

Editorial

Environmental education: where do we go from here?

By: The Ecologizing Editorship¹

Here is a basic truth to which environmental education must contend: our civilisation is able to look at its dwindling life support system, see countless species driven into isolation and poisoned into extinction, witness untold suffering for many disenfranchised humans, and the imminent loss of the most complex, beautiful and grand web of relations in the known cosmos and yet, often with eyes wide open, most appear to get on with business as usual. We have been doing this despite the increasingly tragic consequences for over half a century. Why? And can it be prevented? Is it structural greed? Is it unstructured distractions? Or is the problem, as some say, simply too big to hold in our hearts? Who knows?

However, staring down the abyss is hardly the only way to approach environmental education. There are times for leaning into hope, for defiant conviviality, or for inspiration in paradigmatic possibilities, and for simply and softly appreciating the world we live in. But we suggest that, at least occasionally, there are times to take a step back, feel the weight of the hurtling machine, and wonder where to go next. And that doing so may be important when collectively recreating the future hangs in the balance and our best intentions are easily co-opted. For instance, we know that our profession seems increasingly held hostage as journal articles are tied to metrics, which in turn influence job security and promotion. The ways we work with each other, with ideas, and with practices then get subtly or explicitly redeployed to game the system. Our field ends up with countless clever diagnoses for the ecocrisis, generating alternative worldviews, and recycling creative pedagogies. In another context, some of this work might be genuinely inspiring. But here, in the belly of the institutional and educational beast, we are often stuck between pragmatics, possibility, and the deception that change is and can happen.

Too often, we print our work through major publishing houses that drain money from universities, and from public funding through grants, and create epistemological firewalls between people and ideas, and between wealthier institutions and those in the Global South. Ideas get owned and contained, knowledge flows are diverted like rivers from their course, the ecology of the human mind gets enclosed and ripped apart at the same time. Capitalism doesn't care because Che Guevara t-shirts sell. All the while, our critiques proliferate like microplastics in the sea. However incisive they may be, the fundamental issue still stares us in the face: perhaps we do not know how --or even whether-- education can get us out of this mess.

As *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* gathers its new editorial team, we sit in this place for a moment, somewhere between heaviness and

hope and the accelerating destruction to which we must respond. And as we hold the tension, the power of a more beautiful futures also makes itself felt.

Education is about the relationship between the new and the old, whether about the relationships between newcomers and the existing world order or new ideas and existing paradigms. And so, education has an intrinsic dimension of hopefulness to it. It is a gesture that cannot say no to the future, even when the future itself seems impossible or futile.

At a moment between the old and the new, CJEE welcomes our readers into this space, to imagine together what we can yet be. It is a space which turns to hold the wisdom and lessons of its previous incarnations while keeping firmly in view the severity of the situation we are in and the need for radical breaks. As readers, authors, and editors of a free and open-source journal, and one which slips under the ranks of most neoliberal institutions, our work is already a powerful act of resistance to the conspiracy of factors that is compromising the ecology of ideas. We have opportunities and responsibilities to explore the bounds of what might be, to urgently linger, to stretch towards those impossible possibilities we cannot yet think, feel, touch, taste or see.

With that, our vision—and by vision we mean *aspiration* as success is hardly assured—is to work together as a team, and with you, the CJEE community, to keep each other “real” as the challenges mount, to not turn away when the suffering surrounds us, nor conversely to bury ourselves in the pain and forget to honour the goodness of the world. Fundamentally, we hold a vision for new spaces of imagining, researching, creating, questioning, articulating, documenting, collaborating, and envisioning. We hold ourselves to what calls us and refuse the bad faith of easy answers, easy scapegoats, dualisms and fatalisms. How do we hold an educational space, indeed an environmental education space, in our editorial relations? And as we embark on creating its next chapter—writers, readers, reviewers, and editors together with the rest of the natural world—what might it mean to conceive the journal-making process as environmental education, committed to the challenge of sustaining a world that needs drastic change?

Despite the trepidation and uncertainty, we have assembled an important collection of papers thanks to the thoughtfulness, creativity, collaborations, and care of the submitting authors and their reviewers. The papers in this volume are an intriguing mix of theory and practice, of the particular and the general, the local and the global. They illuminate important threads of change, criticality, and awareness, as well as practices that align with environmental educators’ commitments and integrity. Ordering such a varied and diverse set of articles is always a challenge, but these are loosely grouped around themes and paired so that the following paper is talking to, following up on, building on, and even challenging its predecessor. The fit isn’t perfect, but for those of you who like to read the entire journal in a single sitting, curled up with a hot drink on a rainy evening, perhaps our choices will be engaging. And those who like to dip, sip, and savour articles one at a time, in whatever order, will find abundance and variety here.

