



Drawing – Places

Drawing as an Emplaced Practice

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ISSN: 2368-948X

2nd Special Edition 2023

*Curriculum inquiry, pedagogical documentation,
and their relationality*

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This inquiry project takes place within the community of Cypress Hollow, a small cohort of children and educators situated among the Coast Salish lands of which Capilano University Children's Centre is located. Thoughtful living with natural spaces includes considering and cultivating relationships with the more than human community members such as plants, trees and animals that inhabit this place, acknowledging that there are multiple stories, knowledges and complex histories of Indigenous peoples and colonial settlement here, and living with the rhythms of seasonal conditions unique to the West Coast of B.C. This project was inspired by the Huckleberry Moss room, a soft, mossy area within the forest that holds memories and meaning to the members of the Hollow who visit this place. The initial intention of this project was to create a 'drawing room' within the Huckleberry Moss room so that we may continue to cultivate a ritual of being together to draw, think and share ideas in an area that is significant to us.

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Drawing – Places

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Capilano University Children's Centre
Ali Morrow

In the spirit of respect and honouring the Indigenous peoples, histories, stories and knowledges situated in this place, it is with a deep sense of humility that I acknowledge this inquiry project takes place among traditional and unceded territories of Coast Salish Nations, including the šx^wməθk^wəyəmaʔl təməx^w (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔl təməx^w (Tsleil-Waututh) nations.

Introduction

This inquiry project takes place within the community of Cypress Hollow, a small cohort of children and educators situated among the Coast Salish lands of which Capilano University Children's Centre is located. The Cypress Hollow first emerged in the Spring of 2021 as an opportunity to respond to the then current Covid-19 pandemic, as well as consider the growing interest of families and educators to create an outdoor classroom which I have had the privilege to be a part of as both practicum student and educator for nearly two years. The Hollow classroom has brought to life an outdoor, covered space that is carefully utilized and attended to by its members who are committed to living thoughtfully with the natural surrounding spaces. Thoughtful living with natural spaces includes considering and cultivating relationships with the more than human community members such as plants, trees, and animals that inhabit this place, acknowledging that there are multiple stories, knowledges and complex histories of Indigenous peoples and colonial settlement here, and living with the rhythms of seasonal conditions unique to the West Coast of B.C.



Participants in this collective inquiry project include Fern, M., C., Matthew, P., and A., along with the materials, diverse elements, and the pathways and places we visit, including meaningful spaces, trees, plants, animals, and unique kinds of weather conditions.

“Place is not a physical backdrop to human activity; rather it is an active ‘gathering’ of human and more-than-human bodies and stories that require attention beyond [individual experiences]”

Fikile Nxumalo, 2019



Wayfinding: The initial unfoldings of a collective inquiry

This project was inspired by the Huckleberry Moss room, a soft, mossy area within the forest that holds memories and meaning to the members of the Hollow who visit this place. The initial intention of this project was to create a ‘drawing room’ within the Huckleberry Moss room so that we may continue to cultivate a ritual of being together to draw, think and share ideas in an area that is significant to us. As children and educators of the Hollow are familiar with walking together in the forest, we wondered what might happen if we were to set up a clear tarp above us in the trees, protecting us from the rain, along with a table for us to draw around underneath. Though the original concept of a drawing room in the forest did not take shape, the project began to unfold in ways that invite us to think and merge with multiple places in new, familiar, and curious ways that are intrinsically linked to the characteristics of the spaces, including the seasonal weather conditions, qualities and rhythms of where live. What emerged and continues to deepen is a slightly more nomadic sense of place that is ‘bodied’, or felt and known, as we move towards particular places in an intentional yet organic kind of walking or wayfinding. Sidewalks, significant stopping points, pathways in the forest and distinct kinds of rain join us on our journeys, influencing and inspiring the ways we wander together and the movements our bodies are called to take or try along the way.

Along with the places, weather conditions, and materials (chalk pastels), the growing embodiments, or ways of knowing and their enactments of what is possible within these places and the experiences of the elements there become a shared language, or unique way of being together. The physical movements, visual representations, stories, conversations, and reflections that are documented and photographed are brought back to the places we go, as well as the Hollow, and discussed together. We see that the ways we might come to know a place, or how we begin to share and represent our ideas and meanings, are woven into the drawings and figurations we pause to take up collaboratively in these places.

The initial guiding questions of this project include:

How might engaging with drawing materials in particular places influence the ways in which we cultivate a culture and practice of thinking and being together?

How might we continue to learn amongst and deepen our relationships with the meaningful places around us through walking and drawing?

Throughout the fall of 2022 and into the new year, a group of children attending the Hollow, along with myself, began a co-composed inquiry project which focused on *drawing as an emplaced practice*.

The early stages of the project were characterized through experimentation with and between materials, place, body and senses. The forest seemed to be speaking to us, provoking us, and we watched one another, keen to try or extend on each other's ways of listening and responding to the forest, the rain, snow, tarp, chalk pastels, and the ways in which these elements act upon each other. Though we brought rain paper with us, during the initial stages of the project, we did not always use it. Instead, children brushed and rolled chalk pastels through and along their hands, investigating the way the chalky pigments spread across their skin or transformed the colour of the snow. Vibrant greens began to sweep along leaves and sticks, while remnants of chalk pigments were enlivened by the often-pouring rain, creating small rivulets that would pool and flow along the creases and angles of the plastic tarp below us. Found pieces of charcoal in the forest became pencils and logs or stumps were turned into tables. **Paint! I'm making paint!** The children would call out. **Over here!** Someone would shout, spying the perfect place to gather and create a 'table' we could draw upon.

The dense forest seemed to ask us to look closely, sink into our surroundings, notice the textures, listen to the sounds around us and embrace the deep dampness. This inspired ideas about the elements, or what we referred to as 'faces of the forest', and how we might think with the aliveness of the woods. As we paused to draw in certain places, we began to notice the particular qualities of where we were, and what is made possible there, depending on what kinds of movements and actions it limits or allows. What also arises are the feelings of the places around us, both the feelings we sense, and our wonderings of how places might feel, and we respond with stories and offerings of gifts of comfort in return.



During the winter we were met by heavy snowfalls and windy weather conditions that posed a risk of large falling branches, keeping us from entering the forest and spending time in the Huckleberry Moss room. Due to these unique circumstances of where we are, we were led to different places along the campus. The ‘skating rink’, a large open area made up of long wooden slats became another significant place for us to spin, twirl, swirl and draw in together. The atmosphere here differs greatly from the forest and when met with a particular kind of rain – a mist that is essential to the way we can spin and glide, became well known to us through the sense of movement this place evokes. Spinning and twirling along the slick surface of the ‘skating rink’ were not only physical motions that emerged, but they also became the central focus of our drawings and conversations as well. Together we wondered how to convey bodies in movement, performing these actions for one another so that we could try to depict the motion in our images to those viewing our work.

