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An Intervention in Educational Inquiry: Re-membering, Honoring and Practicing a River's Ways of Knowing and Being

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ABSTRACT *Answering this special issue's call to reckon, repair and reworld, and following an ethical imperative to re-think social and educational structures, I turn to the wisdom of rivers. In the current settler colonial climate of near inertia that we live in, there is an urgent need to reckon with ways of being and knowing that go beyond the mainstream taken-for-granted habits of conventional educational research. Thinking with Indigenous perspectives, I problematize the Eurocentric worldview I was raised in and consider, in my capacity as a non-Indigenous educator and inquirer, some principles rivers can teach about educational inquiry. A series of photographs of the Chehalis River and personal vignettes allow me to trace and articulate a feminist and decolonial approach to my own inquiry. I consider how reciprocity, language and movement – three teachings gifted by the river – invite me to be, think, and act as an educator and an inquirer engaged in reconciliation. As many rich and diverse Indigenous perspectives have always reminded us, we have a responsibility to listen to and care for all our relatives, human and more-than-human. This is one important way we can work to transform our collective thinking, actions and future in education.*

KEYWORDS education; inquiry; reconciliation; Indigenous perspectives

As I have done elsewhere (Forte, 2022b), I purposefully present my thoughts in this paper in a format that doesn't obey mainstream academic writing conventions. I offer a text made of vignettes that contain interventions in the form of boxes with grey backgrounds. These interventions, together with a series of photographs, invite readers to engage with vivid images and ideas, without aiming to be objective or purely scientific. Vignettes have been used by researchers to connect with readers on a more personal level, through the stories shared in them (Humphreys, 2005; Mizzi, 2010). The vignettes crafted in this piece serve as invitations to pause, think and feel more deeply and critically with me as I share teachings I was fortunate to receive. Most of the vignettes in this article recount moments my family and I experienced near the

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Chehalis River which is located in the southern part of the province that is today known as British Columbia. The teachings that came with these moments helped me reckon with different expressed and lived meanings of reconciliation. I am curious about what they might produce for readers, and I encourage them to respond in any way they wish (e.g., by writing a response for themselves, by discussing with someone else a vignette they felt was particularly poignant for them, by reaching out to me to share their reaction). In this way, I hope this piece will contribute to disrupt some of the hegemonic and unquestioned rules of academic texts.

I am a non-Indigenous educator who is passionate about language teaching and learning. I am also a white immigrant of French and Spanish descent who eventually became Canadian, and a guest on the ancestral, unceded and traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and səlilwətaɬ Nations. Colonization persists, to this day, as Patrick Wolfe (2006) points out when he writes that "[settler colonizers'] invasion is a structure not an event" (p. 381). This also means that settler colonizers continue to exist, as Emma Battell Lowman and Adam Barker (2015) explain:

> If colonization [has] changed form, then maybe what a colonizer look[s] like [is] different now, too. [We] attempt to articulate our efforts to understand ourselves as Settler Canadians, as colonizers, and as people with deep moral and ethical responsibilities to change our relationships to the lands that we call home. (p. 15)

I have learned that "settler" can be both a liberating and a harmful word to use around Indigenous peoples.[1] I also believe that the articulation of my position as a white settler living on unceded, ancestral, and traditional lands can bring a sense of accountability and obligation to my own story. Rosi Braidotti (2019) encourages us to think about the composition of the "active transversal assemblages" (p. 153) that we are a part of and that make us who we are. "Non-indigenous" and "settler" are two words that can describe the material locations I am embodied and embedded in, and I acknowledge that. Posthumanist, new materialist and deleuzo-guattarian theories, as well as Indigenous perspectives have all been foundational, in rich and different ways, in my doctoral journey. In this piece, I want to engage more specifically with certain Indigenous perspectives I have learned from. I want to forefront them "without seeking to 'weave', 'blend', 'intertwine', 'integrate' or otherwise render Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies compatible with, or palatable to, Western hegemonic ideologies (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wilson, 2008)" as Myra Hird and

[1] I am grateful for the Indigenous friends and colleagues who have shared their thoughts and feelings about the word "settler." I cannot refer to other non-Indigenous peoples as settlers because it is also a word that doesn't encompass the stories of all non-Indigenous peoples. I therefore use "settler" to talk about myself and my own story here with intention and care. I use the word "non-Indigenous" to talk about other people, while being aware of the binary opposition it can (re)create. No word is perfect, and labels are treacherous. I strongly believe that we should always explain the reasons why we choose to use certain words in certain contexts, hence this imperfect footnote.

