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## Critical Discourse Analyses of Early Education-Land Assemblages within Settler-Colonial British Columbia, Canada

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Education

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## Abstract

‘Outdoor’ education receives ample attention in early education, as land and dominant developmental discourses fuel promissory outcomes for children as future market driven citizens. What has not received sufficient attention are critical examinations of ‘outdoor education’ that account for persistent colonial-capitalist-neoliberal logics, especially in British Columbia, Canada where ‘outdoor’ education abounds. This thesis explores *how early education perpetuates the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies* through a historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education, and a Discourse-Historical analysis of the 2019 British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF). Addressing three main discourses (*quality, citizenship, and well-being and belonging*), I underscore the need for anti-colonial efforts to seriously refuse enduring colonial-capitalist-neoliberal ‘outdoor’ program rhetoric, and instead, nourish just and equitable relations in land-based education.

**Keywords:** anti-colonial, early education, discourse analysis, colonialism, Canada.

## Summary for Lay Audience

‘Outdoor’ education, which is promoted as teaching and learning ‘on’ and ‘from’ the land, is very popular in early education especially in the colonially claimed province of British Columbia, Canada. The popularity of this form of education comes from key discourses (ways of understanding and being in the world) that promote the ‘outdoors’ as beneficial to children’s ‘overall’ well-being, development, and learning. These understandings, however, are generated from narrow ideas of what children, childhood, and the ‘outdoors’ entail. That is, although the ‘benefits’ of land based learning may sound innocent and neutral in a political sense, they are far from it. Early education programs were set up to ‘educate’ colonial-settlers and Indigenous children into ‘proper Canadian’ culture and values through dominant Euro-Western ideas on education. Thus, land and early education have an intimate, complex, and political relationship that cannot continue to be ignored. Through an anti-colonial framework, my thesis weaves narratives of Canada’s enduring colonial history with the history of early education in British Columbia, with the hope that more just and equitable ways of teaching, learning, and being may be possible.

“Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous.”

Thomas King, 2003

## Dedication

To my Auntie Claire ~ None of this, down to my life, would have been possible without you.

Until we meet again, tá grá agam duit ó mo chroí amach.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking my thesis supervisor Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and my committee member Dr. Erica Neeganagwedgin for their guidance, knowledge, and support throughout this process. Your encouragement and advisership has added breadth and depth to my work and fortified my passion for education.

I would like to thank the additional brilliant, inventive, and dedicated women who have challenged, inspired, and instructed me during my professional and pedagogical pursuits. There are too many to name here, but I hope I have expressed my gratitude to you enough personally that you know who you are. There are truly not sufficient words to adequately articulate the appreciation I have for your combined impressions on me.

I must also give my thanks to the advocates, scholars, writers, thinkers, creators, and ‘everyday’ people whose words, work, and wisdom I look to for personal-pedagogical sustenance. Although you may never know who I am, your presences, stories, and resolve to share pieces of yourselves profoundly co-shape my being and becoming.

To my dear friends-family ~ Anna, Connie, Danielle, Ruth, Samantha, and Stefanie. Thank you for always listening to, reassuring, and caring for me. I could not have done this (or the rest of life) without you.

To mom and dad ~ thank you for everything. I love you.

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## Introduction

### Chapter 1

#### 1.1 Enchanted Childhoods

Although early education in British Columbia (BC) is attempting to transform curriculum and pedagogy into a more equitable and relational paradigm, particularly through revisions to the second edition of the British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF 2019), there is still much work to be done (Díaz-Díaz, 2021; Nxumalo, 2019). In today's context early education in Canada is structured as a social-service modeled on capitalist-neoliberal rhetoric, while its educational philosophies are inherited from dominant European ideologies (Díaz-Díaz, 2021; Moss, 2014; Taylor 2013). In addition, as the 'nationhood' of Canada is a settler-colonial state, early education is implicated in the ongoing "colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples' lands and languages as well as the displacement of their families and cultures" through violent tactics; affairs I will speak to throughout my thesis (Díaz-Díaz, 2021, p.4). These colonial-capitalist-neoliberal *histories* and frameworks have also fused 'land' pedagogies and childhood into indistinguishable companions in Westernized settings (Burman, 2020; Drew & MacAlpine, 2020; Taylor 2017). Images of scuffed knees, grass stains, laughter ricocheting off sizzling summer pavement, and cool, crisp air stinging young pink lungs, paint landscapes of what a 'good,' 'quality' child(hood) ought to be (Burman, 2020).

These romanticized dreamscapes of purity and virtue, while as seemingly innocent as the children who haunt them, are in fact fantasies conjured up by the ever-persistent project of colonization (Burman, 2020; Nxumalo, 2016; Taylor, 2013, 2017). Scenes such as these aim to naturalize the mirage of childhood through a child-centred, developmental narrative,

while upholding nature/culture divides (Bardina, 2017; Cairns 2018; Nxumalo 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw 2013). The field of early education attempts to protect the ‘nature-child,’ amplified by alarm bells sounding the era of the *Anthropocene* declared “as the current geological epoch in which humans, as a geophysical force, have irreversibly damaged the earth” (Nxumalo, 2019, p. 29), and rectify this precarious era through exposing children to the ‘outdoors.’ This reactionary ‘remedy’ comes with an especially heightened concern for cultivating particular twenty-first century skills crafted for children’s future endeavours in labour markets (Cairns 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw 2013; Taylor 2017). Despite being confronted by these living histories, early education lingers within a passive positionality and apolitical concern for its role and power in upholding the colonial-settler project of education (Díaz-Díaz, 2021; Moss, 2014; Nxumalo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw; 2013; Vintimilla; 2014).

## **1.2 Thesis Overview**

My thesis works to make visible ‘mainstream’ early education’s role and implications in the ongoing colonial-settler project of education within the ‘nation-state’ of Canada. Through an anti-colonial lens, I aim to unsettle sedimented knowledge regarding ‘modern’ early education-land assemblages, as land becomes reduced to places of ‘discovery’ within dominant contexts. There is ample literature regarding the benefits of land, as part of a greater ‘outdoor’ landscape, for children’s acquisition of ‘universal’ skills based learning, developmental scaffolding, as well as environmental stewarding potentialities (Banack & Berger 2020; Burman, 2017; Cairns, 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor, 2017). What has not received sufficient attention, which I attempt to attend to, are critical examinations of ‘outdoor education’ beyond colonial-capitalist-neoliberal paradigms and logics

specifically in Canada (Banack & Berger, 2020; Cairns, 2018; Nxumalo et al., 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Taylor, 2013, 2017; Wildcat et al., 2014). I also contribute a weaving of foundational discourses and *historicitities* (an interplay of thinking and being through time and space) regarding *early education-land assemblages* (e.g., the confederacy of Canada including the abhorrent treatment perpetuated on Indigenous people and their Traditional Lands, as well as the dominant Euro-Western early education philosophies carried to ‘Canadian’ shores during that time) within a colonial-Canadian context. I do so as there is a lack of literature assembling these historical contourings and considerations (Díaz-Díaz; 2021; Marker, 2015; Wildcat et al., 2019).

These assemblages are an important contribution to the field of early education in Canada, specifically in BC, if early education is to take seriously anti-colonial efforts and action. Locating early education as a complex, ongoing political project urges frameworks, specifically the British Columbia Early Learning Framework, pedagogy, policy, and practitioners to take up *traitorous identities* (Plumwood, 2002) which refuse to uphold dominant institutionalization. By analysing and disrupting humancentric ideologies perpetuating nature/culture divides through underscoring the inseparability of theory, practice, knowledge, and subject formation, I contribute to a tearing at the colonial-capitalist-neoliberal fabrics bolstering early education in Canada, so that more just and equitable relations may be centred and nourished.

### **1.3 Organization of Thesis**

This thesis is an integrated-article format comprised of two papers (chapters 2 and 3), this introduction, and a brief conclusion. This introductory paper provides context for my thesis

which aims to bring papers two and three together in coherent conversation. As papers two and three are written as articles for publication, each will outline my personal-pedagogical standpoints, theoretical framework, methodologies, and methods. As such, there may be some repetition and overlap due to the integrated-article format I have chosen.

This introduction (chapter 1) offers a broad overview to my research and contextualizes the second and third papers within an anti-colonial framework. In this first paper, I situate my personal-pedagogical standpoint as a non-Indigenous researcher, elucidate the anti-colonial framework and methodology I am thinking with throughout my thesis, as well as introduce my methods for the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to critical analysis of the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF) which I similarly use in my historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education within a colonial-Canadian context.

The first article (chapter 2) is a historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education that critically traces early education’s historical inheritances and reverberations by narrating them alongside, and within, ‘modern’ Canadian contexts. To support an anti-colonial orientation, I look to the Indigenous worldview, *All our (or my) relations*, as a key counter story (Madden, 2019) to land pedagogies and ‘outdoor’ curriculum in current, dominant early education paradigms.

The second article (chapter 3) conducts a *Discourse-Historical Approach* (DHA) to critical analysis of the (2019) BCELF through locating capitalist-neoliberal rhetoric, interlocking them with colonial past-present historicities, interrogating implicit and explicit language upholding these regimes, as well as interrelating multiple ‘outside’ texts that underpin the BCELF’s framing. This article also asks my primary research question, at a policy level,

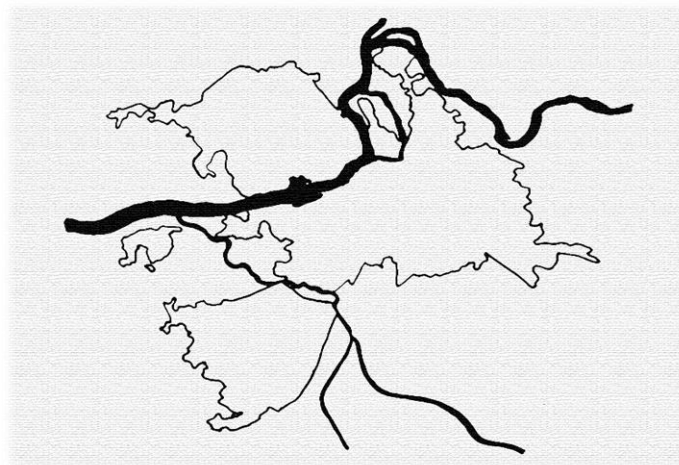
how does early education perpetuate the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies within curricular frameworks such as the (2019) BCELF?

Lastly, my thesis does not conclude with definitive findings or material solutions to enduring status quo early education-land assemblages in BC. Rather, the final chapter begins by extending dialogue between the introduction, chapter 2 (article #1), and chapter 3 (article #2), then offers anti-colonial implications and questions for further examination, ending with my final thoughts.

#### **1.4 Grounding the Research: Multi-Textured Storytelling**

This integrated article thesis offers personal and historical vignettes, photography, links to ‘external’ material, and poetry throughout. Contouring this thesis with multi-textured storying is meant as “an ethical practice” in order to “tell stories that draw audiences into other’s lives in new and consequential ways” (van Dooren & Rose, 2016, as cited in Banack & Berger, 2020, p. 58). Time traveling with, through, and alongside multiple living stories of past-present-futurity in flux, draws inspiration from Banack and Berger’s (2020) anecdote about walking with children as *meandering*. They “invite meandering as a philosophical concept” and “approach to life and pedagogy” (p.58). Along with Banack and Berger I aim to cultivate an “attentiveness to the evolving ways of life” and “diverse forms of human and nonhuman life, in an effort to explore and perhaps re-story the relationships that constitute and nourish them” in early education (van Dooren & Rose, 2016, as cited in Banack & Berger, 2020, p. 58).

#### **1.5 Personal-pedagogy**



**Figure 1.1:** Hand drawn map of Limerick Ireland, including Abhainn na Sionainne (Irish language), the River Shannon.

My research interests spring firstly from a personal standpoint ‘outside’ of academia, as being adopted (from Ireland) imprints a particular mark on one’s identity. Having little to no close familial connection to my culture, language, or histories influenced me to seek them out. This yearning as a child to re-collect where I came from shaped me to be incredibly curious and inquisitive. When I had a question, my mom would direct me to my Childcraft Encyclopedias (80’s & 90’s, pre Google) and I quickly fell in love with the folk tales, places to know, and the green kingdom sections as they transported me into worlds (I thought at the time were) beyond my own. As time and technology motored on, I was able to digitally search more specifically about where my family lineage dwells in Limerick Ireland. I became particularly drawn to (what I would later come to understand as pre-Christian) ‘historical’ ways of living with seasonal rhythms tied to land, other than human relations (land, water, trees, animals etc.), and fooding rituals (foraging, fishing, planting, harvesting, cooking, preserving, and feasting to name a few).



I grew up in Tsawwassen meaning *Land facing the sea* in hənqəm'í'nəm, which is part of the Traditional Territories of the Coast Salish peoples in British Columbia, Canada (BC). It is an estuary with diverse topographies of ocean, river, and bogs, as well as a climate that allows for robust agriculture. Farming and fishing within this peninsula are a part of what it means to live in this place (think sentiments of 'support local'). I have fond memories of gardening in my backyard as a very young child and one of the vegetables we were sure to plant every season were potatoes. They were present at pretty much every dinner, and I still love a good French fry (notable: not invented in France, but Belgian fry doesn't really have the same ring to it). Although synonymous with Irish culture as a hearty staple food, this innocuous, beige lump of a vegetable also carries in its flesh millions of deaths and an abundance of loss. Many people have heard of the catastrophe in Ireland viscerally dubbed *The Great Famine* which began in 1845, spurred on by a (*Phytophthora infestans*) potato blight (McLean, 2004). What many are not aware of are the reasons for the humble potato becoming a mono-culture crop in Irish soil to begin with; to be abrupt, colonization (McLean, 2004). Carrying this "cultural memory in the present" (McClellan, 2004, series title) into my former career as an early childhood educator, now pedagogist, and researcher, affords me particular attunement to how people interact with food, land, and the ways in which they compose (and we them) our being and becomings.

I must distinctly note at this point that I use caution when offering the above personal narratives, as some could be conflated with "mutuality based on sympathy and suffering" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 20). Although this is not my intention, the risk of misinterpretation is possible. Weaving my personal-pedagogical standpoints together through these narrations is intended as a grounding. It is also meant to create an entryway into tilling at

the rhizomatic slips of neutrality sown into policy and land pedagogies in early education. Re-collecting and re-tracing these anecdotes also obliges me as a non-Indigenous researcher on stolen Land, to continuously provoke my personal-pedagogy by carefully listening to the places which raised and continue to shape me on the West Coast of Turtle Island, now known as Canada (Watts, 2013). These *entanglements* (Alaimo, 2016; Nxumalo, 2019) of past-present-futurity transplanted from Ireland to Tsawwassen are at the heart, and in the gut, of this work.



**Figure 1.2:** Me sitting in our family garden with Tiffany (cat)- July 18th, 1989.

## 1.6 Land relations

In early education, *land* is conflated “to mean landscape, place, territory, home, [outside/outdoors, nature, wilderness], or all or some of these simultaneously.” As a result of colonial mindsets, in particular relation here to law and the English language, *land* has been ‘translated’ (physically and conceptually) into *property* which “perpetuates the logics of containment” (Goeman, as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p. 71, p. 72). These containment logics do not merely isolate land as a physical presence for privatization and ‘public

development,' as settler-colonialism also impedes on Indigenous education by severing ties to the “transmission of knowledge about the forms of governance, ethics and philosophies that arise from relationships on the land” (Wildcat et al., 2014). Containment logics stretch into many systems that wield unequitable power dynamics, as Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua (2013, as cited in Teves et al., 2015) illustrates:

Containment can manifest in geographic forms as reservations or small school spaces, in political forms as legal-recognition frameworks that seek to subsume sovereignty within the settler state’s domestic laws, and in ideological forms that allow a sprinkling of indigenous history and culture only to maintain its marginality. (p.72)

For my thesis, I approach *land* with Goeman’s sentiments “as a storied site of human [and other than human] interaction; they are routed and rooted stories that provide meaning well beyond jurisdictional legal values” (as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p. 72). Goeman (2015) articulates *land* further as a site of *interconnected relations* of “meaning making rather than as differentiation and isolation in a multicultural neoliberal model” (pp. 72-73). Interconnectedly, “Indigenous peoples make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes” (p.73). This unpacking of *land* is crucial for “deconstructing the discourse of property and reformulating the political vitality of a storied land,” as it asks for a “reaching back across generations, critically examining our use of the word land in the present and reaching forward to create” improved relations for the future (Goeman, as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p. 74). However, as a non-Indigenous researcher in Canada, my use of the English language is tied to colonial rhetoric

confining my words to “the language of the state” (Goeman, as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p. 80).

