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ARTICLE

Re-Thinking Intuition as Relational in Education

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Abstract

This article explores what we identify as two forms of intuition. The first is a form called *teacher-intuition,* which is described as expertise-based, rational, and individualised. The second form, *relational-intuition,* is inspired by Intuitive Interspecies Communication and presented as an embodied, reflexive, and connected way of being with/in the more-than-human world. Guided by hermeneutic methodology, anecdotes and research vignettes aid in understanding the ontological and epistemological differences of these two intuitions. We consider how teacher-intuition might unduly limit the possibilities available for ecologically minded pedagogies, especially in comparison to relational-intuition, which opens more ontologically diverse ways to be teacher — thereby expanding one's options for interacting with students and creating space for ecological connection. Wild Pedagogies (Jickling *et al.,* 2018) is drawn upon to help situate relational-intuition. We conclude with questions that educators may consider with regards to the form and range of their own intuitions, with a view to perhaps bringing forward more relational forms.

Keywords: Ecological education; intuition; intuitive interspecies communication; relational-intuition; wild pedagogies

Introduction

Through our reading into intuition, and our respective experiences in education— most often outdoors— we have encountered a disjuncture between what we are articulating, for the purposes of this paper, as two forms of intuition. Our intention is not to create a binary, nor to suggest that there are only two forms of intuition. Rather, there appears to be a gap best discussed by positioning intuition in this manner. The first form is what we call *teacher-intuition*. This intuition, as its name suggests, appears most commonly in educational discussions. It resembles habit and can be further described as expertise-based, rationally explainable, and a possession of the individual. The second form we name is *relational-intuition*. This form is best depicted in multispecies research, particularly the method of Intuitive Interspecies Communication (see Barrett *et al.,* 2021). We see this relational-intuition as involving a reflexive, connected, and embodied way of being with/in the more-than-human world[1].

Our contention is that there are ontological and epistemological implications related to these two forms of intuition that deserve attention, particularly in environmental education, where questions of ecological connection are important. Without an eco-orientation, the teacher-intuition form as conceptualised in the pedagogical literature carries assumptions that may pose problems for "ecologizing education" (Blenkinsop & Kuchta, 2024). In comparison, relational-intuition leans into different ontological and ecological directions — directions that diverge from

[1]Our use of Abram's (1996) terms "more-than-human" is in place of nature, natural world, environment, etcetera.

the norms of modern western culture concerning what it means to be human, how we communicate, how we know, and who has the right to be heard.

We are not dismissive of what is articulated as teacher-intuition as there are many positives to this form. Likewise, we are not disparaging of existing literature and research on intuition. However, we do wonder, with the benefit of ongoing criticality and immersive-relationality, what the educational possibilities may be for expanding one's intuition to include that which is more relational and inclusive of the more-than-human. As such, the prospect of opening-up and rewilding the range of possibilities for intuition within education is appealing.

The questions that inspire this inquiry are as follows: How are these intuitions different? What are the educational implications of these differences? What might happen if we open up intuition in education in a more relational way? This paper is hermeneutically guided, theoretically exploratory, and arose through author conversations, school-based research, and examination of intuition literature. It is also a theoretical wandering into two encountered intuitions, offered as an admittedly incomplete conversation starter that invites further consideration and dialogue.

In the next section, we provide some context for intuition as it appears in Wild Pedagogies (Jickling *et al.,* 2018). Following this, we show how hermeneutic methodology guides our inquiry. We then explore the two forms of intuition mentioned above in relation to our questions and the literature. We present anecdotes and vignettes from our experiences and school-based research to illustrate these two intuition forms. Considerations and implications for education are woven throughout the paper, and we close with questions for educators to perhaps consider.

Wild pedagogies: intuition

In the text, *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Renegotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene*, the authors recommend that students have the opportunity to nurture their intuition (Jickling *et al.,* 2018, p. 94–97). Reference to "intuition" predominantly appears in the section for touchstone, Time and Practice. The description for this touchstone is as follows, "We believe that building relationships with the natural world will, like any relationship, take time. We also believe that discipline and practice are essential to this process" (Jickling *et al.,* 2018, p. 92). In response, we ask what are the possibilities for intuition in helping to build relationships with the more-than-human world? How might the differing conceptions of intuition in education pose problems or open spaces for this relationship building? In the coming section we describe our use of hermeneutic methodology before turning to teacher-intuition.

Methodology

Hermeneutic methodology is an approach focused on interpreting and understanding the meaning of human actions, behaviour, texts, and cultural phenomena (Moules *et al.,* 2015). When using hermeneutic methodology, the emphasis is on the interpretation for understanding, rather than explanation (Moules *et al.,* 2015). In this paper, we engage hermeneutically to understand the meanings of the anecdotes and vignettes, using them to illuminate the topic of our inquiry.

