Unsettling Environmental and Place-Based Literature for Young Children

by

Marissa Kidd

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
Thunder Bay, Ontario

© Marissa Kidd 2020

Abstract

This portfolio seeks to trouble and unsettle the pervasiveness of settler colonialism, White supremacy, and anthropocentrism in young children's environmental and place-based literature through the creation of a picture book for young children. While critical discourse surrounding these entanglements has begun to emerge across the field of early childhood environmental and place-based education, literature for young children that depicts human relationships with the more-than-human world has been slow to take up these conversations. The result is the need for works for young children that both "unsettle" the hegemony of these social forces and re-centre the narratives that have been and continue to be erased through White settler constructions of young children's relationships with the more-than-human world. This portfolio consists of three tasks: 1) A literature review; 2) A written and illustrated children's book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* that was informed by the concepts of a layered "palimpsest" or "pentimento"; and 3) A brief critical reflection on my personal experience throughout the process as well as the tensions and possibilities I foresee in the field of children's environmental and place-based literature going forward.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the more-than-human others to whom I owe more gratitude than words can say, I would like to offer my deepest appreciation to a number of particular people who made this work possible. First and foremost, a big thank you to Connie for your open-armed welcome into entire worlds of pedagogical praxis, for your inspiration and guidance, and for your endless patient, caring support through four years of ups and downs as I learned to navigate motherhood and graduate studies together. Thank you! Thank you also to Paul for your steadfast guidance through all of these times and to Pauline for sitting on my committee and introducing me to the wonders of weaving together art and academia.

Endless gratitude to Lyndsay, Sasha, Melissa, Fern, and Theresa for generously sharing your stories with me, and to Julia, Hanah, Devon, and Heather for your conceptual and editorial support. It is all of you who breathed life into this work. Thanks also to Matt for your magical behind-the-scenes work translating my artwork from paper into the digital realm, and Stephanie for around-the-clock tech support and formatting wizardry.

I also extend my gratitude to my dear family. Thank you to my partner Jamie for your unconditional support of my pursuit of this endeavour and through one major life transition after another. I have so much gratitude for your patience with my endless state of "almost done!" and for your boundless love and care. You are the firmly grounded roots that have held us all together. Last, thank you to my two little loves, Fen and Robin for being my greatest teachers of all: your patience with my absences, and your overwhelming love for my presences have never ceased to keep me feeling grounded and connected to what is most important.

Chi-miigwetch, kukwstsétselp, thank you to everyone.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iii

Chapter One: Introduction 1

Chapter Two: Literature Review 6

Chapter Three: Methodological Approach 56

Chapter Four: Children's Book 61

Chapter Five: Reflection 100

References 119

Chapter One: Introduction

Across the sphere of early childhood education, the turn of the century saw the beginning of widespread concern over the growing disconnection between young children and the more-than-human world. This resulted in a call for a pedagogical shift that prioritizes rebuilding these connections (Gruenewald, 2003; Louv, 2005; Sobel, 2004). As this "nature reconnection" movement began to gain traction, critical conversations surrounding the hidden – and sometimes not-so-hidden – entanglements of settler colonialism, anthropocentrism, White supremacy, and overall erasure of marginalized narratives within early childhood environmental education also began to emerge. The result has been the development of a critically conscious pedagogical praxis that seeks to challenge and "unsettle" the hegemony of these social forces. In doing so, the aim is to re-centre narratives that have been, and continue to be, erased through White settler colonial navigations of young children's relationships with the more-than-human world (see Greenwood, 2013a, 2013b; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015a). Despite the emergence of pedagogical work in this area, however, these conversations have yet to be taken up with significant vigor in an important part of early childhood education: children's literature.

Picture books depicting human relationships with the more-than-human world have been held in high regard pedagogically for aiding in the formulation of young children's conceptualizations of nature (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2004; Payne & Reid, 2010), and proliferate as a teaching tool in early childhood learning environments. It has also been asserted that young children are able to glean knowledge about the natural world through children's books (DeLoache et al., 2011), and that picture books can aid in fostering both a love for and

desire to act in the interest of the more-than-human world (Bai et al., 2010; Wason-Ellam, 2010). Despite the "nature reconnection" movement's growing popularity in children's literature, however, critical conversations concerning whose narratives are privileged within picture books depicting human/more-than-human relationships, and "which past and present inhabitants of place count" (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 104) have yet to make a significant appearance.

The purpose of this portfolio is to review relevant academic literature and make the case for creating a children's book informed by said literature. I will outline the three tasks that comprise this portfolio and the process I undertook in order to complete each of them. The tasks are: 1) a literature review; 2) a children's book (informed by processes of enstasic drawing and concept sketches), *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow;* and 3) a critical reflection.

After completing the literature review, I began the bookmaking process with creating "enstasic" drawings (Ings, 2014) – a drawing method used as a tool not for the creation of an image, but for exploring, synthesizing, and contextualizing ideas (Makela et al., 2014). This drawing process was used to delve into themes and ideas that emerge from the relevant academic literature pertaining to: a) unsettling early childhood nature education; and b) critical approaches to representation in young children's environmental and place-based literature. Conversations with friends who did not as children see themselves represented in children's environmental and place-based literature also influenced this drawing process. This explorative process of enstasic drawing then guided my creation of concept sketches (Rodgers et al., 2000) to develop both images and text as preparation for the children's book. Unlike the act of enstasic drawing, which emphasizes process over product (Ings, 2014), the purpose of concept sketching in this context was to transform the ideas that emerged through enstasic drawing into the images and words that

appear in the final version of the book. Concept sketching allowed me to plan, workshop, and refine these words and images before creating the final versions of my work. The art-making components of the process were grounded in several methodologies, including visual narrative inquiry (Bach, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2011) and reader response theory (Barone, 2001a, 2001b; Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978). At the end of this process, I concluded with a brief reflection piece on the process, pointing towards future directions I, or others, might take in doing this sort of work.

A Note on Language

Throughout this portfolio, I use the word "unsettling" to refer to settler acts of "conscientização/concientization" (Freire, 2000, p. 35) – the process of becoming aware – in order to differentiate from words such as "decolonization" and "reconciliation" that are considered both inappropriate and harmful when (mis)used in this context (see Corntassel, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Situating Myself

Art therapist and arts-integrated researcher Fish (2018) writes that, "All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer" (p. 339). I thus will begin by positioning myself relative to the work I will undertake. I am a White settler, a mother, and a teacher of young children. I have lived most of my life in Haudenosaunee, Attawondaron, and Anishinaabe territory north of Lake Ontario, but currently live in the traditional territory of the Secwépemc, Dane-zaa, Nakota, Métis, Anishinaabe, and Nêhiyawak. The privilege afforded to me and my family as settlers is a direct result of our participation in the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands. It is through this privilege that I have been able to move freely across the colonized lands we now

call Canada and make a home in this place.

Another of these privileges (and of particular relevance to this project) has been a relatively barrier-free walk into my role as an educator, and an easy experience sourcing teaching resources that – for better or worse – echo the narratives of the White, EuroCanadian settler culture I call my own. As an environmental educator and kindergarten teacher, this included the picture books depicting human relationships with the more-than-human world that I read with young children. It became strikingly apparent to me through this work, however, that while there seemed to be a growing list of titles by authors reinforcing the need for "reconnecting" children with nature, children's books that specifically troubled White settler colonial ways of relating to land, place, and the more-than-human world seemed virtually non-existent. Notwithstanding the growing field of Indigenous children's literature, I similarly noticed an absence of environmental and place-based literature for young children featuring LGBTQ2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit and all other diverse genders and sexualities), disabled, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) narratives and characters. Narratives of the more-than-human world were similarly ignored.

In terms of my own childhood connection to this work, while without question my childhood memories of picture books depicted my Whiteness, cis-normativity, and anthropocentric settler colonial way of relating to the more-than-human world, my nascent queerness and the physical disability I experienced as a child were never mirrored back to me. In conversations with other activist and educator friends, I began to realize that many had narratives, identities, and perspectives that had been "written out" of the books that were read to us as children. Furthermore, when we did see marginalized identities and stories reflected back to

us, it was not in beautiful, imaginative stories, but most often as subjects in fact-based children's literature designed as teaching tools for an audience of "normal" children. This phenomenon was of course magnified for those experiencing multiple, intersecting oppressions. For years I have carried with me questions of how to go about unsettling these depictions, and now have had an opportunity to respond to these questions through this portfolio.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this literature review, I seek to shed light upon work that has led to the critical conversations currently taking place in early childhood education, particularly by those engaging in "common worlds pedagogies," and make clear why critical environmental and place-based literature for young children needs to reflect these conversations. Given the scarcity of such academic work, I also will draw upon other writing on critical children's literature, critical early childhood environmental education, place-based pedagogy, environmental and place-based literature, anti-racism and critical race theory, disability studies, queer and feminist theory, and Indigenous children's literature.

While this review is situated largely in critical responses to the call for recognition of the "child/nature disconnect" seen in the early 2000s, as well as to subsequent pedagogical responses to this call, it is vital to provide an overview of the ideas and conversations that led to the emergence of present-day critical discourse. The first two sections will give an overview of the "nature reconnection" movement in the 21st century, followed by a review of the literature concerning critical responses to this movement as it pertains to place-based and environmental education. These issues will then be troubled through a review of the literature concerning the colonial roots of the child/nature disconnect, and the ongoing reification of White settler colonialism throughout spheres of environmental and place-based education. I will then highlight current dialogue supporting the need for critical environmental and place-based literature for young children and insights that can be drawn from critical early childhood environmental and place-based pedagogies, environmental and place-based literature for young children, and social justice literature for young children.

The Nature Reconnection Movement in the 21st Century

The Call: Recognizing the Child/Nature Disconnect

In early childhood education the world over, the last several decades have seen a marked increase in pedagogical discourse surrounding what has been identified as the "child/nature disconnect" that voices concerns about a trend of young children becoming increasingly disconnected from the more-than-human world. One body of research in this area has sought to quantify this trend by comparing outdoor play time across generations (Clements, 2004) or seeking to explain the cultural shift towards the indoors by laying blame upon electronic games, new comforts such as air conditioning, and changing family structures (Moore, 1997). A related body of research has speculated about the consequences of this disconnect, suggesting that effects could range from detrimental impacts on children's physical health and development (Bailie, 2012) or moral and ethical development (Kahn, 1999). The greatest concern, perhaps, is about the perceived growth in apathy for the more-than-human world, a trend that numerous researchers have suggested could be dangerous for the future of the planet (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Kalvaitis & Monhardt, 2015; Moore, 1997). Louv, in the popularly renowned book, *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe children's disconnection from the more-than-human world. In this book, Louv (2005) made the case for an increase in formal and informal environmental education as the way forward.

The Response: The "Nature Reconnection" Movement

The wave of pedagogical responses to this call to reconnect children with nature includes a proliferation of nature- and place-based pedagogical resources and activity guides for educators and parents (see, for example, Constable, 2015; Sobel, 2004, 2015; Ward, 2008). A plethora of

organizations focused on repairing the child/nature disconnect have contributed to the proliferation of this work (see, for example, Back2Nature Network, 2019; Andrachuk et al., 2014; Child & Nature Network, 2019). In 2007, the first of the current 42 Forest/Nature Schools in Canada was opened (Child & Nature Alliance of Canada, 2019; MacEachren, 2013), and in the context of the United States, the National Start Alliance estimates that since 2012, the number of nature preschools and forest kindergartens has increased sixfold (Merrick, 2016).

Along a similar vein, the emergence of place-based education as a pedagogical school of thought also challenged educators to work towards reconnecting children with all aspects of the places and communities with whom they interact, not only the more-than-human elements or "natural" spaces (Sobel, 2004). While digging reveals that the concept of place-based education was likely first articulated in English in the late 1990s in a compilation edited by Elder (1998), Sobel (2004) popularized this approach with the publication of the book, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities.*

A place-based approach grounds itself in a number of principles, including not only making deep connections with local more-than-human spaces, but also with local human history, community members, and organizations (Sobel, 2004). Emphasis is not only on emplaced, embodied experiences, but also on service-learning and nurturing children to value being part of a place (Sobel, 2004). Other proponents of place-based education similarly underscore the importance of a pedagogy that not only occurs in a specific "natural" place, but is experientially contextualized there, reflecting the ways in which human identities are shaped through interactions and relationships with both human and more-than-human beings and places (see Gruenewald/Greenwood, 2003, 2013; Smith, 2002; Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

A Second Response: Critical Environmental and Place-Based Education

While the movements for nature reconnection and place-based education have been widely accepted and established in early childhood education, they also have become increasingly recognized as "critical sites of struggle" (Bang et al., 2014, p. 39). Educators and academics have raised concerns about a number of deeply embedded power imbalances and sticky entanglements bound up with environmental and place-based education – with young children as well as more widely.

For example, Greenwood (formerly Gruenewald) (2003) re-conceptualizes place-based pedagogies through "a critical pedagogy of place," writing that "if place-based educators seek to connect place with self and community, they must identify and confront the ways that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and non-human others" (p. 7). A host of intersecting and oppressive social forces have been reified through place-specific imbalances in power, but through ongoing dialogue, educators and academics have been working to bring to light these issues.

Some specific areas of critical work have included, but are far from limited to, troubling toxic masculinity and gender-based oppression (Blenkinsop et al., 2018; Gough, 2013; Newbery, 2003; Plumwood, 1992), confronting fat-phobia (Russell & Semenko, 2016), critically examining LGBTQ2S+ oppression (Gough et al., 2003; Russell, 2013; Russell et al., 2002), challenging colonialism in both the context of Indigenous resurgence (Bang et al., 2014; Simpson, 2002, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014) and settler reckoning (Greenwood, 2003, 2013; Root, 2010; Seawright, 2014), examining constructs of anthropocentrism and speciesism (Fawcett, 2013; Martusewicz, 2014; Nxumalo et al., 2015; Russell, 2005), and dismantling White

supremacy (Miller, 2018; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016). These issues are deeply entangled with one another and conversations surrounding such intersections have been brought to the forefront of critical discourse in environmental and place-based pedagogies.

White Settler Colonialism and The Child/Nature Disconnect. Concerns about the child/nature disconnect do not exist in isolation. Children's disconnection from the more-than-human world and the eschewing of settler responsibility are rooted in the same White supremacist, colonial, anthropocentric worldviews upon which settler society is built. In light of this, expressions of White settler colonialism and of the growing separation between humans and the more-than-human world must be explored in tandem with one another. I delve into this in the following sections related to recognizing relationality, challenging apoliticism, problematizing settler moves to innocence, understanding the relationship between White settler colonialism and human supremacy, and acknowledging the importance of land.

Recognizing Relationality. While the movement for rebuilding children's connection with the more-than-human world has been growing in environmental education, so too has a parallel movement for "reconciliation," "Indigenization" and "decolonization" (for more on these contested terms, see Tuck & Yang, 2012). With credit owed to Indigenous educators, activists, and allies (e.g., Battiste, 2004; Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998; Simpson, 2008, 2011), discussion has emerged in settler spheres concerning not only the broken relationship with and ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands, but also the disconnect between settlers and their identities as complicit agents in the ongoing colonial project (Dion, 2008; Regan, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

As White settler colonialism has been addressed in a myriad of ways in environmental

and place-based education - including through misguided and harmful acts of romanticization and cultural appropriation (see Calderon, 2014; Sheridan, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012) - many have emphasized that a first “partial and imperfect” (Clark et al., 2014) gesture towards unsettling colonialism and its related entanglements involves settlers acknowledging and understanding the relational dimension of colonization (Dion, 2010; Graveline, 1998; Jakubowski & Visano, 2002; Regan, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Jakubowski and Visano (2002) write, “viewing oppression and privilege in relational terms urges us to move beyond theoretical abstractions towards an examination of how oppression and privilege are experienced in our everyday lives” (p. 58). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Calls to Action* (2015) also speaks strongly to the idea of relationality by challenging settlers to confront their identities and roles in this country’s shared history and ongoing process of colonization. Simpson (2008) writes, “settler society must also choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations, and to join with us in building a sustainable future based on mutual recognition, justice, and respect” (p. 14).

Challenging Apoliticism. In early childhood education, taking the first necessary steps of recognizing relationality and settler complicity as well as seeking to be actively involved in unsettling colonialism appears to have been stalled by the pointed apoliticism that has been normalized within its sphere (Duhn, 2012). Noting the ways in which early childhood education has historically positioned, and continues to position, itself apolitically, Duhn (2012) writes that “the idea of childhood as a time of innocence that should be kept free of complex knowledges … poses a formidable challenge for educators when it comes to developing pedagogies and curricula that address contestable issues” (p. 20).

While the prevalence of this apolitical positioning is an ongoing challenge, Clark et al. (2014) assert that early childhood educators are in a unique position to address the complex and entangled issues bound up with White settler colonialism and the child/nature disconnect as it is during the early years that the ontological, axiological, and epistemological foundations of our worldviews are laid. Ignoring or depoliticizing White settler colonialism as it is expressed in early childhood settings contributes only to the reproduction of these values and the reification of these forces.

Perfect Strangeness, Desiring Silence, and Settler Moves to Innocence. The apolitical positioning so commonly found in early childhood education can be understood as a defense of "innocence" (Duhn, 2012), which can be deepened by engaging with Dion's (2008) concept of the "perfect stranger" (p. 330) and Tuck and Yang's (2012) writing about "settler moves to innocence" (p. 9). Dion (2008) characterizes perfect strangeness as purporting to have no significant knowledge of Indigenous peoples or colonial processes and therefore positioning oneself as a stranger to issues of colonial oppression. This allows for the convenient excusing oneself from grappling with complicity in the colonial project. Perfect strangeness manifests as blissful ignorance and denial of the detrimental impacts of White settler colonialism in educational spheres, thereby continuing to inflict harm through perpetuating colonial systems. Such avoidance by educators fails to engage young, settler children with Indigenous ways of knowing in meaningful or appropriate ways (Regan, 2010) and "erase[s] the present-day First Nations struggles over sovereignty [and] render[s] invisible the colonial histories through which these spaces have been constituted and naturalized" (Braun, 1997, p. 11).

Ritchie (2015) similarly advocates for the confrontation of settlers' "desiring silence" (p.

154), an idea borrowed from Mazzei (2011) to describe settlers' intentional avoidance of facing colonialism and desire to protect White privilege. Another complement to Dion's (2008) concept of the perfect stranger and Mazzei's (2011) desiring silence are Tuck and Yang's (2012) description of six "settler moves to innocence" (p. 9) that are ways settlers position themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples, ranging from adoption fantasy to settler nativism to conflating awareness with decolonization, each an "attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity" (p. 3). These moves to innocence also provide a framework for understanding the myriad ways in which settler society – including early childhood environmental education – has historically maintained distance from implicating itself in the ongoing perpetuation of White supremacy and the process of colonization of Indigenous peoples, lands, and ecosystems. Identifying settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012), desiring silence (Mazzei, 2011), and perfect strangeness (Dion, 2008) can lead to openings for the social and pedagogical change so deeply needed.

White Settler Colonialism and Human Supremacy. In the overarching dialogue surrounding reconnecting young children with "nature," criticism has emerged over the problematic ways in which this construct positions human beings as separate from rather than an inextricable part of the more-than-human world (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Nxumalo et al., 2015). While educators and academics working within EuroCanadian academic traditions have begun to more widely recognize human beings as inherently part of what we define as "nature," Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island have been living this concept since time immemorial (Bell, 2013; Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998).

For instance, Cajete (1994) writes that anthropocentric epistemological conditioning has caused most of us to be alienated observers of the natural world. Thus, as Graveline (1998)

explains, that which is given by the Earth is reduced to commodities for exploitation, profit, and control. If we understand ourselves as an inextricable part of the more-than-human world rather than separate from or above it, we can also begin to see that that our own degradation as human beings is fundamentally interconnected with the ongoing destruction of life on Earth, upon whom our entire existence depends (Graveline, 1998). Of course, this problem also impacts environmental and place-based education. Bell (2013) writes that "effective and meaningful environmental education" must address the whole child, in relation to all else, in order to foster "an ongoing interconnected relationship between the student and [their] world. Such a holistic environmental education teaches a student that they do not exist without the trees" (p. 99).

Any approach to educating children with, through, in, or by the more-than-human world must respect and value non-anthropocentric ontologies and epistemologies if we are serious about confronting the colonization of people and lifeworlds that pervades education and settler society overall. Blenkinsop et al. (2016) urge settlers to recognize "our implicatedness in colonial projects that justify the denigration of 'the natural world' by way of manufacturing human supremacy just as it manufactures colonial racism" which also "will require developing abilities as allies and a willingness to listen to and honour the *voice(s)* of the colonized—human and other-than-human" (p. 205, italics in original). That said, I also think it is important to keep in mind Tuck and Yang's (2012) cautionary words about the metaphorization of colonization (and decolonization) and recognize the fine line this sort of positioning treads.

