

**THE EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL, OUTDOOR,
AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATORS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH**

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of an exceptional subset of environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators. This study sought to understand how and why their experiences were most significant for their understanding and relationships with nature and led to their lifelong commitment and development of a career in the field of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education. Participants of this study consisted of environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators within Canada. Data was collected through two sixty to ninety-minute semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed using an inductive process according to the narrative analysis and analysis of narrative approach outlined by Polkinghorne (1995). A deductive approach was also used to apply the place-based education design principles (Sobel, 2008) to the study findings. The participant narratives have been re-storied to emphasize their experiences and perspectives that align with the overall study intent. Themes pertaining to each narrative have been identified, and represent the expressions, understanding and memories of participants in relation to the research questions. In the discussion section, key findings that emerged across all participant narratives are detailed in connection to the research questions, literature, and place-based education design principles (Sobel, 2018). There are implications and considerations for educators from this study, and this research adds to scholarship in the field of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education through the stories of seven exceptional educators.

Key terms: Nature, Human-nature relationships, Narrative

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Glossary of Terms

Nature

In the context of this study, nature is understood as all earthly phenomena excluding man-made materials that human is a part of. Within this study, you will find that participants reference more-than-human, non-human, environment, and natural world, which are their interpretation of the term “nature.” Despite the implication of the word nature to separate human from earthly phenomena this research study chose to use the term for its accessibility with a wider audience. I refrained from using less frequently used words such as “other-than-human” and “more-than-human” that people may not have an association with.

Human-Nature Relationships

Human-nature relationships in the context of this study is understood as the perceived closeness between human and nature. This study also acknowledges that there is not one singular relationship with nature, and a relationship is influenced by factors, including privilege, culture, and place. The phrase “human-nature relationship” may imply separation between human and nature for some people. I chose this phrase for its accessibility and frequency in literature. I acknowledge the implication of phrase, and the need to find a more inclusive term.

Narrative

As a method, narrative originates in individual experiences as expressed through the lived and told stories of people within specific situations and places (Clandinin, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narratives are personal accounts of everyday life that arise from imagination, lived experiences, and oral and written accounts of the past, present, and future (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this research, narrative provides space for sharing both the meaning that is generated from accounts of experience within, and between individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Chapter 1—Introduction

Rational

My earliest memories as a child are those involving my interaction with nature. I credit much of these memories to my mother's mother, Gran. When I was an infant, my mother returned to her career soon after she gave birth to me, and my father, a police officer, worked sporadic hours. My Gran took on the responsibility of providing me with childcare out of her home in the charming South Bay of Prince Edward County. The land spans both sides of the country road, totaling to sixty acres. On the left side are a barn, greenhouse, farmhouse, and an orchard leading down to lakefront. Densely lined trees running up from the lake and to the road's edge shelter this part of the land. On the other side of the road are two fields, a pond, and a laneway through a forest. South Bay was, and still is, my favourite place.

When my Gran stepped in to care for me, I would have been under a year old. I only have her words and photographs to piece together this part of my life story. Gran has told me that she would swaddle me in a blanket, place me in a 1940's Welsh baby pram, and wheel me or around the land as she moved from one outdoor chore to another. While my Gran tended to her garden, I was often parked in a nearby spot where I spent countless hours staring above at sky and watching the branches of the trees move in the wind. Nature was my TV screen; a movie playing before my eyes. I listened to the music of birds, the crash of waves on the shore and the buzzing of insects around me. My senses were activated, my imagination was sparked, my curiosity and wonder for nature was ignited.

As I grew older, my Gran was not only my caregiver, but also a mentor in nurturing my environmental ethic and relationship to nature. Her teaching continued from daycare to afterschool care, and weekend visits. I could write a book on all the lessons in nature that I was gifted from my Gran, and I doubt that would do her teachings justice. However, most notably,

the way Gran communicated about nature has been most impactful for me. Gran and I would stroll along the trees that lined the land, stopping to admire and embrace each one. I listened as she told me stories of “how the trees, and all living beings feel just as humans do.”

The living beings of nature were my Gran's friends, and they became mine too. The premise of my Gran's teachings being that just as you treat your friends with “love” and “kindness,” you must do the same with nature. Gran put to action this ethic in many ways like suddenly stopping her vehicle on the side of the road to collect litter from the ditches. Each instance was accompanied with a conversation on how “the Earth hurts when we cause harm to its body.”

From primary to post-secondary education, I have and continue to carry the perspective of nature that I was gifted from my Gran. In my primary school years, I was the student who told the teacher on the kids who littered on the playground. My elementary wardrobe consisted of Roots t-shirts that had various environmental slogans across it such as “stop global warming.” For my expressions I was called a “tree hugger” as though it was an “insult,” but little did my fellow classmates know that I was proud of it.

Throughout my life I have put to action the lessons learned from my Gran— an elementary school speech on Al Gore's *the Inconvenient Truth*, piloting a composting club at my school, peaceful protest of the unethical captivity conditions of lobsters in produce markets in my hometown, working on a farm and rescuing newborn piglets from their fate, and running my own beeswax wrap business that allows me to attend community functions to educate others. In my undergraduate degree I took an environmental ethics course that pushed my thinking on how humans understand our relationship with nature.

During the Bachelor of Education program at Queen's University I had the opportunity to take a yearlong environmental education course. This course was my introduction into the fields of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education. Although I had never formally engaged in this kind of education in my own schooling much of the lessons that I learned from my Gran aligned with field. It was in this university course that I was able to fuse my passion, admiration, and appreciation for nature, and my interest in educating others on that same path. I gained a wider understanding of human-nature relationships, and how important it is for the health of humans and Earth to create opportunities for our students to develop a relationship. In my professional opinion, environmental, outdoor, and experiential education is the most important kind of education.

Teaching led me to question how human-nature relationships are differentially understood, and what experiences others found to be most significant in shaping their understanding and relationship with nature. Consequently, I became increasingly curious at what experiences some adults remember to be significant in shaping their understandings and relationship to nature in their early years, and the influence of those experiences throughout their lives. I chose to focus on a subset of exceptional environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators because their unique experiences, dedication, and accomplishments are worthy of honoring their opinions on the research topic. I wanted to know how these educators understand human-nature relationships, and how their own relationship informs their education efforts. I am motivated to provide the same kind of mentorship to my future students that I received from mt Gran, but I realize that supporting diverse students requires a broader understanding that is beyond my upbringing. These burgeoning questions, and curiosity, led me to graduate studies.

I was privileged in my upbringing especially to have received wonderful mentorship from my Gran that has shaped my own understanding and relationship with nature. I realize that having a relationship with nature is not universally accessible for students, and is dependent on factors, including a person's place, beliefs, privilege, culture, and situations. My own understanding has and continues to be shaped by whiteness, privilege and the opportunities that have come from my position. I hope to use my privilege to meaningfully contribute to the field of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education.

I chose to conduct this research to explore the stories of exceptional environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators who have an understanding and relationship with nature and have demonstrated unique efforts in the fields of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education. I hope that this research will contribute to education practices by providing insight on some of the experiences and practices that have worked for these educators to nurture a relationship with nature for themselves, and others.

Research Problem

The United Nations Sustainable Development goal states, "There is no country that is not experiencing the drastic effects of climate change" (United Nations, n.d.). Greenhouse gas emissions have increased globally over fifty percent in the last thirty years (United Nations, n.d.). The impact of geo-physical disasters is considered "91 percent climate related" and will have disastrous consequences globally (United Nations, n.d.). Research has explored the connection between human-nature relationships and environmental concerns (Nisbet et al., 2009; Howard, 1997; Schultz, Shriver, Tabanico, & Khazian, 2004). The extinction of species, loss of biodiversity, rising sea levels, deforestation, pollution of land and waters, and climate change are considered evidence of a troubled human-nature relationship—repercussions of the way some

people continue to extrapolate, abuse, and pollute Earth. Further insight into human-nature relationships, and the experiences that shape perspectives of nature is considered one way to avoid further environmental degradation (Nisbet et al., 2009).

In the Ontario education system environmental education is used to promote an appreciation, understanding of, and concern for nature (Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future, 2007, p. 6). However, according to the Ministry of Education, “environmental education is implemented unevenly across the province” (Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future, 2007, p. 7). While initiatives in environmental education do exist, “there is no comprehensive policy that would signal the importance of environmental education, guide the investments necessary for further development, and provide concrete accountability measures” (Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future, 2007, p. 7). As a result, environmental education receives limited visibility within the education system resulting in scarce professional development opportunities for teachers, resources, and incentives to gain the skills necessary for teaching content (Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future, 2007, p. 7). Consequently, some educators “lack the knowledge, skills, and background in perspectives to teaching environmental education effectively” (Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future, 2007, p. 7).

Scholar David Orr (1994) considers the environmental crisis as not a problem “*in* education,” but rather, “a problem *of* education” (p. 17). The limited access to environmental education is one factor of this multi-dimensional problem within education. The education system as an institution has a significant impact on the minds of people globally; “Today’s students will shape the world of tomorrow” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 7). The education system could be a vital tool in bring awareness to humans-nature relationships through explicitly valuing and acknowledging relationships in its processes through education initiatives

such as environmental, outdoor, and experiential education programming for students and teachers.

Research has shown that outdoor and environmental education has a lasting long-term impact on people’s mindset (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020; Tanner, 1980; Chawla 1998) including a “change in perspective and feelings about human-nature relationships” (Nisbet et al., 2009, p. 735; Feral, 1998; Kaplan, 1995, Kaplan & Talbot, 1983). Significant life experience research of children, environmental activists, and educators has explored the formative influences that have shaped a person’s engagement, concern, and knowledge of nature (Arnold et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2014; Duerden & Witt, 2010; Nazir & Pedretti, 2016; Howell & Allen, 2019; Cagle, 2016; Torkar, 2012; Corcaran, 1999). The findings indicate a range of influences including family, mentorship, outdoor and environmental education, and time spent outdoors (Arnold et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2014; Duerden & Witt, 2010; Howell & Allen, 2019; Nazir & Pedretti, 2016; Torkar, 2012; Corcaran, 1999). However, Liu and Lin (2013) indicate a gap in influential formative experiences research; “few studies have directed their attention to how people perceive, experience and understand nature and human–nature relationships, especially in the field of environmental education” (p. 413).

In consideration of the limited visibility of environmental education within the education system, the urgency of the climate crisis, and the research gap identified by Liu and Lin (2013) led me to conduct this research. I chose to share the experiences of a small subset of exceptional environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators who are knowledge keepers—people in the education system who may be able to provide insight on perspectives and relationships to nature from their range of personal experiences and education practice. The unique contributions of these dedicated and exceptional educators led to the honoring of their opinions in this research

study and mobilizing to a wider audience. I have selected these educators with the intention that their expertise and life experiences may stand as inspiration for others regarding nature in the realm of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of an exceptional subset of environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators. I sought to understand how and why their experiences were most significant for their understanding and relationships with nature and led to their lifelong commitment and development of a career in the field of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guides this study is:

What are the experiences and understandings that influence exceptional outdoor, experiential, and environmental educators regarding nature?

This study was also driven by three sub questions:

- 1) What experiences have shaped participants' perception and understanding of nature?
- 2) How do participants understand human-nature relationships?
- 3) How have participants experiences with nature influenced their environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts?

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that underlie this study. Firstly, I assume that the methodology of narrative inquiry is the best possible method to carry out this study. Considering that this research aims to share the lived and told stories of participants, narrative is believed to

be the most appropriate methodology as it is selected when there is a need to explore the lives of people.

Secondly, Creswell and Poth (2018) describe epistemological assumptions as “the researcher tries to get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (p. 21). Subjective evidence is gathered from individual interviews as knowledge is understood “through the subjective experiences of people” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). I assume that the participants can provide answers to the research questions, and that their experiences are only a small subset of perspectives regarding human-nature relationship. The experiences and perspectives of participants are influenced by their situations, dedication, opportunities, and privilege.

Thirdly, axiological assumption is the way in which the researcher “positions themselves by recognising their positionality to the context of the research” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). I assume that I bring to this study my own biases and whiteness on the content which varies to that of my participants and audience. My opportunities, experiences, and knowledge in relation to the research topic are informed by my privilege and whiteness. I acknowledge that my social position and experiences are different than others in relation to the phenomena of study.

A fourth assumptions of this study is that an absence of an understanding and relationship to nature is considered negative. I assume that human-nature relationships vary in their meaning and understanding and are not widely accessible. I acknowledge that not all people have access to opportunities and resources that are considered important by participants for fostering human-nature relationships. Some of my personal experiences shared and those of my participants are associated with privilege and whiteness. I acknowledge that the content of this study is not universally accessible.

Lastly, there is an assumption within this study that there is one kind of human-nature relationship that is universally felt. I acknowledge that human-nature relationships hold different meaning for each person. There is not a singular kind of human-nature relationship, and it is dependent on several factors, including privilege, religion, language, place, and culture. The experiences of this study's participants are not universally accessible, and there is not one single route to a human-nature relationship. The narratives of participants are to be received as inspiration however I assume that not everyone will have access to similar opportunities that the participants of this research study had.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. In the first chapter I have situated myself as a researcher, expressed the rational, research problem, study purpose, research questions that are guiding this study, and the underlying assumptions. In chapter two, I share the relevant literature and empirical research studies to position this current study. In chapter three, I discuss methodology. Chapter four presents seven individual narratives and an explicit analysis of each participant narrative. Lastly, in chapter five, I communicate the key findings of this research study in connection to the research questions, literature, and theoretical framework. I also discuss the significant contributions of this study, the limitations, and implications. From hereafter environmental, outdoor, and experiential will be abbreviated to EOE educator or education.

Chapter Two—Literature Review

A range of empirical studies have explored how life experiences inform the beliefs, relationships, and behaviour of people regarding nature. Some of this literature focuses on the perspective of youth whereas other sources examine the formative influences of adults. Furthermore, research into life experiences has also focused on groups of people, including environmentalists, activists, and educators. The intention behind focusing on people who are considered to have positive relationships and perspectives of nature is that their formative and influential experiences may provide insight for others. The purpose of this literature review is to summarize the existing research to situate and provide context for the present study and identifies relationships among the studies and reveals research gaps.

The literature review is divided into four sections. The first section explores formative life experiences regarding nature from the perspective of youth. The following section looks at influential life experiences from the perspective of environmental and outdoor educators. These discussions lead to several sources that explore significant life experiences as informing environmental knowledge, awareness attitudes and behaviour. Lastly, the final section looks at how life experiences inform perspectives on human-nature relationships. This literature review aims to answer the question: What has empirical research to date told us about how life experience informs the beliefs of environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators regarding nature?

Formative Life Experiences—Youth Perspective

The participants in the following studies are youth, including young environmental activists (Arnold et al., 2009), middle-aged students (Stevenson et al., 2014), and high school students (Duerden & Witt, 2010). Empirical research has shown that childhood is a critical

period is shaping perspectives of nature (Howell & Allen, 2019; Torkar, 2012; Corcoran, 1999; Cagle, 2016; Palmer & Suggate, 1996). Therefore, gaining the outlook of youth who are living in this critical stage of development provides valuable insight on the research phenomenon.

Researchers Arnold, Cohen, and Warner (2009) explore the influences of young environmental activists and what they believe motivated them to engage in environmental action. Using qualitative methodology, the researchers conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with twelve youth (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009). The criteria for recruitment included: “positive environmental attitudes, behavior, initiative, and involvement in multiple spheres of action” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 27). The first overarching interview question asked participants to “tell the story of why and how [they] became involved in environmental action” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 30). All youth provided formative influences from their childhood, and all except one participant mentioned a “specific transformational person or set of experiences in adolescence that was key to setting them on the path to environmental leadership” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 30). The findings indicated that their environmental action was influenced by “parents, experiences outdoors in childhood, friends, role models, teachers, and youth groups and conferences or gatherings” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 27). All participants mentioned significant experiences in nature, however “they were not always through unstructured play as a young child” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 34). For some participants, “participation in structured outdoor camp or trip experiences in later childhood were seen as most important” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 34). The findings affirm the importance of experiential education programming, especially when there has been an absence of nature place early on in a child’s life (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 34). The researchers state, “In every case, the participant’s relations with other passionate and influential people

combined uniquely with powerful experiences as the key to becoming a young environmental leader” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 33). In all cases “parents were formative for all participants, not as teachers but as supporters, role models, and encouragers,” however having supportive parents was “consistently present, but this factor was not sufficient to translate interest and values into action.” (Arnold, Cohen & Warner, 2009, p. 33).

Stevenson and colleagues (2014) sought to build on qualitative research into significant life experiences that premises on the idea that “role models, time outdoors, and nature-related media foster pro-environmental behavior” (p. 163). Using quantitative methodology, the researchers randomly sampled middle school aged students (grade six and eight) in the United States of America (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 163). The findings indicated “a limited positive association between presence of a role model and time outdoors with behavior and a negative association between watching nature television and environmental knowledge” (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 163). Accordingly, “the strongest predictors of environmental knowledge and behavior were student/teacher ratio and country income levels” (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 163). Time outdoors alone or with family were “weak positive predictors of pro-environmental behavior,” and time spent outdoors with a group was “a weak positive predictor of environmental knowledge” (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 168). The data revealed that “having an adult role model for environmental sensitivity was only weakly related to pro-environmental behavior” (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 168). Regarding participant demographics, the data revealed that “Native Americans engaged in environmental behaviors more than Caucasians, and that African American and Hispanic students had lower levels of environmental knowledge” (Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 163). Consequently, focusing on issues associated with socio economic status within school and class size appeared to be more important than the life experiences of students

(Stevenson et al., 2014). Furthermore, the findings highlight the need “to actively reach out to lower income and ethnic minority students and improve teacher and classroom quality”

(Stevenson et al., 2014, p. 171).

Duerden and Witt (2010) sought to explore the “relationship between nature experience type (e.g., direct and indirect) and learning outcomes (e.g., environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behavior) associated with an environmental education, international immersion program for adolescents” (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 379). A mixed method research design was employed to carry out this research (Duerden & Witt, 2010). The researchers used longitudinal data gathered from 108 participants along with 49 comparison groups to accurately test the hypotheses (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 379). Following, grounded theory was used to “assess participants’ perceptions of these processes” (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 379). The participants were middle to high school aged youth who participated in a global explores environmental education and international immersion program. The findings indicated that “environmental knowledge (EK) increased more than environmental attitudes during the indirect portion of the program (i.e., preparatory program) whereas the direct portion (i.e., international workshop) produced similar levels of knowledge and attitude growth” (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 379). The qualitative portion of the study revealed that “exposing youth to natural settings does not automatically guarantee they will perceive the experience as direct contact with nature” (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 389). From synthesising the data from both the quantitative and qualitative study findings several insights emerged: “The indirect experience portion of the program (i.e., preparatory program) led to growth in EK... direct experiences appear slightly more complex in terms of their relationship to learning outcomes... the relationship between EK and EB, in the context of a direct experience (i.e., the international workshop), became activated” (Duerden &

Witt, 2010, p. 390). The study findings contribute to understanding on environmental knowledge and environmental attitudes in developing environmental behaviours, and the function of direct and indirect experiences (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 391). Each study in this section builds on existing research into significant life experiences but from the perspective of youth.

The Influence of Formative Life Experience on an Educator's Mindset

Existing literature looks at the formative influences of people's attitudes, behaviours, awareness and understanding of nature. Within this research is a subset of studies that explore these formative influences in lives of environmental activists, environmentalists, and educators. Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2020) remind us of the origin of significant life experience research; first beginning in the field of environmental education field when "Tanner (1980) sought to learn more about experiences that raised concern for the environment, and Chawla (1998) asked participants to remember and describe experiences that contributed to future decisions about environmental protection" (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020, p. 1). By focusing on people like environmental educators who have dedicated their lives to being immersed in nature and sharing it with others, these people have the potential to provide important insight into the kinds of experiences that led them to a care for nature. Each of the six studies included in this section builds on the original research of Tanner (1980) and Chawla (1998) by further focusing on the perspective of educators, including outdoor educators (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016), climate change educators (Howell & Allen, 2019), environmental studies university faculty (Cagle, 2016), generalist and biology teachers (Torkar, 2012), and environmental educators (Corcoran, 1999; Palmer & Suggate, 1996). These studies provide insight into the kinds of experiences that these educators find most influential regarding nature.

Most recently, Howell and Allen (2019) conducted a study that explored the formative influence of significant life experiences on participants' concern for climate change, and involvement in climate change mitigation and education within the United Kingdom (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 813). A requirement for this study was that participants were engaged in climate change education. Quantitative methodology was employed, and data was collected through a survey from 85 participants. The data revealed several important findings. Firstly, inconsistent with previous research on significant life experiences such as that conducted by Chawla (1998) outdoor experiences, including "childhood play in 'natural' areas, camping, and observation of/interaction with wildlife – while important influences for some of our respondents – were not a major formative influence for the sample as a whole" (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). The highest ranked influences were "work, education, the media, people, and groups/organisations" (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). The participants of this study were most influenced by social justice concerns, specifically the impact of climate change on future generations and vulnerable communities; "social justice concerns were rated more motivating for action than biospheric concerns (about impacts on wildlife and landscapes) by the sample as a whole" (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). However, biospheric values scored equally with altruistic values (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). Secondly, the data revealed "that people who engage with climate change do not all act from an affective connection to non-human nature" (p. 825). This finding suggests that it is not necessary to foster "nature connectedness" or "create opportunities for outdoor or wilderness experiences" when promoting climate change education (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). Furthermore, the researchers consider whether a case could be made for "avoiding framing climate change education as 'environmental' education, as this may be of interest to a smaller number and range of people than would otherwise be the case" (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 827).

On the other side of the world, Nazir and Pedretti (2016) explore the premise that “environmental education involves raising environmental consciousness rather than simply knowing about the environment in a technical-rational manner and acting for it in mechanistic prescribed ways” (p. 288). Nazir and Pedretti (2016) are interested in how outdoor experiences, especially those provided through outdoor education inform a person’s environmental consciousness. A phenomenological case study approach was used to explore the perspectives of nine educators working at an urban outdoor education centre in Canada (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016). The age of participants ranged from mid-thirties to fifties, and participants had at least been working at the outdoor centre for ten years (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016). Data collection entailed gathering “a variety of lived experiences” through interviews (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016, p. 293). Participants were asked to share their understanding of environmental education as consciousness raising, and the associated pedagogy for this approach of environmental education (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016, p. 295). The study conducted by Howell and Allen (2019) was concerned with the personal viewpoint and lived experience of each participant whereas Nazir and Pedretti (2016) are focused on participants’ educational practice and pedagogy and how that shapes an environmental consciousness within students based on their own life experiences and expertise. The findings revealed that environmental consciousness raising includes “three structures: connecting people to their environment; fostering care for the environment; and building agency for the environment” (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016, p. 301). To nurture an environmental consciousness, participants of this study favoured strategies and practices that “provide people with deeply engaging experiences with and in the outdoors” (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016, p. 298). This study provides insight into environmental education as consciousness raising and the necessary structures and based on the opinions of participants there are “specialized

pedagogical strategies” that accompany this approach (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016, p. 301). Howell and Allen (2019) were focused on experiences that promote climate change education, and the findings of their quantitative analysis suggested that creating opportunities outdoors and nature connectedness were not necessary (Howell & Allen, 2019, p. 825). However, Nazir and Pedretti (2016) found that through the lived experiences of the subset group of educators revealed connection to nature and engaging outdoor experiences as necessary for the development of an environmental consciousness.

In 2012 Torkar (2012) explored how significant life experiences have “influenced teachers’ attitudes towards the environment and present their teaching practices within environmental education” (p. 49). Teachers working in compulsory schools in Slovenia were invited to complete a survey, including pre-school, primary school, and biology teachers (Torkar, 2012). The findings indicated that participants view childhood experiences outdoors and parents as the most influential in producing environmentally informed minds (Torkar, 2012). Participants shared memories of being outdoors as a child such as “playing in the open air, going to the seaside and mountains, or being raised in the countryside” (Torkar, 2012, p. 51). The teachers referenced the ways in which their parents had influence on them, especially during childhood (Torkar, 2012). Role models, mentors, grandparents, and teachers were also mentioned within key life experiences (Torkar, 2012). Participants referred to their present situation, including living in the country, sports, and recreation along with plants and animals (Torkar, 2012). Additionally, “experience of solitude and freedom in nature” was also discussed by participants (Torkar, 2012, p. 52). Negative experiences and perspectives of nature were mentioned by participants, including pollution, radiation, and natural disasters (Torkar, 2012). Sixteen

participants stated that personal crisis and illness have impacted their lives, and that “they found comfort and personal meaning in natural areas” (Torkar, 2012, p. 51).

The researcher noted several differences between the groups of teachers regarding their teaching professions particularly with their view of plants, animals, and the education system (Torkar, 2012, p. 53). Firstly, “experiences with organisms and education were more influential life experiences for biology teachers than for preschool or primary school teachers” (Torkar, 2012, p. 49). Education is considered a “more influentially significant life experience among biology teachers” because they gained a deeper understanding of biology and ecology from their teacher training (Torkar, 2012, p. 54). Through analysis of the teacher practices of environmental education the data showed “that teachers under-emphasize the meaning of recruiting young people in pro-environmental actions taking place in the school and local community” (Torkar, 2012, p. 54). For example, the data suggested that “biology teachers encourage students to analyze and discuss environmental problems rather than to empower them toward collective pro-environmental actions” (Torkar, 2012, p. 54). Overall, the findings of this study suggest “enjoyment of the outdoors and experiential learning, especially in the childhood, attitudes of parents, living in the countryside, solitude of remote places, education and experiencing negative environmental changes all instilled in respondents a care for the environment and nature” (Torkar, 2012, p. 53).

Corcoran (1999) based their study directly from a previously completed environmentalism research project (Palmer 1993; Palmer and Suggate, 1996). From the research project Corcoran (1999) collected narratives of environmental educators in the United States (p. 207). Participants were asked to provide a written response to the following prompt, “Please describe the significant life experiences and formative influences which have contributed to your

concern for the environment and your interest in environmental education” (Corcoran, 1999, p. 211). Consistent with the findings from Torkar (2012) the themes that emerged from the narrative include “childhood time outdoors, hope, heroic figures, parents and grandparents as environmental educators and role models, teachers and professors, scouting and camping, hunting, trapping, fishing, the destruction of landscape, a call to activism and social problems, fear of the effects of environmental problems, worldview, faith and spirituality” (Corcoran, 1999, p. 211). An examination of the narratives affirmed the importance of childhood experiences outdoors, and pristine nature as formative influences (Corcaran, 1999, p. 207). Speaking about the research Corcaran (1999) states, “The important events that echo across lifetimes—those experiences, as they are remembered, both positively or negatively, that drive us to certain life decisions and behavior” (p. 220).

At the outset of their study Cagle (2016) identifies two gaps in research concerning experiences with nature, “what happens to environmentally committed people’s relationship to nature over time, including the time spent in nature and the quality of that experience,” and “previous work has not more finely categorized these nature experiences, except for natural history-oriented professionals” (p. 889). Cagle (2016) addresses these gaps using qualitative methodology. Like Nazir and Pedretti (2016), Cagle (2016) selected participants who were established in the field and therefore able to provide rich data on the research topic. Twelve environmental studies faculty members at Duke University, United States of America, were asked to participate in the study, and interviews were used to gain a sense of participants relationships with nature across their lifetime (Cagle, 2016). The findings indicated that the “amount of time spent in nature, and the quality of that experience, changed for this cohort over time” (Cagle, 2016, p. 889). These changes included time spent in nature and the quality and

type of experience were dependent on the stage of their life (Cagle, 2016). When discussing childhood experiences with nature participants expressed “a sense of beauty and peace” (Cagle, 2016, p. 893). Furthermore, experiences with family and friends in nature during childhood were also mentioned by participants (Cagle, 2016). Interestingly, one participant expressed the absence of a relationship with nature in childhood due to the impact of environmental problems on their childhood (Cagle, 2016). In their college and adult years, participants expressed a shift in their relationship with nature that aligned with nature as “ways to explore intellectual interests” and “means of completing their studies (typically in environmental fields)” (Cagle, 2016, p. 893). In adulthood, an average of five, with a range of three to eight participants shared one of the following notions regarding their experiences with nature as professionals, “(1) they had less and too little time to enjoy nature, (2) the nature of their experience had changed due to their work in the environment, (3) nature served as a physical outlet, (4) nature served as a way to recharge mentally, emotionally, or spiritually, and (5) nature became a way to connect with their significant others or children” (Cagle, 2016, p. 893). Childhood experiences of nature were consistent across participants whereas adulthood experiences with nature were more varied in their responses (Cagle, 2016).