Hermeneutics is not methodologically strict; rather, the interpretive work is initially guided by "a deliberate showing of questionablness, intentionally allowing the topic to guide the direction of the character of the work" (Moules *et al.,* 2015; p. 5). As such, we are called to "proceed attentively" to this "questionablness" with hermeneutics as a practice of interpreting for understanding (Moules *et al.,* 2015; p. 5). Having engaged with the anecdotes and vignettes, it is our view that they offer insight to the questions we hold. The anecdotes and vignettes are, for us, what Jardine (2008) refers to as "worthwhile experiences" (p. 1). These are, according to Jardine (2008), "worthy of rest and repose, worthy of returning, worthy of tarrying and remembering, of taking time, of whiling away our lives in their presence" (p. 1). Such experiences stand out in our

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memory and our research, inviting exploration in light of our inquiry — hence their inclusion in this paper.

Our process is as follows: We engage in the "Hermeneutic Circle" — responding, listening, and being immersed in the anecdotes and vignettes (Moules *et al.,* 2015, p. 122). We study the details of each, noticing the particulars, identifying understandings, and moving toward broader meanings (Moules *et al.,* 2015). In doing so, we explore the ontological and epistemological implications for more-than-human, human, teacher, student and pedagogy related to these two forms of intuition. Educational literature on intuition and multispecies research are drawn upon, influencing our interpretation.

We acknowledge that prior experiences, positionality, assumptions, and knowledge influence our interpretation. Conversations about the anecdotes and vignettes have helped us to recognise our prejudices and refine the interpretation. We also understand that interpretation is partial, never complete, and that there is always further meaning to behold (Moules *et al.,* 2015).

In the next section, we articulate the teacher-intuition form. The intention is, firstly, to better understand this form, and secondly, to help set up our concerns in relation to the desire of Wild Pedagogies to deepen relations with the more-than-human world. This is done through sharing two short, recognisable, and pedagogical anecdotes — or at least, ones we think are recognisable. Following, we turn to educational literature on intuition. We then discuss the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the anecdotes and how they are potentially worrisome, both ecologically and relationally.

Teacher-intuition

It is a clear, bright, and sunny day and twenty-five grade two students are quietly listening to the world and seeking out "interesting questions" as the teacher has requested. Amidst the buzz of excitement, one student screams out, "Why is the sky blue?" The teacher, somewhat harried and lacking the time to really respond, relies on their well-developed teacher-intuition— an intuition informed by their experience, professional training, and culture. The teacher responds habitually, and efficiently with a scientific answer about the scattered distribution of light. The answer appears to satisfy, and the teacher turns to the next excited query and offers another answer.

Second anecdote. Author One remembers sitting in a lecture hall when she first heard intuition described in an educational context. Here, intuition was articulated by the sessional instructor, a former principal and esteemed member of the faculty, in this way: *When you are an experienced teacher there will come a time when you won't even need to think. Instead, you'll just function from your intuition, and you'll be quick, making the day-to-day mundane of being a teacher easier.* The impression was that intuition was a kind of skill— rationally developed and a benchmark for new teachers to reach.

These anecdotes pique our curiosity. They suggest certain conceptions of intuition within education that differ from those presented in other venues (e.g. interspecies communication and research). As scholars with interests in ecological education, we wonder why these differences exist — and what happens to our relationships with the more-than-human world when it is encountered and understood through the ways and assumptions of teacher-intuition.

Intuition in education

Here we offer a quick review of the dominant form that intuition takes in education. This is not a comprehensive review but rather touches on the important conversations about intuition in education that informs our understanding of teacher-intuition.

In the educational literature intuition is understood as being developed over time and thus derived from a growing expertise (Sadler-Smith, 2008; Waks, 2006). Sadler-Smith (2008) describes intuition as "based in prior learning experiences" (p. 31). Similarly, Waks (2006) explains intuition

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as originating from "memory" (p. 384). This conception of intuition as based in expertise is commonly associated with leadership (Claxton, 2006; Sadler-Smith, 2008; Waks, 2006), and decision-making (Sinclair & Ashkanasy, 2005), especially in management and business education (Sadler-Smith & Burke, 2009; Sinclair & Ashkanasy, 2005). Comparatively, Garipova (2018) considers intuition as important for "teacher cognitivity" and the development of competencies such as leadership (Garipova, 2018, p. 926). Leaders draw upon their intuition, developed over time, to make quick, effective decisions; thus, intuition is an important skill for those in leadership roles to develop (Sadler-Smith, 2008).

In a qualitative study, seventeen primary school teachers were interviewed about decision-making. Researchers Vanlommel and colleagues (2017) concluded, "that teachers' decision-making processes are affected by intuitive expertise and feelings of knowing to a great extent. Teachers hardly use data that are collected deliberately and systematically to inform decision making" (p. 82). It can be said, then, that teachers rely on their storehouse of historical experience to inform even their immediate decisions — decisions made quickly, in the moment, without apparent acts of deliberation but supported by extensive experience, which are considered intuitive.

To explore the role of intentionality and intuition in facilitation, Thomas (2008) conducted interviews and observations with seven educator facilitators. In this study, intuition is described as "the circumstances when an experienced facilitator is not able to articulate a clear rational for their actions, yet they are still able to facilitate effectively" (p. 5). The findings indicate intuition as both important, and crucial for facilitation (Thomas, 2008). To develop intuition, Thomas (2008) recommends the following, "experience through reflective practice, observe experienced facilitators in action, and find suitable mentors who can help" (p. 18). There is an emphasis on intuition as forming from, and as an ongoing refinement of, one's expertise, in order to facilitate effectively and efficiently.

