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SHIFTING TOWARDS EQUITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION THROUGH PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION, DEEP LISTENING, AND CENTERING RELATIONSHIPS

A Capstone Project Presented

By

Meghan Young

to

The Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources University of Vermont In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree Specializing in Leadership for Sustainability

October, 2020

Defense Date: August 20, 2020 Committee:

> Britt Yamamoto, Ph.D Matt Kolan, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

This capstone project allowed me to better understand the challenges and struggles in the creation of equitable, relevant, and inclusive learning opportunities for youth within the field of environmental education in Maine. My work centered on exploring ways to work towards dismantling systems of oppression within the field of environmental education by focusing on connecting providers and by laying a foundation that could bring people together in order to design curriculum that is representative and responsive to the cultures and communities in which it is being taught. Although the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift in some of the processes and practices of my project, the core question remained: What work needs to be done in order to build compassionate and sustainable communities where all life has the ability to thrive? The pandemic allowed me to more fully integrating the personal and internal work into this process, by incorporating methods and processes that allowed me to analyze and research how I show up in communities, how I embody my learning, and how I root, anchor, and find balance in my values, methods, and relations during times of uncertainty and grief all while engaging with projects aimed at systemic change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first want to acknowledge the land that has held me - in my past, into my future, and throughout this process - my greatest and most foundational teacher, continually helping to heal me in my return to my body and spirit. I want to acknowledge the painful and troubled history of the land on which I reside in Western Maine, the forced removal, genocide, and erasure of nations, communities, and cultures who stewarded and lived on this land for generations before my ancestors arrived here, and who continue to steward, live, and persist. The People of the Dawnland. Acknowledging this history and my ancestral and current role as a colonizer in my home, is an integral component of my capstone work and has led me to more appropriately locate myself within the systems that I inhabit. I want to acknowledge my more than human teachers who have guided me through hardship, struggle, joy, and exuberance and who have opened my eyes, ears, mind, and heart. I want to acknowledge my human teachers: the instructors, my coach, and Grunion cohort members from Batch 4 who have, directly and indirectly, influenced my experiences, learning, and this lifelong project; my mother for providing space for play and pushing back against social norms, for modeling relationship with the natural world and encouraging me to talk to trees. and for filling my life with so much love and lessons they should fill a book; my father for the unspoken but demonstrated lessons about the power of curiosity, love, resilience, and the potential to grow in compassion from a place of struggle, pain, and hardship; my brothers for challenging the norms laid before them and for inspiring me to define and find my own happiness; my blood family for being linked to the same story and for the movement and development of new narratives; my chosen family for choosing me too and for knowing me and wanting to know me; my partner who has, from the very beginning, supported my learning journey, challenged my defaults, and helped me rise over and over again in trust and love.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It can be JaRriNg
Stepping off the desired path.
That heart-racing
Gut wrenching
Fear
That comes with
Slipping up,
Being unprepared,

Having too much confidence... Or too little energy, Causing one to lose the way.

 $Sometimes\ the\ tendency\ can\ be\ to\ barrel\ ahead,$

Choosing to forget the mistake & Feign ignorance,

Continuing further down the road leading away from where one seeks to land.

This is where the panic thrives, And the defensiveness lives.

It would be easier to turn around,

But accepting the err in judgement is not on the agenda.

Another option could be to research.

To pour over maps and gizmos and gadgets.

To consult guides that offer reprieve.

To alter the route based on the wisdom of others.

This might get you to where you are hoping to go,

But make sure to look up and take in the view every once in a while.

Sometimes; however, it is easiest to embrace the humility of wrongdoing.

To admit to yourself that you went astray.
To trace back to the start and begin again,
With tools of perspective and acceptance.
The journey never ends.

There will be endless missteps, Trails that deadend,

Loop back to the start, Lose their markings.

Getting lost,

Messing up

Every once in a while is inevitable.

It is the choices that come afterwards that determine the adventure.

I have worked within the field of environmental education and outdoor learning, in various capacities, for the past decade. During this time, I have seen the amazing and transformative power of this work, but I have also witnessed the deep and continually exasperated inequities that exist within this field. "Science education, place-based education, and environmental education are critical sites of struggle because they typically reify the epistemic, ontological, and axiological issues that have shaped Indigenous histories" (Brayboy and Castagno, 2008). I have also become increasingly aware of how settler colonialism has

shaped environmental education and, more broadly, schooling, in the United States (<u>Tuck and Yang</u>, 2012). In this capstone, I sought to better understand the challenges and struggles that are currently present in the creation of equitable, relevant, and inclusive learning opportunities for youth within the field of environmental education in Maine. I found the suggestions by <u>Gould et al.</u> to address issues of low diversity in thought and action within conservation, extremely helpful when applied to environmental education, especially "redefining 'environment' to more closely align with the diversity of perspectives that different people and disciplines bring to the topic" (Gould et al. 2017). I wanted to immerse myself in the systems that determine what, why and how youth learn. I felt a deep physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental call for change within the sector. I also felt called to build a strong community of partners and peers and friends within the environmental education sector and beyond in order to locate myself and my role in this work and to speak to and fight for a more equitable sector. I found myself asking: "How do I contribute to a more equitable and just environmental sector in my community and region?"

