

A photograph of a forest with tall evergreen trees. In the lower-left foreground, several children in winter clothing are walking away from the camera. The text is overlaid on the image in white boxes.

LIVING WELL TOGETHER:

Interconnections Through Movement

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Land Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that we are on an unceded, shared, current, and traditional territory of multiple nations.

I acknowledge the unceded Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the [Tsleil-Waututh](#) (səlilwətaʔ), [Kwkwetlem](#) (kwikwəʔləm), [Squamish](#) (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and [Musqueam](#) (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations where SFU Burnaby Campus and Morningside childcare center resides on.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to the children, families, and educators at Morningside, SFU ChildCare Society.

It has been my absolute pleasure working alongside all of you. For all your inspiration and ongoing support, thank you for letting me be a part of a wonderful learning journey. I look forward to seeing and experiencing more of how this inquiry will further unfold throughout our lives.

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The Unfolding

At the heart of Burnaby Mountain sits a community filled with dedicated families who saw a need for childcare and therefore began a family co-operative back in 1968. Through the years, this dedication has enabled that co-operative to flourish into multiple childcare programs that work in partnerships- with one another, with Simon Fraser University (SFU), and also the larger community. Being nestled in the east and west sides of the SFU campus, these programs have grown into what we now know as SFU ChildCare Society (SFUCCS).

And at Morningside, one of the three-to-five centers at SFUCCS, I have been privileged to have worked alongside educators, children and families to rethink through inquiry and curriculum what it means for us to live well together with the human and the more-than-human. As we are situated nearby a pathway and also surrounded by lush forestry, we encounter various more than human bodies and entities that have intrinsically affected our lives on the daily.

These include numerous encounters with animals such as birds, raccoons, squirrels, deers, and countless insects such as ants, bees, and butterflies to name a few. Because of these encounters, we have been more attuned to who is with us, and to who else is moving along with us within the localities of our unique place. Attuning to movement has allowed for children and educators alike to research deeper into our similarities and differences with the more-than-humans we encounter. It has created a concern and ethics of responsibility for us to be actively participating in and engaging with who else is living with us.

And it was through this concern that our inquiry on birds began.



The Unfolding

During the Fall of 2020, we experienced seeing smoke that are from the wildfires down from the south roll into our city and envelop the entire Lower Mainland. It has already been a challenging time for us as humans as we were living in the midst of Covid-19, navigating our way through the 'new normal' as one of the effects of the pandemic. And so with the coming of the smoke it has created more difficulties and tougher situations for us, with our own movement already been limited as we were not allowed to travel internationally and have been repeatedly advised to stay home or stay local. With the smoke, we have been bound more to stay indoors or risk our own health by breathing in toxic air.

As we await for the smoke to clear up, it was during this time when a new concern from one of our educators, Taylor, began. She discovered through news articles from scientists (Lacitis, 2020) how birds' migrations have also been heavily affected by this harsh reality. Birds who would migrate annually back to the south around this time of the year have been seen coming back north due to the smoke. As a result, they risk death as they fly back due to exhaustion, poor air quality, and even lack of resources as we anticipate Canadian winter slowly creep in right around the corner. Deeply troubled by this, Taylor shared her concern with the educators and the children. Being moved by her worries, we then felt the need to respond as a collective, and so the next day, we decided to bring in bird seeds and bird feeders. We hung them in our yards as an initiative to provoke more questions from the children and our families on how the smoke has also affected birds' lives and also to help feed birds who may be coming back during the winter.



The Unfolding

As we hung our feeders, we anticipated the coming of the birds. Though birds were seen flying all around our yard and sitting by our fence and play areas, we were surprised to see that the birds would not come near our feeders. Puzzled, we waited each day in anticipation for birds to fly by and eat from our feeders. Until one morning, Taylor saw that one of our feeders was wrecked and that someone had eaten all the seeds. Gnawed from the inside, we concluded that this was not the works of a bird. We were surprised to see the marks and the residue of the leftover seeds in our now broken feeder, but all the more became joyfully expectant in our waiting. *Who could've done such a thing? What will we see? Who else have we yet to encounter through this unexplainable scenario?*

And then came the day, as children were playing in our yard that week, when we had an unexpected encounter with a squirrel. Children screamed in excitement and delight as the squirrel made its way to one of our trees. Though children and educators eagerly surrounded the tree where our feeder was at, the squirrel proceeded to climb the tree and eat all the seeds from the feeder in front of us.



The Unfolding

Watching the squirrel as it hung upside down and nibbled the bird seeds, not only were we faced with a dilemma of whether to continue to allow the squirrel to eat from the feeder or not, we were also encouraged to ask **why**: *why did the squirrel need to eat our seeds? Why did the squirrel come but not the birds? Why should we allow for the squirrel to eat bird seeds?* Seeing the nipples protruding from the bottom of the squirrel, we held our breath as we quickly realized that the squirrel was either pregnant or had hungry babies nearby. *Did the squirrel come and eat from the seeds because, like the birds, she or her babies were at risk of hunger too? Did she come to find food for her babies? Did the smoke impact them as well?* As we continued to engage with these questions, a family of raccoons passed by our yard. 'Mama raccoon' and her three 'baby' raccoons were seen coming down from a tree due to the ongoing construction nearby, and had stopped on the pathway to see what the commotion was all about. As they continued to walk past, we asked: *Were they going to eat from the seeds too? Seeing that they were coming down from the tree, were they afraid of the nearby construction? **What else were they concerned about?***



The Unfolding

It was in these moments that I was able to step back and realize that we, humans, are not alone in this world. Though my views and perspectives on curriculum have been human-centric, I was faced with the reality of having to re-situate and recognize myself being in the midst of an entangled relationship with the world and with my other co-inhabitants.

Smoke, air and virus were merely metaphors that showcased how interconnected our lives are with the more-than-human. What affects humans also has an effect on animals and other entities. For example, the global effects of Covid-19 heavily affected human movement and activity as we paused our normal way living to lessen the impacts of the highly contagious virus. With our limited movement locally and internationally due to the lockdowns, this has allowed for more freedom for animals and other species as their world became quieter and safer (“Coronavirus: Animals enjoy freedom”, 2020). Bodies of water became cleaner, places that once were packed with tourists have become spacious and quieter, so as a result, animals have been seen roaming around more freely.

But not all problems were dichotomous in results, as in one group benefitting from the effects while the other is in a disadvantage. Humans and more-than-humans alike breathe in air, therefore the smoke created a problem that negatively affected us all. With this problem, it changed the way we moved and responded to previous ways of doing things, having to figure out a new ‘normal’ once again.



