# Living Out-of-Doors: A Narrative Inquiry Alongside Nipugtugewei Forest Kindergarten Teachers

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## Abstract

In this paper, we draw upon a narrative inquiry alongside two creators of an out-of-doors Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program within a Mi'gmaw community, in northeastern Canada. Our intention was to understand their schooling, educational, and communal experiences over time. Diverse field texts were composed and interpreted alongside participants. We turned towards narrative conceptions of knowledge to show how attending to teachers' personal practical knowledge and stories to live by on their professional knowledge landscape is sustaining who they are as teachers and people. It is also a way for teachers to live their responsibility to Indigenous communities and students.

## Background

> *One morning, Joyce was doing a math lesson. Newt. Ta'pu. Si'st. Ne'w. Na'n. Numbers in Mi'gmaw.[1] I listened. I repeated after Ms. Joyce—whispering the numbers, attempting for them to stay in my brain—beautiful language. My chair was pulled beside one of the boys—for some reason, I was always around him. Big brown eyes, filled with curiosity, generosity, kindness, and a few freckles on his face—somehow, I felt drawn to his warm spirit. He did not talk much in class. Newte'jig. Ta'pusijig. Nesisijig. Ne'wijig. Na'njig. Ms. Joyce was using numbers to tell stories. I heard students laughing. Repeating after Ms. Joyce. Not him though. He seemed disengaged, disinterested . . . I wondered why. It was not a question of readiness or cognitive ability.*
>
> *The following afternoon, Joyce points me in the direction of the same boy. We were out-of-doors, outside, this time. He was writing the numbers in the snow. Tal Tluen [how do you say] one in Mi'gmaw?—I asked. How about two? Three? Four? Five? Later that afternoon, in one of our routines after-school conversations, Joyce tells me a story: I just asked a question, I was assessing, and I noticed a student that was not responding, or not sure, low self-esteem for some reason, something. And I decided to do it out-of-doors[2] and he did really well. So, I base my assessment and his mark on how he did out-of-doors as opposed to indoors. All the curriculum is done, could be done out-of-doors.[3]*

Throughout this narrative inquiry study, I [first author][4] worked closely with Joyce and Brenda, who are teachers working within a land-based Mi'gmaq speaking education program in Listuguj First Nation,[5] in northeastern Canada. In this study, we inquired into the experiences of these two kindergarten teachers. Thinking with narrative conceptions of knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) allowed us to attend to the temporality of Joyce and Brenda's stories, to pay attention to how their past stories shape their present stories, and, in turn, shape their imagined future stories. From a conceptual standpoint, it enabled us to see how their personal knowledge landscapes have become rooted in their professional knowledge

landscapes (Clandinin et al., 2014) and how this shapes their relational responsibility to their community, as well as how it sustains them as teachers.

Indigenous philosophies have been rooted in the agency of place, where "place teaches the intrinsic, life-supportive value of being together and facilitates dialogue and relationships across ontological divides" (Larsen & Johnson, 2017, p. 22). Education facilitated on the land is a way for people, specifically First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, to reestablish a connection to their identity and cultural heritage (Kovach, 2009; Simpson et al., 2012; Simpson, 2014; Haig- Brown & Hodson, 2009). Simpson (2014), a Mississauga Nishnaabe writer, advocates for teaching on the land, as it enables individuals to connect to landforms, plants, spirits, animals, sounds, feelings, thoughts, and energies in ecological networks. In fact, Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry scholar Kovach (2009) claimed that Indigenous peoples are "keepers of the land" (p. 57), as they maintain deep and storied interconnective relationships between people and place. For Styres et al. (2013), land is the first teacher and individuals' roles and responsibilities are acquired through intimate embodiment with land. Children are said to learn *from* and *with* the land where they come to use the "whole body intelligence practice in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals" (Simpson, 2014, p. 7). The bond made with land and place paves the way for children to be mentally and sensorially stimulated to learn from their experiences (Simpson et al. 2012; Simpson, 2014, Smith, 2002). Land-based education provides many other cultural benefits, including ways for teachers and children to reconnect with their language (Kovach, 2009; Wildcat, 2017; Metallic, 2017). In fact, according to Mi'gmaq scholar Metallic (2017), Indigenous languages are considered to be deeply connected with the natural world. Moreover, teachers reported that land-based education facilitated the incorporation of effective cultural, spiritual, and traditional ways of knowing. Examples of these ways of knowing included teaching through stories, teachings of the elders, arts and crafts, traditional dancing and ceremonies, and lessons derived from plants and animals (Wildcat et al., 2014; Archibald, 2008; Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002).