My initial project intended to build off newly released data from The Community-Based Environmental Learning (CBEL) Census that had been conducted through a partnership between Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance (MMSA) and Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA) about who, where, and how K-12 youth are engaging in environmental education opportunities. I worked intentionally and over time to build relationships and connections with MMSA and MEEA, and also the Nature-Based Education Consortium (NBEC) in hopes of partnering with them to hear from, learn from, and work with folks in government, education, conservation, agriculture, forestry, public health, and recreational careers through regional listening sessions based in Maine's 16 counties. I decided to pursue this project, because I feel called to connect youth with nature and its wisdom, and to facilitate exploration based in inquiry and compassion, not based in systems of oppression or colonialism. To me, "learning about the natural world is a critical necessity given the socio-scientific realities (e.g. climate change) that are currently and will continue to, shape the lands and life that land supports, more specifically for present purposes the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples" (Bang et al., 2014). I feel that it is critical and essential to support youth in their journeys to connect to place and I feel called to bring together community partners already engaged in work related to this vision. MEEA, and North American Environmental Education Association (NAEEA), MEEA Changemakers Cohort, NBEC, and many other stakeholders have identified these trends and are taking action to bring forth change.

Due to COVID-19 and the widespread and unpredictable nature of the pandemic, much of the original project was stalled and some of the intended work could not be carried out. What started as a project based on listening session design and community empowerment has grown and morphed and pivoted throughout the capstone process. The listening sessions unfortunately never left the planning phase, but my work with partner organizations never stopped - my relationships have continued to deepen and grow and change since the fall of 2019. I realized, due to the pause put in place by COVID, that I needed to shift from solely asking, "What goes into creating culturally responsive, inclusive, and equitable environmental education curriculum that can be transformative for youth? How do you bring people together to design curriculum that is representative and responsive to the cultures and communities in which it is being taught?" to incorporating the questions, "How do I show up in community? How do I root, anchor, and find balance in my values, methods, and relations during times of uncertainty, shifts,

and grief?" Without the incorporation of the second set of questions, my project would not have been able to address the core tenet of building sustainable and compassionate community.

The current iteration of my project is the deep and critical look at the themes and pillars of what keeps me balanced and attuned to my values during and through times of immense shifts, how my leadership practice is influenced by these themes, and how my leadership practice has changed as I have continued to intentionally center relationships. My project is the examination and practice of how I show up in spaces, regardless of platform (in-person or virtual) and how I stand in my authenticity and truth as a collaborator and leader in those spaces. My project is speaking to the practices of inquiry and method that I uphold in my relations. Finally, my project is speaking to the opportunities and potentials that exist in the field of environmental education and nature-based education to shift toward equity and the current projects in which I am involved that hold this vision. The intersectionality and interconnectedness within the field of environmental education is astounding, especially once new narratives and voices are brought into the frame (Maina-Okori et al. 2017).

While so much has changed over the course of the capstone process, particularly in the past several months, I have found balance by rooting myself in two broader questions that formed my capstone at its inception. The first question comes from Orland Bishop in his explanation of the Zulu word, Sawubona: "How do I have to be in order for you to be free?" The second broad question rose from my heart and a synthesis of the essential questions provided by the learnings of the MLS program: What work needs to be done in order to build compassionate and sustainable communities where all life has the ability to thrive? I have felt held and stretched by these guiding questions. These questions and the learnings and (un)learnings that have accompanied my commitment to them, have given life to more specific and directed inquiries and multiple iterations of projects based in the work I sought to accomplish through this capstone. I have had to step off the desired path multiple times in the process, but through the MLS program, relationships, and my commitment to a leadership practice based in authenticity, listening, love, and growth, I have been able to navigate the choices, missteps, unpreparedness, shifts, and pivots that popped up along the capstone journey.

During the past year, I have had the immense privilege of stepping into decision-making and advocacy-based roles within the environmental sphere in Maine, in both volunteer and professional capacities, because of relationships that have been built. It was clear, in order to more effectively work across and within differences, be a stronger advocate for equitable representation, be a more informed and stronger ally, and be a part of a more inclusive, holistic, and sustainable movement, I had to continue to push myself to my learning edges and continually question my practices and beliefs. I had to seek out resources that give deeper insight to experiences different than my own and I had to continue to be deeply committed to listening. I had to continue to ask the questions: Who is this serving? What are the benefits? The repercussions? Why is this the way things are being done? How can I bring more curiosity to this topic? How can I grow from discomfort?

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

This capstone project was based firmly in building relationships and learning from relationships. As someone who was somewhat new to the state of Maine and the region and community in which I lived, I knew that I had to introduce myself to my new home through the protocols outlined through the MLS program ¹, listen deeply, and build connections and relationships through awareness and trust. This was the core of my methodology and informed my actions throughout the process. I chose this as the central tenet to my research process, because I felt strongly that if I was to be involved in systems change work, no matter how big or small, I needed to build trust with partners, communities, and individuals, and I needed to better know who I was working with and how to be in those spaces. I processed my interactions and learnings through poetry as a form of expression.

