



# Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives

# 14

## Where They Meet, Where They Are Far Apart, and Where They May Come Together

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### Abstract

While Forest Schools are increasingly popular in Canada and their work of connecting children to nature and enacting a new pedagogy for learning outdoors is important, how do Forest Schools, as places of learning in nature and on the land, connect with Indigenous ways knowing, learning, and teaching? This question is significant in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as Canada is in the midst of recognizing the injustice of its treatment of Indigenous Peoples and working toward reconciliation. Through a review of literature, this chapter examines the ways that Forest School pedagogy and Indigenous educational perspectives may meet, may be far apart, and may come together. How do notions of nature and land, risk, and resilience differ from western understandings? What does decolonization mean? How does place-based education connect with Indigenous understandings of land as first teacher? As a settler

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P. P. Trifonas (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education*, Springer International Handbooks of Education,

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56988-8\\_63](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56988-8_63)

and early childhood educator, the author is situated in this learning journey as “coming to know” (Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Clear Light Publishers, Sante Fe, 2000). Drawing on Indigenous and settler scholars offers insight into the complex differences between Forest School pedagogy and Indigenous educational perspectives and offers guidance on how (re)positioning Forest Schools in the context of settler colonialism reframes the premise of how Forest School may incorporate, embed, and be reshaped by Indigenous educational perspectives.

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**Keywords**

Forest School pedagogy · Indigenous educational perspectives · Place-based education · Risk and resilience · Decolonization

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**Introduction**

I got lost on the land once. It was on the Niagara Escarpment on the Bruce Trail, back in the woods behind my friend C’s house. We must have been about 9 years old. We packed a lunch and set out on an adventure that we had been planning for a week. It was my first big adventure into the world with a friend. I remember walking in the woods and how new it felt. We trudged through the bush until we came a very thorny thicket and then into a large clearing with blue sky above. I remember it well because I had just read about a “clearing” in a Nancy Drew book, so I knew exactly what it was and now I was in one. We walked alongside a small brook until we came to the most beautiful shale waterfall. It wasn’t very high. The rocks were large, smooth slabs of grey that went up in long steps just as the small brook came bouncing down. The sun was right above us. We ate our lunch there and stayed for a while hopping up and down on the stone steps around the flowing water. When we had hopped enough, we continued on getting lost in our sense of adventure until we noticed that the sun had moved considerably and that we were in fact lost. Panic! We tried to go back but nothing looked familiar anymore. Will we have to stay out here over night? C was a little older than me and suggested that we use the position of the sun to work out which way to go. We decided that we were heading west and that we should just keep going that way. Maybe we would eventually come to a house or a road. A little further on, we heard a car go by. We ran toward the sound, and soon we were at the side of the road up around the corner from my house about a quarter mile from where we started. Relief! We never did go back, though how I would love to sit by that waterfall again. I wonder if it still looks the same as I remember it.

This story is from a time when I was a daughter, a sister, and a friend. Now I am a wife and a mother, an educator, and a student. Although I live in downtown Toronto, those memories of growing up close to the land, live on in me. As a preschool educator, I shared my love of nature with the children in my program and built a small garden in the playground of the childcare center where I worked at Yonge and Bloor Streets. Each summer we watched the life cycle of the ladybug in the Globe

maples, and for 1 year a Monarch butterfly laid eggs on our little milkweed plants. We reared the caterpillars and released the new generation of Monarchs back into the garden. We spent every day there naming all the flowers and seeing how things had changed from day to day. I tell this story as I reflect on my relationship with the land and how it has shaped me and taught me. I tell it also to situate myself in the journey of this chapter:

“Coming to know” (Cajete 2000) is a way of describing distinct Indigenous views on the process of learning via more intuitively connected pathways. Indigenous ways of coming to know respect the individual’s relationship with and the responsibility for what is being learned and explore stories and other diverse approaches to the subject at hand, learning pathways that appeal to diverse learning styles in non-prescriptive ways. Coming to know ultimately invites us to explore our emergent learning process as part of our own journey, rather than challenging us to enter into externally imposed, isolated theme areas. (Anderson et al. 2017, p. 59)

