Editorial

Paths and Possibilities: Envisioning, Inhabiting, and Reflecting On Environmental Education

In considering the compilation of papers while preparing this 15th volume of the journal, we noticed a thread running through them pertaining to directions in the field: past, present, and future. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that almost half of the papers emerged from three environmental education conferences that took place in 2009 (NAAEE in Portland, WEEC5 in Montreal, and the 10th Seminar in Health and Environmental Education Research in Montebello), where researchers and practitioners gather and inevitably consider, discuss, and reflect on the state of the field. Whatever the case, it seems evident there was particular focus in this issue on directions in environmental education. Hence, we chose the title "Paths and Possibilities" for this editorial, to reference the paths on which we have been travelling and possible future directions we may take. While we don't see every article as fitting into a single category, we did notice that each contributed in some way to envisioning, inhabiting, and/or reflecting on environmental education. We thus have chosen these thematic concepts as a framework for introducing the papers herein.

Envisioning

What does it mean to envision? The papers in this issue lead us to suggest that envisioning the future of environmental education might be an abstract process, a creative exercise, or even a pragmatic endeavour. For example, in recent years the field has consciously broadened its scope from being understood as an entity unto itself to one that is inextricably linked to other social justice movements. In this volume, we see attention to interlinked movements as authors envision possibilities encompassing ecofeminism, decolonization, and the "animal question," to name a few examples.

David Greenwood, for example, envisions how the field can work as an intersectional movement. Rather than focusing on growth and specialization, he suggests environmental education should acknowledge and embrace the overlap between social and ecological movements, between displaced and minoritized groups and ecological destruction. He discusses the importance of acknowledging and resisting the power and influence of empire, which is steeped in imperialism and colonialism, while simultaneously building relationships and forging connections with nature. This, he believes, is a project of both the decolonization of minds, bodies, and places, as well as a project of *reinhabitation*—maintaining, restoring, and creating ways to live that are more realistically in tune with earth's ecological limits.

Like Greenwood, Nicole Ardoin and Justin Dillon also contribute to the project of envisioning as they discuss outcomes of a session at the invitational Seminar in Health and Environmental Education Research. In this session, participants were encouraged to ponder what they would write about if they could write only one more book or paper. Ardoin and Dillon discuss the results of this activity which included critical reflections on practice, theory, and application of environmental education; the links between environmental education and other social movements focused on equality, justice, and fair trade; and the need for more research or focus on elements such as place, traditional knowledge, indigenous practice, and human/nonhuman animal relationships. All of these, they suggest, outline a "snapshot of current preoccupations" (p. 72) and possible directions of the field.

Creative envisioning is also evident in Lara Harvester and Sean Blenkinsop's paper where the authors explore potential contributions of ecofeminist theory and pedagogy to environmental education. They investigate learning relationships, structures, governance, policy, and practice in light of ecofeminism, which seeks to overcome an ethos of domination, and they suggest we may need to depart completely from traditional school formats to overturn this logic of domination in education. In the second half of their paper, they creatively imagine the process of redesigning schools in an "ecofeminist learning village," and what this would mean for relationships (between students, student/teacher, school/community, and human/more-than-human communities), structures (of buildings and classrooms), and practice (pedagogy, curriculum materials, and assessment strategies).

Don Metz, Barbara McMillan, Mona Maxwell, and Amanda Tetrault also take part in envisioning, albeit in a more pragmatic way. In their paper they outline a study comparing education for sustainable development in the Manitoba school system with that of a school in Costa Rica. After interviewing teachers and administrators from both systems, and thoughtfully considering what is working in both, they forward a proposition for what education for sustainable development might look like in Manitoba. In doing so, they contribute to a vision for environmental education in a Canadian context, one that incorporates local components and addresses community problems.

Inhabiting

A second theme running through several articles was the theme of inhabiting. Inhabiting in environmental education can include attending to the present moment, to our bodies in the here and now, as well as to the places where we live with their histories, politics, and present realities. Inhabiting does not come without challenges, as some of the authors have noted.

Emily Root, for instance, argues that environmental educators need to address decolonizing pedagogies and recognize the colonizing history of the lands we inhabit and travel on as practitioners. She discusses how colonization is not just about land: minds, too, can be colonized. In outlining her research, in which she explored the decolonization journeys of EuroCanadian outdoor environmental educators, she expresses concern about the lack of acknowledgement by the wider population of White outdoor environmental educators regarding the interconnectedness of land

and its traditional people. For her participants, part of their decolonizing journeys included acknowledging "that the land where they live and teach is Aboriginal traditional territory, where deep interrelationships amongst Aboriginal peoples, their languages, and the land have existed for thousands of years" (p.111).

