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## **Master's Project: An Emergent Journey Towards Relationship, Possibility, and Liberation in Environmental Education**

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MASTER'S PROJECT:  
AN EMERGENT JOURNEY TOWARDS RELATIONSHIP, POSSIBILITY, AND LIBERATION  
IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

A Capstone Project Presented

by

Trudie Henninger

to

The Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science  
Specializing in Leadership for Sustainability

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout my ten year career as an environmental educator, I have observed that a common goal in environmental education is the replication of curriculum and content. Domination and oppression in our trainings, programs, curriculum and work cultures is often perpetuated through this emphasis on unexamined replication and centering of knowledge mastery. Often, there is no real consideration of who is in the room, or of the relevance of the content to the participants. Additionally, there is little possibility for change or for co-creation of environmental education experiences. I examined domination and oppression in environmental education, in an effort to avoid replicating oppressive models and to embody leadership that focuses on relationship, possibility and liberation. I set the intention to engage with a statewide program on a deeper level that would nourish community between educators, critically examine the programming for the vast diversity of kids across the entire state, and imagine beyond these long perpetuated practices of oppression and domination. I engaged with personal learning, deepening awareness practices, conversations, small scale facilitation and pausing. These methods evolved, overlapped and emerged based on relationships, reflections, and global changes. I turned to the wisdom of nature to truly practice emergence, allow for collaboration, authentic relationship building, and consciously examine domination and oppression. I gained a deeper awareness of my own sovereignty, accountability and positionality as a white female environmental educator in a leadership role. I learned the essentiality of leading from a place of connection and embodying a leadership that allows for right relationship, possibility and recognizes the sovereignty of myself and others.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot express enough gratitude to the many people that have guided me through this process and supported me all along the way. I am so grateful to my coach Connor Stedman and my mentor Sarah Haggarty for pulling me in more deeply. I am grateful for my cohort that has sung, laughed, cried and danced with me through this journey. I am thankful for my friends and family that have been my biggest cheerleaders and late night editors. I am thankful to my cats, Tuba and Piccolo “Pickle” for all the snuggles one could need throughout a pandemic. Lastly, I am thankful for the many teachers in this program who have shared themselves with us wholeheartedly.

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## Introduction

Since 2013, my position with an environmental education center in North Carolina has allowed me to offer programming that engages students and their teachers with hands-on science in the schoolyard. I also provide local outdoor programs for youth, including after school programs and summer camps, and serve as a supervisor and one of the trainers for staff. In recent years, several other professional environmental educators have reached out with an interest in learning more about ways they too can offer environmental education in public schools within their own communities.

The scope of my current position offering environmental education programs is expanding from western North Carolina to all one hundred counties of North Carolina. I received a grant that will enable me to train and equip other educators to be able to offer schoolyard science curricula, beginning with a five day training. Drawing from my learnings in the Master's of Leadership for Sustainability (MLS) program, **I am examining domination and oppression in environmental education, in an effort to avoid replicating oppressive models and to embody leadership that focuses on relationship, possibility and liberation.**

I have experienced an emphasis in environmental education trainings, workshops and certifications on replicating lessons and activities. The curricula I was taught and in turn teaching to others, often centers a mastery of one kind of knowledge and recitation of facts with little to no consideration of who's in the room or of the relevance of the content to the participants. I found myself struggling to engage participants and other educators in authentic and relational ways. The practices I, and many other white

educators like myself, were relying on did not allow for change, growth or co-generation of environmental education experiences. Often, these practices further centered a long history of dominant white values and white experiences of environmental education. The common practice of replicating and relying on activity guides has been cited as a weakness of environmental education and an “easy way out” (Knapp, 2000). It is necessary to critically examine our programs rather than relying on replicating them. I have found that by relying so heavily on activity guides, we are in danger of diminishing not only our own agency and sovereignty, but our students’ as well. Without consciously examining what we are replicating, we find ourselves perpetuating domination and oppression in our trainings, programs, curriculum and work cultures in environmental education.

