Bringing Mindful Outdoor Engagements to the Classroom

Five Postures for a Pedagogy of Re-Membering

Amanda M. Kingston
Jessica Fundalinski
Syracuse University

Abstract:

Pedagogical frameworks seeking more relational, reciprocal, and sustainable ways of being continue to emerge as part of a larger response to learning in the Anthropocene (Honeyford, et al., 2024; Philip & Finn, 2020). This article seeks to ground such a pedagogical framework in forest therapy, a mindful outdoor engagement. Through a narrative inquiry study, we explore a pedagogy of re-membering that, through engagement with the more-than-human world, speaks back to the dis-membering experiences that can occur in traditional schooling spaces. We offer five findings, or what we name postures, for a pedagogy of re-membering: (1) rooting in the local and place-based, (2) moving in slow attention, (3) harnessing invitational language and communal engagement, (4) facilitating embodied and agentic learning, and (5) practicing gratitude in kinship consciousness. For each posture, we offer a composite narrative of a forest therapy guided experience, theoretical engagements and discussions of the posture, and considerations for educational practitioners seeking to flesh out these

Amanda M. Kingston is a doctoral candidate in the Cultural Foundations of Education program and Jessica Fundalinski is a doctoral candidate in the Teaching & Curriculum Program, both in the Schoool of Education at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. Email addresses: akingston@syr.edu & jfundalinski@syr.edu

postures in a classroom or educational space. We hope that, through this framework, we might find new modes of learning, being, and becoming with the more-than-human world toward communal flourishing.

Keywords: Embodied pedagogy, forest therapy, environmental justice, mindful outdoor engagements, narrative inquiry

Introduction

During our (the authors') doctoral programs in education at a university in upstate New York, we (the authors) began to attend local sessions of forest therapy, a type of mindful outdoor engagement. Through forest therapy, we attended sessions lasting two to three hours at local state parks and nature preserves with a certified guide who leads groups through contemplative practices, community sharing, and intentional engagement with the more-than-human world. As a result, we found ourselves connecting deeper to the local landscape; connecting deeper to our own bodies, spirits, and minds; and finding a community among humans and more-than-humans such as trees, lakes, moss, rivers, and more. These connections came at a pivotal time: prior to these experiences, we talked often about the ways in which schooling could do work to dis-member us from our bodies, spirits, and minds; the loneliness of doctoral work and dis-memberment from community; and the dis-membering from the local place and environment. Certainly, other authors speak to the need for relational and embodied pedagogies (Honeyford, et al., 2024; Philip & Finn, 2020) so then we expand upon these conceptual and empirical framings to engage specifically how education can be a sight of dis-membering. We seek to understand how lessons, grounded in a place-based engagement with the more-than-human world, lead us to practices of re-membering. Our approach works against anthropocentric notions of learning in which knowledge is transmitted for control, and toward knowledge gained through attention (Ingold 2017; 2023) for communal flourishing.

Initially, we began working together on a narrative inquiry project exploring what sorts of orientations forest therapy and mindful outdoor engagements might provide rememberings, reorientations, and reimaginings of ecojustice and social justice for educators. However, through this, we began to piece together a conceptual pedagogical framework that mindful outdoor engagements could offer to classroom educators. Here, we fully flesh out this framework and offer ways in which mindful outdoor engagements, like forest therapy, could inform, shape, and encourage more holistic ways of learning and becoming for classrooms and educational spaces. We name this a *pedagogy of re-membering* after

our own experiences with re-membering, re-connecting, and re-imagining our education and role as educators. In a pedagogy of re-membering, we find ourselves grounding in a return to our bodies and spirits, more-than-human kin, and classroom community.

We write this primarily for classroom educators—as we both spent a decade in middle and high school classrooms and now teach undergraduates—to consider, reinforce, expand, or imagine re-membering within their own classroom and educational spaces. This paper sets out to do the following: first, we will begin by unpacking what we mean by a pedagogy of re-membering. Next, we will offer the five postures we conceptualize are key to a pedagogy of re-membering which include questions educators can use to reflect on their own practices. We have paired each posture with a narrative portion of a forest therapy to introduce the posture. Finally, in our conclusion, we consider future directions for a pedagogy of re-membering.

