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6. WAYS OF BEING, BELONGING, AND BECOMING

Arts Practice, the Relational, and Cultural Learning

Whenever I think of 'teaching' I always come back to one singular overarching thought—the power of the relational, and the values of empathy, diversity, and interdependency. I am reminded of this when I meet students for the first time, when I see them in ongoing mentorship roles, and when I go to schools and communities. I see it in my son who has worked in remote indigenous schools and in urban schools. It is an unmistakable part of the pedagogical experience and is always imbued with the aesthetic—that is, it is felt. In Shor and Freire's words: "Education is naturally an aesthetic exercise. Even if we are not conscious of this as educators, we are still involved in a naturally aesthetic project" (1987, p. 118). What this references for me is *awareness*, *presence*, or sometimes *a lack thereof*.

In this chapter, I describe ways of being in teaching as relational: to students, place, materials, community, and ideas, and I share elements of two projects in a remote indigenous community where I saw the relational both through its presence and the effects of its absence. While this is not an evaluation of the projects themselves, I share my experiences of them to help reveal ways of being in teaching and their enablers and constraints. In each of these two projects I describe how arts practice— both as process and product—is relational through connecting materials, ideas and people together. It is this process that always has a social element at some point during inception, creation, or sharing; the social imagination always containing the possibility of dialogue. And importantly through sharing what is made, that is our inquiry and expression, our connectedness to place, heritage, and those around us is increased. In Madeleine Grumet's words, "no one learns alone" (2004). I describe five different ways of being and *possibility thinking* as a disposition that links arts practice with these generative potentialities. Finally, going beyond these two project sites, I highlight four relational principles that highlight for me what enables education to be a state of growth with the benefits and responsibilities that flow as a consequence.

STATES OF RELATEDNESS

When I think about the relational and connectedness in teaching and learning I am reminded of the aphorism "I may not remember what you said, but I will remember

how you made me feel" (Buechner, 1984, p. 244). What this means is that, in the art of teaching and learning, the aesthetic counts and this takes us beyond the primacy of knowledge to where affect, sensuality, liminality, and embodiment interact. It is helpful, for example, to think about the relational in terms of attributes and dimensions; that is, how we *know* it and how it may vary providing richness and depth; I turn to these now and how they might be revealed.

Most often, we see the relational through its absence or *lack;* that is, when relationships of trust are not built, not much else happens, educationally speaking. Relationships of trust, like creativity, are not something that can be taught in the way that direct instruction teaches phonics with a script to follow; they relate to ways of being (the plural being important). Rather, as teachers we can provide conditions where these relationships can be developed and supported. I share two threads both drawing on my experience. The first describes a visit to a remote indigenous community school in the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia where, through a lack of awareness and humility, stereotypical perceptions of a cultural divide were reinforced and notions of cultural value and education as growth, never realised. This reveals that ways of being are always diverse and contingent.

The second, more hopeful description lies in a project where young people acted as artists, in other words *makers*, and developed both practices and ways of being that promoted cultural vitality, regeneration, and moved beyond shame, a lack of understanding, and lack of confidence. This second example shows how ways of being are developmental and imbued with the aesthetic and, at their best, promote connectedness through mutual understanding, collective communication, and respectful collaboration. The first, evoked by a back-story, provides a touchstone and entry for these points.

KNOWING AND (UN)KNOWING, DOING AND (UN)DOING

I was sitting in a four-wheel drive vehicle on the side of a dirt road six hours from any large town, 25 km from the interstate highway, and 2,800 km from the capital city; we were driving to a remote indigenous community. Sitting next to me in the vehicle was an eminent scholar who wanted to use this community for the purposes of research. The intention was good—build an educational game that honoured this community—draw on what was important to this community and, through their experiences, do much to educate the broader community about what it means to be an indigenous Australian at this time. This aim appealed to me immensely and referenced a lot of my own values. In short, I wanted to help.

I pulled to the shoulder of the gravel road, nothing more than a simple demarcation of where the road was used and not, and where the low sparse vegetation could grow unimpeded. The conversation went something like this.