Unfortunately, white supremacy is interwoven in our practices and decades of these exclusionary practices “have resulted in a nearly homogenous white workforce” that centers white middle upper class youth (Romero et al., 2019). I set the intention to engage with a statewide program on a deeper level that would nourish the community between educators, examine the programming for the vast diversity of kids across the entire state and imagine beyond these long perpetuated practices. Through examining my own internal conditions, connections to nature, and ways domination and oppression show up in myself, my organization and my curriculum, I have attempted to embody a new way of leadership that doesn’t take the easy way out, but rather allows for right relationship, possibility and recognizes the sovereignty of myself and others.



## Methods

For this project, I engaged in a multitude of methodologies to grow my personal learning, including deepening my awareness practices, having authentic conversations, and practicing small scale facilitation. In order to increase my understanding of the systems of power and privilege in environmental education, including a tendency towards replication without examination, I read literature, listened to podcasts, and attended webinars, conferences and community gatherings<sup>1</sup>. I participated in and implemented learning opportunities that explored resources with and alongside others. Through the use of these methodologies I sought to center relationship and incorporate reflection and conscious examination of my beliefs, philosophies and assumptions. It's important to note that these methods were not separated into distinct or even linear practices, but rather engaged with in a way that was often overlapping, messy, and emergent.

To deepen my awareness practices I sought and leaned into other ways of knowing by bringing my awareness to personal somatic experiences and experiences with nature. I developed personal practices including rising for the dawn chorus, greeting the sun, dream-work, meditations (especially tonglen meditation practice), sitting with nature, pausing and gathering with community to share and learn through these experiences together, and I explored other ways of knowing as they emerged or were suggested to me<sup>2</sup>. It felt especially important to deepen these practices, as my role asks people to deepen their own connections to self and nature. At the very start of this project, I reached out to Sarah Haggarty, an educator and counselor that has served as an

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for an annotated bibliography of resources that informed this capstone  
See Appendix C for more information on community gatherings that informed this capstone

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix D for examples of guided meditations

influence in my life. I asked her to serve as a mentor as we engaged in what it means to design emergent experiences with intuition, nature connection, and personal development. I reached out to her to help bring and push my learning edges and serve as a place of vulnerability and accountability. I am continuing to work with her in this capacity.

Throughout the whole of this project, conversations played an important role, from the initial conception to the continued application of my learning. I sought to deepen my understandings, broaden my perspectives, build relationships and personal accountability, and include collaboration through conversations with my coach, my mentor, staff and other educators. I took notes during these conversations and used them for reflection, identifying questions and taking possible further reflection actions (including free writing, systems mapping, meditations, and reaching out to other people). I also sought to have collaborative conversations with training participants through interviews, surveys, and office hours. Sharing in discussion and conversations has been interwoven throughout all parts of this project.

As I continued to explore emergent and non-replicative processes and experience shifts in my own leadership, I was able to apply my learning through offering mini opportunities with staff. This included offering opportunities for discussion about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and bringing in a guest speaker to facilitate conversations with staff including perspectives about EDI. This work also encouraged me to rethink the design and application of interviews and surveys, the impact of disrupting meetings, implementing a pause and somatic practices into meetings, and providing time for

intentional relationship building. These opportunities were a way to implement my learnings in smaller ways and build a deeper awareness of my personal agency.

These methods evolved, overlapped and emerged based on relationships, reflections, and global changes. I initially planned to design and implement a 5-day training, but it was ultimately canceled due to the health concerns from COVID-19. However, I am still developing how that program will be restructured and become going forward. I'm also continuing to track my own learning during this process and how I will offer learning opportunities with staff and develop new environmental education programming using intentional community building and reflection.

