Transformative learning at the community-university-land interface: A political ecology of knowledge, education and health

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Abstract

As awareness grows of the catastrophic implications of global environmental change, multiple scholarly fields addressing health-environment relationships have advocated 'transformative' educational strategies. Holistic Indigenous health-environment models inspire and inform many such efforts, but related land-based learning initiatives involving universities are often impeded by the competitive processes of academia. In this article we report on a community-university partnership – Pedagogy for the Anthropocene (P4A) – aimed at developing

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transformative educational responses to pressing global crises, inspired by land-based approaches. We integrate political ecologies of health, education, and knowledge to understand the troubled production of pedagogical knowledge in P4A, participant experiences in the resulting educational programs and the role of health and bodies in both. We first trace the production of knowledge as shaped by macroscopic and localized institutional forces; organizational and occupational dynamics; interacting knowledges and individuals; and material factors. Next, we explore participant experiences in the resulting educational programming. In both steps, affect-laden bodies of academics, trainees and community members reveal entanglements with human communities and more-than-human elements, shaped in variable ways by institutional forces such as settler colonialism and university neoliberalization. One key finding involves the role of universities in relation to land dispossession at home and abroad; another includes the challenges of pursuing transformational community-university research within contemporary universities. Tracing such entanglements yields implications for future land-based learning efforts in university settings, and broader praxis for environmental justice in the shadow of higher education's complicity with settler colonialism and globally extractive neoliberal capitalism.

Keywords: land-based learning, critical pedagogy, transformative learning, planetary health, ecohealth, extraction, community-university collaboration

Résumé

Avec une prise de conscience croissante des implications catastrophiques du changement environnemental mondial, de nombreux domaines scientifiques traitant des relations santé-environnement ont préconisé des stratégies éducatives « transformatrices ». Les modèles holistiques autochtones de santé et d'environnement inspirent et éclairent bon nombre de ces efforts, mais les initiatives d'apprentissage inspiré de la terre impliquant les universités sont souvent entravées par les processus concurrentiels du milieu universitaire. Dans cet article, nous rendons compte d'un partenariat communauté-université – Pédagogie pour l'Anthropocène (P4A) – visant à développer des réponses éducatives transformatrices aux crises mondiales pressantes, inspirées par des approches basées sur la terre. Nous intégrons les écologies politiques de la santé, de l'éducation et du savoir pour comprendre la production troublée de connaissances pédagogiques dans P4A, les expériences des participants dans les programmes éducatifs qui en résultent et le rôle de la santé et du corps dans les deux. Nous retraçons d'abord la production de connaissances façonnée par des forces institutionnelles macroscopiques et localisées ; dynamiques organisationnelles et professionnelles ; interactions entre connaissances et individus ; et les facteurs matériels. Nous explorons ensuite les expériences des participants dans le programme éducatif qui en résulte. Dans les deux étapes, les corps chargés d'affects des universitaires, des stagiaires et des membres de communautés révèlent des liens avec des communautés humaines et des éléments plus qu'humains, façonnés de manière variable par des forces institutionnelles telles que le colonialisme de peuplement et la néolibéralisation universitaire. L'une des principales conclusions concerne le rôle des universités dans la dépossession des terres dans le pays et à l'étranger ; un autre inclut les défis liés à la poursuite de la recherche communauté-universités transformationnelle au sein des universités contemporaines. Retracer ces enchevêtrements a des implications pour les futurs efforts d'apprentissage basé sur la terre en milieu universitaire et pour une pratique plus large de justice environnementale dans l'ombre de la complicité de l'enseignement supérieur avec le colonialisme de peuplement et le capitalisme néolibéral extractif à l'échelle mondiale.

Mots-clés: apprentissage inspiré de la terre, pédagogie critique, apprentissage transformateur, santé planétaire, écosanté, extraction, collaboration communauté-université

Resumen

A medida que crece la conciencia sobre las implicaciones catastróficas del cambio ambiental global, múltiples campos académicos que abordan las relaciones entre la salud y el medio ambiente han abogado por estrategias educativas "transformadoras". Los modelos holísticos indígenas de salud y medio ambiente inspiran e informan muchos de estos esfuerzos, pero las iniciativas relacionadas de pedagogía basada en la tierra que involucran a las universidades a menudo se ven obstaculizadas por los procesos competitivos del mundo académico. En este artículo informamos sobre una asociación comunidad-universidad – Pedagogía para el Antropoceno (P4A) – destinada a desarrollar respuestas educativas transformadoras a crisis globales apremiantes, inspiradas en enfoques basados en la tierra. Integramos ecologías políticas de salud, educación y conocimiento para comprender la problemática producción de conocimiento pedagógico en P4A, las experiencias de los participantes en los programas educativos resultantes y el papel de la salud y los cuerpos en ambos. Primero rastreamos la producción de conocimiento moldeada por fuerzas institucionales macroscópicas y localizadas;

dinámica organizacional y ocupacional; conocimientos e individuos en interacción; y factores materiales. A continuación, exploramos las experiencias de los participantes en la programación educativa resultante. En ambos pasos, cuerpos cargados de afecto de académicos, estudiantes y miembros de la comunidad revelan enredos con comunidades humanas y elementos más que humanos, moldeados de maneras variables por fuerzas institucionales como el colonialismo y la neoliberalización universitaria. Un hallazgo clave tiene que ver con el papel de las universidades en relación con el despojo de tierras en el país y en el extranjero; otro incluye los desafíos de llevar a cabo una investigación comunitaria-universitaria transformadora dentro de las universidades contemporáneas. Rastrear tales enredos tiene implicaciones para futuros esfuerzos de aprendizaje basado en la tierra en entornos universitarios y una praxis más amplia para la justicia ambiental a la sombra de la complicidad de la educación superior con el colonialismo de colonos y el capitalismo neoliberal globalmente extractivo.

Palabras clave: pedagogía basada en la tierra, pedagogía crítica, aprendizaje transformador, salud planetaria, ecosalud, extracción, colaboración comunidad-universidad

1. Introduction

As awareness grows of the catastrophic implications of global environmental change, an increasing number of scholarly fields are engaging with its related health effects, from infectious disease outbreaks projected to be worsened by climate change to ubiquitous chemical contamination in what is now thought of as our 'toxic world' (Buse *et al*., 2018; Nading, 2020). Variably informed by Indigenous and grassroots responses to global crises (Orr, 2011), fields such as one health, ecohealth, and planetary health often prioritize implications for *human* health and interventions within existing policy structures and institutions, but sometimes pay less-instrumental attention to the health of the environment within decolonial, Indigenous and anti-capitalist orientations (Buse *et al*., 2018; Jones, Reid, & Macmillan, 2022; N. Redvers *et al*., 2020). They have also begun to prioritize the transformation of pedagogy, especially in opposition to epistemologies that separate humans from nature and reinforce neocolonial capitalist structures (N. Redvers, Guzmán, & Parkes, 2023). For example, scholars in 'planetary health', a biomedical field applying complex systems theory to global-scale health-environment relationships, have called for "transformative educational strategies" aimed at "interconnection within nature...in which the cognitive (the sense of connection), the affective (the caring component), and the behavioural (the commitment to act) are integrated" (Guzmán *et al*., 2021, p. e253). Similarly, 'ecohealth', which emphasizes links between human health and ecosystems, has moved to recognize that "psychomotor and, especially, affective learning are necessary to grapple with and enact the sweeping structural changes, such as decolonization, dismantling of systemic racism, and questioning tenets of neoliberal capitalism, that are needed as we forge a more reciprocal relationship with nature and each other" (Webb *et al*., 2023, p. e90).