Hillary Prendko (2024, p. 8) advocate. This all comes from a will to act responsibly and to work for change, both as an educator and as the mother of a white child born on these lands. Positioning myself as a white non-Indigenous settler scholar is a first important step as I move in a complex reality in the field of education with much respect for the work that many Indigenous peoples have done and continue to do. In particular, I am grateful for the hard work the people who were part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) accomplished. In their executive summary, the TRC (2015a) defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (p. 16). As a teacher and as an inquirer, I am therefore learning to contribute to reconciliation, admittedly, in imperfect ways and, often, from an uncomfortable position (Carroll et al., 2020). As a teacher in elementary and secondary schools, and as an instructor in teacher education programs in postsecondary institutions, I choose the materials and texts I select for the courses I teach. In one of its reports, the TRC (2015b) articulates, in point 8, that "supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential" (p. 126). Including Indigenous voices, perspectives and knowledges in the texts my students and I read, listen to, look at, and discuss together has therefore been an important practice for me in recent years. In addition to referring to and discussing texts and material authored by Indigenous authors, I believe that it is also important to do my best to educate myself about Indigenous ways of teaching and learning and to change my pedagogical approach according to these, while acknowledging them properly, as well as the people I've learned from.

Anishinaabekwe professor Eva Jewell and professor Ian Mosby (2022) state that the obligations of reconciliation are to be shared between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and that there *are* pathways for settler institutional leadership to be enacted. As a non-Indigenous person, I believe that non-Indigenous peoples like me need to learn *from* (not about) the rich and varied Indigenous perspectives which honor the principles of relationality, reciprocity and accountability, among others. These principles are not central in the Eurocentric worldview in which I was brought up, which envisions the human (and often, the white man) as an individual entity separate from and superior to other species. This worldview is the settler colonial one and it accounts for the human, cultural and environmental genocide that Canada, along with other settler colonial states, has brought upon the stolen lands it is built on. It intentionally and ongoingly generates historical and cultural amnesia (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and imposes cognitive imperialism through the use of the dominant European languages that came with and articulated this Eurocentric worldview (Battiste, 2013). As a white settler educator and scholar, and as a French, English and Spanish speaker, I therefore believe that I have a responsibility and a role to play in decolonizing education by unsettling and interrupting the settler colonial Eurocentric worldview that is still pervasive in

the institutions and classrooms I work in, in the curricula and course outlines I am mandated to teach. Through reading the work of Indigenous scholars, participating in workshops facilitated by Indigenous leaders, and talking with Indigenous peoples, I have come to understand that engaging in reconciliation in an ethical and accountable way means learning from and holding up the rich and diverse Indigenous perspectives, languages, and cultures that have always offered and enacted relational ways of existing in this world. Engaging in reconciliation does not mean appropriating these or incorporating them into a "multicultural settler colonial nation-state" that is only invested in settler futurity and that is not committed to Indigenous sovereignty (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 16).

In this respect, Max Liboiron (2021), a Red River Métis/Michif and settler professor and researcher, offers the following distinction between the words and concepts of "small-*l* land" and "capital-*L* Land" in their book which aims to define an anticolonial scientific practice aligned with Indigenous and Métis concepts of land, ethics, and relations. Small-*l* land is commonly used to describe colonial relations between humans and animals, land and waterways. In contrast, Liboiron (2021) states that capital-*L* Land "is fundamentally relational" (p. 45). It is about "relations between the material aspects some people might think of as landscapes – water, soil, air, plants, stars – and histories, spirits, events, kinships, accountabilities, and other people that aren't human" (p. 43). Colonialism got in the way of and damaged these relations and the cosmocentric worldview that supports it, and continues to do so. Learning from ancient ways of inhabiting the world – a cosmocentric view which is deeply rooted in relationality, reciprocity, respect and accountability, and in which the human species isn't considered to be superior to other ones – therefore constitutes transformative work for all parties involved. Anishinaabe/Métis professor Vicki Kelly (2021) insists that this transformative act can only happen with:

> the intention that we create learning ecologies for the next seven generations that lift up the offerings of our Ancestors for the children yet to be born, and engage in the re-imagination of what it means to be human and live in harmony with All Our Relations. (p. 197)

