

## ECED 565: Discussion posts & Visual journal

### WEEK 1



Hello everyone! It's nice to meet you ~ I'm sorry for the super late post, work and life has gotten in the way and I'm trying to get back on track :) Here's my visual journal & notes for Week 1. This was also the week when I invited a local studio to come in and teach the educators how to play with clay. After our teachers, told us a few tips and tricks on how to mold the clay, I noticed that most of the teachers started to make fairly similar shapes with their clay. However, later on, some of their creations really started to take shape. We all were meant to make mugs, but some made more than one mug, some had different handles, sizes, etc. Each creation really showed each educators' personality.

*Calderon (2023) 'Teachers and Clay'. Photograph*

After reading the articles for this week, the common theme of educators not having enough information or understanding of having art in education is wild. Or the way that educators usually associate/assume art = drawing. In my visual journal, a quote from Greene's article stood out for me. "The idea of interpretations seems to me to be crucial, that and the realization of that 'reality' means interpreted experience" (Green, 1984). As an educator, I'm guilty of asking children while they engage themselves into an art project and I ask them a question "What is that?" or "What are you making?". The main focus of art exploration and aesthetic education is the process rather than the final product. This approach emphasizes the journey of creating art, the experimentation, and the exploration of different techniques and mediums. It encourages artists to embrace the unknown, to be open to unexpected outcomes, and to learn from both successes and failures. By shifting the focus from the end result to the process itself, artists are able to develop their creativity, hone their skills, and cultivate a deeper understanding of their craft. In this week's visual journal, from what I've gathered during the class was that we were supposed to make a spill and create something out of it. **"Different materials evoke different ways of thinking" (as cited by Pente, 2018 from Kind, 2005).** As I focused on the process of how I should start, it reminded me of this children's book called 'It looked like Spilt Milk' by Charles G. Shaw. It's a picture book where it shows different images of animals or objects but it's not, "...it's just spilt milk." I carefully took my coffee and carefully created a small puddle on my paper. I tried to almost control the spill but as a liquid without a solid container, it went everywhere. After cleaning it up, my spill kind of looked like a sea monster -- which is what I've ended up creating. Focusing on the process, I was able to experiment, take risks, and have fun.

## References:

**Greene, M. (1984).** The art of being present: Education for aesthetic encounter. *Journal of Education*, 166(2), 123-135.

**Pente, P. (2018).** Child development in art. What do you need to know? In K. Grauer, R. Irwin & M. Emme (Eds.) *StARTing with* (4<sup>th</sup>) (pp.26-35). CSEA.

## WEEK 2: Lines, Marks, and Traces



Looking at the title of this week's topic: 'Lines, Marks, and Traces' I decided to incorporate different colored lines all over my page which is similar with what I did with the art piece done in class with the use of popsicle sticks, a paper towel roll, and my finger (image on Padlet). This week we also discussed the idea of using strings/wires in order to create an art piece and tell a story through that have inspired me to create pieces that I wouldn't normally create (image on Padlet).

In Marme-Thompson's article 'Listening for stories: Childhood studies and art education', she mentions how "...art education maintains a problematic relationship with childhood and our own image of the child" (2017, p.9). That goes back to the history of early childhood education, with early childhood philosophers and theories continuously asking "What is your image of the child?" As seen in my visual journal, there are outside influences to our own image of the child such as historical, cultural, political and societal. As an educator, my image of the child is always changing and evolving. **To me**, a child is like a river. A river that changes and flows with the tide and current. It has its path laid out for it, however, it does not always follow it and can change it from time to time. The river erodes the soil, goes over the rocks (big and small), and is filled with life and energy. "Children must be seen actively involved in the construction of their own social lives, the lives around them and of the societies in which they live" (as cited from James & Prout, 1990/1997 by Marme-Thompson, 2017). This also relates to our role as educators.

Chung Kwang Dae's research on 'Cultivating a Pedagogy of Listening in Early Childhood' examines the pedagogical engagement of ECEs in an artmaking space (2022). The "Pedagogy of Listening" was highlighted in this article, to show that this doesn't only mean to physically listen to the children, but also listening to their thoughts, actions, and being immersed to the whole experience. Sometimes it really is hard for educators to just wait and truly listen to the children. Today, I was observing one of our preschool classes. Some decided to paint on paper and others decided to paint leaves, rocks, and the pinecones they'd found earlier that day. The educator sitting with them almost felt like she was pelting the children with open-ended questions. "What is that? What colour are you going to use next? Why did you choose this item? How many objects would you like to

paint on? Why are you painting like this?" I was even exhausted by the non-stop questioning. I know my coworker meant well, and she might've been just genuinely curious and interested in what the children were doing. Educators often desire to know what children are making or what they have drawn, and this is common in the field, however, as Chung (2022) mentions "...questions should aim to create a space for lingering and for allowing children to show their ideas in their own ways of expressing, understanding, and living" (as cited from Kind, 2018). This pedagogy of listening recognizes the importance of understanding and valuing the unique perspectives and voices of children. By actively engaging in listening, educators create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where children feel heard and valued. This approach also acknowledges the significance of empathy and connection in the learning process, as it fosters a sense of belonging and encourages open dialogue between educators and students.

