

VANCOUVER REGGIO ASSOCIATION

LEARNING JOURNEY GRANTS

INSPIRED BY & IN MEMORY OF
SUSAN FRASER



SHARING CIRCLE

Thursday, May 23rd, 2019
Burnaby Central Secondary School

2019 Learning Journey Grant Recipients

Exploring Art Studio in Our Classroom

Kiwassa Variety Club Daycare, Vancouver, Vancouver

Aya Harada

The Art Studio accepts children's difference and humans are all unique. Children can represent their ideas with multiple materials. Now, every day is a journey.

Investigate Border Crossings

School Districts 38 (Richmond), 39 (Vancouver) & 41 (Burnaby)

Janice Novakowski

Inspired by the Border Crossings exhibit at the Loris Malaguzzi Centre in Reggio Emilia, Italy, groups of elementary teachers from the three school districts began an inquiry looking at the intersection between digital and analog worlds.

Supporting Dispositions for Documentation with 100 Languages

Terra Nova Nature School, Richmond

Emily Vera and Katie Dawson

Educators dived into the '100 Languages', languages both familiar and unfamiliar, in order to support children's research using diverse 'languages'.

Story Workshop in the Grade One Classroom

Gordon Elementary School, Vancouver

Sarah Fisher and Jamie Sinclair

We explored how Story Workshop can support young children's storytelling, writing and life skills dispositions by using anchor books and loose parts.

Building Curriculum from an Indigenous Story: Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives in Early Learning Environment

Natsuko Motegi in collaboration with Gabi Kirton

How to respond to the call of 'Reconciliation' by Early Childhood Educators? Participants explored an Indigenous story with children to learn with them rather than handing down information of Indigenous cultures and history.

Building Connections to Our Place, Community and Curriculum

Sperling Elementary School, Burnaby

Sarah and Rachel Montague

Our focus has been to provide authentic learning experiences connected to nature in order to develop a deeper connection to our place - the Sperling Forest - and each other as a community.

Welcome

Aboriginal Acknowledgement

6:50 PM - 7:40 PM

Sharing Circle

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Building Curriculum from an Indigenous Story:
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Building Connections to Our Place, Community and Curriculum
Sperling Elementary School, Burnaby

7:40 PM - 8:00PM

Connecting Dialogues and Gallery Walk

Thank you!

Art Studio in our classroom

~ Every day is a journey ~

Kiwassa Variety Club Daycare, May 2019



Last April, the whole team was able to attend the Professional Study Days at Hilltop Children's Center in Seattle. What inspired us the most was the art space which they called their "Community Studio". Art materials were made easily accessible to the children, and many of the children's art work was displayed with care and respect. Therefore, our team came up with the idea of creating an "art studio" in our own classroom.

Where to start?

The first meeting for this project was held on Nov.29th 2018. We sat down and discussed the benefits of having an art studio for our children. We all agreed to the opinions which Art is a tool of communication; Art has no barriers. This studio accepts children in difference and humans are all unique. In the end, we set the goal of making a place for them to realize who they are and for them to bond and collaborate with others. The next day, we discussed the plan with our children.

What were the challenges we faced?

Our first challenge was deciding where the art studio should be in the room and how much space to use for it. To have an art studio, we needed to change our whole set up, including the lunch tables, reading corner, sandbox and loft play house. Before making these massive changes, two of our team members went to Brentwood Preschool and Frog Hollow Satellite Daycare to observe the art studio that they have. They gave us advice and encouragement. After some deep considerations and many discussions, we finally started to move some

furniture around. However, this change made some children feel frustrated and insecure. Therefore, we decided to change our room very slowly. We discussed the change with the children at circle time every time we made a new change.



What did we learn through this journey?

This project required a lot of collaboration with both our staff members and our children. During this journey, we reflected on our philosophy and values constantly. It allowed us to rethink our teaching and learning process. We were so used to setting up art or to planning activities for children, that some of us got lost and didn't know what to do in the creative space. It took time for both children and teachers to get used to the new environment. The children were confused at the first; however, they gradually got used to the studio and started to explore more. They comfortably created their own art work after a couple of months. We started to notice some details of how the children were communicating their thoughts as they drew, painted, and use their bodies. Our art studio has become a place where children can represent their ideas with multiple materials. Now, every day is a journey.



