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## On the continuity of learning, teaching, schooling: Mead's educational proposal, from the perspective of decolonization and Land/place-based education

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### Cover Page Footnote

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## **On the continuity of learning, teaching, schooling: Mead's educational proposal, from the perspective of decolonization and Land/place-based education**

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### **Abstract:**

In her 1943 article "Our Educational Emphases," Margaret Mead inquired: What constitutes education in "the broadest sense" of the term (p. 633), as a *continuing* human process. More specifically, she asked, how and from what basis can we understand the educational processes of long-standing/Indigenous societies as continuous with the forms of education practiced in modern industrialized society? In short, Mead proposes that we recognize the essential continuity of learning, teaching, and schooling across all human societies. In this article, I explore the controversies that Mead's proposal raises for contemporary, intersecting discourses on decolonization, Indigenous pedagogy, and place- and Land-based education. I argue that Mead's call alerts us to two major impediments to the widespread flourishing of decolonizing, place/Land-based education, both of which are deeply intertwined with the processes of colonization and forms of anti-Indigeneity implicit in mainstream notions and practices of schooling. The first impediment concerns the external demands for efficiency and productivity placed upon schools, teachers, and learners; the second concerns the interior (personal/spiritual/cognitive) manifestations of colonization that impact upon our ability to understand Land and place as educationally significant in the first place (Land/place as school). In conclusion, I outline the significance of this reconceptualization for the possibilities and controversies of decolonized, place- and Land-based education and the promises of settler-Indigenous reconciliation.

*"The ability to learn is older – as it is also more widespread – than is the ability to teach."* (Margaret Mead, 1999[1964], p. 44).<sup>i</sup>

### **1. Mead's Proposal**

In her 1943 article "Our Educational Emphases," the anthropologist Margaret Mead posed what is, in some ways, a very simple line of inquiry, asking: what constitutes education in "the broadest sense" of the term (p. 633), as a *continuing* human activity and process. She proposes that we recognize the essential continuity of human educational processes – not as something that suddenly and discontinuously sprang up with the advent of formal compulsory schooling some 150 years ago, or the slightly older history of the school as an instrument of colonization. More specifically, Mead is asking: how and from what basis can we

understand the educational processes of traditional/long-standing/Indigenous societies as connected and continuous with the forms of education practiced in modern, technocratic, industrialized society?

Not what separates or distinguishes, but rather, what *connects* the child in Manhattan with the child in a South Pacific tribe? For Mead, the primary connection is that, “*both [children] have everything to learn*” (1943, p. 633 [emphasis added]):

Despite the tremendous difference in what the New York infant and the New Guinea infant will learn, there is a striking similarity in the whole complicated process by which the child takes on and into itself the culture of those around it. And *much profit can be gained by concentrating on these similarities . . .*

In Mead’s (1943) account, education is premised on the pragmatic and concrete realization of a *regulative ideal*. Not a utopian ideal, but an open-ended aim to guide us in our pedagogies, the basis of which can be expressed in the simple aphorism *anyone can learn anything* – or, inversely, *we don’t know* what children (or people generally) *are capable of learning*.<sup>ii</sup> This is for Mead the necessary and basic pedagogical commitment, which is simply a commitment to intergenerational continuity and growth: a love for the young and a love for the world, and with this love, a recognition that both cannot be directly or determinately controlled or predicted.<sup>iii</sup>

The focus of this early 20<sup>th</sup>-century critique is powerful and direct, and it rings true to this 21<sup>st</sup>-century historical moment: For Mead, it is precisely this basic pedagogical creed that has been co-opted by technocratic educational reforms, which demand that, due to a host of colonial, industrial, economic, and societal pressures, *learning be productive* and teachers and schools as institutions be accountable to this productivity. In contrast to these prevailing technocratic aims for education, Mead suggests that pedagogical processes observed across human societies are broadly defined by the fact that *an emphasis on learning is more primary and foundational than an emphasis on teaching*. (See Section 2 of this article.) By contrast, she observes that in modern globalized society “our concepts of education have been shaped by the will to teach, convert, colonize, or assimilate” (1943, p. 63) learners, rather than to channel or foster the process and action of learning itself. Based on the ethnographic insights of her time, Mead claims that the consistent meaning of education throughout human societies is to create forms of continuity. Mead explains that, in stark contrast to the practices and aims of colonial education, which enforce standardized modes of doing and

thinking as well as radical forms of *dis*-continuity<sup>iv</sup> between family, community, and environment, this kind of pedagogical continuity is performed and enacted in the service of fostering responsiveness to present and future uncertainty by connecting learners with the locally meaningful knowledge of their community and landscape.

In this article, I explore the implications and resonances of Mead's "educational emphases" with contemporary, intersecting discourses on decolonization, Indigenous pedagogy, and place-based, environmental education (PBEE). I argue that Mead's proposal,<sup>v</sup> read in and through this 21<sup>st</sup>- century historical moment, necessitates that we recognize the essential continuity of learning, teaching, and schooling. I suggest that this orientation toward continuity helps to uncover an *open morphology of educational dynamics* (cf. Masschelein & Simons, 2013; cf. Campbell 2018b) that draws no distinctions between long-standing/traditional, informal or formalized/institutionalized pedagogical practices and, importantly, prescribes no external functions onto the school, teachers and learners. Significant to this theoretical approach is that school is not conceptualized as an institution or institutionalizing force, but more generally the enacting of a particular space-time-matter arrangement, or specific *pedagogic form* (Masschelein & Simons, 2019): *scholé*, or time free from the demands of productivity (as developed throughout Masschelein & Simons, 2013, 2015, 2019). Adopting this kind of morphological perspective opens an avenue from which to consider *place* and *Land*<sup>vi</sup> as sites of study, or schools, in a more than simply figurative sense. I propose that this conceptual-philosophical move is compatible and resonant with the perspectives and practices of Indigenous pedagogy and Land-based learning and education, and thus has important implications for the very prospect and proposals of decolonized, *place*-conscious education (see Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Charnley, 2019; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Simpson, 2014; Tuck et al., 2014).

This is part of a broader effort of making perceptible the ways in which many mainstream educational practices and concepts are simply incommensurate and insufficient for the calls of decolonization (see Tuck & Yang, 2012). For instance, it is not enough to simply include references to the importance of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in official government and curriculum documents, while providing very little in terms of meaningful resources or avenues for learning and teaching about these perspectives in formal schooling contexts. Neither is it sufficient to perform Land-acknowledgements by script, mechanically and dutifully, without additional (existential) work/study. As Khelsilem Tl'aḱwasikan Sxwchálten (2014, n.p.), community leader and councillor of the Squamish nation proposes, Land acknowledgements are

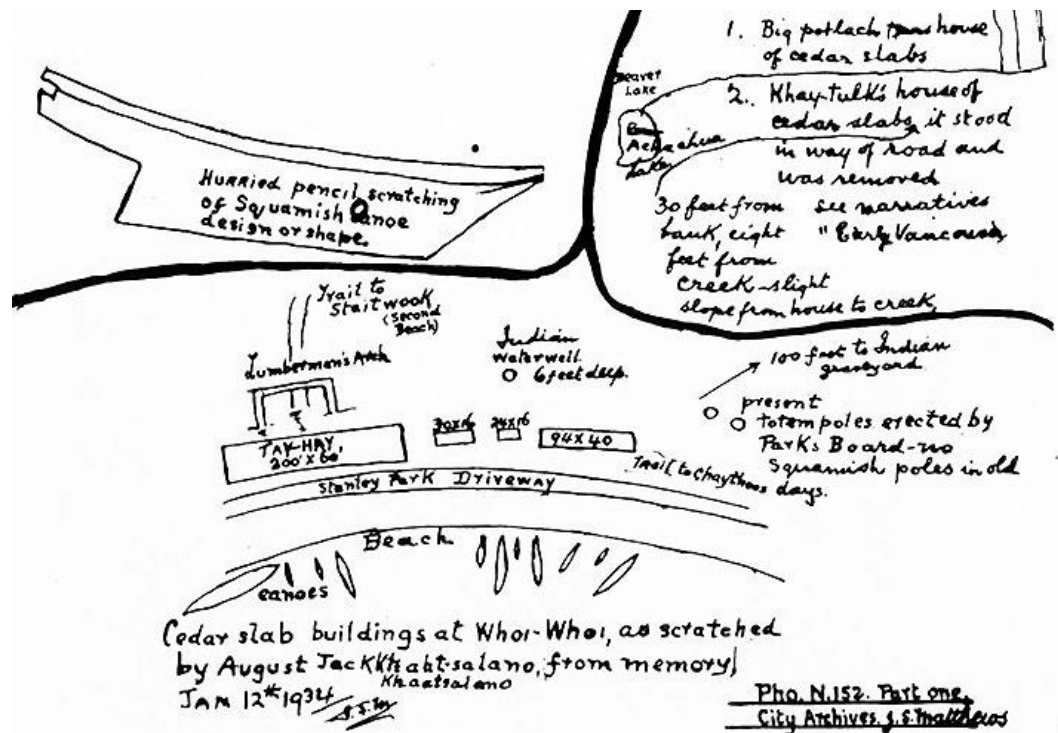
important ways in to addressing what it means to be a colonial resident, and thus *must be lived*, not merely performed:

Talking about unceded territory does nothing to achieve justice or form restitution with the Indigenous peoples who are dispossessed from their land. Instead – actively live it. How are you, through your actions, lifestyle, and attitudes, enacting a life that lives on unceded territory? What systems that perpetuate uncededness and dispossession do you speak out against or subvert?