The relational aspect of my project incorporated and wove together learnings offered by the MLS program. This project involved multiple meetings and conversations each week with project partners and with community members as well as collaborative project work. I prepared for and worked to show up as my authentic self to all conversations, and to discern when to step up and when to step back in these spaces. An essential component of my ability to show up in my truth involved introducing myself, my ancestors, the land that I walked upon, and my teachers. I was committed to reading, listening, or viewings of journals, articles, books, speeches, webinars, trainings, music - I found that I needed to consistently engage with material that pushed me to my edge, in order to better understand myself, my leadership style, and how to interact with others and difference.

Writing poetry as an awareness practice was another aspect of my project. Dedicating my time and energy to learning and (un)learning over the past two years and committing to this learning journey as a lifelong process, allowed me to more fully simmer in the questions: "who am I becoming and who is the leader that I am becoming?" and critically examine to what degree I am embodying what is central to me in my life. As I moved through conversations, resources, lessons, situations, hardships, challenges, and uncertainties, I would articulate my thoughts, ideas, and internal landscape through poetry. My writing was never dedicated to a specific space, time, or place, but I would be sure to acknowledge and honor space for this form of awareness building and processing.

Another awareness practice that was critical in processing my learnings and in allowing for me to show up in my truth was in daily meetings with the woods and waters near my home. I have often used exercise as a mode of processing and relief; however, during the capstone practice, I was told by the woods, the streams, and my body to move more slowly in order to listen more deeply. I started incorporating more intentional walks into my daily routine, or sections of a run where I would slow down for moments of pause, to connect with my breath and the breath of the forest in order to hear what the world around me

¹ MLS Relationship Building Protocols (TwoTrees & Kolan 2018):

A. Proper Introduction

B. Invitation

C. Offerings

D. Permission

E. Listen, listen, listen!!

was telling me. This slowing down and connection to the place that I call home helped to form a basis of deep listening as part of my relational leadership practice with the human and more than human world, and was a cornerstone in my capstone work.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

My capstone project shifted from a project of designing community listening sessions, to a project of personal development, relationship building, and leadership attunement. With the pivot put in place by COVID-19, I was forced to pause and reevaluate - How was I aligning with my values? How was I showing up in my relationships? Who was the work for? Who will it benefit? Who was I accountable to? Who did I want to become? This slowness put the emphasis on personal growth as the core of this capstone project, and led to several deliverables: a collection of poems based in self-reflection & self-discovery (see Appendix A) that have helped to articulate my learnings in a form that makes sense to me, deep professional relationships (see Appendix B) that constantly bring me to my learning edges and hold me in loving accountability, collaboratively designing a consulting business that focuses on equity journeys, positive youth development, and nature connection, and a shift to align my personal and professional life through projects and curriculum building based in equity, racial justice, climate justice, nature connection, networking, and holding space for multiple ways of being (see Appendix C & D).

Throughout the capstone process, and since the beginning of my intended work, building intentional relationships has been central to transformation and growth. Initially, when I was gathering information about who was doing work in the state of Maine that fell under my initial capstone questions involving culturally responsive curriculum development, I was led to the MEEA Changemakers cohort, a network of intergenerational climate justice and social justice leaders throughout the state of Maine focused on shifting power in the field of environmental education. Through months of dedicated efforts and moving with intention into the newness of relationships, I began attending events with the Changemakers and slowly shifted into applying to task forces and committees and boards on a volunteer-basis and (transparently) for research, and joined a community that has changed my life. Studying these organizations and entering meetings and spaces with curiosity and awareness made relationships evolve into partnerships. When COVID hit and the reality of my initial project was decided, the strength of these partnerships and the built mutual trust created a new space for me in the community and asked me to step up. I was working full time as a teacher, but I started to take on contract and consulting work for partners and sit in on conversations with the purpose of giving feedback and asking questions. From here, I joined planning and design teams and have worked as a facilitator for several online events.

This evolved capstone project of personal growth and transformation has taken me fully to my learning edges - of arriving at my truth, being confident in shifting internal landscapes, enhancing awareness of how I show up in spaces and experiences, embodying my learning at a cellular level, and how all of these edges relate to my capacity to work across difference and work with power, privilege, and tension. Through the offerings of MLS program and the learnings of this capstone project, I have been moved. I have embodied trust, authenticity, and vulnerability and I have transformed in a way where I can lead as my true self. My leadership now feels like growth - accessing ancestral knowledge, challenging systems of oppression and colonization, becoming more grounded in who I be, leaning into my relationships, and remembering.

CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

Throughout the capstone process, I have been motivated by core values such as growth, learning, curiosity, purpose, adaptability, gratitude, authenticity, honesty, exploration, recreation, adventure, dependability, empathy, love, courage, patience, listening, and reflection. I have intentionally created time and space at many points in my process to evaluate when my work has aligned with these values and when I am pushing myself to my learning edges, in contrast to when I have fallen out of intentionality and have allowed for my defaults to dictate my personal and professional work. I have looked to my students, affiliate organizations, partner, friends, family, and coach to keep me aware of my alignment with my values and principles. I have worked to listen deeply and receive feedback from students, teachers, community members, stakeholders, affiliate organizations, friends, partner, peers without ego and attachment. I have strived to make space in my life for this reflection and for the potential for failure and requirement of course changing, like what happened due to COVID. I remained transparent with my affiliate organizations and peers about my process and project throughout the past year. I have been tracking my progression through a poetic lens throughout my entire time with the MLS program and have documented shifts and alignments through prose.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS/KEY LEARNINGS

I feel warmth in the acceptance
That my learning will never end,
That my curiosity will always be inspired,
That I can always grow
Taller,
Deeper,
Fuller.

I am dedicated to learning and growing. Throughout the capstone journey, I have come away with the deep understanding and key learning that this is a lifelong process. I will always need to put in the work through conversations, trainings, readings, resources, listening, etc to show up as an equitable and just leader in community. My list of resources is ever-growing, as seen in Appendix E, and I am committed to tracking my learning and sharing. I am committed to the embodiment and practice of learnings, to stand in my truth and to work towards openness, softness, vulnerability, even through mistakes and failures. I am committed to admitting when I don't know and surrendering to the reality that I cannot know everything (Montejo, 2018). I commit to the neverending inward journey of self-awareness and centering, and will continue to strive for balance through commitment to alignment practices, such as breath work and visiting with foundational relations (see poems on Foundational Relationships in Appendix A).

The road and work ahead will be challenging, heart breaking, and exhausting. I am not alone in this work - in dismantling systems of oppression, questioning those in power, unlearning colonialist narratives. I

will continue to deepen and strengthen the relationships and communities that have emerged during and before this capstone process and will make space for relationships to come, as well as deeply and critically grow my relationship to place (<u>Tuan</u>, 1975). I will look to my foundational and generative relationships to hold me accountable to my goals and core values.

A final key learning from this process is that I find great release and a more whole understanding of my inner thoughts when creating poems. Next steps will be to continue writing as I grow forward through challenges and joy and potentially assemble a collection of work.

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APPENDIX A: COLLECTION OF POEMS

FINDING MY PEOPLE

Who I be?

I know not yet, who is me.

I seek the stories,

The culture,

The perspective,

The details of trauma that lives in the cells of my being,

That arrived in my body before birth.

When did I lose my home?

I think often on the songs of my people,

How lost I am without their music.

I think often on the traditions of my people,

How lost I am without their ways.

I think often on the prayers of my people,

How lost I am without their spirit.

Who are my people?

Who were my people?

Inheriting power and privilege without context -

Ignorance in full effect.

THOUGHTS on SYSTEMS

Life through a lens,

An ever-changing aperture,

Perceptions based in half truths,

When cloudy about self.

This concept of reality,

Perception,

Continues to change.

Everyone sees differently.

Are we living the same experience at all?

I will never find an outside mirror,

But I can provide one for myself -

To reflect where I am blind,

And where I am seeing clearly.

At times.

Falling victim to the twisting and tangling of sensation -

The contortion of data -

The perpetuation of wrong assumptions.

The antithesis of growing,

Forcing self back into the shell,

Isolating from the levels beyond.

Levels that

Bend.

Weave.

Intertwine,

Stack.

Levels that are lateral,

Up,

Down,

And in between.

Nested within and outside of each other,

Integral to the formation,

Of living relationships.

Delineated yet borderless.

To access the bridge the riddle of self must be solved.

Go ahead.

Dive in.

The bridge to truth is waiting.

THREE POEMS on the FIGHT to RETURN HOME

You've worn my skin for far too long Stolen the sacred places within my being Turned me to dust Took my name And told me to smile.

Upon peeling back the layers of my mind

I still find

You

Buried in the deepest depths of my core

Disorienting my balance

Fucking up my alignment

Forcing me to fight in my own home.

I've been a stranger for far too long
And I want to come home.

SEARCH for HOME

That familiar pull

Of my being toward the water

The molecules in me

Greeting their external family.

A call to my spirit and soul

A reconnection of matter

That was potentially once one.

The ancient building blocks of my physical body

Seeking, searching, longing for home -

Pieces of home beneath the trees,

In the currents of rivers,

In the richness of the earth,

The depths of forests,

The gentleness of lakes.

Before they were me,

Where did the fragments of me dwell?

There is profound honor rooted in the infiniteness of my being.

How do I further lean into arriving at my truth?

How do I reconcile my body's search for home?

DEFAULTS

What are these stories

That were never told,

Never whispered as lullabies,

Never questioned?

Stories that

Disenchanted

Disengaged,

Disconnected,

Distorted.

Discouraged

And named this as success.

Did I ever choose to accept these stories as the truth?

When did they intertwine with my DNA,

Forming their own fixtures within my body and mind?

When did I lose sight of my spirit -

Preventing myself from fully falling into the magic of love and life?