Her words speak to me because they emphasize the "response-ability" (Haraway, 2008, 2016) we all have towards nature and future generations. They also echo my own intentions as a ~~researcher~~ who prefers to identify as an *inquirer.* Being an inquirer has come to mean, for me, that I ought to act with respect, wonder, and an openness to the world, at all times (Forte, 2022b). While reading of the work of Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Kim TallBear, amongst others, I started articulating my ideas more clearly from the position of a white feminist scholar engaged in educational inquiry and reconciliation. TallBear (2013), a Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate citizen, explains that, "for feminist epistemologists, … inquiry not only does not require 'point-of-viewlessness,' it actively incorporates knowledges from

multiple locations" (p. 24). While I have, in other publications and in my doctoral work (Forte, 2022a), engaged with theories from the Eurocentric cannon of posthumanism and new materialism, in this piece, I want to focus, as I stated above, on my engagement, as a non-Indigenous person, with Indigenous perspectives and their teachings about relationality and reciprocity with the more-than-human world. I do not believe that I can stand with Indigenous scholars and authors if I do not think with them too, in a univocal and direct way. I want to answer Metis and anthropologist professor Zoe Todd's (2016) call when she asks, "when will I hear someone reference Indigenous thinkers in a direct, contemporary and meaningful way …? Without filtering ideas through white intermediaries… but by citing and quoting Indigenous thinkers directly, unambiguously and generously" (p. 7).

I believe that an educational inquirer must engage in what adrienne maree brown (2017) calls "the practice of humility – enough humility to learn, to be taught, to have teachers" (p. 8). I thus turn humbly to the wisdom of rivers, one of our many more-than-human relatives and teachers as different Indigenous cultures view them. I do so encouraged by the teachings I have received while reading and listening to the work of Potawatomi citizen and ethnobotanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, 2021a, 2021b), of Vicki Kelly (2016, 2021), of Squamish ethnobotanist Styawat Leigh Joseph (2023), and of others. Kimmerer (2021a) warns us that "choosing the myth of human primacy gives us permission to designate our kinfolk as property or natural resources" (p. 117). Rivers, animals, plants, rocks, mountains and forests are so much more than "resources." The anthropocentric worldview and narrative which views them as such has brought us all into the settler colonial times we live in, marked by systemic racism, pressing environmental issues, global health crises, and socio-economic divides that continue to widen and split our societies and communities. I recall Kelly's words, quoted above, which invite us to think and act differently, to repair and reworld, so that the next generations learn and live by a relational narrative that has always been there, embedded in Land (Altamirano-Jiménez & Kermoal, 2016; Liboiron, 2021; McCall et al., 2017). While it isn't the narrative I was brought up in, it's one that I am drawn to join and to support with much respect and gratitude. In my capacity as an educator and as an inquirer, I thereby invite you to ponder with me what pedagogies and principles a river can inspire for educational inquiry.

Opening Vignette

It's the beginning of April and it's a particularly wet kind of day. My spouse, our son and I are walking along the Chehalis River, in the Fraser Valley, a few hours away from home (Vancouver) in what is now known as British Columbia.

Figure 1. The Chehalis River

… opening intervention …

Layers upon layers of colonial history have sedimented in these place names and, until recently, I never paused to think about the origin and meaning of these names. Following an imperialist and colonial logic, the Fraser River bears the name of Simon Fraser who, according to the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, was, "in 1808, … the first European to travel the majority of the Fraser River" (Robinson & Newton, 2017, para. 10).

In contrast, Wall Kimmerer (2021b) wisely asks we consider the following questions: What would happen if we viewed and called ourselves as the Younger Siblings of Creation, rather than as Masters of the Universe? What place do we give to humility in our worldview?

The words we use to describe the world we are but one part of (re)create certain kinds of realities. Living in reciprocity with the land and paying attention to its teachings, the Stó:lō people are named after the ~~Fraser River~~,[*] not the other way around. I learned that Stó:lō actually means "People of the River" and also "River" itself in the Halq'eméylem language. They were and remain the first inhabitants of this region and they have lived with and taken care of the land and the waterways for thousands of years. There is deep respect and reciprocity embedded in this name – Stó:lō. I wonder if the ~~Fraser River~~ Stó:lō would be in dire need of protection due to pollution, urban, commercial and industrial developments today, had the way we refer to waterways and other more-than-human relatives remained embedded in reciprocity.