## Nipugtugewei Kindergarten

The land-based program was created by Joyce and Brenda in 2012 and is situated within Nipugtugewei Kindergarten in Listuguj First Nation. Students and teachers learn out-of-doors through discovery, dance, play, storytelling, and song, all in their Mi'gmaw language. While Nipugtugewei Kindergarten aligns with curriculum objectives, it is focused on conceptions of well-being, and centered on enabling teachers and students to connect with Mother Earth, as well as their unique culture and language. Because of the conceptualization and creation of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, the relationship between school and education for Joyce and Brenda evolved as they made spaces within the school landscape, spaces that can be both metaphorically and literally out-of-doors, spaces connecting them with their language and culture, with Mother Earth and with spaces of sustenance and relational responsibility.

## Conceptualizations of Teacher Knowledge and Practice

The implementation of curriculum rarely takes into account the knowledge teachers hold; instead, Clandinin (1985) explains that teachers are positioned to facilitate someone else's intentions in curriculum implementation. Greene (1995), in a similar vein, noted that teachers feel like a "chess piece or a cog or even an accomplice of some kind" (p. 98). As Clandinin et al. (2014) explain, teacher knowledge is not valued in the classroom; "[w]hat is valued is knowledge for teaching; the codified abstract knowledge of teaching that is often studied and taught to teachers" (p. 207). In addition, many authors have critiqued how mandated teacher education courses in Canada are built off of an industrialized Eurocentric model that is framed by Cartesian dualism, which separates not only the mind and body, but also knowledge from context (Sanford et al., 2015).

Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) highlight the dominance of knowledge *for* teachers in teacher education, such as the subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge and technical skills. Knowledge *for* teachers is knowledge that is considered as important knowledge for teachers to have; in this way "knowledge itself is considered an object, as something to possess or hold and that can be transferred to teachers" (p. 9). Knowledge *for* teachers, embedded in teacher education, is designed to prepare future teachers with the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be effective and successful teachers. Clandinin and Connelly (1995), drawing on narrative conceptions of knowledge, point us to the importance of personal practical knowledge. The failure to understand and value a teacher as holding personal knowledge helps to explain the limited effectiveness in curriculum implementation, in teacher retention and sustainability, and in teachers' commitments to students and the larger community.

## Knowledge as Personal and Practical (and Communal)

Clandinin (2013) has shown how knowledge is "personal, practical and expressed in practice" (p. 9). Connelly and Clandinin (1985) introduced the concept of personal practical knowledge, which emphasizes that practical knowledge places an emphasis on the teacher's knowing of a classroom by understanding knowledge as "imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362). Our personal practical knowledge is also shaped by familial, cultural, and institutional stories that live in us, and are lived in and on both personal and professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin et al., 2014). It is important to not only acknowledge teachers' knowledge, but also how Joyce and Brenda live out their personal practical knowledge. Their experiences are shaped by being Indigenous and living in an Indigenous community. It is shaped by their relational responsibility and commitments to community.

Clandinin et al. (2014) conceptualized a way to see how teachers have and continue to negotiate their stories to live by, rooted in a personal knowledge landscape. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) see in-school and out-of-school spaces as knowledge landscapes. This notion of landscapes includes relationships to places, people, situations and is always in the midst. The relationship between *personal and professional knowledge landscapes* offers a new way to teachers as individuals who possess a body of knowledge and express it within their lives and, in turn, through their teaching practices. As we think with Brenda and Joyce's experiences, alongside a narrative conception of knowledge, our intention is to

show how attending to teachers' personal practical knowledge on their professional knowledge landscape sustains who they are as teachers and people. It also is a way to live their responsibility to Indigenous communities and students.