We turn to Sadowski (2017), who gives a comprehensive overview of intuition in education, including a critique concerning intuition as forming from expertise:

> "Framing intuition as a result of expertise may be a rhetorical tactic used to create distance from explanations that are uncomfortable or unspeakable within a positivist paradigm. However, such treatments of the subject can be left 'thin', reducing the complex perceptual, hermeneutic, and affective functions of intuition to a rational, intellectual process (p. 51)."

A rationally explainable intuition based on expertise may miss the presence of another form of intuition (Sadowski, 2017). The form that expresses itself in the context of the present moment can be overlooked if all the emphasis is placed on past experiences and rational grounding. Sadowski (2017) notes an additional challenge; "limiting the explanation for intuition to a cognitive, rational framework leaves a range of common intuitive experiences unaccounted for" (Sadowski, 2017, p. 78). Reducing intuition to what is rationally explainable restricts the breadth and depth of intuitive experiences and diverse understandings.

Interviews with teachers confirmed the importance of intuition in situations that require pedagogical tact — the ability to deal with complex classroom situations requiring immediate attention (Sipman *et al.,* 2019, p. 1186; Sipman *et al.,* 2021). Interestingly, the educational practitioners expressed concern, noting the extent to which "rational processes overshadow intuitive ones in unproductive ways" (p.1199). Noddings and Shore (1984) indicate that rational biases can, indeed, discredit, or limit a range of intuitive experience all together. In a different study, Valle (2017) explored teacher's intuitive interactions in a classroom context. Valle's (2017) understanding of intuitive action is based in the Western philosophical tradition; "intuitive actions are seen as an insight, an ability to realise what is happening, what would be the wise course of action, or which means, in a given situation, will lead to the best result" (Valle, 2017, p. 246).

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Sadowski (2017) raises an additional important critique that is relevant to conceptions of intuition, and teacher-intuition:

> "... some of the definitions [of intuition] appear to a rationalist, functionalist structure, where what gets called intuition may be better explained as rapid, unconscious cognition enabled by expertise and experience" (p. 62).

This critique from Sadowski (2017) has us wondering if what we have encountered as teacher-intuition could be limiting the potential range of intuition or even indicative of something other than intuition all together.

Sadowski (2017) observed that "academic writers traditionally either ignore intuition altogether or else appeal to an explanation of it that emphasises its rational, expert aspects" (p. 35). The scope of intuition becomes limited if adhering only to its deemed rational qualities. For an expanded conception of intuition, turning to other knowledge systems than those of the Western purview is an avenue for exploration (Sadowski, 2017). Barrett and Wuetherick (2012) report on data that was gathered from students who were part of a graduate course, which explored the connections between students' personal knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing in environmental decsion making. In this course, intuition was used as a key bridging concept to faciliate greater considerationa and understanding of diverse ways of knowing. Other ways of knowing can also help undo the 'intuition as individual possession' assumptions that undergird the teacher-intuition form, allowing us to think differently about the self. Perhaps even opening space, as Sadowski (2017) suggests, to consider the intuitor as being "contextual, inter-subjective, and always in relationship" (p. 124). Burns (2024), for example, follows this thread in their work related to the role of intuition in transformative eco-spiritual learning (p. 119–125).

In summary, the educational literature on intuition predominantly focuses on a form of intuition rooted in experience, built up over time, and grounded in expertise. The teacher-intuition form also appears to be rationally explained, even though it is often employed in complex situations where decisions must be made quickly. Furthermore, teacher-intuition is clearly a possession of the individual teacher. In the next section, we turn to the ontological and epistemological assumptions that might undergird the form of teacher-intuition. The anecdotes are reflected back upon to illustrate these assumptions.

Ontological

There are ontological and epistemological assumptions and implications that underly both anecdotes and the forms of intuition as we understand them. These onto-epistemological assumptions may pose problems and/or possibilities for the more-than-human. We will begin by addressing the ontological. First, in the anecdotes, there is the giving of a perceived right answer. This intuitive response — to give the oneright answer, as though there is a right answer — rests on a series of ontological assumptions that notably prioritise the individual human and alienate humans from other beings. These assumptions tend to underpin public education in Canada. How might these assumptions be upheld? Battiste (2005) describes that humans are "marinated" in a Eurocentric consciousness (p. 124) with teachers too "marinated" in a modernist education system (Jickling *et al.,* 2018, p. 33). This time spent being educated and then educating others through immersion in modern western schooling shapes one's teacher ontology — the way of being teacher (see Kincheloe's (2011) "critical ontology" and its relationship to being teacher). We are left wondering to what extent intuition is formed and continually shaped by education and cultural framings, and what the subsequent effects might be.