Me: Were you able to have a look at that book I recommended? "White Men are Liars." (Bain, 2005)

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Visitor: Yeah, yeah

Me: What did you make of it?

Visitor: Interesting.

[Hmmm… I mentally raised an eyebrow, it sounded dismissive].

Me: You will find this context quite different from what you are used to.

Visitor: I can adapt.

Me: Some things are consistent, but particularities matter. When you work in a community such as this, who you are [as a person] matters much more than what you are [status]. There is a long and difficult history of communities being 'used' for someone else's purposes. It is important to listen, be present, and recognise difference.

Visitor: Yes I know that *[peering at his phone for non-existent reception]*.

We buckled up and then drove the final five kilometres to the community… I wasn't sure that he got it.

THE POP-UP APPLE SHOP

Upon arriving my visitor unpacked a digital projector, some computers, computer games, a digital scanner, a printer and assorted cables, a high definition digital video camera, microphones, extension leads, power boards and the like. It was a bit like a mobile Apple shop and stood in stark contrast to the worn tired spaces and facilities frequently found in forgotten places. Our immediate contact in the community—someone I had built a relationship with over the last year—helped us unpack and set up in one end of a community space—a stark place consisting of a concrete floor, walls of corrugated iron, and some bench seats. During the rest of the afternoon a number of young people drifted by, attracted by visitors, the games, and the high tech equipment (these having high currency in such a remote location); many stayed to play.

The intention was that we conduct interviews with young people and community members, take some images that we then share in a public space, and seek feedback on them. In my experience, this was a good approach in terms of iterative feedback loops, but attempting to do this without the bonds of knowing and relationships of trust, especially in this context was problematic; it lacked insight because connectedness implies a particular way of being and takes time. My suggestion that we visit on a number of occasions and build relationship wasn't a notion that was supported by him. My experience of this community and others was that we needed to be *present* to this community and that, given time, good things could then flow as a consequence.

Our purpose in conducting these interviews with the community and young people present was to find out about what these interviewees cared about, and this was a principle upon which the project was intended to be built. When my colleague went to talk to these (mainly) young men gathered around the technology, they either remained focussed on the games, or simply remained silent, being engaged by the attractiveness of the technology rather than my colleague himself. Turning off the games and computers as a first response by my colleague to get attention didn't help; the young people simply drifted off.

We also had sought permission for a series of interviews with students who were at the school, and introduced ourselves to the principal who was both a gatekeeper and facilitator, and who offered both advice and perspective. The way that this happened was revealing. After negotiating appropriate permissions, no young person would (by choice) be interviewed alone—we then did this in groups of four—three young people at a time and an interviewer. In each interview, and there wasn't many, we worked hard to elicit stories of these student's experience of *being* in community and education. Unfortunately—and perhaps symptomatically—being bound by an external schedule rather than responsive to place, we left before we really began.

DISCONNECTION AND SHAME

As I reflect on this experience, the interviews, and the observations I was able to make, one theme that remained consistent was that of *shame*. Shame is an interesting phenomenon that appears in particular ways in remote and rural indigenous communities that goes beyond being shy. Shyness, for example, lies more in the individual, whereas shame more strongly references the self in relation to others; the issue with this being that Western understandings of eye contact and silence are out of step with indigenous ways of being (Bain, 2005).

Shame in this context is about not putting yourself forward, stepping out in front (sometimes literally), and being visible in separating from the group. In this particular context the group is more important than the individual, hence being separate from the group is disconnecting and shaming. Shame can also take a variety of forms. For example, *shame* to be the one who is called on, *shame* about speaking out, being disrespected and *shamed* by the system that seeks to test students through standardised testing in what can be their third or fourth language. And *shamed* sometimes by friends and the teachers themselves.

For these young people—and many in traditional societies—sharing and reciprocity are not optional and so binding co-operative relationships are encouraged, coordinated, and reinforced. Consequently, disconnection as a defense of mismatched cultural understandings can mean a loss of security, belonging, identity and, in this case, anonymity provided by the group. Hence shame could be both horizontal—how I appear before my peers—and vertical, where there was a power differential.