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*As I did elsewhere (Forte, 2022a, 2022b), I present certain words *sous rature* (under erasure) with the use of the strikethrough function, following a Derridean practice, to underline the imprecise and inadequate nature of many words. In the case of the ~~Fraser River~~, more specifically, it is meant as a typographical protestation which shows a refusal of an imperialist and colonial toponymic practice.

I learned from the caretaker of the place we are staying at that *Chehalis* comes from the name of the *Sts'ailes* First Nation. *Sts'ailes* is itself "derived from the Halq'eméylem word '*Sts'a'iles*', which means 'the beating heart'" (Sts'ailes, n.d.). Bearing this mind, when I look at the river moving, this is what I think about – a heart beating. My son is picking up rocks and throwing them in the water, while I take pictures of the river and marvel at the mist that surrounds us, feeling at once calm and awed. My spouse is sitting close by, playing music. Almost an hour passes as we each do our thing, together. The river keeps flowing. My son keeps picking up rocks. I keep looking at the river. My spouse keeps playing his wind instrument. The rain keeps falling. The mist keeps misting. At some point, my son, my spouse and I decide to leave. It's time to head back home. My son shows me one of the rocks he picked up that he wants to keep. He says: "Look, it's a planet. But you can only see the planet if the rock is wet. She needs the water to be a planet."

Figure 2. Wet rock/planet

I am reminded of the following words, written by late Ojibwe author and journalist Richard Wagamese (2016):

> The phrase ‘all my relations’ ... points to the truth that we are all related, that we are all connected, that we all belong to each other. … ALL my relations. That means every person, just as it means every rock, mineral, blade of grass, and creature. We live because everything else does. (p. 36)

Rocks and water are connected. They belong to each other. Children seem to know this truth, intuitively. They pay attention. They haven’t learned the anthropocentric and colonial way. Yet. I want to dwell in that moment. Brazilian Indigenous educator, leader and activist Célia Xakriabá (2020) explains that “people lost [their] connection to the Earth because they don’t see Earth and land as a relative,” but that, to her and her people, “the Earth is like a grandmother, because it’s Earth who gave birth to all of the mothers of the world. Earth is like the first independent woman that created humanity and Earth needed rivers and water to create humanity” (para. 7). I wonder how and if non-Indigenous peoples like me can play a role in repairing and recovering this connection respectfully.

A Vignette About Contexts

Sophie McCall et al. (2017) share that,

> In naming ourselves and our histories, we acknowledge the strength of our readings and the limits of our knowledges; we recognize our relationships to each other and are reminded to behave respectfully; and we also acknowledge the sovereignty of the territory ... Locating oneself is an act of continuance that pushes back against claims to universality and the assimilative drive of colonialism. (p. 4)

Inspired by their words, I share a bit more about my past and present contexts in what follows. I come from a city named Toulouse, located in the south of France. On average, Toulouse receives about the same annual amount of rain that Vancouver gets in just one season. As a child, I learned that, if the rain starts to fall, you seek shelter or stay inside and wait until it stops raining to go out because it won't last. Applying this rule in Vancouver would basically mean not doing much outside from November to April.

Figure 3. Rain falling on the Chehalis River

Tyson Yunkaporta (2020), from the Apalech clan, states that "being in profound relation to place changes everything about you" (p. 227). So much has changed about me while living in Vancouver for 17 years. The West coast is home to many spectacular temperate rainforests. I don't try to shelter from the rain here. I welcome it and remember, when I smell it, feel it, see it, hear it, that it lives in reciprocity with the many beautiful different types of mosses, the powerful waterways and the lush forests I am blessed to live with, and that are home to many other human and more-than-human relatives.

Figure 4. Rainforest nearby the Chehalis River

While I did not grow up in a cultural worldview which considers nature's offsprings as "relatives," I am grateful for the teachings I receive from the generous Indigenous perspectives that do. And I consider it an honor to be able to share these teachings with the students and teachers I work with today. Some of these perspectives come from the Chehalis River area that my family and I have been visiting regularly for the past four years, shortly after I started my doctoral journey.