Currently, I am a graduate student, continuing to journey, learn, and think more critically about the world, my practice, and pedagogy. My learning journey has brought me back to thinking about my love of nature and about the land and my place in it, in a very different way. When I began my journey back to school, I knew that I wanted to take this opportunity to explore outdoor education, specifically Forest Schools in more depth. At the same time, I began learning more about Indigenous ways of knowing and being and about settler colonialism and decolonization. I wondered how Forest Schools and Forest School pedagogy connected to Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning. This chapter seeks to explore these connections through a review of some of the literature. I invite you to walk with me as I step out on a new adventure. I acknowledge the land that I walk on is ancient and storied with the history and current lives of the First Peoples who have always lived here. I am a settler on this land, a treaty person welcomed here through the *Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant* to share and respect the land and all that is in it. I acknowledge my western settler perspective and that I am actively working on “decolonizing” this perspective as I explore these topics. I seek to listen to the voices of Indigenous scholars and share them here where I do not have the authority to speak. Even so, I am aware that from my perspective I am choosing which passages to include. I am at the beginning of this journey, walking with an open mind, open heart, open eyes, and open ears. I am coming to know.

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## Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that came out in 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015) outlined 94 Calls to Action for non-Indigenous governments, institutions, and individuals to engage in as actions to move us together toward reconciliation. Education is implicated largely in the Calls to Action, and so educational institutions from childcare centers to PhD programs are incorporating Indigenous content and ways of teaching into their curriculum. There

is no returning to our previous ignorance about Residential Schools and the destructive trauma of colonial education on Indigenous children and families. It is our responsibility as non-Indigenous citizens to learn the truth and to actively work toward reconciliation and the decolonization, at the very least, of our thinking and of our educational institutions.

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## Coming to Know

In this light, it was a natural assumption for me to think that Forest Schools, situated in wild nature as they are, would have a lot in common with Indigenous ways of knowing and being and of teaching and learning. On the surface, this may seem sensible, and indeed there are aspects of Forest Schools that do connect to Indigenous educational perspectives; however there are deeper understandings that escape the western view, escaped my view, where these two paths move away from each other. This chapter will explore some of the literature about Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives, where they converge and diverge and perhaps where they may eventually come together:

The wilderness that resides in our national identity is a fantasy of Canadian homeland created in the interplay of desire and anxiety and is used to mask implication in colonial injustice. The discursive absence of the politics of wilderness on our cultural landscape mirrors its curricular absence in much educational practice. Wilderness is a deeply ambivalent fiction that canoe trippers nonetheless enjoy and this contradiction haunts outdoor and environmental learning. (Newbery 2012, p. 37)

Newbery's (2012) article, *Canoe Pedagogy*, challenged and shifted my thinking about our great Canadian wilderness. The pristine nature of the Canadian wilderness as an open, empty space waiting for adventure has been idealized while not at all acknowledging the erasure of the people that were removed from their land and the destruction of languages, cultures, families, and histories. Newbery (2012) argues that outdoor education should henceforth include the history of Indigenous peoples on the land and the history of colonialism. In thinking about Forest Schools specifically, I wonder how many educators know the Indigenous history of the land or the treaties that govern it and how many include this in their curriculum. I am cognizant of the fact that, fundamentally, though Forest Schools are based in nature, they remain "socially and culturally constructed" (Harper 2017) western forms of education. Here in Canada I believe that those with closer ties to and who have worked to build relationships with Indigenous communities and family are genuinely working to weave Indigenous perspectives into their curriculum (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, 2018b; Elliot et al. 2014; Elliot and Krusekopf 2017; Rowan 2014). On their website, Forest School Canada acknowledges that "Indigenous people here have been teaching and learning on, with, and from this land for millennia. We have learned and still have much *to* learn from building reciprocal relationships built on mutual trust with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

communities around us” (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018a). A section on Aboriginal perspectives is also included in the guide, *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning* (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b).