My visitor found this perplexing and outside of his own frame of reference. For example, he would relate how many students in his experience would actively seek

opportunities to outshine others. In the context of his Western-centric experience, it was the *successful* individual who was celebrated, almost worshipped. Hence everyone who didn't aspire to stand out, individuate, and put themselves first—even at the expense of others—was somehow looked down on, this being the 'cult of the individual' to which Durkheim referred (2009). Connection in this later context comes from an aspiration that is desirable amongst young people (Psarras, 2014), but often vacuous and manufactured (Twenge & Campbell, 2010), and not relational in a way that reflects dialogue and mutuality.

More recently, the work of Brené Brown is revealing as it provides a different perspective. Brown talks about shame as a universal fear—the fear of being alone—and a threat to connection (Brown, 2012). This highlights that shame is not particular to any one group, indigenous Australians for example, and the fear of disconnection is profound. It is this notion of connection, and fear of disconnection, that has such significant implications for ways of being in teaching where relationship comes before anything.

In these remote communities referenced earlier, shame appears close to the surface and, going beyond what was our project, has significant implications for everyday life. For example, in indigenous communities there is a long history of well-intentioned but destructive forms of interventions by governments and agencies alike based on lack of awareness of different ways of being (d'Abbs, 1989; Smith et al., 2013). In an Australian context, for example, external government controversially restricts alcohol sales in indigenous communities. While limiting alcohol's destructive effects, it also indicates a diminution of agency within the community, and promotes an immediate illegal trade of procurement. However, when the community came to a decision to be alcohol free themselves, the restrictions were enforced by community members and positive benefits—such as feelings of respect and pride—resulted. Culture, in this way, was strengthened and went beyond immediate benefits of the issues, such as a reduction in domestic violence itself.

Following on the principle of connection, in indigenous communities it is the collective that is important rather than the individual. For example, people know themselves not by standing out on their own but through their relationships with others. For visitors or someone new, sharing photos of your family is far more connecting than listing individual accomplishments. Putting someone in the context of their country (place), and their family are two aspects of belonging and connecting that reflect identity not seen in white urban Australia. Connecting to people and place builds and strengthens, while sympathy fuels disconnection.

TALKING TOO MUCH—DOING, NOT BEING

It was also in this community where the school principal recounted her initial experiences in this remote setting. As the product of white middle class upbringing, she arrived in the community with a desire to improve the conditions of the community through building the aspirations of the young people. Equipped with a strong sense

of social justice and a passion for indigenous education, but distressed by the third world conditions she observed, she quickly realised that little would change unless she had the support of the community. What struck her was the first question asked of all new appointments to the community: "How long are you staying?" The history of white education in indigenous communities is replete with churn as new teachers are tested by lack of support, difficult living conditions, and the isolation one feels when removed from what is familiar. So, after school finished each day she would walk the 50 metres down to the community-run store that was a gathering place and sit down outside with the old men and women who gathered there each day.

Her initial attempts to initiate conversation were met with monosyllabic answers or abject silence. Not comfortable with silence, she would redouble her efforts. After some weeks of this routine an elder in the community lent in to her and said: "You white people just want to talk all the time." It was, for her, a powerful lesson that pointed towards a different way of being where she needed to decentre, that is, take the perspective of the community rather just seeing their lives through her own, and suspend judgment. This suspension of judgement provides space for relationship or connection building through recognising the authenticity and validity of this community's feelings and differences to her own.

Importantly, each of these ways of being are consistent with Wiseman's (1996) defining characteristics of empathy—that is, building connection through being present and listening deeply—simply put, being still. Empathy is a powerful way of being in teaching.

ARTS PRACTICE: MATCH AND (MISS)MATCH: UNICORNS, FAIRIES, AND BARBIE DOLLS

The second experience (in the same community but a different time) reveals how arts practice is connecting, and how learning by making has a particular resonance to health and wellbeing, cultural development, engagement, and agency (Wright & Pascoe, 2015). In this school there are a series of stand-alone classrooms with concrete slabs in between them. Some five years previously a new graduate with great intentions asked some students to paint murals on these pads with their choices of what the subject matter might be—the idea being that this would improve the aesthetic of the school.