Border Crossings

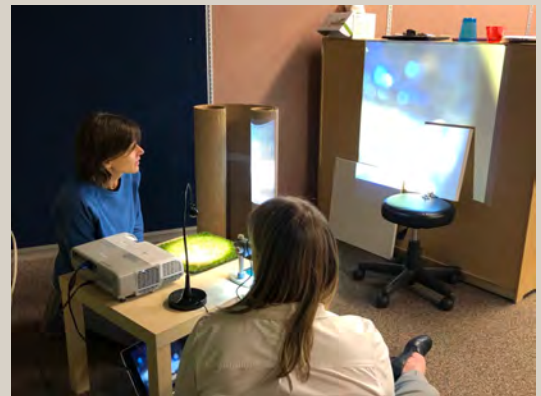
School Districts 38, 39 & 41



Border Crossings

Inspired by the Border Crossings exhibit at the Loris Malaguzzi Centre in Reggio Emilia, Italy, groups of elementary teachers from the Burnaby, Richmond and Vancouver school districts began an inquiry looking at the intersection between digital and analog worlds. This interdisciplinary project examines how teachers and students use digital microscopes to look closely at the world around them and create digital landscapes with the goal of students creating meaning of new media and technologies through making connections to the natural world.

Our two cross-district networking sessions were held at Champlain Heights Elementary in Vancouver on January 31 and April 3 2019.



#VRAbordercrossings

Border Crossings

2018-2019



Some of the questions explored during the project:

What does the intersection of encounters with living things and digital technology reveal?

What connections are made as we cross borders between science, mathematics, language, social studies and applied design and technology?

How might the big ideas of story, place and identity be considered by working with natural materials in new innovative ways?

How does creating new digital landscapes support connections to community, culture and place?

How might this project encourage a digital poetic - a way to make meaning, create metaphors and imaginings, and communicate and exchange knowledge, ideas and stories?

Words teachers highlighted in their reflections on this project:

**connections engagement agency
language colour thinking listening
collaborating communication focus
encounters looking closely curiosity
deepening understanding surprises**

Some highlights from reflections on this project:

Teacher: "noticing what children are noticing"

Student: "discovering a whole world that you didn't even know existed"

#VRAbordercrossings

SUPPORTING DISPOSITIONS FOR DOCUMENTATION WITH 100 LANGUAGES

TERRA NOVA NATURE SCHOOL

"What is our relationship to this place? How do the seasons, the changing landscapes, and our interactions with the more-than-human, impact our teaching of young children?" This was the driving question we considered in the course of our Learning Journey grant.

Each of our six members explored this question by committing to spending one hour a month for six months in Terra Nova Rural Park - the location of our licensed outdoor preschool program. The manner of the research, however - the exploration itself - was left unspecified. Our belief is that educators themselves need the time and freedom to dive into the '100 Languages', languages both familiar and unfamiliar, in order to support children's research using diverse 'languages'.

Despite the very open invitation, we held an underlying assumption that as adult educators we would rely on research that would take the form of documentation methods familiar to us from Reggio Emilia: written notes and visual images, and we assumed these would be objective, perhaps even scientific, in style. Wow! Were we ever wrong!

Our staff members engaged in the following methods of research: running; mapping; note-taking; writing stories; writing poetry; sitting, standing, climbing, falling, and crouching in mud, water and trees; sketching; reading; researching; listening; observing; photographing; gathering; collaging; mask-making; musing.

Every month we shared with one another our experiences of 'just being' in the park, and our various forms of collected information. As the year unfolded, we noticed that our individual explorations were leading us in unforeseen directions:

- we each had 'false' starts: explorations, ideas, or projects that started but didn't feel sufficiently engaging to continue;
- a developing confidence in our own path of exploration, and excitement about seeing the work of others;
- incorporating insights and feedback from our monthly meeting into our next month's work;
- and, most poignantly, a vulnerability with one another that has strengthened our team.

This is not to say that the work was easy. Each of us wrestled with challenges of time, commitment and energy. Sometimes it was only our accountability to one another, and to the funding we had received for the project, that kept us engaged.