As children join the Hollow, new group dynamics within the community have not only brought about a space for remembering, and fondly recalling familiar ways of thinking and being together but have also created an environment for engaging with different, emerging, and evolving relationships that begin to story the collective culture here. As the identity of the Hollow continues to establish itself, an opportunity to work with walking and drawing in places, journeys along with us. The following stories, reflections, and unfinished thoughts work to portray how the community of the Hollow moves and learns with an enlivened sense of connection to one another and the places that we are situated in. Acknowledging the ways in which places, their qualities, characteristics, and conditions impact our thinking, movement and choices, the ways we use materials and how we gather or move together, is essential to understanding the context of being together in collaborative and nuanced ways that emerge through these emplaced practices.

Thinking with Tim Ingold: Meaning made through the making of things & emplaced practices

Drawing as an emplaced practice is significant to shared processes such as drawing together, as it highlights situated and contextual ways of making and constructing meaning together, so often influenced by the places we are amongst. Specifically, the *where* and *when* of locations. These shared practices of drawing hold a particular and compelling capacity: bodies, ideas, marks, movements, dialogues, and reflections over graphic visuals are drawn closer together, while a sense of relationality, exchange, and vibrancy within and between the places that we collectively draw within are rooted into, as well as enlivened in these experiences. Drawing as an emplaced practice considers how meaning is made through the making of things (Ingold, 2013) and emergent possibilities that are brought forth when participatory members of the world, children for example, join forces with the active surrounding materials and their agentic, and even perhaps not yet known qualities (Ingold, 2013). Ingold (2013) suggests that in order to know the world around us, we should not only listen, feel, watch, and respond to what we are experiencing, but that we should also grow with the world, grow into our sense of knowing the world and learn by moving with the uniquely situated happenings we experience within “particular times and places” (Ingold, 2013, p. 4). This is distinct from learning about the world, from a mere distance.

Here on Capilano University’s vibrant campus, located on Coast Salish lands along the West Coast of British Columbia, the abundance of outdoor space and natural environment plays a significant role in the shared ways of living and learning in the Children’s Centre. In this way, the values of the community continue to intertwine, and connect the children and educators to outdoor places, while also making known the entanglements and infusions of ideas between one another and the more than human community members and entities such as animals, water, trees, plants, and the distinctive seasonal and weather conditions that comprise the campus grounds. Notably, place and environment are viewed as far more than a mere backdrop for human activities or seen solely as a means of personal exploration. Rather the activating, provoking, and dynamic characteristics, qualities, and lives of the natural world speak to us and each other, carrying histories and life-worlds that interact with our own. Seasons and weather conditions for example, invite specific movements of the body - freedoms, and limitations - that weave into where we go, how we get there and the decisions we make along the way. These interactions trail into our thinking, curiosities, material choices and understandings, as well as drawings and graphic formations, disrupting prescriptive ways of knowing, being, and the ways in which we engage in artistic processes. Through this perspective we see drawing as an emplaced practice, acknowledging that we are intrinsically attuned to and influenced by the environment and the many rhythms of the world around us.

Drawing, thinking, puzzling, figuring, and reflecting together may be characterized by collaboration, reciprocity, and possibilities made known to one another through marks made on surfaces, as well as dialogue and collective questioning (including shared tensions and problems that require others' help to solve them). Yet these aspects of meaning making and knowledge construction may also be reflected and enlivened through the process of *making* within places. Ingold (2013) states that through a sense of correspondence and curiosity with place, grows the sense of possibility of what might become both within us and the world around us. It is this notion that interrupts predetermined or prescribed ways of perceiving and encountering the world, and materials found within spaces. For example, the piece of charcoal found in the forest that begins to smudge and appear along hands, fingertips and paper, inviting a sense of knowing the world. This ultimately co-creates a sense of personal and shared meaning of how things might be, what particular things might do, and the way we continue to approach or think about experiences with the wider environments we are amongst.





As rituals and practices of drawing come together to overlap with the surroundings we get to know so deeply; *we become accustomed to living with the rhythms that take place*. We see how summer months beckon rich tones of berries, joyfully pressed into drawings, paintings, and mouths, while the dark winter weeks reflect the abundance of leaves and rain that fall from above and into traces of our marks and wonderings, leaving tiny rivers on our figurations. The seasons here do not go unnoticed, or un-responded to, they have a way of drawing together a certain kind of seeing, moving, and thinking that correlates to a sense of timing, and strongly echoes the ways in which we come to know and make meaning here together.

These particular ways of being within our communities and the surrounding spaces are grounded within a sense of relationality, care, and the valuing of diverse ways of knowing and perceiving the world. The practices we embrace are entered into with a sense of trust, playfulness, and experimentation that enrich our daily lives, emphasized by what Kind (2018) shares as ways of being together and a sense of mutuality that are just as important as the graphic or material practices that are taken up. The particularities of not only invite and inspire what materials we might use, or how we might take them up, but also the conditions guiding the ways we take up artistic practices and the transforming possibilities that emerge with and through them. In acknowledging drawing as an emplaced practice, we may begin to perceive and understand how ideas, images, thinking, and meanings are influenced, reflected, guided, generated, borrowed, and co-created with one another and the spaces in which we are present.



Making - Place
A sense of place

How is it that certain places hold meaning? What does it mean to be emplaced?

There is more to places than their geographical location or physical surroundings, and there is more to places than simply the members that frequent them. To truly know and be within a place, we sink into our felt-senses and a bodied way of recognizing the atmosphere or "sense of mood" (van Manen, 2002, p. 69) that fills the space within a place, entering into our knowing-ness of particular places. The forest for example is thick and hidden, it holds an endless sense of wonder and vitality. It carries an aroma of trees, soil and moisture that blends and fills the air. We know this place in a deep way. We know also of this place 'now', for it is different now than in dry, dusty summer months when the sap clings to our fingers and a multitude of berries immediately find our mouths. To be emplaced is to know a place as well as its rhythms. Throughout the months of our inquiry project, we know the soft, mossy spots that we nestle into and are accompanied by moist bark, slippery patches of snow... We know of muffled noises from up the hill that quiet greatly when we are inside... We know of the sound of rain upon the tree canopy... This is a place that shifts with the seasons, and our attention shifts with the differences we notice. We come here to meet the qualities of this place and bring our own unique intentions to join them. Together with the forest, we create a place that is known, and felt, gathering in both a sense of familiarity and novelty.