The Unfolding

And that concern with the smoke was just the beginning. With the encounter with the squirrel and raccoons, I was also forced to think of the need of the other living beings. Not only did we breathe air, we **needed** air to be clean. With clean air, we become healthy and are able to move to have access to resources such as food, water, and create a home. How this impacted each of us varied, and the way we responded to these problems and changes was made visible **through movement**.

Since we began this inquiry, we have been continuously faced with many challenges along the way. At some point our feeders had to be taken down due to a salmonella outbreak with birds (Thibault, 2021) which posed another problem as we learned that this virus was most likely passed on when birds feed so closely to each other, which would result to them getting sick and die. Though brief sentiments were made as to how similar this was to how Covid-19 is spread through humans, we were saddened to take down our feeders as we expected lesser numbers of birds coming into our yard.

It was in moments like this that we, educators, have felt hopelessness and defeat as we thought this was the end of the inquiry. But time proved that something has changed within educators and children as we have gained a deeper relationship with birds as we decided to search for birds. We went into places and have taken routes we don't usually take in hopes of finding where the birds lived and moved to. We planned out and followed possible bird movements and routes, visiting our garden, fields, and places in the campus we haven't visited in a while. We went for longer walks in search of birds, looking for more connections and allowing ourselves to be more attuned and patient when they do come to visit.



The Unfolding

Taylor first became concerned with birds because of the change in their annual movement as a result of the smoke problem. And it was through this shift in the routine and annual patterns of birds that we, humans, tried to offer hope by becoming a possible food resource when we placed our bird feeders in the yard. As we intentionally made relational contact through the feeder, the effects of this encounter with them (and with the squirrel and raccoons) reverberated into various questions that developed more challenges, critiques, and dialogues with everyone at Morningside (children, educators, families, and even other programs).

And it is through watching and engaging ourselves in research of movements that gave us an opportunity to be more attuned to the entangled relationships of birds and humans in Morningside.



Pedagogical Frameworks

To decenter humans from the story is not to pull us and the children's voices away from the narrative completely. It means having to re-think about who we are excluding from the narrative when we research from an Anthropocene viewpoint- where humans are at the top, the center of the world, therefore giving us the authority to do what we want without bearing the consequences of our actions. The definition of the Other for the educators at Morningside has significantly changed from the beginning as we de-center ourselves from the narrative, through highlighting the problems and challenges birds and other beings experience in the world we reside together in. Up to this point, we have been thinking of ourselves as **separate from the birds' life, not a part of**. And so, as we realize our entangled relationship with the birds at Morningside, we were challenged to engage ourselves in research and within pedagogical frameworks of other artists, authors, and educators to guide us in our journey.

Therefore, I engaged heavily within the theoretical pedagogical frameworks of **common worlds** and **place pedagogies**, constantly referring to authors such as *Iris Duhn*, *Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw*, *Affrica Taylor*, *Margaret Somerville*, *Peter Moss*, and *Anne Haraway* who have been influential in guiding my work with the children. These authors and researchers were key in repositioning and contextualizing the inquiry with children within the land that Morningside stands, proposing a shift in perspective of what it means to truly know a place, its inhabitants, by engaging in inclusive practices with the more-than-human, within contact zones of difference, and ethics of care and responsibility.



Pedagogical Frameworks

Common Worlds and Place Pedagogy

Humans tend to think in categories, dominantly based on evident physical differences and attributes. This categorical thinking has led us to believe that we are at the center of the world, if not at the top of, therefore the most important. This brings us into a nature vs culture divide that thinks of the other (other than ourselves) as separate from us. Since the widely known era of the Industrial Revolution and explorations made by colonial settlers, we have done greater damage not just to the place we have altered and exploited but also to the more-than-human beings that reside in it, ourselves including. It gives permission for humans to alter, manipulate, dominate, and interfere greatly with the communities of the more-than-human with very little to no moral consequence. Using the term '**common-worlding**' (Taylor, 2013) repositions ourselves away from the notion that discourages to think beyond the divide between humans and more-than-humans. It allows for us to shift us away from having an anthropocentric viewpoint of living and into the perspectives of world-making and/or common-worlding, whereby we are able to open up more possibilities of discussing in between the entangled lives of the human and more than human.

Common worlds framework is “an active and cumulative inclusive concept”, thinking with the idea of humans being a part of this common worlds that is shared with all manner of others living, inert, human and the more-than-human, therefore forming dynamic collectives and unexpected partnerships (Giugni & Taylor, 2012, p. 109).

Place pedagogy as a framework is what allows for us to be involved in world-making approaches in our works with children in relation to place rather than in globe-making approaches, which seeks to dismantle the social in favour of the economic. World making puts a focus on the human self-in-relation-to the Other, whereby ‘the Other’ is inclusive to the human and the non-human entities who are co-inhabitants of the place. This world-making approach opens up possibilities of connection or re-connection of children and communities, disrupting stereotypes and stigma that can potentially turn down the possibility of such connections from happening (Duhn, 2012).

Pedagogical Frameworks

Engaging with Contact Zones of Difference, Discomfort and Responsibility

With the multiplicity of stories, histories, responses, and experiences that humans and the more-than-human encounter, we find ourselves engaging with these contact zones of difference that are uneasy and messy “but also productive spaces” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2019, p. 26). By engaging in these contact zones of difference, we participate in collaborative dialogue filled with difficult questions, ones that push against personal comfort and demands for tension, dissonance, and refuses an easy answer. This transformative exchange that recognizes and responds to the wonders of the more-than-human difference is one of the key features of living in common worlds.