In a study that took place in the United Kingdom, researchers Palmer and Suggate (1996) examine “the relative importance of various categories of influence and formative life experiences on the development of environmental educators' knowledge and concern for the environment” (p. 109). Members from the National Association of Environmental Education were invited to participate by completing an autobiographical statement (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 109). Participants were asked to provide “details of their demonstration of practical concern for the environment and an autobiographical statement identifying those experiences

that led to this concern,” and “what they considered to be their most significant life experiences and to write a statement indicating which, if any, of the years of their lives were particularly memorable in the development of positive attitudes toward the environment" (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 110). The sample sized consisted of 230 members (Palmer & Suggate, 1996).

The findings provided several important insights into the phenomena of study. Firstly, outdoor and education was mentioned by over 60% of participants, and the influence of people, including friends, family and colleagues presented in 51% of responses (Palmer & Suggate, 1996). Furthermore, "the prime importance of childhood experiences of nature, being mentioned by 55% of the respondents,” and courses completed in higher education was considered a common influence found in some responses (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 113). Positive experiences in nature during childhood and living in the countryside was more frequently mentioned in older age groups specifically 62% and 70% whereas the youngest was 25% (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 115). Participants were instructed to rank the influences they mentioned and/or state the most important influence however only 49% of participants answered this request (Palmer & Suggate, 1996). Of the responses, “25 said that they were unable to name a single most important factor, so only 89 (38%) gave any ranking of influences” (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 116). The researchers gathered that “the most influential factor in developing personal concern for the environment is childhood experiences of nature and the countryside” (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 120). Additionally, education seemed to be of great importance as it was cited by 60% of participants especially secondary education (Palmer & Suggate, 1996). The importance of education was distinguished by “not only the stimulation of increasing factual knowledge, but also the influence of teachers' enthusiasm and concern for the environment, specifically mentioned by many respondents" (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 120). Across all age

groups, “the role of the family and other adults in awakening and fostering such interest was another recurrent theme in all age groups” (Palmer & Suggate, 1996, p. 120).

Formative Influences and Outcomes Regarding Nature

Research has explored formative experiences in nature through the retrospective accounts of people from many different angles. Most recently, Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2020) explore the “life significance of a university summer outdoor education (OE) course” on alumni who took part in the course twenty years prior (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020, p. 1). The sample size consisted of fifteen participants who engaged in in-depth interviews (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020). The data indicated the following significant life impacts, “development of interpersonal skills; self- discovery; environmental behaviour change; leisure style change; transfer to others; and increased outdoor knowledge/skills” (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020, p.1). The study revealed that “a university summer OE course can have significant life impacts more than 20 years, and even up to 36 years, after course completion ” (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020, p. 10). An implication of this study is the long-term impact of outdoor education courses on people’s mindset (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020).

Puig and Echarri (2018) explore the potential of significant life experiences in promoting environmental values through environmental education using the narratives of three environmentalists, including Ernest T. Seton, Also Leopold, and Felix Rodriguez. Like Wigglesworth Heintzman (2020), Puig and Echarri (2018) are focused on the outcome of experiences in eliciting behaviour or attitudes concerning nature. The study was conducted in Spain. The focus of inquiry in the experiences of these three individuals was their encounter with wolves—a significant life experience that changed their lives (Puig & Echarri, 2018). By studying the biographies and narratives of these environmentalist the researchers “shed light on

how to facilitate or promote, when possible, the acquisition of deep and lasting values through environmental education" (Puig & Echarri, 2018, p. 678). The researchers were interested at the influence of a wolf's gaze on these "remarkable western environmentalists," especially considering that in some cultures the wolf is considered an "enemy or even an evil creature (Puig & Echarri, 2018, p. 686; see also Prokop et al., 2011). All three narratives included "the gaze of a wolf, which triggered what we can term a 'calling,' 'manifestation,' 'spiritual revelation' or 'spiritual upheaval'" (Puig & Echarri, 2018, p. 687). The wolf encounters led the three environmentalists to new understandings of "seeing, sensing, perceiving and assessing not only wolves but also our integration within the whole of nature" (Puig & Echarri, 2018, p. 687).

Palmer and colleagues (1998) articulate the findings of an "an ongoing major international study of significant life experiences and formative influences affecting the thinking and pro-environmental behaviour of adults" (p. 445). The study involves approximately thirty researchers from twelve countries across six continents (Palmer et al., 1998). An overview of findings from nine countries, including Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, and Uganda are included, along with similar findings and differences across the globe (Palmer et al., 1998, p. 445). The study included 129 people who all "had some declared interest in or concern for the environment" (Palmer et al., 1998, p. 445). The data indicated comparisons for childhood and adulthood regarding experiences with the natural world (Palmer et al., 1998). Specifically, "the great importance of childhood experiences of nature in Australia, Canada, South Africa and UK, with more than half of each of these samples referring to them" whereas accounts of childhood did not appear as dominant in the responses of participants in other countries (Palmer et al., 1998, p. 454). Overall, "the most important single factor by far was childhood experiences of nature" and "other influences given by over 20% of

the respondents were close family, tertiary education, pollution, and adult experiences of nature” (Palmer et al., 1998, p. 453).

Life Experiences and Human-Nature Relationships

Empirical research to date has told us about formative life experience research from the perspective of educators regarding nature, but limited studies specifically explore their outlook on human-nature relationships. This claim is supported by Lui and Lin (2013) who identified the following gap in research, “few studies have directed their attention to how people perceive, experience and understand nature and human–nature relationships, especially in the field of environmental education” (p. 413). Furthermore, research in this area is typically quantitative, using standardized measures, and not exclusively focused on the experiences of educators (Lui & Lin, 2013). The literature included in this section will provide some context to this research study.

In 2015, researchers Grimwood, Haberer and Legault reported on two individual qualitative studies to bring awareness to the similarities of findings. Both studies intended to better “understand human-nature relationships as experienced by different groups of wilderness travel leaders in Canada” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 138). The first study took place in 2009 and “applied phenomenology to describe the lived experiences in nature of five canoe trip leaders employed by a residential summer camp in Ontario, Canada” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 138). The purpose of this study was to “understand how a group of wilderness canoe guides experience the complex notion of nature” (p. 140). Data collection occurred over two in-person interviews. Three core themes emerged from the wilderness leaders’ experiences, including, “1) meaning of nature, 2) relationship to nature, and 3) behaviours and emotions in nature” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 140).

The second study took place in 2009, and “involved five individuals bonded together by having amassed five years or more of experience leading diverse groups on multi-day, self-propelled trips through wild Canadian landscapes” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 138). The purpose of the second study was to “explore human–nature relationships from the perspectives of wilderness leaders” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 143). Five wilderness leaders were purposively selected. An exploratory qualitative study design was utilized, and data was collected over one semi-structured interview. For the purpose of the paper, the findings emphasized from the second study are “leaders’ perception of wilderness and human–nature relationships, and how these perceptions influence their wilderness ethic and leadership roles” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 142). The findings indicate that participants “treasure the time they have and will spend in wilderness settings,” and “as a result of personal relationships with nature crafted over years of experience as a wilderness leader, participants felt compelled to encourage others to have related nature experiences and develop their own intimate relationships with the natural world” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 145).

When considering both study findings, “emotionally charged connections” with nature are important to how the leaders perform in their roles (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 146). The leaders in both studies see themselves as responsible, and able to encourage campers to develop connections to nature because of their own established relationship (Grimwood et al., 2015). The leaders also emphasized the important opportunities that wilderness trips provide to nurture relationships to nature (Grimwood et al., 2015).

Like the approaches taken in the two studies articulated by Grimwood and colleagues (2015), researcher Piersol (2014) used a narrative inquiry approach to “explore the relationship to place that exists amongst members of a Canadian university education research team” (p. 43).

This team included higher education researchers who had visited a school that incorporated “place-based, ecological and imaginative pedagogies” in its practice (Piersol, 2014, p. 43). The study explored “how interpersonal relations might inform relationship with the land” (Piersol, 2017). Six themes emerged from the data that represent what the participants believe to be “important in the process of listening to place and strengthening ecological relations” (Piersol, 2017, p. 43). These themes include “1) Forming trust and surrendering 2) Shifting into new senses of time 3) Seeking quiet spaces 4) Whole body immersion 5) Tools for wandering and wondering 6) Sharing places” (Piersol, 2017, p. 43).

Whereas Grimwood and colleagues look at the perspective of wilderness trip leaders on field trips, Mikaelis and Morten (2017) explore the “reflective journals” of university students from a month-long outdoor education trip to the Canadian Rockies (p.1). Although the researchers are established in Australia, the data is based on a trip in Canada. The findings revealed that for all participants “outdoor skill was considered an important part of the relationship to and awareness of the natural world” (Mikaelis & Morten, 2017, p. 6). On the topic of place, the researchers note that it was fascinating to see the variation of responses across participants when answering the questions, whether they had felt "in-place or out-of-place during the journey" (Mikaelis & Morten, 2017, p. 6). Overall, the findings suggest that “decentering of humans in favour of mutual and relational engagements with matter and the more-than-human, in combination with outdoor skill development and place stories that involve reading, and land and learning from nature-cultural history opens new possibilities for embodied relations to place(s)” (Mikaelis & Morten, 2017, p. 9)

On the other side of the world in Portugal, the approach of Almeida and Vasconcelos (2011) consisted of “a theoretical framework of three main environmental perspectives in the

human-nature relationship (anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism) aimed to identify their incidence in teachers involved with environmental projects when confronted with diverse environmental issues” (p. 299). Sixty generalist and specialized teachers who had at least seven years of experience engaged in interviews (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011). The findings indicated “higher occurrence of biocentric perceptions in all teachers” (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 299). Specifically, the biocentric perspective was evident “in more than 50% of the research sample – on the topics concerning hunting (43–72%), the value of nature (39–65%), attitudes towards the human species (39–65%), economic development (38–63%), pollution (36–60%) and cultural diversity (35–58%)” (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 306). The ecocentric perspective occurred highest in human nourishment (27%-45%), and nature and park reserves (32-53%) (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011). The anthropocentric perspective was evident in “the consumption of ecological products” which accounted for 35–58% (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 306). A key finding included “topics related to the human species, hunting and economic development, not a single participant chose the anthropocentric option” (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 306). Overall, the researchers gathered that “the teachers interviewed showed a predominant preference towards biocentric and ecocentric perspectives regarding the human-nature relationship” (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 309). Most teachers displayed a non-anthropocentric perspective to the issues considered (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 309).

In Taiwan, Liu and Lin (2013) explore “undergraduate students’ environmental worldviews by exploring their ideas about nature and human– nature relationships” (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 412). Twenty-nine university students participated in this mixed-method study. The approach consisted of “interviews were employed as the dominant method, while a questionnaire

survey was also used to support the sample selection and enhance the understanding of the interview data” (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 412). Students were asked the following interview questions, “What comes to your mind when you think of nature/the natural world; How would you define nature; How does nature work?” (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 418). A major finding was that “although the students were generally pro-ecological, their ideas about nature and human–nature relationships seemed to be often a mixture of worldview tendencies typically as follows: (1) humankind is part of nature and subject to natural laws, and thus cannot possibly destroy nature; (2) humankind plays a dominator role in nature, but can be ‘replaced’ by other species; and (3) humankind should take responsibility for nature in order to secure sufficient natural resources and a livable environment for all species, especially humans” (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 412). Also, students described nature largely from a scientific perspective such as “descriptions and explanations of nature were highly concentrated on scientific concepts and metaphors, such as ‘cycle,’ ‘balance,’ ‘food chain,’ ‘natural selection’” (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 418).

Summary and How My Study Builds on Existing Literature

The studies included in this literature review reveal the benefit of research into life experiences regarding nature. Insight is provided on the kinds of experiences considered as influential for people who have strong relationships with nature and who engage in environmentally responsible behaviour and activities. Each of the studies included show similar findings about how life experience informs perspective of nature, including family, mentors, time outdoors, and education. Several studies focused on the perspective of educators involved in EOE education which aligns closely with my study.

The studies in the first section limit their investigation to youth (Arnold et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2014; Duerden & Witt, 2010). I chose to include these youth focused studies to

provide context to my study, and because I ask participants to share with me experiences from this stage of development. In the following section, participants are educators (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016; Howell & Allen, 2019; Cagle, 2016; Torkar, 2012; Corcoran, 1999; Palmer & Suggate, 1996). The participants for my research are situated within six studies. Like Nazir and Pedretti (2016), Corcoran (1999), and Palmer and Suggate (1996) the participants for my research are EOE educators. And Cagle (2016) who interviewed university faculty, six out of seven participants in my study attended graduate school, and three of them worked in higher education. The educators included in the studies conducted by Howell and Allen (2019) and Torkar (2012) align with some of my participants who are generalist classroom teachers or involved in climate change education initiatives.

In the following section, *Formative Influences and Outcomes Regarding Nature*, as the title suggests, the studies included explore the formative significant life experiences expressed by participants (Palmer & Suggate, 1996; Palmer et al., 1998) and the outcomes of those experiences on behaviour and attitudes concerning nature (Wigglesworth & Heintzman, 2020; Puig and Echarri, 2018). In the final section, I have included several studies that explore perspectives of human-nature relationships. Researchers Grimwood, Haberer and Legault (2015) reported on two individual qualitative studies to bring awareness to the similarities of findings regarding human-nature relationships. Both studies intended to better “understand human-nature relationships as experienced by different groups of wilderness travel leaders in Canada” (Grimwood et al., 2015, p. 138). The conclusions drawn from the data, and participant selection were both influential factors for my research study. Piersol (2014) used a narrative inquiry approach to examine “the relationship to place that exists amongst members of a Canadian university education research team” (p. 43). The approach to research and participant selection

taken by Piersol (2014) informed my research study. Like the previous two studies, the study by Mikaelis and Morten (2017) was also based in Canada. They explored the lived experiences and perspectives of human-nature relationships through student reflective journals (Mikaelis and Morten, 2017). Similarly, Liu and Lin (2013) explore the environmental worldviews of undergraduate students, including their ideas about nature and human–nature relationships” (p. 412). As previously mentioned, and supported by Lui and Lin (2013), limited research exists that looks at human-nature relationships from the perspective of EOE educators.

Few studies included in this literature review provided an in-depth exploration of each person’s influential experiences as cited by the participants. Arnold and colleagues (2009), Cagle (2016) and Torkar (2012) state what formative experiences participants found to be influential, however given the nature of their methodology and research design, they do not provide detailed accounts of participant’s individual lived experiences. Palmer and Suggate (1996) collected autobiographical statements from participants, Nazir and Pedretti (2016) used phenomenology to get a sense of participants’ lived experiences, and Corcaran (1999) and Piersol (2014) gathered individual narratives. My study aligns most closely with these studies as it actively seeks the detailed accounts of the specific lived experiences from participants that influenced their understandings and relationships to nature, and efforts in the fields of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education. My intention is that using narrative will provide in-depth insight into the experiences that provided these educators with understandings and relationships with nature and led them to the field of EOE education.

Chapter 3 — Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative method of narrative inquiry as it applies to this study. I draw on the knowledge of established qualitative researchers to inform the methodological approach. Narrative was employed to gather accounts of experiences from participants and later disseminated using storytelling. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe narrative inquiry as both a methodology and phenomena of study—narrative is used to gather, understand, and tell stories of individual experiences, and as a gathered story the narrative is an explanation of a particular phenomenon. The narrative approach to inquiry is an appropriate methodology for this study as it allows for the stories of participants to be told using their authentic voice, communicated in a captivating way that emphasizes the underlying meaning by highlighting themes and concepts. In the sections that follow, I will describe the research process, context, participants, sampling, data collection and analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study is Place Based Education Design Principles (Sobel, 2008). The theory explains that meaningful connections with nature are fostered in a person’s backyard and communities, and not in distant or wild places (Sobel, 2008). In practice, a placed based education approach engages students in “real projects that connect the core curriculum to real places and real problem-solving in the community” (Sobel, 2008, p. 3). Beginning first within the child’s world by recognizing their “inherent fascinations with nature and people” and then using their fascinations as starting points to develop “study, community-valued knowledge” (Sobel, 2008, p. 3). According to Sobel (2008) a placed based education approach would simultaneously develop a child’s love of nature, and social and academic skills (p. 3). Sobel’s (2008) overarching goal has been to explore “the relationship between children and nature from

the bottom up” (p. 19). This has entailed: “figuring out how to cultivate relationships between children and trees in their own backyard as a precursor to their working to save rainforests as they get older, when they can actually do something about it” (Sobel, 2008, p. 19).

Through phenomenological observation of children outdoors, Sobel (2008) has identified “seven play motifs” of evolutionary outdoor activities that children repeatedly engage in “regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or eco-systems, children play in similar ways when they have safe free time in nature (p. 19). The seven motifs include: “1) making forts and special places; 2) playing hunting and gathering games; 3) shaping small worlds; 4) developing friendships with animals; 5) constructing adventures; 6) descending into fantasies; 7) and following paths and figuring out shortcuts” (Sobel, 2008, p. 20). These play motifs connect children to place and are intended to be translated into design principles for educators (Sobel, 2008, p. 20). The design principles include: “special places, hunting and gathering creating small worlds, and other design components for family outings, curriculum projects, and environmental field trips” (Sobel, 2008, p. 20).

Sobel (2008) outlines each of the principles as a framework and provides examples of how educators have applied the motifs in education practice. For example, principle one is adventure that emphasizes the kinds of activities that are “kinesthetic, in the body...a physical challenge component speaks directly to children via the mind/body link” (p. 21). In this design principle, children should “stalk, balance, jump, and scamper through the natural world” (Sobel, 2008, p. 21). The other principles include: 2) Fantasy and Imagination; 3) Animal Allies; 4) Maps and Paths; 5) Special Places; 6) Small Worlds; and 7) Hunting and Gathering (Sobel, 2008). He describes the principles as “tools” for educators implement in their practice allowing for immersive experienced for children in the natural world (Sobel, 2008, p. 57).

I have selected this framework for several reasons. Firstly, the play motifs and design principles outlined by Sobel (2008) tend to the environmental concept of place, which has proven to be an important part of fostering human-nature relationships and understandings of nature. Therefore, the principles aligned with the overall intent of this study. Secondly, place-based education is intended for all educators, but a certain focus is given to EOE educators. The lived experience of these educators especially their practice was weaved throughout the book. I wanted to further explore the concept of place and place-based education through the experiences of an exceptional subset of EOE educators. I am curious at what these educators have to say that can build on the concept of place outlined by Sobel (2008). Additionally, Sobel (2008) critiques the education system's use of curriculum expectations, test preparation, and frameworks which reduce understandings of nature to facts, concepts, and measurable outcomes whereas place-based education takes a different approach.

According to Sobel (2008) the place-based education approach emphasizes applying curriculum in real world contexts therefore developing students' academic skills and fostering their environmental stewardship. This study explores a subset of environmental, outdoor an experiential educator whose educational efforts foster similar desired outcomes to that of place-based education. Lastly, the play motifs outlined by Sobel (2008) frequently occurred in the narratives of participants in their own childhood unprompted and without facilitation. Furthermore, the significance of their memories led to these educators valuing experiences resonating with the play motifs in their education practice.

Research Design

Why narrative? Chawla (1998, 2006) expresses that there are two sides to the field of environmental education: "one that emphasizes scientific knowledge and technical or managerial

solutions to environmental problems; and another that seeks to instill a sense of care and responsibility for the earth among the general population” (p. 360). The scientific side of environmental education has historically been favoured and as a result research in the field has been predominantly quantitative Chawla (1998, 2006). Therefore, I chose to focus on perspectives of the environment that are driven by emotion and personal experiences. There is a growing body of research in significant life experiences (SLE) that explores “the emotional and interpretative side of environmental experience” (Chawla, 2006, p. 360). An approach in environmental research that has otherwise been avoided (Chawla, 2006). My research seeks to complement the approach taken by SLE researchers, and predominant existing quantitative scholarship by adding a qualitative perspective to the understandings of EOE educators. To best understand and share the understandings of participants this study employed the qualitative method of narrative inquiry approach to research.

As a method, narrative originates in individual experiences as expressed through the lived and told stories of people within specific situations and places (Clandinin, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Stories are a significant act which describes the human experience. For centuries, stories have been the predominate way people become acquainted with the world around them. Narratives are personal accounts of everyday life that arise from imagination, living, and oral and written accounts of the past, present, and future (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative provides space for sharing both the meaning that is generated from accounts of experience within, and between individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Clandinin (2007) uniquely refers to narrative as a “phenomenon of study” (p. 5). In this context, narrative inquiry goes beyond the method used in a study such as procedures and analysis, and instead focuses on the gathered narratives as expressions of a phenomena. The narrative approach to

research is adopted when there is a need to explore the life of an individual or few people (Daiute, 2014). A feature of narrative is the ability to integrate the varied perspective of individuals, all with diverse knowledge, influence, and experience in relation to a particular topic (Daiute, 2014, p. 3).

It is important to recognize that not only is the focus of narrative inquiry the expression of participant experience, but also it is vital for researchers to attend to the embedded context of the narrative, such as the cultural, social, linguistic, and institutional sharing in which individual experiences were, and are shaped, constituted, and enacted (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative provides the opportunity for researchers to investigate the occurrences being studied, context and place, and the meaning that arises from experiences. Accordingly, the narrative inquiry approach to research “1) gathers stories of individual participant experiences, 2) analyses the stories using strategies such as thematic analysis to examine what was spoken, 3) the stories are reorganized and re-stoyred into a framework in a captivating and logical manner, 4) the narrative is presented in a written format” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Clandinin (2013) expresses that it is not uncommon for researchers to find the narrative dissemination of findings challenging as it is at this point the researcher makes their study visible to audiences, those who may be far removed from the stories of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I have selected narrative inquiry as a methodology for several reasons. Firstly, narrative focuses on telling the authentic stories of participants, and representing the voices, actions, and emotions within each story (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To this end, I will draw upon the narrative of participants, ensuring the continual visibility of both the participants and their stories throughout the study (Clandinin, 2007). Secondly, narrative provides space to share multiple perspectives but from people who are all bound by a particular phenomenon of interest. Lastly,

stories are an important way that humans make sense of the world. Considering that a focus of this research is exploring participant experiences and understandings, narrative is an appropriate choice for gathering and presenting the data. I identify with Seidman (2006) in that story telling is a meaning making process. The data generated from this narrative study will bring new meaning and ways of knowing the world from the experiences of diverse knowledge keepers in the field.

Participant Selection

Qualitative researchers select participants who are connected to the research topic in different ways to illuminate meaningful variances in experiences (King et al., 2019). This study recruited participants in different educational roles, but all within the field of EOE. Participant recruitment began once ethical clearance from both the Educational Research Ethics Board (EREB) and the General Ethics Research Board (GREB) was received. Participants for this study were initially selected using purposeful sampling strategy. A requirement for this study was that participants must be involved in EOE education in some capacity. This could include teaching in higher education, an outdoor center, alternative setting, or in the classroom, and engaging in projects, publishing, or researching on content related to EOE education. I spent time researching participants by looking at their contributions to the field, including publications and engagements in environmental related projects, and affiliations with organizations such as the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO). I chose to focus on a unique subset of EOE educators instead of any given group of EOE. I hoped that their level of experience, length of time in the field, and unique involvements would provide rich data and insight to the research questions.

Once the person of interest was identified, publicly available email addresses were utilized to recruit participants. Individual emails were only sent out to those persons in the field

who I believed fit the eligibility criteria. To ensure consistency each participant email contained the recruitment letter (Appendix A), and the combined letter of information (LOI) and consent form (Appendix B) which provided an overview of the study, the kinds of questions that will be asked of the participant, the time commitment of participation and the voluntary participation in this study.

This study recruited participants from across Canada. The rationale for recruiting across Canada was to ensure that the best possible participants in the field are being selected for participation. The sample size for this study consisted of seven participants on a first come, first-serve basis, allowing for extensive data to be collected from each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The email script, and combined letter of information/consent were sent to fifteen people who met the requirement outlined for this study. Of those who were contacted, nine people responded. Five politely declined the invitation saying that they did not have time to participate due to the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, and four agreed to partake in the study. The snowball sampling strategy identifies cases of interest from the acquaintances of existing participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and was used to recruit three of the seven participants. The existing participants were asked to provide the researchers email to the potential participants, who then contacted me with their willingness to participate in the study. Initially, this study aimed to have an equal representation of male and female. However, due to a lack of interest in participation brought on by the pandemic, this study had two females, and five males. A limitation is the lack of female representation and voice.

The consent form was signed by both the participant and researcher before proceeding with data collection. All consent forms were stored on a secure Queen's OneDrive Business account. In instances where written consent was not possible, participants were asked to provide

verbal consent. I used the verbal consent script (Appendix C) to obtain participant consent and documented the consent in the verbal consent log (Appendix D). Participants were made aware that their participation in this study was voluntary. They could withdraw from this study up to two weeks after the final interview with no negative consequences. If they chose to withdraw from the study an email or written letter had to be sent to the researcher clearly stating their wish for removal from the study and whether they would like to have all data removed. This information was clearly stated in the LOI. Should a participant choose to withdraw, their data was to be destroyed. There was no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study, and there were no benefits to participants. Fortunately, no participants requested to withdraw from the study.

All participants were involved in environmental, outdoor, and experiential education in some capacity, including teaching in higher education, facilitating environmental projects in the classroom, working at outdoor education centers, and acting as activists in their communities. These participants were selected because of their contributions and dedication to the EOE field. From the interviews I gathered that six out of seven participants were in retirement or soon approaching. This meant that the participants of this study had a careers worth of EOE experience to share. Their knowledge and depth of experience is reflective of the length of time they have been in the field. I also learned that six out of seven participants had attended graduate school. Their involvement in graduate studies adds to this participant group being considered a unique subset as not all EOE educators attend graduate school, and therefore do not have access to the same opportunities or experiences that higher education provides. A few were well published authors. The educators in this study are privileged in some of the opportunities and

experiences they were afforded due to their position. However, it is clear from the stories of participants that their dedication and commitment to the field is unwavering.

It is also important to note that participants of this study were primarily raised in a western culture and mindset. Although two participants were not born in Canada they did however grow up in a predominantly western culture. The perspectives shared from the participants of this study are primarily Eurocentric focused making them not representative of other knowledge systems and ways of knowing that are critical to EOE field. This content of this study only illustrates the opinions and experiences of a small subset of EOE educators making it not universally applicable or accessible.

Data Collection

Interviews allow knowledge to be constructed from the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Data was collected over two virtual interviews on Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Both interviews were semi-structured and included open-ended questions using Patton (1990) and Kvale's (1996) criteria. Semi-structured interviewing allows for the interviewer to probe using a follow up question that requests the participant to elaborate on their answer to obtain a more in-depth response (King et al., 2019). I created an interview guide (Appendix E & F) prior to the interview which outlines the topics that are to be covered throughout each interview (King et al., 2019). The use of an interview guide (first and second interview) ensured consistency of content asked across interviews with each participant.

The type of questions asked reflected both Patton's (1990) six categories of questions, and Kvale's (1996) criteria for questioning. The first interview guide was completed during the initial interview (Appendix E), and the second guide in the follow up interview (Appendix F). I

had the option to modify and adapt the second guide depending on the data generated in the initial interview as well as whether further information is required to answer the research questions. The interview guide allowed for some flexibility in terms of the order in which the questions are asked, and the terminology used (King et al., 2019). As well, it provided the participant with an opportunity to lead the discussion in unexpected and authentic directions (King et al., 2019). Each interview was recorded using an audio recording device that was disclosed prior to the start of each interview. King and colleagues (2019) state that the “physical space in which an interview is located can have a strong influence on how it proceeds” (p. 72). It is considered good practice to allow participants to determine where the interview will take place (King et al., 2019). The interview environment should be physically comfortable and psychologically comfortable (King et al., 2019). Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, I initially planned for the interviews to be a walking interview and take place outdoors. However, due to provincial restrictions, the interviews had to take place virtually.