The first western nature kindergarten can be traced back to Froebel’s kindergartens in Germany in the mid-1800s (Harper 2017). The concept was transported to North America in the late 1800s. Forest Schools began in Sweden in the 1950s later inspiring similar schools in Denmark and Norway and the *Waldkindergartens* (forest kindergartens) in Germany. The Forest School movement quickly caught on in the UK and is beginning to increase in popularity in the USA and Canada (Sobel 2014). While Forest School philosophies and pedagogies may differ as they adapt to the contexts in which they are situated, they do have similar overarching tenets and goals. Generally, the focus in Forest Schools is on play in the outdoors with some form of inquiry-based learning or place-based learning that either is planned or occurs naturally out of children’s curiosity, wonder, and questioning (Harper 2017). Since Forest School pedagogies differ also from indoor, mainstream classroom settings, Forest School programs are often conducted by at least one educator trained as a Forest School practitioner (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, 2018a). Forest School practitioners are trained and knowledgeable in building fires, tool use, wood carving, shelter building, as well as in child development. What sets Forest Schools apart from mainstream education is that it is based on an ethos that recognizes children’s innate sense of wonder and discovery in the outdoors and supports children’s initiative to explore and engage in inquiry and experiential and experimental learning, building their self-esteem, confidence, and social skills (Harris 2017; Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b). Each iteration of a Forest School takes a different form, whether it is every day for a half or whole day or it is once a week for a series of weeks. Regardless of the schedule, the time is spent rain or shine or snow.

For some, the idea of spending all day outdoors rain or shine or snow is not an appealing one. For others, it is an exciting adventure. The attractiveness of Forest Schools for families who send their children to them and for educators who teach in them is the health benefits that come with physical play outdoors and being in nature (O’Brien and Murray 2007; Chawla et al. 2014); opportunities for risky play and building resilience (Harper 2017); the increased environmental awareness and responsibility (Elliot et al. 2014; Elliot and Krusekopf 2017; Smith et al. 2018); and the play-based, place-based, and inquiry approach to teaching and learning (Gruenewald 2003; Maynard 2007; Sobel 2014; Harwood and Collier 2017). Forest Schools in many ways are an attractive alternative for the rigid learning that takes place in mainstream classrooms which, for many children, is agony. “Children cannot bounce off the walls if we take the walls away” (Erin Kenney, founder of Cedarsong Nature School as cited in Sobel 2014).

When I read about Indigenous educational perspectives, it becomes obvious why children area bouncing off the walls in Western Euro-centric educational settings. More and more I think that the real draw to Forest Schools is to subconsciously get back what our western worldviews have scrubbed out of our own educational

systems and society as unnecessary and what we have simultaneously stolen from and destroyed in Indigenous peoples, namely, a spiritual and emotional as well as physical and intellectual connection to the land. John, a Cree Elder in a study by Hansen and Antsanen (2016), indicated that “balance is important, and emotions as well as spiritual understanding are paramount in the traditional education system. He suggests that the emphasis on the mental and physical aspects in the mainstream education system results in learning difficulty because half of human existence is excluded. Therefore, Indigenous education includes the feelings and spiritual understandings” (p. 10). Anderson et al. (2017) in *Natural Curiosity 2nd Edition*, describe Indigenous perspectives as being “rooted in complex, dynamic knowledge systems, and grounded in the long-standing cultural worldviews of Indigenous peoples” (p. 6). There is also an emphasis on relationship (Greenwood 2013), having a holistic worldview, an understanding that everything is interconnected (Hansen and Antsanen 2016), and learning from the land (Styres 2011). Hansen and Antsanen (2016) also point out that “Indigenous knowledge is not a relic of the past, but rather it still exists as an adaption to life in a changing world. Indigenous people adapt to stress and adversity through Indigenous knowledge, which emphasizes the need for balance” (p. 3). Anderson et al. (2017) echo this in stating that “Indigenous perspectives belong in *all times* (emphasis in original)” (p. 6) and in a quote by David Orr that highlights the need for Indigenous knowledge now. “The skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary to industrialize the earth are not necessarily the same as those that will be needed to heal the earth or to build durable economies and good communities” (David Orr as cited in Anderson et al. 2017, p. 2).

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## **Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They Meet and Where They Are Far Apart**

Richard Louv (2008) in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, famously coined the term “Nature-Deficit Disorder.” Not that it is a real, diagnosable disorder, but that it is an effect seen in the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression in children. Forest Schools boast of the positive impact they have on children’s health and well-being. O’Brien and Murray (2007) note that Forest Schools have “positive impacts in children’s confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, physical skills and knowledge and understanding” (p. 249). Similarly, Roe and Aspinall (2011) demonstrated restorative effects on mood and behavior of young people. Forest Schools also support healthy development by offering opportunities to engage in more risky play like climbing trees, using knives, lighting campfires, and playing near water. This is one of their central appeals. Parents and educators who are involved in Forest Schools tend to share a point of view that sees the positive benefits of risky play. Harper (2017) defines risk as “the potential for loss or harm, yet risk can also present opportunities for gain” (p. 318) and argues that risk builds resilience necessary for healthy child development. He describes how society has become risk averse in trying to protect vulnerable children and prevent injury. This uncovers a duality in the image of the child that we can hold, with the child