The more time we are in certain places, the more meaningful they become. The 'skating rink' for example not only lends itself to spontaneous movements that mimic the physical appearances of ice, but also to how we hold ideas of what places are and can be, weaving them into our ways of being together as a community and informing the culture being cultivated within our classroom. The understandings we carry with us to places come alive within us and around us, permeating our perspectives and relationships with our surroundings. In this way, existing places are continually being created and re-created as the multitude of conditions, contexts, and perceptions we share, influence what is possible within these spaces and how we think together.

The Huckleberry Moss Room

The ways we come to know and carry places with us forms an understanding and an embodiment of place that continues to be enlivened and felt through shared recollections, and a sense of fondness that deepens over time.

The Huckleberry Moss room has been in the making for some time. Through a ritual of walking here in mild, warm, or cold conditions, it has become a place well known to many of the children in the Hollow and lives on in the stories shared and memories being made. It is not just a place that we visit, but a place that, in essence, we live with-in. We play, paint, gather, and share conversations as we eat together here, and though it offers us feelings of familiarity and comfort, we are continually surprised by the hidden mysteries we discover around us. The way we refer to this place alone tells us that it is not our place, or a place that we simply go to, it is the Huckleberry Moss room, a space in which the elements and features have informed us, offering us room to listen to what is around us and a place to visit so that we can be a certain way when we are here.

During the rainy season we enter into a saturated wood, balancing over slippery logs, and brushing past moist wet ferns. We experiment and draw with the thick chalk pastel pigments that transform from dust to a paint like liquid with the rain and snow. This is part of the liveliness of this place, and the ways in which we become responsive to the weather and seasons. We change with the forest, continually making and re-making this place while also deepening our sense of and relationship to it.



It is interesting that though we may need materials either found or brought along with us to make visible marks, it is a place to draw that Matthew and A. recognize and attend to first. They acknowledge the importance of having somewhere to gather, something the Huckleberry Moss room has been inviting us to do each time we are here. They set out to create this, together co-composing a space with-in this place.

The two stand amidst the mulching forest floor, and brawny blackberry vines that seem to defy the continually cooler months. Looking around, Matthew spots a large log. With determination in his expression, he lifts one end of the tarp, A. keen to help, is quick to lift the other side. Though we are not totally sure of his plans yet, we trust his knowing-ness of both this place and his thinking. We know that a ‘table’ will help us with our intention of drawing together, yet we seek a response from the features of the forest in order to help us create this. Together they shift the tarp on top of the large log as it becomes a perfect place to lean our tarp-table against.

On a soaking wet day in the late coastal fall, we reach the Huckleberry Moss room, discussing what may be helpful for us to draw here.

Matthew: **“A table! We need a table.”**

A.: **“Yeah, we need a table to draw.”**

Matthew: **“Let’s put it (tarp) here on this log.”**

A.: **“Yeah, this is a good spot.”**





We find that our ways of being here during this ‘time-of-place’ are diverse from other times, like the warm, sunny months of summer. This works to deepen the significance and meaning that this place already holds. Some days we are met with snow, an offering of playfulness and excitement from the forest. We slide on surfaces that were once textured, and place tiny ice crystals upon our drawing paper. On other days we bring our snack so that we may continue the rituals of gathering and eating here together. This is a place that holds our bodies, as well as our new and existing ways of being together, and over time our relationship with this place has become a generosity of getting to know one another (place and people) in new and familiar ways.



The Huckleberry Moss room offers much material and elemental inspiration, and we begin to notice these traces emerging amongst us.

Instead of paper, Fern experiments with pressing dampened chalk pastel along the surface of a maple leaf. She spreads it along the leaf's entirety, pausing to notice how it highlights the prominence of its veins. Holding up her hand, she shows us how she too has been imprinted upon, echoes of the pastel and the process, turning her own hands green. She smiles and walks away, wiping her hand on her coat. A little smudge of familiar, forest green that follows us from place to place.

Co-composing with-in places trails between bodies, elements, and materials. Imprints of us, a living aesthetic of our being here in the Huckleberry Moss room, begins to subtly decorate the space, and we leave with our hands, fingers, jackets, and memories marked in new ways. We are committed to being here together, yet we feel the colours and tones that comprise it, the rhythms of the weather and ways of being together that certain times allow. Like us, the forest is alive, vibrant, and full of intrigue. Together we continue to weave ways of being amongst each other, nestling into particular grooves, dynamically co-designing place.

The Skating Rink

Though the children of the Hollow are used to walking within the forest, there are times during the winter we found ourselves unable to visit the Huckleberry Moss room as wind warnings posed a risk of large branches potentially falling in the woods. These weather conditions forced us to adjust our path and the places we could go. We have an idea of visiting a picnic table nearby, so we pack our chalk pastels, and set out in a new direction under misty gray skies. Through a narrow corridor between buildings, past the bears, a few of us start to veer left towards the picnic table. Fern, however, is lit up by another idea!

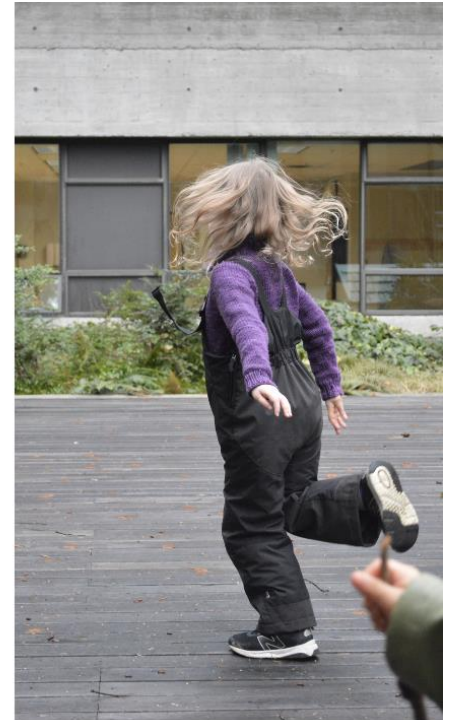
Fern: “**Can we stop at the skating rink first!?**”

Fern pleads, as though fearing our prior intentions might trump her excited new idea. A tentative pause swells amongst us. The children and I, slightly puzzled, stop. We look to Fern, and back to one another. The skating rink? We have not heard this term before, yet the earnest tone of Fern’s voice compels us to consider the very possibility of a skating rink right in front of us. Fern’s body has already begun to take the shape of a figure skater, hands and arms raising to the sky. We have arrived at an open plaza in front of the library. The wood is slick as a result of the light, dewy rain that envelopes us. Suddenly there is a synchronistic sense of understanding that we all seem to experience. *This place is the skating rink*, we can see it in the way the rain glistens like ice upon the wood, and we can see it in the way Fern point her toe as she bends a knee, twisting her spine in preparation for a fantastic full body spin, just like the way a figure skater would do.