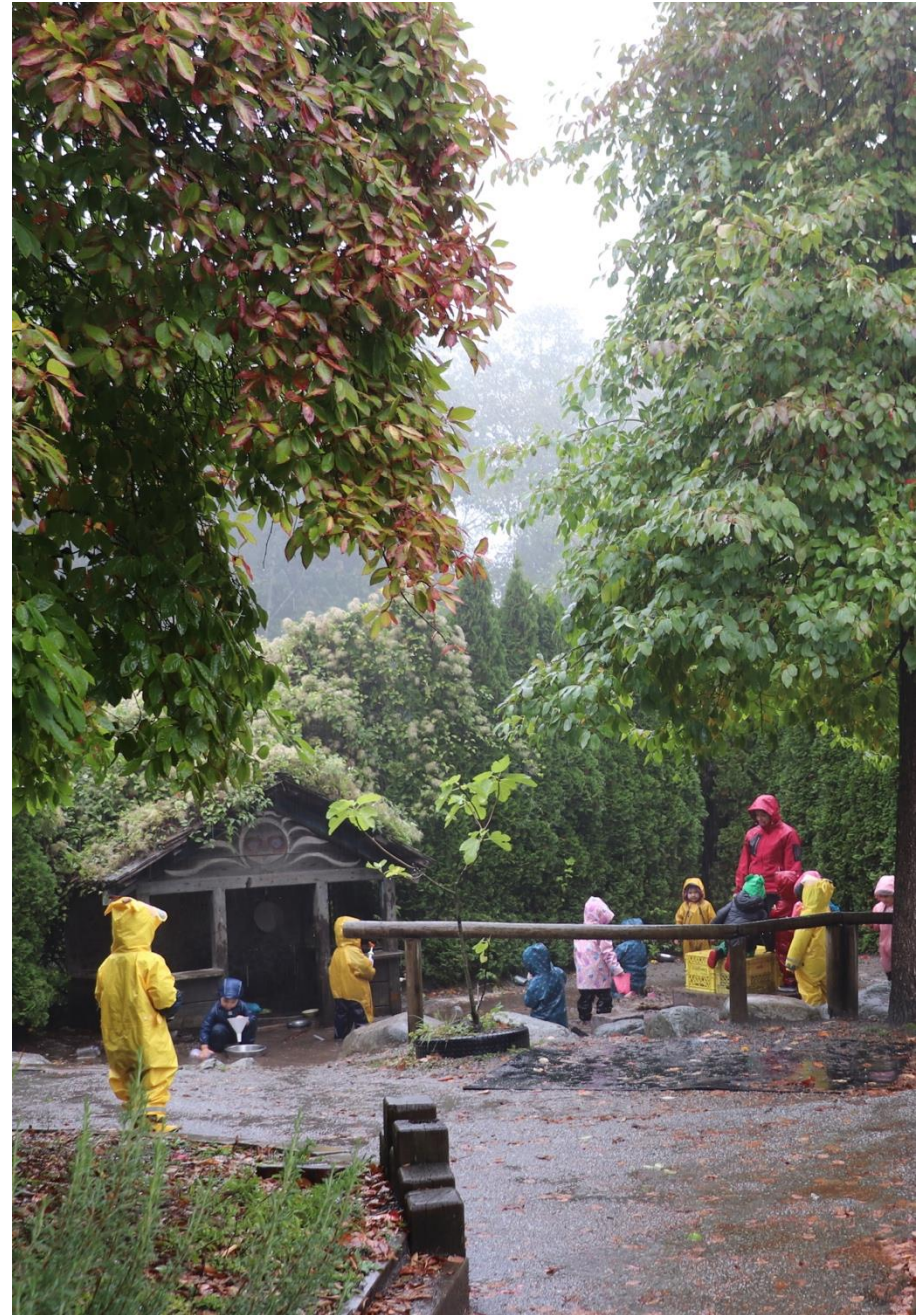
Knowing how deeply intertwined we are with the place we are situated on and with the co-inhabitants within it is merely the beginning point of action. Through involving ourselves in learning more about the human in relation with the more-than-human, we see and experience the interconnectedness and entanglements in a broader, more global affect, realizing that “what we do to the planet, we do to ourselves” (Davies et al., 2011, p. 2; Duhn, 2012). To care for oneself and to care for the other cannot be seen as separate responsibilities or processes anymore, as common worlding pushes beyond the singular care for the self. Promoting an ethics of care and taking responsibility is not something we can choose to have when we want it as it should come with having this realization and with our potentialities of affecting and becoming affected.

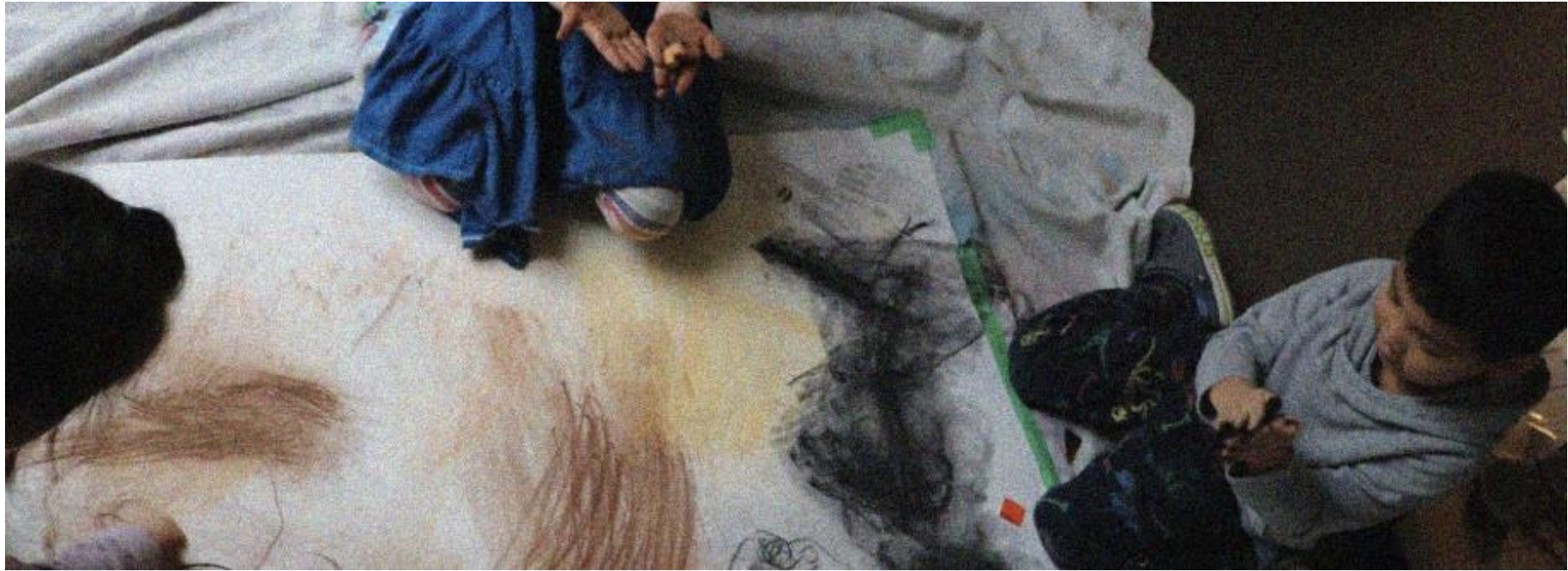
Thinking with these ideas in engaging with my inquiry with the children at Morningside, these common worlds and world-making perspectives create a shift our understanding of ‘living well’ from an individualized personal, social, or economic success, to flourishing as a collective with the more-than-human (Davies et al., 2011; Taylor, 2013; Giugni & Taylor, 2012; Moss, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2019; Sommerville 2010).