having agency and rights on one hand and being vulnerable and needing protection on the other (Maynard 2007). Forest Schools offer the antidote for the risk averse society. In Connolly and Haughton's (2017) study, Forest School practitioners (some who were also parents) agreed that children needed risk in their lives and that risk was viewed positively; however they struggled with how much risk to allow and how parents would react if their child got hurt while attending the Forest School. Getting hurt, though, is part and parcel of risky play and helps to build physical resilience. Emotional resilience is also supported by being in nature. Though not Forest Schools, Chawla et al. (2014) show the positive effects of green schoolyards on lowering children's stress and increasing their resilience.

When considering what risk and resilience mean from an Indigenous perspective, Giddens (1999) eludes to risk being a modern social construction that did not exist in the same way for pre-modern societies. Hansen and Antsanen (2016) offer a different and more complex view of resilience for Indigenous peoples, specifically Cree and Dene Elders from Saskatchewan who took part in their study. Elders in the study describe their education systems and how values were passed on through watching their grandparents and following by example, like using a knife to cut moose meat at a very young age, learning how to hunt and fish and snare rabbits, and sometimes having to figure things out on their own (experiential learning). While these elements of risk were a natural part of the education for these Elders, they are different than the understanding of risky play in Forest Schools. These were necessary skills to learn for survival. Risky play then is not only a socially and culturally constructed concept but also a colonial one.

Resilience also has a much different and deeper meaning for Indigenous peoples. Resilience means enduring and thriving in a colonial state. The Cree and Dene Elders in Hansen and Antsanen's (2016) study talk about how culture and language was taken away and destroyed and children were taken away from families for generations. This was immeasurable loss and harm with no opportunity for gain. The resilience built by risky play in Forest Schools for healthy child development cannot be adequately compared to the resilience demanded by the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and imposed colonial education. If Forest Schools were to be a place of connecting to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning around ideas and concepts of risk and resilience, this would need to be acknowledged.

Much of the literature about Forest Schools also centers on how they foster a sense of environmental awareness and responsibility in the next generation. Many families and educators value children's learning in the outdoors and learning about nature and the environment. In the literature, studies document the positive impact of Forest Schools on children's environmental responsibility and nature relatedness (Elliot et al. 2014), environmental stewardship (Elliot and Krusekopf 2017), and pro-environmental attitudes (Turtle et al. 2015). A return to nature is crucial for the health and well-being of our children and ourselves but also for the earth that we inhabit. When children have adventures outdoors, their connection to nature and the environment grows and grows deeper. Hordyk et al. (2015) show how children develop deep caring relationships with and in nature and how nature in return nurtures children in many ways:

The concepts of spirituality and balance are recognizable when one considers the Indigenous view that plants and animals like humans have a spirit. It is a manifestation of the holistic worldview. As John Martin described it, the spirit is inherent in all that surrounds us—the trees, grass, rocks, etc.—which expresses the idea that existence is interconnected. (Hansen and Antsanan 2016, p. 11).

In the literature, Indigenous perspectives of the environment are rooted in the land, and they encompass more than just an awareness. Cajete (2010) states that “Traditional Indian education is an expression of environmental education par excellence” (p. 1128). Land is understood to be the source of knowledge and first teacher (Simpson 2002; Styres 2011). Connection to Mother Earth is intrinsically linked to Indigenous spirituality (Simpson 2002; Anderson et al. 2017). It is a holistic worldview which recognizes that everything has a spirit and everything is interconnected (Hansen and Antsanan 2016). This way of understanding the land is much different than environmental awareness because it demands that we have a relationship with the land and everything in it. In reflecting on the difference in language used to describe outdoor education, I noticed that western education uses terms like nature kindergarten and Forest School, whereas Indigenous perspectives always use land. This is a significant difference. Using words like nature and forest convey a sense that these environments are only in certain places, like in a Forest School or in the Canadian wilderness. Land is more definite, firm. It implies our direct and sustained connection with the earth. So even when we are at home or in school or at work, we are on the land. Styres (2011) describes “land as an Indigenous philosophy or ideology that exists beyond the concrete connection to place” (p. 718).