Recognizing language as a social practice, critical discourse analysis focuses on the “the role of language in structuring power relations in society” (Wodak & Meyer, date, p. 5). Language, at times “independent from our intentions,” has the ability to subjugate bodies (human and other than human) while also constituting “agency and desire.” English, being the example here, is structured through binaries and patriarchal “ways of making sense of the world” as it possesses “narrative strategies and devices” (Davies et al., 2020, pp. 22-23). These strategies have the affordance to be wielded as a form of legitimization, as well as delegitimization, dependent on the dominant ideologies within the ethos it is being used. English within a ‘Canadian’ context is a powerful tool, as “it rearticulates the norms of an ideological system built on settler-colonial processes” (Goeman, as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p. 65). Language, however, can also be performed as an act of resistance “used to challenge the negations, omissions and devaluations of a peoples’ social reality, experience and history” (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kemp, 2006, p. 11).

As such, I attempt to articulate that First Nation people in North America were forcibly taken and *disconnected* from the Lands they have lived with since time immemorial. As Goeman (2015) explains, this purposeful placement of Indigenous children into residential, or ‘boarding’ schools, intended on the “rehabilitation” of the ‘uncivilized’ body to be educated into “proper citizens” which “meant changing relationships to land” (p. 81). The extraction of Indigenous children was also designed to sever their ties to their traditional processes of education (and language) which are intimately entangled with Land (Marker, 2015). Additional containment logics and dis-location of Indigenous peoples from their

homelands fabricated the construct of *reserves*. These areas, geographically and spiritually far removed from generational connections to homelands, isolated Indigenous peoples “from the rest of society” and also, by design, “became a place where the Indian agent [a Canadian federal agent overseeing these colonial-projects] could regulate education, morality, and economies” of First Nation peoples (Goeman, as cited in Teves et al., 2015, p.81).

Although this one hundred and fifty-three year long colonial project of attempted *erasure* continues, Indigenous people are “recovering and maintaining Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, and ways of knowing and applying those teachings in a contemporary context.” For x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>ə’yəm (Musqueam Nation), there are particular “liberation strategies” that have, and continue to be, “applied to political and legal systems, governance, health and wellness, education, or the environment” (Simpson, 2004, p. 373). The Musqueam people have been fishing along the [Sto:lo river](#) (colonially claimed as the Fraser River) running through Delta, BC since time immemorial. During the settler-colonial settlement of the province, many of the Musqueam Nation’s traditional food and economic sources were stripped and dictated by the Canadian government. Fishing licenses were issued which limited Musqueam people to ‘food source’ only fishing, meaning, they were only able to catch fish for personal and family consumption rather than as additional income (Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca, 2009).

Despite this, “Musqueam continued to exercise what they deemed to be their inherent and unextinguished right to maintain their culture and ways of life, particularly in relation to fishing.” Subsequently, in 1984, Ronald Sparrow (Bud) “was arrested for fishing with a net longer than was permitted by his food fishing license.” His arrest and the accompanying

court cases were a catalyst resulting in “one of the most defining decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada regarding Aboriginal rights.” The x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>wə</sup>’yəm community rallied in collective resistance and support through many trials and appeals, until the final verdict was made that Musqueam Nation had “existing” (unceded) rights to fish their Traditional Waterways without impediment. This landmark decision gave way to what is known as the *Sparrow Test* “which sets out a list of criteria that determines whether a right is existing, and if so, how a government may be justified to infringe upon it.” Although the outcome was a victory to some, the ability for the province to ‘infringe’ upon any form of Indigenous sovereignty “also confirms that these rights are not absolute,” and leaves “outstanding questions regarding adequate consultation” with First Nation communities in BC (Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca, 2009).



**Figure 1.3:** Sketch of Bud's boat provided by his son, Jarred Sparrow, who proudly follows in his father's footsteps. Jarred looks forward to continuing this legacy with his son, Jackson.

## 1.7 An Anti-Colonial Framework

I draw on an anti-colonial framework to conceptualize my thesis as I consider early education an ethical and political project which structures power, knowledge production,

‘validity,’ and subject formation (Burman, 2020; Liboiron, 2021; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006). These structures have implications for children (and childhood) as they “are very much part of the social, cultural, political, and economic worlds in which they live” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 29). These implications are at times inequitable relations which require “an ethical stance...[insisting] that we continually resist dominant discourses and seek ways to disrupt;” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 182) specifically as Lenz Taguchi (2008) notes, “taken-for-granted, universalistic, and normalizing ideas and practices” in early education (as cited in Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p.182). Nxumalo (2019) provokes early education’s ongoing historical implications in the project of education further by naming how the dominant Westernized theory of *developmental practice*, for example, has “little critical attention paid to how it is entangled in colonizing histories and to the inequitable structuring impacts on children that are outside its normative formations” (p.23). Nxumalo follows these ‘normative’ colonial framings into children’s relations with other than human entities, as they become reduced to “already-known learning goals rooted in developmental psychology, such as classification, motor skill development, categorization, observation, prediction, scientific thinking, and language development” (p. 95). As my thesis is concerned with colonial legacies enmeshed in early education policy and nature/culture divides specifically in BC, it is important to distinguish at this point why I am engaging with an *anti-colonial framework* rather than a *decolonizing* orientation.

Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize that “decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (p.1). My thesis labours towards “contextualizing, historicizing, and

politicizing particular practices” and language in the (2019) BCELf while also paying critical attention to how human and other than human “presences and absences” are attended to (Nxumalo. 2019, p. 23, p.49). As such, my thesis interrupts status-quo narratives, causing pause, with the hope for more just and equitable practices to be (continuously) opened up and responded to. Continuity is key, as although an anti-colonial approach borrows from additional theoretical frameworks, it is distinct as “it rejects the etymological implication of the “post” in post-colonialism and asserts that the colonial encounter is trans-historical rather than historical;” meaning, *colonialism* is not a ‘thing’ of the past (Kempf, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 130).

*Colonialism(s)* are also not one dimensional as they encompass, in part, “dynamic interplay[s] among race, class and geography” (Guinier, 2004, as cited in Hampton & DeMartini, 2017, p. 254). Thus, as Liboiron (2021) proposes, it is necessary to “acknowledge that different colonialisms will have different decolonialisms and anticolonialisms” (p. 132). This is not to suggest however that ‘anything goes,’ as there is considerable risk for ‘good intentions’ to inadvertently “set the stage for a rescue curriculum” (Hampton & DeMartini, 2017, p. 252). Anti-colonial pedagogies do not seek more *inclusion* or honouring of *diversity*, rather, they work towards a “settler reckoning” (Wild cat et al., 2014, p. III) that unnerves the normative and valorized status of ‘whiteness’ as an ideal, systemic structure (Liboiron, 2021; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wild cat et al., 2014). Liboiron (2021) reminds further that anticolonial frameworks and efforts are also not merely applications to “add a bit of land theory here, and work to be a little less elitist over there,” but instead, anti-colonial frameworks are ever “changing, moving, patchy, incomplete, plural, and diverse”



approaches and acts (Liboiron, 2021, p.133, p. 130). Thus, *anticolonialisms* provoke an ongoing examination of how ‘we’ live, and urge ‘us’ to struggle towards transforming everyday colonial encounters and systems through disrupting, unsettling, and dismantling dominant discourses within the gamut of colonization (Liboiron, 2021; Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001; Simpson, 2004).

Although anticolonial frameworks advocate for the transformation of political structures and social systems, there is another distinction which Tuck and Yang (2012) make clear, being, that “decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice” (p.21). Thus, my non-comprehensive, conceptual thesis is a piece of an anti-colonial “process, not arrival; it invokes an on-going dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European ... (imperial) ... discourses and their anti-colonial dis/mantling” (Thiophene, 1995, as cited in Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, pp.298-299). As I am engaging within a specific context, which begs specific dialogue, it is important to situate my anticolonial attempts within the ethos of the ‘nation-state’ of Canada which is “predicated on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ lands and political authority” (Coulthard, as cited in Carlson, 2016, p.4). As Carlson (2016) notes, this is a “specific form of domination with specific referents, as settler colonialism” (p.4) in North America is “ultimately about the pursuit of land for settlement” (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016, as cited in Carlson, 2016, p. 4).

My situated specificity, along with what Simpson (2004) calls “anticolonial strategies for the recovery of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems [IK],” requires “a deconstruction of the colonial thinking and its relationship to IK” (2004, p. 381). By

“reflecting on and working through Indigenous, feminist, anti-racism, critical race, and participatory action/activist methodologies and the inspiration they provided,” Carlson (2016) proposes *eight principles of an anti-colonial research methodology for settlers*: 1. Resistance to and Subversion of Settler Colonialism 2. Relational and Epistemic Accountability to Indigenous Peoples 3. Land/Place Engagement and Accountability. 4. Egalitarian, Participatory, and Community-based Methods 5. Reciprocity 6. Self-Determination, Autonomy, and Accountability 7. Social Location and Reflexivity 8. Wholism (pp. 7-8). Although I am not working in direct relation with human participants, I am still a non-Indigenous researcher on the Traditional Lands of the scəwəθən məsteyəx<sup>w</sup> (Tsaawassen First Nation People) concerned with the colonial rhetoric shaping policy and nature/culture divides in early education. As such, I ethically consider Carlson’s (2016) *Land/Place Engagement and Accountability* principle which states that:

As connected to relational accountability to the Indigenous peoples of the lands where we reside and research, anti-colonial research is accountable to the land herself. Anti-colonial research acknowledges, respects, and engages with the protocols and natural laws of the Indigenous lands where it is conducted. It attends to narratives of place and place-based memories, and to specific land-based histories. Research avoids causing further harm to the land and works directly or indirectly to return lands to Indigenous peoples. Further, anti-colonial research honours relationship and connection with non-human beings on the land. (p. 7)

From this, as well as other personal-pedagogical standpoints (particularly Queer and Eco-feminism; the latter following Val Plumwood’s work) I enter into an anti-colonial framework not as a set of *meta-theories* (Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001), but rather, as

“complex responsibilities” and an obligation to a way of life that cares for “the ‘narrow conditions of existence’ in this place” (Todd, 2013, p. 107).

### **1.8 A Discourse-Historical Approach Methodology**

I am employing a *Discourse-Historical Approach* (DHA) to critical analysis of the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF). The BCELF is a provincially funded framework aimed to support early childhood educators in their professional development and practices; details I provide in article two. I chose DHA as my critical analysis tool alongside an anti-colonial framework, as it also focuses on social-justice and advocacy. DHA uses *socio-diagnostic critique* (amongst other forms) with an “aims at exposing manipulation in and by discourse” by “revealing ethically problematic aspects of discursive practices” (Reisigl, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 51). A DHA analysis further compliments my anti-colonial efforts as there is a “strong historical research interest” in the approach stemming from “analysing linguistic manifestations of anti-Semitic prejudice in their historical context [1986, Austria]” (Reisigl, as cited in, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.45). DHA is a model of critical analysis concerned with *social, linguistic, and historical* ‘categories’ at the same ‘level,’ suggesting that the social *contexts* of texts inform, for example, the presence or even absence of specific language (Rogers, 2014). Although it is a distinct form of critical analysis, DHA pulls from various proponents of Critical Discourse Studies (i.e., sociolinguistics, narration studies, identity studies, and many other discursive social-discourse issues). As such, DHA “opts for a multiperspectival concept of discourse” (Reisigl, as cited in, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.49). Fairclough (as cited in Rogers, 2014) elucidates this perspective as:

In using the term discourse, I am proposing to regard language use as a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables. This has various implications. Firstly, it implies that discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation . . . Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning. (p.7)

Approaching *discourse* as a ‘construction of the world in meaning’ is a key signifier of DHA as it significantly influences its intentions and movements. DHA research examines ‘everyday’ policy, practices, perspectives, and performances with a focus on “relationships between discourse and politics,” and a “preference for interdisciplinary research since the selected discourse-related social problems are multidimensional” (Reisigl, as cited in, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.47). Much like an anti-colonial framework, DHA refuses the notion of neutrality by rejecting “a purely formalist and context-abstract view on language” and discourse. Instead, DHA analysts “pay attention to multi-modal macro- as well as micro-phenomena, to intertextual and interdiscursive relationships, as well as to social, historical, political, economic, psychological and other factors relating to the verbal and non-verbal phenomena of communication” (Reisigl, as cited in, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.49).

Although DHA analysts strive for ‘practical’ and transformative ‘results’ through their *critique-al* methods and methodology, the work does not seek hegemonic Truth. Rather, as is the spirit of my thesis, DHA labours to “explain [and interpret] the contradictions and tensions which occur between nation states and...[other] entities on many levels

(economies, science, technologies, communication, and so on).” To till at the “complexities of modern societies in our fast changing world,” there is need for a “wide range of material and semiotic practices” which are “multitheoretical and multimethodical, critical and self-reflective;” practices of which a DHA analysis takes up (Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 63-64). DHA “attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded,” but does not merely view this knowledge as ‘information’ (Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 65). Rather, DHA analysts “assume a dialectical relationship between particular discursive practices and the specific fields of action (including situations, institutional frames and social structures), in which they are embedded.” This is to say that on one hand, “situational, institutional and social settings shape and affect discourses, and on the other, discourses influence discursive as well as non-discursive social and political processes and actions” (Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 66).

This viewpoint of *discourse-interdiscursivity* as dialogical, affective, and co-shaping lends itself to the “text in context” which is “broken down into a macro-, meso- and micro-dimension.” DHA specifically focuses on four of dimensions: 1) The immediate language; internal co-text and co-discourse 2) intertextual and interdiscursive relationships; between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses 3) social factors and institutional frames; of a specific context and situation, including but not limited to, place, time, ideological orientation etc. and 4) broader sociopolitical and historical contexts of a text (Reisigl, as cited Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 53). DHA pays heightened attention to historical contexts, which is an important feature for my critical analysis of the (2019) BCELF, as it

is but one material manifestation of a much larger historical narrative within the field of early education. Although DHA gathers linguistic, discursive, material, semiotic practices, and archives to examine, this approach to critical discourse also relies on the analysts “background and contextual knowledge” so they may embed the “communicative or interactional structures of a discursive event in a wider frame of social and political relations, processes and circumstances” (Wodak, as cited in, Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 3).

### **1.9 Methods of a Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Analysis:**

My methods for conducting a *Discourse-Historical Approach* (DHA) to critical analysis of the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF), as well as my historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education, follow a non-linear strategy. However, to begin a DHA to analysis “a discourse fragment or utterance is taken as a starting point, and its prehistory is reconstructed by relating the present to the past” (Reisigl, as cited Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 53). I follow this design by using Moss’s (2014) declaration as my departure:

The particular task facing early childhood education as the first stage of lifelong learning is to start the continuous process of producing and maintaining autonomous, enterprising, and risk-managing subjects, a competitive, flexible, and compliant workforce, and an informed, insatiable, and individualistic body of consumers, so ensuring personal and national survival in a never-ending global rat race. (p.44)

As I am interested in how colonial past-present histories are *recontextualized*, and how neoliberal-capitalist logics are upheld within the (2019) BCELF, I put Moss’s (2014)

statement into conversation with an opening statement from the BCELF. It claims that it “resists language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonization and marginalization of Indigenous people” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). With these two statements in mind, I read the BCELF through those positions. This guides how I contextualize and interpret the “genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), [and] styles (ways of being)” within the pages of the (2019) BCELF (Rogers, 2014, p. 12).

