LYNN LEMISKO

2. WE ARE NOT STRANGERS HERE

Sunlight trickles down.
Leaves shimmer and sparkle in the warm breeze,
light reflected like water rushing over pebbles in a shallow stream.
Swishing, rustling breath of the forest
sings harmony with warbling chirps of back-capped chubby chickadees.
Shoulders touch, warmth seeps between, slow breath expanding lungs, quiet rest.
Suddenly he is there – a dash, a leap, then pause and momentary stillness.
Huge dark eyes smiling, long ears upright, tiny brown body trembles with anticipation.
She springs in, grinning,
long ears flat along soft furry body.
Between breaths we all join the game.
Human eyes widen in delight as he dashes under bench.
She is close behind.
Human legs entangled have no time to move,
but he and she are unconcerned.
Away again through roots and tangled branches,
rabbits playing chase, include us in their circle,
laughing.

What wonder! These small beings, running, jumping and chasing for the pure joy of it. And we, who witnessed this play, felt part of it as we sat quietly in the small glade in a stand of trees, near a field, along a riverbank in Saskatchewan. Why were we including in this game? And, why is this story important to me?

I think my life partner and I were included by these beings in their play because, at least in that moment, we acted as if we remembered that we are not strangers here. In quiet rest between eating lunch and the chores of hoeing and picking vegetables, we were simply one of the many inhabitants who belonged in that place and in that time, posing no threat to those who belonged there too. This story is important to me because it symbolizes that which I think important when contemplating the notion '*ecological justice'* – that is, the idea that human beings are not strangers here. But what does this phrase mean, and why did it spring to mind when I contemplated the notion of ecological justice? To explain the connections between my understanding of the meaning of this concept and educating for ecological justice I will explore

T. A. Horton & L. Lemisko (Eds.), Educator to Educator, 17–27.

these questions: Why do I think we need to 'remember' why did we forget? Why is such remembrance so important? How can we remember? How can we educate for ecological justice?

In claiming that 'we are not strangers here', I am talking about how I think human beings need to see themselves in relationship with the world. We need to see ourselves and feel ourselves as deeply and profoundly embedded in the web oflife on our planet and that we are, in fact, deeply connected to both the animate and inanimate. We need to remember that we do belong here, and although we need to meet our human needs within our environments – we must use air, water, animals, plants and minerals to survive—but as 'belongers' we have no right to damage or 'use up' that which surrounds us.

In my opinion, this is where the notion of ecological justice comes in. When I use this term, I begin with the idea that everything in and on earth has rights – that is, "… that every component of the community of Earth needs to have its say, and to find its place and needs a spokesperson [and that] …no part of that community can be guided in its activities except with reference to the total community" (Berry, 2003). For me, *ecological justice* means ensuring just or fair resolutions when interests conflict by taking into account the freedom and security (read: group survival/ non-using up) of all web-of-life community members. When we remember that we belong and are deeply connected, we know that damaging and using up does not just hurt that which is outside of ourselves; but rather, when we remember we are not strangers here, we remember that damaging or using up any part of the web damages and uses up ourselves. I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember this.

At present, in some circles, it seems to have become axiomatic to express these kinds of ideas, and a reader could ask what I think I have to add to the conversation. With heightened awareness of environmental issues and climate change, catch phrases about recycling, carbon footprints, and saving the planet have entered popular culture and could be taken to represent a paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability. But I am concerned that the underpinning ways of thinking (with accompanying presuppositions) that caused us to forget our deep connections might not be recognized or challenged. And, if this is the case, all the emerging catch phrases in the world cannot and do not represent real remembering. Therefore, as I elaborate my thinking about the idea of ecological justice and explain why I think this connects in a generative way to education, I need to explain why I think we need to 'remember' and why we 'forgot'.

This goes to my understanding of how past ways of thinking are influencing us now, and this arises out of my own particular (and perhaps peculiar) historical ways of looking at the world, which I think I should take time to explain. I need to name my biases and perspectives and explain from where some of my notions have been derived. I am a Celtic (Irish-Scot) Canadian middle class female market gardener, have been a social studies teacher, am a teacher educator and social studies methods instructor, a working historian, an educational historian and a philosopher of history.