Onwards ...

The volume opens with *From Teacher Doings to Human Beings: Ethical Awakening in a Wild Pedagogies Gathering*, a deeply engaging project where Greek practitioners and scholars seek to, in some ways, “do Wild Pedagogies” while also doing academic conferencing and being scholars differently. This research seeks to walk the talk with regard to relationality, temporality, shifting identity, and, perhaps ultimately, change. Next, *The Canada 2080 Workshops: An Arts-based Activity to Support Climate Change Education* engages learners’ sense of hope to creatively, strategically, and collectively imagine a better future. *Ecologizing Bildung: (Re)Framing Five Questions for Future Environmental Education Practice*, is also about changing practice in search of different outcomes, but instead of practitioners working with students, philosophers work with curriculum theory, Klafki’s theory in particular. These papers are in search of a similar end: change.

“*Paying Respect to the Land*”: *Futures-making Through Land-based Education in the Face of Climate Change* brings us back to the themes of community, relationality, and making manifest the visions of youth within the auspices of land-based education and the culturally specific. This conversation is carefully taken up in *Land-based Education and Place-based Education: Mapping the Terrain and Resisting Conflation*. Here, the authors, through a deep literature review and their own practices, take us on a journey through the importance, even necessity, of the local Indigenous cultural presence in Land-based education and the potential dangers of co-option and re-colonization.

Into this discussion comes the practice-based case study *Phenomenological Writing at an Island Beach: Encouraging Connection with Nature . . . and its Limits* which describes a place-based writing activity with undergraduates, committed to decolonizing, exploring Indigenous/settler relations, and perhaps even opening space for ontological change. *Business as Usual but Greener? Confronting Colonialism in University Responses to the Climate and Nature Emergency* holds Canadian universities accountable, beyond the work of particular environmental educators in their particular courses, to critically examine what these institutions are doing and not doing to address climate and nature emergencies.

What happens when educators do this work of critically analysing their practices and institutions in light of colonization and ecological crises? For one thing, according to *‘The World is Under Threat and We Had Best Get a Move On’: Canadian Climate Activist Teachers*, teachers become activists, changing their practices and ways of being teacher so that they become more obviously engaged in the project of creating a more just, perhaps even better world. Often left out of the equation, as *Messily Mediating Milieu: Enclothed Cognition in Environmental Education* points out, is the need to consider everything in and around education, even things that might not be obvious. Theory ... sure, practice ... definitely, but so too the affordances, the imaginings, and the clothes one wears and shares. As this paper illustrates, pedagogy can be influenced and learning mediated by every decision environmental educators make.

The final five papers of this volume turn to case studies and research on rich examples of practices and discussions with collaborators and participants of such practices. Working with students of various ages in a variety of environments they provide compelling insights into doing this work of environmental education and doing it well.

The first three; *Transformational climate change education: A case study on using personalized assessment methods to support enduring engagement*, *Community partner perspectives on course-based experiential learning in Environmental Studies: A case study*, and *Canadian Environmental and Sustainability Education in Preservice Teacher Education*, focus on tertiary education with the first diving into insights for practitioners drawn from an online course. This case study shares these insights while also describing how the course is built around partnerships between academics and the academic world and active, in-the-field sustainability practitioners. The second paper focuses on the experiences, benefits, and challenges experienced by community partners who act as hosts for undergraduate students involved in a one-semester experiential learning, community-based course. The third paper in this group turns its attention to preservice teachers in a faculty of education, seeking to better understand what those becoming teachers need and want to become good teachers of sustainability and environmental education.

Our last two papers also focus on programs and practices, this time with high school-aged students. The first, *Layering participation pathways in school-based environmental education* explores how benefits accrue the more programs and possibilities exist. The authors describe three different environmental entry points at a single school and explore the implications of that broader range of layering between choice and commitment. And the final paper, *Exploring the limits of knowing and discovering Reverence: The fundamental shift from STEAM to CREATIVE Learning* brings us, in some ways, full circle—back to the first paper in this volume. Here, on board a sailing ship for a semester, high-school students become learners in such a different way that things like reverence, sacred connection, and responsibility to the environment are thoughtfully given the space to be part of the curriculum and, perhaps, the world changes as a result.

And so, there you have it dear reader. We walk and work in interesting times.

Notes

- ¹ The Ecologizing Educators, in reverse alphabetical order, are: Megan Tucker, Estella Kuchta, Ellen Field, Elizabeth Boileau, Sean Blenkinsop, Sarah Anderson, & Ramsey Affifi