## Situating the Study

> Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. [...] Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Over 30 years ago, Clandinin and Connelly (1990) wrote the first article that conceptualized narrative inquiry as both a methodology and a way of understanding experience narratively. Narrative inquirers often cite Dewey's (1938) pragmatic ontology as the philosophical underpinnings of their work. Part of this ontology denotes that experience is continuous, interactive, and happens within specific contexts. This work is based on the premise of Dewey's (1916; 1938) vision of education. Dewey believed that the experience of the student is the basis for learning, that the acquisition of knowledge comes from within the student and the teacher. In this study, there is a focus on how teachers' individual experiences and stories are shaped by the cultural, institutional, social, and historical narratives of the community. In other words, while there is a focused attention to individual lived experiences, there is also an understanding that these experiences took place within a complex and ever-shifting environment, a sociality, that was imbued with a multiplicity of stories and relationships.

The research design of narrative inquiry includes a commitment to create relationships with participants over time to hear how their stories unfolded over, and in, their lives. Spaces of narrative inquiry are attentive to what it means to live as a researcher in ethical relationships and in collaborative ways (Lessard et al., 2015). The diverse forms of field texts were interpreted alongside participants from within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with attention to temporality, the personal and social contexts, and place. As we listen to participants' stories, we also draw our attention to the importance of language, language that encompasses silences (Lessard et al., 2021).

### A Relational Negotiation: Meeting the Participants

In 2018, I [first author] was fortunate to be offered a teaching practicum in Listuguj, First Nation. This experience allowed me to meet Joyce and Brenda and learn about Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. I first met Joyce and Brenda on the yellow school bus that drove students and teachers to different out-of-door adventures. From the day that I was introduced to both Joyce and Brenda and my time in their program, I knew that our relationships would be special. I also knew that I was not ready to embark just yet on a teaching career, so I pursued graduate school and was invited to continue working alongside Joyce and Brenda for my research. I was introduced to narrative inquiry as a methodology and phenomenon of studying experience at the same time. Narrative inquiry enabled me, as a researcher, to build relationships with participants and to learn alongside each other in the telling and living of experiences.

From 2018 to 2020, I recorded conversations with Brenda and Joyce and also wrote diverse field notes of my time at the school and in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. These methods were negotiated with the community research ethics boards and with Joyce and Brenda.

### *Meeting Joyce*

I came to know Joyce as someone who loves children, and who is deeply connected to her culture and language. For Joyce, teaching is sharing her love and knowledge with others. In our conversations, Joyce often alludes to her childhood memories. Her stories are imbued with being engaged in the out-of-doors, in the community, on the land, and with her family. As she mentions, being in a small and close-knit community, everybody took care and looked out for each other. Being risk takers, climbing trees, going in the woods for long periods of time, exploring and playing where they wanted to was part of her ordinary life. It was part of who she was and how she lived within a collective, within a kinship.

Joyce has been teaching Mi'gmaw at the school for over 20 years as she is one of the most fluent speakers of her community. When Joyce spoke about how she was raised in Mi'gmaw, she had many specific and detailed memories of listening to her mother's and grandmother's stories. Storytelling, as Joyce remembers from her childhood, was part of how she was taught, as well as how she teaches today.

Joyce's early beginnings as a student included stories of attending Indian Day School,[6] of being punished and reprimanded for speaking her language and practicing her culture, of learning within a specific type of knowledge, within timelines, within walls that attempted to erase her personal knowledge landscape. It is visible how these experiences have shaped Joyce.

> *My vision was to go to school and come back and help my people. What I didn't get—that support—I just felt that it's so needed here. Support in their ways of learning. To help people understand that native people have different ways of learning. Rather than paper and pencil and English language and writing. I had a vision; it was my vision. (Joyce, conversation)*

Attending to how these experiences have shaped her present teaching practices helps me to better understand who Joyce is as a teacher and why she is drawn to teach out-of-doors.