Acknowledging Land is an important early-step in the work of positioning,<sup>vii</sup> a chance to pose and reflect: What is my relationship to this Land where I find myself? As I will return to touch on in Section 5, acknowledging and positioning *myself* to the Land where I was born and raised has been a central part of my own life’s journey as a (settler) inhabitant of the west coast of Canada. A simple lesson like learning an Indigenous place-name or village/historical-site that has been *colonially erased* in some way (see Barman, 2005, 2007, 2020) allows you to reflect upon what it means to be a colonial resident, or what Denise Ferreira da Silva (in Hern et al., 2018, pp. iv-v) has articulately framed as the *colonial resident question*. Learning about the interwoven narratives, intersecting and often competing for land, is essential in realizing for oneself the realities of colonization, and an early step in making visible the “colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 10) and how this matrix of power manifests at the local level.

Over time, personal practices of acknowledging Land have informed pedagogical practices. As illustration, in late November, 2021, a group of first-year students and I embarked on a walking field trip to Vancouver’s Stanley Park with the intention of learning more about the 3000-year-old village site of *x̣ʷaỵx̣ʷəỵ* (often rendered in English as *Xway Xway*, the present site of Lumberman’s Arch, a name translating into something like “a place for making masks” (Barman, 2005, p. 21), must also connoting the act/event of a Swai’xwe dance, a masked-dance performance featuring a distinctive and widely-known kind of Coast Salish mask (see Thom, 2003, p. 11; Khahtsahlano and Matthews, 1955/2022, pp. 152C-H). As part of this introductory course in education, we had been learning about the Potlatch ceremony and the related *Potlatch Ban* (1885) connected with the earlier *Indian Act* (1876; cf. Joseph, 2018), imposed by the British Columbia and Canadian governments at the time of confederation (using the course text *Potlatch as Pedagogy* by Sara and Robert Davidson, 2018; cf. Davidson, 2019). As part of this ongoing inquiry into the Potlatch and our own local history, we learned more about a large and historically significant Potlatch and accompanying masked

dance-performance held at ǰwǰǰwǰǰ in 1875 (see Khahtsahlano and Matthews, 1955/2022, pp. 40-41), that was attended by at least two thousand people, settler as well as Indigenous, with “[r]epresentatives from Lytton and Kamloops in the interior, and from the upper coast and Vancouver Island” (Hill-Tout, 1978, p. 48), at a time when the village had a population of around seven hundred (p. 47). An attendant of the Potlatch, Khaltinaht (cited in Barman, 2005, p. 68) who was a young girl in 1875 and both Musqueam and Squamish by descent, describes her childhood impressions of this immense cultural event: “They gave a great big potlatch in Stanley Park; rich where the Lumberman’s Arch is. I was little, but I can remember it clearly ... there were “thousands” of Indians: “thousands” of them, from everywhere, Nanaimo, Cowichan, everywhere, and I was frightened.” The Potlatch was hosted at the famous big-house, a large and impressive plank-house (230 feet wide and 60 feet across), named *Tay Hay*, and childhood home of famous Squamish leader and Chief, August Jack Khatsahlano as well as home to 10-12 families (see Khatsahlano’s hand-drawn map below, Fig 1). Those dimensions of the house struck us; as one student proclaimed, “wow, that really is a *big* house!” Hereafter, a group of us from the class felt inspired and motivated to head out to the site of Lumberman’s Arch one Sunday, and, using our bodies and some string as measuring tape, mapped out the approximate dimensions of the big-house.



**Fig 1.** 1934 diagram showing ǰ'wǰ'ǰ'wǰ'ǰ' by Khatsalahno as he remembered it in the 1880s, with notations by JS. Matthews (Khatsahlano & Matthews 1955/2022, p. 24D; cf. City of Vancouver Archives, Add MSS 54, Stanley Park File).

One insight, a kind of *aha* moment that became strikingly apparent as we mapped out and photographed the site of this truly *big* house on this land that had been cleared for over 3000 years, was, quite simply, the realisation that *colonization is not a metaphor* (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and thus neither are the prospects and practices of decolonization. Listen to August Jack Khatsahlano, in conversation with Vancouver archivist JS. Matthews (1955/2022; see also Barman, 2005, p. 92;), about his childhood at ǰ'wǰ'ǰ'wǰ'ǰ', when the house and village was demolished by the city:

We was inside this house when the surveyors come along and they chop the corner of our house when we was eating inside. . . . We all get up and go outside see what was the matter. My sister Louise, she was only one talk a little English; she goes out ask Whiteman what's he doing that for. The man say, 'We're surveying the road. My sister ask him, "'Whose road?'"

“Whose road?” – indeed! Colonization always involves, to some degree or another, removing somebody from their home. Although there was much learning and living that preceded this particular moment, the actual experience of acknowledging ǰ'wǰ'ǰ'wǰ'ǰ' and the big Potlatch house *Tay Hay*, together with my students on this patch of Land/sea was transformative. (I try not to misuse that word).

Land acknowledgements, however, when they lack these contemplative-existential dimensions and openings, inevitably fall short.<sup>viii</sup> To proclaim that the largely rhetorical and impersonal uses of Land acknowledgements at the start of official, institutional functions are meaningfully decolonizing is clearly not satisfactory (see further Blenkinsop & Fettes, 2020; Ruitenber, 2017a). I will argue in Section 6, with Tim Lilburn and others, that, at best, minimal efforts such as institutionalized Land-acknowledgements constitute a kind of *pre-conversation* (Lilburn, 2017; cf. Lilburn & Campbell, 2019), a starting point on the (possible?) path to decolonization.

I argue that the general inability or unwillingness to meaningfully and widely incorporate both place- *and* Land-based educational perspectives within the purviews of formal schooling stems largely from two ongoing histories or paradigms of educational practice, both identified by Mead (1943) as being incompatible with an understanding of education as intergenerational renewal:



- globalist and technocratic educational aims that learning, teaching, and schooling be productive and connected to the accumulation of both economic and social capital; and
- the colonial and anti-Indigenous indoctrination practices implicit to the concept and history of compulsory schooling itself.

My point here is simple: that without acknowledging these basic incompatibilities, we are unlikely to make much in the way of progress. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has clearly exposed this second point of incompatibility, in her now classic article, “Land as Pedagogy” (2014), arguing that Indigenous cultural and educational resurgence requires nothing short of “a radical break from state education systems – systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism” (p. 1).

This basic incompatibility between the educational significance of place/Land and school was, at least in part, already an important caution and insight of early environmental education research, identified and addressed, for instance, in Stevenson's (1987) seminal “Schooling and Environmental Education: Contradictions in Purpose and Practice.” Likewise, Smith's (2007) “Place-Based Education: breaking through the Constraining Regularities of Public School” begins by observing plainly that “the fundamental disconnection between the structure and purposes of public schools and the aims of environmental education continues to provide a useful explanation for why environmental education has remained so peripheral to school reform agendas” (p. 189) (cf. Grunewald [later Greenwood], 2005, for a more extended discussion on the institutional barriers to place-conscious education in formal schooling). However, though at least minimally acknowledged, I argue that this “fundamental disconnection” between place/Land and school has not been sufficiently problematized or engaged with in place-based environmental education research, which often proclaims a simplistic (and I would claim unwarranted) optimism that PBEE can, perhaps through sheer strength of merit, succeed at breaking through the “constraining regularities” of compulsory schooling.<sup>ix</sup>

Part of this unfounded optimism no doubt stems from the failure of place-based education to engage meaningfully with issues around colonization and Indigenous pedagogical perspectives (see McLean, 2013; cf. Scully, 2012). Speaking specifically of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015, p. 123) calls for settler reconciliation with the natural world as part of the broader project of settler-Indigenous reconciliation in Canada, Blenkinsop and Fettes (2020) remark clearly that, “[h]istorically, environmental education in Canada has not been asked to bear this responsibility” (p. 1035).