As DHA is a multidimensional methodology, there are combinations of methods that can be engaged with (see Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). In no fixed order, as I read the (2019) BCELF (as well as the sources that shaped it; ‘external’ personal, and historical secondary sources) I consider two dimensions of discourse in particular: *time-relatedness* and *discrepancies* (Reisigl, as cited Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.54). *Time-relatedness* regards “the perspectives of the historical discourse participants” in order to locate the situatedness of the discourses. This is to say that the analyst must not only think of history as connected to the past, but also how it lives in the present. Although I am not conducting my research directly with human or other than human beings, my thesis is being conducted on, and with ethical care for, the Traditional Lands of First Nation Peoples across what is colonial called the province of British Columbia. As such, I lean on the knowledge I have currently regarding the settler-colonial histories of this place, as well as seek further past-present chronicles, and even future speculations, from Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to bring increased depth to both my analyses/articles. I weave these living knowledges and histories into my contextualizing, interpreting, and analysis of the explicit and implicit language and discourses found in the (2019) BCELF, and the ways in

which they (re)connect to social, cultural, and political power structures currently. For my historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education, the same consideration for *time-relatedness* is adhered to as I hold the (never fully complete) research on (ongoing) Indigenous history in BC against the settler-colonial narrative of early education.

Locating *Discrepancies* (Reisigl, 2018) is central to my argumentation and analysis as the initial statement I begin with from the (2019) BCELF, that it ‘resists perpetuating colonial legacies,’ initializes a presupposed, implicit assumption; meaning, at one point the framework did not resist, and now it does. I apply a *discourse world analysis* to the phrase which “aims to account for processes of meaning construction in discourse beyond the sentence.” *Discourse worlds* “emerge as texts are interpreted contextually against a backdrop of broader systems of knowledge and value, encoded in frames and conceptual metaphors etc., which constitute common ground” (Hart, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, pp. 80-81). As a former early education, I have firsthand knowledge of the overabundance of instruction, ‘best practice’ rhetoric, and curricular trends that saturate early education in BC. This is not an isolated opinion as there is rich scholarship on this assertion (Drew & MacAlpine, 2020; Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014; Nxumalo, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013; Taylor 2013; Vintimilla, 2014). I note this personal understanding as “discourse worlds are important structures in the cognitive study of ideology since they represent the worldview espoused by the text which readers are asked to assume” (Hart, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 81). As I state in my critical analysis of the (2019) BCELF, the ‘opening’ statement of resistance is concerning as these linguistic tactics aim to frame the position of the text as assuring, which I argue, is dangerous



(thinking with Foucault) as it relies “on a more general cognitive capacity for perspective-taking” by the readers (Hart, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 82).

This is not to say that the readers, the target audience being early childhood educators, are not capable at discerning the text. However, due to the oversaturation of apolitical practices dizzying early education along with “recognizing and acknowledging how Euro-western practices are embedded in mainstream educational **pedagogy**,” there is reason to critically question the framing of the statement, and how it will be taken up by the audience as affirmative Truth (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). This especially, as the document is created by institutions of power and authority (government funded and published, in addition to other official organizations); also note the use of ‘mainstream’ in the quote rather than the explicit naming of early education in the ongoing project of colonization. Time-relatedness and discourse world analysis inform my search for *discrepancies* in the BCELF which “relies on social, historical and political background knowledge” through *socio-diagnostic critique*. This form of critique examines ideology, meaning, the “ethos of social actors” as well as critique of the pragmatic, political, and social; this form of critique being what my historical analysis (chapter 2) also thinks through (Reisigl, as cited Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.51). These multi-dimensional combinations analyse “asserted and lived continuities or discontinuities,” meaning, DHA analysts compare what is being said/written/claimed vs. what ‘actually’ has/or has not transpired (contradictions). Such form of discrepancies can be found, for example, around ‘national rhetoric,’ that works to preserve “positive national self-presentation” (Reisigl, as cited Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.54).

My examination of discrepancies for the DHA analysis is conducted between intertextual resources that underpin the (2019) BCELF, as well as between the (ongoing) colonial histories of BC articulated in my historical analysis that (implicitly and explicitly) develop the framework. As I collect my data and contextual information, I move to the ‘selection and downsizing’ strategy portion of a DHA analysis. As the scope and length of my thesis is limited, I select and organize three of the most salient discourses evident through my research (*quality, citizenship, and well-being and belonging*) which help support my primary research question: At a policy level, how does early education perpetuate the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies within curricular frameworks such as the (2019) BCELF? As I read and re-read my interdisciplinary sources, I recursively refine the data to formulate my critiques and critical analyses of the BCELF. The same steps are applied to my historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education, as I focus there on two interlocking ‘themes:’ the confederacy of Canada including the abhorrent treatment perpetuated on Indigenous people and their Traditional Lands, as well as the dominant Euro-Western early education philosophies carried to ‘Canadian’ shores during that time. Again, I must repeat, that the ‘purpose’ of a DHA analysis does not necessary yield ‘applicable results’ or answers, but rather, it is a methodology and method(s) that work to support potentially transformative and more equitable change. As such, my thesis remains open to further interpretation, analysis, as well as findings (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

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# A Historical Analysis of ‘Outdoor’ Education Within a Colonial-Canadian Context

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Introduction

Land based and ‘outdoor education’ is popular in the colonially named province of British Columbia, Canada (BC) due to prominent ‘environmentally green’ identity discourses underpinning what it means to live in the region. These discourses and understandings of the ‘outdoors’ are formed by the “protagonist-superhero of the western psyche,” premised on nature/culture divides and the (attempted) *erasure* of Indigenous stewardship and Land based living and learning since time immemorial (Plumwood, 1993, p. 3). Interest in such ‘alternative’ schooling has also been increasing in the field of early education during the ongoing global Covid 19 pandemic, as the allure of the outdoors has gained a heightened sense of ‘value’ and necessity for personal well-being (Banack et al., 2020; Myers, 2018; Nelson et al., 2018; Thornton et al., 2019). Land, as part of a greater outdoor landscape, is revered as a ‘pure’ arena (Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor; 2013, 2017) [where certain children can ‘flourish’ by way of educators](#) who understand that “connections to natural environments” are foundational “for social and environmental health and well-being, now and in the future” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, pp. 67, 84). Although I am not condemning ‘environmental’ engagements with young children (or any age) in this article, I echo Nelson et al.’s distress about these programs which is “deeply concerned with what we see as a refusal to step back from the [early education] field’s dual obsession with recreating a(n) (imagined) state of environmental sanctity and enhancing children’s developmental progress” (Nelson et al., 2018, p. 5). What I attempt to problematize further,

is the promissory mirage of earthly-survival by way of child-centred saviourism marketed through ‘outdoor education’ (Nelson et al., 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor; 2017).

In this article I conduct a historical analysis of particular early education paradigms, with situated focus on land, within a colonial-Canadian context. I also look to one particular Indigenous philosophy, *All our (or my) relations*, as a *counter-story* (Madden, 2019) to prevailing colonial, human-centric/other than human ideologies. Indigenous worldviews of *All our (or my) relations* is “based on the perspective that we [humans and other than humans] are all here together and that we are all in this together,” thus, our duty is to maintain “a reciprocal relationship of caring for all of creation” (Soma et al., 2020, as cited in Reynolds et al., 2020, p.321). This historical analysis also focuses on two main (non-comprehensive or linear) concentrations: The confederacy of Canada including the abhorrent treatment perpetuated on Indigenous people and their Traditional Lands, as well as the dominant Euro-Western early education philosophies carried to ‘Canadian’ shores during that time. I weave these historicities across different *timescapes* as a method for articulating how these ‘events’ and legacies continue reverberating particular “assemblages of discourses and materialities” in ‘mainstream’ early education (Carpentier, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 282). Time traveling through and alongside temporal intertwinings (temporal intertwinings I-III), supports an anti-colonial lens which “encourages us to interrogate the interlocking nature of systems of power and domination, of how dominance is reproduced and maintained,” and how these systems at play affect subjectivities (Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p.317). The conclusion signals the end of this article but does not foreclose on my thinking and the necessity for more anti-colonial dialogue and action in ‘outdoor’ early education and pedagogies.

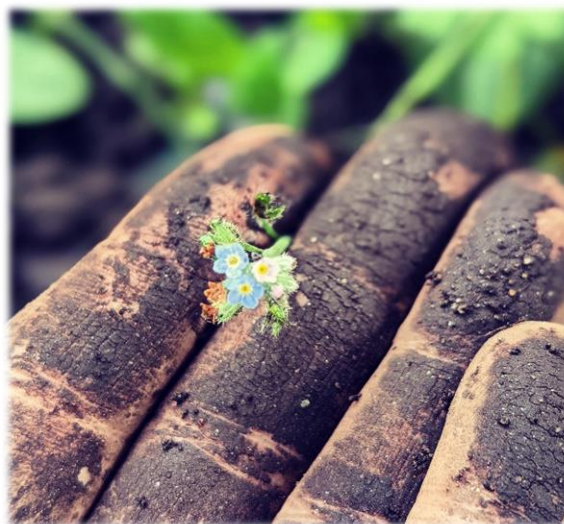
## 2.2 Personal-Pedagogical Entanglements

I have spent my life amongst a stunning estuary-delta geography along the base corridor of the aptly named [Sea to Sky highway](#), within the colonially named province of BC. These Lands have profoundly shaped my being and becoming, and I have a deep sense of care for where I call home. I must give my heartfelt thanks to the Lands from which I am speaking, being of the Tsawwassen First Nation peoples. Living within the *land facing the sea*, derived from the Coast Salish language *hənqəm'í'nəm*, as an adopted colonial-settler from Limerick Ireland has allowed me to re-collect cultural memories through intimate relations to this place, as they parallel a multitude of other than human beings (waterways, fish, plants, climate etc.) in common. This is a serendipitous happenstance to which I am forever grateful. Through personal events, inter-disciplinary academic exposures, and happenings impossible to express by written articulation, I also locate myself as an *entangled* (Barad, 2007) *meshwork* (Ingold, 2011) of human and other than human *relations* (Todd, 2015) which motivate my personal-pedagogical pursuits.

Ingold (2011), borrowing the term from philosopher Henri Lefebvre, explains the concept of *meshwork* as a “world of becoming” through the interweaving of unbounded human and other than human (land, water, plants, bacteria etc.) lifelines (p.64). The entwining of these lines for Ingold, also thinking with geographer Torsten Hägerstrand, “comprises the texture of the world.” This tapestry of meshwork inhabits the world as always in flux, blurring boundaries of ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ and relating all forms and figures as permeable co-composers (Ingold, 2011, p.84). I must distinctly note at this point that I use caution when offering the above personal narratives, as some could be conflated with “mutuality based on sympathy and suffering” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 20). Although this is not my intention,



the risk of misinterpretation is possible. As a non-Indigenous researcher implicated in living and learning on stolen Indigenous Land, weaving my personal-pedagogical standpoints together is intended as a fluid grounding, which turns me toward an anti-colonial orientation. I take up an anti-colonial framework as *ethical obligations* and *responsibilities* which also inform and support this article.



**Figure 2.1:** Plant name 'unknown' to me. Was asked to pull as considered a weed. Photo taken at Earthwise Society Gardens on the Traditional Lands of the Tsawwassen First Nation People.

### 2.3 An Anti-Colonial Framework

An anti-colonial framework leans into the complexities of past-present *entanglements* as “understanding our collective past is significant for pursuing political resistance” (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kemp, 2006, p.1). This re-tracing is a crucial “way to challenge the dominant’s call to amputate the past and its histories” (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p.1), although *colonialism* is not “a monolithic structure with roots exclusively in historical bad action” (Liboiron, 2021, p. 6). Rather, colonialism is “a set of contemporary and evolving land relations that can be maintained by good intentions and

even good deeds” (Liboiron, 2021, p. 6). Although there are varying nuances of colonialism (from overt to subtle, to ‘unintentional’), there are shared constants as “colonialism is more than the intent, identities, heritages, and values of settlers and their ancestors. It’s about genocide and access” (Liboiron, 2021, p. 9). As political scientist Glen Coulthard explains further, colonialism characterizes paradigms of conquest that grant non-Indigenous people “ongoing state access to land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement, and capitalist development on the other” (as cited in Liboiron, 2021, p.9).

As this article is concerned with colonial legacies enmeshed in early education policy and nature/culture divides, it is important to distinguish at this point why I am engaging with an *anti-colonial framework* rather than a *decolonizing* orientation. Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize that “decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (p. 1). This article labours towards “contextualizing, historicizing, and politicizing particular practices” and processes in dominant early education while also paying critical attention to how human and other than human “presences and absences” are attended to (Nxumalo, 2019, p. 23, p.49). Thus, this article is located within an anti-colonial framework as it works against systems of power seeking “to physically, culturally, and spiritually erase Indigenous Peoples” (Petrone et al., 2021, p. 263). Although an anti-colonial approach borrows from additional theoretical frameworks, it is distinct as “it rejects the etymological implication of the “post” in post-colonialism and asserts that the colonial encounter is trans-

historical rather than historical,” meaning, *colonialism* is not a ‘thing’ of the past (Kempf, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 130).

As such, an *anti-colonial prism* is “an approach to theorizing colonial and re-colonial relations and the implications of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics” (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p.2). Anti-colonial efforts are “concerned with breaking, and writing, the silences of the present as well as the past” (Gilmartin, 2002, as cited in Johnson et al., 2007, p.118), as the system of colonisation perpetually “reproduces itself in its own image” (Todd, 2016, p. 13). That being said, anti-colonial frameworks are not merely conceptual and theoretical. Anti-colonial efforts must actively engage with the situated political, agential, relational, historical, and ongoing fight for Indigenous sovereignty and centring of Indigenous knowledges, otherwise, “we immediately become complicit in colonial violence” (Todd, 2016, p.18). I pause again to note that although I am labouring to contribute to anti-colonial potentialities for ‘mainstream’ early education, specifically on the West coast of BC in the ‘nation-state’ of Canada, it does not mean that I am not invertedly perpetuating colonial harm. As Liboiron (2021) reminds, no ‘form’ of anticolonialism is “mono-lithic or stable, but rather changing, moving, patchy, incomplete, plural, and diverse;” and I add, messy (p. 130). As Hampton and DeMartini (2017) also remind:

Once a story is told it cannot be called back. We cannot simply erase colonial stories and decide we will no longer be influenced by colonial ideology and thus make it so. The only way to account for these colonial stories is to engage with them and directly confront the tensions, discomfort, and difficult truths they raise. This is

how we will support future generations in remembering the past and telling different stories in the future. (p.263)

## 2.4 All Our Relations

I look to a distinct Indigenous philosophy, *All our (or my) relations*, not as an addition to current ‘mainstream’ early education pedagogies, but as a *moral memory of place* as within an anti-colonial framework “pushing back against the colonisation of education...requires embedding it in the history and meanings of the land on which the classroom and greater community is situated” (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 245). Kimmerer (2013) explains, thinking with Indigenous author and professor Greg Cajete, “that in indigenous ways of knowing, we understand a thing only when we understand it with all four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit” (p.47). *All our (or my) relations*, is a *natural law* concerning itself with justice for all through equitable relationships of *reciprocity* and *ethical obligations* and invokes coexistence based on mutuality rather than human-centric hierarchy (Kimmerer, 2013; McGregor, 2009; Soma et al., as cited in Reynolds et al., 2020; Todd, 2016). In stark contrast to human-centric/other than human (land, water, animals, plants etc.) relationships of exchange or extraction, *All our (or my) relations* “is about justice for all beings of Creation, not only because threats to their existence threaten ours but because from an Aboriginal perspective justice among beings of Creation is life-affirming” (McGregor, 2009, p.27).

This way of knowing and being looks to other than humans as relatives that provide lessons and teachings about ways to live in ethical, collective coexistence (Kimmerer, 2013; McGregor, 2009; Tynan, 2021). *All our (or my) relations* is a relationship of reciprocity

which “means giving back to the Earth, to society including past, present, and future generations, and to the spirit world, as you take from it” (Whiteman, 2009, p.105). Explaining the required temperament for approaching this interconnected web of lifeworlds as an *ethical relationality*, Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald describes (2009, as cited in Todd, 2016):

...An ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference. (p.18)

Todd (2016) brings this way of being into their work and research with Fish as *non-human persons*, explaining further the necessary positionality of humans “as citizens embedded in dynamic legal orders and systems of relations that require us to work constantly and thoughtfully across the myriad systems of thinking, acting, and governance within which we find ourselves enmeshed” (p. 19). This Indigenous worldview obliges humans to “re-think what the terms *we* and *our* mean,” as *All our (or my) relations* envisions ‘being’ as a delicate play of interconnected coexistence (McGregor, 2009, p. 33). This way of living is the antithesis to *extractivism* as it looks to other than humans, for example water, not as a resource but as relative as it is alive and life itself (McGregor, 2009). This view of collective living holds *assumed responsibilities* between human and other than human beings which are to be passed from generation to generation to ensure the harmonious

process of Creation (a reductionist e.g., birth, life, and death for all lifeworlds) continues. Creation as a dynamic system of *worldmaking* is “what academics now refer to as sustainability” (McGregor, 2009, p. 33), which highlights the “common error of asserting the nature/culture split as a universal phenomenon rather than a reality localised to specific knowledge traditions” (Todd, 2016, p. 9).

