

Relationality in Early Childhood Education in the context of climate crises

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Abstract: The kinship relationships and interwoven living in early childhood education context are urgent in an era of climate crises and the Anthropocene. In this article, I delve into the nested relationships between humans with more-than-human forms. My purpose is to create ethical spaces of dialogue that weave together stories-beginning with my own childhood stories, extending to the narratives of South Asian early childhood educators in Alberta and tying knots with Indigenous stories.

Unsettling ECE in Alberta for an Interconnected future

The field of early childhood education (ECE) in Alberta is deeply influenced by dominant developmental understandings and damaged narratives that prioritize the superiority of humankind over all other forms of life. I contrast my view with the romanticized view of nature in ECE in Alberta. My purpose is to create ethical spaces of dialogue that weave together stories-beginning with my own childhood stories, extending to the narratives of South Asian early childhood educators in Alberta and tying knots with Indigenous stories. My hope is that, through this work, not only the children of marginalized communities, but all children will see themselves reflected in a truly relational curriculum based on a legacy of interconnectedness.

There has been a plethora of news inundated with issues of global warming and climate crises leading to extreme heat waves, wildfires and droughts as well as the rapid melting of polar ice caps and glaciers. One CBC news article reported how prolonged drought conditions have contributed to unprecedented wildfires across Canada (CBC News, 2023). This raises a critical question: what kind of world are we leaving for our future generations? I strongly believe that change needs to begin at the roots. Hence, the research problem that I am investigating questions our modern contemporary relationships with more-than-human entities and the notion of separability. In the context of the Anthropocene, there's a lot of surface-level talk about reconnecting with nature, often framed through a Westernized lens. But these discussions feel detached, lacking the embedded relationality. Offering this new lens is not only necessary but urgent. Consequently, the research question guiding this study is, "In what ways can ethical spaces of dialogue, informed by the stories of South Asian early childhood educators in Alberta and Indigenous wisdom contribute to a relational ECE curriculum in Alberta?"

Through poems, metaphors and imageries, I weave together stories of the past and present. Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2016) discusses how early childhood education is entangled with histories, present realities and speculative futures, inviting early childhood scholars to engage with these temporalities in meaningful ways. I appreciate the invitation to ponder, "What might be unsettled by bringing the knowledge that 'rocks holds the earth's stories' to children to cohabit alongside scientific ways of knowing rocks (Kimmerer, 2005 as cited in Nxumalo, 2019, p. 102). Each small step mirrors the work of contemporary eco-feminist scholars who strive to reimagine alternative pathways, offering bold vision for ECE to move forward with vision and hope, moving along slowly like a snail in the act of slow activism.

References

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