Each participant engaged in two interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes for a total of 120 to 180 minutes. The total estimated time that was required for participation in this study was 3 hours maximum (two interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes). Participants were asked to be interviewed at a time that was most convenient for them. The first interview asked participants questions about their understanding of nature and human-nature relationships. To establish initial rapport, the interviewer followed the interview framework of both Patton (1990) and Kvale (1996) by asking background and introductory questions to begin. Rapport is establishing trust between the interviewer and interviewee by creating a space where the participant can feel comfortable sharing (King et al., 2019). The remainder of the questions asked included dealing with feelings and emotion questions, values and opinion, knowledge

questions, and sensory experience questions (Patton, 1990; Kvale, 1996). To compliment the interview data, I took handwritten field notes as a means of noting non-verbal cues, gestures, and emotions. Participants seemed eager and keen to share their stories with me.

The second interview occurred approximately two weeks after the initial interview. During the second interview participants were asked questions on the kinds of experiences that have significantly shaped their perception/understanding of nature, and their education efforts. I asked any follow up questions for clarification from the first interview. The second interview was also sixty to ninety minutes in length. Again, participants seemed engaged and content in sharing their experiences with me. At the time of the second interview participants were provided with a transcript of the first interview. Two weeks after the second interview, participants were provided with a transcript of the second interview. The transcripts were distributed to the participants by email, or another method as requested by each participant (e.g., OneDrive).

Transcription

The data was transcribed immediately after each interview. Transcription was completed using a word processing program, and all audio-recorded interviews were fully transcribed verbatim. The names of each participant, and those they mentioned were replaced with pseudonyms. Once the data was transcribed, each transcript went to the corresponding participant for member checking. Six of the seven participants reviewed their transcripts, and four requested minor changes or clarification. One participant requested that part of their narrative which discussed a challenging part of their life be taken out. Another participant re-wrote a few sections of their narrative as they felt what they had spoken in their interview did not accurately express their viewpoint. All requested changes were made. After receiving their

transcripts, I engaged in preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2008). The initial analysis included making notes and comments of first impressions that seemed significant.

Data Analysis

Analysis began with reading the transcripts over as a whole, creating notes of first impressions, and referencing those made in the preliminary exploratory analysis. From reading the transcripts over a few times, I gained a sense of the experiences that were significant in each participant's story, how they could be used to answer the research questions, and the best way to share the stories. I would step away for a day, and then revisit the transcripts again. This provided me time to think things over before moving on. It is important to note that I focused on one participant at a time to become fully immersed in their story. I read the transcripts again, while referencing the purpose of the study, research questions, and the interview protocol. At first, I attempted to engage in refined coding using NVivo, however I found it got in the way of me being able to better understand the essence of each participant's story. Therefore, I decided to "loosely" code larger chunks of text instead. All coding was completed using Microsoft word, and included phrases, sentences, concepts, patterns, and opinions.

Polkinghorne identifies two approaches to data analysis: narrative analysis and analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). Both informed the analysis process of this study. Firstly, narrative analysis takes an in-depth look at the story itself. This approach focuses on descriptions of events and experiences that are arranged into a story by means of a plot (Polkinghorne, 1995). The intended outcome is to move from paradigms embedded in the data to a story plot or series of stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). This approach allowed me to gain an understanding of the narrative structure. Specifically, it helped me understand the experiences of participants chronologically throughout their life. Narrative analysis is comparable to the three-dimensional

space approach that involves analysis for three elements: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's place) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This approach allows for the researcher to include diverse elements (e.g., personal, social, time, place) that embody a story (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The second approach is analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995) where the researcher analyses the data using a paradigmatic process (Polkinghorne, 1995). The paradigmatic analysis results in themes that are consistent across the story continuum, and across narratives. This process is like thematic analysis that analyzes “what” is spoken within the data (Riesman, 2008). Analysis of narrative allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of participant stories. Specifically, it helped me to understand the meaning within their narrative. A general inductive approach of analysis was used to construct the narrative themes and findings (Thomas, 2006). The purpose of a general inductive approach to analysis according to Thomas (2006) is threefold: “(a) condense raw textual data into a brief, summary format; (b) establish clear links between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and (c) develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data” (p. 237). This form of analysis was favorable as it is a “simple straightforward approach” that provides “systematic” procedures for analysing data that produce findings in context to research questions (Thomas, 2006, p. 237).

When constructing the narrative, I chose to tell each participant's story chronologically, from earliest memories to adulthood. Both the narrative analysis process and three-dimensional space approach were helpful in constructing the timeline that provided me with a rough skeleton to beginning writing the narrative from. I “re-storied” the data by identifying elements of each participant's story and arranging them into a logical sequence that has a beginning, middle, and

end. Firstly, I included the major events that occurred within the participants life. Within that I filled in other experiences, as well as the initial themes and topics that emerged from coding, and the analysis of narrative process. From the coding I was able to identify themes that provide answers to the research questions in each narrative. I chose not to explicitly state the themes prior to or within the narrative. Rather, I took a more natural and fluid approach by re-telling the participants story by emphasizing the experiences that relate and capture the themes. After each narrative, I provide an explicit analysis of the themes. Direct quotes were used to capture participants thoughts however they were arranged to construct the narrative. I focused on one participant at a time when constructing the narrative ensuring to highlight significant memories and emphasize the themes that I perceived to be important. My priority was to represent each participant in an authentic and meaningful way. Once the narrative was constructed participants were sent a copy to review to ensure their voice is maintained, and that the narrative provides accurate accounts of details and captures the essence of each participants experiences (Appendix G). Participants requested small minor changes which I gladly made. Overall, participants were happy and excited about reading their narrative, and appreciated being a part of my study.

This study utilized both inductive and deductive reasoning. Inductive was used to draw conclusion from the data. In each narrative, I emphasised the themes that I perceive to represent the experiences and understandings of each participant and provide answers to the research questions. The themes were constructed from the answers that participants provided to the interview questions. I used deductive reasoning to test place-based education design principles (Sobel, 2008) and the literature with the study data. I applied the theories and literature to the study data to make connections. My intention was to reach a conclusion at how this study aligns with this framework and literature within the field.

Following each narrative is an explicit narratives analysis that describe the themes that emerged from each participants' narrative. When constructing and re-telling the participant narratives I chose to implicitly embed the themes that emerged from the data and analysis process of each individual narrative opposed to explicitly stating the themes within each narrative. I choose to tell the stories this way to allow for the voice of participants to not be overshadowed. Therefore, the explicit narrative analysis highlights the themes that became apparent to me through analysing the data for each individual participant. The themes capture the perspectives, understandings, situations, and memories of participants that connect to the study research questions.

The themes that emerged from the explicit analyses of each participant contributed the key findings that I chose to share in chapter five. I looked across the theme findings of the explicit analyses in response to each of the research questions to help me determine what in the data could be considered a key finding. The explicit narrative analysis themes pertain to each individual narrative whereas the key findings in summary section of chapter five relate to more than one participant. The key findings are similar expressions, understandings, perspectives, situations and memories that occurred across participant narratives. I selected a key finding based on if it occurred in more than one participant narrative and their ability to contribute to the research questions. The key findings are articulated through the experiences and understandings of participants. Moreover, they are a way to explore commonalities that occurred from the participants combined.

Validity and Trustworthiness

This study incorporates validity and trustworthiness in multiple ways. Firstly, it constructs validity through triangulation by including two interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is also evident in the selection of participants, for this study seeks to sample participants in different educational capacities (e.g., environmental education, higher education, non-for-profit, environmental related organizations) (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Secondly, to establish validity, I positioned myself at the beginning of the study, so that the audience is aware of my background and biases. Creswell & Poth (2018) state that participants play an important role in validation. To this end, implemented member-checking and collaboration throughout data analysis and presentation of the findings (Creswell & Poth 2018). I generated validity by “generating a rich, thick description” by including thick descriptions of themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263). A researcher should revisit their raw data shortly after collection to include further descriptions that may aid in analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was sure to attend to the data no more than two days after it had been collected. Lastly, I used verbatim transcripts and audio records, which adds to the validity of the study as those are the raw words of participants.

There are four types of trustworthiness: “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pg. 243; Thomas, 2006). Amongst the four, credibility and dependability are the most pertinent for conducting data analysis (Thomas, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is presenting the study in an appropriate manner that enriches the study findings and establishing integrity for those external to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Considering that my study explores the experiences of participants, narrative in the most appropriate methodology for presenting the findings as it allows for participant voice to be maintained. To establish external credibility, I also I conducted supervisor debriefs, and member-checks. Dependability indicates the reliability of the study across time periods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Adhering to Tri-Council policy, this study has been approved by the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) of Queen's University. Before proceeding with this research, I obtained consent from each participant. Participants had the option of providing either written or verbal consent. In the Letter of Information (LOI) I disclosed the purpose of the study. I assured that participants were fully aware of the study before proceeding and that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any point in the study.

To protect the identities of participants, all collected data was de-identified and anonymized. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identity on all data files and in any dissemination of findings. The interview recordings were transcribed and then the recording was destroyed. The study data is stored on an encrypted hard drive on Queen's University servers. I will maintain copies of the transcripts for a minimum of 5 years and may use the data (with names removed) in subsequent research. Based on the depth and nature of experiences that participants share within the interviews there is a possibility that the information could be indirectly identifiable. I encouraged each participant to review all transcripts and to share any notes on any possible way that they could be identified based on what they have shared.

Participants were told that I plan to publish the results of this study in academic journals, and at conferences. I will not include personally identifying information in any dissemination of findings. Also, participants were made aware that I intend to use direct quotes but will not include any real names with quotes. To avoid lack of agreement in the disclosure of findings, I included embed member-checking strategies, to include and collaborate with the participant throughout the procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Clandinin, 2007). All seven participants reviewed their final narrative.

Chapter Four–Participant Narratives

This chapter presents seven individual narratives, one for each participant in this study. The narratives are essential for exploring the experiences and understandings that influence EOE educators. To authentically represent the voice of each participant, direct quotations have been used. The quotations have been re-arranged and organized in a way that captures and effectively communicates the story of each participant.

Following each narrative is an explicit narrative analysis that highlights the themes that emerged from each participants narrative. When constructing the narratives, I chose to implicitly communicate the themes that emerged through the stories and experiences expressed by participants. This section explicitly highlights those themes that became apparent through analysing the data. The themes capture the significant perspectives, understandings, situations, and memories that connect to the study research questions.

Clay

Clay described his childhood without any hesitation: “I lived and breathed it...it was camp all the time.” For Clay, camp was transformational in “carving a personal identity,” and forming a bond between people, the land, and our fellow travelers on Earth. Growing up, Clay did not read the typical children’s novels: “I read a children’s book about David Thomson, I was all in all the time. Framed by my experiences at children summer camp. I was one of those kids.”

Clay first “attended camp when he was six.” His parents understood the “value” in sending their children to camp, but they were “urban dwellers” and did not “share the same interest” for the experiences he was to discover. By age ten, he was spending “two months” at summer camp. Clay described that his character was shaped out of time spent at camp more so than his months at school: “My identity was carved out of that experience [camp], and very little

out of school...none of that [school] seemed to be important to me in terms of carving a personal identity.”

The “heritage of place” was revealed at the camps Clay attended in the Canadian Shield where his passion for the land, animals, and outdoors was awakened. With each summer, Clay became more invested in the camp experience, his imagination ran wild in combination with the explorers he had read about. Each fall, as school began, Clay also began dreaming of his next summer at camp. In the 60’s, Clay’s dyslexia was not well understood, therefore, learning at school became challenging. In contrast, he excelled at camp activities, especially canoeing where felt like he belonged and could fully develop. All school year, Clay longed for the moment that he could slice his paddle into the lake, feel the gentle rock of the canoe, and glide through the open water. The birth of Clays identity as a lifelong canoeist and tripper was clearly formed from his camp experiences. Canoeing became more than a leisure activity— it became a vehicle to exploring place on multiday trips. Paddling and tripping opened a whole new way for Clay to feel and understand his relationship to the world.

Clay shared a vivid memory from when he was twelve, and by this age he was a better paddler than his peers. He boasted “no surprise because I am still the same [laughs].” The group was near the “end of a difficult area of canoe tripping...it was a lot of portaging, small legs, big portages, and we were in the man-made dam.” Clay was “enjoying the fact” that he was “with these two older guys who were probably twenty-two and under, and they made me feel like an equal in terms of the rigor of the day, the hardship of the day of paddling.” Clay felt like he was an “equal” to the leaders who he admired: “I’ve always remembered that as how valued I felt in that moment, and the nature angle on that is, it was a great hard day of canoe tripping and at that stage, I was sort of relishing that, but I was made somehow, whether they even are aware of it, to

feel like I was like the third staff member among the group of twelve-year old boys.” In his mind, he was a “man of the North a 12-year-old boy who could paddle and portage with the big boys.” That memory left an impact on Clay, “In that moment, it made me feel like I really belonged, I was part of something, part of something bigger than myself.”

Clay had been watching and learning from his leaders all along. He grew from the twelve-year-old boy to a leader that had been shaped by the leaders who preceded him. When Clay was a young adult, he was hired on a camp team for the summer months. During the rest of the year, Clay had shoulder jobs with the school board, and outdoor programs. On his down time, Clay would go on month long canoe trips with friends. Once Clay returned home, he had contracts lined up to guide group canoe trips. At the age of twenty-four, Clay had two degrees and was surprised to be hired at a post-secondary institution to teach outdoor education in the physical education department. Close in age to his undergraduate students, at this point, Clay asked himself, “What was worth doing? What the hell am I going to do that is relevant?” The answer to his question was “Teaching canoeing was a means to lead us to bigger questions about how we must learn to dwell well on the Earth.”

Clay shared that “in the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s and 50’s outdoor education was grounded more in skill development and character development, but as we move into a new tone, people might say the Anthropocene or what have you, outdoor education and our interactions with our environment couldn’t be more paramount in terms of instilling a world view that allows us to move forward in the world.” The job of an outdoor educator for Clay was “lofty...if you just want people to be safe, it seemed like a ridiculously low bar.” He felt that there was more to outdoor education than hard skills, risk management, and returning from a field trip safely. If the goal was to ensure a safe return that “set the bar amazingly low.” In Clay’s mind, the outdoors

was neither a gymnasium, nor an arena for challenges. Opportunities for learning experientially were missed if the focus of outdoor education was on solely “counting kilometers or how hard was it.” Rather, as culture moves into a time where we must consider Earth and our “relationship to it in a new way...we are needing to become ecological beings where we truly embrace notions that we are of the earth.”

Clay was teaching in the physical education department, however his aspirations for outdoor education were beyond the course curriculum and expectations: “My own aspirations, if you will, we're more grounded in big ideas and big themes that connected experience to the culture we were living in, and I've always grasped onto the phrase of cultivating ecological consciousness.” His practice was grounded in themes and big ideas that connected traveling on the land to experiences that explore cultural identity: “To connect ideas to broader cultural issues, in other words, outdoor education was connected to the world we live in... outdoor education was a broad way of looking at our connection to our natural environment.”

When Clay began teaching, there was a “burgeoning understanding of a deep ecology or an eco-philosophy that was grounded in the idea that we have to change how we live, and it's a pretty big challenge.” He “worked that nerve, if you will, into the teaching of outdoor education.” Clay “turned to philosophical issues more than outdoor theory and skill sets and organized my teaching more that way...I found a home for that inquiry in the literature of eco-philosophy, and deep ecology.” Through reading books on these topics, and subjective understanding of his own life, Clay came to the idea of embracing “Earth as a living being and part of us,” and the “oneness of that relationship.”

Clay wondered how he could orient his practice to create opportunities for students to experience and realize their relationship with Earth. Through retrospective understanding of his

own life, canoe tripping had provided Clay with an appreciation for Earth, and guidance for how he should live. Clay felt that canoeing tripping would be the best means to expose his students to a relational understanding of Earth. To other educators, “at times it might have looked like I was just teaching canoeing ... there was a very different exercise going on.... teaching canoeing was a means to lead us to bigger questions about how we must dwell well on the earth.”

Clay was not your typical university professor. On the first day of class, Clay would introduce himself as a “travel guide.” He expressed to students, “You may not know what a travel guide looks like or is, but I’m not a university professor in a lecturing kind of way that you’re used to... my background is in guiding canoe trips, so I’m going to be a travel guide, and that’s how this university course is going to be conceived and actualized at least by me.” Clay brought his passion for paddling, tripping, camp, and the Canadian Shield to the course, and he encouraged others do the same. The course would not look like other courses students were enrolled in because Clay was a travel guide, and not a lecturer “who tells you what you need to know.” He described, “Almost all my classroom experience involved some kind of trips from nine days to weekends to even day trips, and those experiences really set the stage for a really positive classroom experience.” These field practices were integral to a positive classroom environment: “The classroom experiences were so intently informed by relationships formed in the field.” Clay’s practice guiding trips, outside of an education context, and often month-long, provided him with an important understanding of the role of the travel guide as a cultural and experiential inspirer.

The structure of these trips was important. Clay described that if executed correctly, a trip should have a “big fat middle, a middle that swells.” The beginning of the trip “is an adjustment and getting know you and perhaps an awkward kind of time,” and “the end can be

very awkward when you're leaving a trip.” What is most important according to Clay, is the middle of the trip: “If a guide has set a really wise ambience is this middle that is very, very strong, and in that middle is where you are really in the present, living in a kind of sub-culture that a group creates.”

Clay shared a memory where he took students on a walk through the forest to discuss the course material around a fire. In his words, “that is traditional learning” being in a “classroom is not.” Following class, Clay received an email from a student after which shared that they had the best sleep of their life after walking through the forest. Clay said, ‘Heck we just went for a walk in the forest!’ This memory is significant to Clay as a travel guide in that creating opportunities for students is important, and then leaving space for nature to do the rest. As a travel guide, Clay “sets the right ambience” for these profound connections with Earth to open in the lives of students. Further, connections are possible even during class time, it doesn’t have to be on an extended trip.

Clay was often “frustrated with the insufficient understanding of learning” that was happening on field trips. It is important that a guide acknowledge the transformational, and powerful dynamics of the trip. In his words, “People were almost entering a kind of a subculture that was so much more an Earth presence.” What resulted was the “Earths presence brought to their lives in quite profound ways.” A significant responsibility of the travel guide is to create an ambience where you nurture student relationships with Earth. Instead of teaching students, Clay took the approach of “having students unlearn” what society had expected of them. Clay described that he had them unlearn time; his role was to “set an ambience” to have “students realize that they could live in body time and break away from mechanical time.”

Since the early 2000's Clay has embraced the Norwegian Philosophy of "friluftsliv," meaning free air, open air life. The two tenants of friluftsliv are "nature is first, that you are grounded in your ability to embrace the spirituality of being one or being well with nature and being joyous." Clay became acquainted with this philosophy when reading about Scandinavian approaches to outdoor education. Since then, he embraces it by spending time with Norwegian scholars, and making contributions to the field through authorship. Friluftsliv is distinguished from mainstream outdoor education through an "inherent wisdom that the outdoors is good for the soul and good for us." Friluftsliv is making its way into the English language, and educational practice, much to the delights and efforts of Clay. He continues to embrace friluftsliv by "being well in nature, being well for yourself, and also with the Earth."

Clay conducted "a mini research project during a hiking trip in Norway." He brought around a tape recorder, to capture responses to the question, "What is friluftsliv?" A friend of his was asking the same question, and an interviewee, responding to the question, "held up a thermos and said, "This is friluftsliv!" This response implied that friluftsliv involves " being with family and friends in a beautiful setting and lingering, you're out for a ski or a walk, you're picking mushrooms or berries, but you stop for a hit of thermos and a bit of conversation." Clay shared, and ever since then, "I've been inclined to carry a thermos with me as... I thought that was so great."

There is a "global idiom...putting value in miles...counting kilometers...how far was it?" In its early manifestation, outdoor education was connected to the "rigorous journey." In contrast to this approach to outdoor education, Clays says "there so much to be gained by lingering." He describes, "I hope we move in that direction because it takes us down a path that I think allows us to have a more place-responsive way of being."

Clay shared a significant memory from his adolescence that has impacted his teaching practice. His biology teacher was at the front of the class preparing to give a demonstration while each student was handed a box with a live frog inside. The teacher instructed that everyone “piff the frog” (to put a pin down the frog’s spinal cord) to kill the frog instantly. If “preformed incorrectly, the frog will let you know.” The teacher was at the front carrying out a demonstration of the exercise, and the frog let out a loud bellow. Consequently, the teacher was unsuccessful at piffing their frog. Clay vividly remembers the teacher having an emotional breakdown over the frog, quickly gaining himself back and then said “Okay, now get to it!” Clay and his peers were “dumbfounded” over what had taken place and that they were now about to “piff our own frog.”

This experience has stayed with Clay for last fifty years, and only recently he has been able to unpack what really happened. Clay realized the “incredible power of science” and how “humans are asked to be objective beings” and “not honor anything about their subjectivity in the world.” In the name of science, the teacher was asked to be objective to the frog, a living creature, and not feel for its life. The teacher struggled to role model his objectivity to the students. In that moment, “The teacher clearly showed emotions that he wasn't supposed to show as an objective scientist”—the teacher, subjectively, felt an emotional connection to the frog.

Retrospectively, looking back on this experience as an educator, Clay said that it would have been far more interesting if that teacher had said instead, “I think it's time that we talk about why I had that emotional breakdown in hurting this frog, as he inadvertently took the class there anyway.” However, the teacher chose to ignore his breakdown by pretending it didn’t happen. In Clay’s perspective, “We turned away from what could have been a good environmental inquiry or environmental studies class, and we turned to environmental science....the frog thing, it was

just in your face, those boys, of which I was one, we needed to talk about why our teacher lost it in that moment.”

Clay is “most at home in the Blue Lake and rocky shore of the Canadian Shield, and I’ve not wandered from it too far” that represents three quarters of Canada. The often opportunity to encounter a “moose,” and the “greatest joy being on the water and seeing an otter” affirms Clay’s connection to place. When Clay wanders from the Canadian Shield he feels “psychologically disoriented.” He described that “you can embrace and love the planet, but it is differentially understood, and I think you’re not native to all the planet, you’re native to places and parts of the planet.” That place being the Canadian Shield for Clay.

Clay perceives the relationship between “human and more-than-human” as a “spiritual quest... at the heart of our being is a great mystery to feel connected and to feel belonging, and I’ve never turned to religious doctrine for this, and don’t feel myself as a religious person, but do feel that I am a spiritual person and strive for some sense of understanding and becoming within the world is a paramount central human quest.” He feels that the relationship between “human and more-than-human” is “the central motivator for the travel guide in my opinion.” As an educator, having “the glorious opportunity to feel that you can help people with that same quest by setting an ambiance where these kinds of things can happen, is the central goal of the travel guide.”

Clay described that his relationship to animals, and the heritage of place is stronger than that of flora and fauna. He laughed, “I would be a pretty shitty naturalist!” Clay painted a picture of his “imaginative archeological steak” in action—he had arrived in “the arctic and the ridge ahead was likely a thoroughfare for early peoples and animals to get to Great Slave Lake... I saw these imaginary native groups walking the ridge line in the distance.” At the same time, his

friends were excited about some plants. Clay's imagination is not "stirred by that...it goes in one ear, and out the other."

Clay's understanding of the "human and more-than-human" relationship has been shaped by many experiences, but his one about a wolf "boards on the profound for me and keeps the magic and mystery super strong." Clay was in Labrador with a group of friends, paddling up some headwater lakes. Where they were, the water was shallow, and "a white wolf walked across the water." The wolf turned around and had a "good look" at Clay. With courage, the group continued paddling in the direction of the wolf. The wolf stopped, and in Clay's words, "boy, I got that real stare..." and after a few seconds, the wolf went on its way.

The group continued paddling onwards. Having planned the route prior, they were headed towards a waterfall in a gorge, and at that time, they would need to put on their spray skirts to prevent the canoe from sinking. The water was still tame; they knew that "the river demeanor" was going to change quickly. Clay remembers the group being in a "laid-back mood," and not scouting the rapids to their fullest extent. The first canoe, that Clay was in, "was seduced into running a challenging rapid...I thought oh no we have got to run that shoot, it is a little too big, but we have to run it." Consequently, without the spray skirts on, the canoe sank in the waves. Clay remembers the "group having to do a challenging rescue of the canoe, and we were not too far from the waterfall."

Looking back on this wolf encounter in the shallow waters of Labrador, Clay wonders "I can't help but think as crazy as it sounds... but there must have been something in that wolf that was a warning or maybe looking at me and going, 'you stupid human, you're going to get in deep shit down there.'" This moment "speaks to a relationship with the other that I carry with me for

sure.” Clay mentioned that although he will never know for certain, “I just feel like there was something in that.”

A more “placid and surreal, not as knicker gripping...each day, I look into my cat’s eyes and ask, ‘What are you thinking?’” Clay thanks his cat for being in his life and for keeping “the mystery alive.” Clay assures that “it doesn't have to be a wolf in central Labrador” to affirm the relationship between human and other, “it can also be the ones before you all the time.”

Explicit Analysis: Clay

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Clay's understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Clay’s narrative include a) Blue Lake, Rocky Shore, b) Canoeing to Connectedness, c) The Subjective Educator, and d) The Role of the Travel Guide.

Blue Lake, Rocky Shore

The theme, Blue Lake, Rocky Share encompasses Clay’s love of camp and relationship to place. Firstly, camp was instrumental in “carving an identity” for Clay. At camp Clay was able to be himself— an experience he valued more than school. Camp was significant in building relationships with other campers, and leaders. Clay described an experience where he was able to keep up to his camp leaders in terms of the “rigour and hardship” of paddling during a difficult portage. In that moment, Clay felt that he was “one of the leaders.” These early experiences at camp are significant for Clay as they are the foundation for his career in EOE education.

Not only was camp significant in foraging relationships with people, but also with the world around him especially heritage of place. Clay shared several life experiences that included being in the Canadian shield, canoe tripping, and his archeological streak. Clay’s perception and understanding of nature has been influenced by his connection to the Canadian Shield that started

from attending camp as a young boy, and since then, has been continually shaped throughout his life. In his traveling life, Clay has not “wandered too far from the Canadian Shield.” Clay’s love for the Canadian Shield and sharing that with others through activities like canoeing and field tripping were a significant part of Clay’s narrative.

Canoeing to Connectedness

As illustrated in the narrative, canoe tripping is a significant part of Clay’s connection and understanding of nature. Clay shared a particular canoe trip where he had a close encounter with a wolf. He and the wolf engaged in eye contact, and what followed was Clay’s canoe sinking after running a challenging shoot. This memory speaks to Clay’s perception of the human-nature connection in which he describes as “something there” and a “spiritual quest.”

Clay was hired as a university professor for outdoor education shortly after finishing his masters. He was part of the physical education department, but his vision for outdoor education was beyond what was historically understood as outdoor education. Since his childhood at camp, and tripping experiences in his teenage years and adulthood, canoe tripping has provided Clay with opportunities to experience and understand the world in a different way. Clay chose to bring this same understanding to his students.

Clay found inspiration in philosophical understandings of the environment, and humans’ relationship to it. For Clay, his efforts in outdoor education were about having students consider the human-nature relationship in “new ways” and becoming “ecological beings” that embrace the notion that “we are of the earth.” Canoeing and tripping was a means to bring these philosophical understandings to the lives of students.

The Subjective Educator

Clay feels strongly about honoring one's "subjectivity in the world." A memory from his youth shaped his perspective of the value in subjective understanding such as how the emotional and personal are integral for shaping human relationships with nature. Clay's education efforts include allowing students to include their own subjective understanding.

The Role of the Travel Guide

Clay perceives his teaching practice as though he is a travel guide. The actualization of himself as travel guide is significant to his outdoor education efforts. All of his teaching included some kind of fieldtrip. His approach was not to tell students what they need to know, rather to provide opportunities for them to experience the world around them in a way that opened possibilities for new understandings of their relationship to nature.

Clay emphasized the structure of these trips as being important, and that it is up to the guide to "execute them correctly." The middle is the most important part of the trip, including the guides responsibility "to set a wise ambiance." Understanding relationships between human-nature is a central motivator for the travel guide according to Clay.