Many ‘a-ha’ moments emerged from nurturing this culture of inquiry: metacognitive insights that will lead us to many more months of research regarding our individual and collective teaching practices. For example, we recognized that during both our research and our sharing, we often felt anxious and uncomfortable, just as the children do while out in the cold rain, or when faced with a task that is daunting (using sharpie pens that you cannot erase!) We wonder how to live with the ‘knowing and familiarity’ of a place, one another, and our teaching practice, yet still maintain the excitement of wonder and newness we all experienced in the first years of working outdoors? We better appreciate one another’s values, dispositions and strengths. It became so apparent that the true foundation of this work is relational.

None of us wanted the project to end - we didn’t feel we had even completed the seasons yet! We are keen to continue mapping, making, thinking. We can, however, begin to overcome our collective and paralyzing fear of documentation. Like any artistic practice, documentation requires specific tools, habits, and attitudes. By incorporating our lived and shared insights from the learning journey - allowing time, multiple lenses, vulnerability, and reflective thinking - to the work of documentation, we can move forward with authentically documenting our experiences of teaching in this place alongside children.

Just as we were unsure of the format our final presentation would take, we understand more clearly that documentation cannot be conceived of as a final product. The product is the result of the journey, and our journey has just begun.

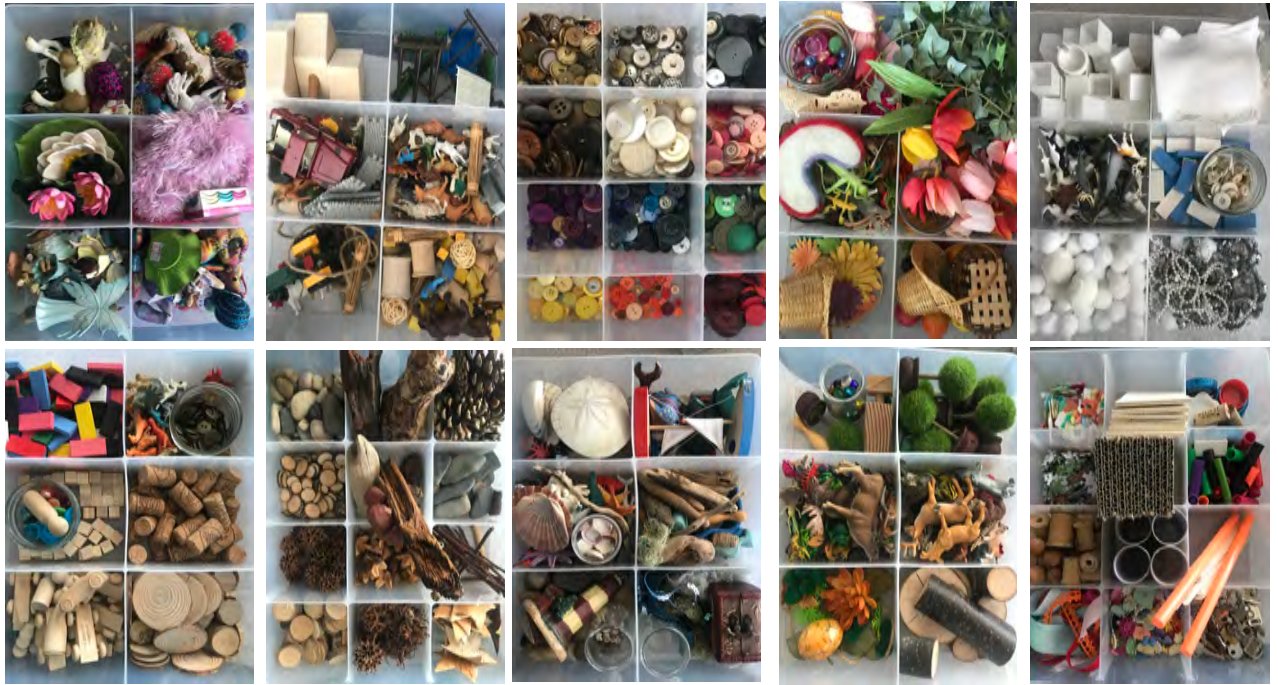
With much gratitude to Shantelle Allard, Tricia Booker, Misuzu Chiu, and Heidi Ziegler, for being willing to play along, By Emily Vera & Kate Dawson

Story Workshop in the Grade 1 Classroom

Anchor Books



Loose Parts



Creating

"I like doing lots of things like making cool stories and getting to write and draw, it's fun" – Taylor

