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Living and Learning With the Morningside Blackberry Plant

Rethinking our Relationship With the World

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This living inquiry took place in the Morningside early learning program at the SFU Childcare Society as part of a practicum course. As we entered the program in early September, our attention was grasped by the children's and educators' engagement and encounters with a particular blackberry plant residing in the corner of the Morningside yard. The Morningside blackberry plant is an integral part of the daily life of the program as the children regularly visit this unique plant, spending time under its tall branches, observing the bubbly blackberries, and reaching over to pick them in their mouths. However, the desire of the children to pick as many berries as they could reach raised discussion and discomfort about the berry plant being viewed solely as an object – a resource for human consumption. And so, as practicum students entering a space with these concerns, we began to consider how we might shift the focus on living and learning with and knowing the berry plant differently and transform our perspective on the world through a curriculum inquiry. This Pedagogical Narration highlights particular events, becomings, and transformations that emerged from children's curiosity and encounters with the blackberry plant and its spikes that provoked the children to re-think their relationship with the world and more-than-human others.

Living and Learning with Morningside Blackberry Plant: Re-thinking our Relationship with the World

School of Education and Childhood Studies
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Dedication

We respectfully acknowledge that these unceded lands on which we gather, study, and explore, and where this inquiry project took place, rightfully belong to the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), səlilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), and kʷikʷəƛw̓əm (Kwikwetlem) Nations.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the Morningside community for providing us the opportunity and support to work together and co-construct this living curriculum inquiry with the Morningside children and educators, and to Dr. Bo Sun Kim – The SFUCCS pedagogist and faculty advisor for our practicum. Thinking with Dr. Bo Sun Kim offered us a unique practicum experience as we had the opportunity to work with a pedagogist and participate in the program's weekly curriculum meetings as part of building this shared curriculum inquiry. We were fortunate to observe closely how she, as a pedagogist, navigated educators' inquiry processes and facilitated collaborative inquiry and curriculum-making between educators, Capilano University faculty members, and practicum students. Finally, we would like to dedicate this Pedagogical Narration to the children who participated as protagonists, their families who supported the inquiry process, and the educators who provided us with guidance and new insights.

Background

This inquiry project took place in the Morningside early learning program at the SFU Childcare Society (SFUCCS) as part of a practicum course. As we entered the program in early September, our attention was grasped by the children's and educators' engagement and encounters with a particular blackberry plant residing in the corner of the Morningside yard. As the SFUCCS is located on top of the beautiful Burnaby Mountain (BC, Canada) and surrounded by diverse vegetation. The children and educators live with a multitude of plants, animals, insects, and other non-human beings. Thus, the particularity of the campus invites children and educators to engage with relationality and interconnectedness between human and non-human others, place, and community in their daily life. Among this diverse community, the Morningside blackberry plant presents itself as unique. Unlike other blackberry plants around the SFUCCS community, it reaches tall towards the sky, over the gate, and inside the Morningside yard.

The Morningside blackberry plant is an integral part of the daily life of the program as the children regularly visit this unique plant, spending time under its tall branches, observing the bubbly blackberries, and reaching over to pick them to place in their mouths. However, the desire of the children to pick as many berries as they could reach has raised discussion and discomfort about the berry plant being viewed solely as an object – a resource for human consumption. Thus, as practicum students entering a space with these concerns, we began to consider how we might shift the focus on living and learning with and knowing the berry plant differently and transform our perspective on the world through a curriculum inquiry, providing children opportunities to generate new meanings, curiosities, and questions about the berry plant.

The focus of this Pedagogical Narration is not to reveal the whole story and journey but instead, to provide a window to highlight particular events, becomings, and transformations that emerged from children's curiosities and encounters with the blackberry plant and its spikes that provoked the children to re-think their relationship with the world. However, we would like to provide some context and pedagogical intentions leading to the inquiry.

When we think of the Morningside berry plant, it is full of life - vibrant and active. Rather than separating the children's learning and knowing of self from the blackberry plant, we wanted to shift the status quo of this relationship and ways of knowing, to consider how we are, in fact, part of the world and connected with the human and more-than-human others that make up a place and the local community. So, as the children and educators embarked on this shared journey of living and learning with the blackberry plant, we began to wonder how we might live and engage with the Morningside berry plant differently than only focusing on picking the berries.

How might our relationship with the berry plant shift by considering our co-existence rather than separation?

How can we re-learn to know the Morningside berry plant?

How might we spend time with the berry plant differently?

These questions serve as important pedagogical values and dispositions of this project as they provoke children and educators to explore new ways of knowing and engaging with the world and challenge the taken-for-granted and prevalent human-centered practices in early childhood education. According to Blaise and Hamm (2019), in order to shift away from such positionings of education and learning, and disrupt the separation of humans and nature, we must move toward a more open view of knowledge construction that considers learning and thinking with more-than-human relations. Thus, reconsidering ways of knowing, learning, and living with this berry plant allows us to respond pedagogically to the need to build more situated, relational, and ethical practices that create space for children to build new relations with the world and refigure learning within world.

We began by spending more time with the berry plant to get to know it differently. Every day a group of children would visit and gather under the tall branches that were arching over, lingering, hiding, jumping, drawing, and sharing stories. Instead of focusing on picking the berries, the children began to notice and become curious about the large size of the berry plant. The tall and robust form of the plant caused puzzlement and brought forward a question from the children;

Is it a blackberry bush or a blackberry tree?

As we engaged with this question, the children began to pay attention to the unique qualities of the berry plant, such as the way it reached its long arm over the fence, how it weaved its stem through the chicken wire, and noting the sharp thorns and the visiting animals and insects. These encounters with the berry plant invited children into the process of staying open to the unknown and transforming any predefined ways of knowing the blackberry plant. Through this process, we noticed that the more the children learned to know the Morningside blackberry plant, the more these binary lines of trees and bushes blurred, resulting in children's theory of the berry plant possibly being both bush and a tree. As the children challenged the binary notion, the shared space opened up to multiple ways of knowing.

As a result, the children began to pay attention to the sharp thorns previously thought of as little vicious spikes trying to scratch and poke the children's arms and hands as they reached for the berries. However, with new perspectives and the desire to know the berry plant differently, the children disrupted their previous relationship with the spikes and created new understandings of them. Through the following pedagogical narration, we illustrate how the engagement with the blackberry plant and its spikes and shifting perspectives transformed children's relationships with the world.

