



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BEd (Queen's University, 2012)
BSc Honours (Queen's University, 2011)

“Biology Teachers’ Lived Experiences in Place”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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MacLaurin Building
A341

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. David Blades, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Michelle Wiebe, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)
Dr. Richard Kool, Environmental Education and Communication Program, Royal Roads University
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Dr. Karen MacKinnon, School of Nursing, UVic

Abstract

A phenomenological inquiry of five place-aware biology teachers was conducted to determine how teachers' lived experiences in place influence their pedagogy, if at all. High school biology teachers from one public and private school in Victoria, British Columbia, were recruited through volunteer sampling. These teachers were invited to share their lived experience narratives of places of meaning and teaching experiences of place through in-depth interviews, journal writings and photographs. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's embodiment phenomenology, a case-by-case thematic analysis was first conducted per informant, followed by an analysis of commonalities across informants as appropriate. It was found that teachers shared similar experiences in different places of meaning: a sense of mystery that there is always something to be revealed, a feeling of wonder for the vastness and complexity of places, a sense of care for nature as the Other and a feeling of love for places as shared through close family and community members. However, the degree and manner in which such experiences transferred into teachers' pedagogies differed, as some teachers demonstrated a stronger intentionality in place-consciousness. The study highlights the humanness of teachers and the unique styles that individual teachers bring into their practices. I suggest that the complex and multidimensional notion of places as revealed through the study opens possibilities for holistic approaches in science education, with a focus on embodied, caring consciousness for the places that we inhabit.

Keywords: place-based education, science education, teacher education, phenomenology, environmental ethics, caring