Recognizing Land as an Elephant in the Room. At the heart of conversations concerning the shared colonial roots of both the eschewing of settler complicity and the child/nature disconnect is the issue of land. Land is an imperative – but often unspoken – matter

when it comes to critically examining colonialism in the context of environmental and place-based education. It is vital to remember that nature reconnection work, educational programming, and every aspect of settler life occurs upon "stolen, appropriated, bought, decommissioned, de-listed, traded, abandoned, sold and gifted Indian land" (McMahon, 2017, para. 9). Speaking to the depth of this issue, Alfred (2008) asks, "what is colonization if not the separation of our people from the land, the severance of the bonds of trust and love that held our people together tightly in the not-so-distant past, and the abandonment of our spiritual connection to the natural world?" (pp. 9-10).

Facilitating nature reconnection experiences for young settler children on Indigenous land in the absence of Indigenous voices and without a conscious unsettling of colonialism contributes only to the erasure of Indigeneity and securing of settler futurity (Simpson, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The ongoing reification of settler colonial relationship with land and "high levels of ignorance regarding Indigenous issues within the non-Native student and educator community" (Wildcat et al., 2014, p. 3) proliferate in these spaces as a result. Thus settler educators have been called to critically examine their own colonizing relationship with land, and unsettle the ways in which they construct settler children's relationships with land and place. McCoy et al. (2014), for instance, write that changing pedagogical practices in environmental and place-based education "will require engaging with land based perspectives and desettling dynamics of settler colonialism that remain quietly buried in educational environments" (p. 39).

Wildcat et al. (2014) assert that the time for "Indigenous resurgence and settler reckoning" has come, and that "in order to achieve respectful co-existence in the future, settlers must engage in forms of co-resistance that challenge settler privilege in the present" (p. 8). If

settler society indeed seeks to become a society capable of undertaking this work presently as well as in the future, it must actively "sow the seeds" for ongoing transformation (Kidd & McFarlane, 2017).

Bringing It All Together: The Case for Unsettling Environmental and Place-Based Children's Literature

Above I have discussed the entanglements of two growing interests in environmental and place-based education: nature reconnection and unsettling colonialism. Here I want to bring these together in the context of unsettling environmental and place-based children's literature.

There has been ample discussion of children's literature that depicts and encourages children's relationships with the more-than-human world (see, for example, Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2010; DeLoache et al., 2011; Dobrin & Kidd, 2004), including discussion focused on the importance of Indigenous children's literature for both Indigenous and settler children alike (Korteweg et al., 2010; Strong-Wilson, 2006, 2007). There also is a rapidly expanding body of work on human/more-than-human relationships in early childhood education, particularly from a "common worlds" approach (for example, Nxumalo, 2015; Nxumalo et al., 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Taylor, 2013).

So far, however, these two fields have not been in much dialogue with one another. As a result, there is little written on the ways in which environmental and place-based literature for young children privileges White, colonial, and anthropocentric constructions of human/more-than-human relationships and simultaneously erases BIPOC narratives of nature and place. Critical conversations about the insidiousness of these norms and the way in which they dictate whose narratives are privileged in children's books depicting human/more-than-human

relationships have made only a limited appearance in the literature (e.g., Echterling, 2016; Gaard, 2009; Ostertag & Timmerman, 2011; Platt, 2004). The gap widens even further if one wants, as I do, to also maintain children's sense of magic, wonder, and love for the more-than-human world – a feature of both early childhood environmental education and environmental and place-based literature for young children that has been encouraged by a number of authors (e.g., Bai et al., 2010; Jørgensen, 2016; Payne, 2010; Sobel, 2004; Wason-Ellam, 2010). Striking this balance in an age of environmental precarity is a prominent theme in common worlds pedagogies focused on early childhood environmental education (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015; Nxumalo et al., 2015), but has yet to be contextualized specifically around environmental and place-based literature for young children.

My children's book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* finds itself at the juncture of these significant bodies of work. Each offers insights into the ways in which human relationships with land, place, and the more-than-human world might be unsettled and, in a sense, "(re)storied" (Bang et al., 2014). I want to build on lessons learned from critical early childhood environmental and place-based pedagogies, from environmental and place-based literature for young children, and from social justice literature for young children more broadly. I will expand below on each of these bodies of research but first I want to offer a note on Indigenous children's literature, which I want to stand alone as it is not to be understood as a subsidiary of these other areas of children's literature.

A Note on Indigenous Literature for Young Children

Before moving into investigations of the possibilities for unsettling environmental and place-based literature for young children, it is important first to differentiate this work from the

need for Indigenous children's literature more generally in early childhood environmental and place-based education. The imperative of settlers to step back, relinquish control, and make space for Indigenous children's literature, as well as expose both settler and Indigenous children alike to stories written and illustrated by Indigenous authors and illustrators, is already strongly articulated (Bradford, 2007; Korteweg et al., 2010; Strong-Wilson, 2006, 2007; Strong-Wilson, et al., 2014).

The "unsettling" work already outlined in this proposal recognizes the importance of Indigenous literature, but it refers primarily to the settler-to-settler work needed to trouble the colonialism inherent in the way that human/more-than-human relationships are depicted for and by settlers. While Ball (2005) reminds us that work that is about Indigenous people must never happen without Indigenous people, Irlbacher-Fox (2014) also writes that, "Indigenous peoples are not responsible for the decolonization of allies" (p. 9). It is therefore the responsibility of settler authors, illustrators, and educators to go about unsettling the colonial underpinnings of the literature we create and present to young settler children. In light of these cautions, I want my book to contribute to this settler-to-settler work of unsettling environmental and place-based literature for young children. The balance between doing our own work, while also ensuring that it is always directed by Indigenous peoples may not necessarily be an easy one to strike for settler authors, illustrators, and educators such as myself, but it is one that I think we must strive for in all that we do.

Lessons from Critical Early Childhood Environmental and Place-Based Pedagogies

This first body of work explores the juncture between early childhood nature reconnection work and the process of unsettling White settler colonialism. While this work is not

contextualized specifically in conversations surrounding the ways in which these entanglements might be explored through young children's literature, analysis of a number of works has revealed several salient themes that could provide openings for attending to some of the problematic issues bound up with nature and place-based education in early childhood. While it is difficult to separate out the deeply intertwined issues brought forth in these works, my review will pick up on several themes that have surfaced. These themes include: the emergence of common worlds pedagogies as a framework; the romanticization of (White) children in nature; and troubling anthropocentrism in child and more-than-human animal relationships.

Common Worlds Pedagogies as a Framework

A growing body of critical discourse has begun to recognize that sites of early childhood education are as implicated in the reproduction of dominant settler worldviews as other pedagogical spheres (Nxumalo, 2015; Nxumalo et al, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Taylor, 2013). While authors such as Soto and Swadener (2002) began to take up conversations surrounding the unchallenged inequity underpinning environmental issues in early childhood education in the early 2000s, a noticeable surge has since occurred, much of it using the concept of common worlds (Latour, 2004). The term, in part, refers to the complex, deeply tangled, and often troubled lifeworlds shared by human and more-than-human others (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015a, 2015b; Taylor & Giugni, 2012). Taylor (2013) writes that common worlds are "full of entangled and uneven historical and geographical relations, political tensions, ethical dilemmas and unending possibilities" and "are always already full of inherited messy connections" (Taylor, 2013, p. 86), which I will more fully describe in the next sections.

Romanticizing (White) children in nature. The field of early childhood education has recently begun to challenge a particularly prevalent and insidious construct that pairs ideas about childhood innocence with the perceived innocence and pristineness of the more-than-human world. This romantic association of young children and nature can be found throughout the literature. From Wilson's (1984) "biophilia" to Louv's (2005) "nature-deficit disorder," nature has been constructed through the assumption not only that children and nature are separate from one another and in need of reunification, but also that "children and nature belong together, as sites of innocence and purity, not as always-already entangled and unevenly co-constituted participants in world-making" (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 101). Dobrin (2010) notes that this idea pervades children's literature, drawing parallels between the inherently classist, racist, and ageist teleologies of: a) children being more closely connected to nature and growing into disconnection as they become adults; and b) children's "pre-literate" forms of "primitive" communication growing into text-based communications as they mature into adulthood. In all of these cases, children are problematically constructed as separate from but also inherently more "in tune" with the more-than human world.

This positioning of nature as a site separate from human beings also reinforces the notion that "natural spaces" exist for "child-centered connection, learning, and discovery" (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 101). It also often plays into the idea that these spaces have never been inhabited, thereby reinscribing the construct of "terra nullius" and that "natural spaces" exist for the pleasure of (White) settler society (Braun, 1997). That in turn erases present-day Indigenous realities and struggles for sovereignty (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013).

Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) trouble these romanticized tropes and bring to light the

resulting placement of White settler humans at the centre of a narrative that in actuality consists of deeply entangled human and more-than-human relationships. Citing the work of Cajete (2000), Calderon (2014), and Tuck and McKenzie (2014) – all of whom trouble the entanglements of colonialism and human/more-than-human relationships – Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) note that the anthropocentrism embedded in these notions ignores the fact that "more-than-human bodies, specific stories, ontologies, histories, as well as humans are all lively and entangled participants in the shaping of place" (p. 100). Not only is such avoidance problematic in the context of colonialism, anthropocentrism, and Indigenous erasure, but the romantic pairing of young (White) settler children with nature also "side-steps the colonial, raced, and gendered politics impacting accessibility and affordability of outdoor education programs" and makes a number of normative assumptions about who belongs in "natural spaces" and what constitutes a normal childhood experience (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 101). The assumption that nature is separate from but also belonging to White settlers also makes space for racist constructs surrounding the human/nature dichotomy and the way in which (typically) Black and Indigenous people have been historically situated as closer to nature's uncivilized wildness than to human culture and society (Bradford, 2007; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016). Nxumalo (2015) suggests that by "refiguring" the presences in these spaces, educators can go beyond merely "making present that which is absent," but can move towards "rethinking and relating differently to absent presences and the normative practices and taken for granted understandings therein" (p. 23).

Troubling anthropocentrism in child/more-than-human animal relationships. The anthropocentric positioning of human and more-than-human relationships is another prevalent theme in early childhood environmental and place-based education. Following work by

educators and academics such as Russell (2005) and Fawcett (2002) who explore anthropocentrism and speciesism in the larger context of environmental education, a small but growing literature has emerged to trouble anthropocentrism in early childhood environmental and place-based education. For example, Ostertag and Timmerman (2011) note the frequency with which the innocent White child is placed at the centre of all other life in children's media and literature, and also shed light on the problematic ways animals are anthropomorphized for use as teaching tools for human purposes. This, the authors write, denies both human children and more-than-human beings accurate representations of animal realities and lived experiences and, in many cases, utilizes animals to reaffirm problematic cultural norms. These include but are not limited to the colonial, patriarchical, and White supremacist norms detailed above.

Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015b) explore young children's encounters with bears and kangaroos in the contested and colonized common worlds of Canada and Australia respectively. Through troubling entanglements between native (more-than-human) animals and (human) settler children, the authors juxtapose portrayals of bears and kangaroos and the violent, colonial histories of settler/native-animal encounters in each colonial state (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015b). Writing that "we can no longer afford the illusion of our separateness from the rest of the natural world," Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015b, p. 45) stress that "educators and young children must rethink understandings of our responsibilities to the common world we share with other living beings" (p. 45). This is especially crucial when facing the "mixed-up, non-innocen[ce]" (p. 44) of multispecies common worlds.

In Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015c), many of these ideas are echoed through vignettes of child, ant, and worm encounters. Through "rais[ing] questions about our

entanglements and mutual vulnerabilities with other species" (p. 4), the authors delve into the ecological precarity that has been inherited by all inhabitants of the planet – human and more-than-human alike. They assert, "It is no longer possible to deny that our fate, as a human species, is already bound up with the fate of other species" (p. 6). Through the vignettes, the authors hone in on the (albeit uneven) vulnerabilities of the children, ants, and worms in their encounters with one another and consider the ways in which these vulnerabilities require a re-learning of how to mutually inhabit the damaged lifeworlds we are left to face in the age of the Anthropocene.

Writing about similar issues, Nxumalo, Oh, Hughes, and Bhanji (2015) explore young children's co-inheritance and co-inhabitation of damaged lifeworlds through encounters with dead and dying bees who can no longer pollinate the flowers in children's common worlds, with raccoons who have moved to co-inhabit a children's outdoor daycare space, with water and water play, and with tree stumps produced through centuries of logging. In doing so, they complicate the notion that "children are the ones who are now responsible and are going to save the planet" (p. 8) and who are left to confront the colonial, capitalist/consumerist underpinnings of ownership over the Earth.

By troubling anthropocentrism and re-centering the multi-species relationships inherent to co-inhabiting this planet, the various authors highlighted in this section are contributing to a growing body of work that seeks to re-imagine how environmental and place-based education might be theorized and practised with young children. They thus offer openings for attending to the host of complex entanglements found therein.

Lessons from Environmental and Place-Based Literature for Young Children

This second body of work seeks specifically to explore the relationships between

children, place, and the more-than-human world through children's literature. Despite operating through an ecocritical lens, much of this body of work appears to do so without considering many of the hidden entanglements and deeply imbalanced power dynamics that more critical responses to the call for nature reconnection work with young children has begun to address. Platt (2009) writes that though although ecocriticism focuses on the relationship between literature and the natural environment, there are "ecocritics [who] choose not to interrogate either the literature of physical environment for an understanding of their links to culture, human society, politics, or history" (p. 183). This assertion appears to ring particularly true of ecocritical work focused on children's literature, which does not boast a wealth of critical and intersectional work (for exceptions, see Echterling, 2016; Gaard, 2009; Platt, 2004).

While the contributions of ecocritical work on children's literature are relevant, in many cases they mimic the initial response to calls to address the child/nature disconnect in early childhood environmental and place-based education. Ecocriticism related to children's literature appears to have made its first significant appearance in the 1990s (Gaard, 2009) before the nature reconnection movement of the 2000s had taken off (see, for example, Greenway, 1994; Sigler, 1994; Wagner-Lawlor, 1996). The 21st century has seen a significant re-emergence of ecocritical work, but it is still largely informed by the same constructions of children and nature as the nature reconnection movement of the early 2000s (see, for example, Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2010; Dobrin & Kidd, 2004).

A more critical response to the call for children's environmental and place-based literature has made small appearances. For example, Echterling (2016), Gaard (2009), and Platt (2004) bring to light some of the complexities of representing relationships between humans and

place in children's literature and describe the varying directions children's authors and illustrators have taken. In the following sections, I will explore three areas: factual and fantastical depictions of the more-than-human world; critical and intersectional approaches to children's environmental and place-based literature; and children's literature as a starting point for embodied experiences in the more-than-human world.

Considering Factual and Fantastical Depictions of the More-Than-Human World

Children's literature runs the gamut when it comes to the ways in which the more-than-human world and human relationships with other beings are constructed. A small pool of literature focuses specifically on how different constructions reinforce specific human/more-than-human relationships. For instance, Holton and Rogers (2004) detail the changing portrayal of the more-than-human world in *Owl Magazine* between the years 1978 and 1998. Noting an increasing trend towards positivistic, expert-driven scientific knowledge and a marked movement away from fostering a sense of wonder for nature (Carson, 1956), the authors ask how this may affect the way children interact with and understand the more-than-human world. They conclude with a call for a return to fostering a more playful approach to human/more-than-human relationships.

Bai et al. (2010) grapple with the role of fantasy in igniting a love of nature, when and how children's literature might be employed to explore the "doom and gloom" of environmental degradation, and how realistic depictions and biologically-based facts about the more-than-human world both contribute to and suppress curiosity in children. Although the authors ascribe to the view that children are inherently wild beings hard-wired for biophilia and do not specifically challenge or champion any particular approach, their explorations of the value of

magic, fantasy, and wonder as well as the value of realistic portrayals are useful to consider.

For a perspective that more pointedly advocates for whimsical and magical approaches to fostering interest in and love for the more-than-human world, Payne (2010) and Morgan (2010) each reflect on the potential of different fantastical works. Payne focuses upon Robert Ingpen's *Australian Gnomes* stories to critique the biological fact-based texts pervasive in children's environmental and place-based literature, instead arguing for an "ecopedagogy of imagination" (p. 306), a philosophy that suggests that imaginative children's literature and experiencing nature through a wonder-filled and fantastical lens holds potential to nurture a reunion between a child's human and more-than-human self. Payne argues that magic and whimsy can invite children into more-than-human spaces that they would otherwise have overlooked. Morgan also builds an argument for fantasy and magic in children's environmental and place-based literature using Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, touting its "creation-centred" (p. 387) ethic of environmental stewardship and "mythopoetic imagination" (p. 388) that may serve as inspiration for (older) children and youth to become re-enchanted with the more-than-human world. While Do Rozario (2011) offers critical reflections upon the ways in which European folklore and fantasy historically served as a tool of colonization in colonial states such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa, it is notable that none of the aforementioned authors offer substantial critical insight into the ways in which the largely European roots of the fantastical and whimsical literature they promote may also serve to reinscribe colonialism and Indigenous erasure.

While not arguing specifically against magical or fantastical portrayals of more-than-human others, Ostertag and Timmerman (2011) do provide a counter to the argument that

realism in children's environmental and place-based literature is detrimental to fostering an ethic of care for the more-than-human world. Speaking specifically to the issue of anthropomorphism, Ostertag and Timmerman suggest that anthropomorphizing more-than-human others serves to deprive both human children and more-than-human others of genuine depictions of their lived realities. While Ostertag and Timmerman also recognize the benefits of the less-than-realistic, anthropomorphic portrayals so often present in children's media – including fostering the ability of children to see themselves in others – they do shed light on the one-directional nature of anthropomorphism. More often than not, they argue, anthropomorphism in children's media entails the placement of more-than-human animals into human narratives but not the other way around. This includes the projection of human cultural values and morals onto more-than-human animals, and the reification of often problematic human social constructs through these projections such as colonialism and patriarchal social structures (Ostertag & Timmerman, 2011). I note that these issues are not substantially discussed by Payne (2010), Bai et al. (2010), or Morgan (2010), which is problematic.

Critical and Intersectional Approaches to Children's Environmental and Place-Based Literature

While the pool of literature concerning critical and intersectional approaches to children's environmental and place-based literature appears to still be quite small, a number of valuable contestations are made visible through this work, many of which are consistent with current conversations occurring in common worlds pedagogies and early childhood environmental and place-based education. Platt (2004), for instance, draws attention to openings for children's literature to delve into environmental degradation while also exposing the environmental

injustice, colonialism, and corporate capitalism at the root of it. Similarly, Gaard (2009) argues that children's environmental and place-based literature must seek to address the interplay of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and "ruling-class culture," while also critically addressing how the child and the more-than-human world are constructed in relation to these forces. Further, Echterling (2016) posits that "children's texts that resign environmental action almost completely to individual choices and behaviors and disassociate environmental crises from their larger constitutive contexts do little to prepare young people for the socio-environmental challenges we face now and in the future" (p. 297). This emphasis on personal environmental actions is bound up with late capitalism's neoliberal individualism and is far from the type of action needed in these precarious times. Like Platt (2004), Echterling (2016) argues that change must be directed towards systemic racial and class-based oppression and injustice that is so deeply entangled with the (unequal) inheritance of environmental precarity.

A particularly pointed question Platt (2004) asks is whether outsiders to a particular experience of oppression such as environmental racism can ever accurately represent those stories – especially to a predominantly White, Western, middle-class audience. Noting the ways in which power is exerted over authors and illustrators of colour in the (largely White) publishing industry, Platt ponders possibilities for promoting authentic, self-represented narratives of unevenly inherited environmental precarity and the struggle against it. Platt's questions are of particular relevance to subsequent sections concerning inclusion, diversity, and representation in the sphere of social justice children's literature more broadly.

Children's Literature as Inspiration for Embodied Experiences in the More-Than-Human World and Nurturing a Sense of Wonder

For the most part, much of the literature cited above has only skirted around articulating the purpose of children's environmental and place-based literature. With the following words, Gaard (2009) raises a powerful question:

> As temperatures around the planet rise, as safe drinking water becomes scarce and costly, as food costs soar, populations swell, clearcutting continues, and the global violence against women, children, animals, and ecosystems proceeds unabated—what in the world are we doing by reading environmental literature? (p. 321)

Platt (2004) adds another dimension worth considering here: the ways such "doom and gloom" topics are represented to young children through picture books. Wanting to preserve a sense of wonder for the more-than-human world, Platt (2004) states that stories of *victories* in environmental justice movements are particularly important for inspiring children to continue to have hope in a world that "is more gray than green, literally and symbolically" (p. 192).

It is well understood in the field of children's literature that picture books "are crucial instruments for the quality of the future of those who are growing up today, learning how […] to know and to think, and therefore to live" (Trisciuzzi, 2017, p. 70). Thus some authors articulate the purpose of environmental and place-based literature as fostering a specific kind of way of living that cultivates a deep love or caring ethic for the more-than-human world (Bai et al., 2010). Others see raising consciousness about the deeply unequal inheritance of environmental precarity and harmful forces of colonialism, capitalism, White supremacy, and anthropocentrism that dictate it as a key purpose (Echterling, 2016; Gaard, 2009; Platt, 2004). These two purposes

do not need to be seen as in opposition. A particularly salient theme across the literature on children's environmental and place-based literature is the idea that we must first inspire learning through embodied experiences of literature and place, and then can move to tackling other issues (Bai et al., 2010; Burke & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2010; Gaard, 2009; Payne, 2010; Wason-Ellam, 2010).