Terra

Terra's earliest memory is "being stuck inside on a rainy day and looking out the patio doors... I was mad that my brother got to be outside, and I couldn't be." Terra feels as though she was old enough to talk at the time of this memory, but maybe is remembering the inner conversation she was having with herself. She describes this instance as "showing what was more valuable to me...he was so privileged that he got to be outside, and I was so angry that I had to be inside." Terra was kept inside from "where I wanted to be most, in nature." This memory shows that from an early age, Terra "valued nature," and was attracted to the outdoors.

When Terra was nine years old the movie *Dancing with Wolves* came out. The “injustices in the movie, towards animals, Indigenous peoples, and the lack of respect for nature” has had a lasting impact on Terra. When the movie finished, “I just felt like I couldn't even pick myself up off the floor when the movie was over because I was so sad.” At only nine years old, she was aware of the injustice, violence, and pain that occurred in the movie. Terra had grown up believing that all living beings have a “reason and right to live.” In combination with her own subjective understanding of nature and philosophy of respect, Terra shared that even before witnessing this movie she desperately wanted to “care for the world and all living beings,” and “still feels the same way today.” Presently, Terra has “two spiders that live in my shower.” She has not done anything with them; “I'm just like... I need to kill them just because it's my shower, I just have a problem with it, so I just shower with them.” Terra cannot recall one experience that set her on this path of caring deeply for nature, and the world at large. From an early age, “I just always knew I wanted to treat the planet with respect.”

A significant part of Terra's childhood is walking through the woods with her grandfather: “He collected bate and sold minnows, and I would just go on the trails with him to go and check his traps, and he would point out the different types of trees based on their bark or their leaves... I remember his knowledge of nature.” Terra was keen to learn from her grandfather, “it wasn't just a pleasant walk in the woods on a nice day, there was something to learn and some knowledge to hold on to.” Terra described her grandfather's teaching as “factual learning about the medicines in nature.” For example, “juniper tea which helps with bladder infections.... or jewel weed which helps with rashes, especially poison ivy...and I was always in poison ivy [laughs]!” What stood out to Terra about her grandfather's teaching is that he was not explaining the “job” of each species but rather what they could “give.” Her grandfather did not

convey that we should “take from the plant” instead that plants could “contribute to our lives.” Terra’s grandfather’s knowledge has “shaped my own respect for nature.”

Terra comes “from a family of outdoorsmen and farmers.” She lives in her childhood home on the family farm, and her grandparents still live down the field from her own home. The land is beautiful with “golden fields, rolling hills, patches of forests, trails, cliffs, a waterfall, and a winding road with old buildings that all leads down to a lake.” There is a “little bit of everything that I love.” She vividly remembers venturing down the field as a child to play on the hay bales with the neighborhood kids. Most of her childhood was spent outside as it was the “best place to be... there was always something fun to do with nature.”

Terra often “stretched the limits” of her alone time in nature. She went swimming, camping, and canoeing by herself. Retrospectively, looking at these experiences, although they were unique and incredible memories, she was a lot “naiver and braver back then” than she is now. In her teenage years, Terra also began venturing into the forest on her own for walks. Often covering three quarters of the farmland and forest by taking different paths and sections. Terra was appreciative of the opportunity that being present in nature provided for her to “daydream and talk to my imaginary friends...sing at the top of my lungs... work through whatever problem was on my mind.” The forest was where Terra “got to be me and aspired to be myself,” and letting go of whatever she was holding back. By the time she made it home from a walk, whatever Terra was thinking, dreaming, or imagining would be “settled,” and then she was able to “step back to her everyday life.”

When Terra left home, she chose to work in a “tropical island.” It was a completely different terrain there— “taro plants growing, and rice fields, and canoeing through green mountains.” Terra felt “safe in nature” but didn’t feel a deep connection to that place. Reflecting

on her time on the island, Terra was mostly “using it [nature] at that point where I was just taking the scenery and taking the adventure opportunities and things like that” opposed to nurturing a connection with the land. The island was nowhere like the deep connection she feels for her farm.

At the difficult points in her life, Terra craved to affirm her relationship to the “living beings” of the world. Terra connects to nature by “making sure that I walk on grass in bare feet, laying in the sand on the beach without a towel, pressing my cheek up against the bark of a tree, and just reconnecting with living nature, connecting with other living organisms, and just feeling that there is a relationship there.” Throughout her life, Terra has had to do “a great deal of healing.” An important part of healing for Terra is “reconnecting with nature.” She finds comfort in knowing that she does not have to “solve problems on my own...nature plays a huge role in that process.” For example, healing is “not just about organizing thoughts” or having the “space and quiet to do so.” Instead, “nature is actually doing some of the healing.” She has discovered it is less her mind finding solutions, and more of nature healing her: “The natural world is making me feel better, it's like I'm exchanging my worries and anxieties for the peace and calm...I can't explain what is making me feel better or making me feel healed, but I attribute that to the natural environment. It's not me working it out while I'm walking, it's literally the natural world that is healing me...Nature has saved me many times and healed me.”

When Terra required “healing and a safe place” she chose to go camping in the forest. Terra and her children “started out with a tent, and then thankfully after a week, I bought a trailer.” The three camped on and off for the entire summer but were at the lake for the entire month of June. Being in nature “was the only place I could be...the only place I didn't have agony.” While nature was healing Terra, it provided wonderful experiences for her children:

“The camping trip had a dual purpose.” She taught her children how to canoe, fish and identify different species.

As a parent, Terra makes a point to instill within her children a respect and care for nature just like Terra’s grandfather’s lessons with her. For example, when she was a child, Terra “pulled grass out and tore leaves off the trees.” With her own children she is “a lot more conscious of the fact that they are living organisms” thus encourages them to instead pick leaves off the ground. Terra tries to “pass on...not just lessons that I was taught from my grandfather about the types of trees or how to identify plants, but lessons that I've learned throughout my life that I can pass on to them [her children].”

There is “little” that Terra needs to feel connected to nature such as “stepping outside my house and standing on the grass,” becoming mindful of her surroundings, attuning her senses accordingly. In those moments she is “not thinking or touching... just soaking everything in through my senses.” Her connection is to just be present: “You just have to go stand in it [nature].” Terra is most attracted to trees: “Trees are very healing for me... it is really important I connect with them. It feels good to my body and my spirit.” Terra expressed concern when she stated that “isolating ourselves from nature is a real problem really, I think it just takes away from our human experience... cutting off that connection to this living organism which is our planet. I just think it's detrimental to the way we think and feel.”

Terra expressed that she “approaches most of life with a balance.” This emphasis on balance also translates in the way she raises her children: “I don't necessarily focus on one thing in particular, like I have to find a way to implement environmentalism in my curriculum, or I have to make sure my kids respect this. We just sort of live what we believe.” Terra believes in “respecting nature” and that “having a relationship with nature is important.” She describes that

her approach to instill an understanding within her children does not come from a developed lesson plan or curriculum, rather “we just take care of the environment and live at our beliefs in every way that we can all day, and it's not like a super strict, super conscious focus per-se.”

Terra’ educational approach is learning from “what is happening in the moment.” In other words, “what lessons can we learn in this moment with what we are doing and the things that were interacting with.” A lot of the time, the learning is “sort of survival skills.” There is no ridged plan or lesson; “whatever is around us... we talk about what we’re seeing and how we can respect and interact with it.” In her view, this approach is valuable because it is “connecting their learning to what they are experiencing around them.” In short, her kids are “learning from life.”

Reflecting on her own educational experiences, Terra wishes she could “change what I was taught.” In public school she remembers learning about the “ozone layer in a doom and gloom” context, and “Earth Day... the one day out of the school year where you pick up garbage.” She remembers environmentalism being a “dirty word” associated with “tree-huggers” and “people who wanted you to stop driving your polluting vehicle.” Moving forward, Terra hopes for “less structure, and negative political overtones.” Terra wants progress to emphasize compassion and curiosity like “let’s just care, let's just do this because we are interested, let's do this because this is our environment.” In other words, she wishes for a more “natural focus” on just being outside because it is enjoyable: “Let’s just learn about ants crawling through the sand because it is joyous, and let's collect garbage because we care.”

When Terra lived in the city her children’s school was a twenty-minute walk from her home. However, the commute would often turn into an “hour long walk because my five-year-old was rescuing worms from puddles.” Terra would attempt to hurry him along in order to arrive at school on time. At some point, she asked herself, “What is more important, getting him

to kindergarten on time, or following through with his passion, and inquiry?” Consequently, you “learn how to walk slow.” Terra emphasizes being present “in the moment, what lessons can we learn in this moment, with what we are doing, and the things we are interacting with.” Part of this is as Terra describes, “learning to leave the house earlier and walk slow.” Moving slowly, provides the opportunity to “observe and reflect.”

Growing up on the farm means that Terra has witnessed the struggle, disrespect, and the hardship that farmers endure, especially from the lack of public understanding for the industry. To help her community and contribute back to them, she pursued a PhD. Her research focus is in “agriculture literacy which is the idea that the public should have an understanding about agriculture and its impact on society.” Terra is working towards “redefining what agriculture is and reacquainting people with the term...people might have a negative reaction to that word, but it's time to sort revive it, and I don't think it has a replacement.” She hopes that “if there is more public knowledge and understanding of agriculture then the 2% of the people that grow our food could feel supported in that industry.” Terra expressed agriculture literacy as “an open door that I could run through and try to make change.”

Explicit Analysis: Terra

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Terra’s understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE education efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Terra’s narrative include a) The Woods, b) Nature as Healer, c) Being Present in Nature, d) Real World Learning, and e) Innate Respect for Nature.

The Woods

Terra's experiences in the woods are significant to her relationship and understanding of nature. She recalled fond memories of walking with her grandfather in the woods, and how his knowledge shaped her own "appreciation for nature." Terra described his teaching as "factual things about our surroundings...and what they could give us... it's contribution to just our lives." Throughout her life, the woods have been a place where Terra sought clarity, healing, comfort and safety. She feels most connected to the trees in the woods and enjoys sharing the place with her children.

Nature as Healer

Terra spoke frequently about the healing aspect of nature, especially in the context of her relationship to nature. For instance, the "healing and clearing of thoughts in nature is part of my connection to nature." Terra was able to recall how nature has helped in her healing at different stages in her life. For example, in her teenage years, Terra described going for walks in the woods to "work through" whatever was on her mind. At some point Terra came to understand that healing in nature wasn't exclusively because she had the "space" in the woods to clear her mind. Rather, nature plays an active part of the healing process. Recently, Terra sought "healing and a safe place," and she chose nature, because "it was the only place I could be, is outside, It's like the only place I didn't have agony." She describes this as a defining moment in her life.

Being Present in Nature

When I asked, "Where do you feel most connected to nature," Terra's response gave the impression that she needs very little. As soon as she steps outside her house, Terra feels connected to nature. In her words, "I don't personally need to do anything to feel connected other than just be present in nature and in the surrounding." There are things that Terra does

intentionally to connect herself such as “walk on grass in bare feet, I’ll lay and stand on the beach without a towel, I’ll press my cheek up against the bark of a tree.” Terra’s connection to nature is to be present in nature and allow your senses to attune to the surroundings.

Real World Learning

As illustrated in the narrative, Terra’s environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts are expressed in the way that she raises her children. Terra described her teaching approach as “nature based” and “philosophy of education” as “learning about what is happening in the moment.” For example, this approach is grounded in the question, “What lessons can we learn in this moment with what we are doing and the things that were interacting with?” There is no ridged plan or lesson, instead, learning includes “whatever is around us...we talk about what we’re seeing and how we can respect and interact with it.” This approach is valuable to Terra because it is “connecting their learning to what they are experiencing around them... my kids are learning from life.”

When I asked, “How have your experiences and opportunities influenced and shaped your present environmental, outdoors, and experiential education efforts,” Terra responded, “I have approached most of my life with a balance.” Terra explained that she does not look for ways to “implement environmentalism in my curriculum.” Instead, Terra and her children “live what we believe.” For example, “I just know that I believe respecting nature, and having a relationship with it is important, and so we just incorporate that into our everyday.”

Innate Respect for Nature

Terra made clear that from a young age she just knew how nature should be treated: “I knew how I wanted to treat the planet and how people should, and so I feel like it still continues to be that way.” Her view was that “everything has a spirit or a reason to live, a right to

live.” At the time of the interview, Terra had two spiders that were living in her shower. In her words, “I haven't even done anything with them cause I'm just like... I need to kill them just because it's my shower, I just have a problem with it, so I just shower with them.” This example demonstrates Terra's understanding of nature as other living beings who have a “right to live,” and the sense of respect she feels for them.

Reed

Reed has always been “aware of my own backyard and neighbourhood.” He described, “cardinals, robins, blue jays, squirrels, and toads” as a few of the living beings that stand out in the memories of his childhood. Reed was “extra observant” of the natural world and “more so than my peers.” He remembers the “grasshoppers in September” bouncing up from the grass in a “vacant lot just before the school.” He “wasn't taken anywhere... it was just an awareness of my own neighbourhood” that nurtured his relationship with nature. From a young age, Reed has “always had sensitivity towards my natural surroundings” in which he feels “comfort and at home.”

Reed described that he was “on my own” in discovering and nurturing his relationship with nature. His parents were not interested in the natural world in the same ways that he was, yet they enrolled him into cubs, and he continued through to scouts. During this time, he was introduced to strong leaders whose “example had an influence” on me him, especially his awareness of the natural world. He vividly remembers that “one guy who took us winter camping with the big Egyptian cotton tent and the stoves, and that was just such an experience to do.” The “quiet attitude and respect” that other scout leaders displayed for the natural world “certainly gelled with me, and it made sense, so I admired them.”

When Reed was roughly seventeen, while on his paper route, he approached a “landowner to get permission to walk on his property early in the morning.” The man said “yes,” and Reed ventured alone onto the property at “4 o’clock in the morning.” It was springtime, and “in the early hours of the morning when most teenagers would be asleep,” Reed was surprised to find that the rest of the natural world was very much awake. He remembers “the cacophony of birds sounds, seeing a racoon on the trail, the rising sun.” Reed watched the “transition from dawn to dusk.” He was “amazed at how everything was so alive,” and “how much life was out there both what I could see and hear.” Reed did not return to the property again: “I just went the one time and really enjoyed and stored it.” The experience was “wonderful and rhapsodic.” An important element of this experience for Reed was that he was on his own: “I wasn't distracted by human conversations, I was fully focused on my surroundings.”

The summer when Reed was twenty-one was a “definitive year.” Reed had eight job offers, and much to the horror of his parents, he chose to work at a summer camp. They did not understand that out of all the offers, he chose to work as a camp counsellor. The camp was run by “a legend in the outdoor education field which attracted an amazingly gifted group of staff.” This position opened a whole new world for Reed: “It was like, oh my god, I’ve come home in terms of combining my love of the environment with teaching.” This experience was the “best summer of my life.” Reed returned to work at the camp for four summers in which he “developed a real love of canoeing and working with children.”

Reed was “struggling to find purpose” during his third year of university. At the same time, his previous position offered him an outdoor and environmental education job offer with the Conservation Authority. Reed sat with the decision of whether to return to university or accept the position. Deep down he “felt like he shouldn’t return to school.” To seek guidance,

Reed went and spoke to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. He explained the job offer to the Dean, who then replied, “What the hell are you doing here? Go back there and get that job before they change their mind!” It affirmed what he had been feeling inside—the outdoor education position was where his heart was at. Working for the Conservation Authority “opened the doors to outdoor education” for Reed, a start of a lifelong passion.

Reed’s “first classroom was 1100 acres in size.” The kinds of activities he engaged students in were both “different and memorable.” One of his favourite activities was night hikes. In the middle of night hikes there is a “solo walk” where students walk alone for roughly three minutes. This practice was a “big deal” for students. Reed made a point to get them to “relax...don’t hold your breath...really enjoy this.” Sensory activities were also important in Reed’s practice. For example, having students “hold their hands up to the ears to show how hearing becomes enhanced.” At the time, Reed said he wasn’t consciously thinking that he must expose students to “wonder and awe,” however that was precisely what he was doing. “Imagine,” Reed said, “if I was consciously aware of this all along.” He questions what more he could have achieved.

Reed shared a significant night hike memory. There were three thirteen-year-old boys out of a class of seventh graders who were particularly interested in the experience and asked if they could go out again. Being that it was almost bedtime, Reed politely said no, and was glad to hear they enjoyed the hike so much. After the boys went to sleep, Reed told their teacher about what the boys had said. The teacher responded by looking Reed “square in eye and said, ‘If you want to take them back out, go ahead!’” Doing what the teacher suggested, Reed “woke the boys up at midnight and I took them out for an hour and a half.” Post Reed teaching at the centre, he returned for a conference presentation where he shared the story of the midnight night hike. To

his surprise, “a hand came up, and one of the teachers was one of the three boys was there.” Everyone at the presentation was “blown away by this formative moment for this kid-now-teacher.”

Like the night hikes, Reed also took students on “dawn walks” that involved kids woken up at 3:30am to witness the progression from dusk to dawn. The dawn walk evolved into witnessing the progression from a canoe, followed by “breakfast on the shoreline facing the sun.” Reed acknowledged that some students would sleep right through it, and others would be blown away. For Reed to “offer the opportunity” for wonder and awe “Is all I can do.” He doesn’t force, instead he provides these experiences, and “hope it clicks.” Reed shared a quote that resonates most with him and sums why he provides these experiences, “You don’t need a scientific breakthrough to tell us what to do, it is simply a matter of awe, learning to stand in awe of it.” Reed provides engaging opportunities for kids to pause and “see if they can soak it in and have an awareness of others that they would not otherwise have.” It is all about “opening yourself to others...realising you are a part of it.”

Reed took a year off from the Conservation Authority to return to school and get a teaching certification. While completing his Bachelor of Education, he also took the Outdoor and Experiential Education (OEE) credit. While he returned to the Conservation Authority for seven months, he subsequently landed a job with a school board at an outdoor centre. Around the same time, he found an opening at Bark Lake and spent thirteen summers there. He started out as a “resource counselor” where he would facilitate groups of seventeen-eighteen-year old’s in developing programming based on the activities offered by the camp. Reed describes this position as “amazing and fantastic experiential education.” After five years in that role, he

became the director of the leadership program. Reed expressed essentially having a “late childhood.... I made up for not being a camper as a kid” through work.

Reed’s experiences, including scouts, camp counselor, Conservation Authority, school board, and Bark Lake, were steps in affirming and strengthening his love for teaching children and the outdoors. In each position, Reed was dedicated to creating engaging, and enriching experiential education opportunities for learning beyond the classroom, and traditional outdoor education setting.

In his mid-career, Reed became aware of a travel agent that specialized in credit courses for high school students. With this agency, Reed taught marine biology at Pearson College in Vancouver. In the following year, he overhauled and directed a grade ten Canadian history twenty-eight-day coast to coast trip. Previously, the course had been run as a “senior citizen tour that was horrible.” With the help of a few other people, Reed managed to design a “heavily experiential course” that included Canadian things such as visiting Anne of Green Gables, eating a lobster dinner, and meeting with Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. This was an “amazing experience for all people on the trip,” and the students were left “tired [laugh] and blown away.”

The school board outdoor education center Reed was posted at was at risk of closure due to cutbacks. Reed was involved in defending the outdoor center from the closures which premised on “articulating what outdoor education was about.” Prior to the closures, he had never had to thoroughly articulate outdoor education in the same way that he did for the policy makers. The people in his immediate bubble understood what outdoor education was all about. Interestingly, David Suzuki ended up interviewing Reed on defending the outdoors centres from closures and the role of nature and children. The centre closed, and Reed went on to complete his masters, making “every course a ringing justification of outdoor and experiential education.”

Once Reed finished his masters, he wanted to experience what a traditional classroom was like. He went into the classroom for one year and described it as a “totally different world.” Teaching in this setting provided him with a better understanding of what outdoor education resources classroom teachers could benefit from. During this time, he did “a lot of reflection” on his career, and after his masters, was “convinced even more on the importance of outdoor education.” Reed used seven months of a leave year to work at an outdoor education centre with another board. Working at two places in a short period of time, lead him to the realization, and affirmed what he had been feeling for quite some time, “an outdoor education centre was where I belonged.” Reed mustered the courage to “not have the golden handcuffs and resign from the board” that his classroom teaching position was with.

In Reed’s words, “It was like Lazarus I’d risen from the dead; I was back where I loved...that was really quite amazing...this reincarnation.” He accepted a position at a centre that “really understood what outdoor and environmental education was about.” An important feature of this positive experience was that there was a good number of staff, and they were “rich” in their mutual love for experiential and outdoor education. The programs they created were “highly creative,” and the time spent there was “wonderful and joyous.” The group would design programming that was an “experiential reinforcement to the curriculum that students were learning in school.” Reed described that he “totally loved showing kids experientially the life supports of the planet,” and bringing their attention to “wonder, and something bigger than themselves.”

Reed is now “actively retired,” and his “major gig is climate change presentations.” After seeing the Inconvenient Truth, Reed sought training from Al Gore. The instruction enabled him to voluntarily deliver climate change presentations at schools and other venues. Reed carefully

tailored “the presentation making it into three parts: science of climate change, science of solutions, politics of solutions.” Most of the presentations he is doing now are with high school students. Reed “doesn’t need to be doing this,” but feels “compelled to... it is a big commitment that I am very passionate about.” Interestingly, Reed is closing in on 600 presentations now, and is also a regional mentor for other trained climate leaders.

A tactic that Reed uses to explain the complex science of climate change is metaphors; “the atmosphere is a blanket, and we are making the blanket thicker” He feels that people understand the complex science of climate change best when explained in this accessible manner, “they get it.” The overarching message of the presentation series is addressed through three questions: “Must we change, can we change, will we change?” Reed feels it is important to inspire students to speak and act up regarding climate change. He urges, “join Greta, school strikes, mass protests...we really need to make this massive!” In addition to climate change presentations, Reed’s retirement gig also includes team building exercises for high school integrated four credit programs such as the Inuit blanket toss. Reed “loves” engaging students in activities like the blanket toss because it sparks the “wonder thing, kids are amazed.” He uses “a corny metaphor with students: If you all pull together, look at the results you can create quite literally.”

Reed finds wonder in “particular canoe trips like the Mountain River in the Northwest Territories.” Reed was in a river valley creek for a few days, and “then you come around a corner and all of sudden it opens up to the mountain river in this great vista.” Excitedly he stated, “Oh my God, I had tears in my eyes...it was stunning.” Reed enjoys taking pictures of his travels, and then creating them into slide show presentations. He voluntarily delivers presentations of his travels on different occasions. His intention is to create the “awe and wonder” for others by

showing them the natural world, and hopefully they “aspire to have some of these experiences themselves.”

Reed believes there is “two worlds...the anthropogenic...and real world.” In his words, the anthropogenic is characterized by “dissecting, fragmented, materialistic, dualistic.” On the other hand, the “real world is quite the opposite...like heaven on earth.” The real world is described as “inter-relation, connection, and interdependence.... a duality there... I think there really is something about others... that we are part of.” Reed has felt a “connection for a long time, “I think in practicing it with others, I am better able to articulate what the connection is.” Reed feels most connected to “the real world when I take time to slow down.” He described a trip to the Grand Canyon, where he watched the transition from dusk to dawn. After all the tourists cleared out, alone, on the edge of the canyon, was the “magical moment.” Reed shared that he “isn’t good enough at making those moments of connection myself, but when they do happen, they are restorative, and really allow for an awareness of others.” He wishes those moments for other people, and hopes that as humanity moves forward, we “recognize that we are part of a small part of something that's much bigger than us, and that we must show respect for and reverence.”

Explicit Analysis: Reed

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Reed’s understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE education efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Reed’s narrative include a) Place: My Own Backyard, b) Moments of Wonder and Awe, c) The Real World and the Anthropocentric World, d) Experiential Learning, and e) Climate Change: “I’m With Greta.”

Place: My Own Backyard

This theme is significant to Reed's understand of nature and human-nature relationships. Reed stated that he wasn't taken anywhere as a child, and that his curiosity, wonder and interest in nature developed from his own backyard. In his words, "I just remember being aware of my own backyard and neighborhood." Reed expressed that he has "always had some kind of sensitivity towards my natural surroundings." He feels a sense of "at home" for place. Reed's awareness and connection to place is a consistent theme in his education practice. The kinds of activities that Reed engages his students in are intended to draw awareness to their own backyard, or place in a similar way.

Moments of Wonder and Awe

As you will have read in the narrative, experiencing wonder and awe of nature appeared in several instances in Reed's narrative both in his own recollections of memories and in his education practice. A memory that came up in conversation in both interviews was when Reed received permission from a "landowner to go onto his property at 4'oclock in the morning" to watch the progression of dusk to dawn. Also, Reed shared with me a particular canoe trip in "the mountain river in the northwest territories... you come around a corner and suddenly it opens to the mountain river in this great vista...oh my God, I had tears in my eyes... It was just stunning!" These are moments of wonder and awe of nature for Reed that part of his understanding and relationship to nature.

Creating opportunities for his students to experience wonder and awe of nature was a central part of his education practice. In his words, "exposing student to wonder, so just something so much larger than them... that was the bulk of my career...I want kids to experience the wonder." The activities he describes such as the night walks, dawn watches, and solo sit

walks spots are for kids “to stop and see if they can soak it in and have an awareness of others that they would not otherwise have.”

The Real-World and the Anthropocentric World

Reed described his worldview which included what he called the “real world” and the “anthropocentric world.” His views contribute to his understanding of nature especially his alignment with the “real world.” He stated, “Well, to me, there's two worlds, there's the anthropogenic, which is dissecting, fragmented, materialistic, dualistic, and then there's the real world, which is quite the opposite... it's inter-relation, it's connection, it's interdependence.” Reed equated the “real world” as “a heaven on earth.” He further noted how “balanced it is, has been” and “how marvelous.” He also pointed out that the “real world” has a “cruel side” like the “food chain.” Regarding the human-nature relationship, Reed views human as “part of it...there is something about others, that we are part of...and it is so much bigger than us.” Reed used the word “duality” to explain the relationship between humans and “other.”

Experiential Learning

Reed's education efforts all emphasized his passion for experiential learning. For instance, he stated, “I totally loved showing kids experientially the life supports of the planet.” As you will have read in the narrative, Reed has been involved in a range of experiential projects, and his teaching positions that all demonstrate his commitment to “showing connections” by doing in real world learning contexts.

Climate Change: “I'm with Greta”

As you will have read in the narrative, Reed is “actively retired” and his present education efforts are primarily climate change presentations. Reed believes in the science of climate change and is highly motivated to deliver that content to youth. He exclaims, “I am with

Greta, as far as science is concerned, we have to listen to science, so it's important for people to understand it.” At the time of the interview, Reed just completed his five hundred and eighty sixth climate change presentation.

Wren

Wren was “lucky enough to have parents, who at the time, just let me go.” At seven years old, Wren’s explorations in nature took off. His parents were both psychiatrists and spent much of their time behind a desk. Therefore, Wren had a golden ticket to “romp and explore” freely in his “neighbour-wood.” Wren “lived next to a conservation area” where he spent much of his childhood. He described himself as a “wild child” often romping and chasing the next adventure on his own, or “with a cadre of kids.” Wren went wherever his “feet wanted to go... a deer trail or a beaver damn.” He was fascinated with the outdoors, and wherever he was, there was an opportunity to further explore and investigate. For example, “I’d wonder if there’s a beaver inside the dam, so I would climb on top of it, or I might see a white pine and I would climb that...how high can I go?” There was a small wetland in the area, and Wren recalls the feeling of “stomping through the marsh.” He would catch frogs and turtles as he walked along the boardwalk. He remembers having “lots of experiences with friends building these complicated forts and then grabbing a stick and using it as a sword or as a wand or the mast of a sailing ship.” Wren describes that his “former years were wonderful and idyllic” because he was given the opportunity to explore nature on his own.