In these roles I have been deeply influenced by many interdisciplinary scholars, including historian and philosopher, R.G. Collingwood. Put simply, Collingwood (1946/1993) claimed that philosophizing and 'coming to know' is simply a process of asking questions, gathering evidence, constructing a web of understanding through thinking about the relationship between one's questions and one's evidence and then thinking/reflecting upon the thinking one has done. Collingwood did not believe this process produced universal and necessary truth. Rather, he believed that knowledge is "something always needing to be re-created by an effort of thought" (Collingwood, 1939, p. 63). This way ofthinking about knowledge and philosophizing is very appealing to me. It puts philosophical inquiry and knowledge construction into the hands of any person who is willing to ask questions and think carefully. Coming to know does not reside in the hands of 'the experts' – it is democratic.

Another aspect of Collingwood's ideas I find appealing is his contention that coming to know is subjective, and that human beings can use the questioning, re-constructing, reflecting-on-thinking method to come to understand both personal experiences and each other. Thus, unlike some post-modern theorists who seem to me to argue that our subjectivity makes it impossible for us to understand one another, Collingwood (1939) offers us hope that we can develop some understanding if we use the question and reflection approach to get "inside other people's heads, looking at their situation through their eyes" (p. 58) – a process he calls 're-enactment'. In arguing that we can come to understand human actions by coming to understand contexts of the action, as well as the thought/presuppositions lying behind the action, Collingwood has provided me with one way to think about how human beings are connected to each other, which I think has implications in how we might see ourselves connected to and within our environments.

I have also been deeply influenced by Collingwood's understanding of the importance of history, which lies in his understanding of the connections between the past and the present. Collingwood (1946/1993) contends that the past 'turns into' the present or, to put it more concisely, he thinks that the past 'interpenetrates' the present. To accept this claim requires us to think about the past and present in a particular way. Collingwood did not use the argument that 'if we do not understand our past we are doomed to repeat it'. He would have thought this argument somewhat silly because he considered it presumptuous to think that events that unfolded in a particular past context would unfold in exactly the same way in a present context. However, Collingwood (1940) did claim that past ways of thinking (presuppositions) survive into the present and continue to influence the way we act now. He argued that in order to more deeply understand why we act as we do, we need to not only understand the ways of thinking that underpin our present actions, but we also need to understand where, when, and under what circumstances these ways of thinking arose. Only through this process can we come to understand how we have come to think in the ways that we do and challenge ourselves as to whether such assumed, implicit ideas actually continue to make sense. Collingwood's philosophizing has pointed out for me that it is these past ways of thinking that interpenetrate the present

and continue to influence and shape contemporary human behaviours. If we want to reform, or transform, it is not enough to simply look at what people did in the past and learn lessons from this behaviour; we must look deeply into beliefs and patterns of thinking that arose back then, and try to understand how these continue to affect our present thoughts and actions.

Although Collingwoodian philosophy is rather 'in the head' as compared to the 'embodiedness' of deep ecology, it was the influence of his philosophical approaches which first grounded my personal inquiries into how we have come to be where we are now in our relationship with the earth. My claim that 'we must remember we are not strangers here' is related to my historicity – that is, the belief that our present is affected by presuppositions that have caused us to forget ourconnectedness. My efforts to explore the questions, "Why did we forget and why (and how) do we need to 'remember'?" are anchored in this set of beliefs.

I think our forgetfulness about our connectedness within the web of life has arisen as a result of the widespread influence of Western or Euro-centric ways of thinking. While I know that many folks around the world have not forgotten the connectedness of all things/beings, I am afraid that a dominant (hegemonic) way of thinking about economic systems, progress, and development has spread around the world through mechanisms of imperialism, colonization, and conquest. At present, it seems to me that discussions about development are mostly about ways of increasing production and consumption – that 'progress' is tied to finding bigger markets in which to sell an ever increasingly large supply of things that fulfill whims and wants rather than basic needs. Even discussions about quality of life seem to be more about material things (e.g., number of: school buildings, books, pencils, paper, shoes) rather than about having time, quiet, relationships and connections. With this evidence before me, I think that humans around the globe are being affected by Western ways of thinking that have caused forgetfulness about connectedness. And, because of this, I think it is worthwhile exploring, at least briefly, where and when these ways of thinking emerged.

In my understanding, Euro-Western forgetfulness about belonging within the web of life has been shaped by several ways of thinking that emerged between the time my ancient Celtic ancestors held rituals in sacred oak groves, or tossed golden jewelry into streams to honour spirits within these places, and now, in the present day, when those oak groves have gone the way of the dodo, and trash is thrown into streams. It seems to me that one of the ways of thinking that had a profound affect on 'connection forgetfulness' is that which emerged with Christianity as an organized, hierarchical religion. The way of thinking, which became orthodox between about the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., was based on rejection of the material world in favour of the spiritual. For example, when St. Augustine proclaimed the City of God (and a god who lived outside of and beyond the perimeters of the natural world) as the penultimate goal upon which human beings should set their sights, while at the same time disparaging the City of Man (or the material world) as corrupting, he

shaped and promoted a way of thinking that severed humans from the natural world. Augustine (413–426) wrote:

> …Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God… . When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, and after him the **stranger** in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a **stranger** below, and by grace a citizen above. [Bold added]

In declaring Abel and others who achieve a state of grace as strangers to and in the material world, Augustine conceived the spiritual, divine, or 'that which is holy' as residing outside of the web of life of the natural world – a conceptualization which began to shape a set of beliefs and assumptions underpinning Euro-Western 'connection forgetfulness'.

