The Oziisigobiminzh/Willow Trees Talk to Us: Being with Place and (Re)storying Young Children’s Encounters in a Forest Nature Program
Humber College is located in Adobigok, known as “Place of the Black Alders” in the Ojibwe Anishinaabe language.

It is uniquely situated along GabeKanang Ziibi, the Humber River, providing an integral connection for Indigenous peoples between the northern shore of Lake Ontario and the Lake Simcoe Georgian Bay region.

In Honouring the Land, we are walking in the moccasin tracks of our ancestors and leaving our footprints for the future generations to come (Charles, 2018)
Me walking, the pond, the wind is watching, how do I draw wind? N

I love the Arboretum, A
The Willows: a land-based program that nurtures curiosity and knowledge about local flora and fauna, biodiversity, traditional/Four Directions teachings and natural life cycles through exploration and storytelling.
Increasing interdisciplinary work and research reflects a move away from Euro-Western child-centered programs towards earth-centered, pedagogical and paradigmatic shifts that:

- see nature as culture
- embrace Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- address and support children’s collective and relational engagements.
By thinking relationally in common worlds with Indigenous ontological epistemologies that attend to the more-than-human relationalities of place, how might the Humber Arboretum be collectively known and experienced differently through place-specific stories?

How might collective engagement and inquiry alongside educators, children, Indigenous peoples, and the more than the human world contribute to (re)storying the Humber Arboretum and reshape place-connected pedagogies?

Kimmerer, 2014
Research and Analysis

Braiding Indigenous wisdom and scientific knowledge (Kimmerer, 2014)
Engaging with the rhythms of the elements and flora and fauna through storytelling and the lens of reciprocity

“N told me that I am not allowed to mow the dandelions, they are the nectar, the first juice for the bees in the spring, not to even look in their direction!”

N’s mother, May 2018
This teaching is from Elder Jim Dumont, Onaubinosay, 2018 October – Binawkway Geezis (Falling Leaves Moon)
Time that the days get shorter – the plants and animals know that it is time to prepare for the coming winter (Biboon). Leaves of Deciduous trees change colour and fall off. Animals eat more food to add fat to their bodies to help them get through the winter. Some migrate to warmer climates to find their food. Some hibernate or brumate to survive the winter.

The squirrels (ajidamoo - red or misajidamoo - grey) bury many seeds (Acorns, Walnuts, Chestnuts) for the winter. They have an amazing memory – they remember where they plant the seeds. Even after the snow has covered the places where they have buried the seeds, they can find them. They also think of the generations of squirrels to come. They plant for the future. They always bury more seeds than they need. These extra seeds germinate to become the trees that will feed future generations of squirrels.
Implications for Practice and Policy

In learning *from* and *with* the land (Simpson, 2016), we are engaging the early childhood field to come alongside (Martin, 2016) in more political and ethical learning, that privileges relationality and reciprocity as central components of transformative and contemplative early childhood pedagogy and practice.
Discussion

In nature-based early learning programs:

- How do we privilege the braiding of Indigenous wisdom and scientific knowledge?

- What does reciprocity look like?

- How do we move from environmental stewardship to reciprocity?
A *gift* of milkweed plant seeds from the Humber Arboretum to support Monarch Butterfly populations and those who journey to Mexico. More milkweed plants = more butterflies, a key pollinator.
References