## Results

I began this project with the vision that I would have a shiny product at the end - a perfect training. Though I had submitted my proposal and was anxious to begin designing the training, my coach told me, “no, I don’t think you’re there yet. Keep sitting with your questions”. This valuable advice allowed me to pause and sit with the resistance and shame I felt from not rushing into producing a “perfect training”, so that I could actually move past replication myself. I identified in myself the sense of urgency and perfectionism that are cited as characteristics and norms of white supremacy culture (Jones, 2001). Furthermore, in identifying that I was centering these white supremacist values in my own work, I wondered how I was forcing others to center them in order to participate and collaborate. I began questioning how am I teaching? How am I training others? How am I replicating these systems that perpetuate oppression and domination? How are we collaboratively shifting a work culture? Through the interwovenness of personal learning, deepening awareness practices, conversations, small scale facilitation and pausing, I found I had to open myself up to truly practice emergence, allow for collaboration and authentic relationship building, and consciously examine domination and oppression.

At the beginning of this project, I began attending trainings, gatherings, and webinars, reading published works, and listening to podcasts on topics of race, EDI in environmental education and emergence. I realized I was trying to “consume” this information and become an expert as a means of transformation (S. Pinto, personal communication, January 2019). In actuality, greater shifts in my own learning and

meaning making came from sharing and building relationships with others. This included creating opportunities for staff to engage in readings and trainings together on the topic of EDI in environmental education. Through the process of attending workshops and trainings based in presence, and engaging with the awareness practices in this project, I became more willing and able to be vulnerable and honest. This honesty allowed me to show up more completely as a learner, sharer and a disrupter of white supremacy<sup>3</sup>.

Once I centered relationship building and created opportunities for staff to also engage in awareness and tension, as well as to honestly and critically examine our programs and policies, my staff and I began creating something new together. This contrasted to the conversations I had with training participants using surveys and interviews. I was attempting to use surveys and interviews as tools to build relationships and collaboration, however I was actually more focused on extracting information, and ultimately received little depth of information, relationship building or collaboration in this way. In “Privilege as Practice: A Framework for Engaging with Sustainability, Diversity, Privilege, and Power”, Kolan and TwoTrees write “when relationships are nurtured within systems, people often feel safe enough to take risks, make mistakes, and explore new territory” (2014). With a staff focus on relationship tending, I started to notice changes in our policies and changes in our programming that put people first and staff that never spoke up, began sharing. As a supervisor myself, my own expectation of staff changed from this place of production and urgency to asking what would be most supportive for my staff. Because of these processes, I am now able to recognize learning

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for more information on workshops and trainings that informed this project

as an embodied, relational experience and one that is filled with ambiguity, possibility and emergence.

Additionally, I realized that in order to engage with tension, tend relationships and show up fully with my staff, I also had to engage with awareness practices. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer says, “The land is the real teacher. All we need as students is mindfulness” (2013). I had to step away from trying to constantly consume information and instead turn to the land as a teacher in my mindfulness practice. This included building my own practices and listening to my own intuition to feel my way into my own relationship with land. I worked with Sarah Haggerty to engage in somatic practices including intuitive meditation, tonglen meditation, and nature connection. I found these practices to be rooted in values of connection, collectivism and oneness of people and nature; and multiple ways of knowing and sitting with discomfort. Through engaging with these practices, I began chipping away at the binary values of white supremacy embedded within myself.

In *Radical Dharma*, Reverend angel Kyodo williams says, “I believe any one engaged in the practice of liberation must actively discover it in their own being, and having a body-based or somatic practice is a direct way to reclaim connection to their psycho-physical connection themselves” (Williams et al., 2016). These somatic practices helped begin a process of deepening my connection with the natural world and of decentering and dissolving myself, allowing me to feel a deep sense of love and connection at the core of my being. I found in these practices a way to examine my internal conditions such that I could begin to shed some patterns that were keeping me