Re-configuring Our Relationship through Place Pedagogy

To shift our way of engaging with the Morningside blackberry plant and to re-think our relationship with the world, we engage with and draw knowledge from the growing theorization of place pedagogies and reconceptualizing place that offers us a different way to approach living and learning with the more-than-human others. We explore how we might disrupt our taken-for-granted ways of thinking and knowing the Morningside berry plant and how we might approach our relationship with the world differently by moving away from human-centric and fixed ideas of a place. To shift our way of engaging with the blackberry plant, we work with scholars such as Iris Duhn, Margaret Somerville, Hamish Ross, Greg Mannion, and Bronwyn Davies, whose work challenges us to seek new ways to consider children's learning and relationship with place as being intimately intertwined with human, non-human others, through exploring concepts within place pedagogy, such as place-as-an-assemblage, networks of relationality, and the practice of community (Duhn 2012; Somerville et al., 2011; Davies, 2014).

Place Pedagogy

Place pedagogy offers early childhood education a reconceptualized framework and an alternative way to approach place differently in learning. Margaret Somerville (2010) proposes an important question as a basis of her work in reconceptualizing place as she asks, “How might we educate a generation of children…to be attached to their local places, to inhabit, and to know place differently?” (p. 327). By asking this, she seeks to challenge and disrupt the taken-for-granted way of thinking about place. The traditional way of thinking of place is very human-centric: it assumes that place is made by humans and imposed upon by human actions, their sense of familiarity, and stability (Duhn, 2012). Similarly, from Western perspectives, learning as a humanist activity traditionally aims to separate the learner from the natural world, its more-than-human others, and the community (Ross & Mannion, 2012). According to Somerville (2010), place pedagogy disrupts this human-centered notion of place by positioning the relationship to place as distinctively pedagogical. From a post-human perspective, places can teach us and shape us as learning and knowledge of self emerges and re-forms in relation to the other, including more-than-human others (Somerville, 2010; Somerville et al., 2011).

Consequently, according to Somerville et al. (2011), place pedagogy intends to generate practices and ways of knowing that are responsive to particular local places and acknowledge our co-extension and connectedness with others. They argue that rather than viewing humans and learning as separate from the natural world, “we are of the landscape” (p.1). Place pedagogy opens learning to transformation and change, as it considers learning as a lived and constantly evolving process. According to Ross and Mannion (2012), supporting children's learning cannot be a pre-defined transmission of knowledge, as the process of curriculum-making emerges in response to the relations and engagement with children, educators, places, more-than-human others, materials, and activities. Shifting our perspective to know place differently challenges educators to create a context highlighting our co-implications and relationality with others, transforming how we view our relationship with the world.

Place-as-Assemblage

Iris Duhn (2012) offers an alternative way to look at children's relationship with more-than-human others by reconceptualizing place as an assemblage that recognizes the vitality and agency of all matter and moving the focus on the entanglements, multiplicities, and interactions of human and non-human others. Duhn (2012) argues that viewing places as assemblages deviates from the traditional human-centric approach to place. In the place-pedagogy context, assemblages refer to an entity that forms through interactions and gatherings of human and non-human parts, through which new qualities and transformations emerge (Grosz, 2008, as cited in Duhn, 2012). Emphasizing assemblages and the human and non-human multiplicities through highlighting the entanglement of self, place, and matter challenges the gap between object and subject in pedagogy that traditionally views place as a static object, with clear boundaries, pervaded by human action (Duhn, 2012).

Viewing pedagogy through the lens of place as an assemblage removes the focus on the individual child and instead acknowledges the child as part of the world, "where matter, desire, human and more-than-human come together to modulate the self in relation to the world" (Duhn, 2014, p. 104). In other words, the focus shifts to critical engagement of place where the self is seen emerging from the human and more-than-human entanglements. Thus, the place becomes an active agent in shaping children's learning experiences and relationship with the world. Place as an assemblage, then views place as relational, unfixed, and open to change, and recognizes the agency of all matter modulating the emerging entity, highlighting the complex relationships between children and the more-than-human others (Duhn, 2012). Indeed, according to Duhn (2012), through place-as-assemblage, educators can create opportunities "for yet-to-be-recognized expressions" (p. 103) that create space for transformative assemblages of the human-nonhuman multiplicities, that make up a place.

Networks of Relationality

Somerville et al. (2011) place the concept of relationality at the heart of place pedagogy, enabling relational learning and considering the ethical implications of mutual responsibilities to others and the world. Indeed, Somerville et al. (2011) argue that finding new ways of understanding relationality is necessary to focus on what it means to be in relation to the other, including human, more-than-human, and earthy others. The traditional ideas regarding humans' relationships to more-than-human others and place have been prominently viewed through categorial differences imposed and positioned to the other through binaries (Somerville et al., 2011). This type of thinking aims to separate and place humans as superior. However, Sommerville et al. (2011) propose a new form of relationality that attempts to approach difference through a process of becoming different, which refers to Deleuze's (2004, as cited in Somerville et al., 2011) concept of differentiation. Differentiation seeks not to construct one's understanding of self in relation to differences from others but rather on openness to the unknown, uncertainty, and insight of being of the other (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997 as cited in Somerville et al., 2011). Thus, considering new forms of relationality through differentiation highlights that humans "are of the landscape" (Somerville et al., 2011, p. 1). This idea has important implications concerning the early childhood education context, as it challenges educators to seek new ways to consider children's learning with place, not as separate but rather intimately intertwined with places, people, matter, communities, and all non-human others.

The Practice of Community through Being Open to Other

Bronwyn Davies (2014) extends the notion of networks of relationality in place pedagogy, through the concept of practice of community. Davies (2014) positions listening and being open to the other at the forefront of pedagogies that consider communities as always emergent, which becomes possible through mutual engagement and encounters between children, adults, and the material environment. Davies (2014) argues that communities emerge from ongoing encounters produced by coexisting multiplicities through intra-actions. Central to this notion of intra-action lies an idea that the participants of the encounters are always affecting and being affected by the other (Barad, 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010, as cited in Davies, 2014). Consequently, the practice of community is intimately connected to Deleuze's and Guattari's (1987, as cited in Davies, 2014) idea of the self as an emergent multiplicity, where beings, through intra-actions, continuously shape into and transform each other. Thus, communities are in a constant state of becoming in relation to humans and more-than-human others.

