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Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw
vpacnik@uwo.ca

Affrica Taylor

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Unsettling Pedagogies Through Common World Encounters: Grappling with (Post)Colonial Legacies in Canadian Forests and Australian Bushlands

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

Affrica Taylor

Chapter in Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw & Affrica Taylor (Eds). *Unsettling the Colonial Places and Spaces of Early Childhood Education*. Routledge.

Grappling with (Post)Colonial Legacies in Multispecies Encounters

At a child care centre in British Columbia, Canada, the children often go for walks to the forest near the centre. When the children and teachers encounter tree hollows or holes in the ground where trees once stood, the children imagine both as “bear holes.” “This is where the bears would take a bath,” they note. The children know that when they walk through the forest in the spring or summer, they might meet a bear. They have learned to make loud noises when they enter the forest to “scare” any bears away. However, when a group of children and educators recently saw a young bear from a distance as they approached the forest, the children waved their hands in the air, trying to get the bear’s attention, shouting, “Bear, bear, over here!” Of course, the educators quickly led the children away from the area.

Half a common world away, in Canberra, Australia, a group of preschool children and their teachers set off on their weekly walk in the nearby bushlands. They are accustomed

to seeing a big mob of resident eastern grey kangaroos on these walks, either grazing in the paddocks or resting in the shade of the eucalyptus trees. When two young girls spot a joey in its mother's pouch down in the gully, they edge forward beyond the group of other children to get a better look. They've never managed to get so close before. An enormous buck is watching them intently, but he doesn't flinch. Following his lead, the mob of kangaroos stays put. The girls eventually stop as well. For a suspended moment, girls and kangaroos face each other off at close quarters.

In this chapter we recount ethnographic narratives of imaginary and real encounters between bears and children and kangaroos and children to grapple with the complexities and tensions that emerge in colonized spaces. Specifically, the encounters are situated in a forest in British Columbia, Canada, where bears and human children “meet” and in the bushlands of Canberra, Australia, where kangaroos and children regularly encounter each other. We follow recent scholarship in early childhood studies that resists simplistic, romantic couplings of children and nature that secure settler imaginations (see Taylor, 2013). We consider the ethical, political, and pedagogical implications of addressing the colonial histories and material geographies that shape children's multispecies relations within their own (post)colonial common worlds.

Child-animal relations have received scant scholarly attention in early childhood education. This is notwithstanding the widely held belief that children have a special affinity with animals (Tipper, 2011), the entangled genealogical trajectories of pets, childhood, and domestication (Strathern, 1992), and the undeniable fact that “children's

lives are [materially and symbolically] saturated by animal presences” (Meyers, 1998, p. 1). The small amount of early childhood research that has considered the significance of animals in children’s lives has been framed by child development and learning theories (Taylor, 2013). These studies cast child-animal relations as rehearsals for the development of their *social* skills, as opportunities for children to learn to care for others and develop empathy (Melson, 2005; Meyers, 1998). They are limited by their anthropocentric concerns and their lack of political analysis.

Drawing on (post)colonial and more-than-human theoretical perspectives, we offer an alternative to these limited developmentalist framings. In lieu of casting child-animal relations within exclusively social (human) contexts, we resituate them within the mixed-up, noninnocent, multispecies “common worlds” (Latour, 2004) that children cohabit with a whole host of human and nonhuman others. We acknowledge that the heterogeneous “throwntogetherness” (Massey, 2005) of these common worlds (the mixed-up coexistences of humans and animals) is largely shaped by colonialist interventions (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; Simpson, 2011). Building on the important insights of childhood studies scholars who have challenged the colonialisms and neocolonialisms inherent in Western discourses of childhood and developmental pedagogies (Cannella & Viruru, 2004), we focus on the material as well as discursive political legacies that colonialism brings to children’s common worlds and to the child-animal relations that are constellated within them. Our interest is in how reckoning with the colonial and neocolonial “ruins” (Stoler, 2008) of bear-child and kangaroo-child entanglements might help us intervene responsibly and ethically in the present (Haraway,

2008) so less violent ecologies might thrive. To this end, we employ a common worlds framework (Taylor, 2013) that takes inspiration from Donna Haraway's (2008) call for us to learn to inherit our entangled pasts and cohabit with nonhuman others in flourishing multispecies worlds.