from stepping into my wholeness as a leader. Because of the spiritual nature of many of these practices, it is challenging for me to find the language to convey the full extent of their depth. However, I can say that in the inner complexity of a walnut shell and the glistening of a walnut leaf, I found my sovereignty and began to dissolve my boundary between the tree and myself. From the heart, I felt a transformation within myself. By connecting deeply with nature, I was able to recognize my sovereignty and how it was buried in places where I was trying to conform, avoid, and stay in the comfort of not recognizing, addressing and disrupting white supremacy. I realized that I had lost my own sense of sovereignty and was in danger of doing the same to my staff and students. I now step forward to lead from and with and as the walnut tree, where all is connected and sovereign. Audre Lorde said “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.” (1984). I realized that to truly stand in my sovereignty, I have to create conditions for others to stand in theirs.

Interestingly, the more I became in tune with my own empowerment, agency, and core values of love and connection, the more clearly I could see. I realized that I’ve been accountable to my institution but not actually to the people I was and am serving. I found myself discerning where, for myself to be whole, I actually had to disrupt with love. I’ve begun asking for moments of pause, calling out when actions don’t align with reality (saying no to performative actions), and demanding we start from a relational and expansive place in our community engagement. In this capstone process, I have identified places I hold power, enabling me to make demands to elevate the voices of those I’m accountable to and whose expressed needs are being neglected. In doing so, I

simultaneously uphold my own sovereignty and allow space for others to stand in their sovereignty. In her essay, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Audre Lorde shares that “for once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of” (1984). By beginning to build a relational practice within my institution, we are restructuring our accountability, proceeding with honesty, and dismantling our own practices of white saviorism. We are also rediscovering how we live into our passions.

I am now more aware of the privilege and power that I have as a white environmental educator in a leadership position, and this is especially important to consider as I hire and supervise staff, train educators and offer programming to teachers and students. There is a shift in recognizing where I am leading from and that's from a place of awareness and values that I want to hold and keep at the center of my work. I have found a new way to lead - from and with the heart. In designing fall environmental education programming for this upcoming fall, I am starting by articulating values, moving away from my typical routine of going straight to planning the curriculum. By creating the spaciousness to start from a place of values and resist the urgency of production and replication, I feel we will be better able and better committed to examining the impact of our practices. As Margaret Wheatley put it “no person or organization can be an effective co-creator with its environment without clarity about who it is intending to become” (2006).

Before COVID-19, and before engaging so deeply in the above methodologies, I



had intended to offer a five day training for the statewide implementation of EE programming at schools. My program is no longer modeled after a 5-day perfectly planned agenda. Instead, I will be beginning with relationship building and input from participants. Adrienne Maree Brown in *Emergent Strategy* says “less prep, more presence” (2017). As I hold that quote close to my heart, I don't have a meticulously laid out agenda, but I do have a practice of emergence, collaboration, mindfulness and conscious examination of domination and oppression to lead from and with. I've let go of intending to have the perfect training and instead, look towards the intention being in the gathering of the people itself.

## **Evaluation and Assessment**

Throughout this project I was guided through conversations and reflections. I had monthly calls with my capstone coach, Connor Stedman. I also had 10 sessions with my personal mentor, Sarah Haggarty. I had a process of taking notes, reviewing and reflecting on conversations, identifying lingering questions, and identifying further offerings of practices to engage in. I reflected on conversations with staff, as well as friends. I also received feedback from staff through conversations and opportunities to write about processes they felt they were or weren't benefiting from. However, this feedback process with staff would benefit from more regularity and intentionality. These conversations and reflections impacted the way I proceeded with this project, and helped to illuminate false limitations I was holding, as well as questions to dive more deeply into.