Consequently, the practice of community disrupts the current neoliberal desire to define community and its members as predefined, predictable, and categorized entities and objects, by viewing community as always evolving and always emergent (Davies, 2014). Davies' (2014) concept challenges the early learning spaces to resist approaching communities as fixed entities, by opening up to the unknown and to its rich opportunities. As Davies (2014) states, "we open ourselves up to being surprised by the encounters that take place within those communities" (p. 7). The essence of Davies' point is that through the mutual engagement and encounters with each other and all matter we let ourselves to be affected and surprised, which allows us to become different. The practice of community through listening and being open to the other offers us new ways of and understandings of being in the world (Davies, 2014).

Noticing the Spikes Differently

The recent engagement around the children's bush-tree theory have brought the Morningside children and educators outside under the blackberry plant, provoking us to pay close attention to the unique qualities and different parts of the berry plant. The afternoon light streams through the green leaves, illuminating the soft arching arm reaching over the children as they move, following the blackberry plant's stems and branches across the fence.

Ella, who is carefully moving through the individual branches hanging down from the tall plant, notices something new that brings the children's and adults' attention to the spikes. Instead of trying to avoid the spikes for fear of getting poked or dismissing them as a disturbance, Ella approaches them differently, considering the spikes' qualities in relation to the berry plant rather than the human.

Ella gently holds a thin branch in her hand while slowly moving her eyes up and down the stem. Suddenly she stops, freezing for a moment. *Something about the berry plant is catching her attention. Something surprising seems to challenge her thinking.*

Ella: "**Hey... see the red on the spikes?**"

Other children become curious and move closer. Ella begins to expand her notion about the newly discovered detail, drawing notes on the paper:

"See, the blackberries are red. So, if these spikes have red, then the blackberries turn red. The blackberries grow from these spikes."

The children begin to pay closer attention to the spikes, finding them in surprising places. They move the branches, looking over, and diving under. As they follow the spikes, they notice that they also grow under the leaves!

Ella extends the ideas about spikes. She turns a leaf, showing the sharp spikes sticking out of the spine. Looking at others, she eagerly continues:

"The leaves can grow from the spikes too!"

Spiky Debates

The children are becoming more curious about the sharp quality of the Morningside berry plant – the spikes. The spikes have become an essential part of children negotiating and expressing their theories and making sense of what the berry plant is as well as transforming their relationships with the plant. On a recent afternoon, Ella and Lucas were climbing on the fence to have a closer look at the thicker branches with more visible spikes while *debating intensively.*

Lucas: "No... Only bushes have spikes."

Ella: "No, trees have spikes. It's a tree!"

The debate provoked us to reflect back on children's dialogues and Ella's theory about the spikes. To Ella, spikes seem to be an essential quality in defining whether the berry plant is a tree or a bush, as well as creating a deeper understanding of *how the Morningside berry grows into a "blackberry tree." Her theory proposes that the spikes are the heart of the berry plant. That is where the blackberries grow from and the leaves as well.* Lucas, on the other hand, uses spikes to argue that the berry plant is a bush, as to him, spikes are the defining quality of a bush.

Urged by the children's deepened interest in spikes, Filippa and Yoojin set up provocations for the children to spend time with the spikes and share their curiosity. They set up a projector reflecting a large photo of the berry plant branch on the wall. The usually tiny spikes are now magnified and highlight their spiky presence.

The magnified spikes hovering above, evoke curiosity, and immediately the children navigate near the wall to touch the spikes.

Amelia, Ella, and Adam are standing next to the giant spikes. They reach up with their hands to touch the sharp needles. They shout with pain, “OUCH OUCH OUCH!!” and quickly pull their hands away, shocked.

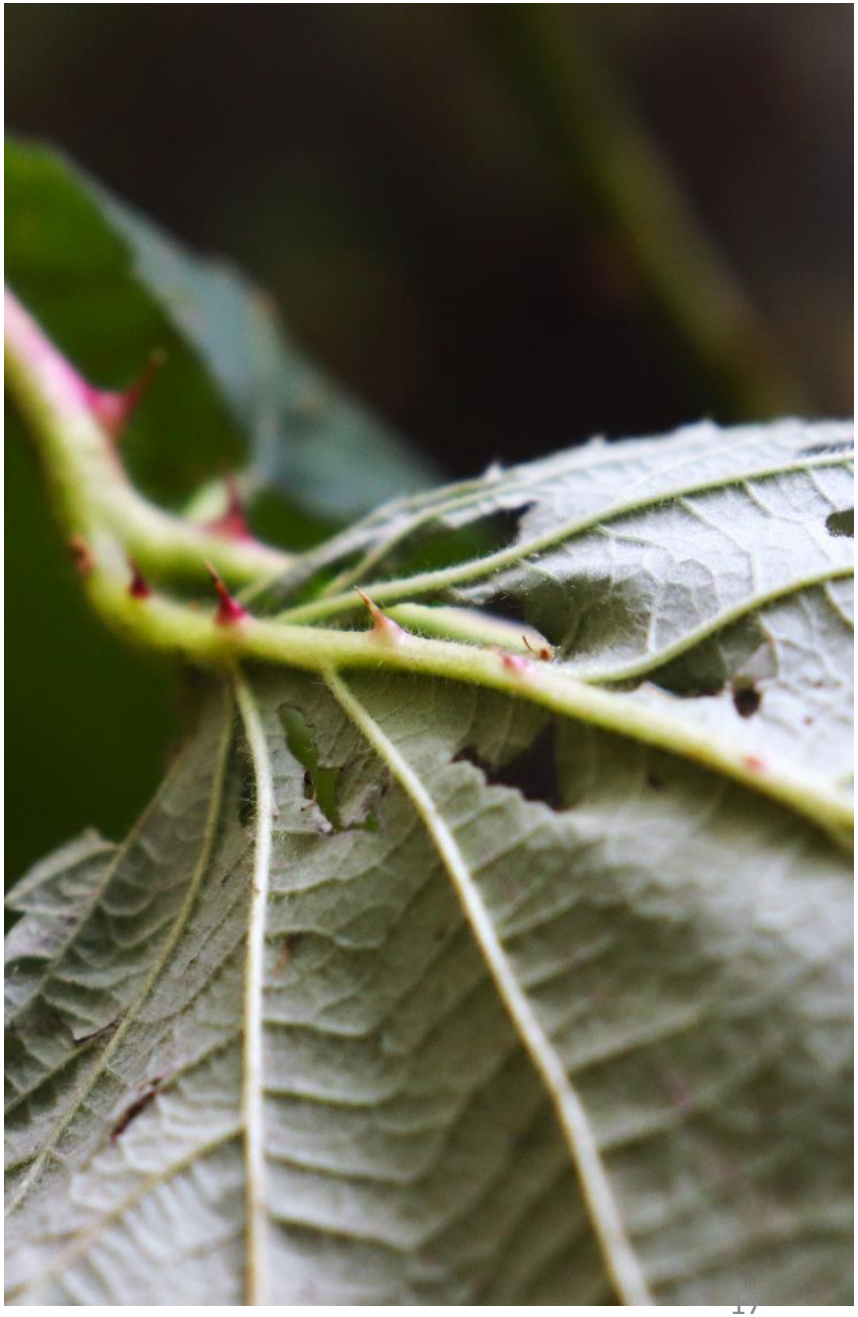
The shared "OUCH" is contagious, and the curiosity to think with spikes spreads to others. The large spikes in the room linger with the children, and as the projector turns off and the giant spikes disappear, Ella and Sophie devise a way to make the spikes bigger. Ella is holding a magnifying glass over a berry branch photo with intense focus.