Such health-environment pedagogy is thus converging with Indigenous land-based learning and healing traditions grounded in good relationships within communities that include both humans and the land or the 'more-than-human' world (Abram, 1997; Bowra, Mashford-Pringle, & Poland, 2021; J. Redvers, 2020; N. Redvers *et al*., 2023; Simpson, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Land-based educational practices of hunting, fishing, gathering, ceremony, language learning and intergenerational linkages are longstanding pillars of generational health and renewal for Indigenous peoples, the land and reciprocal relationships among them (Cajete, 1994). Land-based learning is also increasingly used by Indigenous communities to heal the effects of trauma, including intergenerational trauma originating from forced relocations, contamination of the land by industry, residential schooling and the theft of Indigenous children by child welfare systems (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2014). For example, a 'political ecology of healing' looking at Maidu efforts to assert their sovereignty in the mountains of California shows the close interconnections between ceremony, recognition of trauma and actual re-claiming of lands and Indigenous institutions (Middleton, 2010). Many in universities see such land-based learning as a hopeful approach to confront the daunting social-ecological challenges of the contemporary period, although the specifics of how it might be applied more broadly within academia remain unclear (Bowra *et al*., 2021).

One challenge for such educational responses to contemporary crises stems from biomedicine's uptake of depoliticized narratives blaming a supposedly undifferentiated humanity for 'our' catastrophic impacts on the planet in the post-industrialization 'Anthropocene' (David, Le Dévédec, & Alary, 2021; Jones *et al*., 2022). Indigenous and critical social theorists, in contrast, have compellingly traced today's crises to capitalism's rapid

global colonial expansion in the post-1300 period, which incorporated into markets women and peoples of color as objectified 'factors of production' (e.g., coerced labor) or of social reproduction, and transformed the (animate, relational) land into a commodifiable bundle of natural resources (Fernando, 2020; Jones *et al*., 2022; Moore, 2017). Since the 1970s, neoliberalization has produced new forms of commodification of life and pushed to new extremes the incorporation into markets of nature, people and knowledge (Sparke, 2016). In Canada, for example, government discourse around 'reconciliation' invokes a version of historical trauma originating in supposedly past colonial processes, to be addressed through downloaded and poorly funded self-healing programs by Indigenous communities (Million, 2013). In response to the concurrent promotion of mining, petroleum development and other resource extraction projects on their traditional territories, however, Indigenous peoples have pursued forms of land-based learning and healing, such as protest camps, with decolonizing and sovereignty-focused objectives (Ballantyne, 2014; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; Tuck *et al*., 2014; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014).

Land-based practice for inquiry and teaching is challenged not only by the commodification of people and the land but also by hierarchies in research institutions and the constrained nature of funding mechanisms (N. Redvers *et al*., 2023). Indigenous scholars have noted the negative impacts on pedagogy of overwhelming pressures to acquire resources for land-based learning via grants and other competitive practices within academic capitalist institutions (Ballantyne, 2014; Mashford-Pringle & Stewart, 2019; J. Redvers, 2020). For example, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's storying of 'land as pedagogy' traces profound learning by *Kwezens* ('little woman') with Michi Saagig Nishinabeg and more-than-human communities involved in making maple syrup, but wonders "What if the university got ahold of the sugar bush and made Kwezens get SSHRC funding before she could go out in the field?" (Simpson, 2014, p. 2). Similarly, the land base of an Indigenous community garden at the University of Western Ontario, where practices of 'environmental repossession' heal wounds of historical trauma, has been constantly threatened by the university's relentless push to build additional structures and meet its dominant research and teaching goals (Peach, Richmond, & Brunette-Debassige, 2020).

As those working in mainstream health-environment fields increasingly seek to adopt holistic health models, and adopt anti-colonial orientations and other features of Indigenous land-based education, it is essential to confront the obstacles posed by academia's competitive processes and imperatives (N. Redvers *et al*., 2023). In this article we report on a project responding to contemporary health-environment challenges with a transformative educational approach, inspired by land-based learning, from within one of Canada's most notably corporatized universities (see Tannock, 2010). The project, *Pedagogy for the Anthropocene* (P4A), aimed to develop an educational approach informed by radical analysis (as in 'getting at root causes') and transformative in both pedagogical and societal terms. It brought together health and education researchers and students at the University of Toronto (U of T) with members of the Conscious Minds Cooperative (CMC), a youth organization working, through education, toward decolonization, protection of human rights and the fight against climate change (Conscious Minds Cooperative, n.d.). The P4A project involved scaling up the innovative CMC pedagogical model and applying it to higher education, especially in the form of a 3-day Academics Camp seeking to 'take academia to camp' by carrying out land-based educational activities with university trainees and faculty. The institutional and group dynamics obstacles that we encountered in pursuing such objectives became significant learning opportunities illuminating challenges posed by the structures and mechanisms of contemporary academia to transformative research and teaching.

In the aftermath of our funded partnership, we applied a political ecology lens to examine both the process of developing educational programming, and participant experiences in the educational programs in question. Our analysis extends political ecologies of education (Lloro-Bidart, 2015; Meek, 2015) and of knowledge (Brisbois *et al*., 2017, 2021) while keeping in focus the political ecologies of health lived by researchers, community partners and participants in the P4A project. To this point, political ecology of health has been relatively silent on the question of pedagogy (Meek & Khadse, 2022). It has nevertheless advanced a highly relevant model of health as 'entanglements' (numerous and intimate interconnections) among humans and more-than-humans, paying close attention to the role of affect (emotions and relationships), discourse and structural factors such as racial capitalism (Nading, 2020; Neely & Lopez, 2022; Nichols & Del Casino, 2021). This approach resonates with (and is informed by) Indigenous models of health-as-good-relationships and holds

promise for understanding the embodied dynamics of both transformative learning and academic knowledge production. Existing research on education in political ecology has focused on settings such as Brazilian universities allied with the Landless Workers' Movement or US K-12 education, leading to calls to explore "how environmental education pedagogies, policies, and practices—in all their variety—intersect in fraught ways with gender, histories of colonialism, and political and economic currents to affect humans, other species, air, land, and water, environmental knowledge systems, and the ecosystems they inhabit" (Meek, 2015; Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017, p. 215). Our analysis turns such a lens on the university settings where pedagogical knowledge is often produced.