These stories,

in partnership with pain,

Are a toxic and obtrusive wall.

An armour that regenerates,

To ensure the protection and ongoing acceptance of the lies within.

A fortress that traps and cages and suffocates.

Prying open the walls, bursting through the seams

Requires practice, patience, gentleness, vulnerability -

Why does it hurt so much to live a life of truth and love?

Why is it so hard to realign the narrative, Placing emphasis on space and softness and compassion? Why is is so easy to fall back into patterns that stifle growth? When I long to extend in all directions?

When my heart cries for surrender?

TRUTHS

My heart screams for freedom,

A painful liberation from invisible chains.

An apocalyptic leveling of apathy,

Leaving floods of joy in the aftermath.

Freedom for my fellow beings,

Living and nonliving,

The souls of the ancients within.

An inundation of light,

Allowing shadows to appear,

Be seen,

Be heard,

Be learned,

Be held.

Hear the wailing of the cries,

The melodic shifting of the narrative,

The cracking open of incalculable hearts,

The stories pouring down like a much needed rain.

I have found the truth in the forests,

That contain so many pieces of my soul,

Tucked away,

But not hidden.

I have found the truth in the waters,

That hold me afloat,

Even when I feel like I am drowning.

I have found the truth in your eyes,

The windows to your soul.

I have seen your heart,

And I have felt it beat with mine.

PIECES of SELF

I miss the land

That burned me up

Blinded me with sweat

Confused me with chaos

And made me feel complete.

I miss the air so thick

With ocean water
And breath of industry
Sticking to my skin
Slowly becoming a piece of me.

FOUNDATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

DAILY CYCLES:

The rush of the dawn breaking the darkness of night. Light taking the shape of the day, Casting shadows In places that remain unmoving.

As the light begins to fade
And the day concedes to night,
The darkness descends to blanket the light,
And the cycle moves forward again.

FOOD & FARMING:

Fill me up &

Nourish my soul.

Connect me to those

Who came before.

Hands that work,

Keep me humble, but bold

Rooted in the wisdom

Of the cycles of growth.

Teach me the ways,

That death comes to call,

And how birth follows suit,

And how life circles round.

Show me the struggles of this life and the land,

Take my sweat, blood, and tears,

Take my time,

Heal me.

WATER:

I want to be like the water.

Bending, but unyielding.

Molding, but shape-taking.

Changing at the liberty of the air and sky,

Bringing to life,

nature's colors and textures and patterns,

Without losing sight of the path ahead.

Without sacrificing the softness of the flow.

MOUNTAINS:

I seek the stillness and silence

That both takes my breath away,

But Fills me with life.

The joy of feeling

Both insignificant,

But Integral.

The heart racing,

heart stopping joy

Of standing on a mountain top.

WOODS:

Take my time,

Take my breath,

Take my soul.

Heal me from the inside out,

Help me feel whole.

I surrender to the woods,

The omnipotent teacher of reciprocity respect power revolution.

There is commotion in the silence.

Contradictions of life in layers.

Death and living.

Dark and light.

Howling and hush.

Listening and storytelling.

Breath in. Breathe out.

ACROSTICS - COLLECTIVE WELL BEING

Currently looking back at the year behind feels surreal.

Opening to

LOVE,

Looking to surrender,

Eagerly

Choosing to soften,

To grow.

Inviting the unknown to play through me. To be a

Vessel of compassion and thoughtful, thorough critical

Examination.

Wanting a world of "we" and not "I"

Expressing my

Limitations and owning the edges of my

Learning - there is always work to be done.

Beauty and joy found in standing with my deepest truths,

Even when painful or uncomfortable.

Inspired always by the wisdom of

Nature.

Gaining steadiness in my footsteps as they walk my chosen path.

ACROSTICS - AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

A rguably the hardest thing I have ever done, is seeking to better

U nderstand myself and

T he world around me.

H oping to amplify joy and

E nergize those around me to

N urture their communities and

T urn to the lessons

I ntrinsic to nature and

C entral to sustainability.

R ight now is the time to

E ngage and

L ift each other up. To

A ct with zero complacency and

To continually question our processes.

Is this this truest form of myself?

O *r do I need to widen my scope*?

N ow is the time to

S hape the world with love and compassion.

H earts bursting open

In the

P urposeful listen listen listening of

S tories.

REMEMBERING

There will be times

When the water doesn't come

And no day brings reprieve

An unquenchable thirst

Only quelled by

Knowing when to give and when to take.

A knowledge buried deep

Called memory.

There will be times

When the wind blows heavy

Obscuring the path ahead

Threatening to

Snap

Rip

Tear

You apart

These are the days

When flexibility is key

And Trusting in the roots below will bring balance

Leaning into connections

Called memories.

There will be times

When fire kisses the Earth

Decimating all objects of attachment and identity

Leveling expectations to the ground

But from flame

Life is reborn

In a baptism of memory.

There will be times

Of paralyzing grief

Disruptive pain

That severs the connection between mind and body

Coming back to the body

Surrendering to feel

The vulnerability of memory.