To Live Well Within Common Worlds

Through these frameworks, we are able to understand that **common worlds are relational worlds**; meaning we are not alone in this world therefore we need to rethink about our response to conceptualized ideas on what it means to live well. We need to begin to reconsider the nature of our relations with and responsibilities towards all of the earth others that we share it with. When we shift away from an anthropocentric viewpoint of living and into the perspectives of common-worlding and world-making that goes beyond the human/nonhuman, nature vs culture divide, we understand our existence as co-existence, therefore we affect and are affected by what happens around us, to be in constant becoming, and experiencing the urgency to care for and take responsibility for the other.

To live well is to not just to flourish individually as a human, but to flourish with the collective, in a holistic idea that recognizes their interconnectedness.





Overlapping Movements

“As we are of this world, we do not merely co-exist with other humans and non-humans, rather our lives are enmeshment with theirs. We, humans, are not at the center of this web of relations rather it is “relations that are central to everything”
(Moss, 2019, p.152)



Animals have been an integral part of Morningside's life. As we are surrounded by forestry, we encounter various beings from the moment we make our way up to Burnaby Mountain, take our first steps in the parkade and walk to our center. Even so, in our yard animals greet us as we play in our playground and when we make our walks to the different places on campus. But although they have always been a part of Morningside life, it was only through the concern from the smoke that occurred Fall of 2020 that we have started paying closer attention to them. Especially to the birds that we encounter on the daily, their voices and singing have been magnified even more as we attuned ourselves to their presence and seek for it when it is not there.

When we had to take our feeders down due to the Salmonella outbreak that was happening with the birds, we found ourselves going further from our center in search of birds outside Morningside. We theorised about different invisible roads that the birds may have taken en route to Morningside and would then search for them through these routes.

Our relationship with birds have deepened throughout the inquiry as we now find excitement in our search for birds while also hoping for them to come back. As birds' movements were affected by the smoke and the taking away of the feeders, we find that our own movements have also been *moving* in response to theirs, in response to our relationship with them.

Revisiting the 'Invisible Roads'

Although birds have not been visiting Morningside as often in comparison to when the feeders were out, we have continued to search for birds by going for walks and taking routes we don't usually take in search for them.

Through this, different theories of the 'invisible roads' and maps came about as we collectively wondered about how the birds came to Morningside in the first place. As I continued to ask the question of "how did the birds come to Morningside", one particular group mentioned that somehow only the birds can see what this road looks like.

Alder: *Only the daddy big bird up there knows what it looks like. He's the one who shows it to other birds.*

Meroux: *We can't know what it looks like. We're not birds.*

Luna: *They came from very far away, and they had to drive a car with GPS.*

Alder: *My daddy uses GPS too!*

Soon our conversations led to the different 'invisible' arrows, 'invisible' maps, cars and roads that were invisible to people but visible to birds and other animals.



But being troubled on how to further the conversations and discussions with the invisible, I then asked about what is **visible to us as humans- that which is movement.** As it was through movement that allowed for us to pay more attention the the lives of the birds, I rephrased my question:

“How did the birds move to Morningside?”

was then asked as a more generative question.

Soon, roads were no longer mentioned as instead this invited children to stand up and move their bodies in certain ways- movements that spoke of flight, jumps and hops.



Seeking the Visible

Children began to notice and seek to pay attention to the different ways birds moved. Initially, they collectively said that the way birds moved was only through flight until Luna pointed out that although most birds can fly to Morningside, some choose to jump.

Luna: *Juncos like to jump like this! They jumped all the way from their home.*

Meroux: *They also beep, beep and chirp, chirp (as she crouched forward with her hands folded in front of her mouth)*

As we looked out our window, we realized like humans, birds bodies move in different and complex ways. Intrigued by this, I invited the same group of children back to the studio the next day. Thinking about another way that we could engage with this question more in depth, I asked the children to draw the movements.





Drawing our movements was one way to visually document our motions. Every stroke of the material on the paper is caused by a movement that leaves traces of speed, thought, pause, and wondering stamped almost permanently on the paper. For this inquiry, I intentionally invited the children to work with the material pastel because of its delicate texture and tone.

After introducing pastel, I asked the children the same questions:

“How did the birds move to Morningside?
How are they moving here at Morningside?”



Luna: *This is a junco. Juncos like to jump, jump and they jump from their belly.*

Luna brushed her finger up and down on the 'belly' of the bird to show the movement. As her finger smudges the pastel, the traces left expressed the steady yet quick pace juncos jump.



Through the children's drawings, there seems to be an emphasis on the parts of the birds' bodies that had the most range of movement. Wings, legs, heads and bellies were drawn, with the material aiding in showing and documenting the range of movement, direction, and speed. As I watched the children draw, I notice a connection between their bodies as well. The same bird parts that moved the most were also the same parts of their bodies that were moving along.



As children continued to trace and smudge and circle, soon their movements and drawings overlapped, **as if metaphorically expressing the entangled movements of birds and children.**

As we humans *live in, live with and are of the world together*, we are co-inhabitants of this place with the more-than-humans: meaning we live in this web of relations that is so knotted and intertwined that we may or may not have realized how interconnected we are.



“Distorted” Normal

*“Being open, and being vulnerable to being affected by the other, is how we accomplish our humanity; it is how the communities, of which we are part, create and re-create themselves. We are not separate from the encounters that make up the community but, rather, emergent with them”
(Davies, 2014, p. 10)*

Revisitation

To be able to continue the process in a more reflective way, I revisited previous conversation with the children. Revisitation not only allows for us to collectively 'pick up' where we left off, it also allowed for re-interpretation as we relived past experiences through sharing of documentation such as previous pedagogical narrations and their art.