First, we present the study frameworks and methods. Next, we report on the two main steps of the study: (1) a political ecology account of knowledge production within P4A; and (2) an analysis of participant experiences in an educational initiative related to the project (the Academics Camp). Throughout, we pay attention to the health and bodies of involved researchers, trainees, participants and community partners, and to the ways in which their entanglements with the land, other people and institutions shaped and were affected by knowledge production processes and educational experiences. This integrated political ecology approach to education, knowledge and health results in recommendations for the pursuit of justice in, or in uneasy relationships with, contemporary universities.

2. Methodological approach

Analysis of knowledge production dynamics

The political ecology of knowledge (PEK) framework was developed to help health-environment scholars reflexively examine the origins and societal fate of their research efforts (Brisbois *et al*., 2017, 2021). It extends political ecology's engagement with the social production of health and environmental science (Goldman, Nadasdy, & Turner, 2011; Jackson & Neely, 2015), and complements emerging work on the relationships of political ecologists to the trauma-filled situations they typically research (Moulton, Velednitsky, Harris, Cook, & Wheeler, 2021). The framework employs historian Charles Rosenberg's (1979) 'ecology of knowledge' metaphor for how complex social and material factors interact across scales to shape scientific practice and progress, and a graphical heuristic developed by Akera (2007) organizing such factors into 'layers.' Elements are understood to interact both within and across eight layers whose ordering can be modified in response to the specific situation being studied: (1) historical eras; (2) macroscopic institutions (e.g. settler colonialism); (3) institutions (established ways of thinking and doing among groups of people); (4) occupations, professions, and disciplines (5) organizations (universities, foundations, etc.); (6) knowledges (specific theories or skills); (7) material artifacts such as laboratory apparatus; and (8) actors (e.g., individual scientists). The implied scalar relationship is from large ('global') to small ('local'). Rather than viewing the world as rigidly divided up into hierarchically ordered containers of social experience, however, the framework portrays relationships between layers as multidirectional, locally contingent, and non-deterministic. For example, individual scientists must respond to conventions in their disciplines, but can also sometimes change those disciplinary conventions. Scholarship on the political ecology of education has highlighted scalar dimensions of how political economic structures, landscapes and educational initiatives interact, making it especially important to examine cross-scale interactions and representations of them in the production of pedagogical knowledge (Meek, 2015).

We applied the PEK framework retrospectively to make sense of our experience of the P4A project, with a separate political ecology framework (described below) applied to experiences in the project's educational activities. Our account leaves out the 'historical eras' and 'macroscopic institutions' layers as naming the present era is a scholarly work-in-progress (Fernando, 2020), while broad contours of the period are well-described in literature on settler colonialism, neoliberalism and other macro-institutions shaping our current reality (Liboiron, 2021; Moore, 2017; Quijano, 2000; Sparke, 2016). We move through the remaining layers in three groupings: institutions and organizations; occupations, knowledges and actors; and material artifacts (Table 1). For the latter layer, while Akera's heuristic largely refers to apparatus such as laboratory equipment, our account applies insights from political ecologies of health in also populating the layer with more-than-human elements such as the land, and all-too-human elements such as the overextended bodies of our research team (Hayes-Conroy,

Kinsey, & Hayes-Conroy, 2022; Nichols & Del Casino, 2021). Material drawn from secondary sources was used to develop narrative accounts for all layers of the framework and especially the stories of institutions, organizations, occupations and knowledges. Additional information regarding P4A group dynamics was drawn from the project's ethnographic approach to evaluation (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Team members were provided with notebooks and guidance on taking fieldnotes to record their observations of group dynamics and personal reflections about the project, supplemented by project email correspondence, meeting notes and other materials (flipcharts, etc.). Interpretation of such data was informed by discussion among team members from differing social locations, spanning community organizations and academia; positions in the university including graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, contract lecturer and tenured professor; different genders; multiple racialized identities; and ages from 20-something to 60-something.

PEK Framework Layers	**Elements**
Institutions	University neoliberalization Canadian mining imperialism
Occupations	University occupations (professor, contract faculty, postdoctoral fellow, doctoral student, master's student, research assistant) Precariously-employed youth
Organizations	University of Toronto Conscious Minds Cooperative
Knowledges	Land-based learning, transformative learning, outdoor/experiential education Participatory learning and action Biomedical and social scientific health-environment scholarship
Actors	Conscious Minds Cooperative organizers Pedagogy for the Anthropocene team Pedagogy for the Anthropocene educational program participants
Material artifacts	Lands occupied via settler colonialism and mining imperialism Information & communication technologies Team member bodies

Table 1: Elements of layers shaping knowledge production in the P4A project.

Data collection and analysis for educational programs

Experiences of participants in the Academics Camp were studied using camp registration materials; notebooks in which participants recorded responses to specific activities and additional personal reflections; and recorded semi-structured interviews conducted approximately one year after camp. Coding was both inductive and deductive, searching for themes within broad domains identified in advance while also revising the coding scheme to accommodate themes that emerged from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Political ecology of health scholarship (Jackson & Neely, 2015; Nading, 2020; Nichols & Del Casino, 2021) shaped the broad domains: relationships of participants to others and to themselves (i.e. relational or emotional considerations); relationships to the land or more-than-human world (including participants' own bodies); and relationships to universities and other social structures. We also coded themes related to pedagogical processes and outcomes, which typically overlapped with at least one of the other three domains. The resulting coding scheme is comparable to but distinct from the PEK framework we used to interpret the overall P4A knowledge production process. Triangulation took place among three different analysts, in consultation with the P4A

project team and facilitated by the inclusion of perspectives from camp participants and P4A team members with diverse positionalities.