She whispers:

"We are trying to see the spikes."

Following the children's curiosities and intensities allows us to notice how their controversial ideas and theories *provoked them to pay closer attention and stay open to something new and unexpected***.** For instance, as the children negotiated the role of spikes to tell if the berry plant was a bush or a tree, they began to look at the berry plant through the spikes thus, encountering the spikes differently. Approaching the children's desires and encounters with the spikes through Iris Duhn's (2012) concept of place as an assemblage, we can view the event as an entity with properties that emerge through human-nonhuman interactions.

Ella's desire to theorize the spikes in relation to the berry plant transformed the spike, opening it up for new possibilities. The spreading curiosity intensified the children's bodily encounter with the spikes, challenging them to collectively touch the lighted projector spikes and imagine the sharp response of the spikes, allowing them to make sense of their relationship and highlight the human-nonhuman presence in this children/berry plant/spikes assemblage. Moreover, according to Duhn (2012), the children-berry plant-spikes assemblage can be understood as a place and as "a territory without clear boundaries that is open to further transformations and becomings of all sorts" (Bryld & Lykke, 2000, p. 104). Acknowledging the porous boundaries and opening the territory to transformation, provoke further curiosities: *How do the spikes shape the becoming of the Morningside berry plant? What is the role of spikes?*



The Secret Microscopic Life of Spikes

The story of spikes is in full swing at Morningside. The children have spent time looking closely at our Morningside blackberry plant and its spikes. *The children have noticed that many of the spikes are coated with thin white fluff.* The educators decide to introduce a microscope to children to expand their perspective and deepen their engagement with spikes. Before explaining the new medium (microscope) to the children, Yoojin (student educator) practices how it works by looking at the backside of the leaves in advance.

While she is practicing, Lucas comes running over. Yoojin invites Lucas to use the microscope. He puts a microscope behind the leaf, just as Yoojin demonstrated. *At first, the picture on the screen is blurred and looks pixilated and repeated. Unable to focus on the image, Lucas holds his breath to concentrate more and more on his hand movements.* He continues to adjust the setting and holds the scope with great concentration. He becomes a researcher, saying, "I need more light!" "Focus, focus!" and intensively searching for something.

Lucas: “Oh... oh I see!! Oh no... I lost it... Where did it go? I need more light! Maybe this? (using the button to adjust focus).”

Yoojin and Lucas continue exploring the leaves with a microscope.

Yoojin: “Wow, I see these whites. Do you see?

Lucas: **“***Yes! They are other spikes.”*

Yoojin: “Oh, ok. *Ella said that those are white hairs*, do you think they are white spikes too? The branch must have so many spikes then!”

Lucas: “Yes. They are spikes. Oh, look! What is that? I see the black one too!”

What Broke the Spike?

The word and curiosity about the special microscope tool have spread around the center. The children keep requesting to go out and observe the berry plant with the microscope. And once the door outside finally opens, *Lucas and Oliver rush to the yard with Yoojin, full of anticipation***.** Lucas quickly runs to get Filippa from the sandbox,

"**Filippa, come!! We are going to use the microscope!!"** he shouts with urgency and excitement. *Under the blackberry plant, Lucas shares his microscope knowledge with others***,** and says:

“We can look at the leaves." He switches on the light. "There's a light here, and then you put it on the leaf, and you use this button to take a picture.“ The children begin to work together. The lively berry plant dances with children's excited bodies, making it challenging to focus the microscope lens. Working with a microscope requires patience, teamwork, and shared focus. *Lucas is holding the microscope against the leaf while Oliver carefully observes the iPad screen to direct Lucas.*

“There, there, keep it still! Now!" SNAP! He takes a picture. It glows shades of green and white, and in the middle of the spine, there is a spike that looks as if it snapped in half.

Oliver: **"There's something tall right there!"**

Weyshan (educator): **"Yea, what is that?"**

Oliver: **"A spike. "**

Lucas: **"I think it's a broken spike."**

Oliver: **"The green lines! I saw those too!"**

Weyshan: **"Why do you think it broke?"**

Lucas: **"I think it broke down because of the other branches and the bugs."**

Weyshan: **What happens if the spikes are broken?**

Looking through the microscope offers children a different perspective on the berry plant and the world. It seems to open a window to think about what affects the life of the berry plant. Lucas', Oliver's, and the educators' wonderings about what happened to the spike shifts their relationship with the berry plant. *The usually fear-inducing spikes poking children's skin, like a warning, make the berry plant seem invulnerable. However, looking through the microscope, we notice vulnerabilities.* How did the spike break? What happens if the spike breaks? The new perception of the plant also makes the children wonder about other encounters between the berry plant and more-than-human others.