With regard to embodied learning, Bai et al. (2010) write that "we may teach children about nature through books, films, and online materials, but such learning is not the same as experiential learning through direct contact with nature and through embodied participation" (p. 358). While op de Beeck (2018) draws attention to the split between the notion of "children-in-nature (associated with studies of unstructured outdoor and outdoor play, investigations of child development, and assessments of children's physical and emotional health)" and the notion of "children-reading-nature (the real if abstract environmental concerns children read about, care about, and seek in their favorite books and other media)" (p. 81), scholarship in children's literature has also begun to recognize that these two ways of learning are not mutually exclusive. In fact, one can lead to the other. Children's books hold a great deal of potential to inspire embodied experiences both in relationship with the more-than-human world, and in awakening a sense of awe, wonder, and kinship that is stimulated through those experiences (Burke & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2010; Payne, 2010; Wason-Ellam, 2010). Although the experience of reading a book does not constitute an immersive, emplaced, or embodied experience with the more-than-human world, Bai et al. (2010) posit that the purpose of children's environmental and place-based literature is not to replace these experiences, but to *inspire* them.

With regard to the generation of knowledge itself, Wason-Ellam's (2010) socio-

constructivist approach requires genuine learning to occur “in a context of social and dialogical interactions” (p. 284) – in this case, in direct embodied experience with human and more-than-human others as well as with environmental texts. In reflecting upon the dual practice of engaging with fantastical gnome stories while also facilitating “gnome tracking” experiences in natural spaces, Payne (2010) also weighs in on the subject of exploring story and embodied experience in tandem. Payne writes that “this ecology of the visual, oral and experiential ‘placing’ of storytelling and tracking combine as a form of embodied, sensory and intercorporeal perception and, hopefully, Conception” (p. 296). This multi-dimensional experience inspired by the whimsy and magic of gnome stories, Payne (2010) notes, provides a playful and embodied way for children to relate to the more-than-human places and spaces outside of and within themselves.

Gaard (2009) writes that embodied experiences go beyond children’s environmental and place-based literature alone, and have “the capacity to address children’s emotions and make deep, lasting impacts because it appeals to both the emotions and the intellect” (p. 332). Renowned author and environmentalist Rachel Carson (1956) was perhaps one of the first to assert that embodied experiences of wonder for the more-than-human must come before facts and hard science about other beings. The idea is that if a sense of wonder can be constructed through the relationship between children and environmental and place-based literature, the experience of wonderment can “then be a driving force both for exploring and investigating, and for developing an affective attachment” (Jørgensen, 2016, p. 1141). It is these attachments that many hope will eventually lead children to develop an ethic of care towards, and action on behalf of, the more-than-human world.

A Springboard to Political Action

Echterling (2016) suggests that the purpose of critical environmental and place-based literature for young children is to inspire embodied, collective, political action for environmental justice. Gaard (2009) argues that this sort of action-oriented response can come only by reframing eco*criticism* as eco*pedagogy,* which entails teaching about, in, and through the natural environment as well as actively responding to urgent calls for action heard the world over.

While the linear relationship between children's literature, embodied experience, and political action has been implied in varying ways, it is critical to investigate this teleology. That is no small order, however, as viewpoints on when and how to engage children with political issues range widely across the literature. From the perspective of scholars such as Sobel (2007), experiences (embodied or textual) of the more-than-human in early childhood contexts should be free of "gloom and doom" because otherwise "ecophobia" can develop as a result of exposure to frightening environmental issues before children are developmentally prepared to cope with those issues. Thus Sobel (2007) suggests an approach that first reaffirms for young children the mystifying wonder and beauty that exists in the more-than-human world as a foundation for caring for local places. Sobel (2007) thus holds firm to the premise that embodied experience leads to love and wonder, which then can lead to an ethic of environmental activism years down the road.

Another perspective suggests that early childhood environmental education and children's literature have had "too much focus on local practices and being in nature and not enough effort to engage children in global environmental challenges and sustainability" (Jørgensen, 2016, p. 1140). Echterling (2016), for instance, writes that "children's texts that

resign environmental action almost completely to individual choices and behaviors and disassociate environmental crises from their larger constitutive contexts do little to prepare young people for the socio-environmental challenges we face now and in the future" (p. 297). Gaard (2009) and Echterling (2016) both argue that children's environmental and place-based literature thus must seek to address the forces of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and systemic racial and class-based oppression while also troubling notions of how the child and the more-than-human world are constructed through and in relation to these forces.

A third perspective finds a blend of the two. In some respects, a study by Chawla and Flanders Cushing (2007) corroborated Sobel's (2004) assertion, finding that "nature activities in childhood and youth, as well as examples of parents, teachers and other role models who show an interest in nature, are key 'entry-level variables' that predispose people to take an interest in nature themselves and later work for its protection" (p. 440). Echoing Gaard (2009) and Echterling's (2016) work, however, Chawla and Flanders Cushing (2007) also promote community-level democratic engagement as an age-appropriate stepping stone to strategic political activism in adulthood. Perhaps, then, there is a place for young children's environmental and place-based literature to not only inspire embodied experiences filled with love and wonder for the more-than-human world, but also to introduce children to local, relevant, political issues.

Lessons from Social Justice Literature for Young Children

This body of work differs from that described in previous sections in that it does not focus specifically on children's relationships with place or the more-than-human-world. Still, I argue that explorations of social justice issues in children's literature can inform the creation of critical environmental and place-based literature for young children. While the breadth of

academic literature concerning social justice literature for children is expansive and beyond the scope of this portfolio, I have selected a small sample of relevant work that has been useful as I think about creating my own children's book.

As I reviewed some of this literature, I kept three principles aptly expressed by Jones (2008) in mind:

> 1) all texts are constructed by people informed by particular ideologies and therefore entrenched in perspective; 2) all texts make the experiences of some people seem more valuable than others, enabling some to exercise power more freely than others and therefore contribute to social and political positioning; and 3) all texts grow from language practices embedded in relations of social and political differentials that are inequitably distributed across society therefore both indicative – and generative – of *power*. (p. 49, italics in original)

The following subsections seek to shed light on areas that I think may be of particular relevance to the creation of critical environmental and place-based literature for young children: authenticity, diversity, and inclusion of BIPOC identities and narratives; depictions of gender; depictions of LGBTQ2S+ identities and narratives; depictions of disability; and depictions of fatness.

Authenticity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Representation of BIPOC Identities and Narratives

There is little doubt that in picture books for young children, Whiteness predominates (Crisp et al., 2016; Jiménez, 2018; Koss, 2015; Monoyiou & Symeonidou, 2016; Yoo-Lee et al., 2014). This overwhelming Whiteness is dually problematic, erasing the ability of Black and Indigenous children, and children of colour to see themselves reflected in the books they read

while simultaneously reinforcing for White children that theirs are the only stories that matter by "crowd[ing] out all other views of the world" (Jiménez, 2018, p. 66). These two tandem processes serve to reproduce White supremacy from an early age.

As recognition of the plethora of ways in which children's literature has reproduced White supremacy has grown, so too has what Ashton (2015) refers to as White entitlement to inclusion, resulting in White authors and illustrators' attempts to include characters and storylines that feature diverse backgrounds and identities. Many of these attempts have, however, reified power dynamics, inadvertently reinforced harmful stereotypes, and continued to disenfranchise the people whose stories and identities have been "included" from their own narratives (Chappel, 2017; Jiménez, 2018). In this section, I explore current thinking and suggestions for ways forward.

Content analyses such as those conducted by Yoo-Lee et al. (2014), Koss (2015), Monoyiou and Symeonidou (2016), and Crisp et al. (2016) suggest in no uncertain terms that children's books are not just overpoweringly White, but also continue to portray cultural and racial "difference" in problematic ways. Yoo-Lee et al. (2014), for example, share the results of their content analysis of the cultural authenticity of children's books depicting racialized and culturally diverse characters. To aid in their analysis, they developed a set of criteria for cultural authenticity, including elements such as the absence of stereotypes, the representation of cultural values and not merely facts, and the multi-dimensionality and proactivity of BIPOC characters.

Yoo-Lee et al. (2014) stress the importance of exposing children to a multitude of books that in varying ways satisfy these criteria, although with the caveat that no one picture book can adequately represent an entire culture. This sentiment speaks to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's

(2009) renowned TED talk, in which the author asserts, “the consequence of the single story is that it robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult and it emphasizes that we are different rather than how we are similar” (13:39). Without a plethora of stories about a people or place, Adichie (2009) notes, the wealth of stories that form a person’s identity are flattened and reduced to a single, one-dimensional story that strips people of their full humanity and reinforces stereotypes.

The prevalence of this flattening is visible not only in the lack of books featuring BIPOC characters, but also in the one-dimensional ways many of these characters are portrayed (Koss, 2015). Koss’s (2015) content analysis, for instance, shows that despite the “inclusion” of racialized characters in children’s books, racialized characters still typically played secondary roles in the plot. That was true even of the books that moved beyond mere tokenistic inclusions of people of colour and appeared to be more culturally accurate (Koss, 2015).

There are myriad of ways to define what constitutes an “authentic” portrayal of racialized characters or narratives. Yoo-Lee et al. (2014), for instance, do not require the author or illustrator of a children’s books to share the identity of the characters they create in order for the work to be deemed authentic. That approach is harshly critiqued by Chappel (2017) who uses a lens informed by critical race theory and cultural studies to refute the notion that cultural authenticity can be both achieved and accurately assessed regardless of the identity of the creator and the assessor. Chappel (2017) hones in on the importance placed by BIPOC authors on being able to tell their own stories rather than competing with White authors in the White-dominated publishing industry. In 2015, Young Adult author Corinne Duyvis coined the hashtag #OwnVoices, which “hinges on the idea that people from undervalued, mis- and

underrepresented communities are better suited for writing and representing those experiences" (Jiménez, 2018, p. 65), and continues to bring many of Chappel's assertions about the importance of self-representation in children's literature into public dialogue. In changing focus from the material contained in children's books to the production of the books themselves, Chappel (2017) repositions the issue of including racialized characters to challenging the systemic failures of the publishing industry that continues to prevent authors and illustrators of colour to self-represent thereby also depriving them of the financial benefit of publishing. Chappel (2017) stresses that while criteria such as those detailed by Yoo-Lee et al. (2014) are relevant, the identity and positionality of the authors of children's books are also deeply important.

With reference to inclusion in contexts such as these, Ashton (2015) offers a pointed reminder: we might strive to "[pluralize] representations of people" or "convey racial equality" but at the heart of this work is striving in action to "challenge the embedded hierarchy of racial privilege" (p. 87). The issue of self-representation – including control over the production process and profits – is a particularly valuable lesson for me in the context of creating children's literature. Moving the focus away from inclusion to self-representation requires active confrontation of White supremacy throughout all spheres of children's literature (including children's environmental and place-based literature). That also means that the spectre of "White fragility" (DiAngelo, 2011; Saad, 2020) may rear its head as so often happens when White people are asked to recognize their complicity in inequitable systems and relinquish control.

As far as creating critical environmental and place-based literature for young children goes, all of these power differentials must be attended to: there must be a radical shift away from

the Whiteness embedded in the way children's literature is written (Crisp et al., 2016; Jiménez, 2018; Koss, 2015; Monoyiou & Symeonidou, 2016; Yoo-Lee et al., 2014), and "inclusion" of racialized identities and narratives must make space for BIPOC authors and illustrators to tell their own stories (Chappel, 2017; Jiménez, 2017). Similarly, the White privilege that upholds itself through the exclusion of authors and illustrators of colour within the publishing world must be systematically dismantled (Ashton, 2015; Chappel, 2017).

There are also added race-related complexities to creating literature that features human relationships with place and with more-than-human others on colonized Indigenous lands. Imbalances must be addressed including: challenging Eurocentric, romanticized White narratives of "normal" child/nature connection and of children and the more-than-human world (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015a, 2015b; Taylor, 2013); recentering the Indigeneity of place (Nxumalo, 2015; Ritchie, 2014, 2015; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014); confronting environmental racism and the racially uneven experience of inheriting damaged lifeworlds (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Nxumalo et al, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015c); and acknowledging both settler complicity and what can be understood as the incommensurability of Indigenous and settler ways of knowing and being (Ashton, 2015; Mazzei, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Depictions of Gender

Academic literature concerning depictions of gender in children's literature is expansive, and a considerable amount of that work is based on quantitative content analyses of pools of children's books (see Crisp et al., 2016; Koss, 2015). Crisp et al. (2016), for instance, found that while just over 28% of the books they analyzed featured leading "female/ciswoman" characters,

over 53% featured “male/cisman” leading characters (p. 36). Noting a slightly different trend, Koss (2015) found that while there was a relative overall balance between characters depicted as masculine and feminine, main characters were indeed predominantly men and boys, and women and girl characters were more likely to be portrayed in stereotypical gender roles.

Despite the usefulness of these analyses, some authors have argued that content analyses leave something to be desired (Chukhray, 2010; Clark, 2002). For example, both Koss (2015) and Crisp et al. (2015) agree that conducting content analyses of gender portrayals in children’s literature relies upon “normative understandings of gendered nouns (e.g., girl, woman) and pronouns (e.g., she, he) to categorize leading characters” (Crisp et al, 2016, p. 36). These parameters are both “limiting and potentially problematic because gender is not solely a binary construction” (Koss, 2015, p. 36). Further problematizing content analyses, Clark (2002) makes a compelling argument that while the numbers are no doubt useful, details of the nuanced “hows” and “whys” behind the numbers remain obscured when exclusively quantitative research is relied upon.

Earles (2017) embraces a more nuanced approach to studying the disruption of gender portrayals, describing a study that entailed swapping the gender identities of lead characters in what might be considered hegemonically “male” and “female” narratives during read-aloud sessions with young children. The author found that despite the intended queer, feminist approach to exploring gender roles, children’s dialectical relationship with the texts were still marked by preconceived gender norms that permeated their understanding of the stories. This was made evident particularly in the children’s willingness to accept a girl main character in a hegemonic masculine narrative (such as an adventure story), but not a boy main character in a

hegemonic feminine story (involving nurturing and caregiving). Earles (2017) suggests that while increasing the numbers of disruptive stories – and stories featuring girls and women as lead characters overall – are needed, that alone is not enough to challenge gender norms. Earles (2017) argues that that the gendered relationships children already have with stories must be challenged along with the texts themselves.

Earles' (2017) findings concerning the particular limitations placed on masculine characters when it comes to enacting empathetic, nurturing roles in children's literature are echoed in the work of Blenkinsop et al. (2018) who write about the "eco-double consciousness" expected of young boys in their developing relationships with the more-than-human world. "Eco-double consciousness" refers to the dueling and contradictory expectations for young (particularly cisgender) boys to embrace a loving, nurturing ethic towards the more-than-human world while simultaneously being expected to live up to hegemonic masculine "tough guy" archetypes of stoicism and indifference to the beauty and suffering of more-than-human others. Blenkinsop (2018) and Earles (2017) make it evident that troubling of toxic masculinity is timely and necessary.

Offering another perspective, Varga-Dobai (2013) takes up gender portrayals in children's literature using Black and "third-world" feminist lenses that makes clear that gender cannot be viewed as an independent or one-dimensional aspect of identity. Highlighting the misrepresentation, essentialization, and exclusionary practices embedded in Western feminism's attempts to address the unequal portrayal of gender roles in children's literature, Varga-Dobai (2013) draws attention to a number of works that have shifted power away from White Western feminism through the sharing of lived narratives. The author highlights the importance of

maintaining intersectional approaches when creating children's literature and reiterates the importance of self-representation I discussed in the previous section on race and "inclusion." If literature for young children seeks to disrupt gendered constructions of children's relationships with the more-than-human world, it must do so intersectionally and critically to address issues of privilege and oppression and how they contribute to *whose* narratives might be disrupted or reinscribed in the creative process.

Depictions of LGBTQ2S+ Identities and Narratives

While previous sections describe content analyses that have been widely used to evaluate portrayals of race and gender in children's literature, research surrounding the depiction of LGBTQ2S+ identities in children's literature appears to have been characterized by more nuanced conversations (Chukhray, 2010). While Crisp's (2016) content analysis points to continued under-representation of LGBTQ2S+ identities in children's literature more generally, specific academic literature on LGBTQ2S+ themes in children's books has tended to use critical discourse analysis rather than statistical analyses of (in)frequency.

DePalma (2016), for example, paints a picture of a hierarchy of LGBTQ2S+ identities that is suggested in children's literature, noting that a particular non-threatening kind of queerness is more typically portrayed and other LGBTQ2S+ identities and narratives are erased. Tooms (2007) refers to these non-threatening queer identities as "the right kind of queer" (p. 614). In Lester's (2014) analysis of portrayals of LGBTQ2S+ characters, this "right kind of queer" can be understood as gender-conforming, White, upper-middle class, and rearing children in a monogamous, nuclear family. Trans, queer, bisexual, and gender non-conforming identities are thereby erased, as are intersections of LGBTQ2S+ identities with other identities like race,

class, and ability (DePalma, 2016). Taylor (2012) voices similar concerns, noting that these homonormative constructions enable cisheterosexism as well as other forms of oppression with which they intersect. Additionally, it is notable that across the LGBTQ2S+-themed picture books analyzed by Lester (2014), when homophobia or other forms of LGBTQ2S+ oppression is portrayed, it is often "position[ed] ... as the plot's focal point, and characters are most often left to explain or prove to their community why they should be accepted" (p. 261). (This finding is strikingly similar to children's literature depicting disability, which I will discuss further in the next section.)

DePalma (2016), Lester (2014), and Taylor (2012) all call for authors and illustrators of childrens' books with representations of LGBTQ2S+ identities to: a) emphasize intersectionality of LGBTQ2S+ identities; b) broaden the scope of queer portrayals in children's literature to include all LGBTQ2S+ identities and narratives; and c) affirm LGBTQ2S+ characters as multi-dimensional agents within the plot, not solely as the focus of the plot's problem. Lester (2014) writes that doing so is "important for all children, regardless of their own sexual orientation or gender identity and that of their guardian(s), because if one task of children's literature is to prepare young people for the world, it must expose them to and prepare them for interactions with a wide range of people" (p. 259).

The necessity of troubling cisheteronormativity in environmental and place-based education in general first began to be articulated in the early 2000s (Gough et al., 2003; Newbery, 2003; Russell, Sarick, & Kennelly, 2002) and continues to draw critical attention (Russell, 2013), pointing to a need for cisheteronormativity to be challenged in children's environmental and place-based literature in particular. In addition to questioning the

cisheteronormative assumptions about who “belongs in nature” that pervade the field of environmental and place-based education, Russell et al. (2002), Russell (2013), and Newbery (2003) also draw attention to homonormative expectations of queer performances of gender with respect to the more-than-human world (e.g., the “Amazon” lesbian vs. the gay urban fashionista), pointing to the need to disrupt depictions of the “right kind of queer” that so insidiously pervades LGBTQ2S+ depictions in children’s literature (DePalma, 2016; Lester, 2014).

Another dimension to consider when troubling notions of queerness in human relationships with the more-than-human world is the way in which queerness in more-than-human others might be depicted in environmental and place-based literature for young children. While there does not appear to be a large body of literature that has delved into constructions of more-than-human queerness in children’s literature, select works offer a number of valuable insights. DePalma (2016), for one, challenges the homonormativity that is often reified through popular “queer animal” stories such as *And Tango Makes Three* (Parnell & Richardson, 2005), which features two ostensibly “gay” penguins raising their penguin chick Tango, yet another example of what it means to be “the right kind of queer.”

Gaard (1997) writes that “[a]rguments from ‘nature,’ ... are frequently used to justify social norms rather than to find out anything new about nature” (p. 122) and the issue of assigning human sexual or gender identities to more-than-human others – be they the “right kind” of queer identity or otherwise – brings to light the anthropomorphism inherent in doing so (DePalma, 2016; Russell, 2013). DePalma (2016) writes that while the penguins featured in *And Tango Makes Three* could have been characterized in a number of ways (e.g., as a straight trans or cisgender couple), these beings “do not (and cannot) claim [these identities] for themselves”

(p. 829), leaving their relationship open to human interpretation and in this case, the reification of homonormativity. Russell et al. (2002) describe other circumstances in which more-than-human displays of “queerness” are either swept under the rug altogether or explained away in discussions of “evolutionary fitness” (p. 57).

While Russell (2013) writes that “we cannot help but compare animal relationships with our own human ones,” the author also notes that “our anthropomorphizing makes us uneasy” and that “this perceived familiarity with animal life or behaviour is disorientating, raising important queer and posthumanist questions about human-animal relations and the futures of individual and species lives” (p. 23). It is critical that I, like others creating literature for young children, sit with this uneasiness and carefully consider the ways in which depicting the queerness of more-than-human others might both challenge and reify homonormative and heteronormative narratives that pervade human conceptualizations of the more-than-human world.

The relationship between queerness, Whiteness, and colonialism must also be explored. A search of well-known Indigenous bookstore, goodminds.com reveals a small but constantly growing selection of children and young adult books featuring Two-Spirit characters and narratives (GoodMinds, 2018), but intersection of Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ identities in children’s literature were not explored in any of the scholarly literature I found. It must not be overlooked that queer studies in the “post”colonial, heteropatriarchal context of North America relies upon the erasure of Indigenous genocide (Row & Tuck, 2017), resulting in the erasure of queer Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Smith (2005) writes that “it has been through sexual violence and through the imposition of European gender relationships on Native communities that Europeans were able to colonize Native peoples” (p 139), and notes the

presumption of Whiteness in much queer theory: “If queerness is dominated by Whiteness,” Smith (2010) writes, “then it also follows a logic of belonging and not-belonging. It also relies on a shared culture — one based on White supremacy” (p. 45).