3. A political ecology of knowledge production in Pedagogy for the Anthropocene

Occupations, knowledges, actors

The institutions and organizations described in the previous section were encountered in the P4A project by actors engaging with various knowledges and occupational roles. In autumn 2016, U of T's now defunct Institute for Global Health Equity and Innovation (IGHEI) launched a seed grant competition to "create a pandemic of health through social innovation." Social innovation can be seen as a neoliberal device for circumventing the responsibility of the state to ensure social and environmental goals, while its promotion by IGHEI converged with the priorities of a wealthy donor to the Institute's parent school of public health (Dalla Lana School of Public Health, 2016; Joy, Shields, Broughton, & Cheng, 2019). IGHEI emerged from a 2014 summit whose lead sponsor was the pharmaceutical company Sanofi Pasteur, with additional contributions from the Munk School and other U of T units funded by controversial mining companies (one of the 'summit agents' was also a Senior Strategist for Global Health and Innovation Initiatives at the Munk School) (Institute for Global Health Equity and Innovation, 2014). The competition offered grants exclusively for community-university collaborative projects led by early career investigators. A U of T *professor* who had become interested in land-based learning practices and *scholarly knowledges in health-environment fields* such as ecohealth and planetary health thus invited a *postdoctoral fellow* in the U of T system to lead an application, as the academic 'co-principal-innovator,' or co-PI (a U of T *contract lecturer* with common interests also shared this role for the purpose of funding administration).

The postdoc had previously worked with a *CMC organizer* to design a well-received educational activity for CMC's 2016 camp, developing a degree of rapport and trust. CMC was thus invited to participate as the project's community partner. Work began on a proposal for funding with the organizer serving as the project's community co-PI. As stipulated in the call for proposals, trainee 'co-innovators' (CIs) also joined the team, including one additional postdoctoral fellow, and *graduate students* in public health and other U of T departments. A second CMC organizer who joined the team was also completing graduate studies at U of T. The team proposed to scale up the Cooperative's educational model to contribute novel university pedagogical approaches that would better respond to the challenges of 'the Anthropocene'. *Educational scholarship* on outdoor, experiential, environmental, and transformative education helped express the team's desired vision of pedagogy (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002). Transformative learning provided a specific vehicle through which the (largely settler) team sought to respectfully operationalize land-based principles of environmental, relational and affective learning to confront pressing global challenges (see Cajete, 1994; Tuck *et al*., 2014). Commitment to *participatory learning and action* was a notable commonality between key members of the research team and CMC, whose 2015 annual camp report documents an approach to popular education based in the work of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, "to promote emotional intelligence, critical thinking and questioning of norms; confidence and self-awareness, valuing personal and indigenous experience" (Conscious Minds Cooperative, 2015, p. 6).

Due to illnesses afflicting the overstretched academics who had originally proposed the idea for a land-based initiative, the postdoctoral fellow serving as academic co-PI took on a more active role in proposal development as the submission deadline approached. This involvement drew on his familiarity with *political ecology of health* scholarship and was motivated by personally transformative past experiences with outdoor/experiential education and his previous volunteer work with CMC. The resulting proposal responding to "looming ecological crises and persistent global inequities" with specific summer camp-based educational activities was awarded Cdn$24,940 (cUS$18,000) in February, 2017. While P4A's initial project meeting in March was characterized by an abundance of enthusiasm, the grant's start was delayed by the funder until two months after the date listed in the call for proposals, which proved especially problematic in light of the importance of the summer season to CMC. As conveyed in a reflection written by one of the CMC organizers:

> CMC organizes seasonally, listening to Nature and following her rhythms. In the winter we vision and plan, in the spring we plant seeds, celebrate with our community. The granting body decided to delay their decision by two full months to meet their needs, with no regard to our seasonal organizing. Our ways of being and knowing were already disregarded and undervalued.

This dissatisfaction would intensify as the compressed timeframe forced the team to prioritize completion of the project's research ethics application over educational program development and develop evaluation instruments, without which project funds would not be released. The funder (IGHEI) explained that it was required by the university to impose this administrative hurdle, which conflicted with the grant call's requirement for developmental evaluation that would devise specific evaluation techniques on an ongoing basis. Over time, university processes of grant administration would prove especially objectionable to CMC:

> We are not trusted to use the money as agreed. An academic must hold the power, signing off on every expense that is then processed through the university administration – and if you don't d oexactly as they ask, you may not get reimbursed. This sets up unequal power in two ways: first, it establishes mistrust in the community group; and second, it gives the individual academic total/final control over the process.

The requirement to receive ethics approval before funds could be used, especially complicated planning of the Academics Camp. As the camp was scheduled to occur in July and involve data collection activities, the two academic co-PIs attempted to devise evaluation methods and associated data collection instruments for the ethics application. CMC representatives, in turn, began to express their concern that evaluation methods were overtaking the project's (and cooperative's) focus on educational programs. They expressed a desire for the U of T team to refuse the terms of the funding arrangement, rather than simply complying with the ethics approval requirement. In their view, the idea of evaluating their educational model was made redundant by previous internal evaluations of CMC programs. They explained that their model was already known to work, in ways they felt no need to 'prove' to academia. Such tensions were especially visible in a tense meeting in which the participating CMC members explained to the research team members in attendance – who prided themselves on their adherence to participatory learning and action principles – that participatory initiatives require academic partners to relinquish control over projects and take their lead from community groups. This also reflected CMC's pride in the model they had developed, and resistance to encroachments on their autonomy by academics:

> As individuals and collectively we have gone through ceremony, experiences, workshops, and failure and interpersonal conflicts that carried deep lessons. We work hard on building our still evolving culture and ways of being, and it needs to be recognized that CMC [in] particular, and community/social movements more generally, hold not *equal* value to individual academics who seek to partner with them, but *particular* value that should be held at the centre.

Multiple meetings, lengthy email exchanges and significant emotional labor were required to clarify the interpretations and feelings motivating different team member's positions and confirm the group's desire to continue working together. The ethics application was eventually submitted, as the academic co-leads had not registered or known what to do with CMC's desire for them to push back against the funder's requirement of ethics approval prior to funding disbursement. Planning then continued for the Academics Camp, including anxious attempts to expedite the review process and devise contingency plans in case ethics approval was not granted in time.

Just days before the camp was to start, ethics approval was obtained. Camp took place at the 62-acre Cobourg Scout Reserve in central Ontario, a former ski hill where CMC had run camps in previous years. Participants completed an informed consent process upon arrival, and evaluation data were collected as outlined in this article's methods section. The camp program featured a mix of activities including icebreakers; reflective sessions on topics such as personal connections to ancestors, colonialism and knowledge politics; a story

dialogue on experiences with academia and resistance to its oppressive tendencies; some Indigenous ceremonies such as smudging; a physical movement exercise involving unstructured dance; campfires; an empathy circle; and a block of structured sessions involving a choice of topics such as mental health in academia and extractive industry funding of universities. Participants helped communally prepare food and clean up afterwards, directed by a cook hired with grant funds. Accommodation was in tents and activities were interspersed with down time when participants rested, chatted and explored the property. As discussed in more detail below, participant feedback during and at the end of camp was positive, with considerable excitement at the social connections made over the three days.