> *I felt it in myself as a child and I may be wrong that it shouldn't be, our Native People, themselves intergenerational, the genetics and everything, we were never*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *taught in the four walls. Our great, great grandparents taught our children by modeling or storytelling or just actually being out-of-doors in a relaxed atmosphere to open up their doors through and for knowledge. (Joyce, conversation)*

Thinking temporally with Joyce's childhood stories, the Mi'gmaq ways of learning were out-of-doors, intertwined with experiences, intergenerational stories, and modeling; all parts of who she was and how she lived in her community.

### *Meeting Brenda*

Brenda grew up in Windsor, a city in southwestern Ontario, on the south bank of the Detroit River. As a child, Brenda remembers "bike riding, roller blading, just hanging out at the waterfront, which is always in the woods, and then, every single chance we got we came to Listuguj." Actually, Brenda's parents brought her and her sisters to Listuguj every Spring, Christmas, and during summer breaks. Based on what Brenda shares from her time in Listuguj, it is clear that she was learning a great deal by immersing herself in this place, alongside her family, and especially her grandparents. Brenda refers to this place as a sanctuary—a sacred place.

> *I don't put pressure on myself. I don't have an expectation of myself. I just know, and I know this, that I'm just going to continue. So, if I'm 80 years old, I'm going to learn. I'm going to know much more than I do now, which is cool. I'm not learning it for myself. I'm learning it as they say you do things for seven generations behind you [...] or in front of me. As long as there's still that spark, it's worth it for me. (Brenda, conversation)*

Brenda has been teaching for over 15 years. She has been fortunate enough to be a part of a few curriculum-building projects. She was also teaching kindergarten and found that most of her day was spent trying to control the behavior of her class and a small amount of time was set aside for learning. Brenda was motivated to create a program that would nurture the well-being of her students and connect them (and herself) to culture and language. Brenda joined forces with her aunt, Joyce, and each year they develop different aspects of the program. Each year they focus more and more on mental health, language learning, and cultural traditions.

## Turning Towards Narrative Threads

In the process of moving from field texts to interim texts, I drafted narrative accounts for each participant and subsequently identified narrative threads. Narrative accounts are reflective of individual participants' experiences within the three-dimensional inquiry space; some of these accounts are written as found poems.[7] In collaborative dialogues with participants, I read each narrative account to discern resonant threads that reverberated across accounts. In this paper, we reflect on two resonant threads: Understanding school as an educative place, which looks at the importance of fostering individuals' interests and strengths in this out-of-doors kindergarten program and considering personal practical knowledge as key to community making.

## Understanding School as an Educative Place

You're sitting,<br>erasing,<br>erasing,<br>erasing,<br>this kid<br>Everybody's writing is unique<br>*Why take that away from children?*

I was younger<br>I had the strap,<br>that nun standing beside me<br>trying to wack my hand<br>to make sure<br>I wrote—right

it's my personality<br>how I saw my name<br>how I write

*What are they doing to these poor kids?*

Not all kids are<br>the same<br>at all<br>*you shouldn't be*<br>(Joyce, conversation)

From my time in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten I was attentive to temporality in both Brenda and Joyce's teaching stories; how their past stories have shaped their present and future imagined stories of teaching. I sensed tensions between what they alluded to as *in*-and *out*-of-classroom spaces. These tensions seemed focused around how the in-door classroom is set up and who gets to decide what is included in the curriculum. Specifically, Joyce and Brenda grappled with what knowledge is important to learn as well as when and how this knowledge should be acquired.

> *Ages are so varied. Nobody's going to go back and ask my son, when did you learn to write your name? Kindergarten? Grade one? Grade two? Nobody's going to care. But he's going to care if he feels the pressure of not being able to write it in kindergarten, not being able to write it in Grade one… (Brenda, conversation)*

Although metaphorically and practically Brenda alluded to resisting this pressure when she was a child, she recognizes how some students, like her son, struggle to negotiate the inflexible rigid structures of the four-wall class/room.