During his outdoor adventures, Wren was “enthralled with life...and immersed in what was around me.” He was “honing my senses, being aware of what was around me, just soaking in the world, breathing in fresh air, just being enfolded in this wonderful, intricate ecosystem and all the gifts that it bestows, and feeling part of that.” Wren was enjoying being a kid while

“discovering this wonderful world that I was living in and having a chance to do what I felt like doing, in that way, I was building strong relationships with the natural world.” Wren had “favourite places I would go to over and over again... a favourite tree I loved to climb, a favourite boardwalk.” Consequently, he felt like the living beings of “those places were my friends.” Wren’s familiarity with his favourite places opened his awareness to how place changes throughout the seasons, “You go see these places throughout the seasons and you notice how they change through time.” Retrospectively examining his experiences, Wren expressed that he did not have the vocabulary at the time to articulate that the trees were his friends, but now says that they “surely were... the ethics of having friends in nature stays with me to this day...I’ve viscerally experienced it and that is something that I really believe has immense value ... that nature is not as a bunch of an inanimate objects, but nature as imbued with personality and character and stories.” He used the word “intimacy” in connection to building a “relationship with place.” Wren believes that we are capable of having an “intimate relationship with a place” just as we do with people. Consequently, the ability of visiting the same place Wren acknowledges as instrumental in his relationship to nature.

When his parents were not working, they would go for a family walk to the local conservation area, park, or lake. He describes that his parents seemed to “enjoy nature” but it didn’t involve activities like canoeing or backpacking. Wren’s mother was a “wonderful artist,” and would create “delicate pencil drawings.” With a “sketch book in hand,” Wren remembers his mother taking “the children up a hill or to a bay to draw in open air.” He watched his mother sketch for a short time before running off to play, and then eventually returning to get a glimpse at the progress she made. Wren was keen to “imitate the way my mother was capturing the world around her.” The act of engaging creatively with nature has stayed with Wren throughout his life.

Wren became “more adventurous” in his teenage years. He recalls “falling through a frozen lake with skates on.” When he arrived home, his father asked what happened, in which Wren explained that he fell through the ice. His father replied, “Be careful next time!” This exchange with his father is significant to Wren. Where “most parents would have grounded me,” instead, Wren’s father taught him the lesson that “risk has value.” His father was saying that he should “go out and do those things” but “remember to be careful next time.” Both of Wren’s parents were supportive in letting him have experiences where he would “encounter some measure of risk.” With a present educator mindset, Wren describes how important encountering “discomfort” is for education. For example, teenagers require challenging opportunities to show what they are “capable of” and in doing so, they build “self-confidence and resiliency.”

A significant formative experience for Wren was a program called “Katimavik.” During his last year of high school, Wren saw advertised a yearlong volunteer program where you travel across Canada and live with other youth. Wren was accepted but had second thoughts on whether he should attend University instead. His father “put his foot down...I had to go...I remember as he put me on the train, there were tears in my eyes.” Retrospectively Wren described that his father knew that it would turn out to be a valuable opportunity for him. Indeed, his father was right, Wren explains this experience as “life changing.” He came to understand the value of “volunteerism” and “working in a group.” When Wren returned home, his father stated that it was “time to go to university,” but Wren “wanted to do something else.” He ended up working as a group leader for the Katimavik program, that shaped his “environmental ethic, philanthropy, and importance of non-for-profit charity sector.”

Wren attended university In the United Sates where he took Environmental Studies and Geography. He found work as an outdoor educator which he did for a few years. He then went

back to school and completed a teaching degree, and masters focusing on outdoor and environmental education. Over the duration of a few years, Wren worked at outdoor education centres, and at twenty-six years old he landed a job at the centre where he is now the director. Wren describes accepting the position as “great” because he got the opportunity to “learn how to do outdoor education.” In this role, he worked alongside another teacher, and developed “strategies” for his education pedagogy. For Wren, teaching is about “creating positive experiences and trying to make the outdoors meaningful.” To achieve this, Wren uses “drama, storytelling,” and a broad range of other activities that connect “thematically.” Growing up, Wren didn’t “love school,” and “couldn’t stand teachers who just talked.” As a child who was adventurous and eager to explore, Wren sees that in other children too, and the inherent “value” of direct experience as an approach to teaching. This realization was formative for Wren in his career choice to “live and breathe outdoor education.” This vocation has allowed Wren to connect his “love of nature and the environment to teaching children.”

Wren has spent a lot of time throughout his career thinking about how children develop an environmental ethic. His own practices have helped shape his understanding. Part of “fostering connectedness” is providing children with these “positive experiences outdoors.” Wren was “privileged in my upbringing to have had rich experiences in nature that shaped my thinking in environmental ethics.” This has led Wren to write and get involved in projects that look at “when are kids ready to learn about the environment?” Wren is passionate about determining the “appropriate ages and stages of a child’s environmental awareness.” For example, sensory engagement, visiting place repeatedly, storytelling, and tending to something such as a garden; these are “foundations for developing stewardship in children.” To nurture stewards of the environment, you first must get people to “love and care” for the environment

around them until they “recognize themselves as part of their surroundings.” Wren’s beliefs have led him to develop “a theoretical framework” in how to “nurture environmental stewards through every stage of their development.”

To develop an environmental ethic in children, an educator must first develop “a love for the environment” and become “knowledgeable about the natural world.” An important distinction that Wren made is to not become knowledgeable of the natural world in an “encyclopedic kind of way, more like walking into a room and recognizing your friends... out of respect for your friends, you know their names, you know their character, you should be able to do the same thing with the natural world, to understand the character of the land we occupy.” He tries to “convince kids that they belong to a community, which isn't just a community of people, but it is their neighbor-wood, it consists of the trees, the grass, the insects, the flowers, the bird, the trees, and then they come to value that as an inclusive part of their community.” Wren expressed that “kids are probably feeling alienated and alone because they don't have that visceral sense of connectedness to the natural systems that nurture us all.” One of the most important things an educator can do is to “reconnect, heal those broken threads, making sure that kids recognize that they are part of something bigger, that they're not alone.”

The passing of Wren’s father transformed his perception of the world. His father “leaving this world revealed that the world changes and life has a beginning and an end.” When Wren thinks about future generations, he acknowledges that his “time here is limited, and all time spent living deserves gratitude.” When expresses gratitude as part of his teaching by instilling “a sense of curiosity and wonder” in students towards the natural world. He role models “showcasing delight and joy” by just being in nature when possible.

Wren described the importance to not be in a hurry to “explain the land away.” Instead, you must “give opportunities for the land to do its own teaching.” He shared two ways he could approach learning, “Hey, kids do you want to find some salamanders? Let’s lift up a rock and see, or I wonder what is under the log?” He preferred the latter because it creates an opportunity for a “discovery they own.” The students are “delighted by the magic of the moment... they will never forget.” Wren views “curiosity as the engine of learning” and if you can “give the gift of curiosity...it will last a lifetime.” Within his education repertoire, it is important to “ask great questions, and demonstrate your own love and amazement by using the language of awe and beauty, we help children be receptive and responsive to the beautiful world we share.”

Wren’s parents looked at the world through “artistic eyes,” and he tries to incorporate the arts into outdoor education. For instance, he has combined creative elements, and sensory awareness in an activity book (e.g., sense cocktails, nature frames, and micro trail walks). A sample activity is “basement windows” that involves lifting a log or other object to see what is living beneath them. These kinds of activities help “kids appreciate nature through their senses in a new way.”

What led Wren to “love and appreciate nature as part of my community and neighbour wood” was a lifetime of “positive experiences in nature” that have made him eager to “explore and be curious,” and passionate for the field of outdoor education. Through outdoor education he has found “purpose to my life.” Wren’s perspective on human-nature relationships is “I am part of nature and nature's part of me is... it is like trying to describe an arm... It's an arm, I give it a name, but my arm is still part of me.”

Wren expressed the notion of “love” throughout his narrative— “I remind myself that there is so much more to know and to love.” In several instances, he referenced that “knowledge

without love won't stick” that was followed by “love, appreciation and gratitude need to be the glue that holds it all together.” He provided an example of love, “When I'm out cross-country skiing like I did today and I see the deep color blue of the sky, all the vibrant colors of green and the animal footprints crisscrossing the forest, I realize how privileged I am to be in this beautiful world.” Wren also referenced biophilia which “means love of nature, that we're all born yearning to love nature, and that can either be nurtured in us or it can be eroded out of us depending on the education system. Biophilia is an innate love of nature.”

Wren shared his thoughts on the progression of life, “Like the leaves on a tree, I will get old and weathered and then I will fall off...I'll get reconstituted into something else, which in turn will add to life and its complexity.” Wren requires little to feel connected to nature: “When I step outside the door and it is a beautiful day, I feel a sense of belonging right away.” Even when Wren is indoors looking through a window, “I feel connectedness.” Another example of Wren's “sense of belonging” to nature “is seeing snow fleas leaping across on the snow, how cool is that? How lovely that is?” On the day of the interview, he described cross country skiing, “taking time to drink the world in through my senses.” During his ski, his senses were “on and primed” as though “tendrils were coming out of my body attaching to the rest of the world.”

Wren gave a reminder that nature is “closer than we think” and that it doesn't take “going into the woods to feel connected.” This way of understanding nature has given “purpose to my life.”

Wren proposed that there might be a “spiritual dimension” to human-nature relationships. He does not “subscribe to a formal religion” other than perhaps “the church of the woods.” He believes that there are “forces at play beyond human comprehension.” He described this like “an ant trying to understand a mountain.” What he knows for sure is how lovely it is to be “part of this beautiful unfolding world.” Wren hopes for humans “a collective ethic where we feel like we

are part of nature, and it is viewed as part of us.” In his view, to embrace that ethic, the world would be treated in a “totally different way.” Perhaps at the end of each day, we ask ourselves “did I do more good than harm, or did I create something better by just being here?”

Explicit Analysis: Wren

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Wren’s understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE education efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Wren’s narrative include a) Childhood Explorations Outdoors, b) Connection to Place, c) The Arts and Outdoor Education, d) Spirituality, e) A Sense of Community: “My Neighbour-Wood,” and f) Developing an Environmental Ethic.

Childhood Explorations Outdoors

Wren’s ability to explore outdoors on his own or with friends, and without the supervision of adults was instrumental for shaping his understanding and relationship with nature. He stated, “I think most of my former years in nature were wonderful because I was allowed to explore and be in nature, but not be supervised... it was in many ways an idyllic childhood.” Wren expressed sadness for the children of today who not have the same privilege or opportunities to explore in the same capacity as he was able to.

Connection to Place

As expressed in the narrative, during his childhood Wren grew up next to a conservation area; a place that he developed a strong connection to. In his words, “While I was discovering this wonderful world that I was living in and having a chance to do what I felt like doing, I was also building strong relationships with the natural world.” As noted by Wren, an important factor

of his relationship to place was consistent and repetitive visits. He stated, “there'd be a favorite place I go to over and over again.” As a result of building a relationship to place, “I felt like those places were my friends, a favorite tree I loved to climb, a favorite board walk.”

The Arts and Outdoor Education

As you will have read in the narrative, the arts are a significant part of Wren’s narrative. Firstly, art was a significant part of Wren’s upbringing, that in turn, has shaped his understanding of nature. He feels as though the way his mother viewed the world—through “artistic eyes,” has had an impact on his own perception. Wren expressed his understanding of drawing in nature as “a different experience than just walking through it...taking the time to sit,” study, and try to capture its essence” through drawing provides an opportunity to see things in new ways. In turn, helps to “establish a more powerful connection” with nature. As a result of his artistic infused upbringing, Wren values incorporating elements of the arts in his outdoor, environmental, and experiential education efforts, including elements of dance, drawing, and drama.

Spirituality

Wren believes that there is a “spiritual dimension” to human-nature relationships. He clarified that he does not mean spiritual in a religious sense, and personally does not “subscribe to formal religion;” however, he does subscribe to “the church of the woods.” Wren stated that there are forces at play that are beyond “human comprehension” within nature, and he understands himself as “part of nature as much as nature is part of me.” He requires little to feel connected to nature: “I step outside the door, and it is a beautiful day, I feel a sense of belonging right away.” Even when Wren is indoors looking through a window he “ feels connectedness.”

A Sense of Community: “My Neighbour-wood”

The notion of “community” was significant to both Wren’s understanding of the human-nature relationships, and his environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts. In his opinion, “good environmental education is about ever widening fields of self until the self becomes the world.” In other words, until the self becomes part of the nature, or part of an “inclusive community” with all living beings. To demonstrate this viewpoint to his students, Wren tries to “convince kids that they belong to a community that isn’t just a community of people.” A community that Wren refers to as their “neighbor-wood...the grass, the insects, the flowers, the bird, and the trees.” His goal is that “if children believe they are part of an inclusive community, then their ethic of how they treat the environment will be different.”

Developing an Environmental Ethic

An important element of Wren’s environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts is developing an environmental ethic or stewardship within students. He views himself as a “facilitator” where he brings his “love and joy” for nature to the lives of others. Wren has been driven by the question of “How does a child develop an environmental ethic?” This question has led him to projects that provide answers and strategies for developing an ethic “where we really try to research and determine the ages and stages of a child’s environmental awareness development.” Wren is working on developing a “theoretical framework on how to nurture environmental stewards through every stage and stage of their development.”

Sage

When Sage was an infant, she spent most of her days outdoors. In all weather, Sage’s mother took her to a river in a nearby public park. This time outdoors was partially due to her “mother being a newcomer to this country and unable to speak English.” The outdoors provided

Sage's mother with enjoyment, given the difficulties associated with living in a new place, and limited means to communicate with other people comfortably. Although Sage does not remember this early time outdoors, as an adult she describes it as being "immersed by the elements." Sage expressed that "little seed [passion for the outdoors] was always nestled in there [me], and things sparked that growth."

Sage "grew up in the house that I now live in, where I played as a child." The land consists of "many meadows, forests, and waterways." Her familiarity with this place "helps memories stay alive." Sage recalled a childhood memory where her "friends were sitting around a pond in a field... no one was talking, I remember the sun shining down, enveloping us in warmth...the water was shimmering...water striders gliding across the pond." For Sage, "that is just a moment that fills me with a real calmness, and I think it is a moment of connectedness, a feeling of being connected to everything." She emphasized, "a real serenity, peacefulness, calmness and feeling safe" amongst the group.

Growing up, Sage "had few restrictions... were not told where we could and couldn't go." They played outdoors all day; "here's a couple of apples and we will see you later... and we really did." The six children "looked after one another." Sage's parents became increasingly interested in the outdoors over the years and took her family on some hiking trips to Lake Superior, and cross-country skiing behind their home.

In her teenage years, Sage was part of an outdoors club at school. Three teachers would take a group of students on weekend and evening trips hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, camping, and canoeing. Descriptions of the club activities were of her "happiest teenage moments" in high school that clearly conveyed feelings of "connection." Sage described being in a canoe as "a

wonderful experience of the quiet paddling.” The outdoor club significantly supported Sage’s interest in the “outdoors and outdoor activities.”

Sage worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources as a summer student. She was hired to “catalogue all the plants in a nearby conservation area.” Being that the area was nearby, Sage asked if she could do the job on her own. Sage recalled an instance where she got lost while “surveying the plants in a really leafy section.” She was not able to find the trail and became increasingly “disoriented...I didn’t know where the trail was.” Sage expressed a “real moment of panic, and it was an irrational panic as rationally I knew I was not lost and could easily find my way out, but fear began welling up.” Sage remembered to sit down on the forest ground and in that act found a “calmness surrounded” her. She questions whether that feeling of calmness that suppressed the fear and panic was “a moment of connectedness...something about the rest of the natural world helped me calm down in that moment.”

Sage prefers the term “rest of the natural world” to describe nature. She feels that “it isn’t other ’ing like non-human or other-than... rest of the natural world is a nice in-between place that is more inclusive and ensures that we see that we’re part of the natural world.” She prefers it to other terms, such as more-than-human because “when you say more-than-human world, people are confused, I used it once and someone said, well, do you mean like fairies and elves and stuff, and the spirit world could be a part of the more than human world.” Sage believes it is important that “language has to be inviting... if the intent is to offer people some ideas to rethink and reflect.”

Sage shared many experiences that affirmed her “connectedness with the rest of the natural world.” Two memories stood out to Sage as most significant. Firstly, was snow shoeing through the forest on a “beautiful winter day.” Sage stopped in a “tiny grove of evergreen trees

and the sun was streaming through.” While she was admiring the trees a “flock of chickadees flew into the grove and surrounded me...they were so close.” She described this as “a moment of joy... I felt lifted by that moment,” and “something between me, the chickadees and the trees.” Sage has difficulty expressing “what I felt at that moment, and what happened, what occurred there...it was just really magical moment.”

Her second significant “moment of connectedness” occurred on a canoe trip. It was a “sunny day,” and the group of travellers were “portaging over a beaver dam.” At that point, Sage “placed my paddle onto the dam, and hundreds of dragonflies just lifted up and hovered over the beaver dam... it was a still, sunny day and as they [dragonflies] hovered their wings shimmered from the sun.” She noted that this experience occurred with other people, “When you are with other humans there is a tendency to be more invested in human interaction, and less present with the rest of the natural world.” Sage distinguishes “moments of connectedness with others as fleeting,” and the ones that happen on your own, “last a bit longer.” Sage also expressed feeling connectedness when admiring the “force of water as the waves come in on Lake Superior.”

Sage was immersed in a “science-oriented stream of learning” during her high school and university education. She struggled with the “very rigid way of presenting ideas, there's no real room there for your own stories. It's objective, factual, and your personal thoughts or your feelings are irrelevant.” It was hard for her to “express” herself, and the science “way of thinking” made Sage believe her responsibility was “to care for the rest of the natural world.” This way of looking at the “rest of the natural world” made Sage feel “separate.” Throughout her education, Sage always knew in “my heart I wanted to work with children,” and eventually she went back to school to complete a Bachelor of Education degree and early childhood education diploma.

Over the course of her career, Sage has worked in various educational settings, and has always been “drawn to finding ways to be outdoors, paired with environmental awareness activities.” Sage’s “real focused interest” in education arose from learning about “nature-based programs” in Europe. Over the duration of her career, she took several professional development leaves and absences from her work as a college ECE faculty to further explore nature-based programming. Whenever Sage was planning a trip abroad, she would contact different nature-based programs to see if she could visit, allowing her to spend time with programs in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. As well, she spent four months in Scotland completing several levels of forest school, and nature-based kindergarten training. Each trip allowed Sage to apply in her knowledge to her own practice.

Sage completed her Master of Education which is where she was first introduced to “wild pedagogy.” She defines wild pedagogy as “asking questions that allow us to reflect on the work that we do in the educational settings in the face of the Anthropocene, it allows for a disruption, shift and expansion of thinking to a way of letting go of control, address decolonization.” In her practice, Sage embedded wild pedagogy touchstones both at the college and early year programs.

On one of her professional development leaves, Sage explored if it were possible “to have a licenced early childhood program (Child Care and Early Years Act) that was nature based.” Sage found an agency that was willing to support her in this initiative, allowing her to successfully launch a preschool program that integrated nature-based and wild pedagogy philosophy. Since then, she has retired from the college and is offering expanded outdoor early childhood programs for children and their families.

According to Sage, the key principles for nature-based programming are “uninterrupted, play-based time for children outdoors over extended periods of time, being outside as much as

possible, and fostering an ecological consciousness.” She continues to explore nature-based programming further through her work and interest with wild pedagogy. For Sage, wild pedagogy in the early years program is about “letting go of control and trusting in the rest of the natural world, yourself, and the children; that what needs to happen will happen.” The wild pedagogy touchstones for renegotiating education have had an impact on Sage’s mindset in her work, and everyday life (Jickling et al., 2018). She often “returns to the touchstone” to “reflect on my behaviour, and how those behaviors impact humans and the more-than-human world.” In Sage’s personal understanding, wild pedagogy provides the opportunity to “look at things from a broader perspective than just human-centric.” To Sage, this means “seeing ourselves as whole with the rest of the natural world,” especially in education. In here early childhood education pedagogy, Sage prefers “the idea of the child, adults and the rest of the natural world in a circle” where learning happens “back and forth.”

A wild pedagogy touchstone that Sage is focusing on is the “more-than-human world as co-teacher.” She is trying to understand “what that looks like” in practice. At this time, she feels that “it isn't just that nature teaches us that when it rains, we get wet, so we should put our coats on, that's not what I see as the nature as a co-teacher.” Instead, Sage views nature as co-teacher as “something that happens that I think as adults, we've learned not to notice... When I watch children playing, I see these moments where I think they are deeply connected.” Sage describes a picture of a student who is “touching the bark of a tree and looking up to the branches.” She believes there is some sort of “connection there between the child and tree.” Although she doesn’t know what kind of connection, she doesn’t feel as though it is her place to “interrupt or find out.” The moment of child and tree is what she believes is a moment of “nature as co-

teacher.” As an early childhood educator, Sage is very aware of child development, yet she shared, even if the child does not remember this moment, it still has an “impact on them.”

Regarding human-nature relationships, Sage expressed having “a relationship with the land that's been positive or nurturing...I believe that has translated to a consciousness and connection... building a relationship is much easier when you've had these types of experiences.” In her practice, Sage is motivated to “provide children with similar moments to build a connection with the rest of the natural world.” The idea of “learning to live well together, including all on this planet” is the “most important aspect of education” for Sage. To achieve human-nature relationships nurtured within education, what is needed, is to “rethink the purpose of education,” so it has a great emphasis on “connecting with the land, and the rest of the natural world.” Sage hopes that the education system becomes “broader in what one learns” by being critical of the “colonial ways of thinking.... history (a challenging of history), philosophy, and the arts.” She specifically raised how “poetry for example can unleash creative thinking and expression,” which was sadly lacking in her own school years.

Sage has a deep relationship with her own backyard and the place where she runs the outdoor pre-school program. She thinks that repeated visits to place allows you to “see that space as being a part of you.” Her own connection has allowed her to feel “more strongly to those places we have built these relationships with ... but I also feel that we can empathize with places/ beings that we may not have spent time with.” The thought of “the rest of the natural world” fills her with a sense of “calmness, peace, and alertness in all kinds of facets.” She expands on the facets as encouraging a sense of “alive and stimulated.” Although, “restful” is a word that Sage often associates with nature, she knows this is not always the situation: “When the wind is blowing, and the trees are swaying, and waves are crashing on the shore ... that's not

restful.” Whether restful or active, spending time in “the rest of the natural world takes the foggiest” out of Sage’s head, and she feels “opened up.”

Sage would “ideally like to think there is a connection between humans and the rest of the natural world.” She wonders if “at birth, we are connected to everything...a oneness with the rest of the natural world that overtime becomes fragmented into hierarchal way of looking at the world... the western world.” She added that “oneness is being connected to these energies to the energies of the world.” By “energies” she meant, “I do mean rocks and soil and water, and the animals and the plants, and perhaps spirits that maybe exist.” Sage used the word “spiritual” when describing the human-nature relationships, adding that “the term spiritual probably needs to be defined as well, because I think that's a word that has many meanings to many people.”

Sage hopes to achieve “a place of feeling connectedness...a oneness where I see the rest of the natural world as part of me” and “feel the breakdown of hierarchical structures.” She is presently at the “awareness stage,” especially when she gets “caught up in the day-to-day stuff, I think I fall back into old patterns.” Sage would “love to see the rest of the natural world as a part of me,” but “I don't think I'm there yet.”

Explicit Analysis: Sage

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Sage’s understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE education efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Sage’s narrative include a) Connections with Place, b) Childhood Explorations Outdoors, c) Moments of Connectedness, d) Oneness with the Rest of the Natural World, and e) Education Practice: Wild Pedagogy.

Connection with Place

As you will have read in the narrative, place was significant to Sage’s understanding of nature, and the connections she has with place/places are important to her relationship to nature. Sage grew up in the house that she now lives in. The experiences that Sage had in that place have allowed her to feel “a deeper connection...the deeper connections come from those places we have built relationships with.” The deeper connections allow for an understanding of place as “part of you.” Furthermore, “when you see and feel a disrespect for the land and those who inhabit it you want to step in to support and protect – just as you would for human family and friends.” Place, including “place-based learning” is an important part of Sage’s nature-based programming.

Childhood Explorations Outdoors

A contributing part of Sage’s understanding and relationship to nature were the opportunities she had to explore the outdoors freely in her childhood. She described having few restrictions or supervision. Sage was with a group of children who enjoyed exploring the surrounding greenspace together, and “looked after one another.” She shared several memories that occurred outdoors with the fellow children. Sage’s parents were not mentors in the outdoors, but they did become increasingly interested in the outdoors over the years. In her education practice, Sage values teaching approaches that are more hands-off, allowing children to explore place and connect with nature without constant structure.

Moments of Connectedness

Throughout the narrative, Sage shared experiences, “moments of connectedness,” where she felt a deep connection to nature. The memories she shared included chickadees, dragonflies, and Lake Superior. For instance, Sage recalled feeling “something between me, the chickadees

and the trees.” Sage does not have the vocabulary to describe accurately what happened in these “moments.” The “moments of connectedness” have “translated to a consciousness and connection of a relationship” for Sage. Consequently, she values providing “children with those same kinds of moments” in her nature-based programming.

Oneness with the Rest of Natural World

As you will have read in the narrative, Sage would “ideally like to think there is a connection” between humans and nature. Sage wonders if “at birth, we are connected to everything...a oneness with the rest of the natural world that overtime is fragmented into hierarchal way of thinking that is dominated by western world.” She hopes to one-day achieve a “place of feeling connectedness, where the rest of the natural world as part of me,” and “feel the breakdown of hierarchical structures.” At this time, Sage is in the “awareness stage” of her relationship to nature.

Education Practice: Wild Pedagogy

As you will have read in the narrative, wild pedagogy is a significant part of Sage’s EOE education efforts. For Sage, “wild pedagogy is about letting go of control and trusting in the rest of the natural world, yourself, others and the children that what needs to happen will happen.” Sage views herself as someone who grew up with a “colonizer mindset” and shifting her thinking is “an ongoing process.” The wild pedagogy touchstones have helped to shift her thinking, and she often “returns to the touchstone to reflect on my behaviour, and how those behaviors impact humans and the more-than-human world.” Sage views the touchstone “nature as co-teacher” as “something that happens between a child and nature,” and one she is actively exploring in her education practice.

Jay

In the summer months, seven-year-old Jay spent several weeks at his grandparent's cottage. His favourite activity to do was "catching turtles and frogs in the pond close to the cottage." Jay was especially "fascinated" with turtles and recalls them as "quite a challenge to catch." His recollections of the cottage are vivid, "I would go practically every day, and just on my own as this seven- or eight-year-old...I'd be walking in this pond almost up to my shins with a big net and trying to find turtles that were going down into the algae and vegetation." The moment of catching a turtle was the "biggest thrill as a kid." Jay was allowed to bring the turtles back to the cottage for further inspection in his grandmother's outdoor laundry tub. Although his parents were not "naturalists" themselves, they took joy and interest in whatever Jay was fascinated by. The positive feedback from his parents included "oh wow, look at that turtle, look at those beautiful stripes on the neck!"

Another activity Jay enjoyed was fishing both by himself on the bank, or in the canoe with his grandfather. He recalls being "impressed by my grandfather's respect and kindness towards all living things... especially fish." His grandfather would always "insist the fish be released back into the water." Retrospectively, Jay mentioned that because his grandfather was a first world war veteran and had "seen the rough side of life" he may have been more inclined to save the fish.

When Jay was roughly twelve years old, "my grandmother gifted me a bird book" and "my father built a bird feeder which we put up in the backyard." Jay remembers "a lot of birds visiting the feeder such as the Evening Grosbeaks." On one occasion, "a very different bird showed up... it did not look like anything that I had seen before." Jay got out his guide, "I was pretty sure of my identification...the was a bird called a Dickcissel and it's a bird of the Western

US.” Jay’s father “mentioned it [the bird] to a friend of his who was quite a well-known naturalist in the area and a nature column in the paper.” The friend “came to our house and saw it and agreed that it was indeed this dickcissel.” What followed, “over the course of the next few days, maybe even weeks, a whole bunch of people came to the house to see this bird, and everybody was praising me as an 11-year-old-12-year-old for having been able to identify it.” The bird “was not easy to identify as it was quite nondescript-looking.” Jay recalls feeling “impressed” by all of the “attention” he received. Finding the “rare” bird was a defining moment in his Jay’s lifelong admiration for birds and nature.