Pedagogy of Re-Membering: Context

In the age of Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000) ongoing climate crises, environmental slow violences (Nixon, 2011) and the consequences of environmental harm, we join other scholars and educators in arguing for more broader, multi-species and more-than-human pedagogical practices are necessary for communal flourishing which encompasses all living beings. We argue a *pedagogy of re-membering*, as developed through our engagements with mindful outdoor experiences, can be one such pedagogical framework. By "re-membering," we first look to the ways neoliberal institutions and mutually reinforcing structures of oppression do work to dis-member us from our communities, our bodies, our relationship to land, and the integration of our body-spirit-mind. As current doctoral students and former K-12 classroom educators, we understand deeply the ways in which US schooling as a neoliberal institution is threaded with structures such as ableism, white supremacy, heterocispatriarchy, and more to dis-member students and educators. In re-membering, we choose to find ways to resist dis-membering by connecting to land, community, our more-than-human kin, our bodies, and an integration of our body-spirit-minds. In a pedagogy of re-membering, we look to la paperson's (2017) push toward third ways of becoming and knowing through which we might resist within institutions and structures toward liberated futures.

Pedagogy of Re-membering: Inquiry Methods

We situate this paper in a larger collaborative and bounded narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen & Hacker, 2009) study that we (both authors) participated in together through Summer 2024. We considered the following research question: *how might forest therapy offer rememberings, reorientations, and reimaginings of ecojustice and social justice for educators?* Narrative inquiry allowed us to challenge hegemonic discourses of "objective learning" in favor of lessons grounded in our lived, embodied experiences as scholars and researchers. This also allowed us to blur the lines of researchers and participants to open up new modes of doing and being with the research.

For the larger project, we met over the course of five weeks to dialogue about set questions regarding our experiences with forest therapy and our experiences as educators and students. Our final conversation took place while on a hike in a nearby mountain range. During our five weeks, we separately attended forest therapy sessions in groups or as solo experiences. Our conversations lasted from 30-60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. After each meeting, we each responded to the transcripts through a one-page narrative reflection. Our data included 81 pages of transcripts and narrative responses.

Using collaborative deductive analysis, we first developed 16 initial codes based on our larger research question, we then calibrated our coding approach, and we separately coded the work. For example, our initial code list included personal teaching experiences, feelings conveyed, forest therapy practices, personal reorientations from forest therapy, and personal reorientations outside forest therapy, among others. After, we re-coded for emergent codes. We then developed eight categories to organize codes under and visited the categories explicitly connected to our larger research question.

During this process, new questions, themes, and lessons emerged. One of our initial 16 codes included "forest therapy pedagogy." As we finished a first paper of the larger project, we returned to this code to look for further themes of what makes a forest therapy pedagogy. Each author separately named themes of a forest therapy pedagogy, and then we convened to consolidate our findings. Here, we name these five findings, what we call postures, that we argue make this pedagogy. We refer to this as a pedagogy of re-membering.

Pedagogy of Re-membering Postures: Findings & Discussion

In this section, we introduce the postures of a pedagogy of re-membering through mindful outdoor engagements. Within the forest, as students and collaborators, we learn through these engagements. Within our classrooms at the university as students and educators, we consciously choose to thread these postures through syllabi, assignments, and dialogue with colleagues. We offer this conceptual framing to other co-conspirators working toward more flourishing and liberated worlds.

We use the term *posture* instead of *framework* to emphasize embodied ways of being and orientations toward both formal and informal educational contexts. Our way of being in the world is deeply tied to how we construct knowledge, who is a knower, and what can be learned. In this way, postures focus on being and becoming, rather than doing or simply knowing. Postures represent the corporeal experience of pedagogy, fostering a re-membering of learners with their mind and body, reconnecting them to earth-centered ways of being, and bringing an awareness of time and rhythm into learning contexts. We see these postures as interconnected, much like an ecosystem: they support and enhance one another but can also stand independently. While their entanglement is essential, starting with one posture can be an effective entry point as you explore how a pedagogy of re-membering might take shape in your own classroom.

Below, we outline five postures of a pedagogy of re-membering. For discussion on each, we have paired each posture with a narrative portion of a forest therapy walk. This narrative serves as a composite of multiple experiences we have engaged in separately and together and to illustrate each pedagogical posture. Additionally, we present some theoretical considerations for each posture as opportunities in both formal and informal classroom settings. We conclude each discussion with questions for educators to reflect on as they implement these postures in their own classrooms.