Some of the young female students at that time were engaged by this prospect and volunteered. These students then filled the pads with pictures of unicorns and fairies, images that you might see in promoting the stereotypical popular culture of young pre-adolescent girls and jarring to some eyes in the context of a remote desert community.

While from a position of privilege, it might be easy to be outraged about this cultural dissonance, this view is myopic. What it does reveal, for example, is the power of the media where young women are effectively targeted as consumers for merchandising through the large advertising budgets of multinational corporations.

By way of evidence, this now familiar trope has Facebook pages, wiki links with YouTube clips, and merchandising that goes from the dolls themselves and associated collectables, to clothing, costumes, and video games.

These images represented a strong disjuncture between the rich cultural heritage of this indigenous community—part of the oldest living culture in the world—and what was reflected in the aspirations of these young women in remote communities. It raises questions about belonging and connection, fitting in, and ways of being where teaching at its best might be seen to be a distributed responsibility.

SHAME, FITTING IN, AND SAYING NO

More recently, in the same community, there was a group of young women who either did not attend school or attended only intermittently. This is an ongoing challenge and bumps up against the issue where education is the path to breaking cycles of poverty, disengagement, and disenfranchisement, but education in its current form also being the reason that many young people don't attend school at all. It is also the case that in some communities where people feel disconnected from their culture, young women particularly are at a heightened risk of exposure to domestic violence and assault.

Recognising this issue within the community, the school established a protective behaviours program. This program, adapted from the early work of Peg Flandreau-West in the 1970's, builds confidence, and identity, and *teaches* specific strategies such as the ability to say, "no". One feature of this community was that some of the senior women were also established artists successfully capturing the dreaming of their community and language group. These stories are both repositories of collective consciousness of their language group, and so not only touchstones of identity and ways of being, and also the songlines[1] important for health and wellbeing.

One of the most effective parts of the program was linking these young women in the community with some of the elders—in this case the senior women artists mentioned before. There were often, but not always, familial ties between them— some were the young women's grandmothers or aunties, for example. The school provided materials such as canvas and paint, and a space to work, in this case an outdoor undercover area within the school grounds but away from the classrooms themselves. The young women literally sat at the shoulders of the elders as they painted and yarned (an indigenous cultural form of conversation). This process built relationships, some of which had been fractured or problematic, and became a site for sharing, development, and induction into a cultural identity that had previously been rejected. What I was able to observe was these senior women teaching the young women through their presence and yarning—in short, a different way of being in teaching.

While this building of connection might seem incongruous in the context of a remote community that is village-like in scope, it reflects the pervasive effects of media and popular culture alongside young people's innate desire to push back

against the previous generation. A further complication in some of these communities is the disconnection experienced through the damaging effects of alcohol and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), with resulting brain damage and growth problems. For example, in this context, a generation of parents have been exposed to the ravages of alcohol and other addictions—this becoming a double burden of the "Lost Generation[2]"—and those young people born under this burden have suffered developmental deficits of varying complexities.

There were a number of benefits that flowed as a consequence of this arts-based program. First, these young women attended school every day that the project was on, even coming in to paint during holidays. Second, identity was strengthened through building connections, past to present, and intergenerationally. Third, through arts practice values of life, beliefs and spirit were strengthened. Fourth, the cultural world of this community was animated and enriched both through its reproduction and affirmation, but also through the young women's creative contribution to it. Finally, these young women's artwork was displayed in a significant gallery and income was derived from it for the artists; this provided an enabling pathway that otherwise wouldn't have existed. What this project did was draw together through arts practice the individual and her peer group, the family and community, and engagement with school—each being significant in building resilience and minimizing 'risk-taking' behaviour (Hanewald, 2011; McElwee, 2007).