There will be times

Of abundance and growth

Flowering and blossoming joy

That overflows and shifts and fills

Making all whole

The memory of love.

APPENDIX B: RELATIONSHIPS/PARTNERSHIPS

MEEA: https://www.meeassociation.org/
NBEC: https://www.nbeconsortium.com/

MEEA Changemakers Gathering 2019: https://www.meeassociation.org/programs/changemakers



COMMUNITY LEARNING FOR MAINE (CL4ME):

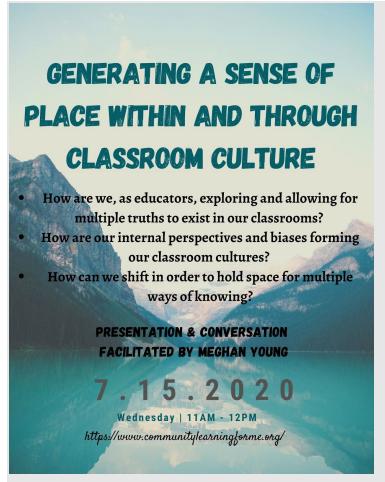
https://www.communitylearningforme.org/

APPENDIX C: PROJECTS LIST

Some of the current projects for partner organizations include:

- 1. Contract/consulting work with MEEA
- 2. Data visualization team member MMSA, NBEC, MEEA, community members
- 3. Advocacy task force member NBEC
- 4. Outdoor recreation task force member NBEC
- 5. MEEA Changemakers cohort
- 6. MEEA Board of Directors
- 7. Shifting Towards Equity Planning team for Virtual Summit hosted by MEEA, CAAE, EEANM
- 8. Creating an EE directory for ME project lead
- 9. Back to school planning team with MSC and NBEC facilitation (large group) how can outdoor learning facilities partner with public schools in the transition?
- 10. MEEA monthly equity calls planning team and facilitator
- 11. design team and science team member for Community Learning for Maine (CL4ME) web database through Rural Aspirations project
- 12. CL4ME Professional Development planning team
- 13. Setting EE benchmarks in Maine planning team
- 14. Climate Education task force
- 15. Presenting on generating a Sense of Place in classroom culture that hold space for multiple ways of knowing PD webinar through CL4ME

16. ReLearing Place initiative- design team member - Changemakers, MEEA, Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative, community members



Recording of Webinar (***describes curriculum development): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQTfTxlsg2E&t=2s





NAAEE Equitable and Inclusive EE Course:



Certificate of Completion is hereby granted to

Meghan Young

for completing a minimum of 4 hours of online study in the eeLEARN learning module:

Equitable and Inclusive EE

Presented by the North American Association for Environmental Education

Granted:



APPENDIX D: Resources for Organizational and Personal DEI Work

Camber Outdoors. (2020). *Employer Tools & Workplace Equity Resources*. Available at: https://camberoutdoors.org/what-we-do/employer-tools/.

Environmental Educators of North Carolina. (2020). *Equity and Inclusion in Environmental Education*. Available at: https://eenc.wildapricot.org/DEIresources.

Equity in the Center. (2019). *Awake to Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture*. Available at: https://www.equityinthecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Equity-in-Center-Awake-Woke-Work-2019-final-1.pdf.

Food Solutions New England. (2020). *The 6th Annual Racial Equity Habit-Builder Challenge*. FSNE Equity Challenge. Available at: https://fsneequitychallenge.org/.

Lamont, A. (accessed 2020). *Guide to AllysAn open source starter guide to help you become a more thoughtful and effective ally*. Available at: https://guidetoallyship.com/. hip:

Interaction Institute for Social Change. (2017). Seeing Collective Impact Efforts with a Racial Justice Lens. Available at:

https://interactioninstitute.org/seeing-collective-impact-efforts-with-a-racial-justice-lens/.

Meadows, D. (accessed 2020). *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System*. The Donella Meadows Project: Academy for Systems Change. Available at:

http://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/?utm_source=Acade my+for+Systems+Change&utm_campaign=01ea993191-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_17_03_50_CO PY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_92529dc5f6-01ea993191-1300963205&mc_cid=01ea993191 &mc_eid=f69d59fa59.

National Equity Project. (accessed 2020). *The Art of Conversation*. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CT7FClx26krDgcVc6TmqzKiWYUbB09yq/view.

Perez, A. (2018). *Love While Challenging Racist Behavior*. Interaction Institute for Social Change. Available at: https://interactioninstitute.org/love-while-challenging-racist-behavior/.

Romero, V., Foreman, J., Strang, C., Rodriguez, L., Payan, R., & Moore Bailey, K. (2019). *Examining* equitable and inclusive work environments in environmental education: Perspectives from the field and implications for organizations. Available at:

http://beetlesproject.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Examining-Equitable-and-Inclusive-Work-Environments-in-Environmental-Education.pdf.

Trãn, N.L. (2013). *Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable*. BGD. Available at: http://www.bgdblog.org/2013/12/calling-less-disposable-way-holding-accountable/.