Alder: *There was a daddy big bird but now we don't see them anymore.*

Meroux: *Birds don't take roads like us because they can fly. They use their wings to fly*

Tina: *I remember the juncos hopping. They hop and hop*

Luna: *I remember drawing about the junco. We all drew juncos together, and I drew a junco with a belly.*

As they reflected on previous processes, new interpretations came about. And as children continued to listened to one another, they noticed key elements that are missing in their drawings and in our discussions which were their body parts.





Like our bodies, birds' bodies consist of different parts that enable them to move in various, complex ways. Our focus took shape through paying particular attention to bodily movements that was not our own. Our co-constructed questions began to formulate as we ponder upon the question of ***where does movement come from?***

As children and educator continued to dialogue with this question, I noticed that through conversations children were being drawn to particular parts of bird bodies that allowed for big movements: the birds' bellies and legs.



Researching Movement

Captivated by this hypothesis of movement coming from the bellies and legs, I decided to take more notice of the birds that come to Morningside. I took videos of birds that would come to our playground in order for us to have a closer and clearer look at what *moves* birds.

Videos taken and shown were of birds hopping on the ground, flying to the feeder, and standing on some branches. After observing the way birds moved, children were invited to move along with the birds. Not only did we move *with* the birds, we *became* the birds. And it was through this embodiment that we felt certain weaknesses that our own bodies have.



Meroux: *I can't hop too fast like the juncos. It hurts my legs*

Daniel noticed another part of the birds' body that was used to hop

Daniel: *You have to put your bum up like this, like the bird*

Meroux: *I did but I'm still too slow*

Faith: *Why do you think we can't hop that fast?*

Luna: *Because birds are smaller and they don't hop like us. They need their bums up.*

This new idea of attuning to the bums of the birds sparked a different way of moving through the room.

Alder went on to the floor and tried to lift himself up using his bum.

Alder: *I can't do it Luna. I have to use my legs and my arms.*

Meroux: *But birds only use their arms to fly not to hop.*

We realized that what seems like a simple method of hopping done by birds proved to be quite difficult if done by our bodies. We had to find ways that distorted our "normal" ways of moving through jumping, hopping, lifting, sitting... in order to imitate the movements of the birds.



Meroux and Alex consistently hopped by putting up their bums first and then extending their legs for a big *junco* hop!





Through focusing, observing and attuning to bird movements, we ended up distorting our own. The key difference between humans and the more-than-human is the physical body, and due to the biological aspects of our bodies in comparison to the birds', we have the ability to move in distinct and complex... though not entirely different ways.

As we distorted our bodies, being frustrated by not being able to fully imitate the movements, it has encouraged children to be more attuned to the process of how birds move. When a bird comes, we watch in silence. We gaze carefully, seeking the in between detail of how else we can echo the motion of a bird's hop, a bird's stance, a bird's posture.



Humans move, birds move.

To invite the children to intentionally focus on the movements of birds is not simply to imitate and be inspired by their motions, rather it encourages me to take notice of how different yet similar we are with the more-than-human, therefore being challenged to think within common worlds perspectives. We come to know ourselves more not in separation but in relation to the human and non-human that coinhabit the places we live in.

And so I ask:

“What does it mean then to be a part of this entangled relationship? How can we be moved to care for and take responsibility for the more-than- human... to be moved to respond... to live well together?”



Gazing Towards Difficulties

To say that living well is to be in harmonious living with the other and not face dissimilarity is to be ignorant of what it means to be of this world by not giving full account to who else lives in this world with us (Taguchi, 2010)

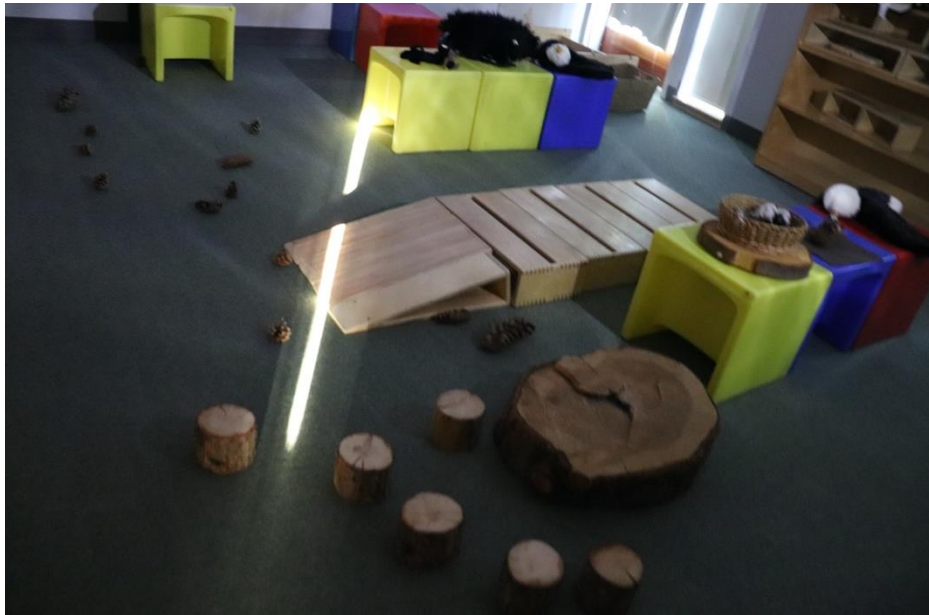


Co-existence & Co-dependency

Though we differ in the way our bodies move, our basic needs remain the same: we all require food and water for survival, shelter, and care.

Therefore, as we are *of* this world, we recognize that we do not merely co-exist, rather our lives are *in enmeshment with theirs* (Moss, 2019). Realizing this enmeshment is enough to open up questions and critique the idea of living well as individualized- something divorced from the collective (Moss, 2014). According to Davies, de Carteret, Gannon, and Sommerville (2011), it is “through focusing on the relationships and connections we have with other beings (the human and the more-than-human) in the place we live in, [that] we come to know more about ourselves” (p.1), and not the other way around.

To engage deeper with the idea of our living with the other, educators have created conditions for questions and wonderings about living together to be explored with the children through our classroom space.



A 'Living' Space

At Morningside, we are constantly thinking about the environment as our third teacher- with the way it presents itself to us, affecting the way we think, the pace that we move, and even how we interact with one another.

Our classroom space evolves with us, reflecting our curriculum, pedagogical intentions, and also how we evolve in our thoughts, movements, relationship dynamics during our time in Morningside. It evolves with intentions of creating more questions, challenging the current 'logic', and invites for collaborative dialogue.