Posture 1: Rooting in the Local & Place-based

> *A little after noon, we arrived at the state park which sits on the ancestral land of the Onondaga Nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We have been at this state park before: in groups, with family, with partners, and alone. Located just twenty minutes away from our university, the park serves as a safe haven for students throughout the seasons: budding greens in the spring, vibrant flowers in the summer, dazzling reds and oranges in the fall, and crisp blue chillness in winter. As we ar-*

rive now in the fall, the two round glacial lakes reflect the reds, yellows, and oranges of the local trees—mostly hard wood—in blue-green clear water. Above, we hear birds call during their southern migration in anticipation of the coming cold which we begin to feel prickle along our skin. We have witnessed versions of this in previous years as the park showcases earth's rhythmic cycles. When we drive through the park to the meeting place, we arrive at a campsite to meet the guide who will lead us again through the Old Growth Trail which moves through the old forest to the glacial lakes.

After spraying ourselves with essential oils to avoid thirsty ticks, we gathered in a small circle beneath a canopy of old-growth trees: beech, hemlock, cedars. The trees, covered in the warmth of autumnal colors, teeter on the cusp of abscission. Morning sunlight pierces through their branches. From their crowns, leaves float singularly, slowly, gently, down to the forest floor, and sometimes they appear white by the glare of the sun. When everyone is ready, the guide speaks.

She begins our session by acknowledging the stolen land of the Onondaga and Haudenosaunee. She continues to situate us by considering the geologic history and contemporary landscape of this state park where we find ourselves—acknowledging the great receding ice sheets that formed the now glacial lakes, and the parts of the park once deforested for farming, are now asserting themselves as the precursor to forests. This initial arrival and introduction situate our engagement as place-based to where we are, the histories that came before us, and the present realities.

Place-based or local education proffers that schooling be accountable to location and the locale where communities and individuals live, work, learn, and relate to one another (Gruenewald, 2003; Yemini, et al., 2023). This postures an accountability of educators, students, and educational systems to the local as a way for students to connect to their lived realities and experiences, including the more-than-human world (Azano, 2011; Bowers, 2001; Budge, 2010). Place-based education aims to build strong community-school relationships that speak to the ways in which the local is interconnected with the planetary (Bowers, 2001; Yemini, et al., 2023). Further, in a critical place-based curriculum, educators and students engage the ways in which power structures both oppression and opportunity within a location—such as the naming of settler colonialism as a historical and ongoing structure

that orchestrating land-theft from Indigenous people. For example, in K-12 classrooms, educators might ground curriculum in the local experiences of land and people. This could be drawing more global or planetary themes around water conservation or climate crises to how these issues manifest in their local community through small group research projects, guest speakers, or class field trips.

Within mindful outdoor engagements, such as forest therapy or forest bathing, critical place-based education is the pedagogical foundation. Forest therapy encourages the return to the same local place so that ethic-onto-epistemological posturing and entanglements occur. By engaging practices in a local space that we return to, knowledge becomes more deeply co-constructed with the more-than-human world, and we more deeply reflect on the power-structures connecting all living beings. For example, we might consider how environmental racism might affect some green spaces and neighborhoods more than others and what collective action projects we could be a part of.

Through a foundation of place-based education, we have opportunities to learn from the same tree or lake in different seasons and weather, see the growth of a dear tree-friend or patch of forest, and better know the plants and wildlife that share our same geographic area. We situate this as the first posture because all other postures become more vibrant when rooted in local and place-based engagements. Our curiosities and gratitude center on this same place, over and again, deepening with each arrival.

Questions for Educators

- How might you and your colleagues connect students with local ecological communities through playgrounds, neighborhoods, or local parks? What does it look like to return to these spaces over and again as part of your learning and curriculum?
- How might a place-based educational model strengthen your classroom engagement in STEM, humanities, and extracurricular activities?
- How does a place-based engagement ignite conversations about local justice and peacebuilding issues?

Posture 2: Moving in Slow Attention

After our initial introduction, the guide shares that we will move through a series of invitations throughout the next two hours. As we continue on the trail, she invites us to notice what's moving around us as we walk just a short distance. She asks us

to walk in contemplative silence together and shares: "I wonder, what might you see moving?"

We start off slowly, walking in attentive steps along the path. "What's moving?" I, the second author, ask myself. I turn my attention back to the confetti of leaves that has suddenly picked up with a gust of wind. They float in the same way that seaweed drifts in the Great Lake–gently looking for solid earth. As I look down at my step, I notice the fluttering of small green shrubs nestled along the forest floor, moving rhythmically to the turbulence we create with each step. I bend down to look closer. The group continues past me, slowly. I notice them looking in different directions, occasionally stopping. The movement of the soundwaves brings forth a crow's call. I look up searching for the crow's physical movement, but instead I see our guide pausing for us to gather at the bottom of a hill.