The individuality of teacher-intuition is apparent. Being teacher through teacher-intuition — where there is an individualistic emphasis — may abstract the self from the world, resulting in a sense of disconnect. Intriguingly — and we explore this below — relational-intuition involves a

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presentness and a willingness to listen to the world as it communicates, in whatever way, directly with you. This strand is in contrast to the the rationalistic, "know where this comes from," built-over-time concepts that undergird teacher-intuition. Without an eco-orientation, there may be be a lack of reflexivity about how one's way of being teacher affects the more-than-human. For example, the more-than-human blue-sky in the anecdote is spoken about and to — but not with, through, or listened to (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013; Jickling *et al.,* 2018). Speaking "about" and "to" tends to axiologically position the more-than-human as lesser-than human. This alienation of the more-than-human for their supposed "limited" communicative abilities is a colonial manoeuvre that works to the advantage of certain humans (Blenkinsop et al., 2016). Evernden (1993) echoes this when he speaks of symbolically severing "the larynx of the biosphere" (p. 17). What he means by this is that cutting the vocal cords of the more-than-human it eases the burden of our use and exploitation.

In addition to ecological implications, teacher-intuition can have worrying issues related to inclusion, diversity, and social justice. For instance, intuition in this form, at times, is more like habituation. A habit that has become an intuited response over the tenure of a teacher's career may have blind spots, systemic racisms, and western epistemological assumptions that would make those intuitive responses different to those developed by a teacher today. Without critical reflexivity, it can be difficult to notice implications for both more-than-human and human.

Epistemological

Ontology asks what it means to be, whereas epistemology asks how we can know, what knowledge is, and the how meaning is created. For a relational-intuition to flourish, there is a need to renegotiate the ontology of being teacher, as well as to reconsider how knowledge is understood and how meaning is made differently. By expanding the space to "do" teacher-intuition differently — such as by supporting a relational form — both the being of teacher and the assumptions of what knowledge is, and where it might be located, must change. The above anecdote of teacher-intuition reveals epistemological assumptions about how knowledge works, where knowledge is located, and how meaning is made. It assumes that knowledge is a possession of someone — usually an adult human expert — and that it is fragmented, transferable, complete in its presentation, and independent of context.

With these illustrations of teacher-intuition there is the assumption that knowledge is fixed; there is one right answer to the question that is independent of context (Snowberry & Blenkinsop, 2010). The answer is transferable from any context to another. There is also the assumption that the teacher is the expert and the one who provides the answer (Blenkinsop & Ford, 2018). This assumed rationally explainable answer to "Why is the sky blue?" is intrinsically closed off to both the world and the student (see Snowberry & Blenkinsop, (2010) for another example). Regardless of where, when, or by whom the question is asked, the answer is the same for any given place or time. With knowledge as fixed within the habit-formed intuition, it prevents other ways of coming to know that are sensorial, relational, embodied, incomplete, and impermanent (Blenkinsop & Ford, 2018). The easy offering of teacher-intuition might suppress the potential to discover that knowledge is more shared, interconnected, and incomplete than previously assumed.

There is also an assumption that the knowledge providing the answer is locatable. For example, located in science textbooks, and reached through objectivity, experiments, and equations (Snowberry & Blenkinsop, 2010). The modern western education system supports this way of knowing. Knowledge is further understood as fragmented, with the distribution of light providing the only answer to why the sky is blue. Instead of consulting only human sources, perhaps we might turn to the wind, the clouds, and winged critters — those who may have a different sense as to why the sky is blue. In doing so, we create space for the more-than-human as co-teachers to enter the conversation (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010; Ford & Blenkinsop, 2018; Jickling *et al.,* 2018; Quay, 2013; Styres, 2011). Alternatively, the question could be returned back to the student

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(Snowberry & Blenkinsop, 2010) to probe their own intuitive sense-making as to why, how, when, and from whom they understand the sky as blue.

It is our suspicion that this predominant form of teacher-intuition is culturally framed and supported, while being implicitly restrictive. The problematics with teacher-intuition are not the fault of the teacher, but perhaps reflective of a modernist system of power. It is a kind of culturally allowable, or controlled, intuition, as it were. The dominant paradigms of the modern western world fundamentally doubt the function — even the existence— of a more fluid, relational, immediate, and unexplainable intuition (Sadowski, 2017). Historially, listening to other forms of intuition has been considred an unreliable and delegitimised way of knowing (Sadowski, 2017). Furthermore, these forms of intuition have often been seen as the purview of women and in a misogynist society, consequently devalued (Sadowski, 2017). It is anticipated that the accepted form of teacher-intuition has been framed to make sense and fit comfortably within these dominant paradigms, driven by reason, explainability, clear causation, and individual experience. To renegotiate teacher-intuition in a more ecological direction asks teachers to carry themselves differently in the world, and that all those involved in education, work to challenge the dominant versions of education that shape how we are expected to be (Jickling et al., 2018).

Wild Pedagogies take seriously the need to renegotiate relationships with the more-than-human world (Morse *et al.,* 2018). Education has an important role in this relationship building (Jickling *et al.,* 2018). For this reason, exploring the potential unecological implications of this form of teacher-intuition and then proposing relational-intuition as one way to be teacher differently is important to the project of Wild Pedagogies. For education to operate in ecological ways it would help to shift from an ontology of separation and individualisation to relationality with world, more-than-human, and humans. There is a need to challenge ingrained beliefs, and problematic epistemological assumptions that have been imprinted through schooling, social-isation, and acculturation. We see relational-intuition as offering options for being teacher and helping in this Wild Pedagogies work of relationship building.