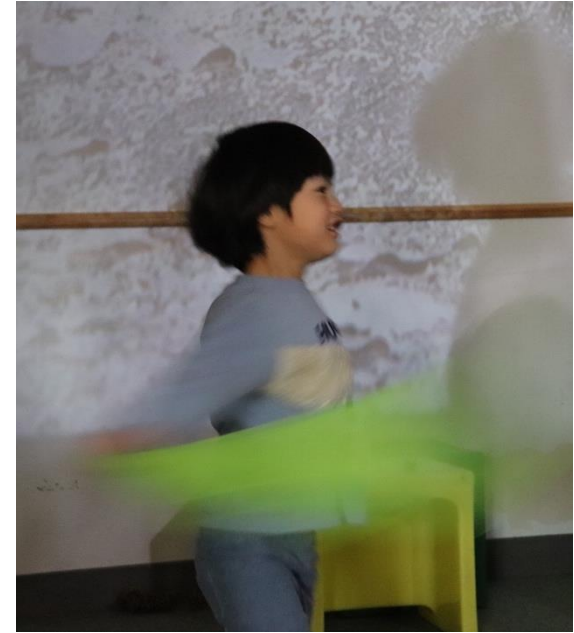
Our naproom is a space that we use daily, with different purposes throughout the day. It transforms as a way to respond to the needs and wants of children during certain times of the day such as naptime, free play, morning meeting time, and so on.

But today, the naproom was manipulated to invite for dialogues around movement, specifically movement with birds.



*Running, jumping, chasing, flying, building, twirling,
passing, dancing, swaying, throwing, swinging,
pushing, pulling, seeking, searching...*

The list goes on as children *moved with* the birds.



From walking in wonder and awe, admiring the space that was supposedly for 'naptime', children's pace began to swiften as one chased after the other. Laughter, screams, and sounds of feet scuffling against the carpet filled the room. Running in circles, children would occasionally stop to look at the birds through the video of birds in the background. It was evident that the call to move in big movements was loud and inviting. It was interesting to note that while children were surrounded by images of birds, they were initially not inclined to embody or pretend to be the birds. Although there's the occasional want to become a bird because of their abilities to fly, we've been thinking of the birds more as the Other. When we become more aware of the Other, we encounter differences and problems that we wouldn't have otherwise experienced.

Engaging with Problems and Differences



Meroux, Zoey, and Luna were building houses in a corner of the room. It was initially understood that Luna and Meroux were to live together while Zoey lives in a home beside them. This was the agreement until they were faced with a problem...

Zoey: *I want to live here too*

Meroux: *HEY! We won't fit in here, all three of us*

Luna: *You have your own home, this is too squishy*

Zoey: *But I want to live in this home too*

Frustrated, Meroux and Zoey exchanged glares. After a few more verbal exchanges, I asked if there was another way the children can still stay together.

Luna: *But the house is already done and it cannot be changed anymore*

Meroux: *And I don't want to change it*

Zoey: *Me too, but I want to live together with Luna and Meroux*

Faith: *So then what can we do? We don't have to change the home if you don't want to but let's think of another way we can still have our homes together without having to squish in one*

Meroux: *Oh I know! We can just have our own homes attached to one another like this. That way we can still live together*

The three children proceeded to create their own individual homes, but attached it to one another with a block that became their boundaries.

The problem began as a space and inclusion problem, which created a bigger question.

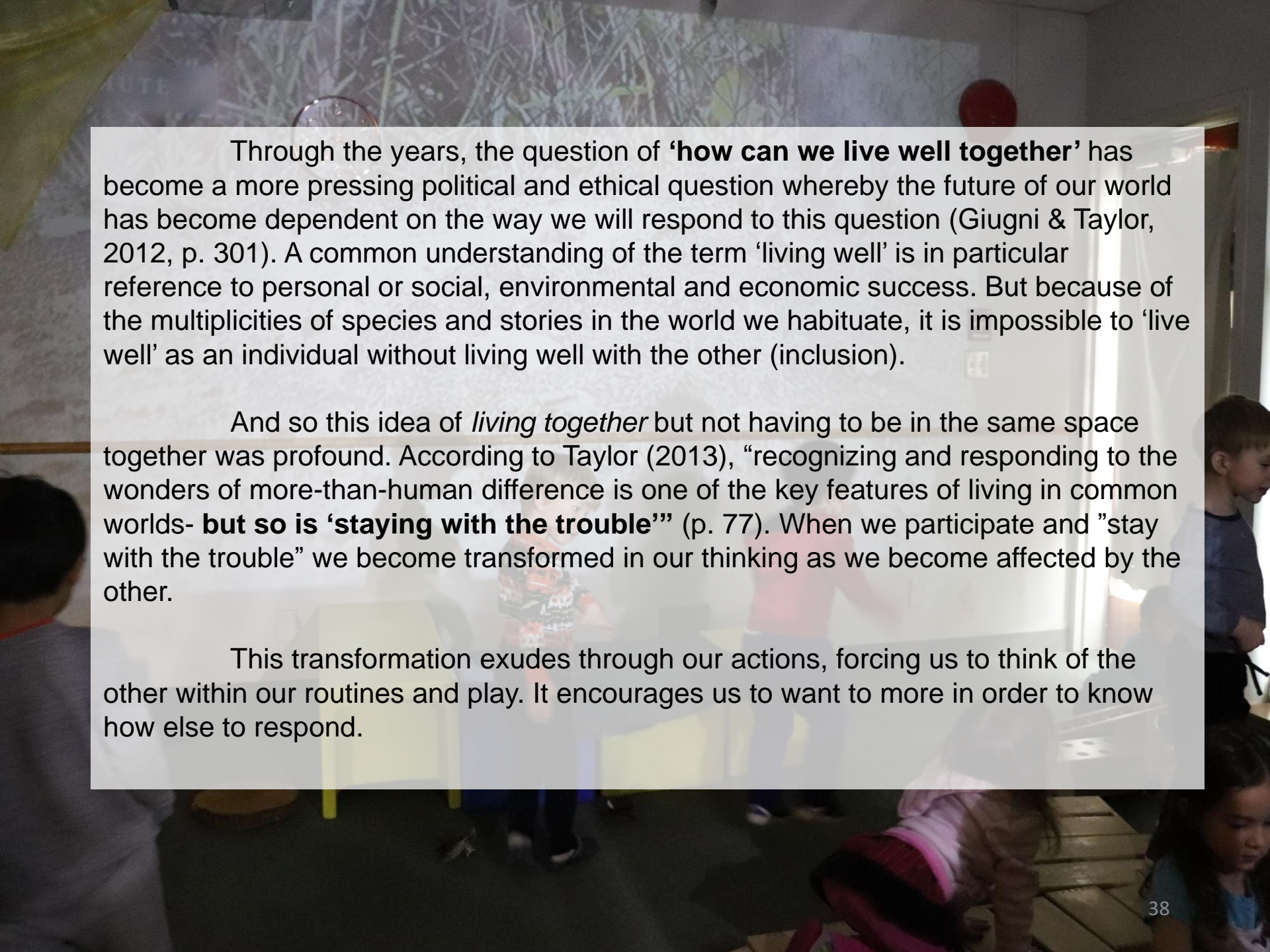
Why was there a need for them to be doing it together? And what happens to us when we listen to other? shifting the way we initially choose to do things for the sake of the other?