We gather together at a fork in the path. Our guide shares that we'll circle in the woods for the next invitation. Silently, she walks into the brush, off the trail. We follow her towards an opening in the trees, where sunlight connects with a large, mossy log. We move through a thick layer of peat and dried leaves, fallen branches, and twigs. The guide asks us to get comfortable to prepare for our next invitation to connect our senses and our surroundings. Some of us choose to sit on a large log, while others sit in the small foldable chairs we were given at the start of our walk.

Our guide shares that for the next 15 to 20 minutes, we will sit in the same place, silently scanning our bodies and our senses to prepare for future invitations (Amos Clifford, 2021). She encourages us to gently soften our gaze or close our eyes. Then, we are guided to connect with our breath, taking in long, slow deep breaths–breathing in through the nose, and out through pursed lips. Over the course of the next 20 minutes, she prompts us to notice different senses: what we're hearing–what sounds are close and what are further away; what we're tasting in the air with our tongues outstretched and dangling like a thirsty dog; what we're feeling and the way the air touches our skin or hands; and what we're smelling and the scents of the forest. We end with a body radar (Amos Clifford, 2021), where we stand up gently with our eyes closed, and move in the direction that feels right to us. She invites us to open our eyes letting "the for-

> *est reveal itself to [us] as if [we] have never seen it before" (Amos Clifford, 2021, p. 73).*

Central to the experience of a mindful outdoor experience is moving in slow attention. By attention, we draw from anthropologist Tim Ingold (2017) who suggests education is a practice of attention rather than transmission. Ingold (2023) argues that attention differs from intention in that attention moves within uncertainty rather than predictability and opens a student up to the world rather than closes in on a single or set of goals.

If place-based education is the pedagogical foundation of mindful outdoor engagements such as forest therapy or forest bathing, moving in slow attention is the way in which pedagogy is undergone. Ingold (2023) describes two sides of attention: exposure and attunement. By attunement, the author refers to a practice of *noticing* our surroundings - —3). Noticing as attunement can be simply a function to gain knowledge on how to move through the world. But in exposure, noticing can also be a practice of interpersonal connection that requires a response. Attention as exposure, Ingold (2023) writes, is to "be pulled out of position" (p. 27) or to abide in and with the world around us. Attention in this sense is to embrace vulnerability, to embrace unknowing and uncertainty, and to embrace astonishment and wonder of the world around us. The world around me speaks, so I communicate back. Ingold (2017, 2023) names this sort of communication with the movement and life around us as *correspondence*. It is in this correspondence, he writes, that we are transformed (Ingold, 2017).

Within a mindful outdoor engagement, we have to attend to the world in a multiplicity of senses. We might adjust our feet according to the terrain, turn our head to a bird's call, take in odors or smells that can signal welcome or danger. We also attend to the correspondence of the land, perhaps choosing to correspond in turn: what is this space offering when I embrace uncertainty? What happens when I choose a slower walking space—that the most impactful moments in our classrooms are often those moments when we veer off course, engage in an unplanned conversation, or a student asks a profound and meaningful question. In the classroom, when we slow down and take the time to correspond with these moments, something more than knowledge transmission happens—both educators and students might be transformed.

Clark (2023), drawing from Ingold, describes then a "slow pedagogy of place" (p. 37). Situating this slow pedagogy in the broader slow movement—such as the slow food movement—Clark (2023) argues for a pedagogy that does not simply transmit knowledge but nourish-

es growth. In slow pedagogy, the emphasis is on engagement rather than transmission (Clark, 2023). Engagement, as described by Clark (2023) aligns with Ingold's (2017, 2023) terminology of correspondence. Engagement is the practice of *being with* rather than power over, in which relationship is central to learning and unfolding. Clark (2023) describes this as a cultivating practice, and from ecology we know that cultivation takes time: there are seasons, weather patterns, and nourishing practices that cultivate growth. Cultivating classroom growth means attending to or corresponding with the classroom: what do students need? Where are their questions and interests leading us? How do we hold space to engage a topic deeply for rich roots? What is needed right now in the moment?

Ultimately, Clark (2023) and Ingold (2023) challenge traditional epistemological models of what knowledge is and how knowledge is cultivated. Rather than a focus on universal facts to be assessed and measured through rote exercises, the epistemologies Clark (2023) and Ingold (2023) name in slow attention and slow pedagogy are knowledge as complex, always in-process, and deeply interconnected as a community co-constructs together.