Our motivation is heightened by the intensifying ecological challenges we face.

Accelerating climate change and species loss are just two of the interconnected bio-geological systems changes that will afflict future generations, and that scientists now attribute to mostly human causes. Feminist scholars in the environmental humanities (Hird, 2013; Povinelli, 2013; Rose, 2013) increasingly refer to these challenges as the "Anthropocene" (or "Capitalocene," Haraway, 2014), a new geological era in which human activities have fundamentally changed the earth's systems (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007). The recognition that these critical changes in earth systems are primarily human-induced carries ethical implications for early childhood pedagogies. We can no longer afford the illusion of our separateness from the rest of the natural world, and so educators and young children must rethink understandings of our responsibilities to the common world we share with other living beings.

Over the past five years, we have been exploring how we might conceptualize and implement pedagogies that will prepare young children to inherit and co-inhabit these messy, complex (post)colonial and multispecies worlds.ⁱ This chapter emerges from our collaborations with two groups of educators and young children—one in Canada and one in Australia. At both sites, we have endeavored to pay close attention to the place where

we are, to the other species that are there with us and to how we all got to be there. We are interested in how we might both unsettle colonialist legacies, and learn with other species in the colonized places we coinhabit. We begin by noting that thinking with other species requires paying attention to the ways in which more-than-human others are typically left out of children's histories and futures. We do not assume innocence, harmony or balance in the multispecies encounters we narrate. We recognize that they are already shaped by and implicated in the mess of Canadian and Australian settler colonialist legacies. Our goal is to take account of the messiness already inherent in these child/animal encounters, even as we seek to pedagogically engage with the possibilities they offer for new worldly modes of relating

The following sections of the chapter trace the historical continuities and geographical dispersals of multispecies relations across our two colonized common-world sites. In unsettling bear/child stories, we give an account of the ways in which bears are both materially and semiotically entangled in Canada's colonial past-presents, and consider how Canadian preschool children are implicated in this entanglement when they visit a British Columbia forest. In unsettling child-kangaroo encounters, we situate our reflections upon Australian pre-school children's face-to-face encounters with kangaroos in Canberra within the colonialist and settler nation-building histories of kangaroo-settler relations. Across both these sites, we tease out some of the knotted threads that entangle animals' and (mostly) immigrant-settler children's lives, and which stitch the two countries' violent colonialist pasts firmly into their fragile multispecies presents. Throughout these narratives, we also argue that the specificities of these legacies and

their challenges require situated pedagogical responses. In the chapter's last section, we tease out the different elements of these pedagogies as we argue that they hold potential to prepare young children to inherit and co-inhabit messy and complex (post)colonial and multispecies worlds.

Unsettling Bear-Child Stories in Colonialist Spaces of Canadian Childhoodⁱⁱ

Most of British Columbia rests on what Destination BC (2014), the trophy hunting industry (e.g., Trophy West Guide Outfitters, 2013), and the ecotourism industry (e.g., Great Bear Nature Tours, 2014), among others, sells as “bear country” while, ironically, the provincial government, municipalities, industry, businesses, and many human residents are embroiled in continuous battles to delineate and enforce bear-free space. This task has become increasingly difficult. Bears populate every corner of the province, and are considered plentiful enough that the government allows bear hunting licenses in the majority of the province's regions. British Columbia is home to the grizzly, the black bear, and a white morph of the black bear known as the kermode, or spirit bear. It is believed that 18,000 years ago, when North America was covered in ice, black bears lived in two temperate refugia and spread out across the continent after the glaciers melted (Government of British Columbia, 2001). In 2001, the black bear population in British Columbia was estimated at between 120,000 and 160,000 bears, which accounted for approximately 25% of Canada's black bears (Government of British Columbia, 2001). Human encounters with black bears, which are far more numerous than grizzlies, are the most common type of bear-human meeting in British Columbia.

Bear-human entanglements stretch back thousands of years, and face-to-face encounters between bears and humans in British Columbia are increasingly common as cities, suburbs, agriculture, and industry sprawl outwards into bear habitats. Forestry and mining industries take ever greater cuts of land, while more humans venture into the “wilderness” as part of the province’s burgeoning ecotourism industry. When one thinks about bear country, wide open expanses, roaring rivers, towering mountains, and pristine landscapes with no apparent trace of human development may flash before one’s eyes. However, bear country increasingly involves pavement, street signs, condominiums, manicured lawns, and especially garbage bins. Borders have been established in an effort to construct safe, appropriate spaces for both humans and bears. Bears usually pay a much heavier price for transgressing those boundaries than humans do.