### **WEEK 3**

With different materials, children have the ability to open up unique and divergent learning pathways in young children (Penfold, L., 2019). For my other class, I had to create an activity for children at my center, and I decided to visit one of the toddler classes and introduce the material of clay. Since it went with this week's readings, I decided to expand on my learnings and observations to connect it with the topic of materials. Based on our readings, "Materials can evoke memories, narrate stories, invite actions, and communicate ideas" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, Kocher, 2017). With clay, the children seemed to be more focused on the process than the product/creation that they make. The squishing, pressing, and rolling of the clay is a great way to develop their motor skills. Our center has a pedagogist who comes every other week and helps educators by encouraging them how to follow the children's lead and the children's interests. She had recently used it with our preschool classes and I asked if I could borrow some to use as a provocation for the toddlers (24-36 months old). Clay bears a few similarities with 'Play-doh' however, playing with clay offers a distinctly different sensory experience as the texture and consistency of clay is a lot more natural and is able to create a truly engaging activity for kids.

In the studio, Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al spent months in intense experimentation with a few different materials. By doing so, they were "...invited to slow down, to listen to the intricate visual and sensory details, to attend to the particularity or the thingness of things, and to treat things tenderly and gently (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2017). When encountering a sensory stimulation of a particular kind for the first time, such as playing with clay, children receive the stimulation which goes with developing eye hand coordination (Cook, R. E., Klein, M. D. & Tessier, A, 2012, p.250-253). Introducing this new material to the children, I saw how and documented how each child held the clay with such care, caution, and curiosity. Some children patted the ball, some split it in half and rolled it some more, others decided to give it a good whiff. They wondered about the color and the way it felt when it left their fingers. Like in the story of "Sticking: Children and the Lively Matter of Sticks" the combination of prodding, stirring, responding, touching, and linking that children exhibit with their encounters, is a part of shaping a connection to their environment (Rooney, T.,

2019). As a form of scaffolding, I added a few other materials with the clay such as plastic cutters and golf pegs. As the children become more familiar with the material, they became a bit more open to the new possibilities for connecting it with the other materials (Rooney, T., 2019). With what started with just a child or two, more children started to curiously walk over and swarm around the table, ripping the blocks and pieces of clay apart. A little boy grabbed a handful of clay and asked “Ninna, what make?” while rolling a ball of clay, I responded “What would you want to make?” I actually planned to make a tile, like how we were supposed to in class this week with salt dough and I didn't make any dough so I wanted to make it out of clay. However, that quickly changed when he decided to rip the clay into small pieces, roll some into balls and grab the one I just made in my hand. Then he started to stack them on top of each other. He had a very serious look on his face as he continued to make a pile. As his creation started to grow, he asked another educator at the table to roll a ball. Then he instructed her to place it on top of the pile he had made. They talked about how the clay felt, and how they could make this pile ‘bigger’. The boy screamed with excitement! After, he went back into the clay grabbing as much as he could and continuing to add onto his creation.

*"As educators, we tend to understand materials from a scientific, rational, or functional viewpoint and through predictable properties of colour, shape, density, mass, friction, and gravity. Further, our understandings of materials are shaped by deeply rooted cultural dichotomies – animate/inanimate, active/passive, self/other, to name a few. These binaries lead us, often unconsciously, to think of ourselves as animate agents who act on passive, inanimate materials." Kind (2014), p.866-867.*



Within this moment, I was also able to observe the conversation the educators and the children were able to build asking open-ended questions to each other; not necessarily asking about the product (i.e. “What is that? What is happening with the clay?”). The engagement between educators and children during the clay activity was filled with curiosity and exploration. The open-ended questions posed by both parties allowed for meaningful connections and deeper understanding. Instead of simply asking about the product, the focus was on the process and the unique experiences each child had with the clay. Through this interaction, the educators fostered a sense of agency and creativity in the children, empowering them to shape their own

learning.

#### **WEEK 4: Environment & Embodied Pedagogies**

Before I start my reflections for this week, I would like to acknowledge that I work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam),

Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Decolonizing early childhood education is a complex topic that requires sensitivity, respect, and research. This was written with humility and a willingness to learn from Indigenous peoples and cultures, reflecting on the readings assigned.