Over the last decade, such failures and their implications have been made apparent and discussed through post-colonial and decolonizing perspectives on place-based environmental education research, with many authors arguing for Indigenous-led *Land*-based education – educational programs run and guided by Indigenous peoples and rooted in Indigenous relationships to land – as a counter balance to the critical, colonial blind-spots of the educational discourse around place and environment (see Bowers, 2008; cf. Stevenson 2008). Accordingly, and following Mead’s (1943) cue, I propose that important to the development of meaningful, pedagogy-guiding frameworks for place and Land-conscious education is an expanded understanding of the functions/roles/purposes of schools in relation to place and Land-based learning and teaching. Finding pathways, both conceptual and practical from which we can embrace, celebrate, and understand this continuity is, I will argue, an important task and opportunity for education and curriculum theorists like myself to contribute meaningfully to decolonization efforts. The crux of the matter is that through recognizing, with Mead, the pragmatic continuity of learning, teaching, and schooling, *Indigenous pedagogical practices and orientations appear as vital to educational research and practice, not peripheral or marginal.*

I outline how Mead’s (1943) proposal alerts us to *two primary impediments* to the widespread flourishing, and perhaps even the meaningful possibility of decolonized, place/Land-conscious education. The *first impediment* (developed in Section 3 and 4 mainly) concerns those “constraining regularities” of schools that Smith (2007), Greenwood (2005), and Stevenson refer to, and how we might come to reconceive schooling through a focus on the school as “internal pedagogical form” (Masschelein & Simons, 2019). The *second obstacle* concerns the interior or existential manifestations of colonization that impact upon our general ability to see/feel/think places and Land as educationally significant in the first place (see Section 5).

This latter impediment, I argue, compels us to take seriously what we might call a “contemplative turn” in place-based education; a recognition, in both life and pedagogy, of the necessity of “decolonization as soul-work” (Greenwood, 2019). As Tim Lilburn explains (2017; Lilburn & Campbell, 2019), this calls for a “pedagogy of the journey” – a kind of continual spiritual and existential confrontation with the vast intellectual and spiritual poverty of settler societies. This can be put simply in terms of an ongoing question: *How to live in the world “as if it were home?”* (Lilburn, 1999), which is also for us in North America tied up with the question of what it means to be a colonial resident. To meaningfully grapple with this question is unpleasant and inextricably involves repeatedly seeing *for oneself* the devastation of colonization that continues, and indeed lives

on through dominant educational practices and conceptions, but also more fundamentally, the settler-soul and settler-culture: “This is what it is to be a colonial subject—you move in a sort of daze in the place you call home” (Lilburn, 2017, p. x).

In conclusion (see Section 6), I reiterate how both of these impediments are deeply tied up with the legacies of colonization and anti-Indigeneity inscribed in the histories and practices of compulsory schooling, commenting on the Canadian history of residential schools. I outline the broad significance of this reconceptualization of schooling, teaching, and learning for some of the “controversies and silences” of place-based environmental education (Greenwood, 2019, p. 358) and the prospects and promises of settler-Indigenous reconciliation.

## 2. Learning is Primary

For Mead (1943), the main dissimilarity between our modern educational practices and the types of education practiced by long-standing (Indigenous) societies, occurs principally in the conversion “when education becomes a concern of those who teach rather than of those who learn” (p. 625). This is highlighted when education diverges from the knowledge, values and practices of the community. This is plainly described as the “shift from the need for an individual to learn something which everyone [in her community] agrees [s]he would wish to know, to the will of some individual to teach something which it is not agreed that anyone has any desire to know” (p. 634). According to Mead, we only arrive at such teaching-centered, top-down, and thus also, institutionalized (or formalized) educational emphases once two things happen, both related to processes of globalization: (a) A culture becomes more heterogenous and fragmented and (b) one culture asserts its own doctrine of superiority over another, so that now there is *something regimented* to teach, outside of the continuity of local Indigenous knowledge systems and established ways of living.

In Mead's (1943; 1999[1964]) educational philosophy, however, *learning comes first*, in the sense that we grow *into* knowing rather than having knowledge handed down to us through the administering or transmitting of ready-made information “prior to its *application* in particular contexts of practice” (Ingold, 2013, p. 13). Accordingly, the teacher's job is not to ensure or determine that learning happens instrumentally and efficiently, but only that learning *might* happen, through engaging in shared habits of living and doing. Ultimately, this changes how we describe the educative process: Through engaging in shared practices, teachers do not so much force or manipulate students' attention toward pre-defined and desirable outcomes, but rather, simply provide opportunities for

students to *form* their attention and to *grow into knowing*. Ingold (2013, p. 13) explains this basic insight, and how it informed his own approach to teaching and practicing anthropology:

*We learn by doing*, in the course of carrying out the tasks of life. In this the contribution of our teachers is not literally to pass on their knowledge, in the form of a ready-made system of concepts and categories with which to give form to the supposedly inchoate material of sensory experience, but rather to establish the contexts or situations in which we can discover for ourselves much of what they already know, and also perhaps much that they do not. In a word, we grow into knowledge rather than having it handed down to us.

Accordingly, what we offer as teachers are simply proposals for action and collective exploration, that in no way determine, or even ensure, that learning will happen – but are, nevertheless, oriented toward its possibility, through our continuing engagement in practices. It is in this sense that I have maintained in previous work with anthropologist/educationalist Michael Ling (cited in Campbell, 2018a, p. 550) that “Learning *precedes* teaching, insofar as it goes on without formal teaching, often enough, and, that effective teaching *has to be* shaped by an understanding of learning, first and foremost.”

However, asserting that learning is primary and precedes teaching also requires that we recognize that learning is fragile, messy, open-ended, and risky (see Biesta, 2016[2013]; Campbell 2018b). In her article, Mead (1943) addresses these aspects of learning in relation to Indigenous educational processes, such as the relationship between a master carver and his young apprentice: “Miscarriages in the smooth working of the transmission of available skills and knowledge did occur, but they were not sufficient to focus the attention of the group upon the desirability of teaching as over against the desirability of learning” (p. 634). Learning and teaching don’t always go as planned. This, however, is not a problem to be solved, but simply the situation all teachers face daily, if we accept the emergent and enacted nature of learning and teaching: the fact that meaning-making can’t easily or simply be determined or ensured by schools, teachers, parents, or society.

Understanding learning as primary consequently means that learning can never be completely pinned down, determined, or operationalized. Instead, it is emergent in the practices, people, and places that give rise to it. This basic way of thinking about teaching and learning practices is emphasised even in economic terms and practices: Mead highlights that even once a sufficient division of labour is reached

so that a pupil learns an artform/craft/way of living not from a direct parent or relative, but a recognized master, the onus is notably *on the learner* to seek out this master: “The master did not go seeking pupils; the pupils and their parents went to seek the master and with proper gifts of fish or octopus or dogs’ teeth persuaded him to teach the neophyte” (p. 634). So, along with the recognition that learning is open, fragile, messy, emergent, and enacted, is the corollary recognition *that teaching takes effort*; it requires a large investment in time and energy, and thus, just like learning, it cannot simply be taken for granted.

Clearly, when learning equals the achievement of good outcomes, learning is reduced. It refers not to an experiential undergoing, but to a simple means-ends mechanism. Such a reduction reifies learning from its experiential basis and feeds into a persistent *performativity* problem in terms of how educational programs (and public services generally) are assessed as effective or ineffective (cf. Stables 2019, p. 29).