These frictional bear-human entanglements can be traced historically through the colonization and settlement—read theft—of land in North America. Dempsey (2010) emphasizes that settlers’ records of expeditions in the West highlight numerous instances of human encounters with bears. Frequently, bears that preyed on settlers’ cattle and sheep were killed, in numbers that equated to their wholesale extermination over large parts of North America (Dempsey, 2010). Describing the grizzly bear’s treacherous interface with the colonizer’s mission, Dempsey (2010) writes: “Grizzly bears posed specific economic threats, but were also considered more generally as ‘dangerous impediments to progress’ by colonial settlers, undoubtedly influencing the pace of killing and ‘civilizing’ of the landscape” (p. 1143).

Early childhood classrooms—especially the classrooms Veronica refers to in the introductory paragraph, where bears are not imaginary, distant creatures to children—are not insulated from past-present entanglements with bears. These particular classrooms are situated in a mountain forest in Coast Salish territory. Now designated as a conservation area, it comprises close to 600 hectares of second-growth forest and is inhabited by many plant and animal species, including black bears, cougars, deer, coyotes, and raccoons, among others. This forest is a rich place at which to encounter and think with what Donna Haraway terms “co-habitation, and embodied cross-species sociality” and it offers opportunities to scrutinize children’s entangled lives with more-than-human species. We are intrigued in these engagements, drawing on van Dooren and Rose’s (2012) work, by what constitutes ethical relationships between children and other species in a damaged world. The field notes excerpt below continues the scene that opened the chapter.

<FIGURE 2.1 HERE>

<FIGURE 2.2 HERE>

During their walks through the forest, the children have myriad questions about the bears: “Why are bears here? “Why are they eating berries?” “What kind of bears are they?” “Will the bears bring their babies?” Educators have become accustomed to reminding the children, “This is bear country. We are visiting the bears in the mountain forest. Bears like sweet berries just like you do.” Back in the classroom, the children

frequently arrange plastic bears on a table, creating indoor “forests” using sand, tree stumps, rocks, plants, sticks, and branches. Many stories emerge about bears in the classroom: A bear will eat me up! The bear is looking for berries! The bear is looking after her cubs! I’m building a dark, dark cave for the bear to sleep in. The bear is going to hibernate for a long time.

<FIGURE 2.3 HERE>

The children have plenty of other opportunities to encounter bears outside the forest, for instance, through the teddy bear, which was named for Theodore Roosevelt after he refused to kill a black bear (van Tighem, 2013), or through numerous storybooks. What kinds of relations are sustained in encounters with teddy bears or cute, cuddly storybook bears? Coats (2013) writes that it was actually the teddy bear’s rise in 1902 that gave “the cuddly sort of bear a firm place in most modern children’s hearts” (para. 1). Bears abound in children’s storybooks: sleepless bears, scary bears, wise bears, magical bears, sad bears, and even space bears (Coats, 2013). These stories are far removed from the bears that live on the mountain forest the children visit. Might the kinds of narratives deployed in these books work to distance children from the relations that sustain humans and other species on this land?

The real-life bears that children encounter in the mountain forest are much closer to those depicted in stories like *S is for Spirit Bear: A British Columbia Alphabet* (2006), written by Roberts and illustrated by Doucet. This book entices different kinds of relationships with bears than the children’s storybooks described by Coats (2013). Distributed to all

kindergarten children in the province, *S is for Spirit Bear* makes particular and interesting connections between the “natural” world and children’s worlds. The attachment between children and bear is created through ideas of loving pristine nature and saving the planet. The book also suggests nonhuman others in British Columbia as “belonging” to the province, and thus does important work to construct and deploy ideas about British Columbia as one of the most beautiful places on earth. Although it depicts animals that are much closer to the real bears the children encounter in the forest, the narrative in *S is for Spirit Bear* is not necessarily innocent. As Collard and Dempsey (2013) explain, these protection narratives become a neocolonial campaign to sell the province’s nonhuman others as tourist attractions. In ecotourism, which relies heavily on wildlife viewing tours, customers pay for the privilege of gazing at bears, wolves, and whales in their natural habitats from the decks of boats along the British Columbia coast, an experience completely devoid of any traces of the bloody entanglements that humans and bears have been embroiled in for the past several centuries in the colonization, theft, and settlement of land in North America. As European settlers scrambled westward across what is now referred to as Canada, an imagined country took shape. Bears became part of a national imaginary of pure, untamed wilderness, ironically distanced from the actual bears that occupied the territory. As Braun (2002) explains, “the effect of such distancing was to evacuate specific meanings assigned to places and incorporate them instead into a mythological space that had little to do with the lived details of particular sites and much more to do with discourses of European modernity and national history” (p. 220).