This leads us to wonderings: If we are to reframe intuition — drawing on the work of scholars who engage with different understandings of it — and create space for intuition in education, could this allow education and educators to be differently? Might knowing and understanding change? Could this open space for a more relational and ecologically rich schooling — one that is more just, more inclusive of humanity's diversity and the more-than-human, and more directly interested in the project of "mutual flourishing" (Kimmerer, 2013) ? This relational-intuition might be pivotal to supporting the aims of Wild Pedagogies.

Relational-intuition

In this section, we articulate another form: relational-intuition. A more expansive, less-sanctioned form that leans in ontological, epistemological, and ecological directions that are different to what we have encountered as teacher-intuition. Our wondering is whether teacher-intuition might benefit from partnering with or leaving space for relational-intuition in order for education to head in different and hopefully more ecologizing directions.

Vignette 1: River

To describe our thinking about relational-intuition, we offer two research vignettes. The first was experienced by Author One with a student we call, River. Our use of vignettes help to hold the experiences and perceptions of participants (Agostini *et al.,* 2023, 2024). The vignettes reveal hidden meanings and intriguing facets of the lived experience (Agostini *et al.,* 2023, 2024). Hermeneutic methodology informs the interpretation of these experiences, and our giving life to them through written accounts (Moules *et al.,* 2015). We describe each vignette,— our admittedly

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incomplete interpretation of meaning — and the insights for relational-intuition, including the ontological and epistemological differences.

For context, Author One, River, and another student, Reed, were walking on a path back to the circle spot to finish the day. Reed was sharing the languages he spoke and mentioned that he would like to learn Tree. This prompted, River, to disclose that she speaks with trees.

> Reed: "I want to learn to speak French, and I want to learn to speak Tree."
> Teacher: "Can humans speak with trees?"
> River who is a shy six-year-old and has been mostly silent on this walk back to the meeting spot, pipes up.
> River: "We can speak to trees!" (said with excitement, certainty, and assurance).
> River then abruptly stops on the path. She bows her head, closes her eyes, and stands quietly for a moment. Then, River gathers herself and begins walking again without saying anything or making eye contact.
> Teacher: "River, were you speaking to Tree just now?
> River: "Yes . . . "
> Teacher: "Can you tell me how you speak to Tree?"
> River: " Well, you just have to listen."
> Teacher: "Can you tell me more about speaking with Tree?"
> River: "They speak through the wind, and I just feel Tree speaking to me."
> Teacher: "What does it feel like to speak to Tree?"
> River: "I just feel it . . . I just know."
> Teacher: "What does Tree say?"
> River: "They say hello, and they ask me how I am."
> Teacher: "What does speaking with Tree feel like in your body?"
> River: "I don't know, it is just that I know they speak to me, I can just feel it in my body."

Reflecting on this experience, there is something evidently happening between River and Tree. Our curiosity was further piqued when exploring Intuitive Interspecies Communication research (IIC) (Barrett *et al.,* 2021; Wijngaarden, 2023; Kuppenbender, 2024; see also Erickson *et al.,* 2014, 2016; Hafen, 2013; Kulick, 2021). This form of intuitive communication is described by Barrett *et al.* (2021) as,

> IIC presents as a detailed, non-verbal and non-physical form of communication between humans and other animals. Drawing on a diversity of intuitive capacities, IIC includes the mutual exchange of visceral feelings, emotions, mental impressions and thoughts, embodied sensations of touch, smell, taste, sound, as well as visuals in the mind's eye. While these exchanges can occur while in direct physical proximity to the animal, they can also occur over great distances and without the need for visual, auditory, olfactory, voice or other cues that humans normally associate with direct interactive communication (Barrett *et al.,* 2021, p. 151).

IIC has been studied as a multispecies method for, in Wijngaarden's (2023) words, "doing research *with* rather than *on* animals" (p. 2). For example, Wijngaarden (2023) interviewed wild and domesticated felines through experienced Animal Communicators (AC) who used IIC to exchange information with the animals. ACs are individuals who are experienced in IIC and draw on their developed intuitive abilities to engage in two-way communication with animals (Barrett *et al.,* 2021; Wijngaarden, 2023). Most of the IIC research to date has been with animals but there are growing accounts of IIC with plants as well. Notably, a recent dissertation from Kuchta (2024) presents IIC field work with trees.

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Returning to the vignette, we wonder whether Author One had witnessed a moment of IIC happening unprovoked by a teacher, but intentionally between River and Tree. Through IIC we can rethink interactions between children and more-than-humans, like that experienced by River. Considering IIC further helps us to explore a different framing of intuition that aligns with the more-than-human relationship building priorities of environmental education and Wild Pedagogies.