"I like to build stories with my hands" - Luke

"It's fun to make stories with friends, they help make my story better" – Maeve

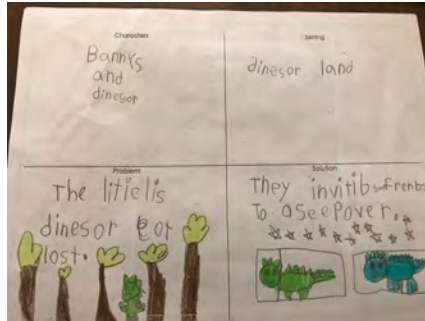
"because you already have a picture it helps you write." – Ryan

"Well you make stories with different materials, it helps you to write stories because it gives your brain ideas." - William



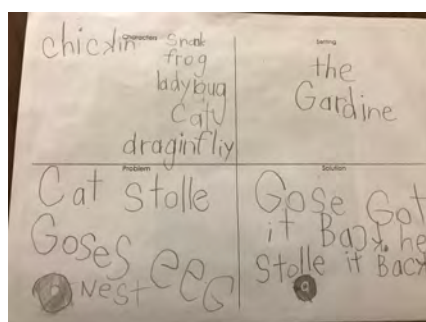
Story Workshop Writing Process in Grade 1

The First Day the Dinosaurs and the Bunnies Raced By Margo



One beautiful sunny morning the dinosaurs wanted to race with the bunnies. So they decided to race in the forest. "One...two...three GO!" said the dinosaur and they went. But when they raced the smallest dinosaur got lost and they went to look for him, and the biggest dinosaur found the smallest dinosaur. But the dinosaur was stuck. So they dinosaurs had a good idea, they went to get scissors but the scissors didn't work. All the dinosaurs pulled and pulled and finally got the dinosaur out. The dinosaur was really happy and they invited their friends.

The Garden By Kate



Once there was a garden. One night in the garden there was 1 chicken, 1 cat, 1 snake, 1 frog, 1 lady bug, 1 dragon fly. The cat stole the chickens egg and chicken stole it back,



I present information clearly and in an organized way

I get ideas when I play. My ideas are fun for me and make me happy



I can celebrate my efforts and accomplishment

Building Curriculum from an Indigenous Story: Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives in Early Learning Environment

Natsuko Motegi in collaboration with Gabi Kirton

“Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practice reconciliation in our everyday lives... To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships (Truth and Reconciliation: Calls to Action, 2015, P.11).”

How can we respond to the Calls as early childhood educators?

Can we explore possibilities collaboratively in a community?

Our learning community included early childhood educators, administrator, post-secondary instructors, kindergarten teacher, and a strong start facilitator with diverse experiences. Karen Hazelman, the Musqueam elder, supported the journey in all sessions. Though we have different experiences and background, many of us shared the similar challenges and a sense of commitment.

“I don’t want to take something from Indigenous cultures and turn it into curriculum materials.”

“I want to honour Indigenous peoples/ cultures properly, not messing it up.”

“I want to honour our own cultures and languages as well.”

Karen encouraged us with her words, **“Whatever you do is a start. It comes down to how you feel inside. Your own intention is important.”**

The participants were to explore an Indigenous story with children to learn with them rather than handing down information of Indigenous cultures and history. The pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi, 2013) was the key. We encouraged them to take time with the story through one hundred languages (Malaguzzi, 2013); a book, drawing, acting, storytelling, etc.... We hoped revisiting the story over and over would allow the children and educators to discover layers of meanings in Indigenous stories as MacCue (2010) suggests, “Non-Aboriginal people often recorded First Nations legends as fairy tales or myths, adding convenient morals to sum up the story. However, the stories of Elders and accomplished storytellers often have no such ready explanation. The listener was expected to take time to think about the story and its meanings.”

The participants brought back their experiences of Indigenous story exploration with the children and shared;

“Through exploring the Raven story with children, it was amazing to witness how children are so connected to the nature through everyday life.”

“By approaching Indigenous culture in the form of a picture book and with the intention to share this learning experience with the children, I felt that exploring Indigenous cultures was more familiar and approachable than I had expected.”

For the third session, we had a field trip to Bill Reid Gallery in downtown to explore stories and layers of meanings behind Indigenous artworks.

“The environment that Bill Reid Gallery provided for us reflected the practice of Reggio Emilia, one hundred languages.”