## **2.5 Temporal Intertwining I: Conceptual Seedlings**

Preceding the federal-crown (Canada and England) and religious (predominantly Catholic) banning of ancestral practices, stories, languages, and many other lifeways, Indigenous peoples across Canada had rich, traditional ways of teaching and educating their children. To discuss this, I look specifically to Marker (2015) and their work in decolonising *historiographies* of the stolen Lands of Coast Salish Peoples as I was raised, continue to live on, and think with their shorelines. A Nooksack Elder recounted to Marker (2015) that:

During his youth he lived with relatives in Coast Salish communities on both sides of the border and participated in the traditional economy of fishing, the ceremonies such as namings and winter spirit dances, while travelling throughout the territory as if there were no border. (pp. 480-481)

The border Marker speaks about is the artificially constructed land divide between the United States of America and Canada which cuts through unceded Coast Salish Territories. This violating division of homeland is significant, as Marker (2015) explains further, that knowledge making through *place-based consciousness* was central to Coast Salish Peoples as ties to Land were (and for many still) “drawn from the ecology of relationships with the plants and animals of a homeland” (p. 483). The “Land contained all the elements of

meaning, identity and culture” as “the Coast Salish world is encompassed by the Salish Sea.” The winding “river systems that bring salmon and other food sources to village communities” created “knowledge and status” that was “directly related to natural resource management” (Marker, 2015, p. 483, 486). Oral stories were shared to narrate geology, navigation, mythological, ethical, temporal, ecological relations to place, as well as moral instruction (Marker, 2015). The arts and various crafting of wood carvings, basket making, spinning and weaving of wool from mountain goats, fashioning canoes for long journeys across the Salish Sea, and ceremonial mask making were also distinctive ways of knowing and being to the Coast Salish people. These rich artistic practices and teachings were (and for many still are) also processes of Indigenous early education. These practices were not only functional for everyday tasks and events, but also connected “its people to the spirit world, preserving their myths and traditions” (Thomas & Schattschneider, 2011, p. 199).

Place-based consciousness, or what Watts (2014) refers to as *Place-Thought*, is “the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated.” Language, laws, stories, food, creative processes, and human and other than human bodies were all tied within Land as “Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (Watts, date, p. 21). Although I am not able to attend to the abundance of interrelated intimacies of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and living with Land in this article, Watts summates that “Indigenous perceptions of whom and what contributes to a societal structure are quite different from traditional Euro-Western thought.” In dominant Western thought, ‘society’ has “revolved around human beings and their special place in the world, given their capacity for reason and language”

(p.21). In current North American contexts, there is a demand for “critical intervention into current thinking around Indigenous education, because Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes” (Simpson, as cited in Wildcat et al., 2014, p. v).

Early education as it is typically known today in Canada, is a nearly two hundred year old colonial project, beginning in the mid 1800s on its Eastern shores (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2016; Prochner & Howe, 2000; Wyile, 2018). As *colonial-settlerism* increased on this coast, a variety of institutions took shape, funded primarily by women lead charities and religious groups. Due to “the dominance of the English-Christian tradition in schools and charitable institutions,” this “meant that many of the programs for children took on the job of assimilating newcomers [colonial-settlers] into the language and values of the Anglo majority” (Prochner 2000, as cited in, Prochner & Howe, 2000, p. 13). These programs were also initially only meant to serve households finding themselves in dire financial need. This situation occurred when the motherly figure was forced to work outside the home to support the family, as it was a wife’s responsibility for minding the children (Prochner, 2000). It was otherwise scornful for women to leave this duty to someone else as “one of the most damning charges that could be made against a day nursery was that mothers used the service to provide themselves with leisure time.” Within this context, these budding organizations can be seen as more alike to social services for the care of young children than educational spaces (Prochner, 2000, p. 13).

Occurring simultaneously was the rise of Canada’s ‘nationhood,’ meaning, its “colonial empire building” (Nxumalo, 2019, p. 17). This commenced a long, continuous, and brutal



displacement of First Peoples living across these Lands since time immemorial (de Leeuw, 2009; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). The dis-place-ments and attempted erasure of Indigenous populations and communities hinged on discovery “discourses of a *terra nullius*, [thought as] an empty untamed frontier occupied by no one and, consequently, freely available for non-Indigenous occupation” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 126). As Halifax Poet Laureate Rebecca Thomas evokes in portions of their piece *A Creation story* (as cited in Wylie, 2018):

Then one day, a new creature came to our shores. . .

Once it took a form, its hunger could not be sated. Its endless greed consumed all the trees, hunted the animals and fished the rivers until they only knew scarcity. It cracked open the body of Mother Earth and bled her black veins. Choked out father sky with smoke. It always picked the first plant, every time.

. . . It confined us to the tiniest portions of our land. . . This creature fed on the languages of our children. Separated families to weaken us. It thrived, nameless, until a dozen generations ago when it was finally given a name.

Canada. (pp. 125-126)

Discourses such as *discovery* and acculturating *values* linking the colonial ‘development’ of land and early education did not solely emerge through the forceful takeover of what is now considered Canada. As a means for advancing the project of colonization through creating particular ‘Canadian’ subjects, these discourses were designedly entangled within the European traditions and figures who motivated the conceptualization of early years education and care (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2016). Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) is one

notable figure for early education in the global North as his contributions to the field are vast, including his inception of the *kindergarten* meaning ‘garden of (or for) children’ (Bruce et al., 2019; McNair & Powell, 2021; Prochner & Howe, 2000). A pivotal moment for Froebel, aged ten, was moving in with his uncle who nurtured his love for the ‘natural world.’ Froebel himself documented the poignancy of this relationship, stating how it significantly shaped his vision for young children’s education and pedagogy (Bruce et al., 2019; McNair & Powell, 2021). In 1837 the first kindergarten was opened in what was then known as Prussia (now Germany). The building was in the town square, intending to position it as a “central part of the community” (Bruce et al., 2019, p. 9). Froebel designed the kindergarten to be “in tune with the natural development of children, where they could grow and develop in harmony with nature” alongside adults who nurtured their “development and cultivated their learning, just as good gardeners tend young plants” (Bruce et al., 2019, p.9).

Froebel also believed that children should be provided with materials and experiences he called “gifts and occupations” which included “materials for weaving, sewing, drawing and painting” as well as “stories, circle games, singing, dancing, music and finger play” (Bruce et al., 2019, p.9). These examples may sound remarkably familiar as they mirror many children’s experiences of kindergarten globally in the twenty first century, including my own thirty years ago. There were also of course, gardens. Each child, up to fifty in attendance, were provided their own plot within the communal garden where they learned about seasons, circles of life, and food production (Bruce at al., 2019). The children were also expected to work cooperatively, highlighting “Froebel’s educational philosophy, which emphasised the individual at the heart of a loving whole community, and freedom

tempered by responsibility” (Bruce et al., 2019, p. 10). Froebel’s kindergartens were also constructed as “microcosms of the liberal state, stressing not only independence but also self-discipline, citizenship, and voluntary obedience to general laws” (Stoler, 2001, p. 852).

The creation of ‘the nature child’ discourse also derives from the ontological impressions of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau’s Enlightenment era approach to ‘nature’ and child(hood) was also greatly shaped by the times and politics in which he lived (1712-1778), as the concept of “divided human nature” in Christian thought formed the ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ split of man’s soul (Bardina, 2017, p. 1382). This Aristotelian approach to human nature, through its social superiority complex, directly contributed to the nature/culture divide from which Rousseau drew his thinking. This categorization of the ‘natural’ portion of ‘man’ belonging with the animals, with the spiritually ‘moral’ portion affording free will and choice belonging in ‘civil’ society, was essential to this dichotomy (Bardina, 2017). These distinctions allowed Rousseau to place human development through culture in contrast to animals, whose sole evolutionary processes remained biologically isolated. This “inner contradiction” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1384) of animal vs. spiritual, ‘wild’ desires vs. ‘moral’ Christian rationality, of ‘man’ vs. citizen, positions Rousseau’s pedagogical thoughts on children (materialised in his book *Emile*, 1762) as an attempt to, not only remedy this ‘innate’ divide within human behaviour, but to illuminate the cardinal ‘goodness’ of the child figure (Bardina, 2017; Taylor, 2013).

The child in Rousseau’s eyes was the closest to ‘nature’ that one could be and thus needed to be nurtured in order to preserve such a pure essence; this being contrary to the indulgent adult populous of Europe during his lifetime (Bardina, 2017; Taylor, 2013). This distinction between childhood and adulthood allowed Rousseau’s child to be ushered out

of an unruly social society, and (back) into the woods in the name of cultivating a very particular subject. Rousseau's attempts at untangling child-adult/nature-society beliefs, consequently created an opening for the construction of a "reductive and homogenizing" life view of 'nature' and education, giving passage to "oppressive types of social organization which subjugate, exclude and destroy human and animal life" (Inston, 2019, p.39, p.45). Moreover, Froebel and Rousseau's ideologies on what 'good' early education and child(hood) should aspire to, as well intended as they perhaps were within their contexts, allowed for the production of the "essentialist conception of child-as-educational-output," observed presently in dominant North American pedagogies (Cairns, 2018, p. 518).

## **2.6 Temporal Intertwining II: Civilizing the Nature-Child**

The 'natural' development of the child was a critical feature of Rousseau's pedagogy, hinging on a "fixed path;" one he believed 'nature' followed through stages (Bardina, 2017, p. 1384). These stages bracketed particular ages and accompanied the acquisition of certain skills to support a child's growth, both cognitively and physically. Language was one such skill that garnered the *humanization* of 'man' vs. 'wild' as "man's objectification in language allows him to distance himself from, or even suppress his animality, as he transcends the materiality of nature to enter the realm of abstract ideas, to give sense to himself and to the world" (Inston, 2019, p. 42). This *perfectibility* paradox ushers in for humans, or child, "a more subtle form of" superiority through "his capacity to acquire the skills, attributes, [and] techniques which allow him to surpass animals and to establish himself as the measure of all things" (Inston, 2019, p. 44). Much like Rousseau, Froebel also believed in the linear progression of a child's development by building skills, in

particular, through play with prescribed materials (Bruce et al., 2019; McNair & Powell, 2021). Froebel (1895, as cited in Bruce et al., 2019), speaking to these *gifts and occupations*, states:

The spirit and character of these means of employment, and so of instruction, are therefore that 1. They proceed from unity and develop in all manifoldness from unity in accordance with the laws of life...2. The aim of each of the means of employment, and likewise of education, is purely human instruction and cultivation. (p. 34)

It is important to note here that the *unity* Froebel is attempting to create through educational experiences is “a way of developing unity with nature and God” (Bruce et al., 2019, p. 34). Rousseau took on this ‘elemental’ duality of human-nature not as a combative contradiction, but instead, as a calling for “the idea of ‘true socialization’ needed for establishing a society” by way of “proper educational techniques” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1384). If conquered by essentialist ‘rationality,’ these ‘innate’ yet seemingly conflicting dichotomies meant that “a well-educated moral person is no longer subject to inappropriate wishes,” granting them incorporation (or assimilation) into polite society (Frede, 2015, as cited in Bardina, 2017, p. 1382). This ideology therefore rendered humans “as both natural and sociable beings that are fit for communal life due to the superiority of their higher reasoning” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1382). Time traveling back into pre-federation Canada, much of the rhetoric abetting the colonization of First Peoples, as well as their Lands, was this notion of ‘civil’ citizenship (Bardina, 2017; de Leeuw, 2009; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Boats crossing the Atlantic toward the shores of a nation seeking Canada brought with them an assortment of the above European heirlooms, steeped in

nature/culture divides and ‘wild’ vs. ‘civil’ discourses (de Leeuw, 2009; McNair & Powell, 2021; Prochner, 2000, Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández; 2013; Wylie, 2018).

As European frameworks for the care and education of young children were being downloaded and translated into a newly forming settler-colonial context, so were a variety of programs and organizations to fund them. The British and Canadian Infant School Society, for example, opened its first location in Newfoundland (1854) due to overcrowding in the already established, mainstream, mixed aged schooling programs. As ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ Canada merged into confederation, and with its population increasing, the outset of documents such as “The Report on the Affairs of Indians in Canada, known as The Bagot Report,” were drafted (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 126). This 1845 governmental report was an initial assessment for inquiring “into the Affairs of the Indians in Canada and the application of the annual grant of money made by the Imperial Parliament for the benefit of that Race” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 127). This was the starting point for many Canadian federal documents with distinct focus on “schooling and Indigenous children as they fit within the colonial project” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 127).

I interrupt at this point to name that as I weave further *historied* events, although similar assimilatory tactics of indoctrination may have been deployed on colonial-settlers within budding early education spaces, it is not my intent to conflate those aims or the resulting outcomes on Indigenous populations. Although the project of education may have a homogenizing design, the inequitable power dynamics that result from its efforts are not comparable across all bodies, human or otherwise (Cairns, 2018; de Leeuw, 2009; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández; 2013).

The drive for ‘civil subject formation’ moved quickly from dogma into brick and mortar manifestations through the founding of missionary (around 1820s), and then residential, schools (first in BC, 1861) (de Leeuw, 2009; Edmond, 2016; Stoler, 2001; Wyile, 2018). *The Bagot Report* endorsed “assimilationist policy, including establishment of boarding schools [another term used for residential schools] distant from [the] child's community, to provide training in manual labour and agriculture” (Edmond, 2016, 1844 line entry). These sites were not only meant for early and mandatory Euro-religious intervention and punitive reform for Indigenous children, but conjointly, conceived to secure “future colonial pedagogic goals, in which education was conceptualized as a colonial force” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 130). As the political temperament of Canada continued to shift into an ever urbanizing and patriotic, “democratic citizenship,” so did the interests of (mandatory) public schooling as “layers of administration, inspection, training, and surveillance” in the name of proper “Canadianization” expanded (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2016, p. 275). This expansion did not remain isolated between the walls of schools as an increasing mass of “land and territory could be procured in order to establish educational facilities” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 130). Canada’s “moral discourses about transforming children and the value of residential school education” worked to incite *re-territorialization* by linking “colonial land acquisition for the construction of material sites in which to contain and transform Indigenous subjects” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 133).

As more federal documents such as the Indian act (1876) were inscribed, “colonial rhetoric about Aboriginal peoples, then, turned on tacit assumptions of Aboriginal childlikeness and, correspondingly, Aboriginal peoples were constructed as subjects who would grow-up into a state of adulthood that corresponded to non-Aboriginalness and Eurocolonial

whiteness” (de Leeuw, 2009, p.129). The Indian Act was introduced in the House of Commons as a means to “consolidate the eight previous acts passed since 1850 to deal with questions of who was an Indian under the law, how Indian lands would be administered, and how Indian communities would be governed” (Kelm & Smith, 2018, p. 35). It would also set precedent for the “relationship between Canada and Indigenous people” allocating all “land, money, and property of the people defined here [under the act’s definition] as Indians.” Further to material property and resources being stolen and colonized, “the Canadian government made all Indians legally children and wards of the state,” thus functioning as “their guardian [and] their legal parent” (Kelm & Smith, 2018, p. 35). The scope of this article does not allow for the necessary detailing of all that was stolen from Indigenous Nations across Canada at this time, however, in summation, The Indian Act prohibited Indigenous communities from any and all sovereign rights to not only their Lands, traditional practices, and ways of being, but their entire personhoods (Edmonds, 2016; Kelm & Smith, 2018; Madden, 2019; Marker, 2015). Please note: Indigenous Nations and communities self-identify through various names. The term ‘Indian’ and the Indian Act served as a form of demoralization and erasure. The term and act [continue to regulate First Nation bodies and Territories presently](#).