In an instant we watch as Fern spreads her arms once again to balance herself. Her hair lifts off her shoulders, momentarily taking flight. It does not take long for bodies to run behind her, arms spread, toes pointing, faces and jackets flashing through the mist.



This place ignites an entire new way moving together. The open area or ‘rink’ is surrounded by a concrete sidewalk, creating an abruptly rough texture that immediately halts any quick spinning or circling of our bodies. Resembling the qualities and features of a skating rink, our bodies begin to flow with accordingly, shifting our previous picnic table plans with each spin we take. Our bodies cannot help but be drawn into the swirling motions of spinning, circling, and sliding across the rink, each movement creating a sense of place that draws out particular ways of being. *The moment is no longer about where we were planning to go, but where we are now.* It is becoming a place-in-the-making, and like the Huckleberry Moss room, a place we soon frequent often.

We never do make it to the picnic table during our inquiry, but this does not matter. The skating rink becomes another space that holds a particular kind of meaning to us and has given us a sense of identity through its name, through what happens and is being made here. The skating rink, filled with fast, slick movements seems to become a stage to perform what our bodies seem to already know in relation to gliding and spinning. In the width of its wide surface, the skating rink lends a sense of openness, and freedom that we do not experience in the density of the moist forest. We are no longer held in place the way we are in the thick mossy pockets of the Huckleberry Moss room. Here, we are invited to stretch and soar on the slippery surface, visible to students and faculty passing by. Though these moments of being seen may be brief, they also seem to invite a sense of extravagance to our movements. We are twirling and skating for one another, and also for a distant audience, leaning into the essence of what it feels like to become sensational skaters.





What continues to shape the way we come to know and make-with this place are not only the ways we respond to its features, it is also the ways we try and re-try the enactments it enables.

Attuning to and experimenting with the expansiveness found here, creating something new as we embrace the current qualities of the weather that work to provoke and influence our quick movements becomes a situated way of living and being here. The surface, lending a slickness to the wooden slats that is just sleek enough to glide on, creates difference from the way we are in the forest or at the centre. This is not all, in addition to what makes this place *a place* is the way we notice one another, and the willingness we have to participate in another's excitement and ideas, inviting a sense of what is possible in this space. The children are keen to pause in puzzlement and enter into a unique way of being somewhere that was unknown to us until this very moment, yet continues to draw us in, in a specific kind of way. We come to experience that places in the making do not necessarily hold us and our actions, but rather hold a certain potential to co-create with us, to allow us to know and relate to it in ways specific to the space itself.



Being in places, both familiar and new, asks more of us than simply arriving physically and acting in disparate ways to the qualities and conditions surrounding us. Rather, we work to foster emplaced practices by engaging with the ways places invite and provoke us to move, think and know. In doing so we begin to co-compose meaningful and intentional spaces with and in particular places. The ways we use our bodies, as well as how we respond to the features of places, along with the materials we bring, begin to cultivate areas of rich experimentation, igniting specific kinds of felt-sensing and understandings of what places are and can be. Through the density of the forest, we listen closely to how the elements of the Huckleberry Moss room speak back to us, and we twirl into new ways of knowing places as just the right amount of rain renders the skating rink. Together we make places with-in spaces, deepening our relationships through the nuances, possibilities, moments, and particularities of these places, and it is through this sense of place, that we also experience a sense of belonging.

A photograph of four children walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a forest. The children are wearing winter jackets: a purple one, a green one, a pink one, and a dark blue one. The forest has large trees and ferns with some autumn-colored leaves. A white text box is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

Walking–Places
The anticipation of place

The children and educators in the Hollow are quite familiar with walking together; together with one another, together with the weather, and together with the well-known trees, plants, sidewalks and stops well frequented along the ways. Lately, the sound of boots upon the pavement, the crunching of snow, and the stomp-splashing into the well-known sunken sidewalks where puddles fill, merges with the resonance of rain, voices, and the occasional call of a crow.

When walking to the forest, we have taken up a particular kind of walk together. Bodies bounce on the inside of the gate with a buzz of anticipation. The fence pops open with a familiar metal clink and there is a sudden burst through its barely open crack. Voices exclaim as quick feet find their footing. No time is spared following the footpath, instead, each Hollow member leaps onto a soil trodden shortcut, leading us towards a familiar opening in front of the library. This shortcut has created a new path, a desire line imprinted along the way, a line made by walking.

Paul Klee shares that drawing is like taking a line for walk. And though our steps often fall with a sense of swiftness, our walks, like lines, linger and meander in certain spots as well. As we are drawn to places that pique our interest and curiosity, along with places of familiarity and fondness, we begin to draw our own wandering lines that snake and stroll with us along the way.



Our walking lines take turns and trajectories that split off, circle back and at times find a synchronized way of weaving together. We slow down and speed up, rhythms and tempos that tap into our ways of wayfinding, and like the waggle lines of bumble bees our steps speak of our relationships to places, to our desires, and to where we are drawn to in hopes of sharing with one another. We search for what lies beneath bushes, peek into library windows, and on snowy days look to one another as we spread ourselves amongst an icy surface, our footsteps following us, our lines along for the journey.





As we reach the crest of the parking lot, we trail along a well-known sidewalk, line and pace picking up once more. Some children dash towards the end of the sidewalk as confident shoes find their way to the pay parking meter, while others drift up and into the garden parallel to us, balancing over stones that line the classroom windows, sketching another outline of our path. The rich scent of conifers begins to fill the air, and our walk to the woods seems to be characterized by the forest itself; familiar, bold, and habitual, yet inherent with novelty, uniqueness and surprise.

Like our ritual of visiting the Huckleberry Moss room, rituals dwell within our walking too. We are close, but we do not cross towards the trees until we have stopped at the pay parking station on the corner of the sidewalk. An unspoken understanding is shared amongst the group as bodies find their way into single file, awaiting a turn to meet with the meter. Not a walk passes us by without small fingers finding small silver buttons containing letters and numbers. The slight sound of urgent clicking can be heard, as we park our cars, dragons, and unicorns. Only then do we continue on.