A bear that still carries the cute-bear image separated from predators and devoid of colonial struggles, one that depicts nature as pure and innocent and presents the notion of trouble-free childhood, is one that children have loved for a century (CBC News, 2014) and still encounter today in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, written in 1926 by British author A. A. Milne. Winnie-the-Pooh was named for the toy bear, Winnie, that belonged to Milne's son Christopher, and the toy bear was named in turn for a black bear cub named Winnipeg Bear (after the Canadian city) that Christopher visited regularly at the London Zoo (van Tighem, 2013). The live Winnie belonged to Captain Harry Colebourn, an army veterinary surgeon in the Canadian military who bought the cub for \$20 in 1914 from a hunter who had killed its mother near White River, Ontario. When Colebourn was sent to France with the Canadian Infantry Brigade, he brought Winnie with him and donated her to the London Zoo, where she became a popular attraction (van Tighem, 2013; Winnie, 2008). *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a vivid reminder of British imperialism, the colonization of Canada, and the subordination of the black bear to the whims and viewing pleasure of Europeans. This is not to say that when the children at the child care centre encounter *Winnie-the-Pooh* they must understand these complex forces. However, pedagogies need to reckon with the figure of the bear conjured in this story—a story that still carries traces of the colonialist, imperialist dynamics that brought it into being.

The bears in the mountain forest where the child care centre is located transgress the imaginary boundaries between “wild” nature and human “settlement” and as such they require management and risk mitigation. For example, over this past summer a number of bear sightings close to the child care centre have been widely reported in the local media,

so the children and educators have engaged in conversations about bear awareness. Bear Aware, an educational program of the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (n.d.) that was “designed to prevent and reduce conflicts between people and bears” in the province’s communities, guides such conversations through the use of protection discourses aimed at bringing both the safety of humans and the survival of bears under its mandate.

Bears also become a trope for human-wilderness relations. Environmental campaigns use the cultural and discursive importance of bears, as well as their material needs for water, food, and land, as arguments for increased environmental conservation and protection. Collard and Dempsey (2013) call this strategy the commodification of nature. Within it, bears are used as a form of currency in battles waged among governments, industry, and environmental groups. For instance, the storybook *Spirit Bear* (Harrington & Arnott, 2013) is advertised as an “eco-book” for children. The publisher, who specializes in books that promote both children’s love for reading and environmental conservation, describes the book’s purpose as follows:

Spirit Bear is an entertaining, educational book intended to raise awareness about the spirit bears of British Columbia, whose habitat is currently under threat by the proposed Northern Gateway and Trans-Mountain oil pipelines. This book has been researched in order to make it as biologically accurate as possible, so that teachers may use it in their biology curriculum. The book will be accompanied by free resource materials for educators to make it easy for them to implement *Spirit*

Bear into their lesson plans. *Spirit Bear* will be available as an ebook, and as a paperback printed on 100% recycled paper with an FSC cover. (paras. 2–3)

Bears are incredibly powerful symbols in children’s lives that conjure up particular realities and imaginaries. They teeter on a fine line in late liberalism—the line between their figuration as profitable, exploitable commodities and their figuration as threats to both human safety and economic development.

Perhaps, though, it is not in these stories of protection and control that we should seek pedagogical possibilities that move us toward a more ethical, less impoverished, less violent future. More potential might lie in ordinary moments when children walk through the forest looking for a bear, or when they come back to the classroom to act out stories about their possible and actual encounters with bears. In these moments, children and educators entangle and embed themselves in the messy, complex common world they share with bears, and so these spaces, while offering no perfect spaces free of struggle, might help us learn how to inherit our entangled colonial pasts. In these moments, children may start to think differently about the teddy bear or the cute bear or the threatened bear.