### **2.7 Temporal Intertwining III: Present Early Education-Land Assemblages**

In ‘mainstream’ early education today, within the context of the Global North, land is diminished and commodified into an ‘economy system,’ resulting in the construction of “a habitat that is almost exclusive to one way of knowing, being and doing, such that all other cultures and species must adapt to the created dominant environment to survive” (Thornton et al., 2019, p.244). Nxumalo (2019) explains how this ‘naturalising’ mindset is imposed



on children's relations with other than human entities, as they become reduced to "already-known learning goals rooted in developmental psychology, such as classification, motor skill development, categorization, observation, prediction, scientific thinking, and language development" (p. 95). Although these dominant developmental discourses and practices work toward crafting particular skillsets, they are not merely reactions to modern day societal or market needs. Rather, they are materializations forged, in part, from settler-colonial '*frontierism*' as colonialisms' systemic movement (conceptually and on land) "carries over to education." Education in a colonial-Canadian context, is an "epistemically built environment; dominated by what is commonly called the Western or Eurocentric tradition of philosophy, particularly the Anglo-American analytic method of philosophy" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 244). These philosophies not only physically reterritorialize land, but in addition, render land into a colonial-settler resource of cognitive fodder for extraction, abstraction, and consumption (Wolfe, 2006, as cited in Thornton et al., 2019, p. 244). I must note at this point that my analysis is not about individual early education programs and practitioners. What I am critiquing are the systemic structures that continue to govern and propel dominant early education further into 'universally' applicable, apolitical, and resource driven markets (Cairns, 2018; Drew & MacAlpine, 2020; Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015; Wildcat et al., 2014).

Current dominant early education ideologies employ a *rhetoric of effects* when conducting and participating in land based pedagogies (Cairns, 2018). Although originally used in conjunction with the arts, a rhetoric of effects "works to reify the arts as elixirs that can be injected to transform educational situations and guarantee particular outcomes" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, as cited in Cairns, 2018, p. 519). Cairns (2018) extends this

concept ‘outdoors’ to the school garden, for example, explaining that “the elixir metaphor might be more appropriately conceived of as *recipe*: add children, dirt, and stir to create an enlightened, healthy young consumer” (p. 519). Broad (2016) plots this concept within land based pedagogies even further, calling this recipe the *magic carrot approach* (as cited in Cairns, 2018). This approach to early education land assemblages converts ‘the child’ to societal saviour and ‘educational-output,’ while romanticizing, for example, “the transformative promise of children’s garden encounters.” This tactic also diverts “attention away from the need for state action and institutional change to build more just and sustainable” systems by simplifying land as a space for play, discovery, and wonder (Cairns, 2018, p. 519). Land discourses and pedagogies then become devoid of *deliberative dialogue* (with children, educators, and other stakeholders) regarding power relations and humanist dualisms (Elliott & Young, 2015).

Drew and MacAlpine (2020) affirm the lack of recognition for the complexities of early education land assemblages as “early childhood educational approaches to [political ethics of] care are often decontextualized from ecological and more-than-human precarities, as well as from the economic influences contributing to such precarities” (p. 27). Engaging with land and children in early education in this manner further reinforces “romantic, dominant discourse of children and environmental education that rarely sees or tells the whole story;” the story within a Canadian context being, in part, an entanglement of stolen Indigenous Land and colonial-settlerism (Young, 2015, as cited in Elliot & Young, 2015, p. 59). Positioning land as ‘empty’ for the use of cultivating *human capital* through extractivism, *commodification*, and dominant developmental discourses, functions as a systemic device of domination (typically insidiously), to ensure the success of the colonial

project of education (Ganti, 2014; Moss, 2014; Plumwood, 1993; Wylie, 2018). Achieving ‘Canadianized’ civil-citizens by way of early education, specifically through access to land, not only upholds and reinscribes ‘nation-state’ rhetoric currently, but also works in preserving and securing *settler futurity* (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this article, I conduct a historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ early education in relation to the confederacy of Canada including the abhorrent treatment perpetuated on Indigenous people and their Traditional Lands, as well as the dominant Euro-Western early education philosophies carried to ‘Canadian’ shores during that time. I argue, the lack of implications in the (ongoing) settler-colonial narrative is systematically designed to insulate early education as an ethos of ‘fun and happiness’ devoid of political dialogue (Vintimilla, 2014). This form of institutionalization aids and abets the continued creation of the colonial-capitalist-neoliberal ‘Canadian’ subject. These subjectivities/identities take on a ‘saviour’ complex, positioning (particular) children and childhoods, as sites of redemption and earthly survival, premised on nature/culture divides and the (attempted) erasure of Indigenous stewardship, Land based living, and learning, since time immemorial (Nelson et al., 2018, Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor, 2013, 2017). Although colonial-settler historicities continue to reverberate, there are counter stories (Madden, 2019), knowledges, philosophies, and other alternative world making viewpoints that endure.

*All our (or my) relations*, is one such Indigenous Worldview. This philosophy lives with the world, human and other than human entities, in a holistic manner (Kimmerer, date; McGregor, 2009). It is a ‘traditional attitude,’ law, and ethical obligation “based on

thousands of years of living sustainably with Creation” which “is not just an environmental concern; it is a matter of cultural survival” (McGregor, date, pp. 36, 37). This Indigenous cosmology is a powerful antithesis to dominant Euro-Western engagements which are rooted in extractivist and developmental (regarding humans, land, and additional other than humans) logics that construct hierarchies in the name of ‘progress’ and commodification. *All our (or my) relations* also highlights the “common error of asserting the nature/culture split as a universal phenomenon rather than a reality localised to specific knowledge traditions” (Todd, 2016, p. 9). This ethical relationality undermines the settler-colonial discourse, terra nullius, of land as free and empty as McGregor (2009), citing Johnston (2003) recounts, “our ancestors learned of the land, the wind, the fire and the waters...the land was their book” which provided “our understandings, beliefs, perceptions, laws, [and] customs” (pp. 33-34).

The Discovery discourses and accompanying acculturating values inherited from dominant European educational philosophies, which spread across a newly forming settler-colonial context of Canada, resound today. These discourses attempted to erase Indigenous populations and their cultures while displacing them from their lands for the ‘advancement’ of the nation-state and the colonial project of education (Wildcat et al., 2014; Wyile, 2018). Current ‘outdoor’ early education and land based pedagogies rely on these echoes to sketch ‘nice,’ seemingly neutral, and developmentally (for human capital and economically) beneficial narratives while ignoring (willfully or less intentionally) the ethical, social, and political entrenchments of early education-land assemblages (Elliot & Young, 2015; Taylor, 2013, 2017; Nxumalo, 2019).

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### Chapter 2

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P is for Potato:  
A Discourse-Historical Analysis  
of the  
2019 British Columbia Early Learning Framework

### Chapter 3

#### 3.1 Introduction: A Grounding

My childhood in the 80's-90's spent on the Traditional Lands of the Tsawwassen First Nation people, along the West Coast of British Columbia Canada, looked like a suburban postcard of tree climbing, sky gazing, and ocean swimming. It was an era exploding with neon messaging about recycling, Greenpeace urging people to save the whales, and after school specials reminding us children to be 'part of the solution' [Cue: Captain Planet theme song](#). I took this call to be a 'hero for the plant' very seriously, and still can't help but pick up writhing worms drying out on sidewalks, to lay them on grass with well wishes for a speedy recovery. My exposure to this messaging as a child strongly influences my pedagogy and continues to shape the research I pursue, albeit with more critical respects. Per my former career as an early childhood educator, now pedagogist, as well as studies in curriculum studies, I recognize the prevalent positioning of (certain) children as 'saviour' and antagonist in the story of planetary stewardship. Through personal events, interdisciplinary academic exposures, and happenings impossible to express by written articulation, I locate myself as an *entangled* (Barad, 2007) *meshwork* (Ingold, 2011) of human and other than human *relations* (Todd, 2015) which motivate my personal-pedagogical pursuits. These motivations, as a non-Indigenous researcher implicated in

living and learning on stolen Indigenous Land, turn me toward anti-colonial efforts and acts as *ethical obligations* and *responsibilities* which also inform and support this article.



**Figure 3.1:** Example of one type of Fruticose Lichen, ‘trumpet lichen.’ Lichens are created through a symbiotic relationship between fungus and algae. Photo taken in the Boundary Bay region of Tsawwassen First Nation Lands.

Much alike to [lichen](#) humans do not ‘become’ on their own, yet there are continued attempts at creating emancipatory illusions for children in early education through ideologies of ‘free range childhoods.’ Land, as part of a greater outdoor landscape, is revered as a ‘pure’ arena (Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor; 2013, 2017) where children can ‘flourish’ by way of educators who understand that “connections to natural environments” are foundational “for social and environmental health and well-being, now and in the future” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, pp. 67, 84). This ‘ideal’ juxtaposed against the current reality of our environmental degradations and the violent colonial histories of land in Canada, I argue, not only employs children as independent bearers for securing their own futures, but in addition, protects a ‘prosperous’ status-quo society (Cairns, 2018; Nxumalo; 2019; Taylor, 2017). As Moss (2014) reminds:

The particular task facing early childhood education as the first stage of lifelong learning is to start the continuous process of producing and maintaining autonomous, enterprising, and risk-managing subjects, a competitive, flexible, and compliant workforce, and an informed, insatiable, and individualistic body of consumers, so ensuring personal and national survival in a never-ending global rat race. (p.44)

Moss's words are a departure point for my Discourse-Historical Approach to critical analysis (DHA) of the 2019 British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF, British Columbia Ministry of Education). I analyse how colonial past-present histories have been *recontextualized* within the (2019) BCELF, while continuing to uphold neoliberal-capitalist logics. I am particularly interested in how land, not only as a physical presence, is planted within the text as twenty first century “genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), [and] styles (ways of being)” in order to produce and maintain these logics (Rogers, 2014, p. 12). This curiosity is provoked by the BCELF's claim that it “resists language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonization and marginalization of Indigenous people” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). From this I ask, at a policy level, how does early education perpetuate the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies within curricular frameworks such as the (2019) BCELF? In no fixed order, I explore this question by locating capitalist-neoliberal rhetoric in the BCELF while interlocking them with colonial past-present historicities. I further interrogate implicit and explicit language upholding these regimes, as well as interrelate multiple ‘outside’ texts underpinning the BCELF's framing.

### **3.2 An Anti-Colonial Lens**

I follow Sefa Dei's articulations defining an *anti-colonial lens*, "as an approach to theorizing colonial and re-colonial relations and the implications of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics" (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 2). Sefa Dei further explains that an anti-colonial "prism also scrutinizes and deconstructs dominant discourses and epistemologies, while raising questions of and about its own practice. It highlights and analyzes contexts and explores alternatives to colonial relations" (as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 2). Although an anti-colonial approach borrows from additional theoretical frameworks, it is distinct as "it rejects the etymological implication of the "post" in post-colonialism and asserts that the colonial encounter is trans-historical rather than historical," meaning, *colonialism* is not a 'thing' of the past (Kempf, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 130). Drawing out ongoing *re-colonial relations* leads my critical discourse analysis of the (2019) BCELF, as "the anti-colonial aim is to subvert dominant thinking that re-inscribes colonial and colonizing relations" (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p.3).

I analyse colonial past-present histories *recontextualized* within the (2019) BCELF, as one materialization of a larger system. The system, institutionalized colonial-settlerism, is a "persistent structure or mechanism of social order governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given community;" the community here being, early education (Todd, 2016, p. 12-13). An anti-colonial lens affords me the ability to not only locate "simply who is there, who is here, [or] who is given a place at the table," but more critically, "how bodies are occupied once they have arrived" (Todd, 2016, p. 13). This is why historical contexts are "crucial for anti-colonial undertakings" as "understanding our collective past is

significant for pursuing political resistance” amidst the (always-ongoing) course of subjectification (Sefa Dei, as cited in, Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2016, p. 1). I take up the ‘idea’ of *history*, not as a static, delineating affair but rather that “history is alive” as a “subjective construction of what and how, people and groups remember” (Kempf, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 129). When encountered as a verb (action), rather than a noun (thing), history cannot remain as an “immovable sort of record,” but instead, exists as “the totality of lived experience” (Kempf, as cited in Sefa & Dei, 2006, p. 129). Locating re-colonial relations through living history, is imperative for linking colonial-capitalist-neoliberal logics to current early education contexts as “today, politics and economics cannot be separated from history and culture” (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2016, p.13).

An anti-colonial lens also affords me the capacity to notice economic relationships in early education as “an affirmation of the reality of re-colonization processes through the dictates of global capital” (Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p.301). Colonial-capitalist logics are undergoing a neoliberal ‘re-branding’ of sorts amongst twenty first century skillsets (not exclusive to early education) creating a climate for, as Carlson (2016) describes, “what slides from view” (p.1). These ‘obscured’ colonial-capitalist-neoliberal moves and conditions “are the ongoing processes by which settler dominance is actively reconstituted as a set of actions, occupations, deferrals, and potentials” which may be interpreted as neutral, or even, ‘progressive’ and beneficial (Rifkin, 2014, as cited in Carlson, 2016, p.1). These colonial-capitalist-neoliberal approaches to education reach far and wide into the subjectivity of the (paradoxical) individual, ‘global child.’ Through swelling marketability, increased economic, social, and educational investments, a ‘new age’ genre for childhood is produced, being, “child as redemptive agent” (Prentice, 2007, p. 289). Turner (2019),

thinking with law and literature, provokes *reconstitution* further by “tracking how genre moves across discursive sites.” Turner notes that which genres (ways of acting) are taken “up at specific times, makes apparent political motivations and ideological investments that might otherwise remain latent” (p. 377).

One such genre accelerating in early education is *neoliberalism*. I consider neoliberalism in early education through Moss’s (2014) earlier quote about the “particular task facing early childhood education” (p.44), in conversation with Vintimilla’s (2014) insight on neoliberalism “as a mode of governance—one that is not limited to the state, [but] one that produces subjects, ways of behaving, and organization of social and economic life” (p.80). Emerging from a post World War I era, neoliberalism, as a global phenomenon conjured by predominantly philosophers and economists, was designed to operate in opposition to “what they saw as a rising tide of collectivism, state-centered planning, and socialism” (Ganti, 2014, p. 91). Neoliberalism as a way of being (style), is embodied as “a ‘joyful’ feeling, a sense of producer and consumer freedom and boundless possibility all provided by the market.” Its ‘inescapability’ “has been naturalised by governmental rhetoric as reflecting ‘the central values of civilisation,’ with particular alignments made to ‘natural human instincts’ and to freedom and liberty” (Andrews & Duff, 2020, para. 2.1). An example of neoliberalism creeping into the (2019) BCELF is within the ‘Vision’ section under ‘Reconciliation.’ *Reconciliation* is a call to accountability and action ([there are 94 specific calls](#)) following the public exposure to the truth about Canada’s *residential schools*, which were a Canadian federal educational project (1820-1996) where Indigenous children were violently taken from their homelands with the intention of stripping their

Indigeneity and assimilating them into ‘civil’ (dominant European-settler) society (de Leeuw, 2009; Edmond, 2016; Stoler, 2001; Wyile, 2018).

The ‘Vision’ section begins by stating it “acknowledges that there is value for all students when Indigenous content and **worldviews** are shared in early learning settings” and encourages educators to seek out Elders ([traditional knowledge and memory keepers](#)) in Indigenous communities to learn from. It characterizes that these interactions, “with appropriate recognition...can be a joyful education across deep historical divides” (p. 13). Pressing an anti-colonial lens to this seemingly well intended suggestion, allows me to trouble that “when calls [to action] are disconnected from supporting scholarship, policies, and systemic processes, interpretation is often sutured over by dominant colonial logics (i.e., a simplistic view of healing Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships through individual action is assumed)” (Madden, 2006, p. 293). The valorizing notion of *individual acts* (even within the collective role of ‘educator’) is a key component to neoliberal thought, as it encourages a *skills discourse* required for twenty first century contexts (Ganti, 2014). Seen as a workforce, educators, pre-service educators, children, and other bodies within the early education ‘become’ the “bundles of skills,” crafting desirable “ones such as communication, human relations, and leadership.” These *becomings* “are understood as facets of personhood” exchangeable for “value on the labor market” (Ganti, 2014, p. 96). Reconciliation does not escape a skills discourse as “diversity *as embodied in individuals* is celebrated when it is seen as advantageous for business” since “neoliberalism recognizes cultural difference or historical injustice only in terms that reinforce rather than challenge the nation-state’s structures, thus further privileging individuals already empowered within those structures” (Wyile, 2018, p. 128).