Questions for Educators

- Where are places where you can make space for "slow pedagogy" through being with student rhythms, interests, and questions?
- How does your pedagogical practice allow for correspondence between you and students, between students and students, and between the classroom and the more-than-human world?
- What might the more-than-human world within your classroom - such as class pets or classroom plants—offer to students in developing skills of noticing or cultivating practices?

Posture 3: Harnessing Invitational Language and Communal Engagement

> *After some time standing in contemplative silence, our guide gathers us in a circle for our first sharing circle. She begins with ground rules: the only person to speak is the person with the sharing piece; when we receive the piece, we should speak from the heart and in a way that is most comfortable for us– whether that is through English, a language other than English, through our bodies and gestures, or simply holding space for silence. For the listeners, we are also to listen from the heart*

> *without judgement, reaction, or comfort. Like the wind, we let what is shared continue to move through the forest. Our guide ends by asking, "What are you noticing?" She passes the sharing stick to the first participant. As the stick moves throughout the sharing circle, each participant shares freely, some looking to our guide as they talk, others looking up towards the sunlight, others looking down at the stick. Each participant shares and is listened to with a quality of egalitarianism and respect. At times I am struck by what someone shares, resonating with their description or experience; though immediately return to the present and let those judgements float away.*

"What are you noticing?" is a question we were asked on a number of occasions; this gentle question was the bookend of a broader invitation that encouraged us to engage with our senses and bodies in a number of ways throughout the forest therapy walk. Invitations emerge from the rhetorical language the guide uses to offer a practice or opportunity to participants. Generally, invitations are a key step or component of a mindful outdoor engagement, like in a forest therapy or mindful outdoor experience; they are not tasks, exercises or assignments, but rather "like the flow of improvisational dance, with the forest as [a] partner" (Amos Clifford, 2021, p. 45). As a posture, educators can harness invitational language to support a disposition toward community and perspective taking, allowing us to step into the worldview of our learning community.

Moving away from rhetoric that is guided by control, influence and power, Foss and Griffin (1995) propose an *invitational rhetoric* grounded "in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (p. 2). These principles emphasize equality through mutual relationships, recognize each individual's inherent value, and support autonomy and freedom in life choices. With this framing, the goals of invitational rhetoric are to openly enter into someone else's worldview, without coercion, persuasion or judgement. Invitational rhetoric is therefore not intended to change an individual's beliefs, but rather offer a way to understand someone's perspective. If change does emerge, it is through the sharing of ideas free of domineering communicative strategies. These changes may create a sense of discomfort as "assumptions and positions are questioned," but typically are accompanied through "gratitude for the assistance provided by others in thinking about an issue" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 6)

Invitational Rhetoric is guided by two communicative strategies that can be seen within mindful outdoor engagements: *offering perspec-*

tives and *cultivating external conditions of safety, value and freedom* (Foss & Griffin, 1995). Offering perspectives is the act of expressing a viewpoint without pressuring others to accept, agree or join in with it. This approach involves sharing one's understanding of the world in noncoercive ways. As an example of this, our guide might encourage us to notice what is moving, or ask us what we're noticing, though does not demand, or specify what we might look at. Rather, she invites us to understand how she experiences the world; that is, through attending to the movement of the world around us.

In a mindful outdoor experience, after an invitation in a sharing circle, our guide creates the external conditions that help us enter into the fellow participants' worldview and perspectives through three conditions: safety, value, and freedom (Foss & Griffin, 1995). The guide lays the ground rules for the terms of engagement in the sharing circle, creating a sense of safety where participants' ideas are shared and received with respect. In these sharing circles, participants are encouraged to listen and speak from the heart–spontaneously speaking their thoughts, feelings, and experiences from the invitation. We have the freedom to share, or not share, in whatever way is comfortable; harkening to the egalitarian reciprocity in which all other participants experience as well. As participants speak, we engage in "absolute listening" (Gendlin, 1978), where others share their experiences with the invitation, but do not comment, judge or comfort on anything that has been said. In these moments, worldviews are offered but not imposed.

Through the invitational rhetoric used and specifically within the sharing circles of a mindful outdoor experience, participants are offered an opportunity to step into someone else's worldview and perspective. These perspectives are offered, rather than being imposed or used through coercive or persuasive language. There are moments as listeners in sharing circles where we are struck by what others say or have experienced, which may change our beliefs, but that is not the goal of the sharing circle. Yet as a result of this invitational language, knowledge has the capacity to be produced through community and in co-constructed with humans and the more-than-human world. The sharing circle presents opportunities to learn from many teachers.