Another significant piece to Jay’s interest in birding was also supported and encouraged by a friend of his fathers who “shared a lot of his birding knowledge.” Jay would “often call him up and tell him what I had seen.” His father’s friend was always “very enthusiastic” to hear Jay share his discoveries, “That is fantastic, what a beautiful bird, that is a hard bird to identify, good for you!” Jay’s birding endeavours were nurtured and in turn he became a member of the “local nature club” and joined them for birding outings in the community.

In his teenage years through to his twenties, “there was a little bit of an absence of nature” in Jay’s life. His “interest in birds and nature took a backseat” until he accepted his first teaching position in Northern Quebec. The job was in a “northern mining town” near the Labrador boarder. Living in the “northern woods was amazing” for Jay. It did not take long for his interest in nature to be renewed, along with a little help from the “birds started to sing at about 3 o’clock in the morning....and amazing fishing opportunities, seeing a lot of wildlife, including caribou...that rekindled my interest.” Later, Jay moved to Edmonton where he got to explore another part of Canada, and environment. He describes being immersed in an “incredibly

rich wetland in and around Edmonton.” The “ducks, shorebirds, and active birding community” further rekindled and strengthened his interest in birding.

When Jay had his own family, he returned to live in his hometown. Once back, he “reconnected” with the old family friend, “mentor,” who sparked his interest in birding when he was a young boy. The mentor was now in his 80’s but “still very active and knowledgeable” in naturalism. Through spending time with this mentor, Jay came to realize that “if you're going to be a good birder or if you're going to be a good naturalist, you kind of need to branch out and not just focus on one group of species [birds].” If Jay were to be a good naturalist, then “you kind of have to know at least something about the trees, about the wildflowers... if you're going to understand and find birds, you really need to know the different tree types....and specific habitats.” This realization sparked his “obsession” in knowing everything about the local environment. He began to make a “concerted effort to systematically learn all the different species and how to identify them.” To begin, Jay returned to what his grandparent’s cottage, “I remember doing an inventory of all the plants growing on the property and doing so very methodically but I was on a mission to learn them.” He describes the process of surveying the plants as “very methodical.” His desire to learn eventually branched out from plants to include “all areas of nature... insects, mammals, and mushrooms.”

Jay finds “satisfaction” in entering a natural area and being able to “put a name” to what he sees, hears, and smells. It is like “entering a room with a bunch of friends...it is nice to be able to recognize them and know their names.” When Jay steps outdoors to get his paper in the morning he takes a minute to “stand there and just listen.” In these instances, he tunes into the voices of other species: “Who is singing?” His attention is drawn not only for “entertainment” purposes but to “check that I am hearing the right voices... that species have returned to the area

this time of year.” Hearing the right voices when and where is a “wonderful and reassuring feeling.” It provides Jay with a “sense that everything is right in the world.” When Jay does not “hear the right bird voices” he finds it “unsettling.” Being able to “identify a lot of what you're seeing and not just this kind of green blur out there” provides Jay “a big emotional, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, whatever you want to call it, payoff.”

On a trip to England, Jay picked up a book called *A Dales Naturalist*. The Dales is a part of England, and the book included “a week-by-week account of this man's walks in the countryside and what he was seeing and hearing...what was blooming, what birds were singing, what was happening on the farms, what crops were being planted or harvested.” Jay was “really taken by that book” so much that he decided to write something similar for his area: “A month-by month almanac” of everything you could expect to see, hear, smell and experience in the natural world. At the time, Jay already had records of many species over the seasons; however, by choosing to write a book he had to now keep even “more methodical records...when trees were blooming, flowers were appearing on trees, and when I was seeing the first birds returning in the spring.” Jay was “getting up at 5 am in the morning before school to work on the book.” It took six years from the time he started to publication.

His book was “well received in the community” and is “currently in its third reprint.” Jay describes the endeavour as a “powerful experience to get that kind of recognition.” Around the same time, Jay “took over the nature column” in the local newspaper from his then “ninety-year-old mentor, and family friend.” Taking over the column “became an opportunity, or a necessity of becoming more knowledgeable about a lot of things as well.” If you have an “interest in birds, you hopefully to some degree also become an environmentalist when you see what is happening out there.” Jay has a deep understanding of weekly and seasonal events that should occur in his

local environment, and because of that, he has gained a sense of how the natural world is changing due to climate change. With caution, Jay is looking at the “progression of the season” and how things are different yearly. He described the previous day when he was out in his area and noticed the sugar maples were almost in flower which is a month earlier than usual, “Okay how does this compare to the long-term average day for sugar maples being in bloom?” His interest in climate change stems from this “phenomenological insight and awareness” that he gained from writing his book.

Environmental education grew to be a “constant and big part of everything” that Jay was doing. For example, he took his students outside almost every day, set up a school wide recycling program, fundraised for initiatives such as habitat restoration, and established a litter-less lunch program. Each month he provided students with “a monthly nature sheet, and in it was a list of things that they had to try and observe over the course of the month.” He described the month of April, including “things like going out and listening to the frog court, finding a nest and watching the activity at the nest, finding the first growth spurt, wildflowers growing, going out and seeing a certain constellation.” The most important project he was a part of was creating a “woodlot in the school yard.” The woodlot included pathways, meadows, seating areas, bird feeders and a cedar rail fence. This became the school’s outdoor classroom—the preferred classroom in Jay’s practice.

In Jay’s eyes, “the natural world is diverse, ever-changing, and unpredictable, one of the big thrills is always coming across something that is unexpected, and there's so much of nature that is sort of happenstance or serendipity.” Opposite to unexpected, Jay recognizes the predictability in nature such as the “changing seasons.” He knows that the “first tree swallows will appear over the river” in his area on the “last few days of March.” For Jay, nature “is a nice

counterpoint to all of the insanity happening in the world” where there appears to be “little predictability.” Being able to predict the occurrences of the nature provides “a sense of comfort...beauty and intricacy.”

Jay used “spiritual” to describe “just how amazing everything is... the fact that anything exists at all is amazing if you step back and think.” Elements of “connection, well-being and mystery” characterize spiritual as in “there's so many things that we don't really understand, how monarch butterflies, how birds navigate...the whole piece around evolution...the story of how everything came to be.” The “wonder of evolution, the story of how it is, that everything came to be the way it is... constitutes 95% of my spiritual life.” Jay stated, “evolution, for me, is really the greatest story out there.”

Jay believes the world is “full of many mysteries,” an idea that was an important theme within his education practice. He intentionally tries to spark curiosity for nature within his students: “We are only scraping the surface of what we know about the natural world...don't think there is nothing left to be discovered.” An example of Jay teaching can be found through his understanding of “evolution.” He uses a “rudimentary introductory way” to expose students to the “evolutionary history of species.” By understanding evolution, once can develop a “sense of just how amazing everything is... how many stories are associated with everything in nature...how many mysteries.”

Recently, Jay has been exploring the healing powers of nature through “mindfulness and meditation.” He will often say to himself, “Okay just stop for a second and take a look.” Jay purposefully engages his senses on the different “shades of green” present in any given place. He likes to notice the “textures, sounds and smells” of the natural world, and what they tell him. For example, “My favourite smell in May is balm of Gilead...the fragrance exuded from the buds of

a balsam poplar.” Jay mentioned that his “birding brain is always on...scanning the treetops for birds perched... occasionally glancing at the sky for movement.” Out of all his senses, he is most focused on “listening to the faint contact notes of birds flying overhead.”

Jay feels most connected to the natural world when he is birding: “it calls upon many of the senses.... just in terms of identifying and appreciating the bird, certainly a huge part of it is visual, but it's also sound, just about my favorite type of birding, is birding by ear.” Jay was reminded of a pleasant memory on “a beautiful May morning, the mist is coming off the wetland, and hearing an American Veteran calling, and seeing it take flight and that beautiful morning sight, and the smell of the wetland or the smell of the forest, all of the emerging leaves, and the cool temperatures.” Jay describes feeling that “we are a part of it [nature]” from activities like birding where having a “heightened experience” is possible through “supressing distractions...exercising mindfulness.”

At times, Jay expressed that “we instinctively feel ourselves separate to the natural world because of our higher-level cognition...humans have done everything remotely possible to create a wall between ourselves and what we call nature.” Jay intentionally tries to “remind myself about this” tendency to separate ourselves from nature. He reflects on “single cell organisms, to think that all creatures have an awareness of self and consciousness exists in some form in all living beings...all living things have an experience of being.” As a result, he stated that a “certain degree of emotional suffering exists.” The “tension in seeing ourselves as being separate and having a totally different experience of different consciousness.” Jay thinks “when we look back in a 100 years’ time, on how wrong we were as human beings, I think that's going to be maybe one of the biggest things that we just had no idea of the degree of suffering that other creatures experience.”

Explicit Analysis: Jay

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Jay's understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE efforts. Following, is an explicit narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Jay's narrative include a) Mentorship, b) Nature Identification, c) Spirituality and Nature, d) Passion for the Outdoors, and e) Engaging the Senses in Nature.

Mentorship

Mentorship was significant in shaping Jay's understanding and relationship to nature. As expressed in the narrative, Jay lived at his grandparent's cottage for the summer months. His time there was spent at the nearby pond "catching turtles and frogs," fishing, and playing outdoors. Although, his explorations outdoors was often alone, the support from his grandparents and parents was consistent. He received "a lot of positive feedback" and "interest" from his parents and grandparents. Jay shared that although his parents and grandparents were not "naturalists" they still provided "support and positive reinforcement." A family friend became a significant mentor in both Jay's youth continuing through to his adulthood. Jay also mentioned being a part of an active birding community which was no doubt influential.

Nature Identification

As you can see in the narrative, Jay's relationship to nature is expressed through nature identification. Jay has built a relationship with species through his ability to identify animals, plants, and all aspects of nature in his region. His knowledge and interest in nature began with having a special relationship turtles, frogs and birds that evolved into "memorizing" all different species. In both interviews, Jay mentioned a rare bird that he identified in his youth, and the

lasting impact of that experience on his continued interest in nature identification. One of several points made about nature identification was the comparison to knowing a friend. Jay states, “It is like entering a room, a lunch with a bunch of friends, it's just nice to be able to recognize them and know their names.” In turn, knowing about the different species provides Jay a “sense of what should be around.” Jay uses his ability to identify to “check in” with the species in a particular area. When he hears the proper voices in a habitat, Jay is “reassured” that things are fine in nature.

Spirituality and Nature

This theme represents Jay’s understanding of nature as well as his environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts. Jay receives “a big emotional, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, whatever you want to call it, payoff being able to identify a lot of what you're seeing and not just this kind of green blur out there.” For example, birding is a spiritual activity for Jay especially “the wonder of migration.” Jay described spiritual as “elements of connection, well-being, mystery.” An example of spiritual being “just how amazing everything is.” Jay provided a critique of religion, “That this world is not enough... we essentially invent religions and spend our time focused on that rather than focused on all the wonder that's out there.” Jay expressed feeling “wonder” for the world and creating opportunities for his students to experience that through learning experiential activities. Also, evolution is a significant part of spirituality for Jay, “The wonder of evolution and the story of how it is, that everything came to be the way it is.” An awareness, curiosity, and interest in evolution was expressed as both significant to Jay’s understanding, and his teaching practice.

Passion for the Outdoors

As you will have read in the narrative, “passion” was an important element for Jay’s environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts. Jay shared some of the interesting and important initiatives that he engaged both students, and the school community in throughout his career. Instrumental for the success of these projects was exhibiting “passion,” especially the woodlot as he noted was “a big endeavour.” Jay expressed that “the reason the project was such a success, not trying to toot my own horn here, but it was really because I still feel passionate about it.” He dedicated “a lot of my own time” into this project, going to school in evenings, weekends, and off months to maintain the woodlot which is something he continues to do.

Engaging the Senses in Nature

When I asked, “When do you feel most connected to the natural world,” Jay responded, “You can be so much in the moment when you are bridging because it really calls upon so many of the senses.” He describes how visual, and sound are most predominately exercised in birding. Jay walked me through a birding experience of “a beautiful May morning.” He highlighted sight, smell, sound, and feeling in his recollection. Jay is most connected to nature when “all of the senses come in to play.” An important part of his connection with nature, but not always necessary are situations where there is a “heightened degree of natural beauty” and “experiencing creatures in their relatively pristine habitat.”

Jay described what the human-nature relationship as “On one level, we instinctively feel ourselves to be separate, I suppose, because of our higher level of cognition.” However, he “tries to remind himself of this,” and instinctively turns to understanding “single cell organism.” He followed by describing that “all creatures have an experience of self” and that “consciousness in some degree exists” in all creatures.

Cliff

When Cliff was six years old, he grew up in an “isolated, rural location on an acreage with a lakefront.” Cliff’s family had “one edge of the original property” that included the old orchard and lakeshore. The “huge maple and douglas fir trees on the somewhat uncultivated property” are “vividly embedded” in Cliff’s memory. Cliff’s parents were not “naturalists,” and did not provide “guidance” in that area. He pretty much had “free range to ramble around the property,” and his explorations were self-driven and occurred alone. Cliff especially enjoyed spending time at the lake, often “fishing on the sometimes-frosted dock” before school. Cliff’s explorations “emanated from the shore bank,” to what he describes as “wanting to the explore the lake in the worst way possible, initially in a rowboat.”

In his almost teen years, Cliff remembers coming across “a sailboat for sale in the local ads.” It was an 11-foot, pre-war sailboat, and only cost \$50. At the time, Cliff remembers being “surprised to be contemplating a sailboat,” but “I would have taken any kind of boat at that point.” Cliff purchased the sailboat and continued exploring the lake in this “new, and exciting way.” On his very first day of sailing, Cliff remembers “feeling captured by the wind, the boat and my whole being moving with the wind.” With his life jacket in hand, Cliff was given “free rein” to explore wherever he wished. Retrospectively, Cliff describes that these early experiences with the sailboat was “more about exploration than attunement;” however, the “relationship with place was definitely there beneath the surface.” Sailing remained an important part of Cliff’s teenage years. In addition to sailing, “organized sports” were also becoming important during this period. His parents “felt more comfortable in mentoring organized sports” than the outdoors. Cliff’s involvement in sports during these years took him “somewhat away from the more-than-

human... I say that, but really, I was still living in a rural location and still quite attached to that place, but a lot more attention went to team sport.”

From school, Cliff met a group of friends who enjoyed the outdoors and helped to “reignite” his previous interest. The “core group” consisted of two brothers and himself. The two brothers had access to a car, “we drove around to all kinds of places.” Cliff stated that they didn’t visit “an exhaustive list of places,” but there was “enough to conjure a sense of adventure.” He was profoundly taken by the “wondrousness” of the places they visited. What they were encountering on these trips was “beyond words,” and would inevitably lead to “poor verbalizations” if he were to describe his “inner feelings.” There was something happening on those trips “an attraction...a growing affinity” for “the more-than-human.”

Hiking with the core group spilled into his early twenties. During one of the trips, Cliff had a conversation about Outward Bound (OB) Schools with one of the non-regular trip goers who had previously taken a course. In those days, OB was “perceived as opportunities for a bit of physical challenge, but also learning some skills.” Unfortunately, soon afterwards, Cliff suffered a knee injury that forced him out of the professional university rugby season. At the same time, he noticed some “posters around the gym where for OB winter courses” which reminded him of earlier conversations had while camping. As his knee was healed, but not well enough to play rugby again, he took the opportunity to attend an OB course, “something that had been calling him for quite some time.” Cliff describes this period as the “transition from team sports back to the natural world that really happened in important ways.”

It did not take long for Cliff to be promoted from an apprentice to instructor at OB. During his time there, Cliff “discovered natural history...and I was the guy that was lugging around bird and flower books, a little bit of an anomaly in the place.” He was exposed to

“wondrous things that weren't part of the environment that I lived in on.” For instance, “there was this little plant called a bitterroot that came up early, early in the spring and it was this gorgeous little, close to the ground with a fairly large pink flower... I'd never seen anything like it, and I was taken by new birds and plants, and so there's an interest and an affinity kindled.” Cliff made the distinction that he did not become the person who knew every kind of plant or bird, instead he had an “interest in a wide variety of species...driven by the wonder rather than the need to know them all.”

Beginning to work for OB is marked “a really key piece of the transition...over time the physicality and the athleticism began to devolve more into an appreciation for the world around me.” As his involvement with OB progressed, Cliff became “less interested in the humanist priorities” of the program. When “a particular site that I first worked on was eventually sold,” Cliff’s “relationship with OB was severed... it was very tied to the losing of a place.” Although Cliff’s interests were moving in an “environmental” direction which were different than the values of OB. From the program he was “gathering” the confidence and ability to take people outdoors. During his time with OB, Cliff “traveled all over the world working in outdoor settings” engaging people in outdoor experiences.

Cliff shared a significant memory from a ski trip that occurred during his early OB days, “It was very cold, the lake was creaking and groaning, and a pack of wolves started howling... it was a kind of a starry night...and very active with the groaning lake and wolves.” He describes this experience as “a very special moment” that he will “never forget.” Retrospectively, he used “wonderous, magical, and luminous” to recall this memory, but also stated that there isn’t “any kind of word that could capture what was happening.” Later in life, Cliff became very active in

“wolf advocacy issues,” and he supposes “that particular experience would have had something to do with that.”

OB sent Cliff to the Yukon to run courses. He affirms then and now that being in the Yukon “just felt right.” He stated, “the lush Moss, it was thick, the rivers were wild and there was wildlife and fish and the mountains.” At the same time, realizing that his employment with OB was not ideal as he now had a young family, he soon returned to school to become an educator. Shortly after completing his degree, Cliff was hired to teach in Yukon public schools. During this transition time, Cliff continued to lead OB summer programs. One trip involved a group deciding to paddle into the night, “We came round a corner and there was a mother wolf with two pups, and they were only twenty meters away from us.” The group “pulled our canoes in and she [mother wolf] just sat there, laying there on the ground, paws crossed with her pups playing and we just shared company for tent minutes until the pups finally got a bit rambunctious...and the wolves eventually went off, but there was no fear, no hurry, no anxiety on their part or ours.” Retrospectively, Cliff described this as “a little bolt of connection of some kind.”

Framed by previous experiences, Cliff was “set up for having a special relationship with wolves and wolf issues.” Early into his teaching career there was a “government-sponsored wolf kill program...with the intention to increase populations of human-hunted species-ungulates.” At the time, Cliff felt unsure at how to approach the wolf kill topic within his teaching practice. He knew that many of the parents of his students did not share the same concerns about the program as he did: “I often talk about it [wolf issues] as one of the impetuses for me to go back to school was that I knew I had a class full of kids whose parents wouldn't have the same ideas or concerns that I did about wolves.” What Cliff wanted was “for people to be able to at least consider

alternative perspectives” to the wolf-kill program. Cliff turned to the local conservation society for help. Many of their teaching resources “talked about ethics and values as part of their mandate, but never really addressed them in their curriculum materials, nobody knew how to talk about it.” Cliff saw himself as “enormously vulnerable taking a stance to it [wolf issues], as opposed to all the parents of all those kids, but at the same time, I didn't think it was appropriate to just leave these things unsaid.” An “innate curiosity” and “not knowing how to engage with questions of value” propelled Cliff to do a PhD. What he needed was to “run into some philosophers” as they were the people who had the inclinations and methodologies to probe his questions.

When Cliff returned from completing his PhD the government had begun another sponsored wolf kill. Cliff was an “extraordinarily active public advocate” and spent “seven years fighting the program.” This included writing letters to leaders, “hard hitting articles in the newspaper,” and attending meetings. His “interest and practice in environmental ethics helped to articulate values and rational against the program.” Although Cliff knew that he wasn't going to win the fight, it was still important to “raise the issue.” He remembers feeling “hallow and defeated” on the first day of the wolf kill. Further, he described his “emotions and feelings as being out of sync with his realistic, intellectual, analysis of the situation... even though intellectually I knew that I did what I needed to do, I knew I wasn't going to win, but I knew I needed to raise the issue.” Cliff knew what was to come, yet he felt “surprised” at the amount of “hurt” he felt and recognized his emotions and values were being “implicitly” there for the wolves but not always acknowledged.

Cliff does not have a single “trigger” that made him think that environmental education was what he wanted to do. In other words, “there is not a straight line” for Cliff to “doing

something environmental.” Instead, it was “cumulative” and “incremental interests” that led him to environmental education. Along the way were important conversations with First Nations people who sparked Cliff’s thinking in “how relationships with the more-than-human world could be different.” One Elder, Cliff describes as his “first environmental ethics instructor...though she would never have framed it that way.” The Elder led Cliff to his “first conscious awakening that worldviews could be radically different.” Another important piece was reading *The Natural Alien* by Neil Evernden. The book helped to “tie together emerging ideas in western environmental thinking,” some of his life experiences, and the Elder’s teaching. The practices that led Cliff to a career in environmental education “need to be stitched together, a bit like a collage.”

Cliff’s approach to environmental education is influenced by “philosophy of education, especially what counts as knowledge and understanding.” Cliff taught at both the college and university level on topics, including “environmental ethics, environmental philosophy, and philosophy of education.” He describes being “forever indebted” to OB for the experiences, confidence, and skills it provided him to continue taking people outdoors. Throughout Cliff’s teaching career, “fieldtrips were always a critical part of my courses.” Like his upbringing, water-based travelling was a “central-piece” in Cliff’s practice. Cliff preferred engaging students in “canoe-based trips because being in a canoe levelled people’s physical capacities whereas while hiking, it was challenging to keep people engaged and together.” In the latter part of his career, Cliff taught an “integrated course in outdoor, ecological, and experiential education, that effectively summarizes where my heart has been all a long.” When Cliff was teaching, “I had this goal that I was working towards, and that would be having at least 50% of my classes in an alternative setting. Sometimes we would hold the sessions in a little cabin and walk back out

again.” Cliff named his last graduate class “Wild Pedagogy,” and the group spent a week in a nearby provincial park.

The name of that last course later inspired a “Wild Pedagogy colloquium” which was essentially a “floating conference.” It was held “70% or 80% of the time in the field...we were all in canoes and traveling down the Yukon River.” People made presentations at lunch and dinner time, so it resembled a traditional conference format. Although the colloquia attendees were “constantly immersed in place” upon reflection it was noted that “the trip did not, for most presenters (but not all), let the voice of the more-than-human world in.” Retrospectively, Cliff described that when people were on the river they would say “look at this,” look at that,” or “listen to that;” however, in most cases the experience “did not make room for the voice of the more-than-human to enter on its own terms.” Considering this, Cliff has determined that “just being outside isn't enough, you have to actively... you need to do more” regarding making space for the more-than-human. The colloquia inspired Cliff and others “to write a book on Wild Pedagogy that strove, amongst other things, to carve out space for the voice of the more-than-human in education.”

Cliff understands human-nature relationships as “an inevitable relationship between us, we're in it together, it's not always seen, not always acknowledged, and will be across generations ...it's there.” The relationship “is there, whether we like it or not, whether we care to acknowledge it or not.” According to Cliff, a “healthier approach to going forward would be to seek ways where that relationship can be highlighted and whereby, we might seek to ensure the mutual flourishing of both humans and more-than-human world. That would be ideal.” Cliff made note of the distinction between “perceiving” and “enacting.” In his words, “in enacting relationships with the world, there's always paradox and contradiction. It's difficult, but

it's worth being mindful that some of our actions can, we hope, be a means to a better end, but sometimes that remains an open question.” For instance, although well-meaning, Cliff feels as though he sits at his desk too much; “The academic part of my life has occupied too large a piece.” With that in mind, it is important to remember to “seek to do the best we can as there is always more to be done.”

A canoe trip is where Cliff feels most connected to the “more-than-human.” Cliff acknowledged that “I think when you use the word most so there's a continuum between a little bit and most.” He feels “little bits [of connection] continuously... little bits are birds in the backyard, bird feeders, hearing the birds in the woods when I go for a ski...maybe later this afternoon... there's a little bit that happen frequently and, on most days, wherever it is that I am.” The place where he feels most connected is when he “gets away from town.” When he does get away, it takes him “at least three or four days to just begin to really feel more connected.”

Cliff has a stronger connection for the places he visits often. He expressed having an “abstract empathy for the whole planet,” but particular “places are where we really develop our sense of empathy. From specific, local, and personal experiences.” Cliff is able to create “general empathy” with other unfamiliar places, however “the abstract” drives his impulses. He mentioned Arne Naess as a “really important” figure especially his understandings about “empathy and relationship.” He exclaimed, “there's an empathy, but it is also a sense of this same kind of relationship that he sought to develop for himself within his place, and so there's a relation analogy that they would probably be added to the empathy piece.” Cliff provided an example of Naess’s empathy, “one day he was looking at a mixture of two acidic substances... a flea probably jumping off of a lemon and found itself into this toxic little mixer under the microscope, and he said it was terrible watching what was clearly a painful experience

for the flea dying.” Cliff stated that Naess expressed that “empathy was essential, even empathy for a flea, and if there had not been any empathy then or some common understanding of empathy, then it wouldn't have mattered to him.” I asked Cliff if how he felt for the wolves regarding the wolf kill was comparable to the empathy Naess felt for the flea. He replied, “The empathy piece may have been there, may have been latent, I didn't think about it in those terms with the first two, but there's something special happening in a relational way that again, it escapes words, but that certainly must have set the ground for the empathy that came with knowing the wolves were going to be killed.” Naess was “in so many ways, a terribly important mentor for me, both through his written work for the longest time, and then eventually in person.”

Cliff and his partner continue to sail today. When he went for a pre-purchase sail for his current boat, he experienced a “strong sense” of the same “feeling” as he experienced during his first sail as a boy; “Feeling the pressure on the tiller as the wind came up, and feeling the boat lean on her side with gusts of winds, and seeing the turbulence around the rudder... It was just an immediate flash of recognition with my past.” When he was a boy, Cliff didn't “dwell” on the relationship between himself, the water and wind; however, thinking about it since, “there is a relationship” that was kindled early and has been there ever since. Cliff finds sailing both “exhilarating and sensuous.” According to Cliff, “we are, after all, sensuous beings, and sailing (amongst other things) brings home, and reminds me of this essentially human nature, it still captures all the senses at once.”

Explicit Analysis: Cliff

In the narrative above, I have emphasized themes that I perceive as important to Cliff's understanding and relationship with nature, and EOE education efforts. Following, is an explicit

narrative analysis that describes each theme separately, and in connection to the narrative and research questions. The themes that emerged from Cliff's narrative include a) Place and Freedom to Explore, b) Water and Wind, c) Program: Outward Bound, d) Animal Encounter, and e) Inevitable Relationship with the More-Than-Human.

Place and Freedom to Explore

Place was a significant theme in Cliff's narrative. Throughout both interviews, Cliff shared many memories from the farm, including the orchard, the shoreline, trees, and lake. Cliff had "freedom to romp" as he wished to. When I asked, "Please explain whether having the ability to roam freely on the land without supervision, has had an impact on your relationship to the more-than-human," Cliff described that what was going on wasn't made explicit, however, implicitly he was likely "shaping foundations for a relation with nature." In his words, "If there was an infinity it was more implicit and came out through the activities." In his early years, there was "no such thing as thinking about the more-than-human," however, later in life, "some activities have really lent themselves to then becoming more attuned with, and it being more conscious attention to the more-than-human." It is important to note that Cliff's parents did not provide mentorship when it came to nature, he was on his own in those early on discoveries.

Water and Wind

As you will have read in the narrative, the water and wind were a significant part of Cliff's narrative. During childhood Cliff had freedom to roam the land that he grew up on. He was particularly interested in the water exploring it by fishing from the shoreline or in a rowboat. After some time, Cliff purchased a "pre-war" sailboat from an ad in the local newspaper. Sailing was an "important extension from the simply wandering about this land... I remember from that very first day of sailing a feeling of being captured by the wind and the whole boat and my

whole being moving with the wind.” What is instrumental to these experiences is the implicit relationship with the “more-than-human” that was nurtured through sailing. It was not just sailing, it was how Cliff felt in relation to the wind, and water, that were most significant. The “implicit arrangement with the wind” was “reinforced” while sailing. Water-based travelling became a “central-piece” in Cliff’s education practice. Most of his teaching included field trips such as canoe trips. Cliff and his partner continue to sail today, and he is reminded of how he felt captured by the wind when he first began sailing.