A large question that I have been sitting with is how do I work from a place of emergence and social justice, when the organization I work within does not hold those values. Though I tried to narrow my focus, I found that the question exists in both the larger structure and the small details, and is something that I will have to continue to work with in my leadership. However, through engaging in the work of this capstone, I have started to understand some possible answers to this critical question. I've learned that I must be aware of how I hold myself in alignment with my values, that I must lean into right relationship and make this work, so often kept in the shadows, visible, moving it from individualism to collectivism. I have also learned to practice letting go of the perfectionism and "expertise" that only serves my institution's values, exhausts me, and

seems to separate rather than serve myself and the people I work with and for. I can now identify how and where I have power, as well as refuse powerlessness and simultaneously recognize where I have been hoarding power and excluding others.

I now ask myself where I am perpetuating oppression and domination and I create space for those I work with to ask the same, and, when necessary, choose differently. My personal practice of listening to nature taught me that living into my own sovereignty is intertwined with creating conditions for others to live into theirs. Creating these conditions involves re-visioning with staff the ways we communicate and work together and work with our environment, so that collaboration becomes embodied in our way of being. Additionally, I must examine my positionality to honestly assess what I can create and who it is for, and accept the responsibility of the consequences. Letting go of my need to control and encouraging others to lead, allows my team to explore together the work of undoing white supremacy in our practices and institutions.

I articulated goals at the beginning of this project but didn't actually understand the depth that those goals would elicit personally and professionally. This project became not just a siloed work production, but one that required engagement in both my professional and personal life. I have not found a singular solution, but rather a system of values, practices and connections I can turn to as I lead. There are undoubtedly questions that I'm not asking, voices I'm not listening to, assessments that I'm not paying attention to. Ultimately, I've found a lifelong practice to engage with and from, as I critically examine my roles and impacts.

## Next Steps

There is potential to not only impact the environmental educators I work with, but also teachers and students across the state of North Carolina. This will require me to continue tending to my internal conditions as well as to truly listen and allow for emergence throughout. By being transparent about my own learnings and processes, I feel a deeper possibility to build a strong, anti-racist foundation among the staff, environmental educators and teachers I serve. By working to release the white supremacist need to be perfect, a process that will likely be life-long, I can be honest and vulnerable. I can be clear about intentions and possibilities and examine where I'm limiting possibility unnecessarily. This could ultimately impact the way students are receiving education as well. This includes rethinking how we are writing and receiving grants, funds, donations and how we are offering programming. Being transparent about where my organization is at, what is possible, and giving an honest framing to the people I work with and for, rather than pretending to be perfect, allows me to be more authentic, relational and opens up more possibility to be equitable.

As I begin serving a statewide audience, it will be important to allow for flexibility, input, collaboration, and emergence to allow for relevance and accountability to the communities I serve. I will need to continue a practice of decentering myself and centering the connection, value and agency of all beings. It will be important to continue emphasizing the need to engage in ways that allow me to understand and question my own power and privilege and disrupt the perpetuation of domination and oppression in myself and the systems I am within. I will be continuing to examine my power,

relationship to power and the relationship to equity. I will work to facilitate, hire community members to facilitate, and elevate community voices. This also includes re-envisioning our hiring practices, our board creation process, and our evaluation processes to be aligned with a future of relationship, connection, equity, diversity and inclusion. Further engagement of environmental educators I work with around equity, diversity and inclusion should include examining the racist history and present day exclusion within environmental education, ideas of who uses and how people use outdoor spaces, and anti-racist teaching pedagogies, so that we may more thoroughly consider our collective impact. This project has asked me to disentangle myself from previous patterns of perfection, urgency, and replication so that I can step into a new way of leadership. In this new way of leading, my department can be a brave space and a safer space as we work to change the values of domination and oppression we are currently replicating and create a new culture of equity and liberation. I hope to continue to better my facilitation of authentic, relationship-based spaces and emergent programming throughout my lifetime.

As I re-envision the future I wonder what will environmental education be when it is disentangled from white supremacy? What would my institution be beyond white supremacy? How is the institution a part of liberation? Would the institution cease to exist? Can the institution prioritize BIPOC leadership? How are we an institution that lets nature be the teacher that guides us rather than an institution that reinforces the binary of human-nature? What would it look like for our institution to acknowledge it is built on stolen land? What would reparations look like? How can environmental education not

stand alone as its own field but be interwoven as a part of existence? How do I hold this vision, not as my own, but in collaboration with others, with multiplicity, with nature?