Questions for Educators

How are you currently communicating with students in the classroom?

- How might your language offer multiple ways of being, engaging or thinking?

- How does an invitation feel different in the body than a task?
- How might you cultivate ways for students to share their ideas, feelings and thoughts in safe and egalitarian ways?

Posture 4: Facilitating Embodied and Agentic Engagements

The final participant in the sharing circle returns the sharing piece to our guide. She pushes the stick into her crossover bag and looks up at the trees. "Our next invitation is a conversation with a tree. Trees are non-judgemental, patient listeners. We can sit with them and share our thoughts and ideas, and often they will return to us in conversation with the wisdom that they have." With this short introduction, she informs us that for the next 15 minutes, we will use our body radar to find a tree in the Old Growth Forest that our body is guided towards. The invitation is to introduce ourselves to the tree, and sit, or lay down with or under the tree. We are invited to talk or share our thoughts, and listen deeply for an answer.

I move quietly through the forest, trying to find a tree that my body is called to. I eventually feel guided toward a very tall and straight tree, with golden leaves fluttering above. There's sunlight threading through the trees which make a spotlight at the base of the tree. I sit where the warmth of the sun reaches my face and limbs, and I lean comfortably against the tree. I begin by gazing, looking at the base of the tree. I realize I'm sitting on a web of roots that slowly extend outward. I look up and notice what appears to be a lady with blonde hair, head turned, as if she's dancing with the wind. Although I recognize I'm anthropomorphizing this tree, I can't help but feel like it's a more believable way of entering into conversation with a tree. I introduced myself, as our guide suggested. As I sat beneath this tree, wondering what it might look like to an outsider, I am struck by a small, iridescent beetle moving between the ridges of the bark. I peer in closer. The ridges are like canyons. For much of my adulthood, my only interaction with trees was looking at them from a distance, using them for support on a climb, or burning them at a campfire. I hadn't stopped to notice that the ridges on this old, beautiful tree felt analogous to the fine lines on the creases of my eyes that I notice with more frequency now. Yet, at the same time, a thought popped into my head: that there's nothing to fear about aging; that we can age with beauty and

grace because of the wrinkles, the canyons. They are a marker of wisdom and of a life well-lived. Who was it that offered me that thought? Was it the tree?

At the fifteen-minute mark, we hear the ocarina of our guide, summoning us at the base of another small hill. There's something that has shifted in the group after this invitation, and an eagerness in our sharing circle–all of us appear with excitement to convey our experiences. Our guide begins by sharing her noticings and experiences with the invitation. As the sharing stick moves around the circle, the ephemeral shares of the participants start to leave a mark in my thinking. They are filled with depth, honesty, and vulnerability. I share my conversation about aging, while another participant shares the wisdom of using the vines the tree offers to make it to the tops of the trees–a metaphor for holding onto the supports that guide us through hard times. And so the circle continues: each person making an offering of their time, each rooted in a deep attentiveness and time with our respective trees. Our conversations emerged from our own personal experiences and worldview, and yet offer knowledge about how to move through the world. Could we have come to these insights if it were not for this patient conversation with a tree?

One of the key elements of practice of a mindful outdoor experience is a focus on the senses and sensory experiences, or rather, the body as a site of knowledge co-construction. These include our senses including sight, smell and taste, in addition to proprioception, interoception, or awe and wonder. In this way, a mindful outdoor experience is about learning about ourselves as we engage in the natural world. As Amos-Clifford (2021) describes, "This is a departure from expectations that structured time in the forest should have something to do with learning scientific facts about nature" (pp. 41-42). Indeed, embodiment is crucial in the pedagogy of mindful outdoor engagements.

Embodied learning theories have emerged from scholars that have sought to push back on the Cartesian dichotomy of mind/body, which privileges the mind over the body or simply views the body as a means to verify knowledge (Macedonia, 2019; Stolz, 2015). Learning has generally been assumed to be only carried out as a result of "mental or behavioural processes" (Stolz, 2015, p. 475). As a result of the beliefs about learning, education systems are often dominated by a tendency to promote pedagogies that involve cognitive processes, like abstract reasoning or conceptual thinking (Stolz, 2015). Instead, embodied

learning seeks to acknowledge the body as integral to learning and to making meaning of our experiences. Embodiment recognizes the inseparability of the mind, body and spirit as all information and stimuli emerging from our environment is "perceived, organized, interpreted and filtered through the body" (Munro, 2018, p. 5). Embodied learning then, can be defined as a body as a site of knowledge through psychic, sensory and emotional feelings.