This brings up a very important point that cannot be ignored. We cannot have a conversation about Forest Schools and Indigenous ways of teaching and learning without acknowledging the land and who it belongs to and without discussing what decolonization really means. A critical work by Tuck and Yang (2012) discusses decolonization as more than just thinking critically about our practices and pedagogies, but that decolonization is the “repatriation of Indigenous lands and life” (p. 21). This is another article that significantly shifted my thinking about the land and my place in it. In it, Tuck and Yang (2012) describe “settler moves to innocence” as “diversions, distractions, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt” (p. 21). I can see how my original thinking about the connections between Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives may be a “settler move to innocence” in that I naively made broad comparisons between Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives without thinking more critically about the implications of settler colonialism. I am realizing that this is a much deeper topic than can be adequately addressed in this chapter. I offer here my journey of “coming to know” about this, knowing that I have much more to learn.

Tuck and Yang (2012) also describe how the Occupy movement, while being a social justice movement, is actually a recolonizing of the land as it focuses only on the plight of the poor settler and ignores the deeper issue of colonialism, uncovering that there are limits to solidarity. Applying this thinking to Forest Schools means that these are also ways of recolonizing the land for the benefit of those in the colonial state while continuing to ignore land claims and treaty rights and responsibilities.



These are at once simple and very complex issues that will not be easily resolved. And they are unsettling. I have been unsettled by thinking about land for some time now. I am not a homeowner, and so I do not officially “own” land, but I live, work, and engage in recreation on the land owned by others who are not Indigenous. I think the land should be given back, but that seems like an impossibility. This thinking has also deepened my understanding and appreciation for land acknowledgments that are increasingly a part of official gatherings and educational settings. Settlers were originally welcomed onto the land in a spirit of sharing and reciprocity. The treaties were equal nation to nation agreements. Honoring these treaties and re-establishing nation to nation equality is a start, just as is making space to have these conversations.

A further critical look at how land is addressed in educational curriculum shows how it is largely shaped by western and colonial perspectives. Pedagogies like place-based education use place as a way for students to learn about many different topics by engaging with the people and material elements of the specific places they inhabit. Place-based education fits well in Forest School settings as it is grounded in the physical space of the forest. Place-based education’s intention is also to help students engage in critical thinking and real-world problem-solving about the places they live in (Smith 2002). Ladson-Billings (1995) includes critical consciousness as part of her theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy that uses place-based education to challenge students to think critically about the systems of oppression in their communities and how to change them. Place-based education is criticized, however, for not going far enough to address decolonization. Gruenewald (2003) suggests a critical pedagogy of place that proposes decolonization through critical pedagogy and re-inhabitation through place-based education that encourages social action. Calderon (2014), however, argues that place-based education needs to “intersect with land education” and fully expose settler colonialism (p. 24). Her conceptualization of land education “centers the relationship between land and settler colonialism” (p. 26) and makes us rethink how Indigenous people were removed from their land and how the land was renamed. Calderon (2014) agrees with Gruenewald’s (2003) concepts of decolonization and re-inhabitation but specifies that re-inhabitation is giving back local control of the land to Indigenous peoples. She argues that more must be done than just enacting environmental policies. Relationships must be built with Indigenous peoples to really learn about the land and its history. O’Connor (2009) chronicles an effective use of experiential and place-based education that addresses “the lack of success and disengagement among Indigenous students by promoting a holistic form of education that values the importance of place and its cultural knowledge” (p. 415) in schools on reserves in Northern Alberta and the Yukon.

Another way to understand place is in Basso’s (1996), *Wisdom Sits in Places*, where he shares an engaging and insightful ethnography of how place is understood from a Western Apache perspective. Wisdom is situated in specific places and brought to life in the stories of those places with life lessons to be learned. Storytelling is also a valued learning approach in Forest Schools (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b). Harwood and Collier (2017) using a new materialism

lens describe children's storied engagement with a stick in their forest school setting and how the stick speaks to them to become different imaginings in their stories. This connects to the Indigenous worldview that everything has a spirit, even inanimate objects (Hansen and Antsanen 2016). This worldview instills a profound respect for and fosters a deep relationship with everything in the natural world, one that is missing from our current western colonial society, but that has deep implications for how future generations will treat the land and the places and their places within in.