As a broader concept, Bob Jickling, Lucie Sauvé, Laurence Brière, Blair Niblett, and Emily Root consider inhabiting by reflecting on means to live well in the *oïkos*, our shared home. They discuss the history and growth of environmental education and its ongoing focus on relationships between people, societies, and environments. They also share the results of their study from the 5th World Environmental Education Conference, in which 223 conference participants answered a survey with questions relating to how environmental education can add meaning to our lives, contribute to social innovation, and play a role in political innovation and public policy. Their findings speak to some of the practices, struggles, and contributions of the field at present.

From the perspective of teacher/researcher, Patrick Howard also considers inhabitation, or sense of place, where he discusses how poetry might be used to nurture an ecological sensibility in students. In his work in Newfoundland, rather than taking the tact of teaching about efficient and wise management use, he has chosen instead to use expressive writing to explore sense of place. His paper discusses how understanding language and poetry could nurture an ecological sensibility for the places in which we dwell, arguing that it is necessary to move beyond the scientific to educate "so we see ourselves as part of the web of life, as implicated in the world, not simply isolated, self-maximizing individuals" (p.191).

Similarly, Laura Piersol discusses sense of place from an educator's perspective as she shares how she moved from an ecological science and social/political advocacy approach to her teaching, to a practice that is rooted in place. She writes about her realization "that the stories of ecological science and political advocacy that I had been telling had been sitting *on* the land, instead of having roots *within* it" (p.201). She discusses how we can look closer in our teaching to see complex webs of relationships, processes, and patterns in the world. Place-based teaching, she argues, can help to foster a sense of wonder, complexity, and ambiguity, as well as an openness to what the world has to teach.

Thinking about how educators might engender a sense of place, Charles Scott turns to Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. He explores what Buber's philosophy can offer environmental education in terms of establishing relationships with the living world that move beyond utilitarianism. His paper offers reflections of how we can inhabit the earth in a less destructive manner by forming *I-Th*ou relationships with other life, as well as developing a deeper sense of ecological identity through artistic practices, contemplative practices, and the pedagogical practice of dialogue itself.

Reflecting

Along with envisioning future possibilities and exploring the complexities of inhabitation, some authors chose to take space and time to deeply *reflect* on environmental education. For some, this entailed a critical assessment of the field, pointing out blind spots, silenced voices and knowledges; for others, it involved pondering practices, frameworks, and epistemologies.

Sean Blenkinsop and Gillian Judson reflect on the use of story as a learning tool in environmental education. Creatively designing their article in story format, they delve into the theoretical aspects of story and as its multiple uses (e.g., as a means of transferring cultural knowledge, creating shared meaning, and shaping knowledge in an imaginative and meaningful way). The characters in their story serve to exemplify people from various areas of education—the traditional classroom teacher, university researcher, and alternative environmental educator—with each character ruminating on present practice and the use of story as a learning tool.

Also with elements of story entwined, Peter Cole and Pat O'Riley, in their address from the 5th World Environmental Education Congress, reflect deeply on the present global situation through the words of Coyote and Raven. Coyote and Raven's conversation spans many topics, and together they unearth and consider some of the paradoxes and contradictions as well as continued blind spots in Western society, particularly those that intersect with environmental education. For example, they contemplate the "riptides of western common sense and tsunamis of science" and how these continue to pull Aboriginal people "away from our cultures our languages our relationships" (p. 31). In part, Coyote and Ravens' conversation/journey is a critical scrutiny of colonization's impact, past and present, on people's relationships to the land, with eyes remaining focused on future community sustainability and self-determination.

Finally, two papers that emerged from the Seminar in Health and Environmental Education Research also contain underlying themes of reflection. Jan Oakley et al.'s paper recaps perspectives of participants at a seminar session that focused on the emergence of attention to human-animal relations in environmental education. The authors argue that the ways in which we conduct research with nonhuman animals is of moral importance, asserting that our research can have a huge impact on other animals' realities: "the ways that we discursively frame nonhuman animals in our research and pedagogical efforts can rationalize, perpetuate, and/or challenge our relationships with them" (p. 92). They discuss some of the challenges relating to informed consent, "giving voice," and working across epistemic communities to illustrate the complexities of researching with the more-than-human world. Another paper to emerge from the seminar, from Joshua Russell et al., offers reflections of the six authors' experiences as graduate students at Montebello. They share their perspectives on the concept of "useful" research (a seminar theme), and how participation in the seminar might influence their future practice. They also consider the larger question of how graduate students experience and imagine their present and future roles in research communities.

As evidenced in this issue, there are clearly many paths upon which we are travelling as environmental educators. This plurality is a strength and a marker of growth in the field, and reflecting upon, inhabiting, and envisioning its directions are integral parts of our ongoing journey.

Gail Kuhl, Jan Oakley, Connie Russell, and Bob Jickling