In technocratic accounts of education, the focus is on ensuring or determining learning, conceived before and outside the unfolding pedagogical event itself (cf. Manning, 2016; Campbell, 2018a). In contrast, Mead’s (1943) proposal involves recognizing that what is distinctive about teaching and learning is not its “theoretical underpinnings or socio-political agenda, but first and foremost in the very ways in which education is performed, that is, *in the forms of its enactment*” (Biesta, 2017, p. 44). This approach, I argue – world-centred (Biesta, 2021) and learning-centred rather than student/learner centred – opens the pathway for a non-functional understanding of schooling that may be resonant with Indigenous and Land-based pedagogical perspectives.<sup>x</sup>

### 3. An Internal Perspective

Following Mead’s (1943) assertion on the primacy of learning over teaching/didactics comes another important distinction in her argument, between *education as assimilation* and *education as pedagogy*: “In the course of teaching natives to speak some lingua franca, to handle money, to work copra, etc., the whole focus is on teaching; not, however, on techniques of teaching, in the sense of *pedagogy*, but upon sanctions for *making the native learn*” (p. 636, emphasis added). The belief that learning must be ensured, Mead suggests, is a consequence of the colonial/settler mindset. If there are already exterior aims for education – settling, converting, dominating, selling, trading – then learning cannot be honored for its essential fragility, openness, and indeterminacy. Instead, it must be defined in advance of the educational encounter or event, and thus such a perspective is inherently *not* concerned with learning and is thus ultimately *not* pedagogical.

But what exactly constitutes a *pedagogical* perspective? By recognizing that the telos and aims of education are ultimately enacted from within shared rituals and practices (*forms of gathering*), we recognize a different way of thinking about the role of education and schooling in society. This kind of internal (pedagogical) perspective has recently been explored in the context of school-studies by educational philosophers Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons (2015, p. 85, *my italics*):

We call this a morphological understanding of the school and we distinguish it from functionalist understandings (sociological or economic perspectives on the school in terms of functions, roles and societal needs) and idealistic understandings (philosophical ones in terms of ideas and meanings of education and schooling) ... [F]rom a morphological perspective, the school is understood neither as an institution (obtaining legitimacy from a transcendent idea or ideal) nor as a (multifunctional) organization (obtaining legitimacy from the performance of functions), but refers to a particular *form of gathering*.

Notably, this approach prescribes no external functionality onto educational institutions, teachers, or the learning process in general. Therefore, such an account of schools is not ultimately anthropological, sociological, economical or psychological — but rather, *pedagogical*. To assert a pedagogical perspective means we must take a view, not exterior to, but from within the unfurling events of learning and teaching. In other words, this is not a functionalist perspective on education – what education, what teaching and learning, are supposed to do/accomplish, or the various ways they can be studied (including sociologically, economically, psychologically) – but what they already and implicitly *are*, inside *The Experience of Meaning* (Zwicky, 2019). Biesta (2017, p. 54) articulates this internal understanding succinctly when he says that “[r]ather than asking what education produces, we should be asking what education *means*. And rather than asking what education *makes*, we should be asking what education makes possible.” Relatedly, Mead’s (1943) critique of modern industrialized schooling and the violence of the missionary schools she witnessed firsthand in the South Pacific ultimately boils down to the functions we prescribe to these inventions, and not the vision of the school we may realize from the inside.

By committing to narrow productivity models, features that can be easily measured and quantified, schools have continually, both unwittingly and deliberately, enforced structures that atomize students from their peers, teachers, and community. By individualizing learning and imposing highly competitive

evaluative structures, coupled with a gradual corporatization of many areas of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary), educational institutions, policy, and society itself have adopted an essentially neo-liberal conception of education. The modern reduction and re-presentation of the school as *a learning environment* and the identification of all citizens as lifelong learners is no doubt symptomatic of this turn (see Simons & Masschelein, 2008; cf. Säfström, 2011).<sup>xi</sup> In the learning environment, learner-consumers seek and extract *positive learning outcomes* in the interest of individual advancement. Put somewhat hyperbolically, *they mine for learning-capital*. Learning, thus construed, becomes little more than a means to continually keep up one's employability in rapidly changing market conditions (Biesta, 2016[2013], p. 67). Notably, these learning outcomes are created outside of internal pedagogical events, imposed from the outside, and very easily, education (and learning more broadly) becomes something that *everyone* is expected to undergo. All people can and should learn, and therefore, they must continue to learn through their entire lives; for this is the way they preserve and keep up their societal worth. *Learning here, is naturalized*, presented as something everyone implicitly does, without explaining why or how (Biesta, 2016[2013]).

But this naturalization of learning is fundamentally different from what we observe in nearly all traditional modes of social learning. This too was perceptively observed by Mead (1943). In traditional educational systems, she stresses that the focus is on learning through establishing and realizing *continuities* between community practices and the landscape itself. In stark contrast, the approaches to education that Mead explicitly associated with globalization and colonization were predominantly driven by using education as a way of changing one's status, to ascend through social and economic hierarchies: "Here the emphasis is still upon the need to learn – on the one hand, in order to alter status and, on the other, to prevent the loss of status by failure to learn" (p. 635). Such an operation, in effect, distorts the educational gesture, so that now "attention is directed toward finding neophytes rather than finding masters" (p. 635). This redirection of educational attention means that education becomes emphasized not for its internal processes – shared *forms of gathering and study* — but, for what it does *to* people from the outside; what it produces.

This conversion of learning into something to be controlled and reductively delivered upon represents a shift away from *dwelling* and shared-experience (see Ingold, 2000; Ellsworth, 2005; Ross & Mannion, 2012; Stables, 2019) towards disciplining practices of socialization, individualized learning, accreditation, and increasing forms of standardization. This is concurrently a shift away from Land and place-conscious pedagogies. In the remaining sections, I'll explore ways in

which we may better understand schools as places of study and schooling practices as enacted forms of gathering (Ellsworth, 2005; Masschelein, 2019). This, as will be elaborated, is an understanding of school, not as building, or institution, but as the enacting of “a particular space-time-matter arrangement” (Masschelein, Simons, & Hodgson, 2014).

#### 4. School, Scholé & Study

As Masschelein and Simons (2013, 2015, 2019) have drawn attention to for over a decade, there is an alternative meaning to be found in the concept of school, implicit in the Greek root of *scholé* (or free-time). *Scholé* is time *free* from the demands of productivity. Schooling, in this understanding, is expressed in the possibility of suspension: Where the younger generation –often through the guide of teachers but not necessarily or exclusively – can put what they have received from the previous generation *on the table*, suspend it from the demands of everyday life, and reimagine it anew for themselves. This is not leisure time precisely, but *free time*, in the service of a more equitable society: “providing scholé or free time, that is, non-productive time, to those who by their birth and their place in society (their ‘position’) had no rightful claim to it” (Masschelein & Simons, 2015, p. 86).

There is an explicit social justice orientation to this conceptualization that is resonant with Mead’s argument in “Our educational emphases.” Anyone can learn anything: All children, regardless of class, race, or the demands of family, neighborhood, or class, are *offered free time*. This is the opportunity to form oneself, “to give shape to oneself” through “disciplining practices” (forms of gathering and modes of study) that “make attention possible” (see Masschelein, 2011; Masschelein & Simons, 2019; Masschelein, 2019).<sup>xii</sup> Learners, by enacting forms of *scholé*, suspend the knowledge and practices of their community and strive to form their own relationships to it. Alas, at one level, this is simple and inevitable because the child’s future will not be the same as their parents.

Observe that this conception of schooling as an enacted and emergent space-time-matter arrangement helps revitalize the educational significance of both place and study. Through such practices of enacted suspension, *study*, communities expose their thinking-doing to “the test of reality”:

It is the *place* (space/time) to try to put one’s thinking to the test of reality [...] It is the place to *study* and to expose oneself to things, but these things are to be ‘made’ present, and we have to be present, to be attentive . . . to ‘see’ something . . . not in order to see what we think, but to think what we see, to expose our thinking to what is happening and to get through our



own reflections in order to see anew. (Masschelein, 2011, p. 361 [emphasis added])

This internal view on the school allows us to critique the technocratic stranglehold on schooling and education that is central to Mead's early 20<sup>th</sup> century pleas. As I've written previously (Campbell, 2018b), resisting this stranglehold requires nothing short of "a massive societal shift, a great *de-acceleration* of schooling—of no longer thinking of schools as *learning environments* that produce desirable and profitable *learning outcomes* in the fast and certain march toward the future" (p. 328; cf. Simons & Masschelein, 2008). Similarly, in interview, Masschelein and Simons (Masschelein, Simons, & Hodgson, 2014, n.p.) describe this internal vision of the school as a kind of "defense" against the ongoing reduction of learning and curriculum to productive outcome and the school to "learning environment":

