What's the Point?

Why should we role model a variety of handwork around children while they play.

From their trunks no bigger than those of dolls they produced shears almost as long as their arms, thread, needles, and snippets of blue and red cloth and went to work on silk uppers for moccasins and dolls' dresses with all the industry of a sewing-circle. (1920 journal entry from a retired principal observing 6-7 year old Native girls on their way to residential school)
quoted in Thompson)

McGuigan's (2013) research demonstrates that children are not necessarily "blanket imitators", but that they are capable of selectivity and tend to choose the more trustworthy or particularly skilled/experienced person to imitate. (p. 968).

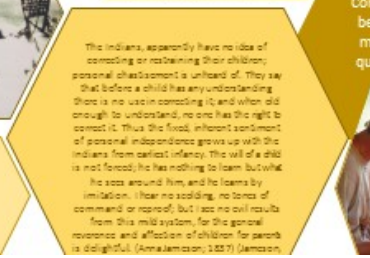
When our grandmothers sent their children to school it was with self-sufficiency and mastery over the production of new things in mind. They did not realize that we would never be taught to create iron cooking pots from the ore of the earth. Our third generation is being educated in the European system and our children know less about the production of the stuff of life than did our grandmothers. Schools have shown themselves to be ideological processing plants, turning out young people who cannot produce the means to sustain themselves, but who are full of the ideological nonsense of European culture. (Maracle, 1996, p. 88)

Industrial Revolution children commonly played within sight of working adults. This environment provided the opportunity to learn through imitation—our universal human heritage. Free play that lacks the opportunity to learn through the observation of Elders will perforce be limited. To define a Canadian Forest School pedagogy let's learn from what First Nation people role modelled to their children when on the land.

"Whatever other duties they may have, they can never forget the daily need to catch enough food. Everyone has a place in the scheme of daily life. Everyone must help." (Low, 1974)

How do you teach children? "When children see adults doing something, they want to do it too. " Anna Bosum, Ouje Bougoumou, Cree Elder

Mirror neurons are richly present in the Broca's area of brain's frontal lobe that is essential for speech. This area creates a close natural connection in our brain that overlaps or is triggered by mouth and hand movement p. 123.



The Indians, apparently have no idea of correcting or restraining their children; personal chastisement is unheard of. They say that before a child has any understanding there is no use in correcting it; and when old enough to understand, no one has the right to correct it. Thus the fixed, inherent sentiment of personal independence grows up with the Indians from earliest infancy. The will of a child is not forced; he has nothing to learn but what he sees around him, and he learns by imitation. I hear no scolding, no tones of command or reproof; but I see no evil results from this mild system, for the general reverence and affection of children for parents is delightful. (Anna Jameson; 1837) (Jameson,

Manu Competence has been known to make a person quiet and easy. (Crawford)

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