While my role as a settler in unsettling environmental and place-based literature for young children is both complex and fraught when it comes to the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Simpson, 2008), it is clear to me that a conscious queering of environmental and place-based literature for young children must necessarily strive to confront the pervasiveness of colonial narratives within settler conceptualizations of queerness, and to move aside for the self-representation of narratives of queer Indigeneity and Two-Spirit identities and experiences.

Depictions of Disability

A particularly striking point in the literature on the portrayal of differences in ability is the embedded hierarchy that not only places able-bodied characters at the pinnacle of human existence, but also creates a hierarchy of disabilities. While the “able body” in itself is a relational construction that requires the construct of the “disabled body,” I found it notable that neither this construct nor debates over the language used to describe it were delved into anywhere in the academic literature surrounding disability and children’s books. While problematic, the literature did provide insights into ways in which children are currently being taught about ability and disability through the picture books they encounter.

According to several content analyses, not only do the majority of children’s books completely exclude any characters with disabilities (Crisp et al, 2016; Koss, 2015), but Koss’s (2015) content analysis found that when disability was portrayed, it was almost always physical,

rarely cognitive, and never emotional. Indeed, a number of other forms of disability (e.g. communicative, psychiatric, or chronic illness) were not thoroughly examined in any of the literature I reviewed. Much like there is a “right kind” of queer (as there is in relation to race, class, gender identity, and body size), it appears that in children’s literature, certain kinds of disabilities are “acceptable” and others are not (Koss, 2015).

Another salient finding in the research is that “difference” tends to be portrayed as a specific focus of the plot rather than as an accepted part of human existence or through characters of agency in an overarching narrative (Monoyiou & Symeonidou, 2016). In an analysis of Greek-language children’s literature, Monoyiou and Symeonidou (2016) found that across the children’s books included in their study, characters of “difference” and particularly those with disabilities were only typically accepted by the other characters after the intervention of a person or a particular event that proves the character’s worth as either “normal” or a “superhero.” A content analysis study consistent with some aspects of Monoyiou and Symeonidou’s (2016) work was conducted by Koc et al. (2010) who found that characters with physical and sensory disabilities were usually portrayed as friends with non-disabled characters but emphasis was often placed on able-bodied characters’ “helpfulness” and “assistance” rather than on the agency of the disabled character.

Saunders (2004) writes that the pathologization of characters with disabilities stems from a medical model of disability that invariably positions characters with disabilities as weak and in need of assistance. Saunders (2004) suggests that this problem can by shifting portrayals away from a medical model and towards a social model of disability: a concept that differentiates between and separates out the "medical condition" (para. 6) from its social consequences and re-

centres the agency of the character that is disabled.

Another key point I took away from the literature is the question of audience. Crisp et al. (2016) note that many books featuring characters with disabilities are intended as teaching tools for the nondisabled. Crisp et al. (2016) pave the way for questions creators of children's books who seek to depict disabled characters might ask themselves about who they are creating *for*, and with what intention. A lesson for creators of children's books can also be gleaned from a commonly used phrase in the disability rights movements used in the title of Charlton's (1998) book, *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment.* That should extend, of course, to depicting disability in children's environmental and place-based literature that is subject to falling into the same ableist constructions of young people and nature as documented in environmental education (see Newbery, 2003).

As with other areas of intersection between social justice and environmental and place-based literature for young children, it can be gleaned from the academic literature that taking an intersectional approach is paramount to conscious and critical disruption of the problematic norms that currently mark constructions of children and the more-than-human world. Newbery (2003), for example, writes that "revaluing the strength of a black female body, a working class body, and a White female body may mean very different things, some of which imply power and resistance and some of which may further reinscribe dominant racist and classist discourse" (p. 213). Without critical awareness of the forces underpinning these issues, and in absence of those who experience these intersecting oppressions firsthand, children's environmental and place-based literature that seeks to disrupt ableist representations of who "belongs in nature" will only reify the very oppressions it seeks to dismantle.

Depictions of Fatness

Children in real life as well as in fiction have remained a prime target of the fat-shaming and weight-based oppression that has come as a response to the alleged “obesity epidemic” (Boero & Thomas, 2016). With specific regard to children’s literature, Webb (2009) writes that “the negative representation of the fat child is a cultural construction which has been unchallenged and unquestioned and has thus permeated and become embedded in the consciousness of Western society” (p. 105). Indeed, children’s literature has a long history of reifying these constructions (Birbeck & Drummond, 2006; Rabinowitz, 2003; Webb, 2009).

Pointing towards the insidiousness of fat-shaming in children’s literature, Birbeck and Drummond (2006) found that children as young as 5 and 6 years old already demonstrated negative attitudes towards fatness, referring in large part to stories they read in school to contextualize these attitudes. Children’s literature has historically reified stereotypes of fat people as lazy, cowardly, untrustworthy, weak, unintelligent, self-indulgent, often using fatness to generate comedic relief, to elicit disgust or disdain for antagonistic characters, or pity for protagonists whose humanity is only fully realized once they have lost weight (Rabinowitz, 2003, Shelton, 2016; Webb, 2009). Occasionally these devices all exist simultaneously, amplifying all of these damaging stereotypes at once (Rabinowitz, 2003; Webb, 2009). Webb (2009) found examples of negative depictions of fatness in children’s literature in nineteenth-century English books for children, citing the concept of “Muscular Christianity” (p. 107) as a predominant influence on the ways in which heroic characters in children’s literature were (and often continue to be) constructed as thin, able-bodied, and masculine. By contrast, depictions of fat children were designed to embody gluttony, sloth, self-indulgence, and victimhood, thereby

"act[ing] as an opposition to emphasize and magnify the positive qualities of the boy hero" (Webb, 2009, p. 122).

Regardless of how they are depicted, fat people do not appear often in children's literature. For example, Wedwick and Latham (2013) analyzed the occurrence of fatness in children's literature Caldecott medal winners from the 1950's up to 1997, finding that fat characters appeared only 3% of the time, a rate considerably lower than non-fat characters. When they do occur, it is very rare that they appear in roles such as professionals (Wedwick & Latham, 2013). Combining the low frequency of depiction and generally negative of depictions of fatness leads to an overall concerning portrayal of fat people. As Rabinowitz (2003) observes:

> … with so many examples of fatness equaling flawedness, fatness slips easily into shorthand for anything negative. Skinny characters are sometimes bad or weak, but they are surrounded by other skinny characters who are good or strong or understandable; fat characters epitomized by flaws have few counter examples. (p. 4)

In keeping with previous sections of this review, it is also important to again note that of course fatness also intersects with many other aspects of identity, including but not limited to gender, race, queerness, ability, and class (Boero & Thomas, 2016). On the intersections of gender and fatness in children's literature, Webb (2009) details the pervasiveness of what the author refers to as the "demasculinization of the obese figure" (p. 110) as well as the tendency for depictions of fatness in children's literature to shame and blame fat characters' mothers for the alleged over-indulgence of their children. These depictions can be understood as expressions of classist and racist constructions of fatness and gender, which are problematized by numerous scholars in fat studies (e.g., Boero, 2009; Quirke, 2016). As Boero (2009) notes, depictions of

fatness have also fed into ableist discourse around the hierarchy of bodily worth. As Shelton writes, “Sizeism gains its justification from and fatphobia feeds off of ableist discourse: the idea that ‘able’ bodies and ‘good’ health are stable, achievable ideals all humans should strive for. When the ableist point of view goes unquestioned, size discrimination and fatphobia go unquestioned” (p. 174).

The imperative for critical conversations around depictions of fatness in young children’s literature has not resulted in widespread dialogue among teachers of young children (Wedwick & Latham, 2013), nor, based on my own observations, a substantive body of scholarly literature on the subject. Further, in the small body of academic work that does exist in this area, some of what is cited here such as Webb (2009) overtly amplifies the panicked rhetoric around the alleged “obesity epidemic” while simultaneously critiquing the pervasiveness of negative portrayals of fatness. This contradiction cannot to be ignored, but remains beyond the scope of this literature review to adequately address. Suffice to say that, like those working in fat pedagogy (Cameron & Russell, 2016), I do not wish to reproduce fat oppression in my own work and indeed seek ways to disrupt it.

Implications of the Literature Review for My Book

To close this literature review, I now turn to various ways I applied the insights from the review into producing my own children’s book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*. To begin, in writing the book, I operated from a belief that while academic discussion of the unsettling of environmental and place-based literature for young children is necessary, so too is the unsettling of the actual literature itself. I thus created a children’s book informed by: a) the academic literature reviewed above; b) my own experiences of exposure to and creating books as a child;

and c) the ideas and reflections of real-life friends who, like me, did not see themselves represented in children's environmental and place-based literature when they were children.

I designed and created the book for an audience of primarily, but not exclusively, settler children of ages four to six. As will be evident in Chapter Four where I share photographs of the book, I used a combination of mixed-media illustrations and narrative prose. While I am mindful that "illustration … doesn't make the narration easier, but rather it makes it more problematic and more complex" (Trisciuzzi, 2017, p. 71), I do see potential in picture books. "Through illustration and the written word," Trisciuzzi (2017) writes, "the picture book and its reading bring the reader to ask themselves questions, to widen their visual and imaginative horizons, and to relate to the world" (p. 71). Although narrative prose accompanied my illustrations, I wanted to rely primarily on the use of images to achieve the complexity Trisciuzzi (2017) refers to, thus image-making was my primary focus. The concepts of (re)storying and both palimpsest and pentimento both figure heavily as conceptual underpinnings of my process.

(Re)storying

If there is one key takeaway from my literature review, it is that the ways in which we story and understand our relationships with land, place, and more-than-human others "occurs within inequitable relations that create certain erasures" (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 104). With specific regard to these erasures, Bang et al. (2014) articulate that "constructions of land, implicitly or explicitly as no longer Indigenous, are foundationally implicated in teaching and learning about the natural world, whether that be in science education, place-based education or environmental education" (p. 39). I thus sought to create a book with the expressed intention of unsettling some of the dominant stories and constructions of the relationship between humans

and the more-than-human world typically seen in children's environmental and place-based literature.

That means that the material composition of the book needed to be able to communicate the "(re)storying" of these relationships – both with place and with more-than-human others. It also needed to make visible the many layers of meaning and interpretation that can simultaneously be constructed of the same physical place, and seek to both create "interruptions to connections to colonialisms in everyday nature encounters" (Nxumalo, 2015, p. 23) as well as to recentre the "still, always" Indigeneity of the land, whether ceded or not (Bang et al., 2014, p. 39). As a counter to colonial narratives, I strove to foreground constructions of the more-than-human world as having value unto itself and outside of relationship with human beings (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016; Watts, 2013).

Emplacement was also central to the creation of my book. I wanted it to be "specifically situated in particular place encounters within the geopolitical and geohistorical specificities of settler colonialism" (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 103) rather than it attempt to be a generalized unsettling of colonialism since colonialism itself is inextricable from land and place (Alfred, 2008; McGregor, 2013; McMahon, 2017).

Layers of Meaning as Palimpsest and Pentimento

Palimpsest. I illustrated the story using layered, translucent images placed on top of one another in order to represent the constant, simultaneous storying and construction of the same place through different sets of eyes, lenses, worldviews, experiences, and ways of knowing and being. As articulated by Holm et al. (2018), images are able to communicate information in a way that is complex and multilayered. In this case, through layered images I sought to add both

literal and figurative depth to the ideas I sought to convey in the book.

A concept that serves to contextualize this design is that of a palimpsest. While originally referring to the textual overwriting of ancient parchments and the showing-through of not-entirely-erased remnants of previous writing (Sameshima et al. 2019), for the purposes of my book, I understand land and place not only as a metaphor but also as a literal palimpsest upon which layers of time and story have been written and re-written. Sameshima et al. (2019) write that "palimpsest refers to trace – that over time, whatever is below sometimes seeps through" (p. 15), and Springgay (2007) notes that a palimpsest can communicate "the idea of peeling away successive layers of meaning, of looking beyond or beneath the surface" (p. 43). In the case of my book, my intent was to peel back storied layers of colonialism, White supremacy, and anthropocentrism to reveal Black and other racialized narratives that have been obscured as well as the always and ever-present Indigeneity of place. Dillon (2005) understands the layers of a palimpsest as "involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other" (p. 245), and so too are the layers featured in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*, which you can see in Chapter Four. The source of their entanglement with one another is the colonized land, place, and lifeworlds they co-habit (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015c), and the relationships held therein.

Sameshima et al. (2019) also note that a palimpsest "allows the multiple voices to be concurrently present – foregrounded and backgrounded – in the layering of interpretation" (p. 20). Directly including different voices "challeng[es] the dominance of the researcher/artist" as "participants are able to constitute their own experiences when they participate (or are included) in the formation of the cultural construction of meaning through representations about their

experience and self" (p. 21). Although the process of creating my book did not involve "participants" in the conventional sense, words and concepts from friends both informed and constituted the creation of layers in the palimpsest that is the book itself. My work can also be understood as palimpsest in that although it re-contextualizes narratives from one form into another (in this case from oral and written narratives to illustrations), the original meaning is not lost but overlayed with both newer and older layers of meaning (see Sameshima et al., 2019). I describe my process further in the next chapter.

Pentimento. While I maintain that framing this book through the concept of a palimpsest is by and large quite fitting, this framing was both challenged and complemented on a number of fronts when I was recently introduced instead to Donald's (2004) conceptualization of place as "pentimento" (p. 21). Pentimento is a painting term and, much like palimpsest, refers to the reappearance of an original element that was later painted over (Merriam-Webster, 2020). While Donald's conceptualization of pentimento follows that of Seed (2001, as cited in Donald, 2004) in addressing the concept of peeling back layers of White, colonial story, Donald's pentimento differs from palimpsest in ways that are quite significant to the context and theme of my children's book. Referring to the showing-through of original writing on parchments that were not entirely erased remnants of previous writing (Sameshima et al., 2019), a traditional understanding of the creation of a layered, textual palimpsest requires at least partial erasure of what was originally written. When it comes to the overlapping, storied layers of place, however, there is a small but important distinction to make between palimpsest and pentimento: the original storied Indigeneity of places across the colonized land we now call "Canada" was *never* erased. Rather, these stories were "painted over" (Donald, 2004) by the White supremacist,

anthropocentric, colonial narratives that Euro-Canadian culture has come to see as the *only* story of place. While the concept of a palimpsest may also be used more contemporarily to refer to the showing-through of painted layers (Sameshima et al., 2019), it is here that the concept of pentimento as a way of framing the layered stories of place is particularly apt. Donald (2004) emphasizes the importance of not only seeing the painted-over elements showing through, but also "peel[ing] back," "scrap[ing] away," and *recognizing* the colonial layers "that have obscured or altered our perceptions" (pp. 23-24).

Finally, Donald (2004) offers an insight into pentimento and the storied nature of place that struck me as particularly pertinent to the context of my book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*:

> Doing *pentimento* does not imply a search for an original and pure beginning hidden underneath the layers. Rather, the idea of *pentimento* operates on the acknowledgment that each layer mixes with the other and renders irreversible influences on our perceptions of it. (Donald, 2004, p. 24, italics in original)

Unlike the clearly separated vellum pages in the book I created, the layers of story that make up real places are messy, mixed, and very much a part of one another (Donald, 2004). Indigenous stories of place are not the "original and pure beginning" (p. 24) to which Donald refers, but just as much a part of the present as the (often romanticized) past (Deloria, 1969). All of our stories on this land – past and present - are intimately connected, and so are we (Donald, 2004). Framing the storied, layered, nature of place through the concept of pentimento in addition to framing it as a palimpsest allows for these slight nuances and distinctions.

Chapter Three: Methodological Approach

The process I undertook in creating my book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* was underpinned by a blend of methodologies, including reader response theory (Barone, 2001a, 2001b; Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) and visual narrative inquiry (Bach, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2011). The interplay between these methodologies is detailed below.

Reader Response Theory

As the images in this inquiry were created as a response to reading and synthesizing current dialogue in academic literature, reader response theory as articulated by Barone (2001a, 2001b), Fish (1980), Iser (1978), and Rosenblatt (1978) was foundational to this project. Reader response theory understands the act of reading as an experiential "transaction" between readers and texts, in which meaning is generated through the lived experiences of the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). Of the application of reader response theory in educational research, Atkinson and Mitchell (2010) write that:

> The ways in which readers make meaning of narratives, [and] the features and functions of their responses relate to the qualities and elements of the narratives and how they may be shaped by the purposes for which the writer composed the narrative. (p. 10)

It is crucial to note here that reader response theory as it has been articulated has also received criticism for implying that the reader's response trumps considerations of uneven power dynamics at play in how culture is produced through text (Chappel, 2017). Chappel (2017) implores readers to "understand not only the individual reader responses, which may vary … but also the material circumstances and power dynamics allowing the creation and distribution of the text" (p. 85). While approaching reader response without this in mind could have indeed posed a

serious problem for my book and further contribute to the marginalization of the voices I seek to uplift, I strove here to approach this work critically and with an understanding of my own positionality. Understanding the positionality of my worldview and identity is part and parcel of understanding myself as an active participant in making meaning of text (Korteweg et al., 2010) – a key tenet of reader response theory, and at the heart of my process.

Visual Narrative Inquiry

Images have been widely exemplified as a valuable tool for accessing "those elusive hard-to-put-into-words aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or ignored" (Fish, 2018, p. 313). Fish (2018) notes that the use of visual image-making can encourage reflexivity, and by going beyond what thinking alone is able to accomplish, image-making "offers a unique way of bringing to view and transforming meaning embedded in experiences" (Leavy, 2009, p. 250). Visual narrative inquiry is a particular mixed approach to making meaning from experiences and is described by Bach (2007) as "an intentional, reflective, active human process" (p. 281). Noting that experience is inherently an active, narrative process, Bach (2007) writes that visual narrative inquiry enables the generation of meaning by interrogating not only the narratives behind the images themselves but also the storied process of creating them. This thereby allows for the voicing of two distinct narratives that would otherwise not be visible by merely viewing the final product alone (Mitchell et al., 2011).

In the case of my portfolio, the two narratives of interest are: the story told by the children's book I created to unsettle constructions of human/more-than-human in environmental and place-based literature for young children, and the story of the process I undertook in creating it. This process occurred in response to the academic literature reviewed above and to stories and

ideas shared by friends and family, which I reflect upon in Chapter Five.

Enstasic Drawing

I made use of two different types of drawing in the production of my book: "enstasic drawing" (Ings, 2014, p. 2.4) and concept sketching (Rodgers et al., 2000) that informed the narrative images featured in the "final product." Enstasic drawings can be understood as "the vehicle of investigation" (Fish, 2018, p. 339) because, following Ings (2014), they are made "not for the creation of an image, but for the exploration of the potential of a thought" (Makela et al., 2014, p. 6). Here, the "thought" is the synthesis of ideas from the literature, from my own experience, and from friends and family members who informed the creation of my children's book. "Enstasic drawing" is defined by Ings (2014) not as "outside of one's self, drawing to create a picture" (p. 2.5), but as an embodied practice in which one "dwells in the creative potential of what is not yet formed" (p. 2.4) for the purpose of "explor[ing] the potentials of a thought" (p. 2.5). Further, Ings (2014) writes that:

> This process may involve the deployment of drawing in a slow, reflective process that allows the designer to become immersed in the world of the emerging image and story. In this approach, thinking becomes contemplative; the designer converses with drawing and the drawing talks back. (Ings, 2014, p. 2.4)

Engaging in enstasic drawing means "think[ing] with, and through drawing to make discoveries, to new possibilities that give course to ideas and to help fashion their eventual form" (Rosenberg, 2008, p. 109). That is not to say, however, that vestiges of images created during a process of enstasic drawing are barred from making their way into the final product that comes together post-process. Ings (2014) notes that it is important to differentiate between the process

of enstasic drawing as an embodied action, and the post-ideational "residue" that may bleed into the final product. In the case of this project, bleeding over most certainly took place as some of my enstasic drawings informed concept sketches, which then informed my final work (see Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter Five).

The enstasic drawings I created for the book were born from my response to the academic material I read, my own lived experience as a mother and teacher of young children and from my own childhood (that included a physical disability and nascent queerness) as well as from the collaborative co-generation of ideas with a handful of friends who have backgrounds in education and/or children's literature. I find it notable that all of these friends identify as women or non-binary, and inhabit various expressions and intersections of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ2S+ identities. These friends offered ideas for characters, storylines, and themes that they as children would have liked to have seen represented in the literature they read, and would like to see depicted in children's literature going forward.

Some of these suggestions included: intergenerational relationships; knowledge of the land being passed from old to young; the feeling of children being "alone" in nature and away from adult influence; the sentiment of children introducing adults to wonderment and fantasy in nature; fat children; girl children engaging in physical, adventurous play outdoors; children with natural curly hair; non-binary or gender-ambiguous characters, especially children; brown, Black and Asian children engaging in physical play and experiencing wonder in the more-than-human world; children in urban natural environments; and the ever-presence of more-than-human others. My reflections on how I worked with each of these threads and wove them together into a cohesive story can be found in Chapter Five.