A Park for Who? Living Differently with the Berry Plant

The curiosity-provoking microscope photos captured previously find a place on the studio wall where children can re-visit them. One of the photos invites the children's attention. Eli made an interesting observation of an image that made us all wonder.

Eli is observing a real-time microscope photo as he shouts, **"Park!"**

Yoojin becomes curious about Eli's notion, **"Interesting, Eli! What made you think of the park?"**

Eli: **"Green."**

Eli's idea urged us all to look at the image differently and provoked the children and educators to imagine the possibility of the berry plant offering a park for someone. Now, Filippa and the children are gathered around the park image, observing the vibrating green world with a long emerald road running through the middle. Filippa and the children read together the dialogue out loud to provoke conversation about who the park is for.

Filippa*:* **"I wonder whom this park is for? Who can come to the park?"**

Ella: "**It can be for bugs!...Because the bugs need blackberries.**"

Filippa: "**Can we go in the park?**"

Ella's looks astonished by the question: "**Noo... We're too big!**"

Mia turns around to Filippa: **"You can come to the park!"**

Ella persistently disagrees: **"No! It's too small!"**

She then demonstrates her argument with the "park" photo: "**Look, this is this small. And look, you're that big.**"

Filippa: **"What would have to change so that we could fit in the park?"**

Ella replies with no hesitation: "**Our size.**"

Filippa: **"Could we maybe draw ourselves in the park?"**

Ella carefully investigates this idea. Her face is serious, eyebrows scrunched from the important thinking. She then says:

"**If you're too big… but you draw yourself and you cut it, and you put it in the park… And you sleep, and it will come true!**"

Encouraged by this idea, the children begin to construct a park using the microscope images. They carefully lay them on the floor, combining them to create continuous roads and expand various green spaces. The educators help children tape their plans together and put the park up on the studio wall. While thinking about how we can exist in the park, Yoojin and Filippa give papers and sharpies to the children and invite them to draw themselves. The children begin to draw with smiles and eagerness. Yoojin and Filippa notice Ethan and Ella drawing themselves playing with ladders and slides. Ethan points to his drawing and says,

"It is me going up and down, up and down, up and down."

Perhaps the children find ladders necessary to go up to the park as the pictures are attached up high on the wall, to be able to climb up the berry plant. Thus, The children's drawing provokes us to think that ladders and slides become a way to live inside the berry plant with its unique qualities.

Becomings of the Spike

Looking at the children's park creation provokes the children and educators to think further about what it would look like to be in the park and what we might want to do. Filippa then draws the children's attention to the gigantic spike on the left, showing how she is *attempting to climb the ladder to get on top of the spike to sit and observe the night sky* (*the background is pitch black and looks like a night sky).*

Filippa: **"I'm going to climb up the ladder to sit on this big spike and watch the night sky. Look... It's so dark that it looks like a night sky."**

Lucas looks up, shocked: "**Aren't you going to be hurt? You're going to shout yay! You're going hurt your butt!"**

Filippa: **"Oh, I don't know. I don't think it looks so sharp now that it is so big."**

Lucas picks up his drawing figure and approaches the spike: **"I wanna be on top of this spike and watch in the dark too!"**

Ella joins Lucas's excitement: "**I want to be there too!**" She climbs up with Lucas and Filippa on top of the gigantic spike, watching in the dark.

The children seem to be suspicious about the gigantic spike. While Filippa is curious about climbing on top of the spike that is sticking out like a perfect climbing branch, the children challenge Filippa's idea with their previous understandings of the spike's qualities. On the other hand, *the spreading desire to transform the relationship with spikes urges them to stay open to the other possibility of the spike affording as a companion or a gathering space. As Davies's (2014) concept of community as an emergent entity suggests, by resisting approaching our community as a fixed entity and its members as fixed identities, the children and adults open our community with spikes to the unknown, affording it new and rich opportunities. For instance, climbing up together on the spike and encountering the spike through a different world and proportions, allows the spike to become more than just something that pokes.* The microscopic park world transforms the spike and the children's relationship with the spikes. Thus, the spike lives through a process of continuous becoming, a Deleuzian - Guattarian concept that resists the idea of fixed identity (Olsson, 2009). *Viewing this event through the concepts of community and becoming provokes us to wonder what the spikes can do in this microscope park. Can the spikes carry us? Can it hold us and accompany us as we watch the night sky?*

Yoojin wants to extend the idea of the possibilities and becomings of the spike and the community by offering new photos of the spikes. The children seem to be specifically interested in a *photo of two bright pink spikes, where something black is covering one of the spikes***.** The children get puzzled by the mysterious blackish-purple thing on the spike. It looks as if the spike was carefully wrapped in the black leather-like case.

Lucas approaches and observes the picture carefully.

Then he says, **"Heyyyy, what's that on the spike?"** He points at the black flat spike beside the pink ones.

Yoojin: **"Oh, I don't know? What do you think it could be?"**

Lucas: **"I think... I think it's covering the spike.. to protect.. to keep it safe."**

Ella, who has been listening to the conversation, looks a little upset. She looks at the picture again, points her finger at the black covering, and says**:**

"NO. That is NOT protecting it. It is a blackberry."

Previously, the microscope image of the red spike provoked Lucas to wonder about the berry plant's perspective. He sees the plant as a living being that can get hurt and feel scared. So, as Lucas theorizes the black wrap protecting the spike, he seems reminiscent of his previous concern about the injured red spike getting "a boo boo," because a bee stung it by accident. Ella, who previously proposed that the spikes are essential for growing blackberries, does not think that the black thing covering the spike is to protect the spikes; instead, it is apparent that it is a blackberry because, to her, spikes are where the berries grow from.

Vulnerability of the Spike

The new spike photos extend the mysterious, spikey berry plant world on the wall. Teo, who has been playing at a distance, becomes curious about the photos as he observes other children engaging with and extending the park. He walks over and begins to observe the newly added pictures of mice, berries, and spikes. He asks Yoojin to lift him up so that he can take a closer look. *His gaze stops at the image of two spikes 'with the mysterious blackish-purple thing'. Teo speaks with a puzzled expression.*

(Since Teo's home language, Korean, allows him to express more profound thoughts when speaking with Yoojin, we usually have a conversation in Korean. Also, both of us exchanged the dialogue in Korean; however, as Teo's Korean has very different tones than adults', Yoojin included his side of the conversation in Korean).