As educators we might begin to see that there is more in the bear-child encounters that take place in the classroom and the forest than just innocent play or even problematic representations of “real” bears. Van Dooren and Rose’s (2012) *ethics of conviviality* is helpful here. An ethics of conviviality is “place based, emplaced, embodied, and

enlivened through multiple stories enacted and expressed by multiple species” (p. 2). An ethics of conviviality asks: What would it mean to really share a place and attend to the histories of those places? As educators, an ethics of conviviality helps us realize the importance of bears and children becoming “attentive to each other’s presence, to their way of being in a place” (p. 12). It is in encounters like those in the mountain forest where children and bears breathe and “grapple inside the flesh” (Haraway, 2008) of the contradictions and tensions of neocolonial relations. Yet, this is space is neither innocent nor transcendent, and these encounters do not necessarily assure resolution (e.g., through management or full protection of bears). Instead, they provoke new questions.

In the chapter’s next section, we travel 13,000 kilometres across the Pacific Ocean, to consider some unsettling child-kangaroo encounters in Canberra, Australia’s ‘bush’ capital.

Unsettling Child-Kangaroo Encounters in a (Post)Colonial Australian Place

Australia’s young national capital, Canberra, is built upon the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. It has long been referred to as the ‘bush capital’ because of its inland semi-rural environs, but lately, it has also gained the reputation of the ‘kangaroo capital’. According to local government sources, the city of Canberra has the highest density of large grassland kangaroos per hectare in Australia (Australian Capital Territory, Territory and Municipal Services, 2010, p. 26). Even without the statistics, it is very apparent that kangaroos form a significance cohort of Canberra residents. They are everywhere. It is

commonplace to see them grazing on the reserves and open grassland that are scattered between and throughout the suburbs, and much more disturbingly, to drive past kangaroo road kill on the sides of Canberra motorways. There are also several big mobs of eastern greys in the grassy woodland perimeters of University of Canberra campus, where Affrica is involved in a multispecies common worlds research project with a group of young children and a teacher from an early childhood centre. As in other parts of the city, these campus kangaroos form a major constituency within the University's multispecies common worlds community. Their unmistakable presence raises the question of what it would mean to really share a place and attend to the multispecies histories of that place (van Dooren & Rose, 2012). Within our research, it is this question, and the possibilities for fostering convivial interspecies relations between children and kangaroos, that prompts us to reflect on the colonialist and environmental legacies that we share with these iconic Australian animals.

Since Australia's early twentieth-century federation as a postcolonial settler nation, the kangaroo has been adopted as a key symbol of national identity. It is a shield bearer on the Australian coat of arms, apparently signifying that the new nation is moving (or hopping) forward (Australian Government, DFAT, 2013). The familiar 'flying kangaroo' logo, accompanied by the slogan 'the spirit of Australia', defines Qantas as Australia's flag carrier national airline. In Australian children's fiction, the kangaroo has been mobilized to secure immigrant-settler children's affection for Australian bush creatures and at the same time secure their identification as naturalized Australian children. This was certainly the stated intention of Ethel Pedley's early-20th-century *Dot and the*

Kangaroo picture book, which was made into a film in the 1970s, and the 1960s “Skippy The Bush Kangaroo” children’s television series that was enormously popular at the time and has since gained cult statusⁱⁱⁱ.

However, in researching the (post)colonial histories of the kangaroo in Australia, we note that the fond shared space that the kangaroo and the becoming-Australian child comfortably occupy within the (post)colonial national imaginary is only one part of the story. The lived histories of (post)colonial Australia tell other tales. They are littered with the fleshy mortal entanglements of kangaroo and human bodies. From colonial days through to the mid 20th century, kangaroos were systematically subjected to mass cullings. By the late nineteenth-century, in response to the perception that kangaroos were “invading” the settlers’ “pasture-improved” sheep and cattle grazing lands, the colonists had virtually declared war on kangaroos. In the early 1900s, Marsupial Destruction Acts were passed in the new states, and in Queensland alone around 27 million kangaroos were reported to have been killed in the ensuing 50-year period. Cullings on this scale were achieved not through individual shootings, but in quasi-military-style organized mass ambushes and poisoning campaigns. It was mostly the largest and fastest-hopping kangaroo species that survived; many of the smaller, more vulnerable species are now extinct (Simons, 2013, see also Taylor, 2014).