No one could truly believe that the school is on the verge of disappearing and that it is being threatened in very real ways. School buildings are still standing, many of them as massive and immemorial as ever. . . . And yet, in today's era of lifelong learning and (digital) learning environments, perhaps the school is under attack more than ever before. One anticipates the school's disappearance on the grounds of its redundancy as a painfully outdated institution. Indeed, besides the recurring charges and accusations levelled against the school (alienating and demotivating young people, corruption and abuse of its power, reproduction of inequality, lack of effectiveness and employability), we must take note of the recent development which states that the school, where learning is bound to a particular time and space, is no longer needed in the digital era of virtual learning environments. The school . . . on that view, is determined by primitive technologies of the past. The accusers thus argue that the school is an outdated learning environment. However, we think that we have to defend the school . . . but against the different strategies and tactics that in line with a long history aim at taming the essential democratic and *commoning* operation of the school. We think the school is not a learning environment, or at least, not a learning environment like any other. [emphasis added]

A defence of the school as enacted in place/time/space is clearly necessary and central to the overlapping projects of place and Land-based education – as well as within digital, online learning environments. This essential "commoning operation of the school" can be understood as the enacting of *pedagogical forms* (Masschelein, 2019) that emerge through *shared practices* happening in jointly

inhabited *places*. Relatedly, Biesta (2017, p. 88, emphasis added) proposes that “[t]he work of the school, and of educational places and spaces more generally, is precisely to offer *time, space and forms* that allow children and students to *practice* grown-up ways of being in and with the world”. For Biesta, *grownupness* means to be in and with the world without being the center of the world. This concept of *grownupness* is helpful in highlighting the existential underpinning of taking an internal *educational* view. The educational aim of *grownupness* is not the question of development, but the question of existing “in and with the world,” which Biesta (2021) observes is decidedly not the same as individualized emancipation, or “just doing what one wants to do” but rather always, an *existence within limits*: “acknowledging that the world, both natural and social, puts limits and limitations on what we can desire from it and can do with it [...]” (p. 3), and most foundationally, the limits of a planet with limited carrying capacity (see Blenkinsop & Fettes, 2021). Analogously, thinking about the school through the purview of *scholé*, *suspension* and *study* requires that we continually endeavour to reconcile ourselves to the world and with all the others we *study* with (including non-human others. See Campbell, 2022).

Here, we should observe that the central conceptual orientation for this conceptualization of School or *scholé*, is notably not learning or teaching at all, but rather *study*. As Claudia Ruitenberg (2017b, p. 3) astutely observes, while evidence of teaching and learning effectiveness must always “point beyond itself” to efficient and productive outcomes, in contrast “study primarily points to itself, in the sense that the result of study is a transformed relationship between the studier and the object of study.” Because of this transformed relationship, educational processes that focus on the ways study can be enacted in *space-time-place* have the potential to be transgressive. Black-studies scholar Fred Moten (in Harney & Moten, 2013, pp. 109-110) develops a related theory of study as a socially enacted “speculative practice,” simultaneously ordinary and subversive:

When I think about the way we use the term “study,” I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it “study” is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. These activities aren't ennobled by the fact that we now say, “oh, if you did these things in a certain way, you could be said to be have been

studying.” To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. What's important is to recognize that that has been the case – because that recognition allows you to access a whole, varied, alternative history of thought.

In other words, study is not imposed from the outside but rather enacted and emergent within the seemingly ordinary events of everyday life. This passage from Moten shows why an *internal* pedagogical perspective on the school is needed: Realising such a “whole, varied, alternative history of thought” is vital, simply in proposing the possibility of meaningful place-based education in the face of the “constraining regularities” of formal schooling; the growing technocratic demands upon all levels of education, and, as will be discussed in the next section: the cultural, intellectual and spiritual poverty of settler culture itself.

My first-year student's mapping and gathering at the *ǰ'ayǰ'əy* village site showcases an example of *study as speculative practice*: something enacted and emergent within the flow of inquiry and resulting in a transformed relationship to what is being studied. In this sense, study necessarily spills over from the classroom and official curriculum, confronting us with the world, asking not only that we learn *this or that*, but that we also do *something* with this learning – and not at all determining in anyway what this something might be in advance (see Chinnery, 2015; Campbell, 2018b; Biesta, 2021).

### 5. Decolonization as Soul-Work

In the remaining sections I will discuss ways in which this approach to thinking through the continuity of learning, teaching, and schooling could contribute to informing decolonizing, place-conscious pedagogy – particularly in the Pacific Northwest and Canadian contexts. We have already observed that forms of gathering and study are always enacted in and through places – notably places with their own stories, peoples, histories and unfolding trajectories (see Ellsworth 2005). To study *in place* involves looking, not only outwardly, but also at our own internal resonances and conflicts with the places we dwell in. A central assertion of this article is that critical pedagogies of place (cf. Bowers, 2008) must confront not only the outward manifestations and legacies of colonization, often proliferated through schooling, but also, the arguably more foundational work of *de-colonizing the self*. This is, in short, the difficult contemplative work involved with reconciling oneself to the intellectual and spiritual poverty of settler culture. Part of this work involves acknowledging what has been rejected or silenced through the school and through education. Lilburn (2017) says, referencing the words of poet Robert Duncan, “[t]he community that is the school of the truly

formed self . . . is very large . . . This is a gathering that includes everyone, especially ‘all-the excluded orders’” (p. 5).

For some scholars and activists, fully acknowledging the ongoing legacies of anti-Indigeneity, land-theft, and displacement, as well as the concordant exploitation of the natural environment, deeply entrenched in settler cultures, necessitates a moving away from *place*-based education to *Land*-based education in research and practice (see Greenwood, 2019, p. 368). This shift is well observed by the 2014 special issue of the journal *Environmental Education Research*, “Land and education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research” (Tuck et al., 2014).

Land education, these editors observe, calls us to more explicitly recognize Indigenous connections to Land as central to environmental education, to recognize “both the role of Indigenous cosmologies in practices of Land education, as well as the necessity of centering historical and current contexts of colonization in education on and in relation to land” (p. 1).<sup>xiii</sup> Calderon (2014), in her contribution to this special issue, accentuates the problem clearly: “[L]and education takes up what place-based education fails to consider: the ways in which place is foundational to settler colonialism” (p. 33). That place is foundational to settler colonialism and functions through settler culture – particularly in obfuscating and erasing the lived realities, knowledge and educational practices of Indigenous peoples – is indeed important to understand and grapple with. What I would further emphasize is that behind the immigrant or settler’s inherently distorted notion and perception of the place/Land they have come to inhabit, is a profound inability for what Lilburn describes as *autochthonicity* – an inability to be in the world as if it were home (see Lilburn & Campbell, 2019). This kind of more foundational, contemplative and interior work is vital for the meaningful possibility of decolonized, place-based education. This is *decolonization as soul work* (Greenwood, 2019).

To be in the world “as if it were home” (Lilburn, 1999; cf. Bai et al., 2009) involves acknowledging the significance of Land; not only rhetorically – as through, for example, performing Land acknowledgements (see the Introduction) – but also existentially and spiritually. As one student from the above-mentioned ǰʷayǰʷəy field-trip remarked after the activity of mapping out the big house’s dimensions: “knowing this, about somewhere I’ve been coming to since I was a little kid, makes be care about this place in a different way.” Friends and colleagues, Cher Hill (pedagogue-scholar) and Rick Bailey (band-councillor and elder of the Katsie Nation) with collaborators McKenzie and Power, have written on the educational importance of settlers cultivating *caring relationships* to/for

Land as part of a remarkable action research project focused on local, creek restoration (Hill et al., 2021):

We have learned that for settlers, caring for the Land is a fundamental and necessary act required to make right relations . . . and that has the potential to begin to heal our fragmented relationships. . . . We believe that supporting non-Indigenous people in developing a practice of caring for the Land and loving it like family, can contribute towards meaningful re/conciliation. (p. 84)

This points to an important observation: that place/Land-conscious pedagogies must ultimately offer everyone (settler, immigrant, and Indigenous) opportunities and practices to cultivate *place-connectedness*. There are, of course, many places to look for inspiration. For instance, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)* can embed significant, local and Land-based understandings, and indeed these *knowledge-practices* need to be respected, understood and revitalized in concrete ways (see Turner & Matthews, 2021). Indeed, practices like cultivating clam-gardens, traditional fishing and food harvesting practices (e.g., fish weirs), cultural/prescribed burning and other traditional land management practices are part of the Land's collective memory and offer important pedagogical openings and insights, not to mention important tools in climate-change adaption and mitigation.<sup>xiv</sup>

Still, before we can fully recognize and understand the conjoined historical-ecological significance of the Land and Waters around us, we must *start with ourselves* through reflecting on the entangled and overlapping histories and ecologies that make up our own personal relationships to the Land. This, again, is the foundational work of positioning. Here, my own voice and stories should, quite rightly, more fully enter the picture:

*Who am I?* Born and raised in East Vancouver – my father's family, Scottish-Ukrainian Prairie settlers to North America from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and my mother's family, immigrants from Southern Italy (Calabria) who came to Canada much more recently in the 1960's. In fact, the neighborhood I grew up and still in fact live in (Grandview Woodland) was dominated by this Southern Italian Diaspora. I could, in material ways, see the lifeworld of my Nonna and Nonno in the built environment of my childhood – the sprawling vegetable gardens, often with backyard rabbits or chickens, the bocce courts in the park I grew up in front of, the Italian grocers, tailors, clubs and cafes on and around Commercial drive. This one level of continuity to the place I was born

exposed me to another huge *discontinuity*: revealed very directly by the strong Indigenous community and presence in this neighborhood.