Stolz (2015) posits that because human experience is subjective, education environments should be cultivated to help learners explore their own perspectives, so students can "gradually come to understand how things relate to each other and to themselves" (p. 484). In other words, embodied learning recognizes that understanding is the result of *our own experiences and understandings*. As Stolz (2015) writes, we "come to knowledge and understanding through human experience [like sensory experiences] first before coming to understand abstract or intellectual concepts" (p. 481). Thus, we cannot simply conceptually learn about the world, or try to have a meaningful connection to the-more-than-human world by analyzing it or thinking about it. We have to use our bodies and senses to develop our own knowledge and understanding of the world. In this way, a mindful outdoor engagement helps us to understand a local place through our embodied engagement with that place—by listening to the sounds, feeling the textures, taking in the smells and appreciating our own emotional reaction to these engagements. Embodied, sensory experiences help to make meaning, and ultimately usher in feelings of care. Over time, this way of being becomes an extension of ourselves as we connect in meaningful, deeper ways. By recognizing the body as a site of knowledge construction, rather than through cognitive processes, educators can intentionally shift their use of the body to "facilitate shifts in perspectives, perceptions, paradigms, behaviours and actions" (Munro, 2018, p. 7).

In mindful outdoor practices, participants are encouraged to engage their senses—hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting, and seeing—to learn through an embodied experience. Beyond traditional senses, these practices invite participants to engage with their sense of awe or wonder, being with something that transcends our understanding of the world, further deepening the embodied experience. This counters conventional educational practices, which often prioritize passive listening, reading, writing, and other primarily cognitive activities, sidelining the role of the body. Because there are no learning objectives in the course of a mindful outdoor engagement, but merely invitations, participants can use their agency to decide if and how deeply they want to participate. These agentic and embodied experiences allow partici-

pants to make meaning based on their own bodily experiences–their learning is uniquely their own.

Questions for Educators

- How do you currently engage your students with their senses and bodies?
- How might you work toward incorporating more practices that offer students chances to connect to their senses and to their local environments?
- How might cultivating agency strengthen your classroom engagement and student motivation?

Posture 5: Practicing Gratitude in Kinship Consciousness

We continue to wander ever so slowly through the park, engaging in additional invitations as we work our way towards the closing tea ceremony. We are summoned by our guide to a small clearing nestled below some trees. Our guide has set up a small patterned blanket with enough tea cups for each of the participants. It's decorated with local foliage. Some of us sit on a log, others sit in their foldable chairs as we look out to a mirror-like lake, with the leaves in their full fall glory. The sun is beginning to slowly descend in the Western sky. Our guide pulls out a small jar of hemlock, foraged from trees in this local park, and shares that she will brew some tea for our closing tea ceremony. Using prongs, she gently takes the hemlock from the jar and into the tea kettle. She twists open the top of a green metal Stanley– the ones you might imagine on a camping trip– and pours nearly boiling water into the tea kettle. As we wait for the tea to brew, we engage in a final sharing circle. In familiar fashion, the guide passes off the talking stick and asks: "What are you noticing?" Each of us share, slowly, contemplatively about the experience of this guided journey through the forest. There's a calmness and fullness in our various takeaways and responses. Some mention a profound gratitude to slow down, others share a longing to keep the peace found in the forest, and still others speak to how they plan to carry the lessons of the water with them in the coming days. Our guide reaches for the first cup, fills it with the brewed tea from the hemlock tree, and returns it to the Earth in gratitude for our experience, and all the gifts Mother Earth continues to share with us. She pours each of us a cup of this locally sourced tea, full of vitamin C and the comforts of home.

> *While this concludes our formal time together, we linger in conversation. We drink more cups of the hemlock tree tea and enjoy the snacks. We laugh. We make further connections and observations about the forest and our own lives. When we leave - a few people at a time - we leave a little more transformed.*

As a final practice of mindful outdoor engagement, the tea ceremony provides a closure and an invitation to gratitude. This gratitude, for us, is couched in a relational engagement with the more-than-human world. But rather than just an engagement *for* the more-than-human world, we suggest an engagement of gratitude *with* and *in* the more-than-human world. Drawing from Kimmerer's (2013) work on Indigenous human-land reciprocity, gratitude is not just a practice of giving thanks, but a pledge of allegiance and relationship and an acknowledgement to care in return. However, Kimmerer (2013) is clear that this practice of mutual care is not transactional but rather relational: I care not because I owe you but because we are responsible to each other. Again, in drawing from Kimmerer's (2013) work on relational language with the more-than-human world, we use the word "kinship" here to situate this more-than-human reciprocity.