…a contextual intervention…

Rather than following a predetermined path traced by others, I ended up, during my doctoral program, following a path with heart, one that Cynthia Chambers (2004) describes as follows: "Like all paths, it leads nowhere, but it will make you strong. If you find yourself on a path, then you must stay on it only if it has heart, and it is only your heart that can tell if it so" (p. 6). That path took me to places – not just academic ones – where I learned a different way, a decolonial way of practising and living ~~research~~ inquiry. I am grateful for the Indigenous perspectives I have encountered walking this path, and I noticed that many of them, while rich, diverse and sovereign, share a deep respect for the teachings of the land (Chrona, 2022;

Kovach, 2021; McCall et al., 2017; Smith, 2021). As Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez and Nathalie Kermoal (2016) write,

> Indigenous knowledge systems have developed over millennia and are grounded in living relational schemas. Relationships not only highlight the strong attachment Indigenous peoples have to their homelands but also underline the ontological framework that land occupies in those relationships (Coulthard 2010, 79). These relationships are reciprocal and develop among people as well as between people and non-human beings. (p. 7)

The place where we stay every time we come near the Chehalis River, is an old lodge set on a large piece of land that was bought back by the Sts'ailes in 2009. It's a beautiful place run by beautiful people. One of them, D., is a member of the Sts'ailes First Nation. Hundreds of books and many art pieces live there. I love spending time in the common areas, opening a book, reading from it, and talking with D. who generously shares many stories from her lifetime and from the ones of the generations before her. The oral and written stories I have been fortunate to hear and read have all contributed to transforming my worldview, as a person, as a teacher and as an inquirer. One of the books I've picked up and read from every time I stayed there is the *Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* edited by Keith Carlson (2001). While reading about the Chehalis River and looking at the maps presented in the atlas, I learn many things. Some of them led to doing more research, to engaging in more conversations with D. and with others, and to thinking more deeply about the implications of what Denise Williams (2021) defines as the wisdom of nature's systems. Below, I share three teachings which emerged while visiting the Chehalis River and which help me re-think the social and educational structures we are but one part of as humans.

A Vignette About a More-than-human Teacher's Teachings

As we walk along the Chehalis River, on a wet morning, early April, my family and I stop, once in while, to watch the power of the water current. It stops us in our tracks and impresses us with its strength. It also reminds us that entering in a relationship with a river is a whole-body experience: you can smell the water smell, mixed with the smell of the wet wood and the moss that surround you and with the smell of the tree trunks and logs that are immersed in the river, you can hear the water burbling and roaring as it flows, you can feel the water droplets on your face, and you can see it splashing and swirling as it moves. Marianna Fotaki et al. (2014) invite us to "be 'open to becoming affected by encounters, rather than simply reporting them'" (as cited in Clarke et al., 2020, p. 25). I reflect on the ways in which the river affects me in that moment, and continues to do so, long after this moment has passed, as I'm writing this manuscript. I notice how, once again, I would not have considered a river as a teacher, just a few years ago. I grew up in a social and cultural context that taught me to be an outside observer of nature, a separate and superior entity. Gavin Van Horn et al. (2021) push me to view the world in a different way than my own native one when they insist that "the world all of us are part of and participate in is a *relational exchange* – alive, wildly generative, an ongoing conversation of bodies, desires, conflicts, and collaborations" (p. 10; emphasis added). It's a way of living, of knowing, and of being in the world that is full of respect and care.

Figure 5. Walking along the Chehalis River

Natalie Clark (2009) offers the following question to encourage us to examine our intersecting identities: "Who are you and why do you care?" (p. 8). I attempt to answer her question here, and to locate myself, because I believe that positionality, as Paul Meighan (2022) explains, is "a pre-requisite for equitable, trustworthy, and transformative work" (p. 2). I'm French and Spanish – I grew up speaking French in Southern France and Spanish in Northern Spain where my maternal grandparents lived and where I would often visit them. Their place and their languages (Spanish and Gallego) felt like home. I learned English in school first, and then in Vancouver where I've lived for the past 17 years.

I am grateful that I can communicate in three languages which all mark different stages in my life and which came with different cultural worldviews. This might explain why I've always wanted to be a language teacher. I was trained as an English teacher first, in France in the mid 2000s, in a very hierarchized and strict educational system. Students' interests and the personal aspects of their identities weren't invited or welcomed into the classroom. As a new teacher, I was told by a practicum supervisor that I wasn't supposed to build relationships with my Grade 6 students. In her view, I had utterly failed as an English teacher because I hadn't realized that my role was only to teach them a subject – English – and not to put up with their boisterous temperament. This way of viewing and relating to my students felt deeply wrong to me. Shortly after, I moved to Vancouver and became a French teacher in elementary and secondary schools. I was relieved and happy to find an

> educational system where building communities of learning within your classroom and with your students was encouraged. I came to understand that, without these trusting bonds, learning and teaching do not happen easily. As an instructor working in teacher education programs today, I consider it an honor to learn from my students and from teacher-learners as much as they learn from me because teaching and learning are reciprocal, not hierarchical opposites.