IIC informs our thinking about a different form of intuition in education for several reasons. First, individuals who experience or practice IIC like ACs draw on their intuitive abilities for engaging in a relational exchange of communication with more-than-humans (Barrett *et al.,* 2021). Compared to the meanings associated with teacher-intuition (e.g. individualised leadership quality), the framing of intuition in IIC as a relational exchange of information (Barrett *et al.,* 2021) — drawing upon one's abilities for connecting to the more-than-human— presents intuition as a more relational or connected function with the world. Despite intuition being difficult to define (Cairns-Lee, 2020), intuition presenting as a function to communicate with other beings is quite different to teacher-intuition.

Second, scholarship tells us that children may be naturally intuitive (Tillmanns, 2017). If we are to think about interspecies communication made possible through redefining and refining one's intuition as presented in IIC — coupled with assuming children are naturally intuitive — if given the space to lean into their intuitive abilities, then is communication like that experienced between River and Tree something yet to be fully realised? Additionally, some ACs have described having the ability to communicate with animals since childhood (see Smith, 2008, p. 2– 5; Diedrich, 2005). It has use wonder whether dominant ways of being and doing — even those encouraged by teacher-intuition — cause us to miss, discredit, or ignore the relational intuitive experiences of our students.

In their description, Barrett *et al.* (2021) note some intuitive capacities that are drawn upon by ACs when they engage in IIC. These capacities include "visceral feelings" and "mental impressions and thoughts" (Barrett *et al.,* 2021, p. 151). Considering these capacities when examining River's experiences makes the similarities in how the commuication was recieved more evident. River noted that she "feels" the communication and just "knows."

In addition to IIC, there are also other scholars working with an understanding of intuition in education that is more relational. Burns (2024) considers nonlocality entanglement (despite space and time, phenomena are interconnected, able to influence one another) taking shape as intuition. For Burns (2024), connecting to intuition is, in their words, "a shift into nonlocality, and a shift away from a sense of self that is limited or separate (the ego self), to an ecological self that is profoundly energetically and physically interconnected with the earth and all life" (p.120; also see Macy, 2016). Intuition is a part of the exchange and interaction of energy within an interconnected, shared world that flows through us and is readily accessible — provided there is a letting go of an individualistic and separate sense of self (Burns, 2024).

Burns's (2024) understanding of intuition as a form of entanglement, exchange of information, and an interconnected sense of self is different to that encountered in the other educational intuition literature, but comparable in some respects to the intuitive experience of IIC. Ideas of non-locality, entanglement, and intuition are not generally accepted in most schooling (Burns, 2024), a point further echoed by Sadowski (2017).

Wanting a different framing of intuition than what is typically found in the educational literature led Sadowski (2017) to turn to spiritual or "self-help books" — despite their status as non-academic sources. These books helped Sadowski (2017) to form a different conception of intuition that aligns with transpersonal theory. This theory, in their words, "accounts for an extended range of intersubjective, and transpersonal consciousness" (p. 3). Intuition in this form is not a subjective, but rather an intersubjective experience (Sadowski, 2023). Sadowski (2023) then goes on to describe the experience of intuition in this conception as "a relationship, a matter of connection and resonance" (p. 88). This understanding of intuition — as an intersubjective

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experience, mode of consciousness, relationship, communication, and a connection across species and between individuals that allows for relationality — is vastly different from the individualised teacher-intuition described above. The latter, with its underlying assumptions, may not only obscure this more relational and ecologically aware form of intuition, but more critically, hinder substantive change in education.

What we have shared here about relational-intuition bears some similarities to Indigenous onto-epistemologies. Castellano (2000), a Mohawk scholar, describes "revealed knowledge" as a source of Indigenous ways of knowing. This source, Castellano *et al.,* (2000) notes, "is acquired through dreams, visions, and intuitions that are understood to be spiritual in origin" (p. 24). An additional mention of intuition is from the Secwépemc nation. Some members note that intuition has a role in their knowledge and attentiveness to the more-than-human world (Robertson, 2017).

Relationality with the more-than-human world is central to Indigenous epistemologies (Kimmerer, 2013). For example, in their article, Donald (2016) describes the teachings of the Cree term "wahkohtowin" as denoting a kinship relationship that asks one to expand their relational network to be inclusive of the more-than-human world. Adding to this kinship relationship, Van Horn *et al.,* (2021) use the verb "kinning" to describe the ongoing process of "(re)connect[ing] our bodies, mind, and spirits" with/in the world (p. 3–4). A world where trees, animals and all other living beings have voices and are listened to (Deloria Jr., 2003).

The mentioned scholarship provides a different way to think about intuition. What could understanding and making space for intuition in a more relational, and less rationalisable form like that of IIC mean for education? How can we challenge the dominant paradigms to allow for a different sense of intuition? How might IIC already be manifesting in our education practice without us being aware? How can we encourage these intuitive experiences for nurturing multispecies relationships?

Vignette two: Raven

We provide an additional vignette from the second author's research. This vignette first appeared in the article titled, *Listening to the Literial: Orientations towards how Nature Communicates* (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013).