*If this is your land, where are your stories?* (Chamberlin, 2003; cf. Davidson, 2019). At a basic level, I think this has always been upsetting to me, living here in the Pacific Northwest, how we are often completely dim to the Land we inhabit and living next to mountains, rivers, and places with their names and stories removed, unaware of their broader spiritual, ecological and historical significance. I remember learning as a child, that “*the lions* – the majestic twin peaks visible from most of Vancouver – were *The Sisters (Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíkn)* for the local Squamish people, and symbolised a peace treaty that occurred between the Squamish and the northern Haida peoples after highly respected twin sisters married with Haida twins, part of ending a multi-generational feud between raiding nations from the North and the Coast Salish of Southern B.C and Washington. I remember first reading about this in Pauline Johnson’s (1913) book of stories *Legends of Vancouver*, retold from her friend, Chief Joe Capilano or *Sa7plek (Sahp-luk)*. This continuity was important to me, as I gradually formed a relationship with the legacy of Haida art spread throughout the city, in particular the awe-inspiring collection at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and the Bill Reid sculptures spread throughout important city buildings (e.g., the Vancouver International Airport, Simon Fraser University), and especially, when I later had a chance to travel to Haida Gwaii in my adulthood.<sup>xv</sup>

Learning stories, place-names, and languages is important. But aside from this, there is also the basic work of coming to see the brutal and crushing existential weight of colonialism and the impoverishment of settler culture. This was something I was confronted with early on, growing up near the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and attending a school with a large urban Indigenous population and deeply entrenched forms of institutionalized and systemic racism (Britannia, near Hastings and Commercial). Maybe there is some hope suggested from the fact that we seem to have entered a new stage in Canadian settler-Indigenous relations, represented by the movement and calls for *Truth and Reconciliation*. But, *are we on the road to re/conciliation?*

We must ask, are we even in a place where conversation, let alone reconciliation and forgiveness are even possible? Furthermore, what about alternative responses and possibilities besides the imperative to reconcile and forgive (see Lozano, 2020)? This is a central point in Lilburn’s (2017) *Contemplation and Place*. He says, contrary to mandates such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that we are, as yet, still in a stage of pre-conversation, unable to even dialogue with

this Land and the people who have lived here and taken care of it for millennia, until we reach deep into our own interiority as well as our own Western/immigrant spiritual and contemplative traditions (see Bai et al., 2020). This is ongoing and continuous work for me. As Western Canada is still defined by many through the extraction of resources and wealth, and not by our commitments to contemplation and place, how do you sustain hope that this conversation is even possible? In interview (Lilburn & Campbell, 2019 [emphasis added]), Lilburn spoke to me about this dilemma:

Colonialism has many causes – greed, racism, a rampant will to power. I would add to this list certain epistemological allegiances and the deficits in one's being-in-the-world they foster. European culture's post-Cartesian proclivity for a certain form of knowing, a certain form of what many take to be cognitive rigour, has caused the closing down of the contemplative tradition in European thought. This has meant, because of the pedagogical attachments that mark this seemingly lost tradition, that conversation, attention, interior transformation have undergone a complete loss of philosophical significance. It is not surprising that settler culture does not comprehend where and what home is, since it does not know how to see, to take in, individualities and their relationships. So, yes, people like me are in a state of "pre-conversation" in the matter of reconciliation, hoping to learn, if one is lucky, intellectual humility [...] so that a space may grow in the self where the actual world might appear. Another aspect of the pan-cultural injury, or poverty, in which folks like me live is that, not truly taking in where I am, I cannot be bound to that place, making *autochthonicity* difficult, if not impossible, for me. Placeless even when at home, I cannot occupy the larger self. . . . elongated by the joy and sufficiency of one's place. I float over a land I do not know, in an intellectual tradition offering no sapiential rooting. Anxiety, fret, drifting are to be expected under these conditions.

The question this poses for education is this: Has this pan-cultural poverty been sufficiently acknowledged, not only within our institutions, but more foundationally, within ourselves, to even speak about *truth and reconciliation*, or for that matter *place*-based education? Pedagogically, being receptive and open to place involves confronting the pain and anxiety caused by this placeless drifting; our own discontinuities and disillusionments with Land and place. Lilburn (2017) emphasizes the severity of this detachment: "[P]laceless, our identity is never fully developed and our anger, thus unnamed, is rampant, diffused. Without a relationship to Land and the respect and ethical regard that come from relationship, we are dangerous and savage to Land, as well as bereft within,

nameless, unhoused” (p. 16). Conceptual arguments made in academic journals, no matter how persuasive, will never heal our incompleteness, and thus, without corresponding interiority as well as lived, embodied practice, have no hope of deeply influencing our ethical conduct or ways of being. Without “the pedagogy of the journey” (Lilburn & Campbell, 2019, n. p.), where the authors/teachers personally walk a path of transformation and becoming (e.g., Kelly, 2021) and express honestly and sincerely their struggles and difficulties along the way (e.g., Hill & Macdonald, 2022), intellectual displays do little more than point out the differences between us.

Ultimately, I would argue that though multiple relationships to place need to be explored and cultivated, to truly grapple with the violence of colonization and in order to not replicate this violence (da Silva in Hern et al., 2018, pp. iv-v) place-based pedagogies must always proceed from out of a deep awareness, respect and acknowledgement of Land and the Land-based educational practices of Indigenous peoples. Regardless of how we choose to orient our pedagogical concepts (place, Land, or hopefully both), deep and meaningful contemplative work is necessary, and this involves going beyond stereotypes and generalities. Colonial narratives of the frontier, the moral values of homesteading or reductive and one-dimensional ideas of the “ecological Indian [sic],” all particularly prevalent in my own Western Canadian context,<sup>xvi</sup> function to obscure how the colonial matrix of power manifests itself in our own local contexts (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 10). These kinds of simplistic signifiers are, as Greenwood (2019, p. 366) recounts, an extension of our settler longing for place, and our general inability to realize it: “Our inhabitation is surrounded by an ignorance and a complicity that, in our colonial minds, we resist and only vaguely understand. We want a way of being here that feels justified, but are not sure what that would entail.” Confronting this ignorance, spiritually and existentially, is a central part of Lilburn’s (2017) proposal for a “true exchange” between settler and Indigenous cultures: “I hope a true exchange between feral European mystical thought and Indigenous communities in North America at some point may occur. It seems to me crucial to hope for this exchange. But I believe we are far from it happening” (p. 11).