We cross the road together, **'No cars, no cars'** echoes like well-known lyrics to a song we all remember, heads turning from side to side to check for cars passing by. The scent of conifers and soil thickens as footsteps soften, pavement becoming a brown blanket of packed earth and pine needles. We are here, but we are not quite there, and suddenly there is a change in the feeling that surrounds us. The exposure and attentiveness we feel near the cars and classrooms shifts into a liberating rush of anticipation.



Within the protective shrug of the large surrounding trees the sound of steps quickens, and the paces pick up. P. bounds down the hillside trail, the spring in his step turning into a full body sprint. A. calls out to him loudly, a tone of concern in her voice.



A.: **“P.! Stop! We can’t see you!”**

Yet the momentum gaining in P.’s dash down the decline of the switchback path seems to work in tandem with the sense of allure the Huckleberry Moss room holds.

P.: **“I can’t! My body keeps going! It just wants to keeps going!”**

His quick steps continue while his jacket and toque flash in and out of sight, hastily blocked and unveiled by large logs, trees and reaching ferns. Etching himself into the features of the forest, he is drawn into the moss and the mist.

Whether arriving in an abrupt halt or a quiet slow, everyone stops at the entrance of the Huckleberry Moss room. Slightly tucked away by cedar sways and prickly holly bushes acting as doors, this place silently invites us to enter with care, partly due to the sense of secrecy it embodies, and partly due to the tangles of crawling blackberry vines and their thorns that we have all encountered in somewhat unpleasant ways from time to time.

There are many subtleties within building relationships to places, and particular ways of walking are a part of this. Walking is a way of knowing a place and begins to take shape far before we arrive to where we are going. From the first turn we take as we exit the Hollow, we are drawn to places, while our walking begins to embody movements of the spaces we are headed towards. Attuning to the conditions around us help us to decide quite quickly where we will go, and just what kind of walk we will be taking that day.

Ali: **“Should we go to the skating rink today?”**

M.: **“No, it’s not raining just enough.”**



Tangible tempos on our way to the forest speak of a familiar strolling along sidewalks, and the cadence of a quickness that is compressed into desire lines, a creation of shortcuts composed of darts and dashes fondly cultivated over time. On our way to the skating rink however, our footsteps land gingerly, like those of performers balancing carefully on ice, our bodies moving gracefully, already recalling the motions we take when we get there. The echoes of these places are pronounced in our sense of ease, and anticipation as we move with confidence and meander with comfort. Each place we visit calls us to move and be in certain ways, inviting us to share in a sense of identity that grows with the customs we create along the way. We draw out lines with our footsteps, taking them for a walk with us, and there is a sense of place along the path.

Faces of the Forest

Elements and feelings of the forest



Spending time in and walking to meaningful places show us that emplaced practices are not only about noticing who we are as a collective, and what it is like to move and be in different places, but also to wonder about the places themselves and the lives of the beings they are inhabiting. It does not take long for us to find the forest looking back at us, as the liveliness of the woods and the elements emanate from our drawings. As the details of our lines take shape, our thinking is shaped in return. Things change when we think about drawings not simply as something we just do, or produce, rather they are as alive as the forest, speaking to us, and re-imagining ways of being and knowing. Together with the faces of the forest we co-create stories, worlds, and neighbourhoods, listening to what the forest might feel, noticing what it might need. Drawings continue to catch our curiosities, returning our gaze with new narratives, telling us of new some-things.



When visiting the forest, the children listen closely to the sounds of the squirrels and birds nearby, a tilt of the head and an expression of awe often following a quiet pause. Hands unconsciously reach out, fingers feeling along wet leaves and bark, a desire to feel this place in more corporeal and tactile ways. In this way place plays a significant role in the ways we draw here, guiding the kinds of marks we make. A. chooses chalk pastel tones that reflect our surroundings, while P.'s pencil curves over the surface of a rock. He pauses to compare the slickness of his rain paper with the wetness of a leaf, sliding it across his hand, and returning to his page to notice tiny droplets there too. This moment is not about figurations or representations on their paper, but rather the way drawings are made together with place, and how place and elements enact upon us, our thinking, and our own actions.





As we spend time in the Huckleberry Moss room, our experimentations with chalk pastels in the drizzling woods transform into wonderings about the elements and beings around us. *What is it like for the woods to have us here?*

P. spreads green chalk pastel pigments like paint, covering his rain paper from edge to edge. Like our surroundings, a rich, watery sense of vibrancy consumes his page.

P.: **“It’s green, like the forest.”**

Moving around to logs and bark, P. presses his page into the forest as though he is *trying to share his drawing with the woods*, or invite the forest to continue sharing with him. *How is the forest receiving our being here amongst the leaves, trees, and moisture?*

Drawing in the forest begins to echo ideas of the entirety of the forest, both in large and smaller, more nuanced contexts. We wonder about who else is here with us, and how the forest might feel. Appearing through faces of the forest, our drawings reflect our wonderings, as portraits of the woods and the more than human members here begin to emerge. We look to the dripping expressions among the faces of Clouds, Rain and Branches of the forest as we co-construct stories of their lives and experiences, empathizing with their feelings. Our responses to these depictions are thoughtful and considered, deepening our relationships here through not so much what we draw, but what these drawings do.



Ali: **“Wow, can you tell me about your drawing Fern?”** I ask her as she uses a gentle force to poke the end of a branch through the drawing of a face on the rain paper she carries, hanging it on a nearby tree.

Fern: **“It’s the Forest.”**

Ali: **“Which part?”**

Fern: **“It’s every part. Every part is the whole forest.”**

At first Fern’s drawings encompass the whole forest, acknowledging the web of connections we share with the world around us. Over time however, the portraits become more specific, bringing particularities of the elements to life. The wetness around us influences the emerging stories. Rain of the forest appears, yet so does the sun of the forest despite the gray, misty days of the fall and winter. The beings in the portraits start to seek friends to soothe loneliness, while blood pumps through branches, a sense of animacy it wishes to share with us.



The Clouds of the Forest

Fern: **“It is hard to see the face in the clouds, because of the colour of clouds, and because of the clouds being cloudy.”**



The Blood of the Forest

Fern: **“The blood of the forest lives in the branches. Because branches have blood in them, because it’s the blood of the forest. If the blood of the forest comes out, it would jump out, into the forest and find its way into our blood, and our blood would mix together. “**



The Sun of the Forest

Fern: **“This is the Sun of the forest.”**

Ali: **“Oh, I didn’t see the sun come out today, it’s raining quite a bit.”**

Fern: **“Yes, but this is because the forest wants to see the sun.”**



The Rock of Forest

Fern: **“The rock of the forest feels happy, really, really happy because it’s not lonely. Now it feels nice because it has a friend to share the world with.”**

The children think deeply about the forest as a community, and the relationships growing within it, wondering what they might be feeling or wishing for themselves. We resonate with this community, entering in ways beyond just our being here. The forest is generously offered the gift of sunshine, so that like us, it too can remember the goodness of a warm sunny day after enduring lengthy periods of rain. While the rock of the forest is thoughtfully placed in a purposeful kind of kinship we can relate to, one in which we are happy in knowing we have a friend to share the world with.