This set of assumptions supported a notion of hierarchy in which humans (along with the angels) were seen to be set over, above, or outside of the material, world.

During the 18th century, Enlightenment thought fully encompassed these ideas. Embracing the notion that humans possessed a powerful intellect unavailable to other members of the web of life, Euro-Western thought promoted the notion that we were both separate from and superior to the natural world. Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782) proclaimed:

> It is then true that man is lord of the creation, – that he is, at least, sovereign over the habitable earth; for it is certain that he not only subdues all other animals, and even disposes by his industry of the elements at his pleasure, but he alone of all terrestrial beings knows how to subject to his convenience, and even by contemplation to appropriate to his use, the very stars and planets he cannot approach. Let anyone produce me an animal of another species who knows how to make use of fire, or hath faculties to admire the sun. What! am I able to observe, to know other beings and their relations, – am I capable of discovering what is order, beauty, virtue, – of contemplating the universe, – of elevating my ideas to the hand which governs the whole, – am I capable of loving what is good and doing it, and shall I compare myself to the brutes? Abject soul! it is your gloomy philosophy alone that renders you at all like them. Or, rather, it is vain you would debase yourself. Your own genius rises up against your principles; – your benevolent heart gives the lie to your absurd doctrines, – and even the abuse of your faculties demonstrates their excellence in spite of yourself.
>
> For my part …I see nothing in the world, except the deity, better than my own species; and were I left to choose my place in the order of created beings, I see none that I could prefer to that of man.

With this way of thinking, all other beings, including animals, plants and minerals, became items created for human use, and Europeans 'forgot' that these beings should be regarded as members of the web of life, important in and of themselves.

During the 19th century, the emergence of positivism (a philosophical position that attempts to purify knowledge of all metaphysical or transcendental aspects and that puts an extremely high value on 'objective' natural science and its methods) added another set of assumptions which contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. While positivism has contributed to development of human knowledge by advocating close and careful observation of natural phenomena, this philosophy also promoted an approach which encouraged humans to examine slices of nature using an increasingly narrow and mechanistic analysis. This analytical approach sponsored development of specialization, where human experts study tiny bits of phenomena in isolation from one another (after all, too many variables muddy the waters). In this support of analysis – the breaking down into bits to try to understand the whole – I think positivism encouraged an approach to knowledge construction at odds with the notion of synthesis – that is, the capacity to integrate bits together to comprehend a wholeness – and ultimately contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. Positivist philosophers also propounded a hierarchy in ways of knowing which described as primitive or childish any approach to understanding the world that included intuition, animism or wholeness. For example, positivist philosopher, August Comte (1830–42), declared:

> In the theological state, the human mind… supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In the metaphysical state, the mind supposes abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws – that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge.
>
> …our speculations upon all subjects whatsoever, pass necessarily through three successive stages: a Theological stage [which contains three stages: animism, polytheism and monotheism] in which free play is given to spontaneous fictions admitting of no proof; the Metaphysical stage, characterized by the prevalence of personified abstractions or entities [world is one great entity in which Nature prevails]; lastly, the Positive stage, based upon an exact view of the real facts of the case.

With this, Comte and other positivists gave credence and priority to a particular way of knowing (techno-rationale) that supported Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. In this approach to knowing, rocks, water, and soil became 'dis-imbued' of life – transforming into the inanimate, or 'non-living', and so even more

foreign to humanness than animals and plants (which, although 'living', are to be considered 'objects' rather than 'subjects'). In severing our understanding of our deep connections with all members of the web of life, the environment seems to have become a foreign (and, perhaps, frightening) place. However, positivist philosophy gave human beings a way to conquer their fears by promoting the idea that people would, could and should manipulate, control, or conquer environments as the 'laws of nature' were more fully understood through observation and fact-gathering. Rather than operating on the assumption that humans are deeply embedded within the natural world, positivists reinforced the notion that we are outside, objective observers of nature – a place and space totally separate from 'us'. This way of thinking endorsed our forgetfulness and promoted the notion that humans are strangers within their environments.