I find it disheartening that I have come to continually agree with Lilburn that we are far from such an exchange, particularly in educational domains. We are, in a sense, lacking the requisite forms of gathering and study – a necessary result, according to Lilburn, of rejecting our own Western Indigenous and contemplative practices and traditions. As encapsulated by Greenwood (2019, p. 273), Lilburn’s “true exchange” will require “white and other settler cultures recovering, recalibrating, and reinventing our own guiding narratives, along with practices



that reinforce their teaching in daily life.” Here, we must continually ask, *where might we look for such teachings?*

## 6. Conclusions

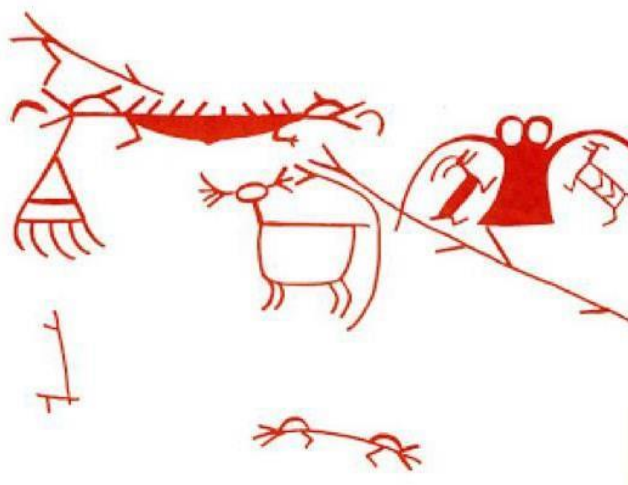
Perhaps the most striking feature of Mead's account of the aims/forms of education and schooling is her reclamation of *intergenerational continuity* that our modern-day conception insists on diminishing. Mead (1943) explains this difference between what was called “primitive education” and the processes often called education that were, in her observations, not educational at all, but focused rather on “conversion, assimilation, successful colonization, and maintaining class-caste lines” (p. 637): “Primitive education was a process by which *continuity was maintained* between parents and children, even if the actual teacher was not a parent but a maternal uncle or a shaman. Modern education includes a heavy emphasis upon the *function of education to create discontinuities . . .*” (p. 637, emphasis added).

Mead (1943) emphasizes that this conversion from pedagogy to assimilation and indoctrination, occurs not inside the pedagogical process itself (teaching a child *to learn*) but in the external functionality (conversion, colonization, standardization) ascribed from outside and generally channeled in/through those buildings called schools. Mead explains this function of colonial education as inherently violent: “Changing people's habits, people's ideas, people's language, people's beliefs, people's emotional allegiances, involves a sort of *deliberate violence* to other people's developed personalities – *a violence not to be found in the whole teacher-child relationship*” (p. 637, emphasis added). I have tried to show that Masschelein and Simons (2013, 2015, 2019) understanding of schooling as a distinctive and particular kind of pedagogical form is compatible with Mead's educational creed. We can observe that, although the enacting of *scholé* may be a suspension from the demands of productivity, it is not a rupture in the continuity of intergenerational learning. Rather, such self-focused suspension rituals are imperative in order for such continuity to occur in the first place.

In this article, I have emphasised that, through Mead's broad view of education as a *continuing* human practice, Indigenous Land-based pedagogical orientations seem central and vital to the educational enterprise, not peripheral and marginal. I have also touched on some of the ways in which dominant educational perspectives are insufficient for the calls of decolonization, highlighting the limits of prevailing notions of the role of school in society as well as the overall neglect of the contemplative and interior aspects of decolonization. Thus, this study can be seen as part of the broader work of disputing and decentering long-accepted boundaries within educational research and thinking (see Smythe et al., 2017) through the “re-existence, resurgence, and insurgence” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018,

p. 6) of Land-based pedagogical practices that have been silenced or muzzled by colonial society and schooling.

Following from these decolonial recognitions, I propose that it is essential for educational research to seriously and meaningfully engage with the learnings and insights of long-standing Indigenous pedagogical practices (e.g., Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Charnley, 2019; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Davidson, 2019; Elsey, 2013; cf. Kelly, 2021). To illustrate, in ongoing research with students and colleagues, I am exploring the pedagogical and curricular implications of several culturally and ecologically significant, Land-based educational practices, specifically, widespread local, Coast Salish and Pacific Northwest practices of cultivating one's *Land*-based knowledge and spirit-powers (*tamanos* in the pan-tribal Chinook wawa language) from important sites within interior watersheds.<sup>xvii</sup> One notable example I could point to here for illustration involves *the assemblage of educational practices* that occur in the sacred Stein River Valley, as practiced by, in particular, the interior Salish peoples, the Nlaka'pamux. This unique and important place, where two great rivers meet, the *Fraser*, or *Sto:lo* in Halqemeylem (Upriver Halkomelem), and *The Thompson*, is recognized throughout the broader Salishan world as an important spiritual site/school; a place of study, integral to how people obtain *worldly positions* in society – in particular, associated with the training/education of “medicine men”, “Indian [sic.] doctors”, *shxwla:m*, in Halkomelem (see Table 1 in Arnett & Morin, 2018, p. 102; cf. Carlson, 2010, p. 71). (See, the extensive ethnographic account in York, Daly, & Arnett, 1993). As recounted by elder Louis Phillips (in York et al., 1993, xvi): “K'ek'awzik is over here, across the river, behind these hills. Can't see it from here. Powerful place. It's our school.”<sup>xviii</sup>



**Fig 2.** Klu'bist, 'Nlaka'pamux pictographs, Stein River Valley. Adapted from York, Daly, & Arnett (1993, p. 156).

Unfortunately, I will not be able to elaborate at all fully on these rich, Land-based pedagogical practices. Suffice it to mention here that a whole new perspective on these practices and their relationship to colonization (and thus the prospect/promise of *decolonization*) is unveiled if we consider these pedagogical forms not as essentialized cultural practices from *time immemorial* – another 'simplistic signifier' so often reductively imposed upon Indigenous cultures – but rather as *historically contingent acts* (Arnett & Morin, 2018); critical educational interventions used to preserve and communicate cultural teachings and Land-based knowledge in anticipation of the arrival of European settlers to the West Coast of North America.<sup>xix</sup> Relatedly, Carlson (2010)<sup>xx</sup>, drawing from decades of historical and ethnographic study, showcases in great complexity how nearby on the Lower Fraser River, the Stó:lō's responses to colonialism were similarly "rooted in their pre-colonial experiences and customs" (p. i), drawing from their deep-rooted Land-based traditions and practices (see pp. 71-74). The reality is that Indigenous peoples have always used Land-based educational practices to resist and disrupt colonization! For more contemporary illustration, Sara and Robert Davidson's *Potlatch as Pedagogy* (2018) beautifully and succinctly showcases how the re-learning of traditional cultural practices and ceremonies (traditional pole-raising ceremonies, potlatches and other ceremonies), starting in 1968 and following the lifting of *The Potlatch Ban* (in 1951), was ultimately a decolonising process of intergenerational education and healing for the Haida community of Old Masset.

Quite obviously, much educational practice and research has failed to take Mead's (1943) proposal seriously or even basically recognize the importance of Land-based educational practices. It would be misguided and ignorant not to associate this obdurate lack of attention with the more general and comprehensive denial of Indigenous educational systems, vital to the process and aims of colonization (Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Simpson, 2014; Battiste, 2017). Clearly, the school Phillips speaks of and its accompanying practices (praying, fasting, collective dreaming, rock writing and reading, learning from the plants and animals) is not at all resonant with the kind of genocidal indoctrination and abuse that Canadian Indigenous peoples were forced to endure in the infamous residential school system (see Barman, 2012; cf. Miller, 2017; Milloy, 1999). Barman (2020) notes specifically in the B.C. context, how these schools, though claiming to educate students to assimilate into mainstream white society, in reality "succeeded only in marginalizing them, destroying their cultures and languages, damaging their family relationships, and undermining their confidence" (p. 394).<sup>xxi</sup> Moreover, some would probably object to Phillips and Annie York's referral to these

important Land-based sites as types of school in the first place. However, if school is, to follow a morphological approach, primarily the enacting of a type of space-time-matter arrangement, it is always connected to and happening in significant places – *places embedded in Land*. Thus, such significant environmental/cultural sites, without having walls or administration, are, I would maintain, a kind of school in which forms of *study* are enacted. However, unlike residential schools (Barman, 2012; Milloy, 1999; Miller, 2017), context here is not violently erased, discontinued, but rather enforced, re-interpreted, re-cognized, continued.

If there is a central message emanating from *this study* it's simply in reasserting that the prospect of decolonized place-based education is not in any way ensured just because it has been minimally acknowledged in recent years. At best, we are in a stage of pre-conversation, as Lilburn reminds us, just beginning to put our thinking-doing to the test of reality.

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<sup>i</sup> My sincere thanks to Michael Ling for bringing this concise passage to my attention, along with so many other ideas that inform this article.

<sup>ii</sup> A conviction, which can be connected with a particular history or orientation amongst progressive educationalists, captured well by Ranciere's assertion of the essential "equality of intelligences" (Ranciere, 1991).

<sup>iii</sup> We can observe similar values at the intersection of anthropology and education throughout Tim Ingold's book (2017) *Anthropology and/as Education* and his proposal that the telos of anthropology is ultimately educational. See also, Ingold & Campbell (2018).