“You need a camel to spin” – A.

The more we share a practice of thinking with our drawings as lively and generative, the more they speak to us in unconventional, or otherwise ways. At the skating rink, a drawing of Fern with a bend in her knee transforms into a camel looking back at A., and eventually a quality of spinning that is held in high regard. In this way, it is not only the figurations we draw, but the essence to living in ways we did not yet know were possible, ways that speak to and act upon us. We recognize our drawings, ideas, and surroundings as capable, agentic, alive, and animate, living life off the page and intertwining with our own.

After much consideration, Fern too is open to the idea of a camel living within her skating leg, and not only does she become a superb spinning figure skater, but through engaging with her drawing, one who is also capable of embodying diverse and dynamic ways of becoming and transforming again and again.





Ali: **“How are you drawing your ice skating, Fern?”**

Fern: **“This is my purple sweater.”**

A.: **“And a camel?”**

Fern: **“This? That’s not a camel, that’s my legs.”**

A.: **“Look, that looks like a camel.”**

Fern: **“It’s not. “**

We continue to talk about the children’s drawings when we are back at the Hollow. Though Fern originally dismisses the idea that her leg, when drawn, is bent into the shape of anything else besides her body in motion, upon further reflection, she notices how her leg and shoe perhaps do take on the shape of a camel’s back and head.

A.: **“You need a camel to spin.”**

Now open to the idea, Fern agrees.

Fern: **“Yeah, animals are good at spinning, so if you become an animal, you can spin even better. “**



Re-placing: Looking to drawings to reimagine relationships in places

Fern and A. search for places to hang drawings, offerings to the forest.

Fern: **“The Forest is so nice; it even lets us break its branches when we are walking. That’s why I’m giving it the pictures.”**

Ali: **“That’s so kind of you to offer something back to the forest. “**

Fern: **“Yeah, it’s a gift for the forest.”**



As we leave the forest, we peer down from the top of the hill. Through openings in the trees, we spy the Huckleberry Moss room.

P.: **“Look! Look! I see them!”**

We stop, facing the newly adorned space, and the faces of the forest.

Fern: **“It’s a neighbourhood.”**

Fern: **“Bye Forest.”**

A.: **“Buh-bye Forest!”**

Ali: **“Bye Forest, see you soon.”**

P.: **“See you soon, bye Forest, thank you for letting us go with you. Thank you, for, thank you for drawing with us, I hope you like our gifts.”**



The faces smile back at us.

The significance of the places we are situated upon and what is made possible within those spaces, continues to grow through many meaningful encounters and experiences of drawing together. The conditions of the weather and environment, the ways in which we see, hear, and attend to the beings inhabiting these places finds life-force through the materials and unique perspectives we bring. We have spent much time cultivating a sense of care and curiosity for places that we walk to, yet through drawing and particularly drawing as an enplaced practice, we come to practice listening to the ways in which drawings speak and gaze back at us, nurturing something new altogether. We make-with place, with the forest, with each other, the materials, and with the drawings themselves. What continues to emerge is a collective co-creation of what it means to live a life together, and together within this unique pocket of the world. Through acknowledging a simple need for sunshine as we ride out the rhythms of the wet and rainy winters, in recognizing the joy that can ease a sense of loneliness, or enacting reciprocity, generosity and hospitality through gifts and offerings, we deepen our relationships to not just places but worlds we imagine. Worlds we cherish, neighbourhoods we do not just draw but create and are in turn drawn to.





Drawing With-in Places
Spinning, Twirling & Swirling



On days the rain continues to fall in just the right amount, we walk to the skating rink. Fern has been here before, and the way her body moves, arms outstretched, reaching gracefully off her body, and leaning into her tip toes tells us that this is a place of gestural flow. In a bodied-language of understanding, Matthew and M. are quick to acknowledge what Fern responds to; a unique way the light hits the rain on the surface of the wood, creating 'ice', as well as an invitation of movements that are quick yet calculated, spontaneous, yet full of thoughtful experimentation. With arms outstretched for what seems to be both balance and an air of elegance that a figure skater would embrace, the children glide one leg forward at a time, testing the pressure of their feet to the slippery wood as they move in correspondence with the slickness of the surface, the friction of their rubber boots and just the right amount of mist to propel them into glissades across the surface.

Strides turn into spins as the point of a boot presses down into the wet wood, arms winding up to gain a magnificent momentum. Flashes of raincoats circle swiftly, accompanied at times by the squeak of a sole, and followed by excited shouts and one's hasty search for equilibrium upon the rink once more. Moving from a mostly collective sequence of spins, the children slowly start to pause in order to observe one another, watching carefully the way feet are positioned, knees are bent and just how slick a spot on the surface might be.

After we spend time spinning, we gather around a bench beneath a covered overhang and begin a dialogue describing spinning techniques and where the best spots for spinning are located. We have brought chalk pastels and rain paper with us, and we reach for the materials with the intention of drawing one another in spinning motion. However, challenges begin to arise:

How do we represent a body in motion? What is the difference between a spin and a twirl?

Thinking about what is needed in our drawings so that we may portray a body in action, we ask P. if he will spin for us so that we can watch him in motion, looking for the particularities and distinct physicality that he embodies as he spins. P. first walks to a spot that glimmers with rain, as he too knows these qualities are important to the effectiveness of our spinning movements. With feet flat on the ground, he uses his arms to wind around his body, building momentum. In a burst of energy, he spins around, his leg is bent at the knee as he shifts on the ball of his opposite foot. In a quick, circling flash, P. rotates around, so swiftly that the eye can barely catch it. P. smiles and continues to spin in circles. Returning to shiny wet spaces on the wood each time his spin veers him away from these areas.