Interestingly, this way of thinking lies behind two contradictory contemporary ideological positions regarding the environment: one, (a dominant Euro-Western ideology) allows human beings to exploit the natural world without paying much attention to consequences – the other (one of the emerging 'eco-friendly' ideologies), advocates the notion that humans are some kind of aberration – that is, that humans lie outside of and counter to nature, and act as a kind of destructive force, at odds with the natural world. Both of these ideological positions represent what I have been calling 'connection forgetfulness' – that is, both positions presuppose human beings as strangers to and in the natural world, rather than members of the web of life who are the natural result of evolution. In my opinion, both of these positions are antithetical to the notion of ecological justice. As I claimed at the beginning, I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember that we are "intimately embedded in a reality greater than ourselves" (Selby, 1998).

But, how can we remember? And, how can we educate to remember?

When contemplating these questions, I think we need to understand that the very approaches we use to teaching and learning have been shaped by Euro-Western ways of thinking; therefore we must recognize that 'educating to remember' requires that we tackle the unacknowledged/taken-for-granted suppositions have underpinned these ideologies. To do this, we need to ensure that our pedagogical approaches do not simply reinforce dominant Euro-Western modes of thinking – for example, analysis rather than synthesis – and that we ask learners to engage with the environment not simply as outside 'objective' observers exercising their intellect, but also as 'subjects' using feelings/perceptions. Using such approaches means that we must encourage learners to access a wide variety of ways to gather and record their perceptions (for example, photography, painting, drawing, poetry), as well as to utilize multiple ways to represent their developing conceptual understandings (for example: story-telling, photography, painting, drawing, poetry, singing, dance, dramatic reenactment).

As teachers, we must open ourselves to multiple ways of knowing and learning. In educating to remember, we must hark back to the time of our ancestors, remember that all early humans lived with the understanding of their deep connections with the

earth, and attempt to uncover evidence (including art & artifacts, songs and stories) that reveal their ways of thinking. I think we should also pay attention to the ways of knowing and learning of peoples who still remember they are not strangers here – for example, to the ways of knowing and learning of the First Nations peoples of Canada. I think that peoples who still remember connectedness can teach educators much about such pedagogical approaches for educating to remember as described by Williams & Tanaka: "Indigenous ways of teaching and learning includ[e]: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening; telling stories and singing songs; learning in a community; and learning by sharing and providing service to the community" (2007).

In my experience, young children are wide open to experiential learning that engages them in exploring the wondrous and the mundane using mind and body/head and heart. However, I have also learned that older children and adults are often puzzled, confused, defensive, and sometimes actively resistant, when asked to venture into ways of thinking and learning that lie outside of their previous experiences. If we are to educate to remember connectedness we must, while remaining gentle and respectful, require learners to take such journeys with us.

For example, in working with teacher candidates, I first try to help them remember their connectedness through a relatively simple activity, which I model as a learning strategy that they could use with children during a Social Studies lesson. The purpose of the activity is to explore the question: What is the connection between 'identity' and geography? By exploring the connections, I am hopeful that teacher candidates are helped to 'remember'. After a large group speculative discussion about what they thinking the connection between identity and geography might be, I ask teacher candidates to:

> Paint a picture of yourself using words. Jot down words that pop into your mind when you hear me say the following: Describe:
>
> - Your physical self (what you look like)
> - Your feelings (your emotional self
> - Things you like to do with friends
> - Things you like to do with family
> - Things you like to do by yourself
> - Future plans (when you grow up)
>
> Pick from these words and write two to three sentences to describe your personal identity.
>
> Next, paint a picture of the geography where you live (grew up). Jot down words of description that pop into your mind when you hear the following:
>
> - The shape of the land (landscape) where you live
> - Bodies of water where you live
> - The climate where you live

- The trees/plants where you live
- The animals where you live
- The natural resources where you live
- Things made by humans on the land/water where you live
- The smell of the air where you live

Pick from these words to write 2 – 3 sentences to describe your 'where you live/grew up.

Compare the two word pictures – yourself and where you live. Do you think the picture you painted of yourself is/has been influenced by where you live? If yes, in what ways?

Use the Think/Pair/Share approach to discuss responses to the questions with a partner and then the whole class.

After engaging in this simple exercise, teacher candidates usually express surprise about what they discovered regarding the connections between their personal identities and their 'place(s)' and they comment, with a degree of wonder, on aspects of this relationship that they had not previously recognized. For example, one teacher candidate commented, "I didn't think it would make such a difference that I was raised in the city, and [name of another teacher candidate] grew up on a farm. I guess the rural, urban thing really does matter."