Zajonc (2006) couches this reciprocal and gratitude work in an "epistemology of love" which, for him, remains the goal of educational spaces and the classroom. He draws from Palmer's suggestion that "every way of knowing becomes a way of living, every epistemology becomes an ethic" (Palmer, as quoted in Zajonc, 2006, p. 1744). In positing an epistemology of love, Zajonc (2006) argues for learning practices that 1) respect the integrity of the other, 2) developing gentleness, 3) moving away from objectifying knowledge to intimate attention, 4) engaging vulnerable practices of unknowing, and 5) seeking a co-transformative experience. When we choose to know a human being or more-than-human being through love, we develop practices of gratitude and reciprocity.

While the tea ceremony is the formal site in a mindful outdoor engagement to express gratitude to the earth - first by offering the first cup of tea and then moving through the sharing circle to express final thoughts - gratitude moves through each invitation. In making friends with a tree, a person might find a deeper connection and deep sense of thankfulness for the life of the tree. In sitting beside water, they might find a meaningful appreciation for the sustenance water offers. Gratitude becomes a way of *being* and *doing* a mindful outdoor engagement; gratitude as a practice of love leads to greater knowing and reciprocal care. In a pedagogy of forest therapy or mindful outdoor engagement, practicing gratitude in kinship consciousness becomes both the North

Star to which we walk together and a practice that sustains our unfolding. Through learning by loving, students develop a relationship with the world around them rather than recognizing other beings as objects to use as resources. Through this, students advocate for the people and more-than-human world they love, they learn more about the ocean or trees or people because they love them, and then they advocate further through that connection.

And perhaps this is the paradox with practicing gratitude: we have to be willing to engage in vulnerability and in return we receive support and care in further risks. What does a classroom that encourages learning by loving feel like? What does a ritual practice of gratitude offer to student learning? How might gratitude help students develop relational knowledge and understanding of their world and set them on a course of advocate action?

Questions for Educators

- How do you and your students currently practice gratitude? Does this feel like a ritual practice? Does this extend to classmates, community, and the more-than-human world?
- What does cultivating not just a love for learning but a learning to love feel like in your own life? What would this look like in a classroom setting?
- How might you introduce the concept of gratitude for kinship consciousness for students? Or, if you have introduced this, how might you build on this through your current curriculum?

Conclusion

Born out of our own learning experiences within schooling spaces and forest therapy along lines of dis-membering and re-membering, we hope to distill the practice of forest therapy or mindful outdoor engagements into pedagogical practices for educational practitioners and more traditional classroom spaces. This paper sought to introduce this pedagogy of re-membering and the five postures that encompass these pedagogical practices. These postures—place-based, invitational rhetoric, embodied engagements, slow attention, and gratitude for kinship consciousness—seek to address the "dis-membering" that often happens in schooling spaces. Instead, they offer ways of being for educators that create more holistic and humanizing approaches to learning and becoming in educational spaces.

This framework contributes to the broader field of education and

teacher development by considering how to prepare teachers to embrace a body-mind reconnect and connections to the more than human world. We believe this work compliments other pedagogical frameworks that consider how to work with environments in ways that resist the ecologically destructive ways of being, and to center more relational, kinship approaches to learning. For example, Phillips and Finn (2022) propose an ecological psychology inspired relational pedagogy and Honeyford et al. (2024) offer de/composing pedagogies to push against the disembodied and neoliberal practices in schooling spaces. Our framework offers an additional way for thinking about relational and embodied pedagogies through a rootedness in place and an extension into gratitude. Together, our frameworks present new ways of engaging with learners and re-thinking a pedagogy for the more-than-human-world. A pedagogy of re-membering contributes to ways of imagining new pedagogical experiences through narrative inquiry that speak to de-centering human knowledge in favor of more holistic and sustainable ways of being and becoming in the world.

Given that this framework emerges from a careful study of mindful outdoor engagements like forest therapy, we see avenues of investigation for examining how this pedagogy and associated postures play out in more traditional classroom spaces. For example, where and how can teachers embrace a posture that attends to slowness? Or, what is the impact of invitational rhetoric on attitudes toward learning? Future research can explore how teachers take up this pedagogy, and the impact on the student experience in schools. Ultimately, we hope the pedagogy of re-membering and the postures we propose present new ways of understanding the possibilities within education.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Contribution of Authors

Both authors contributed equally to this project and have the right to list their name first in their CV.

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