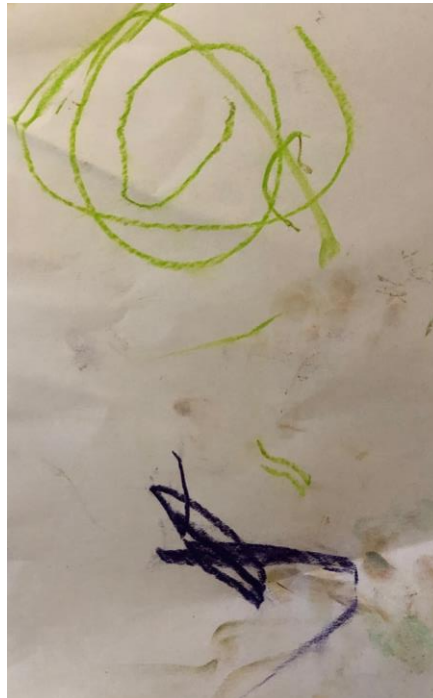
Fern and A. have been drawing and discussing ground skating and ice skating.

Ali: **“P., are you ice skating, or ground skating?”**

P.: **“I’m just...twirling.”**

His response brings even more nuance to our thinking and movements as a spin becomes a twirl. But what is the difference? In hopes of discovering this, we ask P. if we will stop mid-twirl for us, so that we may watch more closely as he pauses. P. winds up again, and in another flash, he spins in a full circle once more. We realize that just like drawing bodies in motion, it is difficult to stop bodies in motion too. Not only this, but our nuanced movements seem to reflect the nuance of the way we feel and name certain actions which too are difficult to both draw and describe on the spot.

'These lines mean moving' – Fern





P. joins us to draw himself, reflecting on what his twirl feels like. He finds green to represent his rain gear, and makes circles on his page, while Fern draws figures accompanied by parallel lines at the sides of each person.

P.: **“What’s these?”**

Pointing to two pairs of parallel lines around their bodies.

Fern: **“These lines mean moving.”**

P. and Fern move once again to slippery spots to spin and twirl, this time slowing their bodies as if to imagine their drawings, connect to the way their bodies are moving, and seek out details to inform their thinking, embodiments and lines made upon their pages.

The children shift back and forth from observing one another, noticing themselves, and adding or adjusting the movements and marks in their drawings.

Together we discuss that there are different parts of our feet we stand on, that our arms actually seem to be outstretched, rather than reaching up like in our drawings, and that it is still quite tricky to pause mid-movement.

Moving-drawings

Ali: **“What if someone doesn’t know what these lines mean?”**

In reference to Fern’s moving lines in her drawings.

Fern: **“Well, we can look at their hair, because my hair is up...if someone’s hair is up like this, it means they’re moving.”**

M.: **“But Matthew has short hair!”**

Fern: **“Well, then we have to draw the different sides of his body.”**





A.'s drawing of ground skating



Fern's drawing of ice skating

Ali: **“How would you draw your body ice skating A.? “**

A.: **“I was not ice skating. I was ground skating. Ali, I’m making the ground first.”**

Fern: **“But I was just pretending. And I’m drawing my shoes. “**

Ali: **“How do you ground skate A.?”**

Fern: **“You use your shoes on a wet, wet surface.”**

Fern: **“I’m drawing my hands in fists.”**

A. and Fern determine the significance of the wood’s surface, and whether ground or ice, we know that on a misty day like today, our shoes must find the slickest spot so that we may whirl with all our might. The physicality of spinning is deeply felt and sensed through meeting and knowing a place and the features and characteristics found there that come together and act upon us. Though conveying movement within our figurations can be a complicated process, there is a deep and embodied knowing that skating movements are only made possible with a specific surface. In this case, enveloped in a soft, filmy rain that glistens like ice and beckons for us to slide upon the wooden slats where it lands in the light. Despite the complexity of intersecting elements in this place, and the challenges to bring swift movements to life through materials such as thick and smudging chalk pastels, the essence of feet needing to meet a wet ground or rink remains significant.

Back at the Hollow we continue to talk about the children's drawings, inviting others to join the conversations, and wondering with the questions:

How can you tell someone is moving in a drawing?

What is the difference between spinning and twirling?



spinning – twirling

M. is confident she knows the difference between spinning and twirling and works to show us through her movements. She presses her arms close to her body and moves in tiny circling footsteps until she completes a full rotation of her body. This is M.'s version of spinning. However, her feet are met with the unforgiving texture of the asphalt, and without the slickness of the wooden slats, wet with just the right amount of rain, her ability to enact spinning is limited, halting her efforts to convey this to us. She tells us that a twirl is with hands above one's head, and again tries to spin, thwarted by the pavement. We realize that being somewhere else does not allow us the same kind of flexibility and ease to not only the way we move, but the way we might describe these concepts to one another. We agree we need to visit the skating rink once again to notice these important differences.



Upon returning to the skating rink, M. repeats her explanation and body movements to show us the difference between a spin, which is intentionally shown to us less gracefully than her flowing twirl. This time, the wide-open wooden surface and continual sprinkle of rain enables her to show us in much more clarity what she tried to describe before. As her arms lift, the back of her hands press together at the center of her head, with one leg kicking out at the knee she balances briefly on the tip of her toe. Even her facial expressions seem more elegant during her twirl, as she smiles and closes her eyes. A contrast from what appeared to be more cumbersome elements of a spin – chin down, eyebrows lowered, and arms tucked in tightly beside her body while she emphasized her boots stomping in a circle. Perhaps like the word itself, twirl invites a sense of lightness and grace.

Matthew: “**Like this!**”

Matthew follows the same steps of hands above head, leg kicking out, bending at the knee, and this time his body hops a little to propel his momentum. Fern, Matthew and M. continue to spin and twirl upon the slick wooden surface of the skating rink. Like figure skaters they jump and extend their arms out for balance as they make their twirls and landings.



As we continue to think about the variances and nuances of spinning and twirling, we are soon introduced to swirling, and ‘twirgle-ing’, adding to our repertoire of spins and twirls, each slightly different from the other.

Fern picks up her umbrella and begins to circle on her tiptoe, arms reaching out as little strands of hair that have found their way out from under her hat lift into the air.

Ali: “**Are you twirling Fern?**”

Fern: I’m swirling! Swirling is where you step with your arms out with something that will catch the wind. I’m going to swirl again, I love swirling.

Ali: “**Does the umbrella help you swirl?**”

Fern: “**Yeah, it helps me go like this (swirling really fast). And it helps me not fall down...But when my umbrella is closed...Fern pauses to think for a moment...It’s called *twirgle-ing*.**”

To draw together in particular places is a practice of embracing, as well as embodying where we are and what is possible within those spaces. Drawing at the skating rink invites us to recognize the nuances that comprise our movements, along with the characteristics of this place that enables particular spins, swirls, and twirls. Fern refers to the ground as ice, knowing that we need its slippery qualities for our quick spinning motions. While P. helps us to recognize the detail in the way we describe the certain movements we make.