In B.C, educators are able to complete their education which doesn't require any Indigenous topics (Diaz Diaz. C., 2022) which can cause a lot of issues with educators feeling afraid and/or unprepared to apply Indigenous pedagogies into their own practice as there is a lot of misrepresentation. Indigenous culture and history should be shared, taught, and included in early childhood and elementary education. Throughout elementary all the way to high school, I learned about everything and anything about European art, history, and culture. If this curriculum continues to be used then we are doing our children and future generations a disservice. "Spending time only criticizing settler colonial pedagogies risks perpetuating the colonial gaze by preventing educators from engaging with Indigenous brilliance through the education of young children" (Diaz-Diaz, C., 2022). A new narrative needs to be introduced into the educational system, and as educators we need to create opportunities for open, meaningful conversations with children, and dispel negative connotations and stigmas surrounding Indigenous culture and history.

I also really appreciated Nxumalo's focus on 'Attuning to place specificities' mentioning how "...as a part of foundational Early childhood pedagogies they still continue to struggle with how they might continually enact learning to learn without the tools of human exceptionalism" (Nxumalo, F., 2016). Engaging children and educators into nature, forest pedagogies, and Indigenous teachings can be quite challenging for educators who aren't accustomed or familiar enough with it. However, with the right approach and resources, it is possible to create meaningful connections between children and the natural world. One strategy is to provide opportunities for hands-on experiences in outdoor environments, such as nature walks, gardening, or forest play. These experiences allow children to explore, observe, and interact with the natural elements around them, fostering a sense of wonder and curiosity. The 'Raccoon-Child drawing assemblage' mentioned in the article reminded me of a similar experience I had at our center. In November 2022, an owl was perched on tree branches in our yard. The children spotted the bird immediately. My journal shows a glimpse into what cope may follow through children and educators' environment, each other, materials and community; embodying the ongoing learning and living together that is highlighted in the BC Early Learning Framework. Engaging in ongoing dialogues of questioning what an ethics of living-with, responding to and relating to might mean for plant and animal species we encountered with children (Nxumalo, F., 2016).

In my journal, I have cut out images from what the children made and drew the following week after the owl encounter. The children were able to draw, sculpt, and paint their version of the owl. By encouraging children to deeply engage with a different mix of natural and man-made materials, educators create opportunities for children to develop a sense of empathy and respect for the world around them. This process of questioning and exploring goes beyond simply making

something; it becomes a way for children to actively participate in shaping their own learning experiences. Through this engagement, children not only develop their creative and problem-solving skills, but also develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between themselves, others, and the environment. We might not be able to completely incorporate Indigenous teachings into our classroom practices, but we can draw upon the environment that is associated with the rich history of First Nations to be a place where children can become more aware of their own cultures and identities.



#### **Week 4 Discussion replies:**

Hi April,

I love that you were able to take your students outside and having them becoming involved in nature. I wish my teachers were able to do that when I was back in elementary! I agree that by incorporating nature-based activities and experiences into early childhood, children are able to develop a deep appreciation for the environment and the interconnectedness of all living things. I believe that these hands-on experiences allow children to develop a sense of responsibility and empathy for the natural world, laying the foundation for future environmental stewardship. Also thank you for sharing these wonderful photos! I also learned a new word from you which is 'lisaak'. The next time I go to the beach, I'll remember that :)

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Hi Sarah,

It was nice to meet you at yesterday's class! I also really liked how you shared that quote about "failing forward" -- Being discomforted is part of the learning process. Similar to when we see children engage in activities that challenge their existing knowledge or push them out of their comfort zones, they are given the opportunity to grow and develop new skills. This discomfort can

come from experimenting with new materials, exploring unfamiliar ideas, or even working collaboratively with others. As educators, we also need to give ourselves the opportunity to learn and reflect in order to help decolonize early childhood education. This involves critically examining our own biases, assumptions, and practices that may perpetuate systems of oppression and inequality. By engaging in ongoing professional development and seeking diverse perspectives, we can better understand the impact of colonialism on education and work towards creating more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments for all children. Additionally, it is important to actively listen to and learn from Indigenous communities and incorporate their knowledge and ways of knowing into our pedagogical approaches. Thank you for sharing :)