In addition, Brenda feels as if her role as a teacher, forced upon her, is to train her students on "*how to take a test as opposed to find out what they're good at or excel in.*" Joyce also shares many stories of dis/ease with what she is demanding from her students and asking herself: *What are they doing to these children?* Joyce travels back to her own school stories to question her positioning as a teacher. These

stories, Joyce's, and Brenda's, encompass a continuing search for intellectual freedom, as well as articulation and expression (Greene, 1995).

Creating a land-based program, shifting the place and space of *school*, allowed Joyce and Brenda to negotiate the inflexible in-school structures, the structures that value standards and timelines of learning, such as how one should write their name, in a certain way, before starting grade one. Brenda speaks to this below:

> *We're not saying that our students in kindergarten are outshining other kindergarten students. We're not pressuring them to learn it in kindergarten. It comes more naturally. They're going to be more at ease about learning. If they learn something at the end of kindergarten or even grade one, at least they didn't have all that pent-up anxiety about learning it in a certain timeframe.*

As Brenda articulates, shift from in-door to out-of-doors is not just a shift of place, but a shift of structure which has allowed her and Joyce to illuminate how children are learning differently. The space that is created out-of-doors meets students where they are and enables a freedom to explore and experience. In fact, understanding this program as an educative place (Dewey, 1916; 1938) helps to explain why it is important for Brenda and Joyce to have students use their own voice as they experience hands-on learning opportunities. Dewey (1938) believed that experiences are educative when they are connected with past and current interactions and lead to further opportunities for growth without bounds. This is a place, a knowledge landscape, that bumps with the in-door school mainstream and, in turn, fosters unique ways of living, learning, and teaching.

*In-Doors*
*always feel*
*this standard*
*to live up to*
*get these kids writing their names*
*get these kids doing this*
*this element of pressure*

*Out-of-Doors*
*way better –*
*Everybody has their space*
*to be—*
*alone*
*destress*
*play around*
*be loud*
(Brenda, conversation)

Out-of-doors, Brenda and Joyce have found a learning landscape that allows students to be themselves without imposed physical and institutional barriers. The teaching evolves depending on students' interests and abilities. What is important for teachers is to build trust with children, as Brenda explains: *you know where they come from, you know where they're finishing. You have checkpoints, you discuss with everybody that's around that child. You ask questions.* The educative place created is based on

understanding where the student is in their development to foster a meaningful and individualized learning path.

> Joyce: *Every one of them has different strengths. I noticed some strengths in all of them. This boy, maybe a cry-baby, but he likes taking things apart and putting them together and working with small little things . . .*
>
> Brenda: *So, it's either we can help him with that and discover his strengths in that so he can get a job that he loves, or we can tell him that, no, it's not good enough, you're not good enough, you're not good enough, you're not good enough, he will grow up thinking, he is not good for anything.*

The out-of-doors space acts as an educative landscape that moves from standardizations, from seeing small, towards seeing students in the midst of what is happening, amid their lives, towards seeing big—and, in turn, towards seeing *otherwise* (Greene, 1995). Joyce and Brenda are creating opportunities to imagine other ways of knowing and learning. *The role of the educator is to say*, as Brenda explains:

*let's try this.*<br>
*let's try this,*<br>
*expose you to this,*<br>
*expose you to this,*<br>
*figure it out*<br>
*what are we going to know?*<br>
*what are you good at?*<br>
*what are you going to be?*<br>
*And you find something they're good*<br>
*out of all these things*

The out-of-doors landscape is the venue that they found and connected with, when they were children growing up in the community. For Joyce, being immersed out-of-doors, learning her language with the land, taking care of her small and close-knit community are memories that she brings to her out-of-doors class/room. Indeed, this program enhances a curriculum that is cocreated between teachers and students centered around exposing students to all sorts of different learning opportunities to allow them to discover what they enjoy doing and learning.