Furthermore, I am considering how I continue to engage with the methodologies used here beyond this capstone, but as an integration into other aspects of my life. I am considering what connections I am making. Who am I in conversation with? Who is holding these larger questions with me? This is especially important as I serve the diverse communities across North Carolina. I am bringing awareness to how I am leaning into spaces that hold difference and moving beyond echo-chambers. This means specifically being in relationships of accountability with anti-racist white people as I navigate and share from a place of possible harm (such that the burden of racist thought patterns, defensiveness, teaching, sharing traumas, is not placed on BIPOC colleagues and friends). It also means specifically that I am accountable to BIPOC colleagues and friends, especially to listen to and elevate their voices. It also requires that I am hiring people to develop and offer anti-racist trainings as I and my staff continue to examine our practices. I am intentionally identifying who I am in relationship with that can help illuminate places where I am perpetuating and complicit in white supremacy systems.

I continue forward into deeper examinations and dreams. I am going to take the next steps of remembering to pause, tend to my connection with nature and awareness practices, continue to dissolve the nature/human binary in myself (what happens if I become the walnut tree?) and how that shows up in my practices as an environmental educator. I will continue examining where I am limiting a vision of what is possible, dream big and dream collectively, engage in a writing practice and reflection, envision a

world where my services are not needed and lean into how we create that. I'm going to follow what emerges and pause again.

As I look towards allowing for emergence, what inclusion truly means, and uncover truths about myself, I am just beginning to tap into a place of liberation. I feel like I'm just dipping my toe into something larger, that goes beyond the institutions I work with, beyond my programming, beyond myself.

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## APPENDICES

This is a selection of some of the resources I engaged with and were informed by throughout this capstone process. Although not a complete list, these were some of the more impactful resources.

### APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnstein, S. R. (2019). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 85(1), 24-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2018.1559388>

This article examines what actually participation and shared power actually look like. Although admittedly very simplified, the ladder of citizen participation helped me to visualize and consider the differences in participation and helped me continue to consider what true participation and collaboration look like in my own leadership practices. This article also reinforced a conversation I had with my anchor coach about distinguishing between manipulating or managing participants' experiences such that they feel they are valued, but rather how are the ways they are valued showing up in the work.

Block, P. (2009). *Community: The structure of belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Having read parts of this book on a module about sovereignty, I revisited it throughout this project. This book served as a reminder of the power of what is small and subtle, and began my own questioning in the beginning of this process of what ownership and accountability might look like. It also helped me hold the

question of what my own intention, transformation or predetermined destinations were and how to work within the limitations of what I could offer.

Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.

This book, inspired by Octavia Butler, explores ways to understand and influence change. This book inspired in me a deeper understanding of emergence, possibility, and collaboration and the possibilities of creativity and joy throughout.

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work, tough conversations, whole hearts*. Random House.

This book shared the importance of vulnerability as a part of meeting and engaging with staff. Beyond our own practice of checking during virtual meetings with MLS, this book was also part of what made it seem possible to start meetings with check-ins with my own staff. These check-ins have been critical to tendings our staff relationships and shifting my own expectations of staff.

DiAngelo, R. J. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press. This book examines the reactions of white people when confronting race. This book expanded my awareness of defensiveness that inhibits conversation and collaboration as I work across the state. It led me to consider

how I can be aware of my internal state so that I can recognize when I'm being defensive and truly listen from a place of openness.

Grundy, S. (2020, July 21). The false promise of anti-racism books. The Atlantic.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/07/your-anti-racism-books-are-means-not-end/614281/>

This article has served as an important reminder that our own knowledge consuming and internal conditioning does not serve the community or create change if it is not rooted in action.

Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.*

Corwin Press.

This book has been truly fascinating and impactful on considering how we learn and make meaning. However, the line that has really stuck with me is “it's not a practice, it's what informs our practice”. I'm not only thinking about this as it relates to culturally responsive teaching but also my own understanding of sovereignty and distinguishing between a practice and what is embodied, a way of knowing, a value, etc.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants.* Milkweed Editions.

This book was a life changing look at how science, art, and indigenous ways, including language can intersect. I have been inspired by her process of sharing information with her students and learning from and with the land herself. I also turned to her use of storytelling to share the scientific process of methods, results, evaluation, as I looked to articulate what story I was trying to share.

Kolan, M. & TwoTrees, K. (2014). Privilege as practice: A framework for engaging with sustainability, diversity, privilege, and power. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, (7), 1-13. Available online:  
<http://www.jsedimensions.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Kolan-Sullivan-JSE-Vol-7-Dec2014.pdf>

I've returned to this framework multiple times. I kept looking towards it as a how-to-guide, or something that would offer step-by-step practices. It wasn't until I was long into this project, and had started to shift away from replication myself that I could see the depth of what this framework was offering on engaging with privilege. It also serves as a reminder to me of how a gift can be offered in such a way that it allows for practice beyond replication.

Liboiron, M., Zahara, A., & Schoot, I. (2018). Community peer review: A method to bring consent and self-determination into the sciences.  
<https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints201806.0104.v1>

This article examines ways to include community into science practices. This is a

publication I continue to turn to as I consider how I am engaging communities across North Carolina and the possibility and emphasis on doing that in a reciprocal way.

*Promoting Discussion.*

<http://beetlesproject.org/resources/for-program-leaders/promoting-discussion/>.

This resource examines ways discussion is used to promote learning and offers different practices to promote discussion. I utilized some of these strategies to promote discussion with my staff around race, values and environmental education. I found it especially valuable as it offers differing ways to make discussion accessible to people, as many prefer to participate in various ways, so that one approach is not the dominant way.

Purdy, J. (2015, August 13). Environmentalism's racist history. *The New Yorker*.

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/environmentalisms-racist-history>

This was an eye opening article that really showed the depth of systemic racism in environmental education. It was also one of the articles I chose to share and engage with staff in as we talked about the ways this racist history influences our practices, relations, and expectations in environmental education today and ways we could make changes towards more inclusive practices.

Romero, V., Foreman, J., Strang, C., Rodriguez, L., Payan, R., & Moore Bailey, K.

(2019). Examining equitable and inclusive work environments in environmental education: Perspectives from the field and implications for organizations.

Berkeley, CA.

This publication examines specifically how environmental education workplaces and or cultures impact people of color. Through reviewing this, it gave me a solid understanding of the current centering of white people in environmental education today.

Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?: And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

We were assigned the chapter on the Development of White Identity during the MLS module on power and privilege. As I was reflecting on this capstone process, I returned to this chapter to see what patterns I could notice. This time reading it, I was drawn to this quote from Shelly Tochluk “our antiracism efforts are not in service of people of color, they are part of our own effort to shed the socialization that has led to us behaving in ways that support and maintain the oppression of others. In this way, our sense of ourselves as being fully human is realized when we work toward educational, economic, social, and environmental justice...”. As I reflect on my own privilege awareness journey from before this capstone and up until now, I find that this quote really resonates with the way I am engaging with power, privilege and antiracism now versus then. My own identity, sovereignty, wellbeing is a part of the sovereignty and wellbeing of

others whereas before I saw doing antiracism work as part of our duty to be a good person.