Through that small encounter, I wondered and became curious on

“what does it mean to live together”, but more importantly

“what does it mean to **live well** together”?



The background image shows a play area with children. A white semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the image. The text discusses the question of 'how can we live well together' and its political and ethical implications. It references Giugni & Taylor (2012) and Taylor (2013). The text is centered and uses a mix of bold and italicized fonts for emphasis.

Through the years, the question of **‘how can we live well together’** has become a more pressing political and ethical question whereby the future of our world has become dependent on the way we will respond to this question (Giugni & Taylor, 2012, p. 301). A common understanding of the term ‘living well’ is in particular reference to personal or social, environmental and economic success. But because of the multiplicities of species and stories in the world we habituate, it is impossible to ‘live well’ as an individual without living well with the other (inclusion).

And so this idea of *living together* but not having to be in the same space together was profound. According to Taylor (2013), “recognizing and responding to the wonders of more-than-human difference is one of the key features of living in common worlds- **but so is ‘staying with the trouble’**” (p. 77). When we participate and “stay with the trouble” we become transformed in our thinking as we become affected by the other.

This transformation exudes through our actions, forcing us to think of the other within our routines and play. It encourages us to want to more in order to know how else to respond.



Peering Through Research

Being open, and being vulnerable to being affected by the other, is how we accomplish our humanity; it is how the communities, of which we are part, create and re-create themselves. We are not separate from the encounters that make up the community but, rather, emergent with them (Davies, 2014, p. 10)

Collaboration and Research

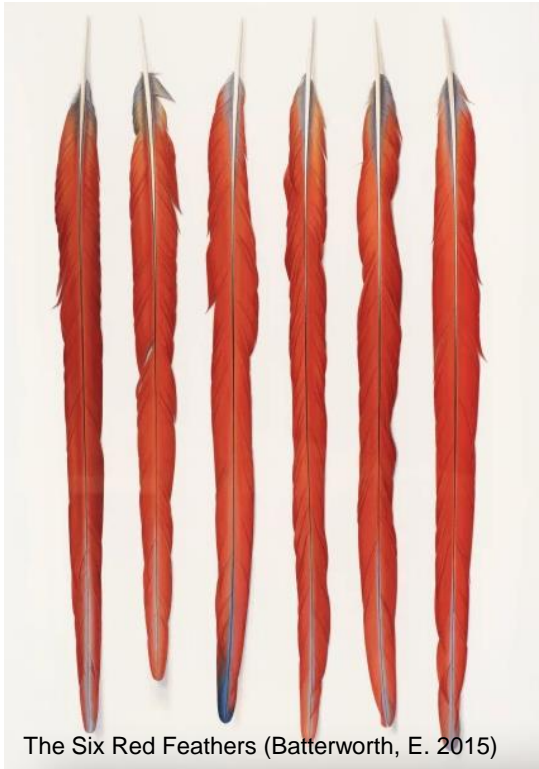


It was important for us as educators to acknowledge that although we were increasingly becoming more knowledgeable about birds, we were not experts. As knowledge is socially co-constructed, in our processes we continuously collaborate with other researchers and artists to guide us in our inquiry. Bo Sun Kim, our *pedagogista* at SFU ChildCare Society, has been fundamental in guiding, critiquing, and sharing valuable feedback and resources that continue to challenge us in our thinking which has been reflected in our curriculum. We've also reached out to "bird experts" and artists such as Elizabeth Butterworth whose thought-provoking illustrations have been insightful and useful in our discussions.

And it was through these reflective and collaborative dialogues that I was inspired to explore movement in relation to wings. Birds' wings are what sets them apart from other species and it seemed impossible to think of movement of birds without mentioning its recognizable, distinctive, unique quality.

Winging in our Differences

My initial thoughts on engaging with wings seemed cliché and redundant to say the least, as humans throughout history and in art have been heavily drawn to wings, particularly with its movement and shape. Through various dialogues with co-educators and our *pedagogista*, I was encouraged to linger with the following questions: *why are we drawn to the wings? how do wings move? what movements can wings make? what do I know about wings and what else have I yet to find out?*



The Six Red Feathers (Batterworth, E. 2015)



Buzzard's Wing (Batterworth, E. 2015)

As the challenge to living well is learning to focus more on dwelling with difference of the self and the other (Haraway, 2008), I began to engage with movement *in relation to wings*.



How do wings move? What are the movements for?

Luna: These wings are covering the bird. They need it to keep them warm

Alex: Wings make birds fly higher and higher. To go above the mountains some birds need to extend their wings longer

Zoya: When birds peck with their beaks on the ground, the wings go up on the sides. It helps them to balance

Samaya: The wings help them fly around in circles or straight lines



Lucy: The wings first move like this, then like this, then like this! When it goes up then that's when it flies.

Faith: What about when its folded?

Lucy: It can't fly like that. They're doing something else



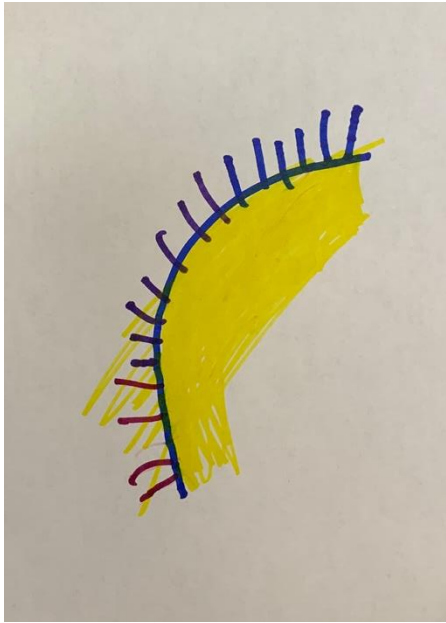
Angela: *There are 26 feathers in a wing*

Squinting, Angela has taken notice of the feathers that make up a wing. She insists that there has to be 26 feathers, no more no less. In between squints as her her peered through the paper, she made sure she was still counting the right amount of feathers in one side of the wing.