Teo**: "This is our blackberry tree. What happened?" 이거 우리 블랙베리 나무인데.. 왜 이렇게 됐어?**

Yoojin: **"Humm well.. What do you think happened? "**

Teo: **"It got hurt." 블랙베리 나무인데 어디 아야 했어.**

Yoojin: **"Oh, do you think so? How did it get hurt?"**

Teo: **"Here, here, it got blood." 여기, 여기, 피가 났어.**

Yoojin: **"Why?" Did something or someone hurt it?"**

Teo: **"A friend scratched it. The friend did not like it. We need a bandage." 어떤 친구가 긁었어. 그 친구가 안 좋아했어. 밴드 붙여줘야 돼.**

His eyes are filled with empathy, and he looks at Yoojin with a sad face as if someone close to him was in pain. Teo's encounter with and concern over the spike speaks to Somerville et al.'s (2011) idea of relationality that provokes us to think about the ethical implications of caring for the other, including non-human others. Instead of viewing the spikes and the world through categorial differences, his encounter considers what it means to be in relation to the other (Somerville et al., 2011). Through viewing the human as of the world, the children extend their notion of vulnerability and care to spikes. The spikes are now transformed into beings we care for and protect**.**

How Does The Mouse Move through Spikes?

Seeing the crowded microscopic berry plant park and the little space left in the park provokes us to think collectively about how to expand the park, and Yoojin invites the children to discuss various pictures we have taken so far. Among the children, Ethan becomes particularly interested in connecting all images and making a path for the mouse that has been balancing on the spikey branches in the park. *It seems like he is creating an elaborate map in his head, and the path he created follows a maze-like pattern.* He knows for sure how the mouse gets in there.

The path created for the mouse by Ethan urges Yoojin to ask a question that invites the children to think from the more-than-human others' perspectives and **how we all live within collective reciprocal relations.** As an invitation to the children, the pictures of bees and raccoons prepared by Madalsa (educator) are brought along with various images of spikes and the mouse. Weyshan and Yoojin place a large piece of paper and sharpies on the floor: materials that help the children visually share their thoughts on a large shared collective paper.

After presenting pictures of the spikes and animals, Yoojin opens a conversation with the picture of the mouse Filippa captured several weeks earlier. *The mouse visited the Morningside berry plant in the yard in late September, and it excited the children as almost every child in the Morningside witnessed it closely.* It still seemed to remain vividly in the children's memory, even though it had been a month since its visit. To provoke children's thinking, Yoojin asks, **"how does the mouse move through spikes?"**

Living In The Spikes With A Suitcase

When children think about how the mouse moves through spikes, they think not only about how it moves but also whether the mouse would get hurt or not because of the spikes. Then, the children use their own theories to discuss how it moves without getting hurt.

Chloe: **"The mouse can move very fast, so it will never get hurt."**

Lucas: **"The mouse can walk, because they can watch out for the spike sometimes. But they get a boo boo sometimes."**

Anna: **"They step on the space where there is no spike, so they do not get hurt."**

As Yoojin reflects on the children's thoughts about the mouse moving fast without getting hurt, she begins to view the ideas from a new angle. In contrast to children's ideas, she wonders***, what if the spikes are essential for the mouse?*** The children ponder about Yoojin's question.

Ella: **"They need the spikes because they use them to climb up."**

Anna: **“The mouse needs spikes because it lives in the spikes with a suitcase."**

Among many ideas, Yoojin thinks it is interesting to think about what a suitcase symbolizes when the children think about the mouse living inside the plant. When we live in the house, we do not carry our suitcases, but how come the mouse lives with the suitcase in the berry plant? *Perhaps the mouse travels while living in the berry plant.*

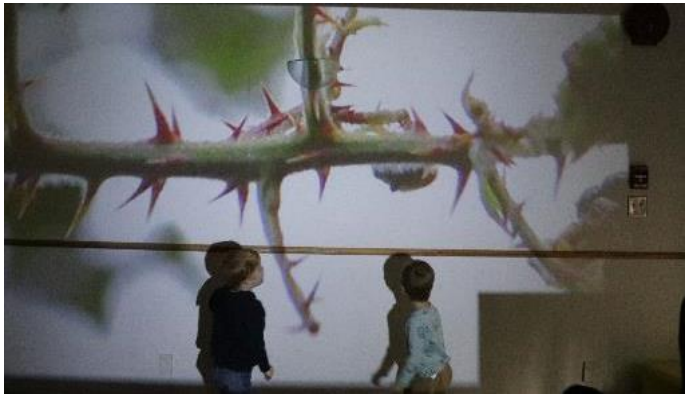
Thinking with Our Bodies: How does the Mouse Move on the Branch

In the process of looking at spikes through the eyes of other animals, we often draw pictures to express and share our thoughts with each other. The children are very focused as if they have transformed their identities into real animals. Especially when Anna is drawing various animals, she moves and mimics the movement of a mouse. She puts her hands on the floor as if she has four legs and crawls around the studio area. Then, she comes back to the table to draw and moves again. *By using her body, it seems that she is trying to better understand how the mouse moves.*

Since then, Anna has repeatedly explained how the mouse moves, runs, crawls, or sleeps through her own body movements. She insists that the mouse lives on the spike with a suitcase, and she is hiding inside the suitcase to hide from a chasing kitty cat. Additionally, when she shared her idea, *she curled up small like a tiny mouse, with her eyes almost closed, and placed her hands together as if lying underneath a cozy blanket.* Her gestures, facial expressions, and movements show how the mouse is safe and looks relaxed. She thinks it can be pretty comfy for the mouse to sleep in the suitcase under the spikey branches. In this way, *the spikes have been transformed again into something that protects the mouse and its cozy home.*

Anna's body movement, *provokes Yoojin to think that the this may be how Anna interprets the relationship between the mouse and the berry plant. She seems to make more sense of the relationships through bodily expressions.*

Furthermore, as the weather outside gets increasingly cold, the Morningside children begin to spend more time inside and engage more in practices involving bodily engagement and movement, like dancing, posing, doing yoga, and running. They also fall in love with songs like "Hey Jude" and "We Will Rock You," and it has become a ritual for them to listen to those songs every day in the nap room. They dance and express their emotions through the songs. So, Yoojin considers how the children could deepen their engagement with the berry plant from other beings' perspectives while using their bodies. When the children play outside, Yoojin prepares a nap room by removing materials and furniture from the floor and setting up a projector to reflect large images on the wall. Lucas, Anna, Oliver, and Teo join the exploration, stepping curiously into the room. Yoojin has selected various photos, including a branch with very sharp thorns, a mouse gripping the thorn, and the mouse riding on the berry tree, and now all we have to do is to wait for the light to turn off.