*Capitalism* is an additional (but not separate) interlocutor abetting colonial reiterations in the field of early education. I again think with Vintimilla (2014) as they specify that “this connection is symptomatic of learning contexts and children in which both are already embedded historically in the market cultures of late capitalism. These cultures are becoming ever more consumer-driven places inhabited by consumer-driven subjects” (p.87). Capitalism, although in cahoots with neoliberalism, is distinguished as an economic model where businesses or individuals privately own particular goods, such as early years centres/land, that facilitate the production of ‘sellable’ goods, such as human capital/children as an ‘educated’ future workforce (Ganti, 2014; Moss, 2014; Prentice, 2007; Wyile, 2018). This not only structures and scales the field of early education into a chain of supply and demand but renders curriculum into a mere reaction to market needs. Further, in relation to the market being driven by a child’s ‘potential,’ Moss (2014) explains that:

Education, then, is perpetual preparation, continuous readying of the child, the youth and the adult for the next stage of lifelong learning, all driven by the ultimate goal: ensuring a pliant and passive labour force inscribed with neoliberal values and equipped to respond to the ceaseless, shifting demands of the market. (p. 44)

The colonial-capitalist-neoliberal ménage à trois does not end with *human capital* as land as a physical resource, as well as a pallet for colonial-progress in knowledge production, emerges (Tynan, 2021). *Extractivism* bellows “at the core of colonialism” as it reaches also into labour, specimens, resources, relationships and research” (Tynan, 2021, p. 598). Using an anti-colonial lens on seemingly ‘innocent’ prompts such as “educators can reflect on practices that enrich and deepen children’s relationships with place, land, and community”



as “children, with their boundless imaginations and sense of adventure, will be the leaders and innovators who will both inherit and re-create our societies in the future,” pronounces extractive systems (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 21). These statements contain romanticized discourses of child(hood) inherited from Friedrich Froebel (German pedagogue, 1782-1852) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Genevan philosopher, 1712-1778). Their philosophies entwined the nurturing of children’s potential with the assumed linearity of ‘nature’ in order to create the ‘ideal’ citizen, assembling an “essentialist conception of child-as-educational-output” (Cairns, 2018, p. 518). In addition, the word ‘adventure,’ against the landscape of stolen, Indigenous Lands, resounds a *discovery discourse* of ‘colonial-settler frontierism,’ upholding (recontextualized) colonial-relations of occupation (Cairns, 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Wildcat et al., 2014).

### **3.3 Discourse-Historical Approach**

In no fixed order, my methods for conducting a DHA analysis of the 2019 BCELf are: tracing historical elements which persist in perpetuating colonial-capitalist-neoliberal rhetoric within current early education engagements, identifying explicit and implicit language aiding colonial-capitalist-neoliberal paradigms, as well as examining contemporary ‘external’ socio-political influences shaping the text (including intertextual resources associated with the BCELf). Although my methods will weave throughout the article, a DHA to critical analysis begins with “a discourse fragment or utterance...as a starting point, and its prehistory is reconstructed by relating the present to the past” (Reisigl, as cited in, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 53). I chose DHA as my critical analysis tool alongside an anti-colonial framework, as they focus on social-justice and advocacy as “language in use always performs actions in the world” (Gee, 2014, p. 29, as

cited in Rogers, 2014). It is also a model of analysis concerned with *social, linguistic, and historical* ‘categories’ at the same ‘level,’ suggesting that the social contexts of texts inform, for example, the presence or even absence of specific language (Rogers, 2014). Gee maintains this thought as “we continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds, not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, nonlinguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing (as cited in Rogers, 2014, pp.29-30).” Working with a *multimodal social semiotic approach*, which reflects that *discourses* construct “the social world through many different sign systems” layered within “political, social, racial, economic, religious, and cultural formations,” allows me to critically examine the (2019) BCELF’s “socially defined practices” in a manner which highlights that they “cannot be considered neutral” or apolitical (Rogers, 2014, p. 1).

I traverse through a (never fully ‘knowable’ or complete) past-present-future intertwining, to navigate layers of historicities and discourses narrating early education in current Canadian contexts. To do so, I begin walking through the ‘Visions’ of the (2019) BCELF. I then conceptualize colonial past-present histories in relation to neoliberal-capitalist logics through a perpetual colonial-subjectification by way of three specific discourses in the BCELF: *Quality, Citizenship, and Well-being and Belonging*. I use an anti-colonial lens to link these discourses to colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal structures effecting all stakeholders (including other than humans) in the field of early education. These discourses manifest through dominant Euro-colonial philosophies and settler land acquisition, bolstering early education into a consumer-driven market (Vintimilla, 2014). I link these logics as Marker (2015) asserts, “Indigenous scholars and allies of Indigenous resurgence

recognise the imperatives of illuminating historical conditions of both policy and landscape simultaneously” for “new lines of inquiry and new priorities for research” to be possible (p. 500). The proceeding historical recollections are provided through secondary sources and, although not comprehensive, are intended as contextual glimpses for analysis into the “wider socio-political formation” and foundations in the current field of early education (Wodak, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 5). Signally the end of the article but not the finality of my thinking, I offer a brief summation to succinctly remind that “in addition to being a physical space and a legal-political apparatus, Canada is a narrative, and stories can change direction” (Wyile, 2018, p. 135).

### **3.4 Preamble: Storying the British Columbia Early Learning Framework**

[The 2019 British Columbia Early Learning Framework \(BCELF\)](#) is the second edition of a provincially funded and published document meant “to be lived with over time, to be reflected on in collaboration with others, and to inspire educators to stop and think about why they practise in particular ways” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 6). Although it is a provincially circulated document, it is not a mandatory framework as the field of early education in BC does not currently offer a united, public system across the province. As of April 2022, the field has moved from the [Ministry of Children and Family Development](#) to the [Ministry of Education and Child Care](#) which brings anticipation for a more ‘collective’ approach to educational considerations and curricula within early years programs. The BCELF is organized into four main sections as well as a glossary, references, and acknowledgements. The key changes from [the first edition \(2008\)](#) include the age range of focus from 0-5 to 0-8 years, connecting to BC’s curriculum (public, elementary) ‘Core Competencies,’ “striving to contribute to lasting reconciliation

with Indigenous peoples,” strengthening “the vision of inclusion,” as well as envisioning learning as holistic (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.4).

I will concentrate briefly on the ‘Visions’ of the (2019) BCELF more than other sections, giving a modest introductory sense of the document’s aims. I will also begin to explain certain design features of the BCELF, as it is a “political text, which is primarily designed to make a persuasive case” (Fairclough, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 12). Considering more than written language in *interdiscursive interactions* such as texts is critical as “stress and intonation, word order, lexical style, coherence, local semantic moves (such as disclaimers), topic choice, speech acts, schematic organization, rhetorical figures, and most forms of interaction are” relative to a speaker/writer’s power and control (van Dijk, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 5). Throughout the (2019) BCELF, particular words have been coloured in blue or bolded to note significance (which will be seen at times in my direct quotes), as well as isolated into separate boxes titled, ‘definition’ and ‘expanding an idea.’ This design choice is to draw the reader’s attention to, for example, a *vocabulary of process*. *Process language* are words such as (but not limited to) study, explore, engage, evoke, reflect, develop, and collaborate, which are used to suggest “the will and energy of agents,” agents here being primarily educators, in order to shape their educational practices. Additional language is used to “represent affective states” such as ‘committed to,’ ‘inspire to,’ and ‘strive to,’ which work as the “persuasive political rhetoric of the text” (Fairclough, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.12).

**3.4.1 ‘Visions’ section one: ‘Exploring the early learning framework,’** expands the (2019) BCELF’s ‘Visions- Respectfully living and learning together.’ Although not numerically listed, there are five subheadings under the ‘Visions’ section of the BCELF

which are offered as “an invitation to re-envision early care and learning spaces, education systems, and society” while promoting “dialogue about understandings of childhood, knowledge, education, and learning” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.11). The first subheading, ‘Early care and learning settings and schools,’ imagines these distinct spaces as sites of dialogue where “members discuss, share, and debate the values they hold about knowledge, education, and how to live well together” in respectful, meaningful, and local ways (p.12). As I am conducting a critical analysis of the (2019) BCELF, I want to point out the separation of language between early *care* and *learning* and *schools*. I point out this *order of discourse* (See Wodak & Meyer, 2001) as it reinscribes the notion that, not only is a *discourse of care* divided from ‘learning,’ but that early education settings prioritize (or maintain their function as providing) care before learning (Gallagher, 2018; Kershaw, 2004; Murray, 2015). In contrast, the ‘universal’ term/setting of ‘school,’ does not incorporate such distinction of discourse (no inclusion of care) within their educational ethos. This is particularly interesting as the next section, and new addition to the BCELF, speaks to the ‘seamless’ transition from early years to primary programming.

This order of discourse is also an example of the hierarchical Westernized approach to school settings as contained spaces of progression, where the acquisition of care and knowledge is distinct to developmental ages and stages. This is in contrast to Indigenous values and philosophies which uphold an *interconnectedness* of place (or land) from which methods of learning and teaching are derived. Care and learning for, and from, place are inseparable practices (Simpson, 2004; Watts, 2013). Watts (2013) explains the creation of this divide further as:

Over time and through processes of colonization, the corporeal and theoretical borders of the epistemological-ontological divide contribute to colonial interpretations of nature/creation that act to centre the human and peripherate nature into an exclusionary relationship. Land becomes scaled and modified in terms of progress and advancement. The measure of colonial interaction with land has historically been one of violence and bordered individuations where land is to be accessed, not learned from or a part of. (p. 26)

**3.4.2 The second subheading, 'Early care and learning for children aged birth to eight,'** views "an image of the child as capable and full of potential," states they are unique and maintains that a "secure sense of belonging" is celebrated (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.12). It continues with a guaranteeing statement that children "are provided with opportunities to enrich and deepen their relationships with place, land, and community" (p.12). Rousseauian (1762) and Froebelian (1862) notions of child development centre 'the holistic image' of the individual child through their community as a unique figure full of 'potential,' while claiming a child's 'true' sense of self must be cultivated through their innate relationships with 'nature' (Murray, 2015). Alike to Murray (2015), I suggest *recontextualization* is taking place within the (2019) BCELF through 'modernist' terms and assertions, as "the tenets held by these early philosophers are still discernible in contemporary guidance on early childhood pedagogy...and often included in...curriculum guidance;" a claim I attend to throughout my analysis (p. 1716). This subheading concludes by promoting learning and education as a "continuum" by way of transitioning "between early care and learning programs, schools, and other services" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.12). Although a seemingly pragmatic

statement, Murray (2015) notes that neuroscience, policy makers, and economists have increasing interests in “simplistic measurable imperatives” that easily persuade and target an “effective pre-school and primary education project” (p. 1717).

As “recontextualization implies transformation to suit the new context and its discourse” (Fairclough, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.12), the third subheading, ‘**Educators,**’ advocates that “educators have opportunities for ongoing dialogue with colleagues, families, and the broader community to consider how developmental theories have shaped perspectives and pedagogies of childhood and learning.” The hope is that educators will “engage with the complexities of practice in a spirit of **experimentation** that is local and respectful” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.12). Madden (2019) however cautions that responses to coloniality (e.g., developmental theories) in education cannot be “reduced, and are not reducible to, practice” or reflective questioning without ongoing, explicit, and rigorous theoretical understandings. (p. 285).

**3.4.3** I outline **the fourth and fifth subheadings, ‘Communities and governments,’ and ‘Reconciliation’** together, as they both speak to the ‘inherent’ value and contributions that children offer society. The ‘Communities and governments’ section pledges to “work in partnership to affirm children as citizens” by way of “adults [who] will work to create a space where pride of languages and **cultures** are cultivated, and in which children can take up social and traditional responsibilities.” This is said to be achieved through familial support, with communities and governments working toward “children’s learning and overall well-being” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.12). ‘Reconciliation,’ the final ‘Vision’ for the BCELF, “acknowledges that there is value for all students when Indigenous content and **worldviews**” are shared in “meaningful and

authentic ways” (p.12). This final ‘Vision’ tasks educators with collaborating and building “new relationships with Indigenous communities to better support the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and families in learning about residential schools and Indigenous histories” (p.12). It states further that “where early care and learning programs and schools are situated within or near Indigenous communities,” educators should reach out to those communities in order to contribute to and learn from them.

I would like to note the inadvertent (I assume) discourse of *erasure* created in this section, as all educational settings in British Columbia (and all of Canada) are situated within Indigenous communities by way of ‘contested’ Land and unceded Territories. The notion that only certain educational settings exist amongst or near Indigenous communities continues to narrate Indigenous communities as separate, by “erasing Indigenous presences and reinscribing colonizing imaginaries of pure Canadian nature.” This statement consequently ‘minimizes’ the perception of early education’s implications in ongoing colonial-settler relations (Nxumalo, 2019, p. 18). Further, the notion of ‘contributing to and learning from’ Indigenous communities runs the risk, I argue, of positioning First Nation communities as human capital and “little more than something that can be consumed...or a feature to be capitalized upon and marketed” (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, as cited in, Wyile, 2018, p. 127). Even with the intentions of reconciliation, the dominant Westernized mindset embedded in early education can effectively continue casting Indigenous communities in deficit positions of need (contribute to), while also abstracting their knowledges, and lands as resources for extraction (learn from).

### **3.5 Critical Discourse Analysis: Current Echoes**



As “discourse analysis is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves” (Olson, 2007, as cited in Mogashoa, 2014, p. 106), it is essential “to disarticulate and to critique texts as a way of disrupting common sense.” (Lucke, 1996, as cited in Mogashoa, 2014, p. 106). To these disruptions I add, taken for granted practices engaged with as applicable ‘fixes’ to colonial reverberations in the field of early education. The three distinct yet overlapping colonial-capitalist-neoliberal discourses I focus on through an anti-colonial lens are *quality*, *citizenship*, and *well-being and belonging*. Amongst these meta discourses, are micro-cosmism of additional genres, styles, and discourses interlocking (Stoler, 2001) particular European hand me downs which I have, and will continue to, touch on.

At its onset, the (2019) BCELF claims that it “resists language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonization and marginalization of Indigenous people” which, I argue, evokes an affirmative, promissory, and persuasive tone for the entirety of the document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). Although a draft (2018, Draft 4, field test version) of the framework begins the verbatim sentence with “Aims [emphasis added] to resist...,” the published (2019) version does not include such an intention (p.7). Rather, a statement of assurance signals to the reader, the target audience being largely early childhood educators, that the entirety of the proceeding (language, pedagogies, and curriculum) resists, for certain, colonial ideologies and affects. Although this statement may not be intended as a “settler move to innocence” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 86), as it should be noted that Indigenous organizations such as the BC Aboriginal Society contributed to the BCELF’s creation, there is a lack of *recognition of complexity* (Suppes, 1974, as cited in Mogashoa, 2014, p. 104) behind such an avowal.

Although the (2019) BCELF states its content is “not to offer criteria or certainities [emphasis added]” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.12), the use of *affirmative language* throughout creates “self-evident truths” based on the content creators’ positions of authority, expertise, and thus, validity (McGregor, 2010, as cited in Mogashoa, 2014, p. 105). Again, I am not stating the intentions of the contributors are to uphold discourses of resolve to pedagogical complexities, however, I caution the slippery slope this assuring language creates as early education in Canada is known for its apolitical standings and lure to *neoliberal fun and happiness* (Vintimilla, 2014).

