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**Rekindling Earth Awareness
and the Young Child's Relationship With Nature**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates and interprets the meaning of Earth awareness in today's society through examining our relationship with nature. It is based on a wide range of ideas from the writings and poetic forms of expression found in philosophy, educational and scientific research, poetry and music, to the personal experiences of children, teachers and parents. This work pulls together interpretations of the child's interactions with the natural world, the general level of Earth awareness existing in our society and the effects that bonding with nature can have on humans. It draws information from the many reference materials and from the observations and recordings of dozens of outdoor experiences with children.

The thesis is phenomenological and hermeneutic in nature, evolving as the interpretation proceeded. The two major issues at play are the health, well-being and wholeness of children, and the health, well-being and wholeness of the Earth. The needs of Earth and the needs of children are brought forth in Chapters One and Four. The content of Chapter Five emerged out of observable data gathered while taking children into the natural world. While this chapter takes place in the physical realm, it explores dimensions of human spirit and emotion. In Chapters Two and Four, the importance of the child having time and place to encounter nature comes to light, and the adult's responsibility to provide these and to serve as role model is discussed throughout the thesis but focused upon in Chapter Six. It is hoped that this work might, in some way, open discussion about the sensory experiences that tend to be missing in the lives of children, experiences that have, for too long, been overlooked.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

'The Little Ones'

~ may their love for the Earth flourish ~

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CHAPTER 1

OPENING THE TOPIC

The State Of the Earth

All we can do is try to speak it, try to say it, try to save it. Look, we say, this land is where your mother lived and where your daughter will live. This is your sister's country. You lived there as a child, boy or girl, you lived there -- have you forgotten? All the children are wild. You lived in the wild country.

- Ursula Le Guin - *Women/wildness*
(Jardine, 1992, p. xiii)

I have in this thesis, been drawn to an area of study that combines two of my strongest passions: my passion as an educator for helping children, and the passion I hold for the natural world, a world which each new human impacts. Will the child, moving down the road of life cut a swath as wide as a six-lane superhighway, or tread lightly leaving a barely discernable path? Edith Cobb points out the importance of a special period, from five or six to eleven or twelve, where "the natural world is experienced in some highly evocative way, producing in the child a sense of some profound continuity with natural processes" (Cobb cited in LaChapelle, 1978, p. 106). The sense of profound continuity of which she speaks has become less and less

easy to develop as we move, in both body and spirit, farther and farther away from nature.

Within the provincial curriculum for elementary students, there is scant reference to the need for humans to develop a relationship with the natural world, and no suggestion of activities with that end in mind. Some locally initiated outdoor, environmental, Earth education programs do effectively build Earth awareness, but these are few and far between or non-existent in the educational life of the child, and not in any way mandated by the province. There are suggested science activities related to nature, but these give only a fragmentary experience with the Earth and its wonders. And in most cases “science doesn't provide Earth knowledge because it is not premised on our ambiguous *dependency* on the Earth but on the premises of mastery” (Jardine, 1992, p. 150). In spite of mounting evidence that the health of the planet is suffering at the hands of human beings, our societies remain incredibly unknowledgable and seemingly unconcerned about nature's systems of life.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1987, 1995) has produced guidebooks in which appropriate and inappropriate practices are highlighted. It only marginally refers to children in the out-of-doors stating that “outdoor activity is planned daily so children can develop large muscle skills, learn about outdoor environments, and express themselves freely and loudly” (Bredekamp,

1987, p. 56), and suggesting that “discussing the need to care for the environment and pointing out natural beauty sends children a powerful message” (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1995, p. 78). These important documents are being used to inform teachers of appropriate practice and yet, do not even mention the significance of the child's relationship with the natural world. Developmental learning appears to narrow the scope of the child's experience, appears to deal mostly with the world-of-human-design, mostly with the child's head. Are we concerned about the heart and hands? Do we not hear the “call of conscience” (Levin, 1985, p. 115) that whispers to us how human heads and hearts and hands long for a relationship with the ground of their being?