Concept Sketching

The purpose and process of creating conceptual sketches differ significantly from that of enstasic drawing (Ings, 2014). While focusing more on the context of industrial design, the work of Rodgers et al. (2000) concerning the value of conceptual sketches is also pertinent to the conceptualization and creation of children's literature. Rodgers et al. (2000) write that "sketches are representations which will often allow the designer to 'try out' a new idea on paper" (p. 452) and to compare and contrast various iterations before the final product is created. In the case of my book, concept sketches were used as an "extension of mental imagery" (Makela et al. 2014, p. 4) to experiment with, juxtapose, and plan the images and words that would eventually constitute the final work. As articulated by Temple (1994) in Rodgers et al. (2000), concept sketches not only serve as a means by which to facilitate and experiment with the creative process, but also serve as a "recorder of creative acts" (p. 452). As a form of visual art, drawing can be used not only as a tool for exploring ideas, but also for representing ideas as a final product (Holm et al., 2018), thus through a number of iterations (see Figures 1 and 2) concept sketches transformed into the final illustrations in my book (see Chapter Five).

Chapter Four: Children's Book

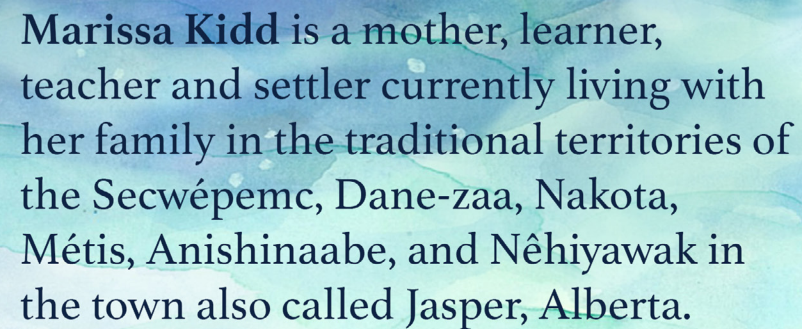
This chapter is a digitized version of the page spreads in my children's book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow.* Please keep in mind while you are reading that these spreads have been altered slightly to digitally represent the tactile, vellum layers that would be present in a printed and bound copy of the book. Multiple spreads that look nearly identical are included here in this chapter to show what the page looks like before and after the vellum page would be flipped from the right side of the page spread to the left.

KIDD

BLANKET OF STORIES, BLANKET OF SNOW

BLANKET OF STORIES, BLANKET OF SNOW

marissa kidd



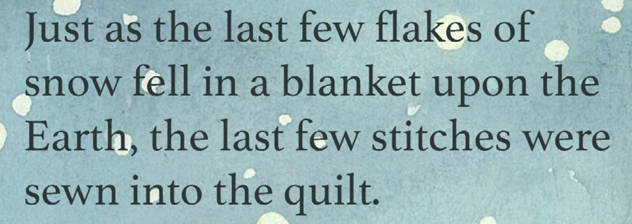
Marissa Kidd is a mother, learner, teacher and settler currently living with her family in the traditional territories of the Secwépemc, Dane-zaa, Nakota, Métis, Anishinaabe, and Nêhiyawak in the town also called Jasper, Alberta.

To Sasha, Melissa, Lyndsay, Theresa, and Fern for so graciously sharing with me. This book is for you, and for all who will hear your stories.
-MK

BLANKET OF STORIES, BLANKET OF SNOW

written and illustrated by

marissa kidd



Just as the last few flakes of snow fell in a blanket upon the Earth, the last few stitches were sewn into the quilt.

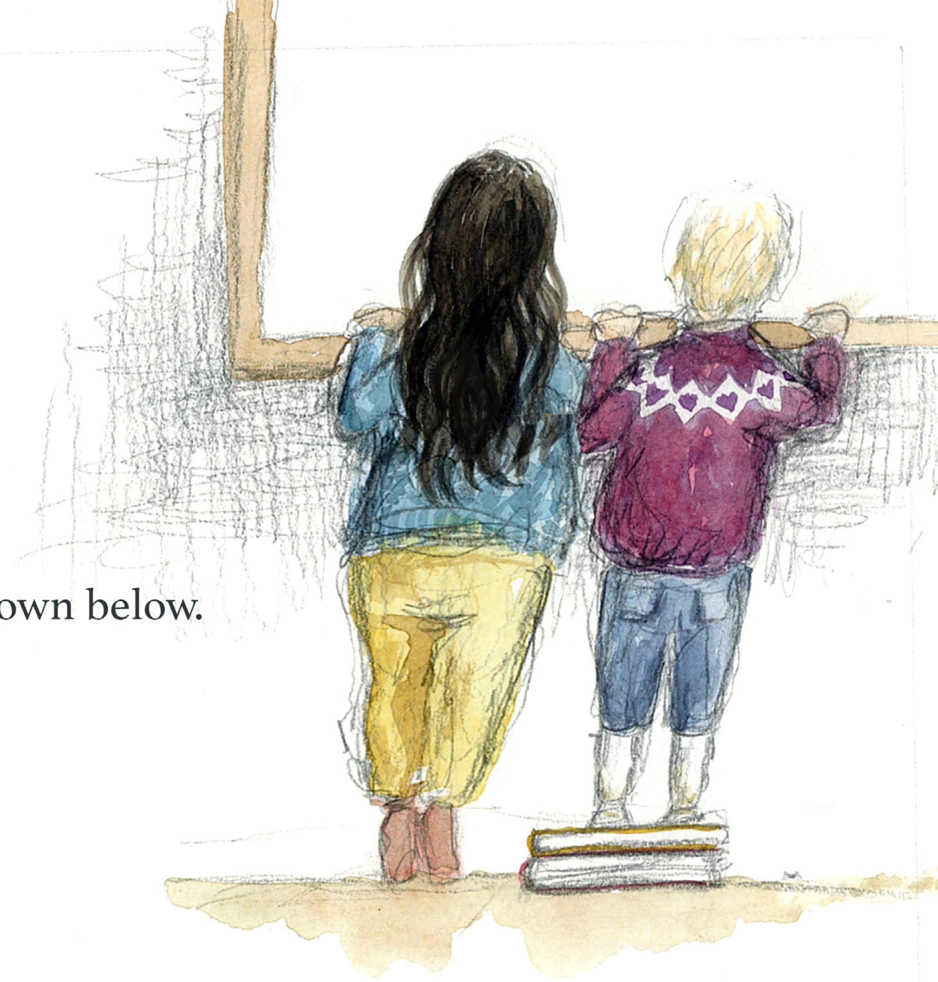
The quilt was beautiful.

It was stitched and
sewn by hands
young and
old,
across
kitchen tables,
living room floors
and seasons warm
and cold.

It was made of old patches and scraps, of favourite shirts too worn to wear, of treasured bits of this and that, and of special cloth tucked away for just such an occasion. Each and every square had a story to tell.

At last, the gentle in-and-out of slender needles traced the quilter's final touches across the sea of cloth. And with that, it was complete.

That evening, we would deliver the quilt - and with it, a wonderful warm gathering of good food and good friends - to the lonely heart we had been holding in our own while the quilt was made.



A holler came from down below.

Time to go!

Zaza climbed the stairs to meet us.
Sweaters buttoned, zippers zipped and
boots were pulled on over woolly socks.

Grandma leaned in close.
"I'll trust the two of you with this,"
she said with a wink, then folded
the quilt into a soft, old backpack.

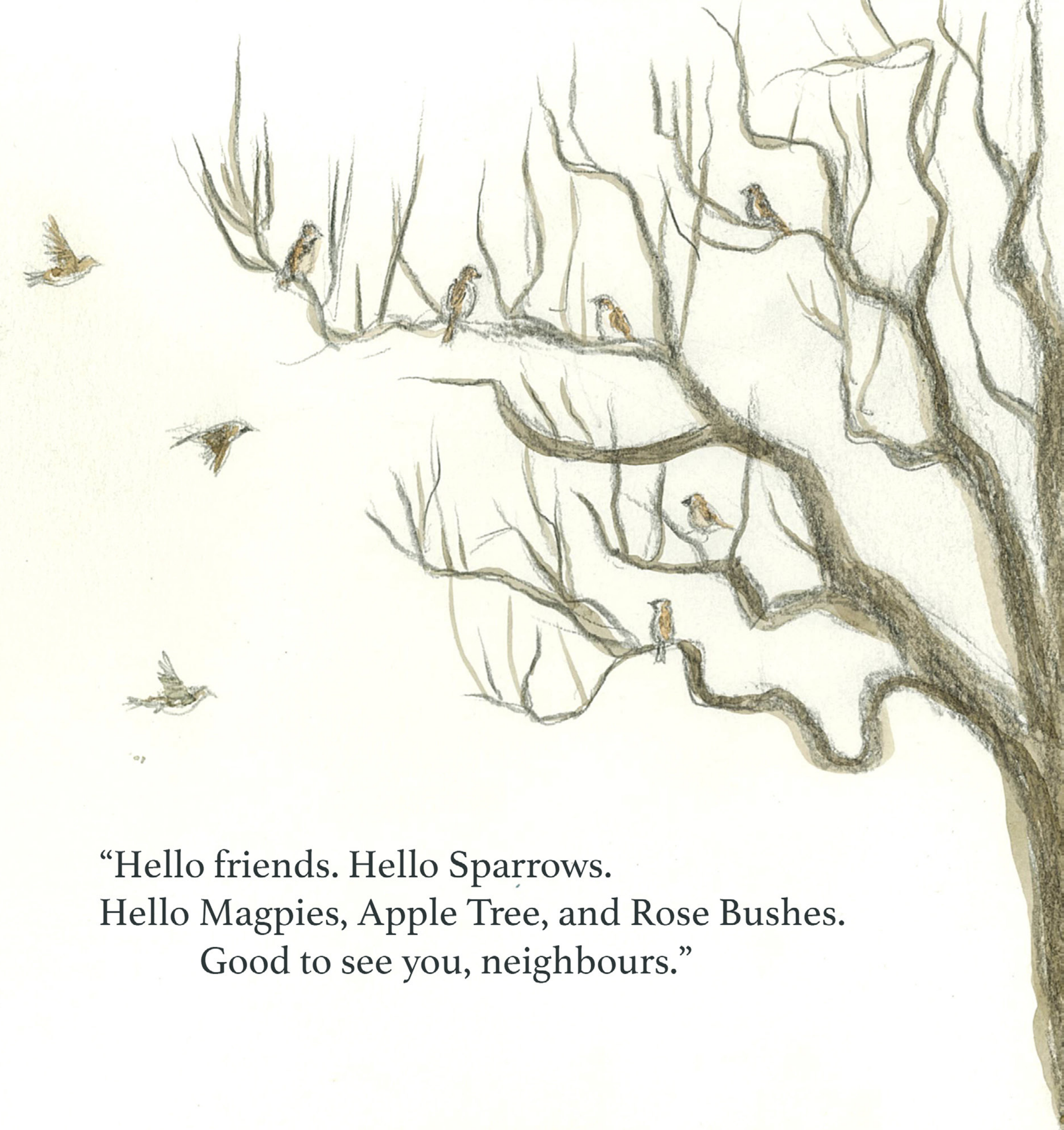
"You go on ahead.
We'll catch up!!" they called.
"Remember to greet the neighbours!"

Then fleet of foot, we were off. They knew not
just how well we already knew the way.

Past snowbanks and spruce trees,
we leapt down wintry walkways
and along snowy streets.

We greeted all our neighbours,

bundled, winged, big and small.



“Hello friends. Hello Sparrows.
Hello Magpies, Apple Tree, and Rose Bushes.
Good to see you, neighbours.”

Just then, Little Red Squirrel surprised us as they leapt across our path.

where

were

they

going?

We followed...

Beneath the branches...

...to a dark and quiet,
secret, hidden place?

We leaned in closer...
Little Red Squirrel was nowhere to be seen.
But...

...suddenly, softly,
a warm and gentle glow.

We leaned in closer...
Little Red Squirrel was nowhere to be seen.
But...

Then, a flutter of wings...

whirring... whispering...

"Come follow me!"

And so we did.

Then, a flutter of wings...

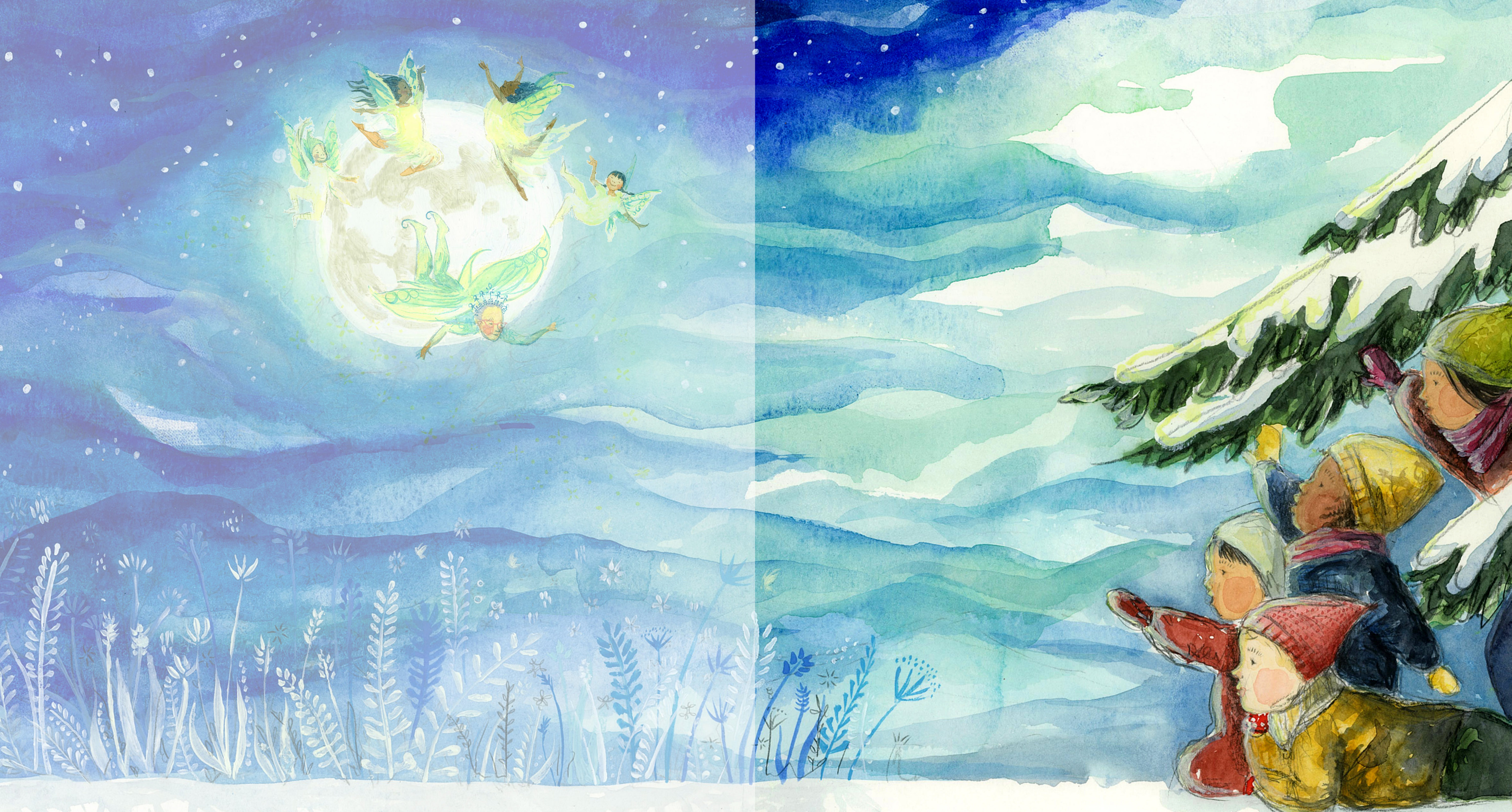
whirring... whispering...

"Come follow me!"

And so we did.

We followed to where the branches opened. Above the creek, where ice crystals blossomed into flowers and ferns, night had fallen.

From there beneath the branches, we watched with eyes wide and hearts aflutter as the dancers flew on winter winds through the starry, moonlit sky.



We followed to where the branches opened. Above the creek, where ice crystals blossomed into flowers and ferns, night had fallen.

From there beneath the branches, we watched with eyes wide and hearts aflutter as the dancers flew on winter winds through the starry, moonlit sky.

The creek breathed billows of mist into the silent stillness, and our own breath rose to meet it. The whole of the sky seemed to shimmer.

The creek breathed billows of mist into the silent stillness, and our own breath rose to meet it. The whole of the sky seemed to shimmer.

The creek breathed billows of mist into the silent stillness, and our own breath rose to meet it. The whole of the sky seemed to shimmer.

Zaza smiled back, knowingly,
"All around us, woven about this place," they said,
"is a blanket of stories."

Then, through the tall, swaying pines and over the creek,
we heard the echoing call of voices, sweet and familiar.
And with that, our winged visitors vanished
into the winter night without a trace.

Zaza trudged nearer. "I see you have been stitching quite a tale!"
We smiled, trails of magic still lingering in the night air.
But how did they know?

Then, through the tall, swaying pines and over the creek,
we heard the echoing call of voices, sweet and familiar.
And with that, our winged visitors vanished
into the winter night without a trace.

Zaza trudged nearer. "I see you have been stitching quite a tale!"
We smiled, trails of magic still lingering in the night air.
But how did they know?

Zaza smiled back, knowingly,
"All around us, woven about this place," they said,
"is a blanket of stories."

We watched Zaza curiously.
"Remember how we made the quilt?"

Of course, we did.
Our fingers remembered well.

"Just like the patches of a quilt," Zaza said,
"this place has its own stories to tell.
And just like your careful quilting,
there are stories that have been
stitched into this place, too."

We watched Zaza curiously.
"Remember how we made the quilt?"

Of course, we did.
Our fingers remembered well.

"Just like the patches of a quilt," Zaza said,
"this place has its own stories to tell.
And just like your careful quilting,
there are stories that have been
stitched into this place, too."

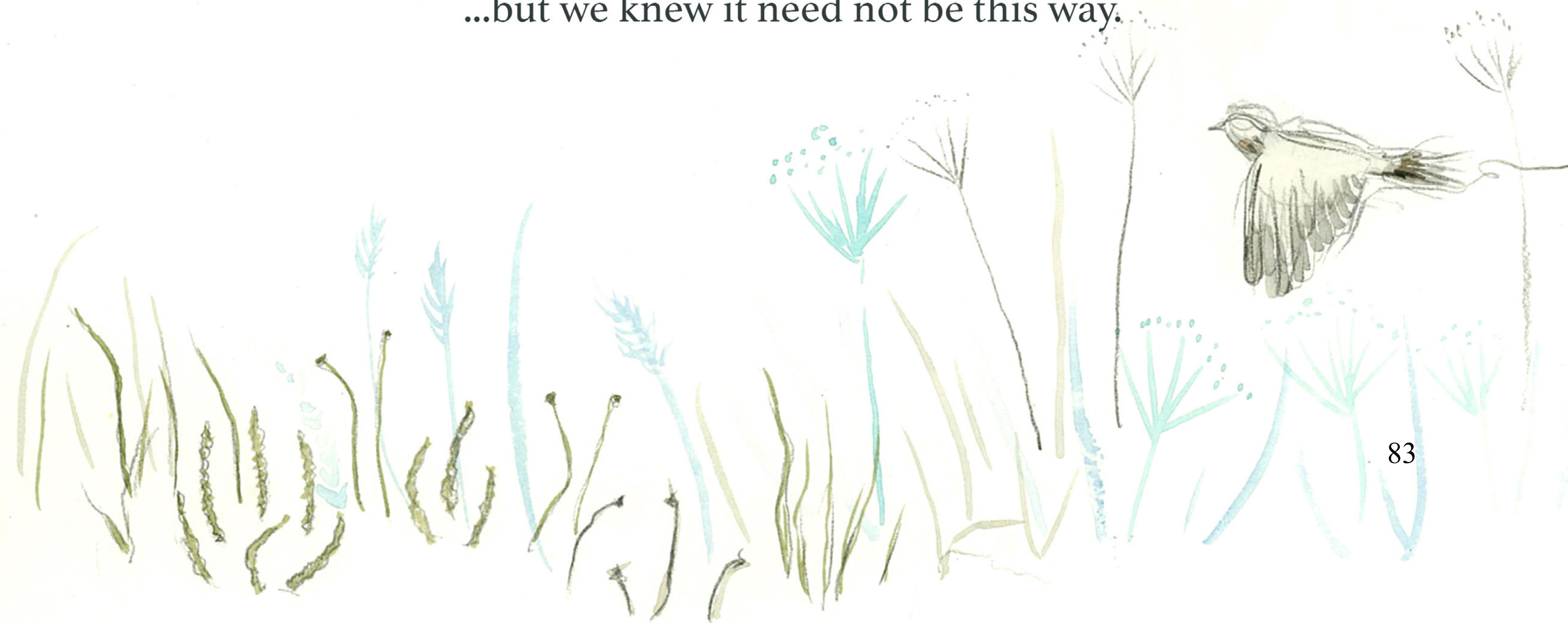
Zaza reminded us of something we had heard many times before from Zazas, Mamas, Papas, Grandparents, Aunties, Unties, and Unclies alike. We had all heard how stories were like people, and like our plant and other animal neighbours too. Some are of this very place. Others have come from far away.