However, despite the camp's largely positive reception by participants, it became clear that a lack of clarity in the respective roles of the organizing team members was compromising their sense that the project had achieved its intended goals. After the camp, the project team met for a debrief at a cafe near the university. The postdoc co-PI commented that his presence had seemed largely unnecessary in relation to the camp's specific educational activities. A later email relates this point to the effort he had put into the grant and ethics applications:

> The leadership role I played in designing major parts of the methodology and fleshing them out in the labour-intensive ethics application should have 'sealed the deal' initiated through my formal role as the early-career researcher the grant was meant to support. Instead, I have found that the products of my labour are largely alienated from me, in that I've done a ton of work and really shaped the project, only to find others making major decisions about the products of my labour.

He asserted that he would need to recalibrate his involvement in P4A to address this perceived inequity, a comment that was described by the project's tenured professor as draining the group's energy. The postdoc's response to this characterization was, in turn, vehement enough that it was later described by the professor as an "attack" illustrating the need for non-violent communication.

For the project's community partner, moreover, such disagreements over voice and influence in P4A highlighted the need to reaffirm CMC and their community model as the leading guides for the project's educational component. Conflicts took root in confusion or disagreements concerning team members' roles both as individuals and as organizational representatives, overladen by their varied social positionings and raising the underlying question of who and what the project was intended to serve. Additional lengthy email exchanges and meetings explored such tensions, initially among university-based members of the team while CMC ran their annual flagship camp at the same Cobourg Scout facility. After CMC had regrouped post-camp, discussions resumed on how to resolve the project's simmering conflicts and continue working together. A letter from CMC to the leadership of the university team described feeling disempowered by project power dynamics positioning the academic team as "agents of the university" with "power-over" CMC, who were in turn viewed as "in need of supervision, and subjects of research." The two main CMC organizers involved in the project, both women in their 20s, also called attention to the role of gender and age differences between them and the academic leadership of the project (the two academic co-PIs and tenured professor were men, with ages ranging from late-30s to 50s). The CMC representatives reported how they had "had to fight to be heard and felt patronized," and expressed their desire as young people not to be "systematically disempowered from having control over our future." Based on this rationale, the letter emphasized CMC's need to have their voice "at the centre at the project" as a condition of their continued participation, with the university team members engaging "as advisors, as mentors, who contribute more by listening than by speaking."

Still, the letter also explained that "**We want reciprocity.** We don't want this experience to only be beneficial for us, with you simply doing the paperwork we need." Despite this last conciliatory element, however, the postdoc, lecturer and professor initially tended to view the partnership with CMC as unsalvageable, due to profound differences in interpretations of events and exhaustion at the prospect of attempting to reach a shared understanding. While such concerns of *both* academic and community partners at being marginalized in the project were not definitively resolved, the team nevertheless agreed to meet in person in early 2018. Over that spring and summer, the group worked through many of their challenges relating to communication and

power dynamics. It emerged that key university-based P4A team members had little interest in publishing academic outputs on the project. The two academic co-PIs of the project, who carried out much of the grant writing and ethics application work, were precariously employed academics seriously questioning their future in the academy and almost viscerally averse to carrying out tasks solely for the sake of career advancement within it. Their interest lay instead in designing educational experiences which would occur with and help to build a supportive community (both human and more-than-human).

Reflecting both such revelations and the desire for autonomy expressed by CMC in their letter, the remaining funded project activities consisted of a CMC camp with a local secondary school, an artists' residency, and a wrap-up event entitled "Academia in the 'Anthropocene'" designed by the entire team and held at U of T at the end of the grant period. Meanwhile, the partnership's reconciliation had enabled the hiring of a research assistant (RA) to carry out post-camp interviews. A somewhat apologetic email went out in summer 2018 inviting participation, approximately nine months behind schedule. Both project team members and other participants in the Academics Camp participated in interviews, which were recorded but not analyzed in depth before the project (and funding for RA support) ended. Importantly, the RA had begun to learn of the P4A internal conflicts that preceded her hiring and used her initiative to pose interview questions exploring team members' experiences of coming to and working within the project. This approach elicited rich data that would nevertheless languish for almost two years after the project ended, as no one involved had time to lead analysis. Motivation was also an issue, as the hopes for community and meaningful land-based experiences that had brought the partnership together appeared to have been dashed by the project's conflict-filled trajectory. As the professor put it:

> I saw this as a cool opportunity to not only do some interesting things, but as a group, explore some pretty fundamental themes. Like what is transformative learning, what makes learning transformative? What do we know from the literature? What do we know from our own experience? And we never really took the time or made the time to do that...So *I think I have a bit of mourning to do...*kind of a disappointment on the expectations of what I hope to get out of the project. And I think I'm not alone on that.

The postdoc similarly expressed feelings of exhaustion with the project and postponed analysis and write-up of the data indefinitely. Years later, however, two former students he had taught as a sessional lecturer approached him about gaining experience as research volunteers (all thus in positions reflecting the exploitative dynamics of contemporary universities). A restart of the project took place in 2020, with one of the volunteers helping carry out transcription and data analysis work, guided by the (now former) postdoc and a rotating cast of interested P4A team members. With this guidance, a coding framework was developed and applied to the data collected at and after the Academics Camp, eventually leading to the results reported later in this article.

Material artifacts

As with knowledge generation more generally, P4A's research activities were profoundly entangled with more-than-human elements ('material artifacts,' in Akera's heuristic). The most obvious such elements were the information and communication technologies (ICTs) now integral to academic research – and built with the products of Canadian mining imperialism and related processes of resource extraction. In addition to devices such as laptops, cell phones and digital voice recorders functioning as intended, their failures and shortcomings also shaped the project. Missed meetings and missed contributions to shared tasks resulted from mix-ups over calendars and email accounts; a team member's laptop was stolen at a crucial juncture; documents laboriously developed in meetings subsequently failed to save; and data analysis software could not be purchased as the team ran out of time in the grant. As inadequate communication and misunderstandings contributed to many of the project's conflicts, the failure of ICTs in a context where university neoliberalization had generated and worsened time pressures on already-busy people represented an important influence on the generation of knowledge.

Similarly, complications to the production of knowledge in such a university environment stemmed from illnesses, injuries and other dynamics affecting the *bodies of P4A team members*. It was illnesses experienced by U of T faculty interested in land-based learning that led to the postdoc's leadership role in proposal development – and subsequent initiation of conflict upon feeling marginalized in a project into which he had invested substantial work. Over the course of the project, team members from the university and CMC sent regrets or apologies for missing meetings, missing emails or 'dropping the ball' on various group tasks due to health challenges spanning back issues, dental surgery, respiratory infections, emergency room visits, family caregiving responsibilities, repetitive strain injuries related to computer work, a hip replacement, lack of sleep and generalized pervasive overwork. These issues tended to slow down and disrupt the completion of project tasks and reduce or complicate communication opportunities, therefore worsening the time pressures and conflicts that plagued P4A.