As soon as the light turns off, the picture of a branch with a lot of very sharp and intense red thorns appears on the wall, and the intensity seems to be felt in the photo. Children look at the image from a distance, hesitating a little more than when interacting with pictures of animals such as the mouse, bees, or raccoons. Yoojin encourages the children to touch the spikes, and they slowly approach the image, carefully reach out, and start to feel the spikes. *Ethan touches one of the thorns on the image and says it hurts because it pokes***,** but after touching it once, he puts his palm back on the wall and removes it, repeating the process multiple times. *He seems curious about the image of the spike moving from the wall on the back of his hand.* It looks like the spike becomes one with his hand.

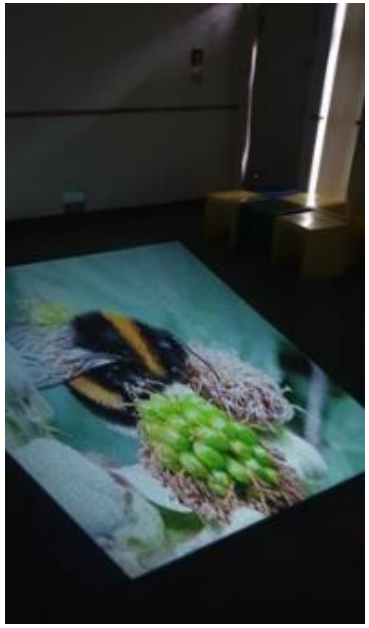
Then, *Leo notices something that resembles a pouch hanging from underneath the branch and questions.*

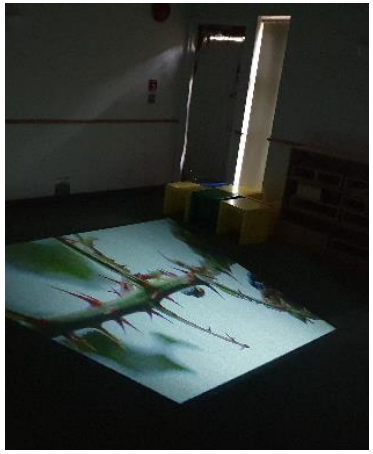
Leo: **"What is that?"** Everyone pauses, and Anna shares her idea.

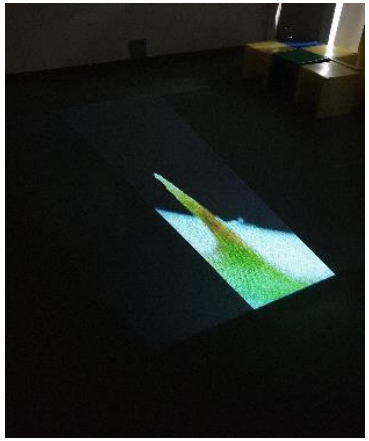
Anna: **"It looks like a suitcase. This might be the suitcase for the mouse!"**

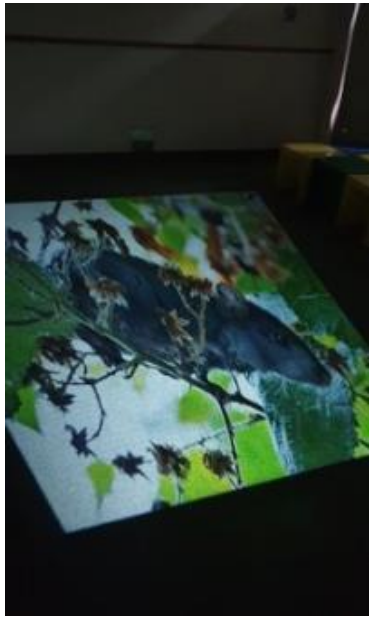
Lucas: **"The mouse is hiding!"**

Lucas, who previously doubted Anna's theory about the suitcase, now refers to that theory saying the mouse is hiding in it, as if he now understands her hypothesis. Eli also agrees that it is an interesting idea, **"I also think the mouse is hiding in the suitcase."**



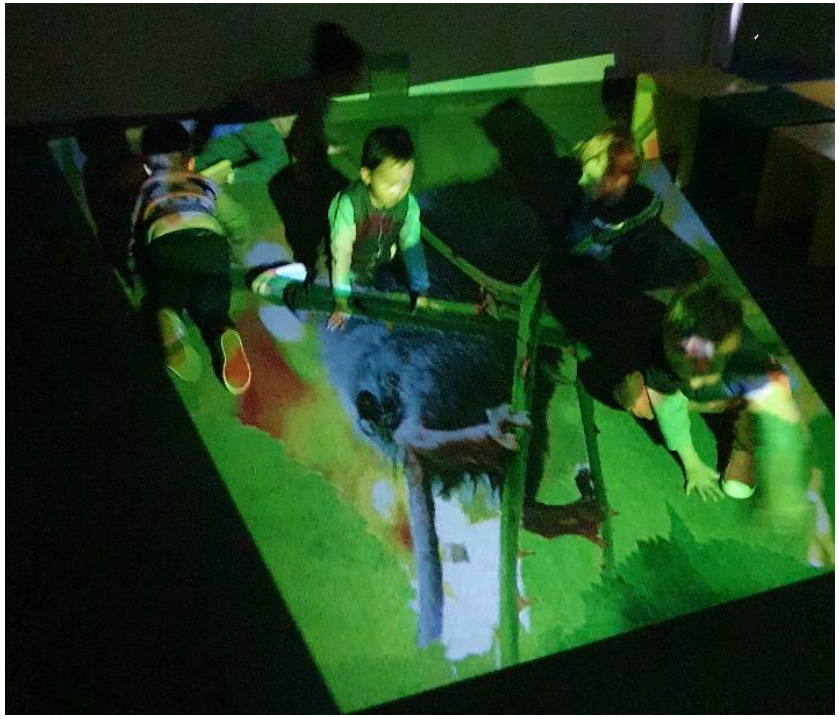






Through the projected images, the children could touch and feel the spikes, mouse, and blackberry plant. However, provoked by Anna's bodily mimicking of the mouse's movement, Yoojin wishes to offer the children a way to immerse themselves in the images with their full bodies. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2016) emphasize that *the studio is not static but an "emergent space itself inherently creative and creating*" (p. 18). *The studio can shape itself in its use, becoming a place to dwell*. According to Hamish Ross and Greg Mannion (2012), the dwelling ontology insists that *curriculum making is an ongoing process of living and learning in the world, in which the world is "a domain of relational entanglement"* (p. 303). Curriculum making can be a response to the relational context where the relationships between people, places, and knowledge open up to transformation (Ross & Mannion, 2012). How might we transform this space in response to learning in the world to create an opportunity for children to extend the relationships between us, the berry plant, spikes, and the diverse nonhuman others entangled in this shared place?