Under the current regime of native animal protection acts, kangaroo killing is a much more measured affair. This does not mean, however, that their survival is completely secured. Unlike the two other main large kangaroo species, which are well adapted to

living in the arid inland and western parts of the continent, the eastern greys of the relatively fertile eastern regions are not faring so well now that the hotter, drier regimes of climate change have taken hold. This is no doubt why, during the recent 10-year drought, during which the weather was the hottest and driest on record, unprecedented numbers of eastern greys moved into Canberra from the surrounding over-cleared and drought-stressed sheep country. Now permanent residents, they have flourished on the open grasslands and lightly forested reserves that comprise more than 70% of Canberra's urban space (Australian Capital Territory, Territory and Municipal Services, 2010).

Since the drought began, scientists have been monitoring the impact of Canberra's burgeoning eastern grey population. The 2011 documentary *Kangaroo Mob* follows two Australian National University ecologists as they observe, track, and chart the kangaroos' movements within the city precincts (Westh, 2011). One particular kangaroo family plays a cameo role. We find out just how "street smart" the urbanizing eastern greys have become: they stay safely inside the public reserve areas during the day, but at night they venture into the suburbs to graze in the neighbourhood parks and ovals, on grassy curbs and front yard lawns. The documentary also addresses the controversy over the local government's annual cullings, which are officially defended as a necessary intervention to reduce "excessive grazing pressure" on Canberra's remaining and fragile native grassy ecosystems. More than any other kangaroo-related issue, the culling controversy epitomizes the tension-fraught politics of multispecies belonging in the nation's capital. It points to the increasingly knotty complications that animals bring to questions of belonging in the age of climate change and (post)colonial extinctions.

This potted multispecies cultural history of the kangaroo might be far from complete, but it does illustrate the ways in which messy colonialist and ecological legacies inhere in the everyday present of living kangaroo bodies. These are the same legacies and entangled trajectories we brush up against (knowingly or not) when kangaroos and children meet during our regular weekly bush walk on the university campus. Like the children (whose own complex and entangled cultural histories also bring them to Canberra from other places for a myriad of different reasons), the kangaroos are *not just there*. They have come from somewhere else for some reason. All members of this common world have diverse, complex, contingent, intersecting trajectories. They may have “sometimes-separate heritages, both before and lateral to *this* encounter” as Haraway (2008, p. 25) puts it, but these heritages always collide “when species meet.” So what kinds of ethical responses do these already noninnocent, knotty, and geo-historically constellated moments of child-kangaroo encounters enable? What are the possibilities for multispecies co-shapings and multispecies belongings in this particular “bush capital” campus common world community? Are pedagogies of conviviality a possibility here?

These provocative questions accompany us on our bush walks. It is not that we expect to find definitive answers to them, but we do want to cultivate a certain “mode of attention” that allows us to pursue an understanding that there is always more going on than you think in multispecies encounters, and to consider the ethical possibilities for learning in multispecies common worlds. It seems important to retain a questioning disposition that stays attuned to the ethics and affects of multispecies encounters, to the ways in which

the kangaroos and the children alike co-participate in a form of multispecies belonging in this particular common world, in order to build a convivial pedagogy. The conversational fragments of field notes and reflections below are offered as a glimpse into this process.

<FIGURE 2.4 HERE>

The kangaroos are still clustered in the gully under the casurina saplings. That's where the spring grass is thickest and greenest. They haven't moved since we passed them on our way down to the bush cubby. We're on our way back now, and we pause to have another look at the mob. The children are always on the look out for joeys.

Kangaroo spotting is a regular feature of our Wednesday afternoon bush walks. The "roos" are always somewhere to be seen in the forested area down behind the campus buildings. They're trapped on this ring-road campus, but at least they now have plenty to eat. They are definitely on the watch for us, too. Their standard routine is to stare fixedly at us from a distance and then abruptly turn and hop away the moment we get too close. They're wary, shy creatures. But today they seem reluctant to leave their juicy pastures. Or maybe they're just growing more accustomed to our visits.