<sup>iv</sup> As reminded to me by a thoughtful anonymous peer-reviewer: it is important to observe that, since Mead posed these questions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large body of research has articulated and described this fundamental discontinuity of school from everyday life, particularly

for Indigenous and non-western, marginalized students. See Ogbu's (1982) foundational article "Cultural discontinuities & schooling" in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, defining three types of discontinuities between the cultures of school and the life of marginalized students in the U.S. See also Bronkhorst & Akkerman (2016); Tateo (2015); and Torres (2017).

<sup>v</sup> In this text I am specifically interested in the broader implications and resonances of the educational questions Mead poses and make no claims or allegiances to Mead's broader theories of culture. That is, I proceed as an educationalist, not a Mead scholar. See further McDermott's (2001) "A century of Margaret Mead."

<sup>vi</sup> I capitalize Land throughout this article as a rhetorical means of foregrounding Indigenous relationships to Land, especially in terms of addressing the critical blind spots of place-based education.

<sup>vii</sup> On this important task, see Deanna Reder's opening "Position" in *Learn Teach Challenge* (Reder & Morra, 2016, pp. 7-8), in which Deanna, masterfully, in a span of a few paragraphs, positions herself to the west coast of British Columbia, where she has lived most of her life as a Metis-Cree person whose family heritage stems from Saskatchewan; seeking guidance and drawing from the practices of Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgements. I've been fortunate to learn from several Indigenous mentors/teachers/colleagues such as Deanna, whom I have known since I was a teenager. For more of the complexity of positioning showcased in action, see Reder's (2022) *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina*.

<sup>viii</sup> Something repeatedly emphasised to me by colleague Carolyn Roberts (Squamish Nation).

<sup>ix</sup> Smith (2007), for instance, ends his article by reflecting: ". . . Bob Stevenson's less than sanguine assessment about the incompatibility of environmental education and the structural and conceptual constraints of public education seems largely justified. Not much revolutionary pedagogy is happening anywhere in the United States or elsewhere. But this does not mean that such pedagogy cannot happen at all . . . If some can do this under the troubling conditions that now hold sway in contemporary schools, more could. And more will" (p. 205).

<sup>x</sup> As Canadian artist-philosopher Erin Manning (2016) has articulated, "what if knowledge were not assumed to have a form already" (p. 2) . . . "outside of its enactment inside unfolding events?" (Manning, 2016, p. 38).

<sup>xi</sup> This perspective is explained well by Biesta's (2016[2013]) critique on *learnification*; cf. Campbell (2018a).

<sup>xii</sup> The phrases in quotations here refer not to direct quotes but rather colloquial expressions that are used throughout this work of Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, including the beforementioned phrase "on the table".

<sup>xiii</sup> See "Introduction to Land-based Education" from the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education, in which Dene scholar Glen (2020) explains the Land-based educational program happening on Dene territory near Yellowknife NWT. Accessed (Nov, 2021): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F6hg8uwZuQ>

<sup>xiv</sup> For instance, *Stitsma* (Maplewood Flats in North Vancouver) – where there are still remnants of an impressive 1300-year-old fish weir – has been an important educational site for my students and me to learn about TEK in our own local setting. See further the important educational and ecological work of the *Hakai Institute*: <https://hakai.org/>

<sup>xv</sup> I follow the example of Dr. Rudy Reimer (Squamish archeologist), by starting all my classes at SFU by meeting next to (and often inside) the famous *Black & Red Canoe*, one of two replicas of a full size Haida sea-canoe that Bill Reid created. This often leads students to reflect on the other Bill Reid sculptures and other Haida sculptures throughout Simon Fraser University and the reasons for this Haida cultural presence in Coast Salish territory more generally. We then take a short walk to look across the inlet (*Tsleil-wat*, home of the Tsleil-Waututh nation), to *The Sisters*, as a way to start asking questions about what these *presences* say about the Land we are on.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Of the pernicious representations of Indigeneity today, none is more equivocal than the trope of ‘the Ecological Indian.’ Borne from nineteenth-century romantic primitivism, this White construction (Bird 1996) has become a prevalent signifier in the environmental realm, an ideal to which Canadians and others look today for a critique of Western institutions (Friedel, 2011, p. 534).”

<sup>xvii</sup> See the important, recent PhD. dissertation, “Embodying Indigenous Coast Salish education: Travelling with Xé:ls the sister, mapping Katzie/q’icáy’ stories and pedagogies” (Charnley, 2019); cf. Arnett & Morin (2018).

<sup>xviii</sup> Philip (as cited in York, Daly, & Arnett, 1993) explains further this school, its course/curriculum, as well as its educational aims, recounting many themes of Land-based education that we’ve touched on throughout: “*K’ek’awzik* is where you graduate from... Our young people were sent up there to *K’ek’awzik* for ten days. No food no water. If they stuck it out, they come out, graduated. [*A making public; establishing societal continuity.*] The mountain, that place talks to you. Some it doesn’t talk to. Some are not successful. Sometimes it’s like that place doesn’t want to teach anybody. [*Learning and teaching are messy and indeterminate.*] It hides away in rain and snow and fog. Even in summer time. That Wendy Wickwire [a well-known BC anthropologist, see Wickwire, 2019] and her husband, they wanted to take youngsters – 14 or 18 year old in there, as a learning thing. That place didn’t want them. Either it wasn’t ready for them, or they weren’t ready for it. You were looking for those footprints, in the rocks. It’s the same. Either you’re ready to see them, or they just don’t want to be seen now, not today. Sometimes they are ready to be seen, sometimes not.

“When you go in any time to train, and you stay ten days, you listen to what nature says to you. You listen and learn and you can come out strong and protected. That’s real Indian education. Kids today go to school. They don’t know anything about listening to the land. Wherever you go in the mountains, the plants and herbs tell you what they are good for. You tell them what you need to know. Talk to each other. Every tree in that place has something to teach. [*Learning from land and the more-than-human*] You stay and learn all there is to learn in that place. Next time you go somewhere else and talk to all the plants in that place. You get knowledge and grow strong. *K’ek’awzik* is the place our young people went to learn . . . Did they write their learning on the rocks? [*Establishing educational/intergenerational continuity.*] Maybe some did, in some of the places. [*Learning cannot be determined or ensured.*] Lots of writings in this country [*A broad sense of literacy and writing!*].

“Some come to me now and want to be Indian doctors. You want to be an Indian doctor? They want answers right away. I laugh at them. Tell them to go out and sit on the mountain . . . For training to be an Indian doctor, it takes close to four years of going out and staying up in there. You go to a place and stay without food and water. You build your sweathouse there and you go in and spend the night. You learn there too. You can sing, you pray in the sweathouse. In the morning you put on your clothes and travel around that place and listen to the plants and the living things (Do this for about ten days). [*Shared practices in environments/places of local significance.*]

“The next time you do this, you go five or six miles further. Do it again and learn all there is to learn at that place. [*Establishing a course/curriculum.*] You stop one time on top of *K’ek’awzik*, after that on *M’kip* and other places. It’s powerful too. Then you move up the valley, five or six miles maybe, all the way up to Cottonwood, learning the power of each creek and the peaks in the area. After about four years you are trained. You have your powers [referring to land-based powers, *tamanos* in chinook *wawa*]. You tap into the power of the river and all the creeks and mountains. When you come back you’ve learned a lot of what the land can teach you.”

<sup>xix</sup> Arnett (2016) explains this hypothesis that Salishan rock art was utilised as a strategic intervention against the encroachments of colonization: “Oral traditions state that *Nlaka’pamux* knew of European presence prior to face to face contact and took active measures to mitigate the

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impact using culturally prescribed means —speeches, dances and rock painting which occurred at 50 or so locations throughout the territory along travel corridors as early as the 16th century and into the 20th century. In all its phases, Nlaka'pamux rock painting is a pro-active historically contingent act of intervention with protection, demographic revitalization and intergenerational memory in mind" (p. xvi).

<sup>xx</sup> My thanks to Professor Mark Fettes (SFU) for bringing this important book to my attention.

<sup>xxi</sup> In her (2012) article, "Schooled for Inequality", republished and revised in *On the Cusp of Contact* (2020, p. 394), Barman recounts that four themes of these schools stand out: 1) the treatment of all Indigenous children as the same, regardless of culture or background; 2) the fact that Indigenous children "spent far less time in the classroom" (p. 394) than non-Indigenous children, instead doing manual and menial labour "required to keep the schools running"; 3) the focus on Christian indoctrination over having qualified or skilled teachers, and finally; 4) the systemic underfunding of these schools.