Ways of Being and Arts-Based Programs

This project reveals how arts-based programs are rich with possibility in education and community development. This is because they are multilayered and link various components of growth and development, drawing together both the intersubjective and intrasubjective (Wright, 2011). They offer powerful approaches to building ways of being that complete the loop between inquiry and expression, connection and belonging, referencing those in the pedagogical encounter with place, heritage, ideas through creative process, and materials. Arts-based programs provide a vision of possibility, and projects, such as the one previously touched on, reveal how ways of being, particularly relationships, might be built both through what *was* and *wasn't.* If growth, in this context, can be understood as a natural way of being then a deep consideration of projects such as this, and the way context shapes and frames interactions, enables me to provide an elaboration of how different ways of being can support and nurture rather than be strained, constrained, restricted, or stifled.

Ways of being as listening. The history of unsuccessful attempts to bridge the gap between indigenous and white Australians is replete with good meaning and well-intentioned attempts to *educate* young people and lift them out of poverty. Despite many programs and substantial injections of funds, this gap has stubbornly resisted change. Coming from a position of privilege, what has been missing is the ability to listen to community and work with their needs and aspirations. For example, there

now exists the regime of the National Assessment Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Introduced in 2008, this yearly assessment is conducted in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. On this day, annually, many indigenous students brought up speaking traditional languages first, various forms of Aboriginal English second, or English based creole before Standard Australian English—the language of *testing* and *instruction*—third and fourth, simply stay away. The testing regime, for instance, holds little benefit for these young people, is shaming (the school's results are published on a public website), and the high stakes testing produces pressure on staff that either consciously or unconsciously translates to students. One outcome of this regime of testing is a dramatically growing area of publications, resources, and private options—tutoring and the like—for NAPLAN preparation. These resources remain the province of those who have the resources to purchase them. A secondary outcome of the low results of students in remote communities where standard Australian English can be a third or fourth language has been the impact on cultural learning, one of these impacts being, by way of example, the abolition of the bilingual languages policy in Australia's Northern Territory.

This shaming of language, and hence identity, stands in stark contrast to the effectiveness of honouring indigenous languages and the successful use of two-way learning that brings together both traditional languages and standard Australian English. Listening is key to helping these young people walk in both worlds.

Ways of being as stillness. In the first visit to the community, time was a pressure. My colleague was intent on making a flying visit and maximising his time there collecting data. The location was remote, and there were considerable costs involved in long flights, car hire, and many hours of driving. Time was also a pressure in another way. In this community we were guests. The rhythm of life was different, determined more by seasons, community life, and the demands of cultural practices. This meant that there was a disjuncture between a western-centric schedule predicated on minutes and hours and an indigenous experience of time.

Being still in this context was honouring and mattered; it allowed things to happen in a sense of time determined by our participants rather than a predetermined schedule. Being still also allowed the importance of place itself to speak. Education is always contextually bound, and being responsive can allow the significance of place—that locates, grounds, and permeates every aspect of community—to also imbue the research, adding a richness and texture that might otherwise be missing.

Ways of being as reciprocity. The dreaming stories the elders told—both through yarning and their visual (re)presentations—were the cultural heritage of the land that birthed them. These acts of representation, and the country that was animated through them, was moving for the elders and young people alike and evoked reciprocity. Some of the elders, for example, had not seen their birthplaces—the country that was painted—for 50 years, walking in from their nomadic lives off the desert for the first time in living memory. These acts of connection allowed the young women to

assume ongoing custodianship of this living culture and act as keepers of place. This meant that, as one elder shared, elders could now die in peace knowing that these young women not only had an artistic future, but that their living culture with the responsibility that comes with it—caring for country—had been passed on. A young person also said, "Now I know where I come from," this being important identity work.

Ways of being as potentiality—a state of growth. It is hard to argue against both education and arts practice being sites of growth, the art in this context being important as a way of knowing. In the context of this project, the art the elders made was the mnemonic for this community's ancestral stories. These stories are touchstones for identity development, and more than this, literally ground people in place. They describe, for example, both significant geographical features as well as dreaming stories, and are repositories for different ways of knowing beyond the formally sanctioned knowledge of schools. As many older artists had now died, or were in their 70s, or too unwell to paint, the future of this practice was in doubt. As connection to culture and place fades, identity is lost, as is the ability to know who we are.