Some of those who live here came in search of a safe place.

Some were taken, and brought here without choice.

And some came from afar and then claimed this place as their own, stitching their stories, ways, and names over top of all the others, and burying those stories beneath.

...but we knew it need not be this way.



This is all a blanket of stories.
It is stitched of old threads and new, of loose threads and of those tied tightly. Even though some of the stories stitched across the land are those of taking, of naming and claiming...

...we see them. And we peel them back to better see others beneath.

Beneath, there are stories of other ways of being.

And woven into the land itself are stories that have come through generations upon generations. Old stories. New stories. Stories that have been in this very place since time immemorial.

Beneath, there are stories of other ways of being.

And woven into the land itself are stories that have come through generations upon generations. Old stories. New stories. Stories that have been in this very place since time immemorial.

And woven into the land itself are stories that have come through generations upon generations. Old stories. New stories. Stories that have been in this very place since time immemorial.

The land has stories to tell, too.
So does this creek: stories of seasons
changing, of humble beginnings,
and of waters flowing, growing,
and journeying farther and father.
Stories of the way things are...

...and of the way things were.

The land has stories to tell, too.
So does this creek: stories of seasons
changing, of humble beginnings,
and of waters flowing, growing,
and journeying farther and father.
Stories of the way things are...

...and of the way things were.

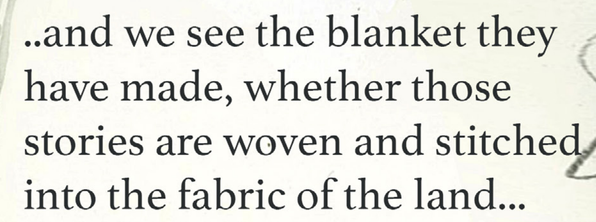
The trees also have stories to tell.
So too, does the snow.

And just like a blanket of stories,
a blanket of snow may sometimes hide
part of what is beneath...

...but what lies beneath does not disappear: it is always there.

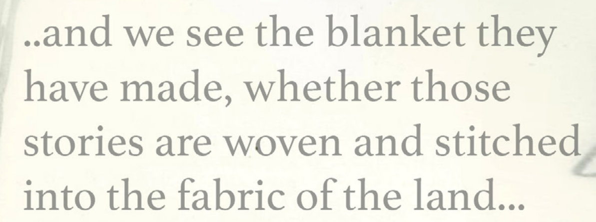
Each being has stories to share; each place is *made* of stories.

And so, we look and listen for those stories. We see each of the threads and stitches that have been woven together...



..and we see the blanket they have made, whether those stories are woven and stitched into the fabric of the land...

...or into the fabric of a quilt.



..and we see the blanket they have made, whether those stories are woven and stitched into the fabric of the land...

...or into the fabric of a quilt.

Blanket of stories,

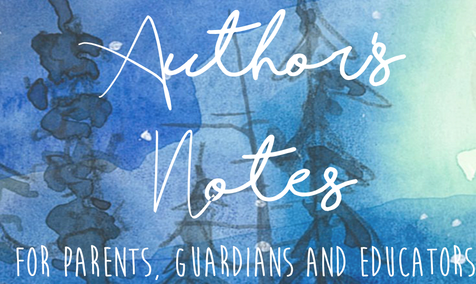
blanket of snow.

Blanket of stories,

blanket of snow.

Blanket of stories,

blanket of snow.



Authors Notes

FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND EDUCATORS

This story is fictional, but loosely set in and inspired by the land occupied by and known as "Jasper National Park," in the traditional territories of the Secwépemc, Dane-zaa, Nakota, Métis, Anishinaabe, and Nêhiyawak.

While this book is loosely set in one particular place, all places are made of layered stories. The land you are on as you read this is layered with stories. Some stories, like the seemingly innocent childhood fairy stories we often encourage children to weave together are perhaps easy for most to see and identify as a story that shapes interaction with a place. While fostering children's imagination, whimsy and wonder in the more-than-human world is important, however, as parents and educators (particularly those of us who are White settlers) we must recognize that these "innocent" stories are also part of a greater process of layering story upon a place, and be attentive to the stories that lie beneath the surface.*

Other stories continue to be obscured or go unrecognized in the way young children have been taught to interact with and relate to land and place. Stories of White colonial narratives of land theft and colonization, for example, are right in front of us, but can be so often obscured by settler colonial normalization of Whiteness that White settlers can fail to see that these too, are stories we layer upon place.

Extending this idea further, Black and other racialized narratives of relationship with land, place, and more-than-human others also become obscured in this over-laying of White, colonial stories; so too are the underlying ever-present Indigeneity of place and narratives of the more-than-human world.** It is the purpose of this book to visually depict the process of "peeling back"*** these layers in order to unsettle the ideas that our EuroCanadian culture and education system teaches children about their relationship with land, place, and more-than-human others.

This book uses vellum pages as a tactile way to depict this layering of story. It is important to note, however, that unlike the clearly separated vellum pages in this book, the layers of story that make up real places are messy, mixed, and very much a part of one another. *** Our stories on this land are intimately connected, and so are we.***

This book is intended largely (but not exclusively) for settlers who are new to these concepts, as a starting place for conversations with young children ages 4-6: *Please do not let the words on these pages be the beginning and end of the conversation with the children in your care*. As parents, guardians, and educators, it is our work to continue to learn about and expand upon the ideas touched upon here in ways that are appropriate to the ages and identities of the children in our care. Know and teach children the traditional territory you live in. Talk with children about how they and their families came to live on this land, and how others have come to live on this land, too (see references to asylum seeking, relocation, and enslavement on page 28). If the children in your care are White, bring attention to Whiteness and how White stories have sought to bury all others. Read and support the work of Black authors, Indigenous authors, and authors of colour. Step back, look for, uplift, and amplify those stories in all you do.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Note that "Zaza " is a nonbinary term for one's parent; "Untie" is a nonbinary term for a parent's sibling or another adult close to a child and considered to be part of their family.

* **Nxumalo, F.** (2015). Forest stories: Restorying encounters with "natural" places in early childhood education. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & A. Taylor (Eds), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood education* (pp. 21-42). New York: Routledge.

** **Bang, M., Curley, L., Kessel, A. Marin, A., Suzukovich, E., & Strack, G.** (2014). Muskrat theories, tobacco in the streets, and living Chicago as Indigenous land. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 37-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865113

*** **Donald, D.** (2004). Edmonton Pentimento: Re-reading history in the case of the Papaschase Cree. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies,* 2(1), 21-54.

Pages 28-29 reference the way that White settlers arrived in these lands, then stole and colonized. The words "but we knew it need not be this way," and illustrations of several non-native beings is a nod to Kimmerer's (2013) writing around the need to emulate plantain ("White man's footstep") and its teachings around becoming a helpful, peacefully coexistent neighbour in a new land. The layering on pages 30-31 again touches this concept, as Black and other racialized narratives of arrival and living on these lands require wholly different - though deeply entangled - conversations than those of White settler colonization (see Nxumalo & Cedillo, and Tuck & Yang below).

Kimmerer, R. (2013). The footsteps of Nanabozo: Becoming Indigenous to place. In R. Kimmerer. *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants* (pp. 205-215). Milkweed Editions.

Nxumalo, F., & Cedillo, S. (2016). Decolonizing place in early childhood studies: Thinking with Indigenous onto-epistemologies and Black feminist geographies. *Global Studies of Childhood,* 7(2), 99-111. https:doi.org/10.1177/2043610617703831

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: *Indigeneity, Education & Society,* 1(1), 1-40. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630

In this book, the use of layers to communicate the simultaneous presence of many stories is also in part inspired by the overlaying of traditional territory and treaty maps found at **native-land.ca**. Though colonial names and borders have been illegitimately layered across this land, traditional place names, territories, and the Indigeneity of this land has never ceased.

GRATITUDE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is not only intended to unsettle ideas about stories, land, and place, but also to disrupt common notions of who belongs in those stories, on that land, or in those "more- than-human" places. The characters and storylines in this book are based on the stories, ideas and lived experiences of a number of dear artist and educator friends who generously took the time and energy to help this book come into existence. Endless gratitude to you, Sasha Patterson, Melissa Fernandes, Lyndsay Taibossigai, Theresa Westhaver, and Fern Yip for open-heartedly sharing your stories, and for being the wonderful wellsprings, sounding boards, and collaborators that you have been throughout the process of writing and illustrating this book. Immense gratitude also to Devon Ward, Heather Westhaver, Julia Miranda, and Hanah McFarlane for the boundless giving of your creative and editorial assistance, and to Connie Russell and Pauline Sameshima at Lakehead University for the steadfast guidance and support that made all of this possible.
Chi miigwetch, kukwstsétselp, thank you to all!

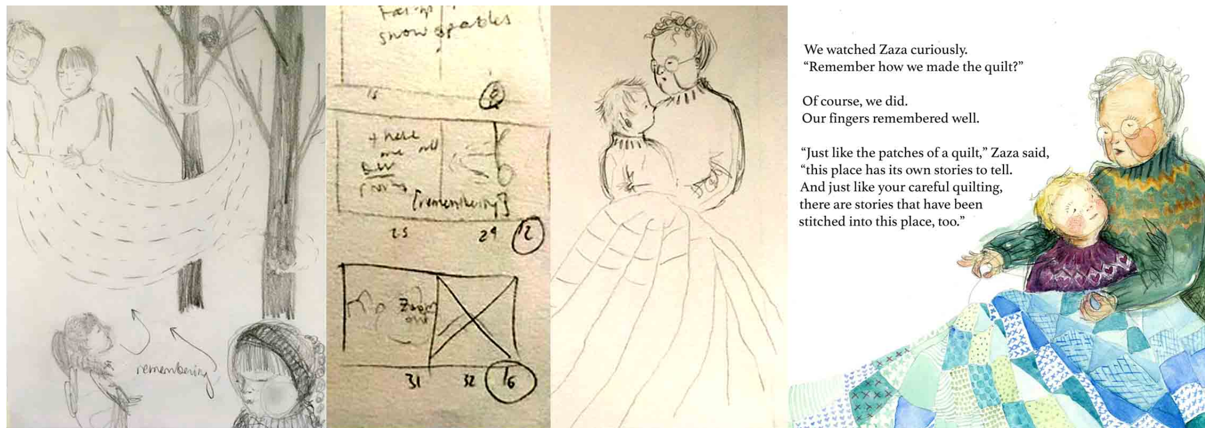
Chapter Five: Reflection

On Process: From Linear to Spiraling

At the outset, my process was to entail three steps beyond the initial literature review: enstasic drawing, concept drawing, and creating the final work. While these steps did indeed provide a structure to my process, the process itself was far less linear than I had anticipated. Instead, progression from start to finish took the shape of a circular and spiraling revisiting of ideas and themes, reminiscent of the spiral model of education often used in popular education circles to build upon, uplift, and move forward and upward with ideas (see McKenzie, 2011). While some aspects of the process were more linear (see Figure 1), most others took a meandering route through the three types of image-making, with me circling back to revisit and reimagine ideas through ongoing conversations, through drawing, and through my own embodied experiences with the land and the more-than-human others who inspired my work (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Linear Design Flow

Figure 2: Spiral Design Flow



At the outset, I made a commitment to act as a medium, as much as I could, to bring together the stories, ideas, and messages of my friends in the book rather than me seeking to “include” others’ narratives in a story I had already envisioned. This meant that a considerable amount of my process was not just about writing, illustrating, and digitizing my book, but revising based on ongoing conversations with the trusted friends whose stories became my book. While the quilt metaphor and the loose storyline of sewing and delivering it are of my own imagination, they came about through a weaving together of what was shared with me, each aspect of the story reflecting elements drawn out through conversation and reading.

On Themes

My book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* is intended both to unsettle the stories we tell young children about their relationships with land, place, and the more-than-human world and to disrupt common notions of who belongs in those stories, on that land, or in those more-than-human places. Beyond the defining feature of using layers of vellum to depict the layered nature of story, I detail below my thinking and intention behind weaving together many threads

to create the cohesive narrative of *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*. Each of these threads is spun from my response to the academic material detailed in the literature review, my own lived experience, and the collaborative co-generation of ideas with a handful of friends who are immersed in the worlds of education and/or children's literature. As children, these collaborators did not often see themselves or the intersections of their identities reflected in children's literature – particularly that which depicted relationships between children, place, environment, and more-than-human others. The following sections describe the intentions behind a number of threads that are not necessarily made obvious by reading the book as well as how the academic literature supports these threads.

Not the Usual Suspects: Unsettling Hegemonic Imagery of Children in Nature

Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow intentionally features children who are not typically found in environmental and place-based literature for young children. As suggested by the friends whose stories, lived experiences, and ideas shaped my book, *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* features children with a number of intersecting identities. This includes fat children, nonbinary children, girl children, a child with leg braces (a nod to my own lived experience), and BIPOC children, specifically those with natural curly hair. Several friends requested that I depict the children engaging in relationships with more-than-human others, and in embodied, active play outdoors – a subject of particular significance when considering the particularly notable absence of depictions of racialized and especially Black children in "nature" in children's literature (Breau, 2019; Fetters, 2019). On this absence, Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) write "unsettling deficit depictions of Black childhoods might include attuning to the ways in which specific depictions of Black children in 'nature' strategically draw on child–nature couplings to

resist images of Black children as out-of-place in nature or resist discourses of Black childhoods undeserving of the attribute of 'innocence'" (p. 107). I hope that through both the illustrations and the text of my work, I have begun to move in this direction.

The adults in my book similarly reflect many of these identities, including one of only two named characters, an individual called "Zaza," (a nonbinary, affectionate title for one's parent) who uses "they/them" pronouns. Similarly, the list of adults from whom the children have learned about the storied nature of place includes the non-binary term "Untie" (an alternative to the binary terms "Auntie" and "Uncle") as well as the binary term "Unclie." "Unclie" is a term we use for uncles in my own family that seeks to disrupt what we perceive as the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity in the English language's creation of a diminutive for "Aunt" (Auntie) but not for "Uncle."

It was of utmost importance to me, and all of the friends who influenced my work, to depict characters with these identities without the storyline *revolving* around those identities (see Lester, 2014; Monoyiou & Symeonidou, 2016). In so doing, I sought to contribute to the normalization of recognizing people who share these identities as whole, multi-dimensional beings. I also recognize that by omitting pointed and specific mention of these identities as they relate to the storyline and to relationships with environment, place, and more-than-human others, I may also have contributed to their erasure. I expand upon this tension further in the section below entitled "Illustration as narrative medium."

Another tension I similarly grapple with centres around my decision to narrate the story using the collective "we" rather than from a first-person or third-person omnipotent perspective. I did this to better enable real children to see themselves in the children depicted in the book, but

I continue to feel conflicted about this decision. I wonder: where is the line between creating room for imagination and space for children to see themselves in the characters of picture books and erasing the identities of those characters and the people who informed them? By choosing not to name or give individual voice to any of the children in my book, have I stripped the characters of identity? Have I homogenized their experiences into that of the collective "we"? This is a source of discomfort, and a question I will need to sit with at least until, perhaps, my book can be distributed to a wider audience for feedback.

Intergenerational Relationships

In *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow,* the importance of depicting intergenerational relationships was stressed by a number of the friends whose stories and ideas are brought together in this book. With the guidance of a grandmother (referred to as "Grandma"), the four children make the quilt at the centre of the storyline, and deliver it to another elderly person referred to only as "the lonely heart we had been holding in our own while the quilt was made" (see page 65 of this portfolio). Multiple generations can be seen interacting together as the children and adults make their way to deliver the quilt, in the moth-fairy flight, and at the warm gathering featured on pages 94-95. Perhaps most importantly to the message of the book, however, is the moment in which the children remember what they had been taught about their relationship to story, land, and place by "Zazas, Mamas, Papas, Grandparents, Aunties, Unties, and Unclies alike" (see page 83). I wanted to be intentional in my book about the source of this teaching: I, and the friends I collaborated with, wanted it to reflect a culture of raising and educating children that placed not a single adult, but a community of individuals in roles of collaborative teachers and mentors, all of whom are grappling with the "intimacy" of our

relationship on this land (Donald, 2004, p. 23). I did so as a gesture of hope towards a future where all children might be surrounded by family, teachers, and mentors that invite them into the conversations in which we are all being called to take part (Simpson, 2008; Wildcat et al, 2014).

While I did not include discussion of ageism in intergenerational relationships in children's literature in my literature review, it became apparent to me after completing the writing and illustration of this book that this is an area that could have used more critical analysis on part, and is an area worth delving into for educators, and authors and illustrators of children's books alike.

Children and Adults: Sense of Wonder and "Aloneness" in More-Than-Human Places

The importance of igniting a sense of wonder for the more-than-human world featured heavily in most of my conversations with the friends whose stories have helped me to create *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*. Carson (1956) posits that before children are given a "diet of facts" (p. 50) about more-than-human others, adults must help them to foster an emotional connection *with* those others. In *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* I tried to draw out this sense of wonder beginning with tiny worlds and hidden, tucked-away places through the sequence that finds the children moving away from the adults in their company, following "Little Red Squirrel" (see page 68) under the branches of a stand of spruce trees (see page 69).

Along with a sense of wonder, a sense of "aloneness" in more-than-human spaces away from (human) adults was also reflected upon fondly by several of my friends. On this topic, Pelo (2014) writes that "children's worlds are small, detailed places" and that "children have access to elements of the natural world that many adults don't acknowledge" (pp. 42-43). Despite having both witnessed and experienced this phenomenon firsthand as a child, mother, and educator, I

also felt it crucial to approach both Carson (1956) and Pelo's (2014) ideas about adult-free childhood relationships with wonder and more-than-human others with caution. There is a fine and blurry line between recognizing the way in which children are drawn to small and wonderous more-than-human worlds that adults sometimes fail to notice, and romanticizing this childhood wonder – often through imagery pairing the innocent, pure, and typically White child in pristine nature (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016) as I discussed in the literature review in the section entitled, "Romanticizing (White) children in nature."

With regards to childhood and adult relationships in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*, I sought to strike a balance between "aloneness" with tiny more-than-human worlds (Pelo, 2014) and depicting adult wonder (Carson, 1956). The children initiate the main whimsical sequence depicted in the book by following a squirrel to a "secret, hidden place" (p. 69), encountering winter moths and imagining themselves as moth-fairies, only to find that this story vanishes with the arrival of the adults. When the adults do arrive, however, Zaza eludes to the fact that they, too, were aware of the wonder and whimsy that took place and I sought to imply that the children marvel at the revelation that an adult could experience a sense of wonder, too (see pages 79-80).

Depictions of Magic, Fantasy, and Realism

Closely related to a sense of wonder is the balance between realistic and fantastical depictions of child interactions with more-than-human others, both of which emerged in conversation with the friends I spoke with in the process of creating *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow.* As detailed in the section of the literature review entitled, "Considering factual and fantastical depictions of the more-than-human world," there are conflicting ideas in the academic literature around the merits of whimsical, fantastical depictions of the more-than-human world

(see Bai et al., 2010; Morgan, 2010; Payne, 2010) and the merits of realistic depictions (see Ostertag & Timmerman, 2010). I continue to see value in both, and sought to strike a balance between fantasy and realism in my book.

In keeping with Ostertag and Timmerman's (2011) assertions that more-than-human beings are often misplaced, displaced, and anthropomorphized so far beyond anything true to their lived realities that they become nothing more than vessels for human stories and lessons, I strove to depict all more-than-human others in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* in a manner that was true to their lives and ways of being. All of the beings depicted are appropriate to the book's setting and season (the Athabasca Valley in winter), and in a gesture towards the ever-presence of more-than-human others everywhere, each and every page includes a (sometimes hidden) more-than-human animal presence.

In addition to these realistic depictions, I also wanted to use magic and whimsy to elicit feelings of wonder in the children that read my story, drawing upon Payne's (2010) assertion that fantastical elements in children's literature can serve to draw children into relationship with more-than-human others that they may have otherwise overlooked. With the use of vellum pages, I sought to create a dream-like sequence in which the fantastical elements of the story (for example, the sudden appearance of a golden glow of light in a hole in a tree and around a winter moth on pages 70-71 and 72-73 or the arrival of a group of moth-fairies that strongly resembles the four main characters and recipient of the quilt on pages 74-75). These magical sequences are painted on vellum and overlayed upon the realistic depictions of place and more-than-human others, acting as the gateway for the children in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* to recognize the way their stories interact with place.