Alberta Education's guidelines for kindergarten teachers make little or no mention of learning in the natural world (Early Childhood Services, 1984, 1988; Schmidt, 1984). In most articles and books, environmental activities for the young child are designed to take place in the classroom rather than outside and the environmental awareness that is fostered is awareness of the immediate environment, that of the home and classroom (Holt, 1977; Early Childhood Services, 1984; Bredekamp, 1987; Warner, 1986; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1995).

With stakes so high, with the word survival floating in the air, one would think teaching and learning about the natural world would be seen as having importance, that we would be eager for our students and ourselves to learn as much as possible about the Earth's life systems,

the way they function, and the effects we are having on them; that we would be concerned about building positive relationships between the Earth and ourselves. "Education in this image . . . is ecstatic, a movement beyond what already is, a reaching out to the new life around us in a way that keeps open the possibility that people of this precious Earth . . . may live" (Jardine, 1990b, p. 111). Instead, we seem to avoid thinking about, let alone investigating, such topics. In fact, with the information age upon us and technology taking ever more of our attention and precious time, activities that might increase Earth awareness have become few and far between.

Along with so many others, I am very concerned about the deteriorating health of our planet; concerned over what the future holds for our children. At an unprecedented rate in the past one hundred years, we, as the Earth's dominant species, have made massive changes to the ways in which we interrelate and interact with the natural world and have caused unfathomable damage to its ecosystems in the process. In a most comprehensive work, The Sacred Balance - Rediscovering Our Place In Nature, David Suzuki (1997) notes:

The eco-destruction continues, compromising the future for all the coming generations. That is our true challenge today -- not debts and deficits or global competition but the need to find a way to live rich, fulfilling lives without destroying the planet's biosphere, which supports all life. Humanity has never before faced such a threat: the collapse of the very elements that keep us alive. (p. 6)

Unprecedented population increases and burgeoning technological growth have caused humans around the world to drift from the land to large urban centres (Suzuki, 1997, p. 24; Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 11). In the last forty years, our society has moved from being agriculturally based with the majority of citizens living on small farms or in small towns to being industrially based with most citizens living in cities. We have moved from supplying our needs locally to believing that we need the international marketplace to provide for us. A trip to the local grocery store tells us that a tropical banana is as easily available as a locally grown apple. As time passes, fewer and fewer people are taking responsibility for producing their own food: fifty years ago growing a garden was the convention, today it is by far the exception. As well, the ways in which we prepare food have changed: take-out and fast food, restaurant meals and pre-packaged dinners have become commonplace and, for some, are considered a way of life.

At the same time, we have embraced technology with a passion, and always at the expense of our planet's ecosystems, the very systems we rely on for our supply of air, water and nutrition. Modern-day environmental prophets issue warning after warning regarding the greenhouse effect, global warming, damage to the ozone layer, overpopulation, deforestation, desertification, species endangerment, and much more, and yet we continue our zealous pursuit of lifestyles

that do little to solve environmental problems and much to contribute to them. Why is there such a lack of interest in environmental issues? Is it that we think we are somehow immune to the effects industrialized society is having on the Earth and its life? Do we not want to hear anything that might bring our comfortable lifestyle into question? Are we simply not believing that our "insignificant" environmental indiscretions have any noticable effect on something as large as the Earth? Or are the environmental problems we face so immense that they make us feel helpless and powerless, and as a result we do nothing?

There seemed to be a glimmer of hope in the late 1980s. The Worldwatch Institute had declared the 1990s as the Turnaround Decade. At this time, I was working in the field of environmental education and I clearly remember a surge of interest in "the green movement" during the latter part of 1989 and into 1990. There was a new emphasis on conservation and much talk about what each of us could do to help ward off the environmental crisis. We were encouraged to buy locally and think globally. We were made aware of the importance of reducing consumption, reusing rather than throwing away, and recycling when we could. Composting organic waste became somewhat fashionable. Unbleached paper, tissue, coffee filters and paper towels were popular for a short time and grocery stores gave away reusable, cloth shopping bags. We experimented with walking and

cycling and riding public transport. For a time it seemed that the new decade would bring with it a new environmental ethic. However, by 1991 the initial flurry of "thinking green" had begun to lose its force while our love affair with technology, our nihilism, that particularly dangerous "cancer of spirit" (Levin, 1985, p. 1), to this day has continued to gather momentum. We approach the "very brink of a precipitous fall" (p. 271). Do we understand the implications? "Nihilism means the devastation of the earth. Nihilism means: the wasteland grows" (p.283)?