Programs: Outward Bound

The Outward-Bound program is an important piece to Cliff’s story. Outward Bound gave Cliff the opportunity to gain confidence in taking people outdoors. Outward Bound also marks Cliff’s transition from an interest in team sports back to the natural world. Prior to Outward Bound, Cliff was very much focused on rugby, and “nature took a backseat during those years.” While working for Outward Bound, Cliff came to realize that his priorities regarding the natural world which were different than that of Outward Bound. In his words, “the program was really set up as a very much a humanistic program,” and “my interest was shifting to more environmental things.” His interest moved from the adventure side of engaging with nature to and appreciation and interest.

Animal Encounter

The narrative highlights Cliff’s experiences with wolves and wolf issues as significant to his understanding of human-nature relationships as well as his outdoor, environmental, and experiential education efforts. Cliff had two wolf encounters that were instrumental in setting him up to have a special relationship with wolves: “I became really involved in wolf advocacy issues, and I suppose that particular experience would have had something to do with that.” The

second memory he shared added to his earlier experience that ultimately contributed “to special relationship when it came to wolf issues, and with wolves.” When Cliff landed his first teaching position, the government had begun the sponsored wolf kill program. Framed by his earlier experiences with wolves, Cliff wanted to address the program within his classroom with the intention of helping people the issue in a different way. He was not sure how to address the questions of ethics and values, especially regarding the wolf kill program. The question of “What to do about ethics and values” in education sent Cliff to do a PhD. Completing the PhD also provided Cliff with further understanding and skills to address the wolf kill through community advocacy and education.

Inevitable Relationship with the More-Than-Human

When I asked, “What is your perception of the relationship between human and the more-than-human?” Cliff replied, “There is an inevitable relationship between us, we’re in it together, it’s not always seen, not always acknowledged, and will be across generations.” Cliff shared that he has had “lots of experiences throughout my life and career that have shaped my outlook,” however, there is not one “single huge epiphany” that shaped his relationship to nature. Instead, it was “somewhat incremental.” In addition, I asked Cliff to describe where he feels most connected to nature, and he responded by first acknowledging the “continuum that is implied with the word most.” He feels most connected on a canoe trip, or at his cottage where the walls that separate indoors from outdoors are “thinner.” Cliff also experiences “little bits of connectedness that happen continuously.”

Mentorship

Cliff shared several mentors throughout his young adulthood and adulthood that influenced his understandings and worldviews of nature. In his young adulthood, this was a

group of boys he went on trips with. These boys helped to “re-ignite” his interest in nature. During his adulthood, Cliff described several mentors, including Indigenous peoples and scholars that informed his perspective.

Chapter Five—Discussion

At the outset of this study, I sought to explore the experiences of an exceptional subset of environmental, outdoor, and experiential educators. I wondered how and why their experiences were most significant for their understanding and relationships with nature and led to their lifelong commitment and development of a career in the field of environmental, outdoor, and experiential education.

The overarching research question that guides this study is:

What are the experiences and understandings that influence exceptional outdoor, experiential, and environmental educators regarding nature?

This study was also driven by three sub questions:

- 1) What experiences have shaped participants' perception and understanding of nature?
- 2) How do participants understand human-nature relationships?
- 3) How have participants experiences with nature influenced their environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts?

The following chapter will address each of these questions by looking at key findings that emerged from participants narratives. Connections will be made to the literature, and theoretical framework articulated in chapter three. In this chapter, you will find a section on the implications, limitations, and significance of this research study.

Summary of Major Key Findings

Each participant had different experiences and perspectives on the phenomena of study, however, I did discover commonalities across participant narratives. This section highlights study findings in response to the research questions. These findings include re-occurring expressions, experiences, situations, and perspectives across participants.

Research Question One

For research question 1) What experiences have shaped participants' perception and understanding of nature, the notable key findings across participants are relationship to place, freedom to explore in the outdoors, and outdoor mentorship and leadership. By asking participants to share with me their experiences starting from their childhood, moving through to present time, a developmental understanding of the research topic was acquired. Many phenomena shaped participants understanding of nature, including people, experiences, job opportunities, field practices, and travel. From the data I gathered that place was an important part of childhood for participants. Their sense of place in childhood developed through to their adulthood. As previously mentioned, all but one participants of this study are over forty years old. This means that their childhood occurred at a time that is quite different than the world we live in today. Participants considered their ability to roam and explore freely without the supervision of adults as significant to shaping their perception and understanding of nature. A third finding was the role of mentorship and leadership. I expected statements to be stronger and that mentorship would play a more significant role in their childhood. However, participants did express having influential leaders and mentors at various stages of their life beyond childhood.

Relationship to Place

The mention of a relationship to place appeared across all participants. This included natural spaces, visiting place repeatedly, backyard, and local conservations areas. Place for six out of seven participants was their backyard, or nearby green space that was accessible by walking. However, for Clay, his sense of place was most strong at the camps he attended that later developed into a relationship with "the blue lake, rocky shores of the Canadian Shield." Clay's "imaginative archaeological streak and heritage" grew from his interactions with place

fostered by his early experiences at camp. Clay's sense of place is so well developed that whenever he wanders far from the Canadian Shield, he experiences a kind of "psychological disorientation." A childhood sense of place was significant in the narratives of Terra, Reed, Wren, Sage, and Cliff. For instance, Terra had a strong connection to the woods on her land and was nurtured from the childhood walks she had with her grandfather leading to a significant aspect of her life as an adult. Specifically, the woods were a place where she seeks clarity, healing, and safety and feels most herself.

Just as Terra's sense of place was the woods in her backyard, Reed also expressed his relationship to place in a similar manner. Reed "wasn't taken anywhere," therefore he developed an "awareness of my own backyard and neighbourhood." His "awareness" included an interest in the species of that place. After further probing, Reed stated "I don't think I can really add to that," meaning his backyard was all that he required to conjure a sense of curiosity and wonder for nature that has lasted a lifetime.

Wren expressed having a "favourite place that I would go to over and over again." He lived nearby a conservation area: "I remember going down to a little wetland and just stomping through a marshy area, there was a board walk I would follow to catch frogs and turtles." From Wren's narrative I learned that visiting the same place repeatedly was important. Through retrospective analysis Wren suggests that visiting the same place led to an understanding that "those places were my friends, a favorite tree I loved to climb, a favorite board walk." Place was a significant part of Wren's narrative, and an important component of his teaching practice. When discussing the role of place in education, Wren stated that "good environmental education is about ever widening fields of self until the self becomes the world."

Developing a relationship to place has the potential for one to see the living beings of that place as part of their community, and hopefully themselves as part of it too.

Like Wren, Sage expressed that frequently visiting place allows for a person to hopefully see that space as being a part of you. Sage's experience of place aligns with Terra's connection to the woods. Sage's recollections of childhood included exploring the woods by her home. Just as Terra still lives on the land she grew up on, Sage also continues to occupy the house she lived in as a child. Sage expressed that continuing to live in the place where she "played as a child" has allowed for her to feel a "deeper connection" to the land and has helped to "keep memories alive." Her connection to place is infused within her education pedagogy through explicit practices that nurture a sense of place within a child, just as Terra aims to raise her children in harmony with the woods.

Jay first expressed a connection to place at his grandparents' cottage. This was accompanied by catching turtles and frogs in the pond that over time evolved to an interest in all aspects of nature in his region. As mentioned in the narrative, Jay is so deeply connected to place that he could wake up on a forest floor and know what day it is through an awareness of the species. Cliff shared that the land he grew up on, which included a lakefront, held special qualities that remained a constant over the years. In his adolescence, and early adulthood, wherever Cliff was, and whatever he was doing, his relationship with place did not diminish. Although Cliff was traveling and visiting new places, they were not comparable to what he felt for place.

All participants had very different life experiences, yet their narrations expressed a unanimous emphasis on the significant role of place in childhood, and their future aspirations. What I gathered from participants was that a perception and understanding of nature was

nurtured from first having a connection to place. Once a connection was established, further life experience strengthened the bond, and it expanded in different directions, including other areas of nature. For two participants continuing to live on the same land, and house that they grew up in allows them to keep their childhood memories alive. Four of the seven participants still live in the same area that they grew up in.

Freedom to Explore in the Outdoors

Six out of seven participants emphasized that having the opportunity to explore nature without the supervision of an adult was significant for both their childhood, and teenage years. Three participants described playing with others, however, those participants also emphasized spending time alone in nature as important for their development and understanding of nature. For instance, Cliff stated that “I was on my own a lot and I can remember wandering around that property, wanting to explore the lake... I pretty much had free range to ramble around the property.” Similarly, Wren expressed that “most of my former years in nature were wonderful because I was allowed to explore and be in nature, but not be supervised... I was lucky enough to have parents who at the time, just let me go.” Both Cliff and Wren expressed engaging in risky outdoor experiences. They were grateful to have had the opportunity and freedom to engage in those kinds of activities as they were character building. Wren expressed worry for children and adolescence today who do not have the same opportunities and privilege to engage in activities due the foreshadowing of risk.

Reed, Jay, and Terra shared similar experiences of exploring their own backyard and neighbourhood. Terra spent time wandering the fields and woods between her home and her grandparents’ farm. When Jay was catching turtles and frogs in the pond, he was often by himself. Reed’s awareness of his backyard developed his solo explorations that included a trip on

his neighbour's property to watch the sunrise. Clay was the only participant who never discussed being alone, but unless the camps he attended ran solo programs that is to be expected.

Both Wren, Sage and Terra indicated exploring their outdoor places in a free-range manner with other children. At times, Wren was with a "cadre of kids." The activities included "building these really complicated forts and then grabbing a stick and using it as a sword, a wand or the mast of a sailing ship." Terra recalls "playing on the haybales in the field with the neighbours." Sage emphasized that when she was with the neighbourhood kids "the adults had no idea what we were doing" which I think is a similar case for many of the participants.

I interpreted from the narratives that having the freedom to explore and alone time in nature provided participants the opportunity to discover, imagine, develop confidence, and negotiate risk. When Sage was alone in nature she was "free of distractions and human conversation, and better able to focus on what was happening around me." Similarly, Terra could be herself, "I would talk to my imaginary friends...sing at the top of my lungs...I could be me." Wren conveyed having a freedom agenda in stating, "I would go wherever my feet would take me...climbing a tree, building forts...looking in a beaver dam." Reed's visit to his neighbour's land was because he wanted to have that experience for himself, and on his own. Cliff was curious about the lake, so he bought a boat to further explore his place. Participants acted on their interest in the moment, further exploring their place with a sense of freedom not readily available today.

Outdoor Mentorship and Leadership

Another key finding related to my research question pertains to mentorship and leadership. It was surprising that only two participants narratives referenced the importance of family members during childhood. Also, only one participant mentioned the influence of

educators or education in a positive note, and two in a negative manner. Based on the findings from empirical studies, I expected the guidance and mentorship of a family member or educator to be more acknowledged by this study's participants. Terra and Jay mentioned mentorship from a family member while several other participants acknowledged the role played by influential leaders in their lives. Initially, I anticipated that their family members would have played a more pivotal role in the making of these exceptional outdoor educators. In this subset of people, mentorship from a family member or educator did not appear to be significant in shaping their understanding of nature.

Clay, Wren, Reed, Cliff, and Sage expressed that their parents did not share the same interest in nature that they did. Although Sage and Wren stated their parents did go for family walks and hikes. Terra and Jay both expressed influential mentors early in their lives. Terra communicated that her grandfather's "knowledge and appreciation of nature" inspired her own. Out of all participants, Jay expressed the most influence regarding his parents and grandparent's role, although they were not necessarily mentors in environmental knowledge. Instead, they supported his "interest" in outdoor activities. By offering a lot "of positive feedback... my grandparents were always interested in whatever I was interested in as were my parents." Jay's mother would allow him to bring turtles up to the cottage from the pond for further inspection, and both his father and grandfather would take him fishing. I gathered from Jay how important it was to have received the encouragement, support, and interest from those around him. Jay mentioned a close family friend that was a significant and life-long mentor in birding and all areas of nature for him. He was introduced to this mentor in childhood, and he remained a constant throughout his life.

For both Reed and Clay, program leadership was significant in their development. Reed received mentorship when he attended scouts and cubs, recalling the “quiet attitude and respect” that scout leaders had for nature which “gelled and made sense to me.” Considering that Reed did not have parents who had an interest in nature, these leaders were important role models in his life. Like Reed, the leaders at camp were mentors for Clay. He recalled a memory of being with “two older guys who were probably twenty-two and under” that made Clay “feel like an equal in terms of the rigor of the day, the hardship of paddling.” Clay was made to feel like “a man of the North, a 12-year-old boy who could paddle and portage with the big boys.” For both Clay and Reed, these leaders were instrumental in building character.

The work of philosophers, scholars, writers, and activists also provided mentorship and inspiration for several participants. Cliff shared that the knowledge of First Nation people throughout his life had been instrumental in introducing him to different worldviews. There was one female elder who he describes as his first informal environmental ethics instructor. Cliff also described Arne Naess and Neil Evernden as important scholarly mentors. In his young adulthood, a group of friends are to credit for “reigniting” Cliff’s interest in the outdoors. Clay mentioned eco-psychology and the ecological consciousness, and Sage referenced Val Plumwood and Wild Pedagogy. Jay discussed Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution, and Reed admired Al Gore’s work on climate change. The scholarship and environmental movements were mentioned in the context of education, and their usefulness for participants in orienting their practice.

Regarding education, and contrary to other studies, participants did not mention an influential educator or education as significant to their understandings of nature. Sage did mention a high school outdoor club run by educators that was impactful. Other than that, both

Terra and Clay made negative comments about education. Terra wished that she could have “changed what she was taught” regarding the environment. She would have liked “less political undertones.” Lastly, Clay referenced that he found school challenging, and preferred camp where he could learn outdoors.

Research Question Two

The key findings that address research question 2) How do participants understand human-nature relationships, are connection, spiritual understanding of nature, animal connection, sensory awareness and engagement, and nature identification and knowledge. Within the key finding of connection are two sub findings, including language of connection and connectiveness with nature.

Connection

All participants described feeling a connection to nature, however the terminology and explanations of human-nature relationships that participants provided varied. For the sub-finding **Language of Connection**, I chose to include a chart of the preferred terms used by participants to articulate human-nature relationships. Each description or preferred terms provides insight into how they view human-nature relationships.

Participant	Preferred terms used to describe human-nature relationships
Clay	“Become ecological beings where we truly embrace notions that we are of the earth,” “Earth as a living being and part of us,” “Being well in nature, being well for yourself, and with the Earth,” “A spiritual quest”
Terra	“Connection to this living organism, which is our planet.”
Reed	“The real world...like heaven on earth,” “Connection,” “Awareness of others,” “So much bigger than us.”

Wren	“Those places were my friends,” “Connectedness,” “Community,” “The church of the woods,” “I am part of nature and nature's part of me is... it is like trying to describe an arm... it's an arm, I give it a name, but my arm is still part of me.”
Sage	“The rest of the natural world,” “Connection,” “Moments of connectedness,” “Something between the chickadees, trees and me,” “Seeing ourselves as whole with the rest of the natural world,” “Ideally I would like to think there is a connection between human and the rest of the natural world.”
Jay	“Diverse, everchanging, predictable, unpredictable,” “Spiritual,” “Connection, well-being and mystery,” “We are a part of it.”
Cliff	“More-than-human,” “An inevitable relationship between us, we're in it together, it's not always seen, not always acknowledged, and will be across generations ...it's there,” “Little bits, little bits continuously... little bits are birds in the backyard, bird feeders, hearing the birds in the woods when I go for a ski.”

The language all participants used to express their connection and relationship to nature differed. The chart above highlights the language of participants. Reed, Wren, Sage, and Jay all used the word “connection” to describe human-nature relationships. Reed elaborated by describing that “there are two worlds...the anthropogenic is dissecting, fragmented, materialistic, and dualistic...and the real world is quite the opposite...like heaven on earth... it is inter-relation, connection, and interdependence.” Jay, Wren and Clay all provided a similar description

that premised on the notion of being a part of nature. For instance, Jay explicitly stated that “we are a part of it [nature].” Similarly, Wren’s understanding of connection is emphasized by his understanding that he is “part of nature and nature is part of me...it is like describing an arm.” Likewise, Clay conveyed “Earth as a living being and part of us...there is a oneness of that relationship.” Reed made the distinction that human is “a part of something bigger than us.”

The idea of belonging to a nature community was mentioned by both Wren and Reed. A community that Wren calls his “neighbor-wood that includes the grass, insects, flowers, birds, and the trees.” Cliff shared that there is an “inevitable relationship between us [nature]...and will be across generations ...it's there...we're in it together, it's not always seen, not always acknowledged.” Regardless of whether we choose to acknowledge our connection to nature, Cliff states that it exists. However, it would be ideal if human chose to acknowledge the relationship to allow for the “mutual flourishing of both human and the more-than-human.”

Overall, I gathered that participants all understand relationships with nature but have different ways of expressing their views. Sage made a point that it is important to be selective of how you are articulating nature depending on the audience. For example, she uses “rest of the natural world” instead of “more-than-human” for the parents of her school program. Sage articulated that “when you say *more than human world*, people are confused...I used it once and someone said, ‘Well, do you mean like fairies and elves and stuff?’” She feels as though “the rest of the natural world is a nice in-between place that is more inclusive and also ensures that we see that we're part of the natural world.” On the other hand, according to Cliff, “I generally go along with David Abram’s idea of the more-than-human world, I realize that a lot of people don't find that adequate, and my task to them is do better, if you can, and we need to have something that is not non.” This question led me to believe we still need to find a language that better articulates

our relationship to the world and/or that this is the task present EOE educators are grappling with.

By asking participants, “Where do you feel most connected to nature,” a variety of responses were received. The second sub key finding is **connectiveness with nature** and explores how participants experience and feel human-nature relationships. Wren and Terra shared that they require very little to feel connected to nature. For instance, when Wren steps outside his door on a beautiful day, he feels “a sense of belonging right away.” Even when he looks outside his window, he feels a “sense of connectedness.” Similarly, Terra expressed that she doesn’t need anything to feel connected other than “to just be present in nature and in the surroundings.” Wren and Terra’s experiences outline a low maintenance feeling of connection, whereas Sage expressed “moments of connectedness” such as watching the “force of water” on Lake Superior or being alone in nature. It seems that Sage requires more depth to her feeling of connected. These “moments of connectedness” translate to “a consciousness of a relationship” to nature.

Clay described that his relationship to animals, and the heritage of place is greater than that of flora and fauna. He was the only participant that expressed a relationship which is stronger to certain aspects of nature over others. He shared the wolf experience as an example of connection that also has a spiritual element to it. Clay also discussed his “archaeological streak” as a significant part to his relationship with nature. Since childhood, Clay has maintained a cultural connection to explorers that is nourished by his imagination for the heritage of place.

Cliff feels most connected to nature when he experiences “little bits [of connection] continuously” and feels “most connected” when he gets away “where the barriers from inside to outside are thinner.” Cliff’s answers suggested that there are instances where a

person may feel “most” or strongly connected, and times where there is less connectedness, and he feels most connected on canoe trips and when away from his home. However, he also acknowledged “little bits of connection” such as when seeing birds at the feeder.

Spiritual Understanding of Nature

Some participants expressed a “spiritual” element to human-nature relationships. By spiritual they did not mean in a religious sense. For example, Clay shared relationships as a “great spiritual quest... at the heart of our being is a great mystery to feel connected and to feel belonging, and I've never turned to religious doctrine for this, and don't feel myself as a religious person, but do feel that I am a spiritual person and strive for some sense of understanding and becoming within the world is a paramount central human quest.”

Clay’s understanding of spirituality comes through his understanding of the term *friluftsliv*: “The two tenants of *friluftsliv* are nature is first, that you are grounded in your ability to embrace the spirituality of being one or being well with nature and being joyous.” Similarly, Wren proposed that there might be a “spiritual dimension” to his relationship but does not “subscribe to a formal religion.” He believes that there are “forces at play beyond our human comprehension.”

Jay used “spiritual” to describe “just how amazing everything is... the fact that anything exists at all is amazing if you step back and think... the wonder of evolution, the story of how it is, that everything came to be the way ... constitutes 95% of my spiritual life... evolution, for me, is really the greatest story out there.” Sage also referenced spirituality briefly when discussing “oneness.” According to Sage, the term spiritual is a word that requires further explanation and has a range of meanings yet defies one definition.

Terra discussed the healing abilities of nature but did not explicitly reference spirituality.

One participant chose to remove most of the spiritual items they discussed. No explanation was provided or asked for. Overall, the spiritual plays a role in connections to the land for most people, but for various reasons it is hard to find words that comfortably conveys this connection.

Animal Connection

Animals were mentioned by four participants in the context of human-nature relationships. Clay shared an encounter with a wolf that “boards on the profound and keeps the magic and mystery super strong.” Similarly, Cliff also expressed having a “special relationships with wolves.” He shared two memorable encounters that contributed to his involvement in wolf advocacy issues. Several “moments of connectedness” felt by Sage included animals such as the chickadees and dragonflies. In the instances shared by Clay, Cliff, and Sage, there was something about the encounters that is beyond their ability to describe a “feeling” of connection. For example, Clay wonders whether the wolf was warning him of the danger that awaited him down the river, questioning if a non-verbal exchange was happening between him and the wolf. Jay’s understanding of evolution and single cell organism brought about a feeling of connectedness, “The idea that all creatures have an experience of self and consciousness exists in some form in all living beings.”

Sensory Awareness and Engagement

The importance of connecting through the senses was mentioned by several participants. For example, Terra expressed “soaking the world up through my senses...I am not thinking or touching.” Her connection was based upon being present in the world with engaged senses. Jay expressed how birding requires all the senses, “seeing a bird take flight and that beautiful morning sight, and then the smell of the wetland or the smell of the forest.” When Jay is out birding, he mindfully engages his senses, “I’ll often say to myself, okay just stop for a second and take a look...the different shades of green, textures and sounds of life around me...the smell

of the wetland or the forest, all of the emerging leaves, I take that in as well.” Cliff highlighted the feeling of force when sailing that contributed to “an implicit relationship with the wind.” Wren reinforced the importance of sensory activities in EOE education such as smell cocktails and basement windows. Furthermore, his sensory descriptions included terms such as “honing” and “soaking in the world.” Participants clearly used all their sensory abilities to connect with the world around them.

Nature Identification and Knowledge

Both Jay and Wren shared that identifying species is an important part of their connection to nature. Wren expressed that equally as important as “love” for the environment is becoming “knowledgeable.” He clarified the distinction to “not become knowledgeable in an encyclopedic way but more like walking into a room and recognizing your friends...out of respect for your friends, you know their names, you know their character, you should be able to do the same thing with the natural world.” Jay made a similar comparison between “nature identification” and “entering a room with a bunch of friends, it is nice to be able to recognize them and know their names.” The ability of identifying species is more than respect for Jay; he receives an “emotional and spiritual payoff.” When he looks outside it isn’t just a “green blur” instead he is able to “put a name to what I am seeing and hearing.” Moreover, through Jay’s ability to identify what is around him he can simultaneously check the health of a habitat which provides him with a sense of security.

A significant part of Terra’s childhood was processing her grandfather’s teachings as “factual learning about the medicines in nature.” Learning the names of different plants and their healing properties was instrumental in instilling an “appreciation for nature.” During his time with Outward Bound, Cliff “discovered natural history” and referred to himself as “that guy who

lugged around bird and flower books.” Cliff was taken by the new species he was exposed to in the different environments. His “interest and affinity kindled for a wide variety of species” where he was “driven by the wonder rather than the need to know them all.”

Research Question Three

The key finding that addresses research question 3) How have participants experiences influenced their environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts, is positive experiences outdoors of wonder and awe. The participants of this study shared diverse recollections and elements that influenced their career, and lead to long successful memories, many that emphasized creating opportunities for others.

Positive Experiences Outdoors of Wonder and Awe

Overall, participants shared that there was not one moment that made them think that they wanted to have a career in EOE education. Instead, a combination of diverse experiences led them to a career of various outdoor practices. Reed’s narrative included experiences outdoors, participating in cubs and scouts, and working as a camp counselor, for the conservation authority, school board, and at Bark Lake. All these experiences combined to affirm and strengthen his love for the outdoors, and teaching children. Sage totaled all her “positive experiences with the rest of the natural world” that led to “consciousness of connection” she wanted to instill within others. The “rich experiences in nature” that Wren had in his childhood, and throughout his lifetime shaped his own environmental ethic, and compelled him to bring similar experiences to others.

Both Cliff and Clay’s past with tripping led to them offering field trips as part of their teaching practice. Clay actualized his university courses as though he was a “travel guide...you may not know what a travel guide looks like or is, but I’m not a university professor in a

lecturing kind of way that you're used to... my background is in guiding canoe trips, so I'm going to be a travel guide.” Cliff set the goal for “at least 50% of my classes in an alternative setting.” Jay’s own passion for the outdoors was shaped from a combination of life experiences that resulted in teaching practices being infused with passion and based in the woodlot.

The participants of this study all shared recollections of memories that were instrumental in shaping their career in EOE education. Each person’s path, and their efforts were very different from one another, but they all found common ground in EOE education. The memories shared were all positive with one exception, Clay’s biology class, yet his narration demonstrated how a negative example could be perceived in a new manner that brought insight and understanding.

Experiencing wonder and the feeling of awe came through all participants. Their own ability to experience wonder and awe translated into their desire to create similar opportunities for others in their own teaching practice. For example, Reed on several occasions referenced that he wants children “to experience the wonder and awe.” He described “exposing student to wonder, to just something so much larger than them... that was the bulk of my career.” Reed’s experience watching the progression of dusk to dawn on his neighbour’s land, and later as adult in the Grand Canyon lead him in his teaching practice to strive to create night hike opportunities.

Jay expressed wonder and awe in trying to understand creation and “how anything [the world] exists at all.” Other participants clearly conveyed a sense of wonder and/or awe in experiencing new places, water-based travel, encounters with a wolf, or Sage’s own “moments of connectedness” where words such as “magical,” “joyous,” and “alive” were used. Sage even stated that these moments were so profound that her ability to describe them does not accurately represent what happened. Wren tries to show students the magic, beauty, and wonder for nature

through activities of discovery, he is not in a hurry to “explain the land away” and instead “gives opportunities for the land to do its own teaching.” Jay conveys wonder and awe by using the term “mystery” in his practice of instilling students with a sense of evolution that scrapes “the surface of what we know about the natural world...don’t think there is nothing left to be discovered.” For all participants their experiences of wonder and awe has led them to desire sharing these kinds of moments with others in their care.

Place-Based Education Design Principles in Connection to the Research Findings

In this section, I consider the place-based education design principles outlined by Sobel (2008) against the findings of this research study. Sobel (2008) articulates that meaningful connections with nature are cultivated in a person’s backyard and local communities, and not in distant places. He describes design principles that are intended for educators to apply to their practice to build connections to place within their students that eventually develop into environmental stewardship (Sobel, 2008). The principles were constructed from the “seven play motifs” that Sobel (2008) states are evolutionary activities that children universally engage in. The design principles include “special places, hunting and gathering creating small worlds, and other design components for family outings, curriculum projects, and environmental field trips” (p. 20).

Beginning with research question one 1) What experiences have shaped participants’ perception and understanding of nature, I sought to gain insight into the experiences that have informed participants understanding of nature. Furthermore, I was curious whether the concept of place was influential, and if so, in what capacity? For research question two, 2) How do participants understand the relationship between human and nature, I was interested in knowing if connections could be made between participants understanding of place and themselves as part

of a particular place. Lastly, for research question three, 3) How have participants experiences with nature influenced their environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts, I wondered in what ways has their experience of place translated into their education practice?

The place-based education design principles informed the analyse process of this study. I used a deductive approach to specifically look for connections to place-based education within the data, including explicit references to place, and experiences that conveyed a relationship to place. I also looked at how participants incorporated place in their education practice, and pedagogy. While constructing the narratives, I made sure to stay true to the language and descriptions that participants used. By making note of their descriptions and understandings, I found that the data aligned with place-based education according to Sobel (2008).

As the findings section conveys, the concept of place was mentioned in all participant narratives. The concept of place, therefore, is a key finding of this study. After reviewing the participant narratives, I was able to draw connections between their experiences and the seven-play motif outlined by Sobel (2008). The play motifs are evolutionary outdoor activities that children continually engage in “when they have safe free time in nature (p. 19). The seven motifs include: “1) making forts and special places; 2) playing hunting and gathering games; 3) shaping small worlds; 4) developing friendships with animals; 5) constructing adventures; 6) descending into fantasies; 7) and following paths and figuring out shortcuts” (Sobel, 2008, p. 20).

All participants referred to one or more of these motifs during their childhood. For example, Wren discussed making forts with friends and exploring the conservation area near his house. The adventures that Cliff constructed on the farm lead him to exploring the lake. Clay’s fantasies at camp were that he was a “Man of the North” and able to paddle with the older leaders. Jay was developing relationships with the turtles and frogs he caught at the pond. Terra

had many paths throughout the woods she liked to take, and her imagination was always running freely. Both Reed and Sage's special place was their backyard and neighbourhood. This research clearly supports that place was an important part of the participants childhood and is expressed through the play motifs Sobel (2008) outlines.

Participants made a range of explicit references to place, describing childhood memories which embed their experiences in a developing sense of place. For example, Cliff referred to his relationship to place as remaining constant despite the new and exciting places he was traveling through in his young adulthood. Wrens' relationship to place led to him seeing "those living beings of place as my friends." Clay's connection was fostered from his early experiences at camp that led to a wider relationship to the Canadian Shield as a place of significance to his identity as travel guide. Whenever Clay wanders far from his beloved Canadian Shield, he feels a physical dislocation. Furthermore, his sense of place is associated with heritage and "imaginative archaeological streak." Terra's connection to place was the farm that she grew up on and still lives. Sage's runs her nature-based programs in the place of her childhood home. Jay's sense of place is tied to nature identification and knowledge. By identifying plants and the season through observing the forest floor is feel a part of a local habitat.

Sobel (2008) presented the design principles as a tool for educators to foster a sense of place within their students. Each participant of my study discussed how they incorporate a sense of place in their education practice and pedagogy and shared how the places of their childhood played an important part in their lives and so as adults they are dedicated to bringing similar experiences to the lives of their students. The activities that they use in their educational practices align with the motifs presented by Sobel (2008). Although none of the educators I

interviewed referenced Sobel (2008) I assume that they are familiar with his work because it is prevalent in the EOE education community.

Sage stated that “the more familiar we are with place, the likelier we are to see that place as being part of us.” Similarly, this relates to Wren’s understanding of “ever widening fields of self until the self becomes the world.” These two ideas expressed by both Sage and Wren best capture the overall intention of Sobel’s (2008) place-based education— students see themselves as part of place, or have a deep enough relationship to place, that makes them inclined to protect that place.

In this study I used deductive analysis to explore the concept of place and place-based education design principles (Sobel, 2008) against the research findings. As you can see, the data revealed connections between participant stories and place-based education from their own experience of place, and the concept of place in their education practice.

Research Findings in Connection to the Literature

Having explored the informative experiences of a subset of exceptional EOE educators through narrative, I now explore their experiences to related literature on this research topic. The literature review presents empirical studies that explore how life experiences inform the beliefs, relationships, and behaviour of people regarding nature. In this section I make connections between the findings of this study and the findings of other empirical literature.

The studies included in the first section of my literature review entitled, *Formative Life Experiences—Youth Perspective*, incorporate youth as participants. I am including youth participants despite the participants of my study being adults because of the limited research that looks specifically at EOE educators. Education research often uses adults’ reflection on their

childhood to determine important stages development. In comparison adult education often examines transformational activities that occur in adulthood and not childhood.

In the study conducted by Arnold and colleagues (2009) the motivators of youth environmental activists were explored, and the findings indicated the following influences “parents, experiences outdoors in childhood, friends, role models, teachers, and youth groups and conferences or gatherings” (p. 27).” In comparison, Stevenson and colleagues (2014) research revealed that time outdoors alone or with family, and mentorship were weak positive predictors of environmental behaviour. The participants of my study did describe childhood as an important time although it did not directly encourage environmental behaviour.

Like the findings of Arnold and colleagues (2009) the participants of my study all described experiences outdoors, and the influence of role models, but in most cases, mentorship was significant later in life. Interestingly, where my study differs is that parents were only influential for one out of seven of my participants, and that was not for environmental action, but instead positive reinforcement. As well, the influence of teachers was only mentioned by one participant and that was a high school outdoor club.

It is important to take into consideration the time of both studies. The young environmental activists in the study conducted by Arnold and colleagues (2009) were participants describing their experiences from the late 90’s and early 2000’s whereas in my study the participants were mostly in their childhood during the 60’s and 70’s. From synthesising the data from both the quantitative and qualitative portion of their study, Duerdeen and Witt (2010) found that “the relationship between EK [environmental knowledge] and EB [environmental behaviour] in the context of a direct experience (i.e., the international workshop), became

activated" (p. 390). The participants of my study provided recollections of direct experience with nature, opposed to in-direct experience such as education.

The second section of my literature review looks at influential formative experiences that encouraged participants to become outdoor educators (Nazir & Pedretti, 2016), climate change educators (Howell & Allen, 2019), environmental studies university faculty (Cagle, 2016), generalist and biology teachers (Torkar, 2012), and environmental educators (Corcoran, 1999; Palmer & Suggate, 1996). Howell and Allen (2019) indicated that "work, education, the media, people, and groups/organisations... and social justice concerns " as the highest ranked influences (p. 825). Although these researchers looked specifically at what motivates educators concerns for climate change, the influence of the media was only significantly expressed in one narrative, and in connection to climate change.

Social justice concerns especially the impact of colonialism was mentioned by several of my participants. Inconsistent with the findings of my study, Howell and Allen (2019) found that "childhood play in 'natural' areas" were influential for some respondents but not a significant formative influence as a whole" (p. 825). The participants of my study emphasized childhood as a critical part of their development. Similarly, Torkar (2012) found that participants view childhood experiences outdoors as one of the most influential components in producing environmentally informed minds. Torkar (2012) also found parents to be equally as influential which is inconsistent with the findings of my participants.

Through a phenomenological case study approach, Nazir and Pedretti (2016) indicate that "environmental consciousness raising includes three structures: connecting people to their environment; fostering care for the environment; and building agency for the environment" (p. 301). To nurture an environmental consciousness, participants of this study favoured strategies

and practices that “provide people with deeply engaging experiences with and in the outdoors” (p. 298). This studies participants’ expressed perspectives concerning their environmental, outdoor, and experiential education efforts aligning with the “ecological consciousness” practices outlined by Nazir and Pedretti (2016).

The themes Corcaran (1999) found in analyzing the narratives of environmental educators on their formative influences of the environment and their profession, included “childhood time outdoors, hope, heroic figures, parents and grandparents as environmental educators and role models, teachers and professors, scouting and camping, hunting, trapping, fishing, the destruction of landscape, a call to activism and social problems, fear of the effects of environmental problems, worldview, faith and spirituality” (p. 211). Of these themes, childhood time outdoors, role models, scouting and camping, worldviews and spirituality align most closely with the findings of this study. I was surprised to see that the influence of parents and grandparents to not have as strong of presence in the narratives of my participants. In the study by Cagle (2016) twelve environment studies faculty members were interviewed to gain a sense of their relationships with nature across their lifetime (p. 889). Experiences with family or friends in nature during childhood were mentioned by participants which is consistent with a small number of my participants.

In the following section, *Formative Influences and Outcomes Regarding Nature*, researchers Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2020) revealed the lasting impression of outdoors experiences early on in a person’s life, including “interpersonal skills; self- discovery; environmental behaviour change; leisure style change; transfer to others; and increased outdoor knowledge/skills” in adulthood (p.1). These research findings relate to my own study regarding the impact of early life experiences on my participants adulthood especially their chosen career

of EOE education. Likewise in an international study conducted by Palmer and colleagues (1998) that explored “significant life experiences and formative influences affecting the thinking and pro-environmental behaviour of adults” the data indicated that childhood experiences in nature was important in countries, including Canada (p. 445). This aligns with the findings of my study especially considered all my participants are Canadian. The researchers also found additional influences, including “close family, tertiary education, pollution and adult experiences of nature” (p. 453). Puig and Echarri (2018) explored the potential of a wolf encounter in the lives of three environmentalist to elicit concern for nature. Just as Cliff, Sage and Clay expressed profound moments with animals, Puig and Echarri (2018) found that the wolf encounters experienced by their participants led to a “spiritual revelation and spiritual upheaval” (p. 687). Interestingly, both the animal encounters mentioned by Cliff and Clay included wolves and included conversations about spirituality.

The last section of my literature review, entitled *Life Experiences and Human-Nature Relationships*, describes the limited research that explores the influential formative life experiences on an educator’s outlook of human-nature relationships. My study contributes to the gap in research outlined by Lui and Lin (2013) “few studies have directed their attention to how people perceive, experience and understand nature and human–nature relationships, especially in the field of environmental education” (p. 413). The five studies in this section provide context to this study, and aid in filling the identified research gap. Grimwood, Haberer and Legault (2016) build connections between two individual qualitative studies to reveal similarities of findings to better “understand human-nature relationships as experienced by different groups of wilderness travel leaders in Canada” (p. 138). As indicated by my participants there was not one moment that led them to a career in EOE education, instead, and consistent with the findings indicated by

Grimwood and colleagues (2015), “personal relationships with nature crafted over years of experience as a wilderness leader. . participants feeling compelled to encourage others to have related nature experiences and develop their own intimate relationships with the natural world” (p. 145). As an important note the participants of this study were all Canadian and in similar EOE education positions as the participants in my research.

The six themes that Piersol (2014) found from her narrative inquiry study on Canadian University researchers’ relationships to place, included “1) Forming trust and surrendering 2) Shifting into new senses of time 3) Seeking quiet spaces 4) Whole body immersion 5) Tools for wandering and wondering 6) Sharing places” (Piersol, 2017, p. 43). These themes which all have to do with place, most directly relate to the key finding of this research studies emphasis on “Relationship to Place.” Mikael and Morten (2017) research results also align with an emphasis on place the narrations of my participants.

Almeida and Vasconcelos (2011) use “a theoretical framework of three main environmental perspectives in the human-nature relationship (anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism), aimed to identify their incidence in teachers involved with environmental projects when confronted with diverse environmental issues” (p. 299). The data revealed that “the teachers interviewed showed a predominant preference towards biocentric and ecocentric perspectives regarding the human-nature relationship” (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 309). Most teachers displayed a non-anthropocentric perspective to the issues considered (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011). All participants in my study displayed a non-anthropocentric perspective when describing their understandings of human-nature relationships. Similarly, In Taiwan, Liu and Lin (2013) explore environmental worldviews about nature and human–nature relationships but from the perspective of undergraduate students. The findings included “(1) humankind is part

of nature and subject to natural laws, and thus cannot possibly destroy nature; (2) humankind plays a dominator role in nature but can be 'replaced' by other species; and (3) humankind should take responsibility for nature in order to secure sufficient natural resources and a livable environment for all species, especially humans" (Liu & Lin, 2013, p. 412). As indicated by the researchers, the answers provided by participants were largely from a scientific perspective (Almeida & Vasconcelos, 2011) which differs to the responses of my participants who included conceptual and philosophical outlooks.

Study Implications

The findings of this study generated implications for practice, specifically for study participants, generalist educators, and aspiring EOE educators. All participants expressed the role of place in shaping their relationships to nature. In several instances this place was their own backyard or local greenspace. Educators could consider nurturing student understandings of nature and human-nature relationships through visiting a local place repeatedly.

The EOE educators who took part in this research engaged in various levels of reflection on their own life experiences that shaped their pedagogy. Several participants noted that they rarely reflect on their own experiences in this capacity, especially with someone else. The implication for participants is that they were able to develop new perspective and meaning on their life experiences.

The participants of this study shared how outdoor learning has shaped their identity, and the influence on their adulthood. An implication of this study is the valuable insight that was provided regarding the lasting impact of outdoor experiences, especially in childhood on a person's development.

Participants shared strategies, activities, and practices for taking students outside, developing environmental stewardship, an ecological consciousness, and awareness of nature. People may find inspiration in the experiences of participants that could be applied to their own practice and pedagogy.

The participants of this research all indicated feeling a relationship to nature, however that there are different ways of understanding and interpreting human-nature relationships. An implication of this research is that broad insight on human-nature relationships has been provided from the perspective of exceptional EOE educators who have extensive experience in the field.

As expressed in this thesis, there is a tendency for research on this topic to be explored quantitatively, and that there is limited existing research that looks at human-nature relationships from the experiences of EOE educators. An implication of this research is that it adds to scholarship that aims to address both of those research gaps.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. One limitation was the limited time to collect data (interviews). Extensive data must be collected from each participant to gain an understanding of their individual lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two sixty to ninety interviews with each participant are not enough time to gather a lifetime's worth of experiences and stories.

Secondly, the female representation is a limitation of this study. Only two of seven participants were female. Due to time constraints, I could not prolong participant recruitment to receive additional female educators. Therefore, a limitation is that this study is primarily male perspective. Future research could build on this study by focusing on female EOE educators.

A third significant limitation of this study is diversity of participants. Although participants briefly referenced additional knowledge systems, this study was primarily Western focused. From what I gathered, two participants were not born in Canada, but grew up in a western culture. This study does not consider how human-nature relationships are understood in different cultures and knowledge systems. The perspective of participants is based on their Eurocentric and Western positionality, therefore the content does not resonate universally. A future study that interviews a wider degree of diversity would likely broaden the rich pool of data collected.

A fourth limitation of this study is the small number of participants. With only seven participants, I was limited in the diversity of data that I was able to gather. The participants of this study only represent a small subset of understandings regarding human-nature relationships that is dependent on their own experiences, opportunities, and positionality making is not applicable universally.

Another limitation of this study is that participants were of a highly specific subset and degree of visibility making them not necessarily generalizable and representative of general education and EOE community. The educators in this study were selected because of their unique contributions so we can learn from their broad range of experiences. However, they are not representative of generalist educators who may not have access to the same recourses and opportunities that participants of this study had.

All participants seemed keen and excited to share their stories within me. Participants were people who I felt could contribute positively to the research topic. As the participants selected were increasingly more homogenized in their positive experiences it would be very informative to complete a similar study on people whose childhood turned them off nature through negative perspective of nature.

When I first sought out to conduct this study, I intended to spend time with participants outdoors, however due to the pandemic, I was not able to do so. Therefore, the data collected is only representative of participants experiences expressed virtually. I am sure having been able to conduct interviews in person would have allowed me to gain a much deeper understandings of the participants in place.

Future Research Needs

In consideration of this studies limitations, I recommend that future research recruit participants that are more culturally diverse. The participants of this study represent Western and Eurocentric perspectives. Research that includes participants with different cultural and economic backgrounds would provide a more inclusive understanding of the research topic.

The participants of this study were an elite and exceptional subset of EOE educators. Future research should look at a more diverse sample of EOE educators. As previously stated, most participants of this study had attended graduate school, and were near the end of their career. To build upon the work of this study, future research should recruit participants who are broadly involved in EOE, and at different stages of their career.

To this research, I bring my own personal biases and experiences that have shaped my own understanding and relationship to nature like being a part of the environmental education program in the Queen's Bachelor of Education program, attending graduate school, and serving as a teaching assistant for both the Outdoor Experiential Education, and Environmental Education course. These opportunities were possible because of my privilege and whiteness. Therefore, these experiences and my positionality combined puts me in a position where I feel strongly towards EOE education. Future research may benefit from someone studying this

phenomenon who is farther removed, and does not share similar experiences, and perspectives as their participants.

Future research could explore why people develop negatives relationships with nature. This may provide data that could be used as proactive in education when engaging students in the outdoors.

Future research could build on this study by incorporating the perspective of children during their education instead of waiting until their formative years have passed. Research that looks at youth voice can contribute and articulate their relationship to nature in a beneficial way that we can learn from, especially considering they are the future EOE educators.

Considerations for Educators

The narratives of an exceptional subset of EOE educators have provided insight that can be considered by other educators, and aspiring EOE educators. Firstly, all participants expressed the role of place in shaping their relationships to nature. In several instances this place was their own backyard or local greenspace. Educators could consider visiting place repeatedly with their students to nurture understandings of nature and human-nature relationships.

In the lives of participants certain experiences seemed to be important at different stages of development. For example, exploring and visiting place repeatedly was a significant part of participants childhood. This was followed by programs, influential leaders, mentors, and engaging in environmental issues at later stages of development. Educators should consider the students stage of development prior to engaging student in environmentally related activities.

Participants of this study emphasized human, nature, and animals as one community, especially within their teaching practice. Educators could consider how nature as part of a

community could be embedded within their teaching practice to foster human-nature relationships.

Several participants stated that they did not visit places beyond their own backyard and neighbourhoods during childhood. Consequently, their understanding of nature developed exclusively from their backyard which had a lasting impact on their adulthood. This is an important reminder that engaging with nature doesn't have to be on a trip or what is considered as "wilderness." Rather, nature is closer than we think, and there is much that can be learned from one's backyard and local places.

The participants of this study all referenced a connection to nature, however the language and descriptions they used varied from person to person. Educators could consider that there is not one universal relationship or connection to nature, and that it holds different meaning for everyone.

Having the freedom to explore nature during childhood alone was a key finding of this study. The children of today do not have the same privilege to roam freely, and for a multitude of reasons, generalist educators in most cases cannot provide their students with the opportunity. Therefore, EOE educators could consider what kinds of activities could provide similar benefits to solo time in nature, and how generalist educators can be supported in executing these activities with limited supports.

Concluding Thoughts

This research shares the in-depth experiences and understandings of an exceptional subset of EOE educators. Their narrations provide a story line to follow of a person's journey that led to a passion that never waivers, and a career in the field of EOE education. Aspects of their stories provide glimpses into the making of extraordinary educators. It is my hope that

Clay, Terra, Reed, Wren, Sage, Cliff, and Jay's stories will be used as inspiration for those seeking a deeper understanding of differentially understood relationships to nature for themselves and others. Educators may find insight and inspiration from these narratives, especially suited to today when climate crises and environmental issues are looming in the frontlines of all our lives. Hearing the interviewees stories affirms the importance and a pedagogy of the ways uninterrupted time and freedom to explore outdoors shapes our understandings and relationships to nature. Completing this research had a lasting impression on me and I plan to continue some aspect of it while attending Simon Fraser University. I also hope others build upon its merit and take it in new directions, especially including different worldviews. Lastly, I hope reading the stories of Clay, Terra, Reed, Wren, Sage, Cliff, and Jay offer new ways understandings, and the experiences that shape human-nature relationships. Although this study is ending, I hope it serves as a new beginning, sparks conversation and further reflection on how we life as one with Earth.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Script

EMAIL RECRUITMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Hello; [name]

My name is Megan Tucker, and I am currently completing research for my Master of Education thesis entitled *The Experiences that Inspire an Educator to be an Environmentalist*. This study defines an environmentalist as a person who demonstrates care and interest in the more-than-human world, and is concerned with, and/or advocates for its protection. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the experiences that inspire an educator to be an environmentalist. Through listening to the stories of environmentalists', this study will explore participants' significant life experiences, and the impression of those experiences on their identity as an environmentalist. Additionally, this study will explore the preferred terms of environmentalists to define and describe the more-than-human world, and the perceived relation between human and the more-than-human.

As an environmentalist, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

If you agree, this research will entail taking part in *two virtual interviews* (described below) lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, for a total of 120 to 180 minutes. The first interview would be approximately 60-90 minutes in length and would involve questions about your preferred terms to define and describe the more-than-human, and the perceived relation between human and the more-than-human. Lastly, the second interview will be approximately 60-90 minutes and involve questions about the kinds of experiences that have significantly shaped your identity as an environmentalist, and any follow up questions from the first interview. At the second interview you will be provided with either a three-page summary or transcript of findings from the initial interview. Two weeks after the second interview, you will be provided with either a transcript or three-page summary of the second interview. Your anonymity is of great importance to me thus all data will be kept confidential, and pseudonyms will be used at your discretion. As such, a total of 3 hours (interviews) of your time is a requirement of this study.

At this time, there is no remuneration for participating in this study.

Please find attached the Letter of Information and sample consent form for this study. These supporting documents should provide you with any further information that you may require, however, please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions. My contact information is listed below.

Please let me know by *[insert deadline]* whether you would like to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Megan Tucker

Master of Education (M.Ed.) Candidate
Faculty of Education | Queen's University
Duncan McArthur Hall | 511 Union Street
Kingston, Ontario | Canada | K7M 5R7 |
megan.tucker@queensu.ca

Appendix B: Combined Letter of Information and Consent Form

The Experiences that Inspire an Educator to be an Environmentalist

Principal Investigator: Megan Tucker, Faculty of Education, Queen's University

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth MacEachren, Faculty of Education, Queen's University

I am inviting environmentalists to take part in a research study. This study defines an environmentalist as a person who demonstrates care and interest in the more-than-human world, and is concerned with, and/or advocates for its protection. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the experiences that inspire an educator to be an environmentalist. Through listening to the stories of environmentalists, this study will explore participants' significant life experiences, and the impression of those experiences on their identity as an environmentalist. Additionally, this study will explore the preferred terms of environmentalists to define and describe the more-than-human world, and the perceived relation between human and the more-than-human.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to be virtually interviewed on two separate occasions using Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Both interviews will be recorded in audio digital files and approximately 60-90 minutes in length (120 to 180 minutes total). The first interview will involve questions about your preferred terms to define and describe the more-than-human, and the perceived relation between human and the more-than-human. The second interview will occur no less than two weeks after the initial interview. During the second interview you will be asked questions about the experiences that have significantly shaped your identity as an environmentalist, and any follow up questions from the first interview. During this interview, you will have the option to review either a transcript or three-page summary of the initial interview. Two weeks after the second interview you will be provided with either a transcript or three-page summary of the second interview. The total estimated time required for participation in this study is 3 hours maximum (two interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, for a total of 120 to 180 minutes).

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. You can stop your participation at any point by telling the researcher. You may withdraw from the study up to two weeks after the final interview by contacting me at megan.tucker@queensu.ca. You may request to have your data removed up to two weeks after the final interview by contacting me at megan.tucker@queensu.ca. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by applicable laws. All collected data will be de-identified and anonymized. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity on all data files and in any dissemination of findings. The interview recording will be transcribed and then the recording will be destroyed. The study data will be stored on an encrypted hard drive on Queen's University servers. The code file that links real names with pseudonyms and study ID numbers will be stored securely and separately from the data on an encrypted USB key. Access to study data is limited to the researcher, as well as the Queen's General Research Ethics Board (GREB) whom may request access to the study data to ensure that the researcher is meeting their ethical obligations in conducting this research. GREB is bound by confidentiality and will not disclose any personal information. The de-identified data set will be made freely accessible in the Queen's University's Institutional Repository after a 5-year embargo period. The code file identifying your pseudonym and study ID number will be permanently erased from the encrypted USB key five years after study closure. I will maintain copies of the transcripts for a minimum of 5 years and may use the data (with names removed) in subsequent research.

I plan to publish the results of this study in academic journals and present them at conferences. I will not include personally identifying information from the interviews when presenting my findings. Real names will not be included with real quotes. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything that you do not want me to quote. Based on the depth and nature of experiences shared within the interviews, there is a possibility that the information could be indirectly identifiable. To ensure that you are informed, the researcher will provide you with a copy of the transcripts to review.

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. Participants will not receive compensation for their participation.

If you have any ethics concerns please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in North America) or email chair.GREB@queensu.ca. Call 1-613-533-2988 if outside North America. If non-English speaking participants wish to contact the Chair for ethics concerns, translation assistance may be necessary, as the REB Chair communicates in English only.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Elizabeth MacEachren at maceache@queensu.ca or 613-533-6000 ext. 77243

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All of your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study. Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one signed copy (print, sign and photograph/scan) to the researcher, Megan Tucker, by uploading this form to the secure password-protected file on OneDrive for Business

You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this study.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all my questions have been answered. I am also verifying that I will upload my signed consent form on a Queen's OneDrive using the link shared by the researcher or provide an audio-recorded verbal consent during the interview with to the researcher. I consent to participate in this study.

I consent to participate in this study: Yes • No •

You have my permission to use my quotes/audio record: Yes • No •

Signature of Participant PRINTED NAME Date

Signature of Person Conducting the Consent Discussion PRINTED NAME & ROLE Date

Appendix C: Verbal Consent Script

The Experiences that Inspire an Educator to be an Environmentalist

Participant Study Number/ID:

I confirm the following:

- I have explained all aspects of this study to the participant as outlined on the letter of information.
- I answered all of the participant's questions to their satisfaction and the participant had sufficient time to consider their participation in this study.
- The participant was informed that they may choose to stop their participation at any time for any reason without penalty.
- The participant was informed that their legal rights would not be affected by consenting to participate in this study.
- The participant verbally agreed to participate in this study and to follow the study procedures.
- The participant was provided with a copy of the Letter of Information for their records.
- The participant consented to the use of Audio Recording /Use of Quotes

Signature of the person conducting
the verbal consent discussion

Printed name

Date

Appendix D: Verbal Consent Log for Documenting Informed Consent

Participant Study ID	Consent obtained for:	Date of verbal consent discussion	Name of individual conducting the verbal consent discussion	Signature of individual conducting the verbal consent discussion
	<input type="checkbox"/> All questions asked by the participant were addressed <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the LOI was provided to the participant <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal consent was obtained for study participant Explicit verbal consent obtained for: <input type="checkbox"/> Audio Recording <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Quotes			
	<input type="checkbox"/> All questions asked by the participant were addressed <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the LOI was provided to the participant <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal consent was obtained for study participant Explicit verbal consent obtained for: <input type="checkbox"/> Audio Recording <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Quotes			
	<input type="checkbox"/> All questions asked by the participant were addressed <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the LOI was provided to the participant <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal consent was obtained for study participant Explicit verbal consent obtained for: <input type="checkbox"/> Audio Recording <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Quotes			

Appendix E: First Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the work you do? OR please tell me about the work you do?
2. What terms would you use to describe/define the world around you?
3. How do the terms you use reflect and shape your understanding of the world around you?
4. How has the way you describe the world around you evolved over time?
5. Some people say that our language is problematic in understanding the natural environment (or use their terms). Do you agree with this? Please explain.
6. When do you feel most connected to the world?
7. What is your perception of the relationship between human and nature?

Appendix F: Second Interview Questions

1. Please share any stories or defining moments from your childhood that has shaped your present relationship to nature? I am going to ask you to answer this question for each stage of your life...
2. How have your experiences/opportunities influenced/shaped your present environmental/outdoor education efforts?
3. Are there any other moments you can share that transformed your perception of the world?
4. Looking back on your past environmental/educational opportunities and experience, is there anything you would change if you had the opportunity?
5. What would you say to others with a similar interest?
6. What do you wish you would have known if you were younger?
7. If you could transform our present-day cultures to serve the environment, what would you suggest/wish for?
8. How have your experiences influenced you to engage in environmental activism?

Appendix G: Request for Narrative Review

Hi,

I hope you are staying well.

I finished writing the first draft of your narrative. I have attached the document and would appreciate if you could take some time to review it. I would like to make sure that the narrative is accurate to your experiences, and authentically represents your understandings. If there is anything you would like added, changed, or removed please feel free to make the changes directly on the document using track changes, strikeout feature, or through email.

Appendix H: GREB Ethics Approval



October 20, 2020

Ms. Megan Tucker
Master's Student
Faculty of Education
Queen's University
Duncan McArthur Hall
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #:: TRAQ #

Title: "GEDUC-1025-20 The Experiences that Inspire an Educator to be an Environmentalist"

Dear Ms. Tucker:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "**GEDUC-1025-20 The Experiences that Inspire an Educator to be an Environmentalist**" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html>) click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period (access this form at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html>) click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html> click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies." Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, GREB, at University Research Services for further review and clearance by GREB or the Chair, GREB.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean A. Tripp".

Chair, General Research Ethics Board (GREB)
Professor Dean A. Tripp, PhD
Departments of Psychology, Anesthesiology & Urology Queen's University

c: Dr. Elizabeth MacEachren, Supervisor
Dr. Saad Chahine, Chair, Unit REB
Kyle Cummings-Bentley, Dept. Admin.