## Considering Personal Practical Knowledge key to Community Making

*I'm learning along*<br>
*I'm teaching them*<br>
*I'm teaching myself*<br>
*to pass on*

*Waterfall—*<br>
*how do you say that?*

*At school*<br>
*within the four-walls*<br>
*never had the opportunity*<br>
*to come up*

*out-of-doors*
*I go to my father*
*he'd say it—*
*it comes back*

*a word*
*I never heard*
*I would go to him*
*he would give me*
*the words*
(Joyce, conversation)

Reflecting on Joyce's experiences as codeveloper and teacher in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, it is evident that she is able to co-compose a landscape that welcomes and sustains her stories to live by and her personal practical knowledge; knowledge that is personal, practical, and expressed through her teaching practice (Clandinin, 2013). Joyce's stories of school bump with her stories of education. Her stories of learning include growing up in Listuguj First Nation, her parents and grandparents' cultural teachings infused with a language connected to place. These teachings, intertwined with the freedom of getting lost in the woods and learning about the land, shape her personal practical knowledge, which, in turn, shape her identity as a teacher and her positionality in the community. Joyce recalls:

> *We learn from and through play. It was so natural to be outside all the time. In winter, as cold as it is, we were out-of-doors because we chose to go out-of-doors. Parents would feed other children in the neighborhood. They would give them water and let them use bathrooms. Let them play. They were all welcome. There was a neighbor, my brother hung out with, just down the highway in a corner and this woman just baked all the time. And as soon as the kids smelled them, from a foot distance away, they would smell the donuts being deep fried. All the neighborhood kids just go and then she would give them out.*

Teaching as a relational responsibility was shaped in her childhood. This way of teaching is different from being in an in-door class/room, where the teacher is focused on specific, individual, and oftentimes narrow outcomes that dismiss students' lives, cultures, and languages. For Joyce, sharing the Mi'gmaw language with her students is her passion. As Joyce mentions: *It's not only the curriculum but the language I want to know if they have an understanding. I'll talk to them and sometimes they're more comfortable outside than indoors with responding to language*. Teaching, imbued with their personal knowledge landscapes, what they know and have learned outside of and in their community, is how Joyce and Brenda are finding ways to express their stories to live by within the program. They have noticed that when they teach out-of-doors, they enjoy themselves and as Brenda says, *if teachers are enjoying themselves, the kids are going to enjoy learning*. For Brenda, being immersed in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten has sparked her interest to learn Mi'gmaw.

Melissa: *Nipugtugewei Kindergarten enabled you to learn the language?*

Brenda: *Yeah, it made me believe that it's possible. It's not as hard as I thought...Ms. Joyce was the teacher, but the out-of-doors was the venue. Just seemed like everything fell into place and I was able to express myself in a safe place being outside, and it's easier for me to teach the language outside as well because the kids are interested in anything that we have to say or do…*

Because of her experience teaching out-of-doors, Brenda has enrolled in a Mi'gmaw language learner program in her community, a space where she continues to learn as a way to not only model for her students, but to also become more versed in her language. By staying in-doors, Brenda mentions that she would not have tried to learn the language alongside her students and explains that, "*it is an institution, and they expect you to come prepared and with proper grammar. Outside, I was just free to make mistakes. Inside, I would never have tried."* Learning language in a safe environment, with the land, is how Joyce and Brenda imagine this professional knowledge landscape, a landscape that is situated amidst the community.

## Discussion

This research is an inquiry into the lived experiences of two teachers who created an out-of-doors Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program within their Indigenous community. Attending to Brenda and Joyce's personal and professional knowledge landscapes was pivotal to understanding their stories to live by and their imagined stories of teaching. It is their personal knowledge landscape that has strengthened a deep sense of relational responsibility and commitment to Listuguj First Nation. We learned that they co-composed a knowledge landscape that nurtured what Dewey (1916; 1938) referred to as an educative space. According to Dewey (1938), educative spaces are connected with past and current interactions, which lead to further opportunities for growth. Joyce and Brenda created a program which focuses on who their students are and are becoming while facilitating Mi'gmaq ways of learning and teaching by understanding land as pedagogy. Indeed, teaching out-of-doors for Joyce and Brenda moved beyond our current understanding of land-based education. Their teachings were situated in place; it is where their language and other ways of knowing are grounded. Brenda and Joyce show us how they created an educative space that reestablishes a connection to their identity and cultural heritage, grounded in Indigenous philosophies (Kovach, 2009; Simpson et al., 2012; Simpson, 2014; Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009). Narratively inquiring into Brenda and Joyce's experiences allowed us to understand how deeply rooted their experiences were in social and community contexts, in the agency of place (Larsen & Johnson, 2017).