“I was surprised to know that the jewelry (bracelets with Indigenous designs) was made because tattoos were banned (by missionaries).”

“The story of Marpole Preschool exploration on Indigenous sculptures at Vancouver Airport made me think it is possible to explore Indigenous cultures in the program.”

Our learning and discussion included the impact of colonialism, the diverse cultures among Indigenous communities, complex stories behind the artworks, and putting the ideas into practice with the children.



We shared our reflection on our learning in the last session. While many people felt positive about their attempt to incorporate Indigenous perspectives through a story, some people still felt unsure;

“I have been challenged. What is sacred and not to be shared, and what is not sacred and OK to be shared? What is appropriate and what is not? Do we need to get the permission from elders each time we introduce a new story?”

“I am less fearful now, but still have apprehension to try.”

Karen the elder continued to support us with the words, **“Anything in the book is OK to share. Those stories are passed on from generation to generation.”**

By learning about colonial history and Indigenous cultures, some of us became more aware of our own roots and cultural back grounds.

“As an immigrant to Canada, you leave your culture behind in an attempt to belong here. You leave who you are behind. In my centre, I acknowledge each child, and represent each cultural connection. I want to bring stories to honour who they are.”

Most importantly, many people felt an Indigenous story was a possible entry point for early childhood educators to explore Indigenous cultures with children through responsive curriculum and reflective practice.

“I started this journey with curiosity and also anger toward the colonial history. Now I feel hopeful. I want to find more of Indigenous cultures. I explored the story of *How Raven Stole the Sun* with the children, and feel more comfortable in sharing Indigenous stories.”

“I realized that the curriculum is not like ‘one size fits all.’ There is not one template for learning. I felt more empowered and confident.”



Gabi Kirton and I initiated the Learning Community for early childhood educators to reflect on possibilities of responding to the Calls to Action from Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Though many people felt hesitation and even fear toward incorporating Indigenous cultures and worldviews

initially, they started to feel, **“more comfortable in trying”** as we exchanged ideas in our learning community and explored an Indigenous story with the children. Gabi reflects on our learning experience on her walk with her husband, **“Someone had cut two trees down where there used to be a cluster of five. My husband pointed out that the remaining three would be more susceptible to damage. These trees are much like us here. We have come together to learn, to reflect, to care, and to see what changes we can bring forth in our practice to better our communities. Together we are stronger.”** The knowledge we gain from our conversation and the meanings we co-constructed as a learning community supported us in our practice. More importantly, the relationships that had grown through dialogue with the fellow educators and encouragement that Karen provided in our every sincere effort eased our anxiety and moved us forward. **“Together we are stronger.”**

Reference

- Malaguzzi, L. (2012) No way. The hundred is there. In Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (Eds.) *The one hundred languages of children: the Reggio Emilia experience in transformation* (3rd ed.) (pp.2-3). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- McCue, H. et al. (2010) *The learning circle: classroom activities on First Nations in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1316530132377/1535460393645> on January 8th, 2018.
- Rinaldi, C. (2012) The pedagogy of listening: the listening perspective from Reggio Emilia. In Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (Eds.) *The one hundred languages of children: the Reggio Emilia experience in transformation* (3rd ed.) (pp.233-246). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
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Building Connections To Our Place, Community And Curriculum

This year our focus has been to provide authentic learning experiences connected to nature in order to develop a deeper connection to our place - the Sperling Forest - and each other as a community.

We wondered...

Digital Microscope

iPads to capture important spaces

how could we weave technology into the natural experience in an authentic and meaningful way?

Multiple light sources - reflection, shadow, growth

audio and video recordings for documentation and discussion

How might we invite others to connect with the natural environment?

Forest bins, presenting at Pro-D or Staff Meetings, hallway invitations to play and engage, open invitations for mixed-age groups to join in forest exploration

Throughout the learning journey the outdoor environment continued to be a rich source of information and inspiration. What surprised us was how interests from the natural environment began to appear indoors. Children re-lived experiences during Story Workshop, Exploration and Math Investigations.

Next Steps...how might we nurture the outdoor experience indoors?



SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE VRA LEARNING JOURNEY GRANTS COMMITTEE

Angela Meredith
Gyda Chud
Michelle de Salaberry
Roni Cahen
Shaun Olson
Tamara Cosic