Raven who was nine years old at the time shares her experience communicating with plants:

> Researcher: "So do you *hear* the plant?"
> Raven: "Yeah, but you have to hear it through your heart."
> Researcher: "I was going to ask where you hear it . . . do you hear it in your heart?"
> Raven: "Little words curl into your mind. You have to know that you're not thinking."
> Another day the researcher asks her again what the process of listening to the natural world is like for her . . .
> Raven: "This sounds funny, you're focused on something but you're not actually thinking about it. If you're thinking than you're not really listening. See I can't do it now when I'm talking."
> Researcher: "Do you feel like you have 'conversations' with the natural world?"
> Raven: "It's not exactly like that, it's not 'speaking' it's more like energy or signals. You don't hear it out loud. It's something that your mind and only your mind can understand because nature is that open to any language. So, if you were just thinking, not even in your language, just showing pictures, it would still work."
> Researcher: "The conversation you mean?"
> Raven: "Yes, it doesn't have to be 'speaking'."
> Researcher: "So you mentioned 'energies' and 'signals' what did you mean by that?"
> Raven: "Well see you speak your way, they speak different ways, like thousands of different ways. Billions. It's like the birds with those signals, like when you see a bird flapping up in the

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sky and a flock of birds how they all move at the same time, it's because they tell each other like through mental speaking. (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013, p. 53–54)

Ontological and epistemological differences

Raven and River's vignettes help us to understand how ontology and epistemology might change if we take this idea of relational-intuition seriously and make space for it in education. First, consider what the experience with River in contrast with "Why is the sky blue?" reveals about the differences in being teacher. For River there is not an easy habit-formed answer to the question that aligns with the dominant paradigm. There is a shift away from finding the resolution or right answers. Instead, we see an open-endedness to what is being experienced. The teacher is asking questions, engaging with, and honouring the student's experience. Questions are framed to explore what River and Raven are feeling, sensing, and intuiting from other beings, allowing for opportunities to lean in and build relationships in ways that differ from the status quo. According to Orr (1994), "we experience nature mostly as sights, sounds, smells, touch and tastes — as a medley of sensations that play upon us in complex ways. But we do not organise education in the same way we sense the world" (p. 94). River and Raven are exemplars of experiencing the world, as described by Orr (1994), and they also point to the potentials — such as relationality— when given the opportunity to do so. See McClarty (2024) as an example of immersive and embodied learning with the more-than-human.

In Raven's vignette she shares her experience of the world. Her way of being can be described as deeply relational and inextricably intertwined (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013). This is a different way of being — one that is given space to exist — compared to the individualism associated and following the teacher-intuition form. Instead, for Raven, there is an openness to the more-than-human world that includes different languages, and ways of communicating across species lines. We see Raven express how she experiences communication and what it looks like to live into this embodied sense of relationality with the world. As with with River, the teacher honours the somatic and sensorial way that Raven encounters the world, which in turn shapes her coming to know it.

In fact, in both vignettes, it appears difficult for both River and Raven to put into words what they are experiencing. An explanation might be that it is natural for them to be in communication with the more-than-human world (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013). For these students, there is perhaps no alternative to this relational way of being. An alternative ontology — such as one of separation — is a learned orientation, one that they are schooled into. Reflexivity in how one is being teacher in the world becomes important when considering ontologies. Giving space to a relational-intuition — catching and slowing one's inclination to lead through "teacher-intuition" — creates space for students like River and Raven to engage in their intuitive sense-making, and live out their relationality.

These vignettes push back on hierarchies and dichotomies that surround who knows, how we know, and who gets to know. First, there is an honouring of the body, and coming to know in diverse sensorial and extra sensorial ways. Further, there is an acknowledging of River and Raven's knowing, and the knowing of more-than-human beings. The more-than-human world is considered agentic, a knowledge keeper, and capable ofcommunicating experiences and desires.

What is considered rationally unexplainable is given space. For example, River doesn't specify whether she is communicating with a particular tree, or perhaps a collective tree consciousness. It is not known if Tree is in physical proximity or at a distance. Raven points to a shift in awareness — intentionally not thinking while in communication — and recognizies that rational thought can interfere with other forms of communication.

In both vignettes, the human-teachers leave space, and honour sense-making while perhaps recognising the edges of their own intuition. Do they notice themselves wanting to say that "trees don't communicate" or smiling over the immature, and imaginative ideas being expressed here?

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Does the teacher perhaps notice the desire to jump in and correct or re-direct to something "important"? How would your teacher-intuition respond in these kinds of situations? And then how might teacher-intuition be changed if one wanted to allow River and Raven the space to be differently?

Taking these differences in intuitive form seriously can nurture different ways of being. Blenkinsop and Kuchta (2024) reminds us that, "the more our relational selves grow, the more capacity we have to connect with others, human and more-than-human" (p. 68). Relational-intuition may open ways to be more ecologically connected. This relational form of intuition is about connection over individualisation, and relationship instead of domination. It challenges the idea of the autonomous individual, the culturally assumed boundaries amongt humans, and those between the more-than-human world. Instead of operating from a rationalistic, mind-oriented way of being that encourages a disconnect between the body and context, relational-intuition is embodied and embedded. Our understanding of the world is limited if we only abide by an intuition that is framed to what is considered rationally explainable and experientially developed.