Brenda and Joyce were able to promote diversity in students' ways of learning because they engaged with an out-of-doors landscape. This understanding supported the literature around land-based education and Indigenous ways of knowing. Even though Indigenous groups and their worldviews are diverse and cannot be addressed homogenously, there nonetheless remains a strong significance across Indigenous knowledge systems on the holistic connection with land (Hart, 2010; Norman et al., 2018; Wildcat, 2017). Connections made through land are the basis for Indigenous knowledge systems, which were said to also be "generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice on land and within each

family, community generation of people" (Simpson, 2014, p. 7). Indigenous pedagogies are based on several features that are distinct to mainstream pedagogies. According to Blackfoot researcher Little Bear (2009), these features include "styles, manner of delivery, materials utilized, and the teacher's cultural background" (p. 19). Indigenous pedagogies are also concerned for "community/collective well-being, experiential learning, and holistic learning" (Metallic, 2017, p. 36). By valuing Indigenous pedagogies, Battiste (2013) argues that the individual is thus encouraged to "learn independently by observing, listening, and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction" (p. 15). From stories that both Brenda and Joyce shared with me, and with observations of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, it becomes clear that this program fosters other ways of learning, moving away from the rigid indoor colonial school structures.

How Joyce and Brenda learned during their childhood, their personal knowledge landscape, continues to influence the ways they teach and live. Learning from experiences, where both teachers and students find themselves in a collaborative search for knowledge, is what is happening in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. Recognizing the importance of Joyce and Brenda's personal practical knowledge provided insights into their stories to live by as they negotiate who they are on the professional knowledge landscape. Being able to draw on their personal knowledge landscape, including their practices and knowledge of culture, language and place has shaped their personal practical knowledge and, in turn, helps them pay particular attention to the individuality and diversity of their students' lives. They live in relational ways with students and, as a result, are sustained in their teaching. This has reinforced their understanding that their personal practical knowledge is also imbued with a sense of responsibility to community. Joyce and Brenda have found a teaching landscape of sustenance; it is critical to understand that the out-of-doors is not just another classroom space for Joyce and Brenda. It indeed is a place that values lived experiences, allows space for their personal practical knowledge, and is a place that holds their commitment and responsibility to community.

## Turning Towards Implications

Brenda and Joyce raised many wonders for us. We wonder: how do we design curricula that enable teachers to bring forward their personal practical knowledge into their professional knowledge landscape? Working with narrative conceptions of knowledge, we see the importance of encouraging preservice teachers and teachers to inquire into the knowledge they live and embody over time, paying close attention to their stories to live by. We understand the importance of creating spaces that allow teachers to negotiate their personal practical knowledge and their stories to live by alongside their professional knowledge landscape.

Brenda and Joyce have helped us to understand the importance of creating spaces that allow teachers to narratively inquire into their stories to live by, that is, who they are and are becoming (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010; Estola et al., 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Uitto et al., 2018). We wonder how we might attend to the personal practical knowledge in teacher education programs. As teacher educators, how do we assist preservice teachers to become attuned to their stories to live by? Can we sustain learners, teachers, and the education system as a whole, when teachers

become mindful of their personal practical knowledge in their professional knowledge landscape? Brenda and Joyce have found the out-of-doors as a place that works for them. By allowing them to present their personal knowledge landscape and their stories to live by, we began to see stories of sustenance and power.