Faith: What happens when there are less feathers? What if there are no feathers?

Zahran: *Without feathers, birds die. They need feathers*



It was this attunement to the feathers sparked for more conversations and curiosities between children and educators alike.



How many feathers does a bird wing need to have? What are feathers made out of? Why do birds lose feathers? And can they grow back?



In order to further discuss what it means to ‘live well’ with others, we must contextualize and *intimately* know the place that we are situated in. It is important to localize research as “without the intimate knowledge of local places... there is no beginning point. Without a concern of the local, action is not possible... [though] it is possible to understand the embodied effects of the global at a local level” (Duhn, 2012, pp. 6-7). Yet it is nearly not enough that humans obtain surface level knowledge of the place they are situated in for *intimate* knowledge to occur unless we take notice of and include dialoguing with and listening to the more-than-human beings that live in the place with us (Duhn, 2012; Davies, 2014).

Paying closer attention to the birds' wings and feathers has allowed for us to gain a form of intimacy with the birds, as we deconstruct former ways of *knowing* wings. Wings allow for flight, but they are also for warmth, a hiding place, stability, and also... life. As we direct our focus on the feathers, we ask ourselves:

What are other ways of knowing? of researching? What happens when we allow for ourselves to challenge what we already know and open up other possibilities of searching for the unknown, the unfamiliar?





Touching Connections

“just as ripples and waves and drops of foam do not exist without the body of water, or the wind, or the other matter they encounter (stones, sand, rocks, human bodies . . .), we,.... are part of, and encounter, already entangled matter and meanings that affect us, and that we affect, in an ongoing, always changing set of movements”

(Davies, 2014, p. 3)



Throughout this inquiry, we've been confronted by a *series of encounters*.

Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2019) talks about “repeated patterns of encounters” (p. 26) with which children, educators, and animals both encounter one another on a daily basis in certain places. With the evident mutual affecting and affected that occurs between these encounters, it offers a glimpse into “the kind of ordinary everyday interspecies relations that reshape worlds together in ways that exceed paramount human actions and interests” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2019, p. 26). This transformative exchange that recognizes and responds to the wonders of the more-than-human difference is one of the key features of living in common worlds.

As we encounter birds on a daily basis, we have also been encountering feathers. This bird-Morningside-child-feather assemblage stirred excitement to search for more relations and more ways of knowing birds outside our childcare center.



Throughout the weeks, children have been finding feathers in our playground. As we collectively wonder about what happens when birds lose feathers, I invited the children to search for feathers further away from the classroom.

Zahran: Lots of birds live in the forest. There might be lots of feathers in the forest

Meroux: But they could also be up in the sky flying! Maybe the feathers will fall off from the sky

Faith: We can go for a walk, but how will we see the feathers?

Joshua: Maybe the binoculars.

Meroux: Yeah and the glasses. We can see them with the (magnifying) glasses



We searched for feathers in the sky, on the ground and into the forest.

Joshua: *I found a feather! It's brown so it must have come from a chickadee*



Meroux: I found a feather too! See... it must have come from a really big bird

Looking closely, the dried leaves of fern had a very close resemblance to the feathers previously drawn by the children. As we touched and felt the soft prickles of the fern, we set forth to find more that echoed feather.



Putting it into the test, Meroux and Tina tried jumping from the edge of a big rock and flapped with their feathers.

Meroux: This is not going to work. I only have two feathers

Tina: We need more! (she exclaimed as they took turns jumping and flapping with their feathers)

Gilbert and Joshua then found some sticks and exclaimed that they too were going to fly. They joyfully ran and 'flew' imitating a flapping motion.

As I reflected more on their choice of sticks, I noticed that the sticks we curved as if to echo wings. Sticks were not chosen at a random as there was particular attention to the shape and length that would best resemble a feather





Our search for more encounters with feathers and differences created linkages and connections that would have otherwise not have been brought into being if we didn't venture out

Feathers in connection with the ferns,
in connection with the sticks,
in connection with place,
in connection with our own movement.

Closing Thoughts

It was through watching and engaging ourselves in research of different bird movements that gave us an opportunity to be more attuned to the entangled relationships of birds and humans in Morningside. It all began when we were *moved* by and shared the concern of Taylor in regards to the birds being affected by the smoke. Through their shift in annual movement, we realized we share similar worries as we were living in the times of Covid-19, which directly limits and has shifted our 'normal' ways of moving.

Through this inquiry, movements were showcased in *big, overlapping, distorted motions that clearly made visible learning and thought processes.*

Excited and moved by our entangled connections that were made visible through drawings, we distorted our bodies to imitate their motions realizing key differences between us that were biological. Through distortions, we become more curious about the details and the in-between process of *moving*, that we sought for more and different ways of attuning to birds' movements.

But movement was also presented in smaller scales *of a stare, a squint, a touch that represented inner dissonance and tensions that have led to newer or another way of responding to the other.*

Not all differences give initial excitement as some moments have even pushed us educators up to the brink of utter frustration. But as we committed ourselves to keep going, shifting perspectives and slowing down through paying attention to the small, minute, and seemingly insignificant movements of birds and of children, we have become more curious and excited. We became open to disagreements that have enabled us to ask challenging questions with each the other, as it was in times of tension and analyzing between differences that led to gaining deeper understanding of the other.

Closing Thoughts

We are not alone in this world. We live in a relational world whereby what we do to the planet we do (or have already done) to ourselves.

Within early childhood education and my inquiry with the children at Morningside and engaging with common worlds and world-making perspectives, we have created a shift in our understanding of **'living well'**: from an individualized personal, social, or economic success, to flourishing as a collective with the more-than-human that reconsiders the nature of our relations with and responsibilities towards not just the birds, but *all* of the earth others that we co-inhabit with. We have begun to understand our existence as **co-existence**, therefore we affect and are affected by what happens around us, in constant becoming, and experience the urgency to care for and take responsibility for the other.

To live well is to not just to flourish individually as a human, but to flourish with the collective, in a holistic idea that recognizes their interconnectedness.



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