I want to note here that my use of fantastical elements are not without issue: my moth-like fairies could be considered anthropomorphic in the problematic sense that Ostertag and Timmerman identify, and it is entirely possible that these magical components will distract some readers from recognizing any efforts I made to depict more-than-human others in ways that reflect their lived realities. Furthermore, as touched upon briefly in my author's notes in the back of *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow*, while children's fantastical fairy stories have long "appeal[ed] to idealizations of childhood innocence" (Lewis & Kahn, 2009, p. 1), authors, illustrators, and educators must be attentive to the ways in which fairy stories can "readily betray their colonial nature" (Do Rozario, 2011, p.14) and in many ways, reinscribe colonialism. While Lewis and Kahn (2009) assert that lore of the "faery" – that the authors distinguish from the commercialized, commoditized, and globalized "fairy" (p. 2) – is a traditional cultural phenomenon seen the world over, it is crucial to note that traditional lore can also interact in harmful and problematic ways when we make generalizations that do not directly confront colonization, or when we conflate the cosmological, axiological, and epistemological significance of Indigenous story with settler folkloric traditions (Do Rozario, 2011). By transporting European folklore to Turtle Island – even the European faery stories that Lewis and Kahn (2009) categorize as part of the same "[I]ndigenous psycho-spiritual reality that implicitly challenges social domination and oppression" (p. 2) as the faery stories Indigenous to Turtle Island – can actively contribute to the "painting over" (Donald, 2004, p. 23) of the already deeply storied Indigeneity of these places. This is not to say that the moth-fairies in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* are particularly derived from traditional fairy lore: it is possible that in fact, they more closely resemble the commoditized, escapist "fairies" to which Lewis and Kahn

(2009) refer. Most importantly, however, is that while exemplified in the book as a teachable moment in understanding the power of some stories to bury others, the moth-fairies in *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow* can still be understood as complicit in the powerful forces of colonization and Eurocentrism. These stories can *also* be understood as part of an environmental pedagogy of wonder and imagination (Payne, 2010), inviting possibilities for curiosity and kinship through fantastical storymaking. While causing friction, both ways of conceptualizing these moth-fairy stories have value. I hold these jointly, and in relation.

I continue to grapple with all these frictions, but I also feel it important to hold the contradictions that arise and sit with the unease they cause. I maintain that these complexities should be leaned into rather than avoided.

Emplacement

When conceptualizing *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow,* I struggled initially with where the story would be set. As efforts to unsettle colonialism are inextricable from land and place (Alfred, 2008; McGregor, 2013; McMahon, 2017; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016), I understood that it would be crucial to ground the story in a way that is deeply emplaced, but also put together this story in a way that would be more widely relatable. The friction (Tsing, 2005) between these two intentions arose from the discrepancy between me being presently emplaced upon land occupied by a national park and knowing that the experience of living here is for many reasons not necessarily reflective of many children's lived relationships with the more-than-human world.

At the suggestion of a number of friends, I also came to recognize the importance of creating a work that would be relatable particularly to children living in urban environments. It is

often in these environments that so-called "pristine nature" is presumed nowhere to be found and is understood only to exist in places such as the national park where I currently reside (see Hansen, 2014). In an effort to find a balance between these desires, I chose to presence the mountains and any signifiers of the national park in subtle ways that would acknowledge the stories of this particular place, but that would not distract from the ability of those who do not have close relationships with mountain parks to connect with the broader themes of the book. Examples of this include the Parks Canada sign on pages 84-86, the subtle and not-so-subtle mountain imagery on pages 91, 96-91, and 87-88, and the more-than-human plant and animal others depicted throughout the book. Urban landscapes inspired by a block of apartment buildings and row houses in my neighbourhood are another nod to this sentiment (page 66), and the book intentionally culminates by "zooming out" to reveal that while the story appears to take place deep within the forest, the entire sequence of events in fact played out in a small stand of trees by a creek running through a city (pages 96-98). This is a gesture towards shaking up hegemonic ideas around what constitutes "nature" and towards building meaningful relationships with more-than-human others wherever they may be (see Hansen, 2014).

Unsettling Anthropocentrism in Human and More-Than-Human Relations

Blanket of Stories, Blanket of Snow is a book that places humans as protagonists at the centre of the story: there is no obscuring that this move is anthropocentric. It also, however, intentionally places human *relationships* with land, place, and more-than-human others at the centre of the story in a way that seeks to unsettle the uneven relations found therein and point to possibilities for equitable co-habitance of our shared lifeworlds. For example, human and more-than-human others are both recognized as neighbours and are greeted by the protagonists in the

same manner (page 67). Similarly, “Little Red Squirrel” is referred to using “they” pronouns rather than the pervasive and misogynistic “he” that in my own observation is most pervasively used for any more-than-human animal that is not clearly a mother or the inanimate pronoun “it” which serves to strip more-than-human others of recognition as living subjects of their own lives. I also chose to follow Graveline (1998) and Kimmerer (2013) and break with grammatical tradition around capitalization, giving the significance of a name or title to more-than-human others such as “Little Red Squirrel” (pages 68-71), and the host of neighbours the main characters greet on page 68.

Furthermore, the lessons that more-than-human others have to offer (such as about being a good neighbour, depicted on page 83 and discussed in the Author’s Notes on page 99) come from the lived realities of those beings, rather than from human narratives artificially projected onto more-than-human others for the purpose of teaching morals and lessons (see Ostertag & Timmerman, 2011). One of the most prevalent themes of the book is that more-than-human others and the land are recognized as having their own stories inherently worthy of being listened to, honoured, and uplifted (p. 90).

On Tensions Moving Forward

Illustration as Narrative Medium

One tension I encountered occurred around allowing some aspects of my illustrations to carry the full weight of representing an idea or identity without supplementing them with written words. As an example, the fatness of several different characters is depicted visually in my book, but is not mentioned in its prose. Although I intended to allow the illustrations to carry the story as much as possible and I do want to avoid the hierarchical valuing of written over illustrated

concepts (Dobrin, 2010), I question whether in omitting mention of these characters' bodies I fall into the trap of "implying by omission that fat is too negative to be spoken of" (Flynn, 2010, p. 435). I similarly question the omission of written material about one character's leg splints, noting that the little illustrated details based on my own lived experience of leg braces (i.e., needing to stand on a stool rather than on one's toes to see out of a window, the way in which one needs to put on winter boots while wearing leg braces, or needing to maintain a flat rather than pointed foot while dancing or kneeling) would likely be lost on anyone who has not shared a similar experience. This questioning also rings true of my decision not to write specifically about some of the BIPOC characters' racially informed relationships with the more-than-human world, or the implied queerness of some of the characters in this book.

I continue to grapple with these tensions and have found an uncomfortable but honest place in the middle of it all, recognizing that I could not adequately address the interplay between each of these threads and the oppressive social forces that obscure and omit them, even with a cornucopia of written words. It especially could never happen in one lone picture book. What this book *can* do is strive to do right by the concepts that contributed to its creation, and contribute to a (hopefully growing) body of environmental and place-based literature for young children that challenges some of the oppressive social forces mentioned above. It cannot – and should not – strive to be all things for all people.

Inequity in the Process of Bookmaking

While the process of creating the illustrations and prose of this book indeed required an extensive amount of creative work, what struck me about the labour involved in this process was the overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of time I (and the workers at the local print shop)

spent on the design and digitization phases. Engaging tangibly in this process illuminated for me the hidden labour involved in producing children's literature: planning how a concept for a book intersects with its physical construction (in this case, the limitations placed on my ability to make use of translucent pages by the physical construction of the book and how its pages will be sewn together); scanning, digitally splicing the layouts, and ordering the pages – a task which in this case required outsourcing to a local print shop; graphic work involving layout and text; sourcing and testing appropriate materials for printing; and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, translating this entire work into a digital format.

As noted in the literature review, Chappel (2017) draws attention to the inequitable relations that play out in the publishing of children's literature. Undertaking the production process myself, particularly the processes of bookmaking outside of writing and illustration, allowed me to deepen my understanding of Chappel's (2017) assertion. The writing and illustrating of a book are but one part of the production of literature for young children, and countless hours of labour are required to bring a book into its physical form. A cursory glance over the children's books on the shelves of my local library and in my own living room indicate that said labour is frequently that of Chinese factory workers. As previously mentioned, the "material circumstances and power dynamics allowing the creation and distribution of the text" Chappel (2017, p. 85) must be understood to include not only the unevenness in relations between who writes, publishes, and consumes young children's literature but also who performs the physical labour required for its production.

White Beauty, White Paper

One of the tensions that arose in the painting process surrounded the intersection of

White supremacy and my painting process. When I began painting the illustrations, it quickly became apparent to me that my lifetime of inhabiting this body and the privilege and of seeing Whiteness overrepresented in media since childhood gave me a familiarity with painting White skin tones and hair textures that I did not have with painting Black and Brown skin and hair. Painting the "natural, curly hair" requested by a friend exposed my own ignorance around the lacking representation of Black hair in children's literature (see Brooks & McNair, 2015), and also the Eurocentric, White beauty standards, colourism, and texturism[1] Black (hegemonically feminine) children face more widely (Oriowo, 2019). In my illustrations, I may have ignorantly contributed to the privileging of lighter skin tones and curlier rather than kinkier hair. This ignorance also pointed towards my relationship with my own Whiteness and racism in new ways. When it came to the intersection of racism and art-making, I grew up calling any shade of light peach "skin colour" without any consideration of my racialized classmates or the White supremacy embedded in that act. Furthermore, in contemplating this racially charged experience of never having to engage with the physical process of laying down layers of brown paint on paper, one particular aspect to this began to stand out to me in addition to the ignorance of this aspect of my Whiteness: the stark whiteness of the paper itself.

Paper is not naturally white: it is bleached. From an early age, children are presented with drawing paper that is bleached white, which in many ways allows Whiteness to be quite easily depicted with a few simple washes or no added colour at all. Skin in any array of Brown or Black tones, however, requires the layering of pigment upon paper to achieve a realistic skin colour –

---

[1] Texturism refers to a hierarchy of Black hair types based upon Eurocentric beauty standards, which elevate loose or wavy curl patterns over kinkier textures (Oriowo, 2019).

an experience that for racialized children can be complex and riddled with shame and confusion (see, for example, Kazami, 2018). This observation led me to wonder if by providing children only with white paper upon which to draw pictures of themselves and others, we as educators are inadvertently reifying the notion that Whiteness equals a raceless "neutrality" and I also wondered what it would take to flip this narrative. What if the paper was brown and White characters needed their skin to be painted in layer by layer? The only example of this I have come across is a children's book entitled, *Julián is a Mermaid* (Love, 2018), which features illustrations of largely characters of colour in paint on brown paper. I wonder if, using such an approach as a teacher could, in a small way, contribute to the de-centering of Whiteness in elementary art class? Further exploring this question may be an area of consideration for educators and illustrators alike.

Balancing Representation and Burdening

I chose to strongly adhere to the principle of "nothing about us without us" (Charlton, 1998) and balancing this principle with the need for children's environmental and place-based literature to depict the people and narratives that it has (and largely continues) to omit. Work to de-centre the White and human supremacy, ableism, cisheteronormativity, and colonial narratives so prevalent in children's environmental and place-based literature must not be focused on mere "inclusion" (Ashton, 2015) in narratives by authors whose privileges allow them to dominate the scene. We must instead seek to relinquish the power and control that prevents self-representation.

This desire gives rise, however, to the tension of balancing the need for self-representation (or collaborative representation, as is the case with *Blanket of Stories, Blanket of*

Snow) with the burden that puts on people who already are made to deal with the intersections of multiple oppressions. With this book, I attempted to find this balance by using my skills as an artist to represent informal, collaborative conversations with friends with backgrounds in the fields of education and children's literature. I recognize, however, that the labour of these individuals has been integral to bringing this project to completion and the potential for exploitation and inequitable power dynamics can still exist between friends. The completion of this portfolio is integral to the completion of my Master's degree, and the academic recognition I will receive will always be partly owed to those whose collaboration enabled this project to come to fruition. I can acknowledge the time, energy, and personal vulnerability my friends put into conversation with me, and I can distribute any monetary earnings that may result from future sale of this work, but it is important to acknowledge that authoring and illustrating this children's book places me in the powerful role of controlling the narrative.

Troubling the Act of Unsettling

Much of this undertaking was grounded in the assumption that children's environmental and place-based literature holds potential to foster in young settler children the desire to contribute to a settler society capable of "choos[ing] to change their ways [and] decoloniz[ing] their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations" (Simpson, 2008, p. 14). The work of "unsettling" settler colonialism in children's books, however, must also be troubled. While this work of "planting seeds" (Kidd & McFarlane, 2017) in early childhood is important on some level, it nonetheless constitutes a miniscule component of the work that needs to be done. I have no illusion that my book, or the full portfolio, by themselves are "decolonizing," or that my work here will in any way absolve me from my implication in settler colonialism itself (Tuck & Yang,

2012).

Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) remind me that "troubl[ing] ongoing settler colonialisms through histories and stories" must be done "without appropriating or […] co-opting them toward settler colonial emplacement" (p. 104), and Wildcat et al. (2014) make it clear that we "must bring intersectional and nuanced approaches to the fore" (pp. 10-11) when challenging settler colonialism. Unsettling colonialism also means unsettling the anti-Blackness that makes its way into anti-colonial discourse through the erasure of Black narratives. Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) write that "relations to place and more-than-human lifeworlds within the context of North America are situated past–present geographies of anti-Blackness, whether or not these are immediately apparent" (p. 106). There is work to be done in (re)storying land and place in a manner that challenges and disrupts pervasive portrayals of Black placelessness (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016).

While I strove to do this throughout this process, I must keep in mind that attempts to include, depict, or represent can "(un)intentionally re-enact reified, appropriative, essentialist, and tokenizing colonial relationship" with both Black and Indgenous people (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2016, p. 104). I must also acknowledge that although this work sought to be grounded in the calls of Indigenous people for settlers to do their own setter-to-settler work (Simpson, 2008; Wildcat et al, 2014), I cannot do this work alone. I, and all settlers, invariably must continue to rely on the time and energy of Indigenous peoples if and when generously offered (Ball, 2005).

Nxumalo and Cedillo (2016) pose the following questions I take to heart:

> What might it mean for settler educators to encounter and tell such stories in places where the absences of Indigenous children, families, and educators are intimately connected

> with ongoing settler colonialism? Who can tell the stories of this place and the "more-than-human" things in it? (p. 104)

There are no easy answers to these questions, quick softening of these frictions, or simple easing of these tensions. Instead I will need to stay with the complicated and sometimes uncomfortable nature of this work without needing or expecting resolution. I choose to do this work in order to learn and to uphold what I see as my responsibility as a settler, a treaty person, an aspiring author and illustrator of children's books, and a mother and teacher of young children on occupied Indigenous land. I have hope that even in the smallest of ways, my work may contribute to settler "conscientização/concientization" (Freire, 2000, p. 35) and serve as a gesture towards cultivating a settler society capable of undertaking the real unsettling work that settler society must do. In so doing, I defer to Clark et al. (2014) who write:

> We have just begun to partially and imperfectly respond to the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and their lands. We understand that this beginning gesture is not enough, and it does not absolve us from our implication. It is simply a gesture. (p. 754)

References

Adichie, C. (2009). The danger of a single story [Video file]. *TedTalks.* Ted Conferences, LLC. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Alfred, T. (2008). Opening words. In L. Simpson (Ed.), *Lighting the eighth fire* (pp. 9-11). Arbeiter Ring.

Andrachuk, H., Kaknevicius, J., Petrini, G., Edgar, T., Lahtinen, R., Piersol, L., Eperjesi, P., Mason, J., Power, M., Filler, C., Molyneaux, L., Young, J., Grover, J., & Morcom, L. (2014). *Forest and nature schools in Canada: A head, heart, hands approach to outdoor learning.* Forest and Nature School in Canada. http://childnature.ca/about-forest-and-nature-school/

Ashton, E. (2015). Troubling settlerness in early childhood curriculum development. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & A. Taylor (Eds.), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood* (pp. 81-97). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315771342

Atkinson, B., & Mitchell, R. (2010). “Why didn’t they get it?” “Did they have to get it?”: What reader response theory has to offer narrative research and pedagogy. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *11*(7), 1-24. http://www.ijea.org/v11n7/

Back2Nature Network. (2019). *Our history.* http://www.back2nature.ca/about-us/our-history/

Bach, H. (2007). Composing a visual narrative. In J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 280-307). SAGE.

Bai, H., Elza, D., Kovacs, P., & Romanycia, S. (2010). Re-searching and re-storying the complex and complicated relationship of biophilia and bibliophilia. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3), 351-365. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504621003613053

Bailie, P. (2012). *Connecting children to nature: A multiple case study of nature center preschools* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nebraska. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnstudent/24

Ball, J. (2005). Restorative research partnerships in Indigenous communities. In A. Farrell (Ed.), *Ethical research with children* (pp. 81-96). Open University Press.

Bang, M., Curley, L., Kessel, A. Marin, A., Suzukovich, E., & Strack, G. (2014). Muskrat theories, tobacco in the streets, and living Chicago as Indigenous land. *Environmental Education Research*, *20*(1), 37-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865113

Barone, T. (2001a). Science art, and the predispositions of educational researchers. *Educational Researcher*, *30*(7), 24-28. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X030007024

Barone, T. (2001b). *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. Teachers College Press.

Battiste, M. (2004). Unfolding the lessons of colonization. In C. Sugars (Ed.), *Unhomely states: Theorizing English-Canadian postcolonialism* (pp. 209-220). Broadview Press.

Bell, N. (2013). Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin: Living spiritually with respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility. In A. Kulnieks, D. Longboat, & K. Young (Eds.),

Contemporary studies in environmental and Indigenous pedagogies: A curricula of stories and place (pp. 89-107). Springer.

Birbeck, D., & Drummond, M. (2005). Interviewing, and listening to the voices of, very young children on body image and perceptions of self. *Early Child Development and Care, 176*(6), 579-596. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430500131379

Blenkinsop, S., Piersol, L., & Sitka-Sage, M. (2018). Boys being boys: Eco-double consciousness, splash violence, and environmental education. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, *49*(4), 350-356. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2017.1364213

Blenkinsop, S., Piersol, L., Sitka-Sage, M., & Ho, Y. (2016). The natural world as colonized other(s): Educational implications. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *21,* 198-217. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1151867.pdf

Boero, N. (2009). Fat kids, working moms, and the "epidemic of obesity": Race, class, and mother blame. In E. Rothblum & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The fat studies reader* (pp. 113-120). New York University Press.

Boero, N., & Thomas, P. (2016). Fat kids. *Fat Studies*, *5*(2), 91-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/21604851.2016.1147005

Bradford, C. (2007). *Unsettling narratives: Postcolonial readings of children's literature*. Wilfred Laurier Press.

Braun, B. (1997). Buried epistemologies: The politics of nature in (post)colonial British Columbia. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *87*(1), 3-31. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2564120

Breau, A. (2019, June 28). *Where are the books about Black kids in nature?* Diverse BookFinder. https://diversebookfinder.org/browse/where-are-the-books-about-black-kids-in-nature/

Brooks, W., McNair, J. (2015). "Combing" through representations of Black girls' hair in African American children's literature. *Children's Literature in Education, 46*, 296-307. https://doi.org/ 10.1007/s10583-014-9235

Burke, G., & Cutter-Mackenzie, A. (2010). What's there, what if, what then, and what can we do? An immersive and embodied experience of environment and place through children's literature. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 279-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504621003715361

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*. Kivaki Press.

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science: Natural laws of interdependence*. Clear Light.

Calderon, D. (2014). Speaking back to manifest destinies: A land education-based approach to critical curriculum inquiry. *Environmental Education Research*, *20*(1), 24-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865114

Cameron, E., & Russell, C. (Eds.) (2016). *The fat pedagogy reader: Challenging weight-based oppression through critical education.* Peter Lang.

Carson, R. (1956). *The sense of wonder: A celebration of nature for parents and children*. HarperCollins.

Chappel, J. (2017). The trouble with reader-response theory when reading multicultural literature: A critique of Dana Fox's and Kathy's Short's Stories Matter. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *31*(3), 81-87. https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/591

Charlton, J. (1998). *Nothing about us without us.* University of California Press.

Chawla, L., & Flanders Cushing, D. (2007). Education for strategic environmental behavior. *Environmental Education Research*, *13*(4), 437-452. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620701581539

Cheng, J. C. H., & Monroe, M. C. (2012). Connection to nature: Children's affective attitude toward nature. *Environment and Behavior*, *44*(1), 31-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916510385082

Child & Nature Network. (2019). *About: Vision and mission.* http://www.childrenandnature.org/about/

Chukhray, I. (2010). *Analysis of children's literary criticism: How scholars examine gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality in picture books* (Master's thesis). San Diego State University. http://sdsu-dspace.calstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.10/445/Chukhray_Irina.pdf?seq

Clark, R. (2002). Why all the counting? Feminist social science research on children's literature. *Children's Literature in Education*, *33*(4), 285-295. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021276729780

Clark, V., Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Hodgins, B. (2014). Thinking with paint: Troubling settler colonialism through early childhood art pedagogies. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, *5*(4.2), 751-781. https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs.clarkv.5422014

Clements, R. (2004). An investigation of the status of outdoor play. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *5*(1), 68-80. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2004.5.1.10

Constable, K. (2015). *The outdoor classroom in practice, Ages 3-7: A month-by-month guide to forest school provision*. Routledge.