## **WEEK 5**

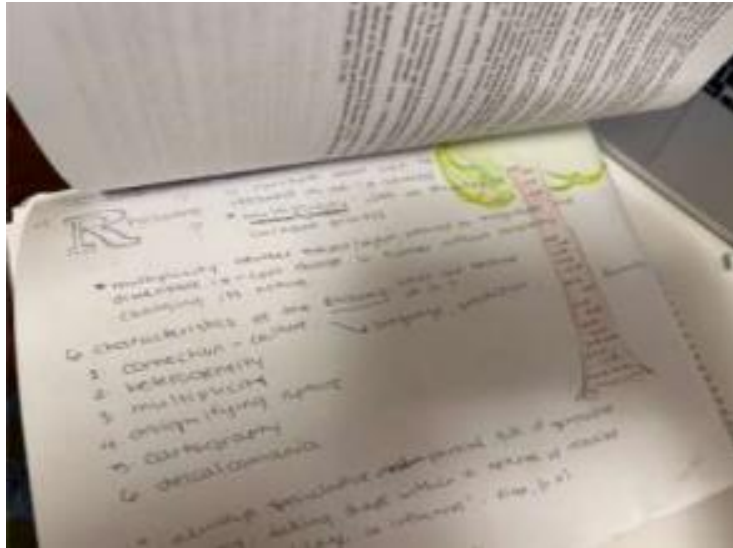
[To April] That's so cool that you're able to introduce yourself in an Indigenous dialect. I didn't exactly catch on what it was but that has inspired me to learn a couple words! Regarding the question of a hidden agenda, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that Sesame Street has a sinister or hidden agenda in its programming. The creators and producers of the show have consistently emphasized their commitment to providing high-quality educational content to children, often collaborating with child development experts to ensure its effectiveness. I grew up with Sesame Street so I was so excited to watch your encounter with it. When I taught overseas, I shared clips of Sesame Street to my students as well ranging from grades Kindergarten to 4th. Over the years, Sesame Street has tackled various topics,

including literacy, numeracy, social skills, and emotional intelligence, through a combination of puppetry, animation, and live-action segments. I agree that there are some things that could have been done differently or been added into the clip like by adding culture or explaining who the artists were behind the sculptures. However, I would've also definitely shown this clip to my student back in South Korea who were just learning English and wanting to learn basic terminology in art. It's quite simple, easy to follow and engaging for children. One aspect that could be considered is the ongoing effort to diversify its cast and characters to better reflect the diverse world that children live in as you mentioned. For example, they could continue to use engaging visual elements, interactive activities, and relatable scenarios to keep young viewers interested and involved.

This might just be a marketing strategy but because of COVID, a lot of children I think/feel have missed out on hands-on learning/experiences. Complementing Sesame Street's learning model and artful pedagogies could involve incorporating more hands-on activities, interactive online platforms, or even collaborating with museums or art organizations to provide children with real-world creative experiences. In South Korea, they have interactive 'Children's Museums' where they do learn about different styles of art and the artists behind that style; ranging from contemporary to romanticism to surrealism. I think this really highlights your quote from Marme-Thompson "When children participate using their own ideas, what they end up creating is more appropriate and meaningful". Overall, while there may be areas for improvement in any educational program,



Sesame Street's dedication to promoting early childhood learning and positive development through engaging content is widely appreciated and has had a lasting impact on generations of young learners. Thank you for sharing your encounter with us! :)



## **WEEK 6: Art, Language, and Storytelling in Early Childhood Education**

As seen in my visual journal pages for this week, I tried to show the underlying themes of this week's readings which surrounded the topics of: language, alternative discourses, and exposures; there were also several mentions of children's experiences within the early childhood education and how as educators we can provide quality education by incorporating art. It's kind of inspired by last week's module and its lesson around 'Rhizomes' and how one of characteristics of it is 'connection'. Not sure if I understood what a 'Rhizome' was completely, however I thought this was related to culture, language and traditions. Language and art have always been closely intertwined, with language playing a pivotal role in the expression and interpretation of artistic creations and stories. The connection between the two has had a profound impact on the history of early childhood education, as educators recognize the significance of incorporating language and art into the learning process. Within this week's readings, we explored the importance of language within art and storytelling and delved into the insights brought about by Peter Moss and Nxumalo's articles on language and art education. In terms of providing "quality" early education and care to our students, language and art education is important as it allows students to express themselves in a way that they can be understood and learn.

By examining the readings, I have gained a deeper understanding of how to effectively integrate language and art in early childhood. Moss explains in his interview with Pacini-Ketchabaw the importance of shaping language and not just staying with what we are accustomed to using within



the field; as language carries cultures and perspectives (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020). English is my second language, and I love picking up new languages whenever I travel. However, it becomes a problem when I have conversations with other people, or when I'm writing essays as translating my thoughts in one language and speaking/writing in another is always a challenge. Art education not only allows children to express themselves creatively but also enables them to develop essential cognitive, emotional, and social skills. That's why the quote by Rinaldi, in one of the readings was so meaningful to me as it provides a clear understanding of the importance of listening to the children and their stories and learning from them. "Listening is a metaphor for having the openness and sensitivity to listen and to be listened to -- listening with not just our ears but all our senses" (Rinaldi, 2020 as cited in Nxumalo, F., Gagliardi, L.-M., & Won, H. R., 2020). By incorporating this into our practice, we can provide quality early childhood art education which we know is a vital aspect of fostering holistic development in young children