As we travel backwards to the story at the beginning of this paper, Nipugtugewei Kindergarten allowed children to find their language. "It becomes all the more important that they tap the full range of human intelligence" as Greene (1995, p. 57) believed. Part of the role of the educator is to enable students "to have a number of languages to hand, and not verbal or mathematical languages alone. Some children may find articulation through imagery; others, through body movements; still others, through musical sound" (p. 57). By being out-of-doors, Joyce and Brenda supported children to find a *language* they can use. As seen in one of the shared stories: He [the boy in the story shared] can interpret what he sees and experiences; he can question; he can imagine. As Greene (1995) articulates: "[t]o call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise" (p. 19). Greene (1995) draws me to imagine the stories to live by of teachers and inquirers working alongside Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, conceptualizing our co-composed and renewed stories as *otherwise*. Nipugtugewei Kindergarten is Joyce, Brenda, the students, and the community's venue to move beyond the curricular content, the narrow assessments guidelines, and the prescribed timelines. "To understand how children themselves reach out for meanings, go beyond conventional limits (once the doors are ajar), seek coherence and explanations," as Greene (1995) noted, "is to be better able to provoke and release rather than to impose and control" (p. 57). Metaphorically and practically, the teachers of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten have found ways to resist this pressure, by traveling in-and-out of different knowledge landscapes, and imagining their future stories of how education, learning, and teaching could be *otherwise* (Greene, 1995).

## Conclusion

By living alongside Joyce and Brenda, it became evident that there is importance to attending to individuals' stories to live by and their personal practical knowledge. We began to understand that by inquiring into their stories to live by, Brenda and Joyce found educative spaces within school which were metaphorically and literally out-of-doors. These educative spaces, for them, were connected to community and relational responsibility, to language, to culture, all of which are rooted in land. This narrative inquiry leads to many future directions for teachers, future teachers, and teacher educators. In our work, we see the importance of imagining different ways of engaging preservice teachers in thinking about their own personal practical knowledge and the spaces and places, knowledge landscapes, that might sustain their unique personal, practical, and professional knowledge—to conceptualize what could be *otherwise* (Clandinin, 2013; Greene, 1995)

## Notes

1. Mi'gmaw is an Eastern Algonquian language spoken by nearly 11,000 people in Canada and the United States.

2. Out-of-doors is a term used in this paper to describe a place in the absence of metaphorical walls, somewhere with infinite possibilities, without restraint and pressure. We define outdoor in the literal sense, being in nature, on land. We decided to use the term out-of-doors to represent the participants' quotes as a way to describe this metaphorical space and place.

3. All italicized text are words spoken by participants, which were recorded between September 2018 and August 2020, or field notes written by the first author. The REB 2 reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (REB File #: 152-0919).

4. "I" refers to the first author, who undertook this study as a graduate student at McGill University in the Faculty of Education. Author 1 was a student teacher in Listuguj First Nation when she met Joyce and Brenda in their Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program. Author 2 and Author 3 were part of the committee overseeing this study. All three authors see ourselves as allies of Indigenous peoples. We have a long-term commitment to Indigenous communities and have worked with different Indigenous groups for an extensive amount of time.

5. Listuguj First Nation is in Gespe'gewa'gi (the Last Land), the seventh and largest district of Mi'gma'gi. Gespe'gewa'gi has been Mi'gmaq and Listugujewaq traditional territory since time immemorial. It includes what is now known as the Gaspé Peninsula, parts of mainland Quebec and Maine, and northeastern New Brunswick.

6. Historically, Indian Day Schools were built by the Federal Government of Canada in order to control First Nations, Inuit, and Métis education. Children who attended Indian Day Schools, as its name implies, were permitted to retain their cultural identity through daily contact with their family and community. However, these Day Schools were built to suppress Indigenous languages and culture. The forced Indian Day School in Listuguj opened its establishment before 1864, a school operated by Catholic priests and nuns.

7. Found poetry was used by taking words from Joyce and Brenda to reframe them to be evocative and make their stories more accessible to diverse audiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

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