Yoojin decides to use the projector to provoke new encounters between children and blackberry plants, spikes, animals, and even light and shadows. This time, however, she decides to change the projector's angle, reflecting it against the floor to invite children to be absorbed in the blackberry plant with their full bodies. Various images glow against the dark floor, offering opportunities for the children to be present in and exist with the blackberry plant, spider web, spikes, raccoon, and the mouse. The space is emphasizing the relational context - the co-existence and entanglements of us, place, the berry plant, its spikes, and its diverse visitors.



Evolving Identities

We begin to engage with the various images, illuminating the berry plant with the mouse, raccoon, and spikes. An image of a long branch with spikes invites the children's attention, and the educators decide to leave it visible to invite the children to spend more time with it. The children linger, observe, and play with it. ***Chloe becomes curious about the long branch, sits on it as if sitting on a swing or a bench, and invites friends to join.*** They sit in a row and begin to chat. A few moments later, *the branch transforms into a bridge as the children stand up and begin to carefully walk on it, avoiding the sharp spikes that present themselves as obstacles, as they cross on the other side. The bodily engagement with the images provokes the children to imagine themselves as other beings, like the mouse or the raccoon, extending their engagement with the berry plant beyond their human perspective.* Through the evolving identities of themselves and the spike branch the children create new meanings.

The children's engagement develops through their relational knowing as they interact with their particular environment that emerges from the entangled relational world between the children, berry plant, spikes, and other nonhuman beings, producing new interactions, relations, and meanings (Ross & Mannion, 2012; Somerville et al., 2011). Then, through shifting identity and perspective, the children generate new meanings and interactions in relation to who they live with and the particular world being present to them through their engagement with the blackberry plant in this transformed space.

Lingering Thoughts

As we reflect on this learning journey and the importance of providing context for children to reconfigure their relationship with the Morningside berry plant, we return to Iris Duhn's (2012) concept of viewing place as an assemblage. Shifting our focus to the assemblages through emphasizing the human and non-human entanglements allowed the children and educators to reflect critically on how we might live and think differently with the blackberry plant. Instead of viewing the Morningside blackberry plant as a static object towards which we, as human subjects, impose human actions, we attune to the value of living with and finding new ways of being and becoming through our encounters with the blackberry plant. Disrupting the human-centered notion of the berry plant allowed us to view ourselves and the berry plant as parts of an assemblage, an entity producing new properties (Duhn, 2012). For instance, through living with the spikes differently, the children's encounters with the spikes transformed from children viewing the spikes as invincible and vicious to noticing the spikes as relational beings with vulnerabilities. The various encounters and shifted perspectives then opened the spikes up for further transformation, allowing new properties to emerge, such as the children's desire to care for the spike (Duhn, 2012). Consequently, the property of care in this multiplicity unfolds as a transformed relationship between children and the spikes.

Additionally, living and thinking differently with the blackberry plant allowed the children and educators to re-think their relationship with the world. Framing children's learning as a relational process that considers the ethical implications and co-existence of humans and more-than-human others moved our construction of self and our learning away from separating humans from the natural world. Instead, the critical framing pushed us to consider children's learning through openness to the unknown and viewing living and learning as intimately intertwined with place and the more-than-human world (Somerville et al., 2011).

According to Davies (2014), we are continuously intra-acting with our coexisting multiplicities. As we stayed open to the Morningside blackberry plant, we allowed ourselves to be affected by each other. While the children constructed their learning through living with and attuning to the blackberry plant, their understandings morphed and emerged in relation to humans and more-than-human others. For example, being affected by the spike's sharpness, vulnerability, and possibilities, the children began to extend their idea of the larger Morningside blackberry plant community and consider how other animals live with and move through the spikes. In these moments, we can recognize how our local context and community emerge and transforms as we create openings for children to live and learn through the world. As Davies (2014) points out, "It is [the] openness to entering into composition with heterogeneous others in an ongoing way that enables a community to become and to evolve, through all its coexisting multiplicity"(p. 20). In other words, through the relationships and encounters with the Morningside blackberry plant, the children shifted how they view the world, positioning themselves as part of the shared community with more-than-human others, where their relationships and becomings are continuously re-made through mutual and relational engagements.

We recognize the ever-evolving and ongoing life of the curriculum inquiry as the children and educators continue to extend and transform their relationship with the Morningside berry plant and the world. As Ross and van Mannion (2012) emphasize, approaching curriculum-making through considering "the relations among people, places, materials and activities" (p. 307) highlight the aspect of living in and through the world. Thus, the inquiry project keeps on living and coming into being through children's lived experiences and relationship-making within this shared and relational world as they continue to engage with the Morningside blackberry plant.

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Curriculum inquiry, pedagogical documentation, and their relationality

Filippa Hyvaerinen is a devoted and passionate third-year Early Childhood Education student at Capilano University with several years of experience as an early childhood educator in Finland. During her time at Capilano University, Filippa's passion for education and learning has been further fueled by her exposure to reconceptualist and post-humanist theoretical perspectives. As a result, she has developed an interest in cultivating practices that value children's relationships and learning with place and the more-than-human community members, and she believes in the importance of thinking, learning, and building theories together with children. In addition, Filippa is committed to challenging and shifting dominant narratives about education and knowledge and advocating for practices that are open to multiple perspectives. In pursuit of her goals, Filippa is eager to participate in the development of critical and transformative practices in early childhood education.

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