Moreover, consistent with political ecology insights on the affective dimensions of health and its diverse entanglements, these issues were shaped by emotional and relational dynamics experienced by team members. As described in an unpublished book chapter, for example, the initial impetus for the professor's engagement with global environmental issues was a bout of intense depression after debilitating back pain left him dependent on painkillers. His subsequent need to 'mourn' P4A's failure to realize its potential illustrates the ongoing relevance of such affective considerations. The postdoc co-PI's affectively formative previous work experience in summer camp and international youth development programs also motivated him to put substantial effort into P4A and shaped his emotionally charged reactions to his perceived marginalization in the project. One CMC organizer also attributed the intensity with which she had experienced and described the frustrations of the P4A partnership to her emotional state in the tumultuous summer of 2017. Conversely, another chose to participate in developing the present article after agreeing that it might serve as a catalyst for a more 'fun' (and less academic) future initiative. As Sara Ahmed (2004) explains, strong emotions experienced in interpersonal interaction help to define the very borders between persons. In the case of P4A, this dynamic may have led to a hardening of distinctions such as those separating 'community' from 'university', or 'professors' from trainees and others precariously employed in academia. Such interactions involving people, their frail bodies and their power-laden interactions with each other represent important influences on the generation of knowledge(s).

Finally, such embodied influences on knowledge generation in P4A were intimately entangled with the land. The centrality of universities to the land dispossession accomplished by settler colonialism has involved intellectual refinement of the objectifying lenses of racism and patriarchy (among other oppressive narratives), occupation of land by universities and use of additional massive land grants to finance university activities (Harvey, 2021; Yang, 2017). After the British and Upper Canadian governments and settlers had systematically undermined livelihoods among the Mississauga Anishinabeg, for example, the 'Toronto Purchase' led to the surrender of 250,808 acres (101,498 ha) of Mississauga land on hugely disadvantageous terms in 1787 and 1805 and set the stage for an 1828 grant of 225,944 acres (91,436 ha) of Crown reserves to U of T's precursor, King's College (Harvey, 2021). U of T today occupies and profits immensely from valuable real estate on formerly Indigenous land in downtown and suburban Toronto (Valverde *et al*., 2020). This land provided by settler colonialism enabled the entire P4A project, but also shaped its conflict-filled progress through dynamics of scarcity and control. Meeting rooms at U of T were often required for project activities but could only be booked by faculty members, which excluded trainees and community partners. The task of booking rooms fell on the shoulders of the project's two faculty members, both with packed schedules. As the conflicts described above emerged, CMC representatives expressed frustration at not being able to book rooms and advocated for meeting spaces outside of the university that would include public parks, coffee shops and the homes of both U of T and CMC team members. The need to pay for rental of the Cobourg Scout Reserve out of project funds that could not be released prior to ethics approval also put considerable pressure on the project team and helped to fuel the conflicts described above. This rented land in Central Ontario making P4A's knowledge generation activities possible was of course similarly made available for non-Indigenous purposes by settler colonialism, which simultaneously created other kinds of 'reserves' such as the nearby Alderville First Nation.

4. Participant experiences in P4A educational offerings

This section reports on the experiences of camp participants, comprising 5 P4A team members who also carried out camp organizing duties, and 9 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from southeastern Canadian academic institutions (characteristics of participants are noted when relevant). While analysis did not employ the specific PEK heuristic structuring the previous section, comparable political ecology themes emerged. First, camp participants voiced themes of desires for community and well-being in relation to the camp. Second, those desires were caught up with heterogenous relationships to the land. Finally, participants extended such narratives to variable affective engagements with societal structures such as colonialism. All emphasis has been added to illustrate key themes.

A primary theme voiced by virtually all participants involved *desires for community and well-being* that camp was seen as potentially satisfying. Numerous participants noted alienating aspects of academia that had brought them to camp, such as a "personal life crisis" related to "being around concrete buildings [that] I believe are making me weaken[ed], sad, and depressed." Such comments frequently invoked a longing for connection with a like-minded or supportive community of peers, with many participants appearing to desire life-changing or transformative experiences. As one explained, "I would like to leave at the end of this camp with the feeling that a journey has started." Another described being "really kind of at a loss and...looking for some community" when they decided to attend camp. One P4A member wrote of his desire for camp to help "open a more direct dialogue with my body". Another participant related her involvement in transformative learning more generally to a previous "setback due to illness."

Positive comments on camp as a learning experience reflected such desires, describing camp as inspiring or energizing or pointing to health benefits. For example, one participant found the camp:

> ...quite interesting, quite **inspiring**. And it was a lot of learning and hearing what other people are doing, how other people are grappling with these questions...The way people are dealing with these questions is also kind of **an emotional and, like, therapeutic way**, because they challenge some of our fundamental ways of making sense of the world and our sense of meaning. And so, that was really interesting to see. I also just really enjoy that kind of experience, community building and being out in nature. I think that's really, **really healthy** and helpful.

Such affective entanglements were also sometimes linked to the personal challenges that had brought many participants to camp, as for the following participant:

> Returning home after camp, I feel calm, and **my anger has dissipated**. Why? I think **the experience was cathartic**. I think that meeting like-minded academics, and seeing commonality in our struggles, but feeling an overall sense of positivity in the group, **made me feel connected**.

Another participant described leaving Camp with a "new appreciation for [the] power of community and what community means [and] new or stronger connections with like-minded people," although the long delay imposed on follow-up to Camp was noted by another:

> When we all dispersed like we had such a...I felt a **strong feeling of community**, and this intention to, you know, keep in touch and keep working, either together or in our own ways, based on what we had learned together. But as far as I know, at least on my part, I hadn't actively kept in touch with anyone.

Consistent with political ecological themes of the importance of non-human elements, moreover, were *variable relationships to the land* that accompanied the relational desires described above. The gathering's land-based characteristics often featured in comments regarding community as a response to the failures of academia:

> What excites me most about this gathering is the opportunity to connect with academics willing to use their engagement with academic institutions in order to push back against the limitations placed on academia by neoliberal policies and market-driven education . . . **Also, that this gathering is planned in a natural setting** – re-grounding academia in nature – aligns with my pedagogical belief about the power of place-based learning, to re-connect, to heal, and to develop mindful ways to move forward in how we live and work.

Similarly, one participant asserted that "being on the land and being with people in nature facilitates a kind of ease and genuine connection you don't have in a classroom or a conference room." As she explained:

> A lot of the academic posturing that tends to happen at conferences, I feel, is stripped away. When you meet in nature, you're all sitting on the ground, you know, and you're dirty. Like you haven't showered and you're not dressed really nicely. You're just present in the way that you would be with your friends or family.