As the elders painted with the seven young women by their sides, the young women learned the styles and techniques of their elders; as the young women grew in confidence and ability, they not only learned country through representing it, but they also made the stories their own. In this context, the art was building relationship between the young and senior women, relationship with community through being visible, and relationship through connecting with this community's cultural heritage and their own contributions towards it; potentiality writ large.

Ways of being as actuality. What this project reflects is relationship as actuality, that is, going from possibility to something that occurred through action. For example, the process of sitting together, creating and (re)creating, meant that relationships developed or were strengthened in the community, that traditional knowledge of ancestral sites and creation stories that were in danger of passing away with the elders became the province of the young women who moved into relationship with this knowledge and so became custodians of it.

Ways of being as empathy not apathy. I came to see through this art project that these young women came to care for the community and the land—this notion being important in indigenous culture where the western notion of ownership of the land is foreign. The traditional view, more specifically, is that the land owns the people—they are simply caretakers of it. Being inducted into their own cultural heritage meant for these young people that the integrity, and hence the dignity, of these peoples is protected.

In this project arts practice developed ways of being, building aesthetic capacity through bringing people, place, and culture into awareness through the artwork.

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In addition, the relationships that were engendered further provide an opportunity for each young person to reflect on her own life, culture, and what they, as individuals and as a community, value.

<div style="text-align:center">WHAT IF, AS IF—BELONGING, BEING, BECOMING</div>

The notion that education is a state of growth, and growth is a natural state of being, is encompassed by *what if* type questions. These questions provide provocations and opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving that lie at the heart of arts education and practice as well as into richer ways of being in teaching. When the imagination is engaged, for example, we can act *as if* something was real and so bring it into existence. Arts-based practice allows some of these questions to be asked, and capabilities to be exercised and developed. This is because the senses allow us to engage with the world, through the capabilities that relate to them: perception, intuition, and what is felt. This means that, in order to realise these capabilities, aesthetic ways of being and doing need to be linked so that these organising practices occur in deliberate and careful ways in order to provide an evocation and engage us in a variety of ways.

When we work in artistic ways as *makers,* we share in performative ways that are the "symbolic and metaphoric extensions of human thought and feeling" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 120). These extensions ground us in the human story reflecting agency, connectedness, and engagement. It is the case, for example, that culture and cultural learning has a critical role to play in human consciousness.

One of the most helpful ways, then, that we can develop these capacities and dispositions is to practice them as "possibility thinking" in the way that Anna Craft (2011) describes. In this understanding, there are four characteristics that can "extend how we interact and learn" (Craft, 2011, p. 129): playfulness, plurality, participation, and possibilities. For example, *playfulness* is relational; it is instinctive and fundamental to our existence. It is pleasurable and a way to feel alive. It is also a creative act and, hence, generative. Playfulness can also provide an exploratory drive that is energising.

Plurality highlights that, in education, there are a variety of entry and exit points, that there are many paths that can be trod, that context is always different, and that each interaction that happens in the pedagogical encounter is always dynamic in nature. In addition, the opportunities that education itself offers changes by intent and purpose; in this sense, plurality is a defining feature of education and, hence, reveals many ways of both being and doing.

Participation is key to learning experiences and highlights that education is not about an individual, but rather about engagement, involvement and action, and the agency education manifests and affords. In the same way that plurality defines responsiveness, participation also occurs on a continuum from active to passive, creating to spectating (Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011). What this means is that arts practice opens up the possibilities for "worldly, productive sites of crossing:

complex unfinished paths between local and global attachments" (Clifford, 1998, pp. 362, 365).

Even though Craft situates these observations in the context of young people in the 21st century, they provide powerful signposts towards how the practices of education can be strengthened in relational ways. Perhaps even more poignantly, this conceptualisation reminds us that it is not simply teachers who have a plurality of ways of being in teaching, but students as well; "high participation and high possibilities" (Craft, 2011, p. 134) applies to all who are implicated in a dynamic ecology of learning.