APPENDIX E: Annotated Bibliography & Resources that Informed this Capstone

Ackerman-Leist, P. (2013). Rebuilding the foodshed: how to create local, sustainable, and secure food systems. Santa Rosa, CA: Post Carbon Institute.

• "Rebuilding the Foodshed" addresses the concept of community resilience and how this translates to the need for sustainable and local food systems. The author reexamines the idea of "local" and "regional" and focuses on the necessity to create foodsheds in various environments

that can weather the changing world and climate. This book relates to and enhances my project, because it examines place-based resilience, and takes a closer look at size and scale of communities and regions to determine what "local" can mean and what is necessary for sustaining different areas. Food security and food justice is completely intertwined with climate justice and environmental justice/literacy, and this reading offers a food systems - based view point in how to strengthen communities for the future.

Ardoin, N. M. (2014). Exploring Sense of Place and Environmental Behavior at an Ecoregional Scale in Three Sites. *Human Ecology*, 42(3), 425–441. doi: 10.1007/s10745-014-9652-x

• This article examines the relationship between having a sense of place and having place-protective, conservation, pro-environmental behaviors. It poses the questions: Is there a link between behavior and having a sense of place? How is a sense of place achieved? The article also explores the role that education plays in fostering the feeling of having a sense of place.

Bailey Moore, K & The Foundation for Youth Investment. (2015). Cultural Relevancy in the Outdoor Field: Beyond a Conversation: A Commitment to Action. Available at: https://youthoutside.org/wp-content/uploads/general-upload/Cultural_Relevancy_in_the_Outdoor_Field.pdf.

• This was a report produced to outline the 2014 Cultural Relevancy Convening and the actionable outcomes from the event. The strongest finding, through small teams and highly collaborative brainstorming, was that front-line individuals continue to lack support and often find themselves as lone drivers for cultural relevancy in the outdoor field. Through design thinking, participants discussed scalability of current culturally relevant organizations and developed strategies to enhance scalability.

Biewen, J. (2017). *Seeing White Podcast*. Scene On Radio. Available at: http://www.sceneonradio.org/tag/season-2/.

• This podcast takes a deep dive into questions of whiteness, white-identity politics, white culture and history, and inequities that exist and persist due to whiteness.

Bradley, J. C., Waliczek, T. M., & Zajicek, J. M. (1999). Relationship Between Environmental Knowledge and Environmental Attitude of High School Students. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 30(3), 17–21. doi: 10.1080/00958969909601873

• This article examines knowledge gain and attitude changes in high school students after exposure to environmental science material. The students were surveyed before and after a 10-day course. Both knowledge and attitudes became more environmentally favorable after the short course, as seen in the questionnaire results. This article discusses the critical need for exposure and effective environmental education. Although this research was conducted 20 years ago, the need

is still relevant and the link between behavior/attitude and education/exposure is still prevalent, especially amongst youth.

Eisenstein, Z. & The Combahee River Collective. (1977). *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. Available at: http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html.

• This paper discusses "(1) the genesis of contemporary Black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice" (Eisenstein, 1977).

Gould, R. K., Coleman, K., & Gluck, S. B. (2018). Exploring dynamism of cultural ecosystems services through a review of environmental education research. *Ambio*, 47(8), 869–883. doi: 10.1007/s13280-018-1045-8

• This article comprehensively breaks down cultural ecosystem services (CES) that are the result of increased environmental literacy, leading to increased community awareness, leading to community identities shifting to include more components of the surrounding ecosystem. The change in the social system (shift in identity) allows for an increase in relational values. The research in this article shows that there is a strong link between environmental education and CES acknowledgment and relationship building. CES benefits include an appreciation of aesthetics, increased artistic inspiration, increased education, a sense of identity, recreation and enjoyment, and enhanced social connectedness. Relational values include a shift in attitudes about the natural world, an increased connection to nature, and an enhanced sense of responsibility.

Greenwood, D. A. (n.d.). A Critical Theory of Place-Conscious Education. *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education*. doi: 10.4324/9780203813331.ch9

• This article, which comes from the "International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education" focuses primarily on the importance of place, as places shape, determine, and hold our experiences. The author discusses trends of Western educational and economic systems moving away from consciousness of the land and away from connections to place and they acknowledge the link between increased globalization and the increase in the feeling of "placelessness" shared by certain groups of people. The author calls for, "environmental education that is culturally responsive and committed to care for land and people, locally and globally."

Hay, R. (2009). A Rooted Sense Of Place In Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*, 42(3), 245–266. doi: 10.1111/j.1541-0064.1998.tb01894.x

• What roots someone to a place? This article explores this question and also researches how a sense of place can develop and also be inhibited. More importantly, the author examines how a

"sense of place" varies across difference - cross-culturally and also comparing "modern" and "indigenous" peoples.

Holland, M., & Kaneko, C. (2019). *Naturally curious: a photographic field guide and month-by-month journey through the fields, woods, and marshes of New England*. North Pomfret, Vermont.: Trafalgar Square Books.