David Suzuki (1997) reminds us that on November 18, 1992, five months after the Earth Summit in Rio, a document titled 'World Scientists' Warning to Humanity' was released. This document began thusly:

Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about. (p. 4)

The rest of the warning clearly outlined the crises we face with respect to the atmosphere, oceans, water resources, the soil, forests, biodiversity and human overpopulation. It then stated:

No more than one or a few decades remain before the chance to avert the threats we now confront will

be lost and the prospects for humanity immeasurably diminished. We the undersigned, senior members of the world's scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the Earth and life on it is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated. (p. 4)

To the dismay of many, and in spite of the scientists' warning, the last few years have seen us, as a society, drift even farther from mindful living as we focus more intently on life in the fast lane: fast communication, fast food and fast fixes. Instead of curtailing desires and thinking smaller for the sake of the planet and its future generations, our society is focussed ever more intently on creating a vibrant economy through economic growth and development. This translates directly into larger salaries, larger houses, larger television sets, larger cars. "Everywhere and in the most varied forms and disguises the gigantic is making its appearance" (Heidegger, 1977 p. 135). As Paul Wachtel put it:

Having more and newer things each year has become not just something we want but something we need. The idea of more, of ever increasing wealth, has become the center of our identity and our security, and we are caught up by it as the addict by his drugs. (cited in Suzuki, 1997, p. 21)

It is becoming increasingly clear that countries which have been living in more basic ways, those, for example, like India and China, desire to emulate our level of affluence. This would increase their

consumption sixteen to twenty-four times (p. 23). At the recent Kyoto Summit on Global Warming, "a number of the world's largest polluters, such as China (which will overtake the [United States] as the number one polluter by 2020), India and Brazil, are not parties to the treaty and have refused so far to outline what steps they will take to curb emissions" (Skelton, 1997). News from the Kyoto Summit confirms what we already know: that the Western World's technological achievements are what the rest of the world is striving to emulate. Heidegger (1977) states that "nihilism (the ideal of superabundant life) is the world-historical movement of the peoples of the Earth who have been drawn into the power realm of the modern age" (p. 62). As a result, environmental degradation brought about by unbridled, careless and thoughtless technological growth and expansion is dramatically on the rise. As the ideal of superabundance, an ideal attainable only through over-consumption, is pursued with ever greater zeal around the globe, not only will the effects upon the Earth's natural systems be staggering but humans will be moved even farther from knowing the real, the true, the beautiful.

We are caught in the flood of products designed for what is fast becoming our throw-away world. Our collective attention is cast on production and consumption of mass-produced technologies with little attention paid to mindful, careful living or to the effects on the "others" with whom we share this planet. Our willingness to consume without

measuring the true cost or considering alternatives is a grave danger. Although we know that much irreversible damage has already been done to the Earth's ecosystems still we continue our reckless pursuit of economic and technological growth.

Human beings have an immense ability to develop new understandings and in doing so, create changes in the way they live upon the Earth. The radio that plays softly in the background would have been considered an impossibility a hundred years ago, computers like the one into which I enter my thoughts were unheard of even fifteen years ago, and now we have a world-wide-web which makes it possible for anyone to access a whole world of information in the twinkling of an eye. We do indeed have a great propensity for accomplishing the impossible.

It is this fascination with doing the impossible that has resulted in the environmental problems we find ourselves in today.

The unnoticeable law of the earth preserves the earth in the sufficiency of the emerging and perishing of all things in the allotted sphere of the possible which everything follows, and yet nothing knows. The birch tree never oversteps its possibility. The colony of bees dwells in its possibility. It is first the will which arranges itself everywhere in technology that devours the earth in the exhaustion and consumption and change of what is artificial. Technology drives the earth beyond the developed sphere of its possibility into such things which are no longer a possibility and are thus the impossible. (Heidegger cited in Zimmerman, 1983, p. 104)

It is not that technology is inherently evil. There is much in our built environment that is carefully and mindfully designed, designed with humans and the Earth and Earth's "others" in mind. But technologies that go beyond the limits of nature, that go beyond what is "possible" and sustainable, are dangerous. It is "by stepping over our proper limits, [that] we do evil" (Zimmerman, 1983, p. 104).