Finally, my reflections on these projects allow me to consider my own ways of being in teaching: successes and failures, pleasure and the pain, being stretched and contained, and what allows me to be mindful and continue to reach beyond. There are four principles that are consistent touchstones and allow me to continue to struggle and grow, touchstones that are also described through the Relational Movement (www.therelationalmovement.org). These principles highlight how, for me, different ways of being in teaching can be strengthened in relational ways.

First is my aim for *Collective Resonance*—practices of sensing and resonating that form the basis for access to mutual understanding and compassion, activating the capacity to recognize human belonging that transcends different groups and cultures. This underscores the playfulness and the power of the aesthetic where arts-based ways of being and knowing have much to contribute through reconfiguring what is taken for given.

Second is my aspiration towards *Radical Inclusion*—practices of strengths-based, appreciative inquiry and collaborative communication in the context of everyday community life, encouraging people to accept and value each other's differences. It is this second principle, for example, that moves me beyond deficit forms of thinking, linking cultural assets with place, community, and diversity, and so referencing plurality and the many ways of being.

Third is my purposeful work towards *Democratic Participation*—practices of respectful collaboration and distribution of shared responsibility for the well-being of communities. This third principle draws our attention to how learning is not located in silos or individuals, but rather lies in the interactions between the webs and flows of meaning and responsibility. Simply put, participation is a choice that is inter-relational, embodied, expressive, and draws on image, sound, movement, space and multimodal texts.

Finally, *Ongoing Cultivation*—practices of relational organizing and leadership in order to engage people in building and sustaining a healthy, diverse and participatory culture. This final principle is instructive in the way it amplifies that growth and development is processual and purposeful and that cultural learning is relational, connecting people, place, materials and ideas.

At its best, my own work as a maker/teacher in arts-based projects enables different ways of being allowing all participants in the pedagogical encounter to become architects of their own knowledge.

CONCLUSION

These two different experiences, the reflections and learnings from them, and what they access for me across my own trajectory of discovery reveals that there is a multiplicity of ways of being in teaching that goes beyond the taken for granted. It is awareness of these differences that can take us beyond the current climate of repressive regimes of testing where education is reduced to a *doing* not a *being,* and where teaching becomes the antithesis of accompaniment. More particularly, a lack of awareness of difference, inclusion, and the generative possibilities offered through play and the creative act means that education as a process of development for student and teacher alike is impoverished.

Arts practice as the warp and weft of cultural learning provides a different way of being for all participants in the pedagogical exchange, providing multi-modal experiences of life, developing a capacity for life, and with powerful applications. In short, working in arts-based ways develops different ways of being through: building awareness that there are more creative ways of being in teaching; representing these differences in a variety of forms where participants can take a variety of positions on them; and revealing that a tension exists between what might be universal and so shared, and that which is situated in the particulars of context and everyday lived experiences.

Finally, successful arts practice can represent a different way of being in teaching that is not didactic or reproductive, but rather expands our understanding of the power of the relational in: connecting to young people's lived experience in dialogic ways; the importance of connecting young people to themselves and the community; the importance of place and the land which shapes them; and important ideas they believe are worth telling. In short, ways of being in teaching ought to be rich with *possibility thinking.*

In this way, my own ways of being in teaching through arts-based methodologies cannot only preserve important symbolic and experiential histories of knowledge, but also communicate them in a way that builds empathy and understanding. If we accept that all good pedagogy depends on relationship before anything, then in the words of activist Lilla Watson: *If you have come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*

NOTES

[1] Songlines are imagined and actual paths across the land and recorded in traditional songs, stories, and painting. The songlines themselves both represent points of connections but also ways through the landscape and so had conceptual, spiritual and practical value.

[2] The Stolen Generation refers to a generation of children who were forcibly removed from their families by successive Australian Governments from the early 1990s for approximately 70 years. I use this term to refer to those who were the children of these indigenous Australians while, not forcibly removed, were 'lost' through various forms of abuse and disconnect.

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