I loved the educational system I found in Vancouver when I arrived in 2008, but I know today that it is far from perfect. Kitsumkalum educator Jo Chrona (2022) reminds us that Canadian educational systems "still reflect the priorities of the people who create(d) and work(ed) in the system, along with those who, while not actively part of the system, exert(ed) influence on education policy" (p. 23).

The exploitative, extractive and assimilative views of the land that colonizers brought with them has resulted in the genocide, the expulsion and the displacement of the first Indigenous caretakers of these lands. And it's also caused a profound and damaging rupture in the reciprocal relationship Indigenous peoples had with Land. As Joseph Pierce (2021), from the Cherokee Nation, explains, "dispossession is a theft of both land and souls. Expelling Native spirits, and thus severing the spiritual connection to the land – as bodies of the land – is central to the management of Native life by settler colonialism" (p. 68). As I walk along the banks of the Chehalis River, I think about dynamics of possession and dispossession, about the fact that, as Indigenous peoples have always been well aware, land and waterways do not belong to humans. In Nishnaabeg thought, as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) shares, "the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment*" (p. 43; emphasis in original). And so, I humbly learn from this beautiful generous worldview and position myself as a learner, during this precise walk, and on other occasions. I ask: What might the movement of the river teach me about my own ways of inquiring? What might it feel like to move through inquiry in the same way the river body flows? Amongst many other things, I present the three teachings that were offered to me below, in the form of the following interconnected diagram:

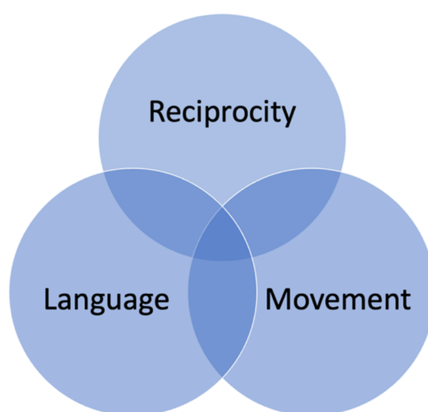

Figure 6. Three river teachings

Reciprocity animates relationships between humans, animals, other more-than-humans, and the river – the Stó:lō. Her tributaries (among which the Chehalis), as well as their banks are home to large populations of animals, from gastropods slowly moving in and out of the water (like snails) to salmons and sturgeons swimming in it.

Figure 7. Snail

Ceremonies take place regularly in the area to honor the fish returning to these waters, and also the thousands of bald eagles who come, every fall, to gather and feast on fish carcasses. In the Sts'ailes and Stó:lō worldviews, every human and more-than-human is interconnected, and this deep reciprocity is something which is honored and celebrated. During an online workshop, Verna Billy-Minnabarriet of the St'uxwtews, and Dianne Biin of the Tsi Del Del (Tsilhqot'in) (2021), suggested that we rethink how we act when we do research. They invited us to consider what research could be like if we acted in a deeply relational, reciprocal and ethical way instead of engaging in common extractive practices. They asked: What piece of you will you leave behind when your project comes to an end? Asking this question – and thinking carefully about the answer we might give and enact – entails going beyond the important albeit common reflection about whether researchers are positioned as outsiders or as insiders, and the implications of our positioning. I think of the ways in which the river is never simply taking. It's constantly moving, taking, and, also, giving. In an educational inquiry framework, inquirers, just like teachers, can't just take from the human and more-than-human participants they are in relation with. We can never stand outside of inquiries but are, instead, always part of the inquiry, in the middle of it. Shawn Wilson (2008), an Opaskwayak Cree researcher from Northern Manitoba, explains that an Indigenous research paradigm demands that we pay attention to the space in between, and to the relationships that form and that grow within it:

> By reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationship that they share. And this bringing things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is about. This is why research itself is a sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space. (p. 87)