Attesting to the variable nature of land relationships, however, different participants voiced different and sometimes contradictory complaints about the land. One P4A team member suggested that their ability to enjoy the land "in an openhearted way" was compromised by the site's physical characteristics:

> You have this kind of funny lodge, which is right next to the highway and then this big field. And then these kind of, you know, swaths of forest that have been razed to the ground and turned into patches of grass that go part way up the hills for what would have been kind of a junior two bit kind of ski hill place. And so **it's a bit of an odd semi-manufactured environment** with a lot of traffic on the highway. And so it's like, yes, we were out in nature. And at the same time, you know, it's not like some other environments we might've been in.

Importantly, the land in question was covered with significant quantities of poison ivy which several participants noted as an irritant and possible danger that impaired their learning experience (as a feature of disturbed ecosystems, poison ivy also revealed the inescapable impacts of colonial capitalism on the land, and by extension on the bodies of participants). As one participant observed:

> I **didn't love the venue** to be totally honest. I thought that we could have been somewhere nicer. you know. There was a lot of poison ivy everywhere, and the camp leaders were kind of saying, "Oh, you know, poison ivy, it's a strategy that nature is using to keep humans out of a place so that it can regenerate." But poison ivy actually can **cause some very severe reactions** for people. And like I've known people who have had to be hospitalized as a result of coming in contact with poison ivy. So I thought, you know, our, our tents were right in poison ivy fields. I thought that was not ideal.

Other participants' experiences of the camp's physical setting evoked their previous relationships to other lands, notably ones associated with more traditional North American summer camps.

> I grew up going to a summer camp on a lake, by the water and [it] had cabins and all these things. And like the space that we were in had like a lot of poison ivy, for example, and it just wasn't like that accessible. It did not feel that removed from, like, it wasn't like we were submerged in nature. It was like, the road was right there. I don't know. It just didn't have that same kind of atmosphere of like going away and really being, I really hate the term wilderness, but like, kind of in that environment.

Placed together, these varied comments regarding the land reveal contradictory tensions between people's desires for the land and their experience of it, involving land which was at once too wild (with poison ivy) and too domesticated or reminiscent of what participants sought to escape. These reflections trouble the extent to which temporary retreats such as camps truly succeed in bringing participants closer to nature, or merely underscore their separation from it.

One final theme emerging from experiences of the Academics Camp involved *variable affective engagements with societal structures*. Participants once again reacted in ways that reflected their social locations and previous encounters with structures such as universities, colonialism and capitalism. Considerable negative emotion was expressed towards universities and related institutions, as one P4A team member termed university campuses "detention camps for the middle class." Another participant described academia as "a 'competitive' bureaucratic venue where academics or activists are forced by the government/funding agencies to focus more on administrative jobs rather than...on promoting knowledge that challenges deep rooted lines of oppression and exploitation." A description of academia as "a combination of frustration and illumination" also illustrates the fact that most participants also had at least some positive affective links to universities. While such relationships tended not to specify local particularities, one participant pointed out that links among people, universities and society differ geographically.

> I come from [a south Asian country], where the universit[ies] are very weak. So we are kind of aware of learning places outside of [the] university. But here the university [is] the dominant part, it's on the main road of Toronto, it's so visible. It's visible in your life to some degree. But where I came from, of course I went to university but it's not the only way. So let's be aware that [when] we say the university is the centre and we need to critique it, we are speaking of a very particular type of experience of being in North America.

While critiques of universities or capitalism were relatively uncontroversial, variable responses to colonialism and its reflections in the camp held considerable affective weight. In response to an exercise prompting participants to examine how their own "roots and relations pertain or interact with colonialism," for example, one participant wondered:

> Why so much focus on this? Never been all that interested in history, especially – the socio-political stuff. Why not? Is it because of the way it was introduced or taught to me? Maybe I feel like it's an impedance for moving forward? Like an anchor that keeps me from flying.

Moreover, and perhaps reflecting the time pressures constraining development of exercises exploring such complexities, a P4A Indigenous team member with substantial experience working in Indigenous health and cultural safety programming expressed concern that the exercises were too abrupt and had the potential to create an unsafe or (re-)traumatizing environment.

> I think anyone who has spent time looking and thinking about colonization, and the sensitivities around that, would be acutely aware of how triggering that can be for some people. And then to give them a short timeframe to kind of address colonization in 10 minutes or 15 minutes would be tricky and challenging for anyone, including anyone that's new or old to that sort of thinking. And then I guess the lack of potential supports, for people who might be triggered by such sensitivities...Those opportunities to be on the land and being in an open space or be able to explore the land were incredibly useful, especially when you're asking and speaking to such triggering questions.

On a related note, two participants commented with concern on the camp's discussion of Indigenous issues in the absence of Indigenous participants and Knowledge Keepers (the P4A team member referred to immediately above was not involved in planning or leading such discussions).

> There was quite a lot of discussion of decolonizing our work and incorporating Indigenous perspectives. And I really appreciate that and think it's really important, but it felt kind of disconnected in a way. Maybe because there wasn't an Indigenous person there, discussing those issues. So it kind of felt, you know, like just giving lip service to those ideas, but it wasn't really. We weren't able to address them in a meaningful way.

Such reactions to discussions of colonialism underscore the political ecological insight that experiences of the Academics Camp were rooted in affectively rich, variable entanglements among individuals and their bodies, human communities, the land and oppressive institutional structures. Such reactions both demonstrate the Camp's sometimes-unsuccessful attempts to address and unravel these problematic entanglements, and to mirror the multi-scalar entanglements through which the P4A project produced the Academics Camp's pedagogical content, as discussed in the previous section.

5. Discussion

Our analysis provides a detailed case study of the attempted development and delivery of land-based pedagogy within a notably neoliberal and neocolonial university context. Accompanying P4A's conflicts and contradictions were positive and impactful educational experiences via connections among people and the land (tempered by the settler colonial provenance of the land in question). By dropping the pretense of professionalism stemming from academia's hierarchical structures, camp allowed for a more direct experience of reality from which the manufactured environment of academia could be more clearly laid bare. Such experiences, and the entire P4A project, responded to deeply felt desires for community and meaningful relationships that would enable personal healing and ecological and societal transformation. These desires attest to the failure of contemporary higher education to adequately address not just global crises, but also the human needs of individual students and faculty. Simultaneously attending to the planet and to individual people (with their social and ecological entanglements) emerges as a necessity.