When two of the girls notice a rather large joey still in its mother's pouch, they edge further down into the gully to get a better look. They've never managed to get so close before. An enormous buck is watching them intently, but he doesn't flinch. Following his lead, the mob stays put. The girls eventually stop as well. For a suspended moment, girls and kangaroos face each other off at close quarters.

In *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction* (2011) Deborah Bird Rose questions Levinas's narrow framing of ethics as an exclusively human ability to recognize our mutual vulnerabilities in the face-to-face encounter with another. She interprets Levinas's insistence that ethics precedes, rather than resides in, the self to infer that it is ethics that "calls us into relationship" (p. 29). At a time when it is no longer possible to deny that our tenuous survival is inextricably linked with the world's other life forms, Rose and her colleagues (2012) question why we would exclude other animals from a relational ethics. She urges us to "resituate the human within the environment, and resituate nonhumans within cultural and ethical domains" (p. 3).

What are the ethical possibilities that open up in the moment of face-to-face kangaroo-child encounters such as this? What stirs kangaroo and child curiosities about each other? What compels them to observe each other so closely? What do they recognize—or not—through exchanging their gazes? Do they apprehend, in some way, their mutual vulnerabilities? Are these fleeting encounters a kind of mutual calling? Could they be the start of an ethical relationship?

<FIGURE 2.5 HERE>

For the first time, it's the girls, not the kangaroos, who turn and run away—when the intensity of the moment becomes too much, when the zones of proximity are breached. The imposing buck is steadfast, resolutely guarding his mob. He doesn't take his eyes or his ears off the girls. Ears forward, in synch, all the adult kangaroos study their retreat.

The girls laugh with nervous excitement as they run back to the group. They look pleased with themselves. Are they stimulated by the up-close physicality of kangaroo bodies?

Perhaps imagining a chase?

In relation to her own entanglement in multispecies lifeworlds that we can never fully understand or control, Lesley Instone, an Australian more-than-human geographer, takes up the challenge of “risking risky attachments.” She argues that the process of risking attachments holds more possibilities than dangers. “Such a stance means different ways of thinking and doing that connect us as one among the many actors and places that enact the world” she says, while encouraging us to see that “embracing our attachments and embeddedness in complex networks offers hope rather than menace” (forthcoming, n.p.).

It is hope that we are looking for. We wonder if it is risk itself, or being on the edge of risking attachment that moves the children as they laugh and run away? What of the kangaroos sensing risk or risking attachment as they stand their ground? In taking the risk of being closer to each other this time, do children and kangaroos also in some way sense the inevitability of their entanglements with each other?

<FIGURE 2.6 HERE>

We make our way back up the hill toward the campus buildings and onto the concrete path that leads to the early childhood centre. The girls hop ahead. Later, one of them draws a picture of two small girls standing right next to an enormous kangaroo, holding

hands with the joey in the pouch. She explains to me that she and her friend and the joey are holding hands “because we are all close.”

There is always some kind of contagion at work in Haraway’s accountings of what happens “when species meet.” Again, it has something to do with “the play of bodies” where relating precedes identity. Where the flesh and blood meeting infects a lateral, rather than a reproductive, lineage and descent kind of kinship. We wonder about the ways in which the children seem so drawn to the joeys—and if and how this up-close encounter with an actual joey might have infected them with a kind of kinship identification that exceeds the culturally sanctioned attraction to the “cute” young of other species that is so heavily promoted in children’s popular culture.

<FIGURE 2.7 HERE>

We’ve been watching the film version of Dot and the Kangaroo lately. It shows how a kind kangaroo ensconces a lost human child in her pouch and hops off to deliver her home. As well as rescuing Dot, Kangaroo secures the child’s sympathies for the bush animals that are hunted by the “cruel white people.” Dot promises to become an “improved human.”

Today, one of the girls wore her kangaroo hoody jacket (complete with ears) especially for the bush walk. Perhaps the Dot story has stirred her imagination about the possibilities of a new kind of hybrid girl-kangaroo identity. As we approach the mob, her best friend encourages her to go ahead to mediate the encounter. She seems willing and

brave. Do the children really think that the kangaroos would misrecognize a hopping girl in a kangaroo suit as one of them? Does her furry jacket make her feel kangaroo-like as she hops confidently forward? Does she see the kangaroos differently in her suit? Does she see them as kin? And what do the kangaroos make of her?