### **3.5.1 Quality Human Capital**

*Quality* is a familiar word (represented as a *genre, discourse, and style*) in early education. Yet within the (2019) BCELF there is no explicit indication of what the term means, or even further, how to ‘produce’ what is being advertised. Moss (2014) explains that the “neoliberal thinking that dominate[s] early childhood policy making today” is “the story of quality and high returns” within “the story of markets” (p.i). *Quality* is a “promise [of] high returns on investment if only the right technologies are applied to children” within “the perfection of a system based on competition and individual choice” (Moss, 2014, p.i). Early education in BC has a wide variety of programming and services offered to families that range from in home private daycares, municipally supported organizations, non-for profit structures, for profit structures, drop-in ‘child-minding,’ parent participation, licensed/non-licensed, head-start, strong-start, before and after school care, nature schools, [and on and on](#). In addition to the saturation of ‘structural’ settings in early education, there is a flurry of philosophical approaches that accompany them. Some curriculums include Montessori

(see Taylor, 2013), Reggio Emilia (see Cagliari et al., 2016), play based learning, outdoor risky play, academic development, and on and on (see Follari, 2007).

The field of early education has become a capitalist market selling ‘quality’ products (spaces and philosophies) to prospective clients (families and children) based on an (over) abundance of consumer choice (Gallagher, 2018; Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014; Prentice, 2007). Due to the buffet of possibilities families are served, early childhood educators are continuously fed an almost glutinous array of ‘new’ techniques and teaching approaches to remain viable in this competition. The result, for the most part, is a brew of incommensurable philosophies devoid of clear pedagogical intentions, buried underneath trendy buzzwords to attract clients. Consequently, educators are subjugated into a facilitator “convinced to embrace dominant ideologies as always being in their own best interests” (Brookfield, 2009, p. 293). In turn, this capitalist-neoliberal contract upholds the business-model rhetoric preserving the state of early education, which furthers the interests of the status-quo (Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014; Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor 2013; Vintimilla, 2014).

The term *quality*, in its reified usage (meaning, an abstract notion toted as a concrete, materialised/graspable object) is peppered through political platform speeches, as well as accompanying resources for the 2019 BCELF ([see video from, Continuity of Learning: A Provincial, National and Global Perspective Summit, 2019](#)). It is as a formulaic approach to education traced back to Rousseau’s call for “proper educational techniques” to be employed in the pursuit of “establishing a [civil] society” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1384). It also mirrors the colonial ‘socialization’ model used in residential schools; an educational project forged during Canada’s confederacy to kill Indigenous culture and assimilate

Indigenous children into dominant Westernized society (de Leeuw, 2009; Edmond, 2016; Stoler, 2001; Wyile, 2018). *Quality* as a *human capital* algorithm has become “one of the main Canadian drivers” for early education’s business model as investing in young children’s education ensures a very particular type of future citizen; low risk, high return, and economically viable (Friendly, 2006, as cited in Prentice, 2007, p. 269). In 2006 (as cited in Prentice, 2007), the Canadian Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) stated that:

Much research has demonstrated the remarkable power of quality early childhood care and educational programs to improve a vast range of social outcomes, particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged children: reduced grade retention, higher reading and mathematics scores, increased IQ, higher levels of social competence, higher graduation rates, lower teen pregnancy rates, less smoking and drug use, higher employment and income levels, and lower crime rates. (p.274)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) promotes this sentiment further in the BCELF acknowledging, “education as the central drive in achieving equal opportunities with a vision to transform lives through education.” To secure the project of education, they “guarantee the full development and blossoming of children from their earliest years” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.5). The notion of developing and transforming children (subject formation) through education, is a Froebelian ideology derived from his thinking that children should “grow and learn” alongside adults (educators) who cultivate them as “good gardeners tend [to] young plants” (Bruce et al., 2019, p.9). ‘Nature’ metaphors of blossoming “flowers” as well as “weeds” allowed Froebel to categorize “good children, the bright ones,” as well as ‘invasive ones’

“who don’t fit into the mould into which you want to press them” (Bruce et al., 2019, 259). This modern mould, the OECD posits once again in the (2019) BCELF, is “in line with the latest scientific knowledge, supporting the holistic development of children with care and empathy” as “a strategic priority for reducing inequalities and enduring” well-being (p. 5). This strategy is at odds however with the ‘vision’ of the BCELF, as it claims its contents are to challenge “the dominance of child development theories formulated within the discipline of developmental psychology” that “set forth universal age-related stages that constitute normal child development” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 11).

Researching (2018) OECD reports further, their ‘key findings’ in ‘Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care,’ discuss the discourse of *quality* in early education being founded on (but not limited to): child-staff ratios, group size, *structural quality* indicators such as educators’ wages and job satisfaction, pre-service training, licensing, monitoring systems, and centre locations. These conditions are endorsed by the OECD as influential features to generate ‘quality’ child development and learning outcomes, and yet, comparable measures found under the ‘Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation’ in the (2019) BCELF (p.36) have no mention of ‘quality.’ The OECD also indicates significant gaps in the research of *quality* as “curriculum and pedagogy were found to be rarely and inconsistently addressed in the empirical literature” (p. 114). The OECD notes that future study must “broaden the scope of child development and learning assessment, to well-being as well as skills critical for future success, such as creative thinking” (p.107). This broadening of dominant Westernized scientific approaches to ‘well-being’ are increasingly turning to particular

aspects of Indigenous Knowledges, values, and worldviews as a resource for “sustainable development,” specifically with land, “primarily because it affords [particular] humans greater control over those environments” (Simpson, 2004, p. 374). An anti-colonial stance recognizes this *knowledge and economic hegemony* as a colonial tool employed to reinforce dominant Eurowestern development through resource extraction and commodification (OECD example of studying future skills for future living), its influence on shaping policy in response, as well as its deterministic discourse of *civilizing citizenship* (Ganti, 2014; Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006).

### **3.5.2 Civil Citizenship**

Although the allure of ‘quality’ programming is hyped through a multitude of programming options, for fear of drowning in the vast service providing sea of educational milieus, early education clings to the shores of repackaged, marketable curriculum as a means of survival (Cairns, 2018; Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014; Taylor, 2013). This life-raft of aesthetically reconfigured themes, practices, and processes not only become devoid of situated knowledges, relational responsivity, and affective experimentation, but sustain discursive styles of *subjectification* and *outcome-based* rhetoric (Kershaw, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). To be clear, this is not a critique of the field for the sake of being critical, rather, it is glaring imagery of the pervasive system of colonial-capitalist-neoliberal climates setting course for the field and all its passengers to navigate (Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). The industrialized *human capital theory* (HCT, see Moss, 2014) undermining the field of early education, using “algorithms and principles of standardization and of factory life” (Robinson, 2020, p.8), create the ideal conditions from which *homo economicus* can be engineered and unleashed globally (Ganti, 2014; Moss,

2014). Early year spaces become intrinsic settings for the moulding and manufacturing of self-serving, economically-objective, competitive, consumerist citizens (Gallagher, 2018; Kershaw, 2014; Moss, 2014).

The *early* in early childhood then takes on a different meaning, beyond denoting young age, to instead a locale of *early intervention* where the cultivation of “specific kinds of citizen-subjects” can be crafted (Cairns, 2018, p. 520). Although I locate this assertion presently, similar sentiments were shared by Rousseau who noted that “love of country cannot subsist without freedom; nor freedom without virtue; nor virtue without citizens. If you can create citizens, you have gained everything.” However, “the making of citizens is not the work of a single day, and in order to have citizens when they are men, it is necessary to educate them when they are children” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1387). Much like the ideologies founding residential schools (running until 1996) during Canadian confederation, every essence of personhood becomes ripe for a *rhetoric of effects* (Cairns, 2018), including “the ways that culture and cultural difference are commodified to accrue profit” (Ganti, 2014, p. 91). A *rhetoric of effects* is an “essentialist conception of the child-as-education-output and bolsters a neoliberal vision of social change rooted in personal transformation” (Cairns, 2018, p. 516). *Identity* is the primary ‘theme’ of personal transformation I focus on as it is shared by the BCELF and BC Ministry of Education’s ‘Curriculum Core Competencies;’ commonalities now part of the (2019) BCELF revisions.

[The BC Curriculum Core Competencies](#) website explains that “a personally aware and responsible individual takes steps to ensure their well-being, sets goals and monitors progress, regulates emotions and manages stress, and recognizes and advocates for their own rights” (“Personal and social,” n.d.). This statement begs a question. If an individual

(or child) does not set goals, is not able to ‘regulate’ their emotions, or does not advocate for their rights, does this mean they are not an ‘aware’ or ‘responsible’ person? I wonder further, *awareness* and *responsibility* against what measure? In section three of the (2019) BCELf ‘Identities, Social Responsibility, and Diversity,’ a “positive personal and cultural identity” is defined by having “the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of all the facets that contribute to a healthy sense of oneself.” This includes “family background, **culture**, heritage, language, values, beliefs, and perspectives in a **pluralistic** society” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.86). Thinking with an anti-colonial framework within my Canadian context, I trouble this statement against the forcible removal, assimilation, and (attempted) genocide of Indigenous peoples across these lands by way of “their culture and language...being taken away and told that they were inferior” (Justice Murray Sinclair, 2015, as cited in, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.32). The dispossession of Indigenous children’s (and adults) socio-cultural lifeworlds and ties to Land is a generational reverberation remaining today, with Indigenous Nations working to revitalize and reclaim their dynamic (stolen) ways of knowing and being (de Leeuw, 2009; Edmond, 2016; Stoler, 2001; Wyile, 2018). I am obliged to ask again, if someone (a child) does not have all the *awareness*, *understanding*, and *appreciation* of their cultural identity, can they not have a ‘positive’ sense of oneself? I again wonder further, a *healthy* sense against whose measure.

Twenty-first century ‘identity skills’ are bolstered for “the realities of changing technologies, an environmental crisis, social and cultural **diversity**, and righting the wrongs of **colonialism**,” as these “are the context within which children, educators, and families live” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.29). *Identity as civil*



*citizenship* is commodified through a *rhetoric of effects* as “the [bundle of] skills least likely to be replaced by technologies,” because “they’re the skills that allow us to adapt to an ever-changing labour market” (Giammarco et al., 2020, p. 5). These statements come from an impact report by the Conference Board of Canada, a non-profit organization researching economic and performance trends in Canada for public and private sectors (Giammarco et al., 2020). The *citizenship skills*, or *social capital*, they outline are malleable, lifelong skills such as “cultural competencies, interpersonal and relationship building skills, self-awareness, and empathy” (Giammarco et al., 2020, p.5). The “learners (and the workers they become),” learners meaning children, need these socio-emotional knowledges as they are not only in demand on the labour market, but also, essential for “health, civic engagement, and wellbeing” (Giammarco et al., 2020, p.3, p. 5). Giammarco et al. (2020) expresses that since ideology, social polarisation, and tensions are mounting in Canada, there is an increased need for ‘respect’ and ‘empathy’ (skills) to be honed, in order to achieve and protect “a more inclusive Canada” (p.5). In other words, there is a re-occurring need for colonial-civil subjugation to be transmitted through proper educational, “Canadianization” techniques (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2016, p. 275).

### **3.5.3 Wellbeing and Belonging: Shaping The Self**

I am in no way arguing that an affectionate sense of self is not a meaningful endeavor. However, I follow Foucault’s (1984) thinking that not “everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (as cited in Cruikshank, 1999, p. 127). What has been done with *well-being and belonging*, is the system of neo-liberal education has co-opted it to be “attained in some way by fulfilling personal needs” through particular

techniques and ‘learnable’ skills (Andrews & Duff, 2020 para.2). Although well-being and belonging is not a quantifiable state of existence, it has been absorbed into a *multiculturalism discourse* (or in the BCELF, *Diversity*) which includes ‘health’ and ‘inclusion’ themes (Malins, 2017; OECD, 2018). Once again, there is a lack of *recognition of complexity* (Suppes, 1974, as cited in Mogashoa, 2014, p. 104) as these *needs-based theories* of well-being and belonging “are inadequate on their own as they do not recognise variability on many levels, including the values and capacities of individuals and groups, the opportunities available to them, and the choices they make” (Andrews & Duff, 2020, para.2). Andrews and Duff (2020) critically examine *well-being and belonging* further as its “produced as an object of social and economic concern, and more directly how wellbeing functions, what it causes, engenders or produces under conditions of capitalism” (para.1).

Underpinning the BCELF’s ‘Visions’ are a set of ‘Principles.’ Four of the nine mention well-being generated through: Family being the most important role, general relationships providing the context, as well as environment and ‘play’ being integral for children to achieve a state of well-being (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.15). Rousseau contended that “the main task of education is to produce a man capable of living with others,” thus, “natural needs should be constrained or transformed” (Bardina, 2017, p. 1386). An anti-colonial standpoint brings this educational aim into modern focus as current capitalist drives, and “the institutional core of neoliberalism,” “consists of an articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third” (Wacquant, 2012, as cited in Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p.422). Although I have separated *quality, citizenship, and well-being and belonging* for

readership sake, all three discourses work in tandem to fabricate an *education of progress* (Moss, 2014). They recontextualize a colonial “concern for realising the skills, knowledge, competences, attitudes and other characteristics of an individual that can contribute” to labour and market productivity (Moss, 2014, p. 19). This capitalist-neoliberal educational paradigm “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions [cultivating skills],” as “it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market” (Harvey, 2005, p.3).

Bringing humans and other than humans into the global market is a task the OECD (2018) is striving for through “child development domains such as well-being” (p. 12), although they note the limited empirical research on children’s well-being, restricting their “scope of examined child outcomes” on development and learning (p.19). Their research on ‘quality’ in early education, however, did produce results stating the importance of family interaction, general early education ‘staff’ relationships, as well as the environment’s role in facilitating children’s well-being in early year programs (p. 22). An article cited in the (2018) OECD gives further insight into the market interest of *well-being and belonging* as it notes, by “supporting teachers’ well-being and social and emotional competence, we may improve their performance and improve classroom quality” (Jennings, 2014, p.741). For the OECD, they “operationalised” the well-being of teachers as “the perception of wage fairness in comparison to others in their organisation and other staff in the profession, and staff perceived autonomy in hiring” (2018, p. 87). To give more context to the term, an etymology of *well-being* requires it to be broken into two parts: well and being. *Well*, from 14<sup>th</sup> century English meaning ‘in good fortune, happy’ and *being* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, relaying ‘a state of existence.’ In neoliberal consumerist terms, it is the criterion for

“content individuals who are able to work and consume” (Andrews & Duff, 2020, para.1). Within an early education program, Vintimilla (2014) pinpoints, “we have moved away from allowing ambivalence in children’s emotional lives or supporting ways of being that are more complex than being happy,” or what Ahmed describes as, “the happiness turn” (as cited in Vintimilla, 2014, p. 82).

The BCELf encourages educators to “create environments in which every child feels confident to achieve to their highest potential” through a list of techniques such as “being open to joy,” “welcoming all cultures,” “respecting children’s identities,” and 94 accompanying self-reflective questions to consider (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p.67). Where applied, characteristics for happy, belonging bodies can propagate into skillful ‘healthy’ and ‘aware’ civil citizens readied for the future labour market (Cairns, 2018; Moss, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). The colonial mindset of *futurity* is an ongoing event where “the future is rendered knowable through specific practices (i.e. calculation, imagination, and performance) and, in turn, intervenes upon the present through three anticipatory logics (i.e. pre-caution, pre-emption and preparedness)” (Baldwin, 2012, as cited in Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013, p. 80). Particular prepared calculations bring me to the final colonial-capitalist-neoliberal ‘slide from view’ (Carlson, 2016) which I analyse within a *well-being and belonging* discourse. Although there have been shifts away from a *multicultural rhetoric* in the (2019) BCELf, Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) highlight that “the initial language of multiculturalism” moving “to a language of diversity” merely allows for a “more fully...reoccupied” space for colonial-settler bodies and narratives to exist. This continued *replacement* and *erasure* of the ‘other’ falls “under the banner of we are all the same because we are different,” in

the name of upholding colonial-settler systems (p. 82). *Well-being and belonging*, when operationalised as an attainable set of human-social capital skills and conditions, results in propping up hegemonic *citizenship education*, rather than working toward the transformative change desired (and required) in early education (Moss, 2014; Nxumalo; 2019; Wyile, 2018).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this article I ask, at a policy level, how does early education perpetuate the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies within curricular frameworks such as the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework? As a means to explore my main research question, I apply a Discourse-Historical Approach to critical analysis (DHA) to examine the (2019) BCELF. Using multiple methods, such as interrogating implicit and explicit language, secondary sources underpinning the (2019) BCELF, as well as wider socio-political contexts, I look for discrepancies as well as incommensurable rhetoric, firstly, against one of the BCELF's opening statements. The statement, positioned directly above the BCELF's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous communities, assuredly asserts it "resists language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonization and marginalization of Indigenous people" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). Using an anti-colonial lens, I press against this statement to begin drawing out colonial past-present histories *recontextualized* in the (2019) BCELF as "the anti-colonial aim is to subvert dominant thinking that re-inscribes colonial and colonizing relations" (Sefa Dei, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p.3).