The use of a lens understanding both knowledge production and educational experiences as entanglements among bodies, human communities and the land illustrates how oppressive structures are both embodied and resisted by those connected to contemporary universities (see also Newson, 2012). Our integrated approach extends efforts to bring together political ecologies of health and of education (Meek & Khadse, 2022), illustrating how such scholarly knowledge production is itself conditioned by and often complicit with problematic social and material structures (Moulton *et al*., 2021). This broad lens brings into focus a number of implications regarding educational responses to today's health-environment crises, and more generally for life and learning in (or in relation to) contemporary universities. P4A's experience of institutional obstacles related to grant disbursement, mentorship of trainees and pervasive overwork led to the realization that pursuing a genuinely participatory community-university partnership within the grant parameters was a far more ambitious undertaking than the team (or funder) had originally realized. The fact that the rewarding educational design activities sought by both university and community partners were rushed by the substantial administrative labor required to free up funds for them suggests a neoliberal dynamic of scarcity. Put simply, there were not enough such fulfilling opportunities to go around, while there was more than enough academic grunt work imposed by university accountability and competition practices. In the end, faculty, trainees and community partners with shared commitments to participatory and decolonizing approaches all ended up feeling disappointed or marginalized and seemingly reproducing the very power relations P4A was meant to disrupt.

Preparatory work to establish relationships, trust and clarity about roles could likely mitigate such issues, although our analysis shows how attempts at such preparation were foiled by university-imposed time pressures. Attempts to pursue participatory and land-based projects with resources such as single-year social innovation grants and other trends in contemporary universities may be more trouble than they are worth and represent an unacceptable opportunity cost in terms of lost effort and time. Notwithstanding the existing interpersonal connections that preceded P4A, our experience also attests to the need for trusting relationships prior to efforts to take advantage of funding opportunities. More broadly, widespread affective commitments grounded in beliefs about the inherent goodness of universities and academic research should be challenged, in light of ample existing knowledge on relationships of higher education and intellectuals to settler colonial, capitalist

social structures (Gramsci, 1971; Tuck, 2018). Rather than producing more peer-reviewed analyses of such inequities to compete within academia, for example, efforts of critical scholars and community partners could be focused squarely on transforming, refusing, or working outside of universities (Reyes Cruz, 2012; Zembylas, 2021).

Further support for such disruptive conclusions stems from the complicity of our institutional home with land dispossession in Turtle Island (Harvey, 2021) and with efforts by Canada's mining industry to legitimize its profitable global access to mineral and metal resources. The mining imperialism furthered by extractive sector CSR efforts, which insatiably commodifies people and the land and is backstopped by neocolonial and racist narratives, compromises health equity and environmental justice globally (Brisbois *et al*., 2021). Such impacts of extractive-led neoliberal development include progressively reducing the land base available for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada *and around the world* to pursue land-based livelihoods, learning and healing. Participating in the U of T academic community and benefiting from the university's self-described 'world class' status – as most of us in P4A have done – implicitly normalizes such harmful university activities, at the very least by neglecting to actively oppose them. Our analysis shows how a land-based learning project may have negative effects on the lands of communities located far from the universities named in the funding proposal – specifically lands affected by the extractive-led neoliberal development model with which countless universities are complicit (Daigle, 2019).

This contradiction suggests that efforts to pursue *internal* decolonization within Canada and other settler colonial states may benefit from simultaneous attention to parallel decolonizing efforts with respect to *external* relationships linking such states to the global South. Seeking to address local-scale health equity and environmental justice problems with funding and institutional participation that legitimize and reinforce the structures generating the problems in question is common – and problematic (Brisbois *et al*., 2017, 2021). This insight points clearly at the need to address the broader economic model driving the problems being addressed by localized research projects or interventions. This point is made especially clear by U of T's receipt of a 'most sustainable university in the world' ranking in late 2023 based on criteria derived from the Sustainable Development Goals such as "environmental education, research and sustainability…equality, health and well-being…net-zero commitments [and] renewable energy generation" (Kalvapalle, 2023). The results of such a reputational survey and its uses in marketing to students and donors are belied by the more nuanced representation of neoliberal relational exploitations in this article.

Such contradictions should be taken into account in attempts (especially by settlers) to pursue land-based approaches and other nominally emancipatory health-environment initiatives, to avoid legitimizing the very structures that have led to widespread calls for land-based learning. Settlers attracted by land-based approaches must identify, consider, and confront broad entanglements with capitalism if they are to be in good relationships with Indigenous communities and more generally achieve non-extractive relationships with other humans and the land. Of relevance to this point are concerns raised by participants in the Academics Camp about the substantial amount of time devoted to 'Indigenous perspectives' in the absence of Indigenous peoples. While such discussions and ceremonial practices reflect relationships developed over years by the camp's organizers with local Indigenous leaders and communities, questions persist about the degree to which non-Indigenous academics and communities should receive funding for land-based learning approaches.

Gravitation of settler scholars to Indigenous models of human-environment relationships has been described as "hella creepy" when it appropriates Indigenous land relations as a resource to enable success in academia and other competitive marketplaces (Liboiron, 2021, p. 110). In contrast, Indigenous scholars typically link land-based learning and healing practices to very specific resurgence and cultural revitalization efforts in which communities assert their sovereignty and claims to land (Wildcat *et al*., 2014). Land-based projects that do not directly contribute to reasserting Indigenous sovereignty, led, guided or governed by Indigenous communities and adhering to their respective protocols, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), should be considered with caution. Engaging with such guidance on Indigenous leadership in a world where it is incumbent on all of us to undertake transformative, decolonial change is a pressing responsibility.

Related pedagogical suggestions also emerge from observations that camp discussions of colonialism were abrupt and triggering. In addition to less-rushed processes of pedagogical development and preparatory

historical readings on the specific settings of land-based courses (Therrien, Lépy, Boutet, Bouchard, & Keeling, 2021), practitioners in cultural safety and anti-racist education can provide guidance, informed by community lived experiences. The complexity of navigating such power dynamics, manufactured through dominant colonial and capitalist underpinning ideologies and mechanisms, cannot be overstated. We do not presume to have the answers to balance these ongoing tensions, but our results highlight the urgent need for justice and more sustainable, relational and ethical structures, approaches and mechanisms that will serve to foster safe and sustainable knowledge(s) development and ultimately improvements in well-being.

6. Conclusion

Our analysis is in many ways a cautionary tale. However, our embodied political ecology approach allows us to end with possibilities for action. The political ecology of health suggests that decolonial desires within contemporary universities emerge from relationships among bodies, community, social structures and the land (see also Yang, 2017). The fact that such entanglements resist complete representation can also disrupt the hopelessness caused by biomedical and even social scientific analyses of contemporary crises (Hayes-Conroy *et al*., 2022; Nichols & Del Casino, 2021). Critical but compassionate understandings of how people embedded in contemporary universities experience their contradictions can inform resistances that link inner change, community and land relationships to mobilization for broader structural change (Poland, 2020). This can help us to imagine and realize transformation of the inequitable capitalist structures driving global environmental injustice.

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