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## **Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They May Come Together**

I began with the premise that Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives may meet on some common ground. I explored some of the literature relating to Forest Schools such as its impact on health and well-being, risk and resilience, environmental awareness, and pedagogies such as place-based education and how these topics converge and diverge with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, ways of teaching, and learning. I came to know that while these learning approaches and outcomes of Forest Schools may have some surface commonalities with Indigenous educational perspectives, they don't hold up in the context of settler colonialism. This has uncovered for me that I have a lot more to learn and reflect on. (Re)positioning Forest Schools in the context of settler colonialism helps to reframe the premise of how Forest Schools may incorporate, embed, and be reshaped by Indigenous educational perspectives.

Many Indigenous scholars have written about how to incorporate Indigenous educational perspectives into western education. Rowan (2014) describes her work in Inuit early childhood and introduces the term "saimaqatigiinni" which means "Inuit and Qallunaat meet in the middle and are reconciled" and invites "Inuit and Qallunaat [non-Inuit people] to do things in new ways" (pp. 74–75). Styres (2011) suggests "land-infused course content and activities" (p. 718). Cajete (2010) suggests a "'culturally informed alternative' for thinking about and enabling the contemporary education of American Indian people" (p. 1127). He illuminates that the goal is more than just education but that "[d]evelopment of appropriate American Indian education and education policy is fundamental to returning Indian nations to sovereignty, self-sufficiency and harmony" (p. 1126). Bartlett et al. (2012) offer the perspective of "Two-Eyed Seeing" (p.331), a guiding principle introduced by Albert Marshall, the "designated voice on environmental matters for Mi'kmaw Elders in Unama'ki-Cape Breton" (p. 331). "Two-Eyed Seeing" is a way of weaving together Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Knowledge with western knowledge to work together to solve environmental issues. This has broader implications for all aspects of education.

Western scholars have also written about how to "meet in the middle and be reconciled" (Rowan 2014, pp.74–75) specifically in the context of pre-service teacher education. These understandings, though not directly related to Forest Schools, can be applied to how we as educators in all settings can think about how we engage with Indigenous education and educational perspectives. Madden's

(2015) review 23 studies of teacher educator’s perspectives and found 4 pedagogical pathways present in pre-service teacher education: learning from Indigenous traditional models of teaching and learning, pedagogy for decolonizing, Indigenous and anti-racist education, and Indigenous and place-based education. I have touched on some of these already. Tompkins (2002) specifically addresses anti-racism in her study with pre-service teachers. She refers to a need to do “affective work” (p. 413) and argues that we need to be comfortable with the messiness of reconciliation. She points out the importance of being in relationship to realize how power and privilege work so that we can move to a place of less arrogance. This reminds me that I have more to learn and need to continually ask myself, as Tompkins (2002) asks of herself, “Just who do I think I am?” (p. 408). Pratt and Danyluk (2017) studied how pre-service teachers engaged in critical service learning in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities as a form of reconciliatory pedagogy. They found how students’ initial feelings of anxiety and preconceived notions about Indigenous communities created a “cognitive dissonance” (p. 14) as they were welcomed into the community and found that their preconceived notions were challenged by the reality of the community’s lived experiences. This led to a transformational experience for the students. This further confirms for me the importance of learning more in relationship with Indigenous communities. Here in Toronto, *Natural Curiosity 2nd Edition: A Resource for Educators* (Anderson et al. 2017) uses an Indigenous lens to re-envision the “approach to environmental inquiry” in the first edition (p. 2). This is an excellent resource that connects more directly to Forest Schools as a form of outdoor education and environmental inquiry.

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## Conclusion and Further Directions

Just as I began with my story of getting lost on the land, I began this journey with a confidence and familiarity with Forest Schools and even a little bit of knowledge about Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning. However, as I delved deeper into how these two different educational perspectives meet at points and at points are far from each other, I found I was in unfamiliar territory and having to find a new way home. Using the sun and the sound of the car on the road, I and my friend C managed to find our way. For me, listening to and learning from Indigenous scholars, knowledge keepers, and educators along with taking the approach of “Two-Eyed Seeing” will help me find my way on this journey of learning how to incorporate Indigenous educational perspectives into my own pedagogy and practice and also into Forest School pedagogy. I am humbled by the depth of knowledge I have come to know thus far, and by all that I have yet to learn and understand.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care](#)
- ▶ [An Ecology of Environmental Education](#)

- ▶ [Beyond Domination: Enrique Dussel, Decoloniality, and Education](#)
- ▶ [Growing Children's Ecological Relationships Indoors](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Meditations: Being in the Early Years](#)

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