In the end, however, I do think that the most important way in which we can educate for remembering is to engage learners in experiences outside the boundaries of schools and classrooms, using place-based learning approaches, where students experience connections with and within various ecological sites though a dialogical conversation where the perceptual (the body) and conceptual (the mind) work in tandem to shape understandings (Kentel & Karrow, 2007, p. 97).

To remember we are not strangers here we must go out into ecosystems, leave the protection of human-created environments, and engage with the soil, plants and animals, wind, rain and sunshine. We need to use our hands to grow and harvest our own food to more deeply understand the relationships between actions and consequences. Growing and harvesting also teaches us that we actually cannot control natural occurrences (like hail, frost, heat, insects, and deer) that can damage what we are growing. We need to experience how and why the deer eat our carefully planted seedlings, remembering that the doe and her tiny speckled fawn need nourishment, too; and when we plant the seeds in a location where the deer will find them as they journey down to the river to drink, we must recognize that the deer have as much right to eat the sweet beet tops as we have. In living side by side with beings who share our places, we can appreciate first hand, both the wonder and frustration of existence, and we can learn to laugh together. To remember we are not strangers here, we need time to sit quietly – to listen – to feel – to simply be with and in the 'here'. To educate for remembering we need to ensure these opportunities for both children and adults.

No matter how we approach educating for remembering, I think the ultimate goal of the process is to enhance the possibilities for ecological justice. Knowing that we are not strangers here – that is, creating "a sense and experience of belonging, of being "at home," with all life forms and all places" (Selby, 1998) is a necessary precondition for ecological justice. When we remember we are not strangers here, developing "that mystic sense of limitless belonging" (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1992, pp. 15 & 57. in Selby, 1998), we become empowered to take meaningful actions toward protection of ecosystems. In remembering connectedness, we can move beyond the pop culture catch phrases about recycling and reducing carbon footprints, into the necessary paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability.

For me ecological justice is a 'first order' generative concept. By this, I mean that the notion of ecological justice that results from deep mind and body comprehension of connectedness, lies behind or is the 'primary generator' of other ideas. As a first principle ecological justice comes before all the rest. When we remember we are not strangers here, we remember the connectedness which generates ideas necessary for living fully and justly and in relationship with all members of our earth community.

REFERENCES

Augustine, A. (413–426). *The city of god* (Rev. Marcus Dods, 1871). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://books.google.ca/books?id=OykMAAAAIAAJ&pg=PP9&dq=inpublisher:%22T.+%26+T.+Clark%22#PPP9,M1

Berry, T. (2003). The mystique of the earth. *Interviewed by Caroline Webb for Caduceus*, 59. Retrieved October 21, 2007 from http://www.thegreatstory.org/Berry-Webb.pdf

Collingwood, R. G. (1939). *An autobiography*. London: Oxford University Press.

Collingwood, R. G. (1940). *An essay on metaphysics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Collingwood, R. G. (1946/1993). *The idea of history. Revised edition with lectures 1926–1928*. (Jan Van Der Dussen, Ed.). Oxford:Clarendon Press.

Comte, A. (1830). Course of positive philosophy. In G. Lenzer, (Ed.), *Auguste Comte and positivism: The essential writings* (pp. 71–86). New York, NY: Harper. Retrieved July 16, 2008 from http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/comte_cpp.html

Comte, A. (1830–1842). A general view of positivism. (J. H. Bridges, R. Speller and Sons, 1957, Trans.).; transcribed by Andy Blunden, 1998, proofed.

Kentel, J. A. (2007). Mystery and the body: Provoking a deep ecology through the situated bodies of teacher candidates. *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education, (1),* 85–101. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://www.complexityandeducation.ualberta.ca/COMPLICITY4/documents/Complicity_41g_Kentel_Karrow.pdf

Rousseau, J. J. (1782). Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar. In *French and English philosophers: Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hobbes: With introductions and notes*. New York, NY: P.F. Collier, c1910. The Harvard classics v. 34. Retrieved July 15, 2008 from http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1782rousseau-savoyard.html

Selby, D. (1998). *Global education: Towards a quantum model of environmental education*. Retrieved September 4, 2005 from http://www.ec.gc.ca/education/documents/colloquium/selby.htm

Williams, L., & Tanaka, M. (2007). Tanaka Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga emerging cross-cultural pedagogy in the academy. *Educational Insights*, *11*(3). Retrieved July 15, 2008 from http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v11n03/articles/williams/williams.html

Lynn Lemisko
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan