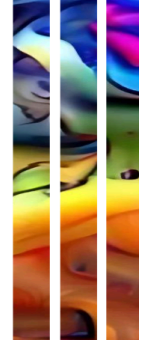


ACCELERATE / ACCÉLÉRER

CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION
IN CANADIAN TEACHER EDUCATION

L'ÉDUCATION AUX CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES DANS LA FORMATION
DES ENSEIGNEMENTS AU CANADA



CCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT REPORT

Land as Relation in Climate Change Education in Teacher Education

Dr. Joshua Hill
Mount Royal University
March 2025

Summary

In partnership with the Brown Bear Woman Cultural Event Centre we hosted a seasonal calendar of Tsuut'ina Elder-led land-based learning opportunities for teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and university faculty and staff. The events occurred on the Tsuut'ina Nation. The fall events occurred on Oct 4th, 21st, 23rd, and 25th. The winter events took place on January 17th and 24th. The fall events included Elder storytelling, Tipi teachings, and plant walks. The winter events included Elder storytelling and medicine pouch making.

In total 207 participants attended the learning series. 144 attendees took part in the fall events. The composition of the participation was made up of 99 teacher candidates, 39 mentor teachers, 2 school administrators and 4 MRU faculty and staff. 63 participants attending the winter events comprised 18 teacher candidates, 32 mentor teachers, 2 school administrators, 10 MRU faculty/staff, and 1 external partner.

A post event survey of participants yielded the following key learnings from the series: participants felt gratitude for the land; participants learned Indigenous knowledge including language, stories, ways of life, history, and ecological knowledge; participants learned the importance of listening; participants learned Indigenous knowledge to share with their students; participants learned that land based learning is inclusive; participants fostered new relationships with Indigenous Elders; and participants made network connections with others interested in advancing Indigenous land based learning in education.

Gaps & Needs Addressed

In the context of the current climate change emergency, to survive, humans must stop thinking and acting as if we are separate from the natural world (Guzmán et al, 2021). In this context teacher education has a crucial role to play as the next generation of teachers need to be capable of fostering interconnectedness with the world (Enns et al, 2021). Dwayne Donald (2021) offers guiding wisdom: “if we wish to take seriously the task of addressing the most troubling issues we face today, we must be willing to consider insights from knowledge systems that express alternative ways of being in the world.” He continues “I have learned that it is difficult to imagine other ways of doing things while sitting stationary at a desk” (Donald, 2021). Yet the post-secondary education system in which teacher educators are enculturated is dominated by Eurocentric ways of coming to know (Battiste, 2013) and the teachers that mentor future educators in practicum classrooms feel unprepared to support the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives (Scott & Gani, 2018; Danyluk et al. 2023).

This project will create the conditions for teacher candidates, teacher educators, and mentor teachers to experience Indigenous ways of coming to know and engage with the natural world through spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical elements of learning (Styres et al. 2013).

Theoretical Framework/s or Guiding Concepts

Land-based learning is rooted in Indigenous epistemology and centres Indigenous ways of being and coming to know (Styres et al., 2013). Within land-based learning, land is conceptualized as the first teacher and learners engage with the stories, language, ceremonies, skills, and knowledge that connect Indigenous Peoples to the land (Streit & Mason, 2017). Starlight (2024) contends that beyond a mere presence on the land, land-based learning includes elements such as “creating a sense of community, facilitating experiential learning opportunities, engaging in activities centered on nurturing and care, and integrating spiritual guidance” (p. 81- 82). It is important that land-based learning acknowledges the diversity of Indigenous relationships with the land and involves Elders and Knowledge Keepers to ground efforts in local place based Indigenous knowledges (Styres et al. 2013).

Land-based learning fosters an understanding of the land, not just as a physical space but as a complex web of relationships (Donald, 2021). This focus on interconnectedness fosters a sense of "self-in-relation" (Styres et al., 2013), allowing learners to reconnect with the land and, ultimately, themselves (Radu et al., 2014). Land-based learning addresses planetary health as children and youth who spend more time in nature are more likely to protect it and land-based learning is identified as a key sustainability pedagogy (DeVillie et al., 2021; Stehl et al., 2024; Soga & Gaston, 2024).

Outcomes

The vision of our project was to sponsor the conditions for teacher candidates and mentor teachers to foster relationality, wellbeing, and hope through engaging in Indigenous Elder led land based learning experiences. This will be an ongoing journey however we believe our project represents a step towards this vision.

Successes & Challenges

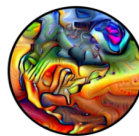
The greatest success was creating the conditions for mentor teachers, teacher candidates, and university faculty to learn together on the land from Indigenous Elders.

Lessons Learned

We learned that there is great demand for Indigenous land based learning in our learning community. The registration for our events filled within the first day of being communicated to potential participants. Furthermore, when asked about their next steps participants told us that they wanted more opportunities like the ones they attended.

Advice & Resources

The most important element to the success of this project was the relationships with both the Starlight Family and Brown Bear Woman Centre and the various K-9 school partners that we have fostered over time. As a community-based Teacher Education Program, we are committed to facilitating not only relationships with our individual school partners but also creating opportunities for our partners to build relationships amongst themselves. Our advice to other faculties of education is to establish a priority to fostering a relationship with local Indigenous partners and help develop those relationships that take time and require the proper supports.



ACCELERATE / ACCÉLÉRER

CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION
IN CANADIAN TEACHER EDUCATION

L'ÉDUCATION AUX CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES DANS LA FORMATION
DES ENSEIGNEMENTS AU CANADA

For more CCE Accelerator Grant Reports and other resources,
visit the **ACCE-TE website** [accelerating-cce.ca]