As we discuss our ideas, we are called to test them out, observing one another in motion. We realize however to draw a body in motion is as complex as the shapes our bodies take on the ice. Though we do not always find our specific answers to what our drawings need, what begins to emerge is a sense of curiosity and experimentation, and a deep knowingness of a place colliding with and requiring specific conditions for our thinking, ideas and enactments. Often more nuance calls forth more questions, as well as diversified movements, and varying terms to describe them, such as a spin, twirl, swirl, and eventually a twirgle, each slightly differing in expression. The particularities and the qualities that we are drawn to invite a lively sense of experimentation, investigation, and possibility.



Like the way we look to drawings, seeing new and not yet known possibilities in the ways they speak back to us, we do so with the places we encounter as well. We look to our surroundings to inform our thinking, welcoming unconventional and unusual discoveries when we face both challenges and difficulties as well as curiosities. Our inquiries begin to draw out differing hypotheses made with places, becoming a way of contouring our ideas and drawings both with and without the original materials we bring with us.

As we take a twirling break, we discuss the movement lines we use to show motion and wonder together about how we might draw a twirl when someone like Matthew has shorter hair. Like our movements, the details and possibilities within our drawings grow. Matthew, trying to draw himself in motion lies down on the the skating rink, as if to get closer to being with the qualities of its surface and how they enable certain ways of moving. As he lies down, his body seems to contradict the swift motions of twirling that have previously helped us think in movements, however, his leg is bent at the knee, kicked into the air, seeming to imitate and embody the way twirls have been taking shape among the children. Leaning-in closer to his drawing he gets up, though not quite satisfied it seems. Looking around, something catches his eye. With a curious yet determined expression on his face, he walks over to a nearby hand railing, and wraps his rain paper around its cylindrical circumference, which also glistens with dewy rain drops. Pressing the paper into the railing until it is fully encased, he slowly pulls it off, eyes watching in excited anticipation. Chalk pastel streaks across the page. He grins, holding up his paper, showing us yet another way of depicting a circling motion through drawings.





Matthew ignites ideas that extend beyond our pages, and in noticing him, Fern finds a large dandelion leaf that she flings into the air. It drops quickly, slowing into a dizzying spiral right before it hits the ground. M. soon seeks out a fallen rhododendron leaf, tossing it into the air.

Meanwhile, Matthew is inspired to find out what will happen when he physically spins around with his paper. Like a twirle, he stands tall holding onto something in his hand, and begins to spin in circles, his page catching wind and rain, eventually watching it wiggle to the ground.



Spinning, twirling and swirling take shape in multiple forms, informing not only our spoken language, but our visual language and expression as well. Through a co-construction of understanding and embodying the ways we move in this place, along with the particular terms, and representations we share with one another, this space continues to be rich with experimentation, and not yet known ways of bringing our thinking to life.

As the days get lighter, so too does the long winter rainfall, and the first buds of spring just barely begin to appear. We step out of the Hollow and seem to all share a sense that there is a different kind of quality in the atmosphere surrounding us.

Ali: **“Are we going to the skating rink? “**

C.: **“No. No, I want to go to the bus stop!”**

Fern: **“Yeah! I want to go to the bus stop and get a magazine!”**

Though we have been to the bus stop before, we have not been in a while, and our walk today is characterized by excitement in the way we skip, stop, and remember where to go again. The sounds of large mechanical brakes and rumblings calls to us from a distance. The pace perks up, in an anticipation that seems to fear we might miss the bus. We arrive and open the large metal box containing pamphlets and magazines. The children lean on the long bus stop bench, and as they flip through the pages of their magazines they begin to draw inside, adding their marks and thoughts to the articles that appear, joining and re-creating with the illustrations among the pages. There is a sense of intertwining with the community, of being inside of the rhythms and consciousness of campus life. Suddenly we are astonished by what we see. There is a drawing of a girl on a skateboard, arms outstretched, knee bent, hair lifting off of her shoulders and flowing behind her. Just behind her illustrated body are two little lines. Our faces light up in excitement. She is moving! There is a shared delight and satisfaction in knowing our own ideas are represented among the campus community, strengthening what we already know, and what we are capable of.



We return to the Hollow, jumping into place with arms outstretched, leaning back as though we are the girl in the skateboarding image, again finding nuance in our movements. Conversations about how to depict the direction we are moving unfolds, and we wonder where else we might notice drawings that speak back to us.

Concluding thoughts and lingering lines of wondering

So often we are influenced by the places we inhabit, yet perhaps do not always recognize the ways we embody and enact these influences. *Drawing as an emplaced practice* supports us to be in particular places as we continue “listening with all our being” (Snowber, 2012, p. 55), inviting ways of seeing and knowing the places we are situated in not simply as a backdrop to our being there, but as active members in making spaces together. The children of the Hollow, walk by forming and trailing lines with them to places like the Huckleberry Moss room and the “skating rink”, which in time with the rhythms of the seasons unique to the west coast, shape collective understandings beyond where we go. We are drawn to these places again and again, contouring familiar faces and stories of the elemental beings we visit, like rain and rocks, listening carefully to the ways they speak back to us. We respond with gifts for the forest, stories and narratives that echo the kinds of feelings in our own neighbourhoods, and the creation of relational worlds in which we choose to live.

We pause to consider, and even welcome the ways we might become what we see in our drawings, such as animals that transform us into even more magnificent ice skaters than before.

As we draw with places, we work to shape that which was not there at first, and trail into the not yet known ways of thinking, being, and feeling into these spaces. It is a uniquely embodied practice, holding diverse potentials that are unpredictable, even as we repeatedly embrace familiar rituals that we form along the way to where we may be going. We come to see that bodied ways of drawing works to support us in the making of our ideas, inviting each other to notice, question, consider, challenge, and contextualize the collective understandings that comprise our community. We continue to gather in, live in, and remember fondly the places that draw out otherwise ways of being together. In this way, *drawing as an emplaced practice* continues to emerge as the collective and co-created possibilities of who we are and who we are continually becoming that corresponds to the qualities of where we are and when we are. We draw together not to simply produce visual images, but to draw out, and create a situated life we live together.

Thank you to all of the children, teachers, families and diverse community members of Cypress Hollow, and the Capilano Children's Centre and campus, including the places, materials, and elements within the surrounding spaces that draw us in and move with us.

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Centre for Childhood Studies

ISSN: 2368-948X

2nd Special Edition 2023

*Curriculum inquiry, pedagogical documentation,
and their relationality*

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Centre for Childhood Studies

ISSN: 2368-948X

2nd Special Edition 2023

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