Indigenous worldviews, such as the one articulated by Wilson here, have offered, for a very long time, that we view the world and live within it while enacting what Barad (2007) calls an ethico-onto-epistemological stance from a posthumanist perspective. For Barad (2007), knowing and being go hand in hand, and they insist on the importance of embracing our ontological and epistemological practices with a single gaze, of reconciling them in a single posture, for they constitute two sides of the same coin: "practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are *of* the world" (p. 185; emphasis in original). In other words, it is impossible to know, and therefore to learn or understand, without experiencing these ideas as both Barad and Wilson suggest. Re-membering and honoring the relational way in which the river flows, in different ways across the seasons, encourages me to envision and live a different kind of educational inquiry, one that's driven and characterized by, at all times, that which Simpson (2017) calls "reciprocal recognition" and defines as "profound listening, … recognizing and affirming the light in each other as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening internal relationships to … Nishnaabeg worlds" (p. 182).

Language, from an Indigenous perspective, has "a unique, relational way of naming, seeing, and relating to the world, which is particular to a specific area, land, and ecosystem" as Meighan points out (Chiblow & Meighan, 2021, p. 207). Stó:lō Halq'eméylem is the upriver traditional Halq'eméylem dialect spoken by Indigenous peoples living in and around Chilliwack, Chehalis, and other areas. As I pointed out earlier, the word Stó:lō both refers to the people living by and with the river and the river itself in Halq'eméylem. I think this beautifully illustrates the following idea relayed by Syilx Okanagan author Jeannette Armstrong (2017): "language was given to us by the land we live within" (p. 142). This relational worldview encourages me to reflect on the importance of words, of the way in which they allow us not to name but to *greet* the world, to be in relation with the world in a good way. Two years ago, Vicki Kelly, as our teacher and mentor, encouraged the team of university instructors I was a part of to engage in reconciliation by asking ourselves the following question: How do we stand in good relation within an insufficient worldview? I recognize that the languages I speak fluently (French, Spanish, and English) played an important part in shaping the worldview I grew up in. For a very long time, as I engaged in post-secondary studies in language education, I learnt to see languages essentially as a means to represent the world, to communicate within it. Until recently, I had never thought that languages could be embedded in the world I live in. I don't think that French, Spanish and English – three colonial languages – work this way in the standardized modern forms they have taken. As Meighan expresses it, "dominant, non-endangered languages, such as English, carry legacies of imperialism, assimilation, and colonialism, and can be easily decontextualized or disembodied from historical context, land, and place" (Chiblow & Meighan, 2021, p. 207). As I stand by, sit by, walk by, or swim in the Chehalis River, an exchange that goes beyond words happens. This relational exchange takes place through felt intensities, such as the way the sound made by the water rushing courses through my ears, or the way my muscles respond when swimming with and against the river's currents, or the way my blood vessels constrict when my skin feels the cold water and my blood rushes away from my extremities. In these moments, minds and bodies connect, and, if I fully engage with the flows of affect that run through these porous encounters, it is hard to pay attention to anything else. And why would I? During another one of the online workshops I mentioned

above, Biin highlighted the importance of paying attention to the different sounds that exist within different Indigenous languages that might be part of the same family. She explained that the difference between these sounds can be accounted for when you think about the relationship between languages and lands. She gave the example of the barred L sound which is more pronounced in the languages that inhabit the BC coast, where the ocean and its waves are present, and stated that, as we learn in the language, the land is sharing with us what that sound is as well (Biin, 2021). This worldview is embedded in the land and the waterways, and the people who speak and understand these languages thereby enact an onto-epistemological perspective that is always situated, always in relation. Armstrong (2017) writes that, in the presence of her N'silxchn language, "she understand[s] [she is] being spoken to, [she's] not the one speaking" (p. 146). I wonder: How can we pay attention, in a deep embodied way, when we are in the midst of our educational inquiries, so that we can learn from the ways in which all participants are affected? Elsewhere, I wrote about the fact that "within the inquiry approach I'm tracing …, affect is acknowledged as a powerful relational force that leaves lasting impressions and marks on mindbodies" (Forte, 2022b, p. 64). I realize that, after living my own inquiry and walking with teacher-learners while they live theirs, we are all left with more than lasting impressions and marks. Wilson (2020) states that "if your research doesn't change you, then you haven't done it right" (1:26:10). Acknowledging and engaging with the languages spoken by others, human and more-than-human, has the capacity to transform not only our worldviews, but also our selves – in other words, who we are and how we act within the world.