• This book is an in-depth, month-to-month, field guide and natural history guide for New England. The author introduces stories, life cycles, and relationships with the natural world with enthusiasm in an easy to read format that incites curiosity and the desire to observe within the reader. It is a field guide that focuses on observation and the ability to build relationships with the natural world. This text unites the world of science with the magic of life and curiosity.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2014). Braiding Sweetgrass. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.

• In "Braiding Sweetgrass," Kimmerer brings different ways of knowing and learning together to reveal the abundance of the lessons present in the natural world. Kimmerer is a trained botanist and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, allowing for her to see the world through the lenses of science and traditional indigenous wisdom. This book is an incredible resource for science educators, especially in the field of environmental education, to bring awareness to other ways of knowing and the power of science learning through developing relational values and indigenous teachings.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2015). *Gathering moss: a natural and cultural history of mosses*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.

• "Gathering Moss" is a collection of essays that give insight to the lives of mosses and how they are connected to and intertwined with many beings throughout the world. Kimmerer uses the lives and stories of mosses to present different ways of living and connecting, and in her reflections, she ultimately makes clear that mosses have much to teach us (humans). Kimmerer ties biological lessons to life lessons and stories, demonstrating how much humans can learn from the natural world, starting with the simple lives of mosses. Just as in "Braiding Sweetgrass," Kimmerer provides an invaluable resource for scientists and science educators (and everyone) by promoting different sets of values and ways of knowing within the scientific field.

Kimmerer, R.W. (2016). *The Honorable Harvest*. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDAPis_GA_s.

Louv, R. (2013). Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. London: Atlantic Books.

• In "Last Child in the Woods," Louv describes the consequences of human alienation from nature, specifically negative effects seen within youth in America. Louv speaks to the benefits of environment-based education on the physical and mental development of youth and the health of youth and adults, and he suggests solutions for the current state of nature disconnection.

Maine Math and Science Alliance. (2020). Census of Community-Based Environmental Learning in Maine 2019 Summary Report. Available at: mmsa.sharefile.com/share/view/sea8bf1f96a74cfeb.

• This report was compiled in 2019 to highlight current community-based partnerships happening in the field of EE in Maine, and to also gain a better understanding of how schools are teaching EE, supported in projects, and engaging in their communities.

Muhammad, G. (2020) Historical Black Excellence Provides a Blueprint for Reimagining Education. *Culturally Responsive Schools*, 15(11). Available at:

http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol15/num11/historical-black-excellence-provides-a-blueprint-for-reimagining-education.aspx?utm_source=Teaching+Tolerance&utm_campaign=fe229661b3-EMA_ IL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_25_03_52&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a8cea027c3-fe229661b3-83516283.

• This article discusses primary concerns that can lead to dehumanizing practices in the classroom and offers a "roadmap" to move forward with culturally relevant pedagogical practices.

Peterson, R. B., Russell, D., West, P., & Brosius, J. P. (2008). Seeing (and Doing) Conservation Through Cultural Lenses. *Environmental Management*, 45(1), 5–18. doi: 10.1007/s00267-008-9135-1

• This reading highlights the historically flawed field of conservation, and how is is not working in its current state of isolated investigation and action. The article brings forth the concept that conservation work must be a "cross-borders collaboration" and a "transdisciplinary dialogue" in order to effectively understand and address the complexity of conserving the Earth's various ecosystems. The author introduces the flaws/harm, but also benefits, brought forth by neoliberalization and other trains of thought and practice, and also provides context for the need for enhanced understanding of cultural lenses and how they play a role in detracting from or adding to the conversation surrounding conservation.

Stevenson, R. B. (2013). *International handbook of research on environmental education*. New York: Routledge.

• This handbook analyzes the studies and findings of environmental education (EE) research, as well as the history and progression of environmental education as a field of study. More importantly, this handbook serves to examine the controversies, blindspots, and potential futures of EE.

Taylor, D.E. PhD. (2014). The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations. *Prepared for Green 2.0*. Available at:

https://www.diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FullReport Green2.0 FINAL.pdf.

• This report focuses mainly on race, class, and gender diversity within environmental institutions, and how these demographics show up in institutional boards and staff. This report also discusses initiatives undertaken by these institutions on enhancing diversity and examines processes such as recruitment and hiring.

Warren, K., Roberts, N. Breunig, M., & Alvarez, M.A. (2014). Social Justice in Outdoor Experiential Education: A State of Knowledge Review. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 37(1), 89-103. DOI: 10.1177/1053825913518898 jee.sagepub.com.

• This article reviewed literature involving social justice in outdoor education and offered insights and thoughts in imagining something different and from a non-White, middle class, male perpsective.

Wessels, T. (1999). Reading the forested landscape: a natural history of New England. Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press.

• In "Reading the Forested Landscape" curiosity and observation are key. Wessels inspires inquiry and has created a guide that allows space for discovery. Central to this text is the concept of observation and reading the land (not analyzing!). The landscape has many stories and lessons to tell and teach. This book drives home the importance of listening to and seeing these stories unfold beneath the aesthetic allure of the woods, and ties storytelling and science together in the quest to build a relationship to the land.

Williams, T.T. & Bioneers. (2014). *A Love that is Wild*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doh_bCaBtdo.