Three main discourses are pronounced during my analysis, being, *quality*, *citizenship*, and *well-being and belonging*. I link these discourses to colonial-capitalist-neoliberal logics as

I argue these “genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), [and] styles (ways of being)” not only produce, but systematically uphold status quo ideologies in early education within British Columbia (Rogers, 2014, p. 12). I also underscore how the dominant discourses of *quality*, *citizenship*, and *well-being and belonging* translate to Land in Canada through dominant Euro-Western educational philosophies, specifically inherited from Fredrich Froebel (1782-1852) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Together, their Enlightenment era ways of thinking of child(hood) and land (or ‘nature’ as the two terms are conflated in ‘mainstream’ education), helped birth a developmental algorithm which resounds in current colonial-Canadian contexts and curriculums (Taylor 2013, 2017). The equation of particular skills + child in twenty first century terms produces a promissory outcome for the child as human capital, banked on for future, economic citizenry (Moss, 2014). To bolster the child’s ‘potential,’ land becomes reduced to a backdrop, physically and conceptually, predicated on the (attempted) erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples across the ‘nation state’ of Canada (Tynan, 2021). Stolen Indigenous Tradition Lands are commodified, abstracted, and extracted as a resource, so early years educators may attend to children as “good gardeners tend [to] young plants” (Bruce et al., 2019, p.9) to ensure a ‘proper Canadianized’ settler futurity prospers (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

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### Chapter 3

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## Concluding, not foreclosing

### Chapter 4

#### 4.1 Overview

This thesis does not conclude with definitive findings or material solutions to enduring status quo early education-land assemblages in BC. Rather, this final chapter firstly extends dialogue between the introduction, chapter 2 (article #1), and chapter 3 (article #2), then offers anti-colonial implications and questions for further examination, ending with my final thoughts.

#### 4.2 Dialogical Summary

My thesis manifests in a non-linear fashion. Beginning with personal-pedagogical knowledge and experience, my research takes shape alike to a *meandering* (Banack & Berger, 2020), however, not a driftless wandering. As the introduction mentions, I am personally drawn to ways of living with seasonal rhythms tied to land and ‘fooding’ rituals such as foraging, fishing, planting, harvesting, cooking, preserving, and feasting to name a few. I engaged with these passions pedagogically, firstly, during my Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and Care. For my graduating project I examined the pedagogical potentialities of food and mealtimes as ritual and rhythms, rather than merely ‘fuel’ and routine transitions with children in early education settings (*A is for Apple*; title facetiously inspired by [dominant ‘phonics’ practices](#), not published). This research as well as my role as a (former) early childhood educator, afforded me preliminary understandings in relation to the apolitical and habitual ways in which the field of early education in BC engages with food, for example, and land as part of a larger ‘outdoor’ landscape. Arising from these interests and conditions (not limited to), I am compelled to further engage with pedagogies

concerning ecology in early education in a more critical manner for my thesis. I craft my primary research question, at a policy level, how does early education perpetuate the ongoing creation of colonial pedagogies within curricular frameworks such as the (2019) BCELf, as an entryway into tilling at the rhizomatic slips of neutrality sown into policy and land pedagogies in early education.

This central question produces two articles: The first, a historical analysis of ‘outdoor education,’ and the second, a Discourse-Historical analysis of the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELf). These two analyses work jointly to unearth specific dominant Euro-Western discourses propagated within early education-land assemblages. For article one, I focus on two main ‘narratives,’ being, the confederacy of Canada including the abhorrent treatment perpetuated on Indigenous people and their Traditional Lands, and the dominant Euro-Western early education philosophies carried to ‘Canadian’ shores during that time. Two main discourses, *discovery* and *acculturating values*, came to the forefront of my historical analysis as I link their entanglements to colonial-settler ‘*frontierism*’ (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). I argue these “genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), [and] styles (ways of being)” (Rogers, 2014, p. 12) not only physically *reterritorialize* land, but in addition, render land into a colonial-settler resource of cognitive fodder for extraction, abstraction, and consumption. Land becomes utilitarian while systematically positioning educators as mere technicians of static, objective facts and developmentally appropriate activities (Cairns, 2018; Drew & MacAlpine, 2021; Taylor 2013, 2017; Vintimilla 2014).

Article two, the DHA analysis of the (2019) BCELf, continues pronouncing temporal intertwinings as well as the ongoing materialisations, ideologies, and settler-colonial

narratives present in BC early education land-assemblages. Three particular discourses, *quality*, *citizenship*, and *well-being and belonging*, are prevalent through my critical analysis of colonial past-present historicities *recontextualized* within the (2019) BCELF. These persistent logics, which continue upholding colonial-capitalist logics, are undergoing a neoliberal ‘re-branding’ of sorts amongst twenty first century skillsets (not exclusive to early education). Their presences create a climate for “ongoing processes by which settler dominance is actively reconstituted as a set of actions, occupations, deferrals, and potentials” (Rifkin, 2014, as cited in Carlson, 2016, p.1). The insidiousness of these dominant discourse is that they are marketed to, and thus taken up, by educators and other stakeholders in early education as neutral or even ‘progressive’ and beneficial for policy and pedagogical aspirations (Carlson, 2016; Moss, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). Although these dominant (economically driven) logics are gaining momentum within current BC early education contexts, they are not new ideologies.

The predominant discourses (although I touched on others such as *extractivism*) from both of my articles (*discovery*, *acculturating values*, *quality*, *citizenship*, and *well-being and belonging*) are woven into the settler-colonial Canadian timescape of ‘empire’ building and stolen, Indigenous Lands. The romanticized notions of child(hood) inherited from Froebel and Rousseau’s early education philosophies which infused ‘nature’ and child into an inseparable, developmental relationship, were downloaded and translated into a newly forming settler-colonial context (Bruce et al., 2019, Prochner & Howe, 2000). Their Enlightenment era inspired thinking was employed as a means for advancing the project of colonization by creating particular ‘Canadian’ subjects through nature-child-culture divides and assemblages. This assimilatory tactic was further applied to not only subjugate,

but violently eradicate Indigenous populations across Turtle Island (de Leeuw, 2009; Tynan, 2021; Wyile, 2018). In the name of expanding the efficacy of proper “Canadianization,” the political project of education turned also to tactile materializations through the creation of residential schools (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2016, p. 275). Canada’s “moral discourses about transforming children and the value of residential school education” worked to incite the re-territorialization of land (physically and later, conceptually) by linking “colonial land acquisition for the construction of material sites in which to contain and transform Indigenous subjects” (de Leeuw, 2009, p. 133).

In today’s ‘mainstream’ early education within the context of BC, as I note in my historical analysis of ‘outdoor education,’ land is diminished and commodified into an ‘economy system’ resulting in the construction of “a habitat that is almost exclusive to one way of knowing, being and doing, such that all other cultures and species must adapt to the created dominant environment to survive” (Thornton et al., 2019, p.244). I am able to interlock this assertion to the departing quote in my DHA analysis from Moss (2014), in part being, “the particular task facing early childhood education...is to start the continuous process of producing and maintaining [an] autonomous...flexible, and compliant workforce...so ensuring personal and national survival in a never-ending global rat race” (p.44). The engagement between my two articles not only underscores the marketization of early education but highlights the systematic capitalization of all ‘subjects’ amidst the field, human and other than human, as resources (Cairns, 2018; Moss, 2014; Nxumalo, 2019). The assemblage of stolen Indigenous Land + nature-child are used to create a ‘pedagogical recipe,’ steeping ‘outdoor’ education in discourses of societal saviourism and ‘universal’ educational-outputs. This furthers the lauding of ‘outdoor education’ and ‘nature’

pedagogies as transformative best practice for the developmental progression and well-being of the child, as well as promissory equations for earthly survival in the face of escalating environment degradation (Cairns, 2018; Nelson et al., 2018, Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor, 2013, 2017). Land, physically and conceptually, becomes rendered into a backdrop for the benefit of the status quo, void of ethical, political, and situated engagements by way of colonial-capitalist-neoliberal endeavours. This all, designedly, in the name of upholding, and securing, a prosperous settler futurity (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

### **4.3 Anti-Colonial Implications**

My historical analysis of ‘outdoor’ education as well as my Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to critical analysis of the (2019) British Columbia Early Learning Framework (BCELF) serve as a contribution to anti-colonial efforts in early education within the colonial context of Canada. Specifically, this thesis adds to geographically and pedagogically situated examinations of early education-land assemblages in British Columbia (BC). These analyses are important work as land, both physically and conceptually, is increasingly absorbed into colonial-capitalist-neoliberal markets (Nelson et al., 2018; Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor; 2017). As “Canadian thought has [also] been steeped in colonial and neoliberal logics,” there is an ongoing need to critically unsettle policy and frameworks such as the (2019) BCELF (Wyile, 2018, p. 139). Thus, my thesis interrogates particular colonial-capitalist-neoliberal (ongoing) histories and discourses, which not only helped establish early education in the ‘nation state’ of Canada, but ones which continue to uphold such historicities in current twenty first century contexts. Drawing on an anti-colonial framework, I consider early education an ethical and political project which structures power, knowledge production, ‘validity,’ and subject formation (Burman, 2020;

Liboiron, 2021; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006). As such, my critique of practices and processes in early education emerges from an ethics of care, one that not only works to provoke complacency, but a form of care that also desires “a way of getting involved with glimpses of alternative livable relationalities, [as well as] with other possible worlds in the making” (Puig, 2017, p.169).

I contend that becoming actively involved in the intricacies and possibilities for ‘alternative’ livable worlds must be taken up at a local and situated level. Thus, I am not concluding my thesis with fixed, provincially applicable ‘solutions’ to colonial-capitalist-neoliberal rhetoric underpinning early education and entangled land assemblages. However, my findings accentuate my advocacy for pre-service curriculum in Canada to centre an anti-colonial lens when developing and delivering the instruction and studies for pre-service early educators in post-secondary institutions (private and public). A primary dilemma with the (2019) BCELF is that although it is a framework aimed at early childhood educators currently working in programs, there are deficient provisions in place for the document, or what it claims to stand for, to be put into practice. This is due, in part, to [the lack of a united regulatory body](#) guiding practices in the field; a point I note in my DHA, chapter 3. I am not necessarily suggesting a ministry enforcement mandating in-service educators adhere to the framework, but I question the framework’s efficacy in delivering ongoing professional development as a stand alone piece within the complexities of theory and practice. My concern is especially raised as the (2019) BCELF asks educators to ‘critically reflect’ on and “recognize their role in educating others about Canada’s history of colonization and seek ways to contribute to reconciliation” (p.85).



As ‘mainstream’ early education in Canada has, and continues to be, positioned as a social service “that allows parents to work, [delivers] education for preparing children for school or integrated care and education that focuses” on the child’s ‘potential,’ much of the pre-service and in program training for early childhood educators revolves around the ‘quality’ delivery of childcare (Murray, 2015, p. 1716). A (2018) OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report states, which I remind is an organization the (2019) BCELF cites, “there is consensus that process quality, such as the quality of staff-child interactions and developmental activities, is the primary driver of gains in children’s development through ECEC” (p.13). My mention of this is to repeatedly underline the current, dominant discourses coursing through early education in Canada, including BC. It is to also highlight the considerable leap from preparing early childhood educators to deliver developmentally appropriate activities for children, to tasking them with a litany of ‘reflective questions’ (there are approximately 296 questions in the BCELF) on theory, practice, and pedagogies ranging from gender performativity to reconciliation. The (2019) BCELF explains that “when educators pause, notice, and reflect on their work with young children, they can notice how theories are embedded in practice and can begin to consider different theories and possibilities” (p.28). From this, I must ask, what ongoing support does the BCELF have in place for in-program educators as they unsettle and reconfigure ‘different’ world making possibilities? In addition, what ongoing resources are available for educators as they activate their reflections and transform them into co-creating ethical and situated pedagogy and curriculum? What is interrupting ‘critical’ reflection from becoming a loop of ‘self’ mirrored feedback?

Brookfield (2009) cautions “the conflating of the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘critical’ [as it] is often taken to imply that adding the qualifier ‘critical’ somehow makes the kind of reflection that happens take place at a deeper and more profound level” (p. 297). Rogers (2014) presses further, reminding that “people call on the resources they have for making meanings and, in doing so, enter into a struggle over representation with political and ideological practices” (p.7). This is not to say that posing questions within the (2019) BCELF is not a ‘worthy’ start to more ethical endeavours, or that educators are incapable of such critical practices, but as Šarić and Šteh (2017) also wonder, “are [educators] provided with adequate conditions in their everyday pedagogical practice (school management’s support, enough supervisors, time, etc.)” so that this reflective process may be able to even take place (p. 70). It must also be questioned, how are in-program educators to bring breadth and depth to their practices and processes when early education has historically avoided implication in past-present colonial legacies and capitalist-neoliberal markets? Within the pages of the (2019) BCELF there is no explicit acknowledgement of early education’s implications and complacency in ongoing colonialisms. I argue, this is a significant “settler move to innocence” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 86), which creates an ethos of saviourism and problematic discourses of ‘inclusion’ devoid of *deliberative dialogue* (with children, educators, and other stakeholders) regarding power relations and humanist dualisms (Elliott & Young, 2015; Vintimilla, 2014). This ethos of complacency and lack of “carefully theorized practice” (Madden, 2019, p.285) alongside questions such as “what opportunities do I provide for children to see their cultural background reflected in my program?” and “how might I include cultural books, stories, or artifacts?” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 87) urges caution, as it

“can lead to a notion of education for reconciliation that is synonymous with pedagogical approaches and, by extension, preoccupation with how reconciliation translates to teaching practice” as a quick ‘fix’ to colonisation (Madden, 2019, p. 285).

#### 4.4 Final Thoughts

If the content creators of the (2019) BCELF are calling on early childhood educators to “take [steps] toward the development of respectful relations, redress, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples” by “clarifying how Indigenous peoples have had so much taken from them – including their children” (pp. 84-85), then I urge the next BCELF to offer more explicit, rigorous, and politicized explanations of the *histories* and theories informing the ongoing practices and processes that continue preserving status quo and business as usual endeavours in the field of ECE (Hampton & DeMartini, 2017; Nxumalo, 2019; Vintimilla, 2014). I must also press the BCELF to re-examine the incommensurable use of particular language and sentiments such as, “in line with the latest scientific knowledge, supporting the holistic development of children with care and empathy is a strategic priority for reducing inequalities and enduring children well-being” (OECD, 2018, p. 4, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 5) by ‘external’ organizations such as the OECD. If the BCELF “resists language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of **colonization**” then it must take up a traitorous identity (Plumwood, 2002) and choose to let go of particular narratives (i.e., quality) and dominant Euro-Western ideologies (i.e., heavily focused developmentalism) if it intends to activate such resistance. Although the (2019) BCELF is an adequate beginning toward an anti-colonial shift, early education cannot rest on its laurels within a framework. As colonisation is a persistent structure, anti-colonial efforts must also, not only persist, but insist on the continuous refusal of processes

or policies “establishing and maintaining an empire, lingering where it has always been in the general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological economic and social practices” (Said, 1984, as cited in Sefa Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 90). If not, I argue, frameworks such as the (2019) BCELF will become a mere tokenistic public relations gesture and repositories for questions that remain critically unexamined under scarce, market driven conditions. As proposing practices was out of the purview of this thesis, one lingering question from my analyses, for further research is: *What might be necessary at a policy level for the creation of anti-colonial land pedagogies amongst ‘outdoor’ education curriculum practices in British Columbia?*

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### Chapter 4

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