Movement in the river is constant. It never stops.

Figure 8. Moving water in Chehalis River

Movement in our thinking and in our relations, within the educational inquiries we are but one part of should be constant too, and reflect the (re)new(ed) understandings we enter into relation with. Wilson (2008, 2020) explains that, within an Indigenous paradigm, research emerges from the relationships forged between participants (human and more-than-human, thus including knowledge as well as concepts and theories). Knowledge does not belong to us, and we are not its owners, nor its producers. I was shocked when I realized this because the worldview I grew up in considers knowledge as something to be acquired and consumed. In an email exchange, Dianne Biin helped me better grasp the scope of this idea:

> Knowledge is never ours as researchers, we can only share what we know at this point … Indigenous knowledge is not locked in the past as an artifact, it is actually informing who we are today and where we are today. (D. Biin, personal communication, November 28, 2021)

There is a continual dance at the heart of the relationship that forms between knowledge and us. It is not a static or a hierarchical relationship, but rather, one that's always moving, transforming, in nonlinear and unpredictable ways, if we're willing to see it this way. Wilson (2008) explains that "knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us" (p. 87). This is very different from the consumerist and utilitarian view of knowledge I was presented with during most of my time in school in France and also here, in Canada. Trying to "[shed] the anthropocentrism that is built into our worldviews and our language habits" (MacLure, 2017, p. 56) is an important move that can become an act of resistance in the colonial times we live in – both a reckoning and a doing. Practicing reworlding through many-eyed seeing (Kelly, 2021) can transform our thinking, our actions and our futures. It isn't about denying who we are, where we come from, or about appropriating worldviews that aren't the ones we grew up in. It is about acknowledging what we can do differently, with respect for ways of doing, being and knowing that have been embedded in Land for thousands of years, and that have been and continue to be silenced and ignored. In the context of educational inquiry, I am grateful for the knowledges relayed by the Indigenous perspectives and peoples I have mentioned here. They have encouraged me to reflect on the importance of focusing on our journeys, and on the relations and processes in which we participate with others. The process is what counts for the moving waters of the river. And the process is what should count in educational inquiry too.

… closing intervention – the river's pedagogy …

Chambers (2006) writes about visiting the land as a form of pedagogy and she asks that we consider the following questions:

> What knowledge is held in there and here, and what if any is still accessible to us, and what is gone? What are our responsibilities to these sites? What can these places teach us, not just about the past, but about now and two days from now? (p. 35)

As I look at the Chehalis River and take the picture below on a bright sunny summer day, the diffraction patterns created by the connections between water, light, where I'm standing, and many other things, I realize that I am deeply affected by this encounter, just as I've been deeply affected by previous encounters with the river, and will continue to be affected by future ones.

Figure 9. Diffraction patterns in water.

These are porous encounters, ones that soften and permeate the artificial, human-made boundaries that have been established, through a Cartesian lineage I had and continue to have a hard time escaping, boundaries between bodies – between human bodies, between human body parts, between human and more-than human ones. Opening up to the wisdom of rivers has allowed me to experience the fact that, as Kimmerer (2021b) gently points out, our more-than-human kin can help us re-member the ancient stories and ways of knowing that are still alive in the land and that many Indigenous perspectives have always known. Astrida Neimanis (2017) reminds us that our human bodies are mostly made of water and that, beyond this simple fact, "what this water does – where it comes from, where it goes, and what it means along the way" is well-worth pondering (p. 2). She further invites us to think how this might cause "considerable trouble for dominant Western and humanist understandings of embodiment, where bodies are figured as discrete and coherent individual subjects, and as fundamentally autonomous" (p. 2).

What the river taught me, in deep embodied ways, through the experienced notions of reciprocity, language and movement, allows me to see what is possible beyond what has been defined as knowable by humanist, patriarchal and male standards, in the field of educational research. Troubling the notion of ~~research~~ itself as an embodied practice, as a porous, fluid, and unpredictable kind of inquiry has challenged the way I think and act as an educational inquirer for the better. Leroy Little Bear (2018) urges us to remember that the world is a gift and that we have to act ethically upon this important belief. Nature systems can teach us about good ways to live an inquiry. I wonder what else they can teach me that I haven't noticed yet, and I am grateful to know that there's always going to be more.

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