Wild pedagogies and relational-intuition

Relational-intuition lurks throughout Wild Pedagogies. For example, the touchstone, *Learning that is Loving, Caring and Compassionate* (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020) states, "we believe that humans are able, if given the opportunity, to develop rich relationships with myriad members of the more-than-human world. And, that these relationships of reciprocal care are part of overcoming the alienation that exists between many humans and the natural world" (p. 126). Being differently through relational-intuition can provide an opportunity to develop relationships and renegotiate them in ways that challenge long held assumptions about the more-than-human.

Relational-intuition can further be considered as a Wild Pedagogies move to "rewild" intuition. To push back on the control in education that can impact, restrict, and misinterpret intuition all together. This rewilding of intuition in a relational sense is not a solo endeavour, but in partnership with the more-than-human world for the intention of building relationships that are equitable and just. Wild Pedagogies states, "new, or maybe ancient, relationships are required for renewed flourishing to be possible, and achieving these relationships will require unsettling changes" (Jickling *et al.,* 2018, p. 24). Opening space for and honouring a different kind of intuition through pedagogy and practice can encourage more relational ways of being.

Conclusion

This paper explored two intuitions: teacher-intuition and relational-intuition. Anecdotes from our experiences and vignettes from our research were used to illustrate both intuitions. We showed how teacher-intuition can have unecological orientations and how it can be different from a relational sense of intuition. Scholarship on IIC informed the concept of relational-intuition. We posed questions for further exploration into intuition, and for curious educators to consider in expanding understandings of intuition.

Research on intuition is said to be challenging given the lack of consensus on what intuition is (Cairns-Lee, 2020). A further challenge, noted by Sadowski (2017), is a lack of discussion on intuition in education. This paper contributes to existing conversations and answers the call for intuition research in educational contexts, particularly in schools. Our paper further adds to this growing field that bridges environmental research — specficially IIC — and education, sparking conversation and opening new possibilities theoretically and pedagogically.

This paper highlights the importance of considering intuition in the context of education which may have far-reaching effects on more-than-human and human relationships. Considering a different form of intuition may create space to actively listen to others, thereby contributing to diverse and multispecies ways of knowing. This paper has practical implications for education, as

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it highlights the importance of bringing conversations about intuition to the forefront and being critical about the different meanings of intuition. We recommend professional development opportunities for teachers specific to a relational form of intuition in education. Further, we also recommend a review of the processes and structures of education that restrict or discount a range of intuitions and intuitive experience. Education policy makers could consider different ways of knowing, including intuitive and multispecies ways, in combination with the dominant forms.

To support the building of multispecies relationships, teacher-intuition may benefit from the kinds of considerations presented here. For example, partnering with and actively including relational-intuition can expand teachers' options to be more ecologically connected and open up possibilities for how to be human in a more-than-human world. This could involve habits formed through expertise while remaining open to the spontaneous, mysterious, seemingly non-rational, and animate world. It might also include engaging in ongoing criticality and immersive relationality in place, and being reflexive about self and world, with multispecies relationships at the forefront of practice.

We suspect that the phenomenon of intuition is bound by modern western cultural frames with colonial undercurrents. Thus, our expansion of intuition in a relational sense becomes not just a personal act of doing and undoing, but a response to broader colonial and oppressive framings of education that restrict intuitive sense-making and more-than-human agency. This is a call to educate differently — a furthering of Wild Pedagogies that extends practice. The form of teacher-intuition that we have presented can be culturally framed and may abide by problematic assumptions that maintain separation from the more-than-human world if not ecologically oriented. Relational-intuition, as we have proposed, is different from the ontology of isolation that can be seen in the assumed common characteristics of teacher-intuition. Now, more than ever, it is time to take seriously the building of relationships with the more-than-human world, and it is our view that relational-intuition may be both necessary for, and supportive of, this.

Practical strategies for educators

The following are some practical strategies for how relational-intuition can be cultivated in educational settings: Encourage non-linear thinking by opting for activities that support feeling, and thinking freely, creatively, openly, and ecologically; Engage in activities that support developing bodily awareness; Take seriously the hunches, experiences, and unexplainable knowings that are expressed by students; Encourage students to listen to the signals of their body, and what those signals mean; Explore the interconnectedness of our body in the world; Being in the natural world is not only inclusive of other beings, but also helps regulates the nervous system, allowing us to be fully present in our bodies — which, in turn, makes it easier to listen and notice intuition; The overthinking mind can override intuition — encourage taking time to pause, and reflect, before acting; Ask questions, have students explore their feelings, and reflect on their experiences.

Questions for educators

Here, we end with some questions for educators to consider: Have students been provided the opportunity to nurture their intuition (Jickling *et al.,* 2018)? How can I nurture my own intuition? In what ways does my intuition relate to others? What are the ranges and limits of my intuition? What forms does intuition take? What happens if I consider intuition to be a shared communicative space? Are there moments when I employ my intuition that are non-ecological, epistemologically fragmented, or alienating? How can I expand my intuition to make it more relational even when I am in the midst of the busyness of a school day?

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