Haraway (2004), acknowledging the influence of Barbara Noske's work on her thinking, in particular Noske's insistence that we must recognize "the 'otherworldly' subject status" of other animals, asks, "What *is* inter-subjectivity between radically different kinds of subjects" (p.143)? In her own work, she consistently calls for "otherworldly conversations" with animals that refuse "autonomization of the self" and "objectification of the other" (p.144). Haraway takes on the daunting task of trying to articulate the ways in which we are constituted through our relations with other species. She tries to do this in ways that resist reducing these others into known objects of interest to us (as all-knowing human subjects). We wonder if a similar realignment of subject-object multispecies relations is at play in this particular child-kangaroo encounter. As the kangaroo girl breaks with the human group and hops toward the mob, as she bodily enacts becoming kangaroo, is she called into a transspecies mode of intersubjectivity? Is she entering into a kind of bodily enacted "otherworldly conversation"? Is this an example of the queer kin worlding that Haraway (2008) talks about?

Unsettling Pedagogies through a Common Worlds Framework

Through recounting our ethnographic narratives in this chapter, we have been arguing for richer and more complex conceptualizations of child-animal relations and their pedagogical possibilities. We have looked to multispecies encounters to learn how to respond to the challenging colonial and environmental legacies that we inherit. We have attended to ways in which geographically specific (post)colonial child-animal entanglements—in this case Canadian preschool children’s entanglements with bears in the forest and Australian preschool children’s encounters with kangaroos in the country’s bush capital—afford children very different sets of legacies and challenges within their own common worlds.

As the narratives highlight, these common worlds are much more than human societies in which animals also happen to reside. They are, in Latour’s (2004) constitutional terms, collectives of human and nonhuman constituents, all exercising agency (or actancy), albeit in asymmetrical and uneven ways. The common worlds that we have recounted are real, messy multispecies worlds full of unexpected and eventful actively collective assemblages, or comings together. The heterogeneous constellations of these common worlds bring differences to bear on the ways in which *all* lives are constituted and lived. These worlds are not common because the differences that constitute them are easily assimilated, or held in some kind of harmonious balance or stasis, as in the (exclusively human) multicultural imaginings of happy pluralism. They are noninnocent, incommensurable, and troubling more-than-human common worlds in which differences rub against each other, causing disconcertment and prompting us to question how we might “learn more about how to flourish together in difference, without the telos of a

final peace” (Haraway, 2008, p. 301). They are worlds within which human and animal lives are co-shaped through the friction of our geographical co-presence and through the layered legacies of our densely entangled histories. They require us to partake in the ongoing ethical grappings that are part and parcel of resisting the pull of exclusively human interests. They nudge us to seek ways that foster far more worldly envisionings of situated multispecies belongings and cohabitations.

These pedagogies are motivated by ethical and political concerns, focusing on the ethics of living together with difference. How might we learn to inherit and respond to common world legacies (colonialist and ecological) and reshape common futures? How might we foster more livable common worlds (for children and other humans, animals, and life forms)? How might we learn with more-than-human others to affect and be affected? Framed by these huge questions, common world pedagogies are nevertheless situated. They respond to the everyday, on-the-ground events (often quite mundane) and relations (often seemingly insignificant) that take place in children’s lifeworlds.

These ethical and political concerns are not just about recognizing difference or colonial formations. They involve acting in the world, not standing outside looking in. It is always in practices and performances of *worlding* (Haraway, 2008) where new yet interconnected worlds come into being. These worlding practices, though, have effects and implications, and the question for early childhood pedagogies to grapple with is that some worldings world worlds in which, or with which, we do not want to live, or worlds that do not let us live, or that let some live and not others (Blaser, 2014). It is here where

pedagogies become political and unsettling. And this process of worlding, of course, must be conceived, not as an individual endeavour, but as a collective performance without clear boundaries, where nothing can be sealed off from everything else, let alone settler (post)colonial childhoods.

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ⁱ See <http://commonworlds.net> for an overview of the Common World Childhoods Research Collective.

ⁱⁱ Portions of this section have already been published in Pacini-Ketchabaw, di Tomasso, & Nxumalo (2014). Veronica would like to thank Lara and Fikile for their permission to rewrite the ideas from that article.

ⁱⁱⁱ For further discussions about the nation-building role that the kangaroo played in early Australian children’s literature, see Taylor, 2014.