Crisp, T., Knezek, S., Quinn, M., Bingham, G., Girardeau, K., & Starks, F. (2016). What's on our bookshelves? The diversity of children's literature in early childhood classroom libraries. *Journal of Children's Literature*, *42*(2), 29-42. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1119279

Cutter-Mackenzie, A., Payne, P., & Reid, A. (2010). Experiencing environment and place through children's literature. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 253-264. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2010.488916

DeLoache, J. S., Ganea, P. A., & Ma, L. (2011). Young children's learning and transfer of biological information from picture books to real animals. *Child Development*, *82*(5), 1421-1433. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289855

Deloria, V. (1969). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. Macmillan.

DePalma, R. (2016). Gay penguins, sissy ducklings … and beyond? Exploring gender and sexuality diversity through children's literature. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *37*(6), 828-845. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.936712

DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *3*(3), 54-70. http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/249/116

Dillon, S. (2005). Reinscribing De Quincey's palimpsest: The significance of the palimpsest in contemporary literary and cultural studies. *Textual Practice*, *19*(3), 243-263. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502360500196227

Dion, S. (2008). Disrupting molded images: Identities, responsibilities and relationships—Teachers and indigenous subject material. *Teaching Education*, *18*(4), 329-342. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210701687625

Dobrin, S. (2010). Through green eyes: Complex visual culture and post-literacy. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3-4), 265-278. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504621003715585

Dobrin, S., & Kidd, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Wild things: Children's culture and ecocriticism*. Wayne State University Press.

Donald, D. (2004). Edmonton pentimento: Re-reading history in the case of the Papaschase Cree. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, *2*(1), 21-54.

Do Rozario, R. (2011). Australia's fairy tales illustrated in print: Instances of Indigeneity, colonization, and suburbanization. *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, *25*(1), 13-32.

Duhn, I. (2012). Making "place" for ecological sustainability in early childhood education. *Environmental Education Research*, *18*(1), 19-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2011.572162

Earles, J. (2017). Reading gender: A feminist, queer approach to children's literature and children's discursive agency. *Gender and Education*, *29*(3), 369-388. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1156062

Echterling, C. (2016). How to save the world and other lessons from children's environmental literature. *Children's Literature in Education*, *47*(4), 283-299. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-016-9290-6

Elder, J. (1998). Teaching at the edge. In J. Elder (Ed.), *Stories in the land: A place-based environmental education anthology (Nature literacy series number 2)*. The Orion Society.

Fawcett, L. (2002). Children's wild animal stories: Questioning inter-species bonds. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *7*(2), 125-139. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/viewFile/260/138

Fawcett, L. (2013). Three degrees of separation: Accounting for naturecultures in environmental education research. In R. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, & A. Wals (Eds.), *International handbook of research on environmental education* (pp. 409-417). Routledge. https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203813331.ch39

Fetters, A. (2019, May 27). Where is the Black *Blueberries for Sal*? *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/05/the-lack-of-diversity-in-childrens-books-about-nature/590152/

Fish, B. (2018) Drawing and painting research. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 336-354). Guilford Press.

Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Continuum.

Flynn, K. (2010). Fat and the land: Size stereotyping in Pixar's *Up*. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *35*(4), 435-332. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/404129

Gaard, G. (1997). Toward a queer ecofeminism. *Hypatia*, *12*(1), 114-137. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1997.tb00174.x

Gaard, G. (2009). Children's environmental literature: From ecocritism to ecopedagogy. *Neohelico*, *36*, 321-334. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-009-0003-7

GoodMinds. (2018). *First Nations, Metis, Inuit books*. http://www.goodminds.com/

Gough, A. (2013). Researching differently: Generating a gender agenda for research in environmental education. In R. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, & A. Wals (Eds.), *International handbook of research on environmental education* (pp. 375-383). Routledge.

Gough, N., Gough, A., Appelbaum, P., Doll, M., & Sellers, W. (2003). Tales from Camp Wilde: Queer(y)ing environmental education research. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *8*(1), 44-66. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/237

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circleworks: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Fernwood.

Greenway, B. (1994). Introduction: The greening of children's literature. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *19*(4), 146-147. https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.0.0977

Greenwood, D. A. (2013a). A critical theory of place-conscious education. In R. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, & A. Wals (Eds.), *International handbook of research on environmental education* (pp. 93-100). Routledge.

Greenwood, D. A. (2013b). What is outside of outdoor education? Becoming responsive to other places. *Educational Studies*, *49*, 451-464. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2013.825261

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Environmental Education Research*, *14*(3), 308-324. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620802193572

Hansen, M. (2014). Exploring our urban wilderness. In B. Bigelow & T. Swinehart (Eds.), A people's curriculum for the earth (pp. 57-60). Rethinking Schools.

Holm, G., Sahlström, F., & Zilliacus, H. (2018) Arts-based visual research. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 311-335). Guilford Press.

Holton, T., & Rogers, T. (2004). "The world around them:" The changing depiction of nature in Owl Magazine. In S. Dobrin & K. Kidd (Eds.), *Wild things: Children's culture and ecocriticism* (pp.149-167). Wayne State University Press.

Ings, W. (2014). Embodied drawing: A case study in narrative design. *Artifact*, *3*(2), 2.1-2.10. https://doi.org/10.14434/artifact.v3i2.3983

Ingpen, R. (1979). *Australian gnomes.* Rigby Opal Books.

Irlbacher-Fox, S. (2014). Traditional knowledge, co-existence and co-resistance. *Decoloniztion, Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *3*(3), 145-158. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22236

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Jakubowski, L., & Visano, L. (2002). *Teaching controversy.* Fernwood.

Jiménez, L. (2018). The overwhelmingly White, straight, and able face of children's literature. *Michigan Reading Journal*, *51*(1), 64-69.

Jones, S. (2008). Grass houses: Representations and reinventions of social class through children's literature. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, *4*(2), 40-58. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068167.pdf

Jørgensen, K. A. (2016). Bringing the jellyfish home: Environmental consciousness and "sense of wonder" in young children's encounters with natural landscapes and places. *Environmental Education Research*, *22*(8), 1139-1157. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2015.1068277

Kazami, A. (2018, March 13). *Pastels and Crayons* [Audio podcast]. https://themoth.org/stories/pastels-and-crayons

Kahn, P. (1999). *The human relationship with nature: Development and culture*. MIT Press.

Kalvaitis, D., & Monhardt, R. (2015). Children voice biophilia: The phenomenology of being in love with nature. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, *9*, 1-21. http://www.jsedimensions.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Kalvaitis-Monhart-JSE-March-2015-Love-Issue-Final- PDF1.pdf

Kidd, M., & McFarlane, H. (2017). *Planting seeds and growing trees: Nature, early childhood and unsettling settler colonialism*. Unpublished paper.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants.* Milkweed Editions.

Koc, K., Koc, Y., & Ozdemir, S. (2010). The portrayals of individuals with physical and sensory impairments in picture books. *International Journal of Special Education*, *25*(1), 145-161. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ890574.pdf

Korteweg, L., Gonzales, I., & Guillet, J. (2010). The stories are the people and the land: Three educators respond to environmental teachings in Indigenous children's literature. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 331-350. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620903549755

Koss, M. (2015). Diversity in contemporary picturebooks: A content analysis. *Journal of Children's Literature*, *41*(1), 32-42. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1062015

Latour, B. (2004). *Politics of nature: How to bring the sciences into democracy*. Harvard University Press.

Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Art-based research practices*. Guilford Press.

Lester, J. (2014). Homonormativity in children's literature: An intersectional analysis of queer-themed picture books. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *11*(3), 244-275. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2013.879465

Lewis, T., & Kahn, R. (2009). Exopedagogies and the utopian imagination: A case study in faery subcultures. *Theory & Event*, 12(2), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.0.0071

Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Love, J. (2018). *Julián is a Mermaid.* Candlewick Press.

MacEachren, Z. (2013). The Canadian forest schools movement. *Learning Landscapes*, *7*(1), 219-233. https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v7i1.639

Makela, M. A., Nimkulrat, N., & Heikkinen, T. (2014). Drawing as a research tool: Making and understanding in art and design practice. *Studies in Material Thinking*, *10*, 1-12.

Martusewicz, R. (2014). Letting our hearts break: On facing the "hidden wound" of human supremacy. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *19*, 31-46. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/1299/0

Mazzei, L. (2011). Desiring silence: Gender, race and pedagogy in education. *British Educational Research Journal*, *37*(4), 657-669. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.487934

McCoy, K., McKenzie, M., & Tuck, E. (2014). Land education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research. *Environmental Research*, *20*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.877708

McGregor, D. (2013). Anishinaabe environmental knowledge. In A. Kulnieks, D. R. Longboat, & K. Young (Eds.), *Contemporary studies in environmental and Indigenous pedagogies: A curricula of stories and place* (pp. 77-88). Sense.

McKenzie, C. (2011). Telling our stories: Training artists to engage with communities. In D. Barndt (Ed.), *¡VIVA!: Community arts and popular education in the Americas* (pp. 75-85). State University of New York Press.

McMahon, R. (2017, May). *Ryan McMahon's 12-step guide to decolonizing Canada: Why land matters* [Audio File]. CBC Radio. http://www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/episode-342-shaming-advertisers-midnight-sun-baseball-rebirth-of-the-concorde-ear-hustle-and-more-1.4161820/ryan-mcmahon-s-12-step-guide-to-decolonization-why-land-matters-1.4161856

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.) Pentimento. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pentimento

Merrick, C. (2016). *Nature-based preschools take the national stage: National start alliance feature story.* North American Association for Environmental Education. https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/nature-based-preschools-take-national-stage

Miller, H. K. (2018). Developing a critical consciousness of race in place-based environmental education: Franco's story. *Environmental Education Research*, *24(*6), 845-858. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1357802

Mitchell, C., Theron, L., Stuart, J., Smith, A., & Campbell, Z. (2011). Drawings as research method. In L. Theron, C. Mitchell, A. Smith, & J. Stuart (Eds.), *Picturing research: Drawing as visual methodology* (pp. 19-36). Sense Publishers.

Monoyiou, E., & Symeonidou, S. (2016). The wonderful world of children's books? Negotiating diversity through children's literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *20*(6), 588-603. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1102338

Moore, R. (1997). The need for nature: A childhood right. *Social Justice*, *24*(3), 203-220. https://www.jstor.org/stable/29767032

Morgan, A. (2010). *The Lord of the Rings*: A mythos applicable in unsustainable times? *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 383-399. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2010.488916

Newbery, L. (2003). Will any/body carry that canoe? A geography of the body, ability, and gender. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *8*(1), 204-216. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/247

Nxumalo, F. (2015). Forest stories: Restorying encounters with "natural" places in early childhood education. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw, & A. Taylor (Eds), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood education* (pp. 21-42). New York: Routledge.

Nxumalo, F., & Cedillo, S. (2016). Decolonizing place in early childhood studies: Thinking with Indigenous onto-epistemologies and Black feminist geographies. *Global Studies of Childhood*, *7*(2), 99-111. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610617703831

Nxumalo, F., Oh, S., Hughes, J., & Baanji, S. (2015). Entangled dialogues on learning how to inherit in colonized and damaged lifeworlds. *Canadian Children*, *40*(2), 82-88. https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs.v40i2.15181

op de Beeck, N. (2018). Children's ecoliterature and the new nature study. *Children's Literature in Education*, *49*(1), 73-85. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-018-9347-9

Oriowo, D. (2019, July 31). Black hair and mental health: A tale of texturism. *AnnodRight*. https://www.annodright.com/blog/taleoftexturism

Ostertag, J., & Timmerman, N. (2011). Too many monkeys jumping in their heads: Animal lessons within young children's media. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 16, 59-75. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/963

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2013). Frictions in forest pedagogies: Common worlds in settler colonial spaces. *Global Studies of Childhood*, *4*(1), 355-365. https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2013.3.4.355

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Taylor, A. (Eds.). (2015a). *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood.* Routledge.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Taylor, A. (2015b). Unsettling pedagogies through common-world encounters: Grappling with (post-)colonial legacies in Canadian forests and Australian bushlands. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & A. Taylor (Eds.), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood* (pp. 21-42). Routledge.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. & Taylor, A. (2015c). Learning with children, ants, and worms in the Anthropocene: Towards a common world pedagogy of multispecies vulnerability. *Pedagogy Culture and Society*, *23*(3), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2015.1039050

Parnell, P., & Richardson, J. (2005). *And Tango makes three* (H. Cole Illus.). Simon & Schuster.

Payne, P. G. (2010). Remarkable-tracking, experiential education of the ecological imagination. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 295-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504621003613160

Pelo, A. (2014). A pedagogy for ecology. In B. Bigelow & T. Swinehart (Eds.), *A people's curriculum for the earth* (pp. 42-47). Rethinking Schools.

Platt, K. (2004). Environmental justice children's literature: Depicting, defending, and celebrating tree and birds, colors and people. In S. Dobrin & K. Kidd (Eds.), *Wild things: Children's culture and ecocriticism* (pp. 183-196). Wayne State University Press.

Plumwood, V. (1992). Feminism and eco-feminism: Beyond the dualistic assumptions of man, woman, and nature. *The Ecologist*, *22*(1), 8-13.

Quirke, L. (2016). "Fat-proof your child": Parenting advice and "child obesity." *Fat Studies*, *5*(2), 137-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/21604851.2016.1145483

Rabinowitz, R. (2003, September). Fat characters in recent young adult fiction. *Kliatt*, 3-5.

Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada*. UBC Press.

Ritchie, J. (2014). Learning from the wisdom of elders. In J. Davis & S. Elliott (Eds.), *Research in early childhood education for sustainability: International perspectives and provocations* (pp. 49-60). Routledge.

Ritchie, J. (2015). Disentangling? Re-entanglement? Tackling the pervasiveness of colonialism in early childhood (teacher) education in Aotearoa. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & A. Taylor (Eds.), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood* (pp. 148-161). Routledge.

Ritchie, J., & Skerrett, M. (2014). *Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, pedagogy and liberation*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Rodgers, P. A., Green, G., & McGown, A. (2000). Using concept sketches to track design progress. *Design Studies*, *21*(5), 451-464. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0142-694X(00)00018-1

Root, E. (2010). This land is our land? This land is your land: The decolonizing journeys of white outdoor environmental educators. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *15*, 103-119. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/858

Rosenberg, T. (2008). New beginnings and monstrous births: Notes toward an appreciation of ideational drawing. In S. Garner (Ed.), *Writing on drawing: Essays on drawing practice and research* (pp. 109-124). Intellect Books.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The reader, the text and the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Southern Illinois University Press.

Row, A., & Tuck, E. (2017). Settler colonialism and cultural studies: Ongoing settlement, cultural production, and resistance. *Cultural Studies<>Critical Methodologies*, *17*(1), 3-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616653693

Russell, C. (2005). "Whoever does not write is written": The role of "nature" in post-post approaches to environmental education research. *Environmental Education Research*, *11*(4), 433-443. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620500169569

Russell, C., Sarick, T., & Kennelly, J. (2002). Queering environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *7*(1), 54-66. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/274

Russell, C., & Semenko, K. (2016). We take "cow" as a compliment: Fattening humane, environmental, and social justice education. In E. Cameron & C. Russell (Eds.), *The fat pedagogy reader: Challenging weight-based oppression through critical education* (pp. 211-220). Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-1784-8

Russell, J. (2013). Whose better? (re)orienting a queer ecopedagogy. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *18*, 11-26. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/1231

Saad, L. F. (2020). *Me and White supremacy: Combat racism, change the world, and become a good ancestor.* Sourcebooks.

Sameshima, P., Maarhuis, P., & Weibe, S. (2019). *Parallaxic praxis: Multimodal interdisciplinary pedagogical research design*. Vernon Press.

Saunders, K. (2004). What disability studies can do for children's literature. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *24*(1). http://dsqsds.org/article/view/849/1024

Seawright, G. (2014). Settler traditions of place: Making explicit the epistemological legacy of white supremacy and settler colonialism for place-based education. *Educational Studies*, *50*(6), 554-572. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.965938

Seed, P. (2001). *American pentimento: The invention of Indians and the pursuit of riches*. University of Minnesota Press.

Shelton, S.A. (2016). "As their waistlines recede": Tracing and challenging the fat quest in young adult literature. *Fat Studies*, *5*(2), 172-190. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21604851.2016.1146117

Sheridan, J. (2013). Alienation and integration: Environmental education and American First Nations. In A. Kulnieks, D. Longboat, & K. Young (Eds.), *Contemporary studies in environmental and Indigenous pedagogies: A curricula of stories and place* (pp. 111-137). Sense.

Sigler, C. (1994). From wonderland to wasteland: Toward historicizing environmental activism in children's literature. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *19*(4), 148-153. https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.0.1011

Simpson, L. B. (2002). Indigenous environmental education for cultural survival. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *7*(1), 13-25. https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/271

Simpson, L. B. (2008). *Lighting the eighth fire.* Arbeiter Ring.

Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *3*(3), 1-25. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170

Smith, A. (2005). *Conquest: Sexual violence and American Indian genocide*. South End Press.

Smith, A. (2010). Queer theory and native studies: The heteronormativity of settler colonialism. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *16*(1/2), 42-68. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/372444

Smith, G. (2002). Place-based education: Learning to be where we are. *Phi Delta Kappan, 83*(8), 584-594. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170208300806

Smith, G., & Sobel, D. (2010). *Place and community-based education in schools*. Routledge.

Sobel, D. (2004). *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms & communities*. Orion Society.

Sobel, D. (2007). Climate change meets ecophobia. *Synergy Learning, November/December*, 14-21. https://earthtosky.org/content/course-content/Showcase/Sara-Weisberg-Smith/Sobel_Climate_Change_meets_Ecophobia.pdf

Soto, L. D., & Swadener, B. B. (2002). Toward liberatory early childhood theory, research and praxis: Decolonizing a field. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *3*(1), 38-66. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2002.3.1.8

Springgay, S. (2007). An intimate distance: Youth interrogations of intercorporeal cartography as visual narrative text. *Visual Arts Research*, *33*(2), 38-48. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20715447

Strong-Wilson, T. (2006). Bringing memory forward: A method for engaging teachers in reflective practice on narrative and memory. *Reflective Practice*, *7*(1), 101-113. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940500489773

Strong-Wilson, T. (2007). Moving horizons: Exploring the role of stories in decolonizing the literacy education of White teachers. *International Education*, 37(1), 114-131. https://trace.tennessee.edu/internationaleducation/vol37/iss1/7/

Strong-Wilson, T., Yoder, A., & Phipps, H. (2014). Going down the rabbit-hole: Teachers' engagements with "dialectical images" in Canadian children's literature on social justice. *Changing English*, *21*(1), 79-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2013.876143

Taylor, A. (2013). *Reconfiguring the natures of childhood*. Routledge.

Taylor, A. (2017). Beyond stewardship: Common world pedagogies for the Anthropocene. *Environmental Education Research*, *23*(10), 1448-1461. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1325452

Taylor, N. (2012). US children's picture books and the homonormative subject. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *9(*2), 136-152. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2011.649646

Taylor, A., & Giugni, M. (2012). Common worlds: Reconceptualizing inclusion in early childhood communities. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *13*(2), 108-119. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2012.13.2.108

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1956). *The lord of the rings trilogy.* George Allen & Unwin.

Tooms, A. (2007). Fit and the politics of school leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, *17*(5), 601-630. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&

db=eue&AN=507999871&site=ehost-live

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.* http://nctr.ca/reports2.php

Trisciuzzi, M. T. (2017). Image and imagination in education. Visual narrative through children's literature. *Journal of Theories and Research in Education*, *12*(3), 69-81. https.doi.org/ 10.6092/issn.1970-2221/7638

Tsing, A. (2005). *Friction: An ethnography of global connection.* Princeton University Press.

Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2014). *Place in research: Theory, methodology, and methods*. Routledge.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1-40. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630

Varga-Dobai, K. (2013). Gender issues in multicultural children's literature: Black and third-world feminist critiques of appropriation, essentialism, and us/other binary oppositions. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *15*(3), 141-147. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2013.809303

Wagner-Lawlor, J. (1996). Advocating environmentalism: The voice of nature in contemporary children's literature. *Children's Literature in Education*, *27*(3), 143-152. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02355686

Ward, J. (2008). *I love dirt! 52 activities to help you and your kids discover the wonders of nature*. Trumpeter Books.

Wason-Ellam, L. (2010). Children's literature as a springboard to place-based embodied learning. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(3/4), 279-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620903549771

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

Watts, V. (2013). Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!). *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *2*(1), 20-34. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/19145

Wedwick, L., & Latham, N. (2013). Socializing young readers: A content analysis of body size images in Caldecott medal winners. *Reading Horizons*, *52*(4), 333-352. https://ocul-lhd.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_LHD/96aft5/eric_sEJ1098169

Webb, J. (2009). "Voracious appetites": The construction of "fatness" in the boy hero in English children's literature. In K. K. Keeling & S. T. Pollard (Eds.) *Critical approaches to food in children's literature* (pp. 105-121). Routledge.

Wildcat, M., McDonald, M., Irlbacher-Fox, S., & Coulthard., G. (2014). Learning from the land: Indigenous land based pedagogy and decolonization. *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *3*(3), 1-14. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22248

Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia.* Harvard University Press.

Yoo-Lee, E., Fowler, L., Adkins, D., Kim, K., & Davis, H. N. (2014). Evaluating cultural authenticity in multicultural picture books: A collaborative analysis. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, *84*(3), 324-347. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/676490