Wheatley, M. J. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

We read part of this book for a module on systems thinking and I returned to it during this capstone. I was specifically inspired by her chapter on invisible fields that influence behavior. As we determine our vision and values for new programs I am reminded of the invisible fields and how I pull in others to hold the vision together. Also, as I engaged in my own awareness practices and engagement with nature, I became totally enraptured with a Black Walnut tree in my yard and have felt guided by it throughout this process. I have lived in this home with this tree for seven years, however, I have never felt so firmly in relationship with the tree until now. Although I have not been outwardly explicit about the walnut tree to friends in my community, several friends have been showing up unexpectedly to just sit with the tree themselves on occasion. I can't help but wonder about the invisible fields of relationship and how my own internal relationship with one tree sparked others relationships with the tree as well.

Williams, A. K., Owens, L. R., & Syedullah, J. (2016). *Radical dharma: Talking race, love, and liberation*. North Atlantic Books.

I carried this book with me almost everywhere for months. I've slowly read and



re-read many parts of it. Radical Dharma says, “I believe any one engaged in the practice of liberation must actively discover it in their own being, and having a body-based or somatic practice is a direct way to reclaim connection to their psycho-physical connection themselves”. This book's sharings brought a deeper awareness to the importance of my own internal conditions as an important part of informing and moving forward actions. I also really related to one of the stories told by Jasmine Syedullah about her mentor telling her to just keep sitting, just keep sitting. I related as my anchor coach too kept telling me to just keep sitting as I wanted to run forward with planning and detailing an agenda. I kept being told to just keep sitting with the questions I was holding. I now recognize the growth that comes from just sitting and staying with the discomfort of not constantly producing, a symptom of white dominant culture.

## **APPENDIX B: CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS**

EE Guides for Excellence: Nonformal Programs and Community Engagement

Conference Session at the meeting of the North Carolina Association of Environmental Education Centers in March 2020.

Cultural Responsiveness in Environmental Education workshop led by Ti'Era Worsley in January 2020.

Interaction Institute for Social Change's Managing Power Dynamics in Virtual Meetings webinar in April 2020.

Interaction Institute for Social Change's Designing for Love and Equity in Virtual Meetings webinar in April 2020.

Interaction Institute for Social Change's Balancing the Dimensions of Success webinar in April 2020.

Interaction Institute for Social Change's Collaborative Decision-Making & Shared webinar in May 2020.

Tokenism versus Authentic Inclusion presentation with Tamia Dame in February 2020.

Emergence Magazine's A Time for Re-Imagination workshop in June 2020.

Adaway Group's Equity and Our Collective Survival webinar led by Desiree Adaway in March 2020.

Master's in Leadership for sustainability webinar series "Creativity in Times of Uncertainty" What we can learn from Art and Artist with Sharon Bridgforth and Dr. Omi Jones in May 2020.

Master's in Leadership for sustainability webinar series "Creativity in Times of Uncertainty" Making Happenings: Building from Places of Unbelonging part one with Bhanu Kapil and Dr. Sayra Pinto in June 2020.

The Adaway Group's Whiteness at Work: Inequity Amplified training with Desiree Adaway and Jessica Fish in June 2020.

Mindfulness for this moment: Inner Change and Social Justice with Rev angel kyodo williams

## **APPENDIX C: GATHERINGS**

Everybody's Environment monthly meeting

Everybody's Environment's Black History of Asheville presentation by Sasha Mitchell

in February 2020.

Resilience Series: Repatterning our Lives in times of Change call series led by Sarah

Haggerty in April 2020.

## **APPENDIX D: GUIDED MEDITATIONS**

These are just two guided meditations I turned to frequently and does not include the intuitive meditations I engaged in with my mentor Sarah Haggarty and various other people.

Introduction to Tonglen: Taking and sending for self — Lama rod Owens. (2019, July 3).

Lama Rod Owens.

<https://www.lamarod.com/blog/2019/5/3/introduction-to-tonglen-taking-and-sending-for-self>

Meditation: Awakening compassion with Tonglen (11:35 MIN). (2018, April 3). Tara

Brach. <https://www.tarabrach.com/meditation-compassion-tonglen/>

Connection, identifying suffering, transforming discomfort.