We need to use our uniquely human gifts to begin the task of renewing our relationship with the Earth. This means crafting life-styles that are in keeping with what is ecologically possible, crafting *techne* that is filled with care, coming to know and understand the Earth and its systems of life. In Being and Time, Heidegger (1996) explains that through resoluteness, the human being, Dasein, hears the call and becomes open to the unique situation. "Resolution does not escape from 'reality,' but first discovers what is factically possible in such a way that it grasps it as it is possible as one's ownmost potentiality-of-being in the they" (p. 275[299]). Are we open to the call? Will we resolutely grasp our ownmost potentiality-of-being and steadfastly work towards rekindling that human consciousness which places in human hearts a deep love for the natural world and what is natural about the human world, in human minds a strong, unwavering environmental ethic, and in human hands the will to craft ways of living that fit within the limits of nature? A generation of such humans could forever alter the course we have set for ourselves.

Regarding Earth Awareness

Only a Little Planet

*The planet you're standing on
looking out at the stars
is the earth, the third planet from the sun*

*and the mildest
and softest
of the nine . . .*

*If you can stop, and let yourself look,
let your eyes do
what they do best,
stop
and let yourself see and see
that everything is doing things
to you
as you do things to everything.*

*Then you know
that although it is only a little planet
it is hugely beautiful
and surely the finest place in the world
to be.*

*So watch it, look at it
see what it's like
to walk around on it.*

*It's small but it's beautiful
It's small but it's fine
like a rainbow,*

like a bubble.

*- Lawrence Collins
(Van Matre & Weiler, 1983, p. 72)*

In reading about aboriginal cultures and our own not-so-distant past, and in thinking about my childhood experiences in comparison with those of present day children, it becomes clear that Earth awareness, which humans have possessed over the ages, is slowly but surely slipping away from us. Are we alarmed by this? Some might be, but, in general we do not concern ourselves with the level of Earth awareness that dwells within either ourselves or our children. We place importance on the awareness of language and mathematics, on social awareness, on awareness of economics and technology, on health awareness; but Earth awareness is seldom mentioned. During twenty-five years in the public school system, I have found that there is little discussion amongst educators related to a child's relationship with the natural world. It is simply not considered to fall within the responsibility of public education. To use Heidegger's terminology, it is a phenomenon that has been "*buried over*. . . . It has at some time been discovered but has deteriorated to the point of getting covered up again" (1962, p. 60[36]). Earth awareness that does exist in modern day societies is a pale imitation of that of our past. But this covering-up is not complete: "what has been discovered earlier [is] visible, though only as a semblance" (p. 60[36]). What are the forms that this semblance takes?

To discover these we must think for a moment what the term Earth awareness brings to mind. Images of desert landscapes,

mountain vistas, oceans and rain forests? The myriad life forms that exist on the planet, the plant and animal kingdoms in their wondrous diversity? Or does this term stir memories of the pungent smell of a forest after a rainstorm, the howling sound of a winter blizzard, or the stillness of a hot summers day?

Since we are born of the Earth all of us possess a degree of Earth awareness. Our dwelling places are adorned with the beauty of nature: paintings and photographs and prints of the wonderful landscapes and amazing life forms, ornamental carvings and sculptures of birds and animals, arrangements of plants and flowers. The fabrics and adornments we create pay homage to plants and animals in textures and colors that exist in wild nature. We are touched by the sound of the ocean wave, bird-song, the whistling wind. We create music that echos the sounds of nature. We watch The Discovery Channel with fascination. Our childrens' books contain countless images of plants and animals and countless stories of adventures in the wild. It is evident that we are enamored by the natural world, and on the surface it seems to have great significance to us.

In thinking of the roots of our Earth awareness we might recall times actually spent with nature: the long climb to a mountain's summit, summer holidays at a favorite lake, scuba diving in the tropics, winter treks or whale watching. There are so many varied and wonderful experiences that we can have.

Such icons and activities show that we bestow a special importance upon the natural world. The fact that they are present in our lives indicates the need that exists in each of us to relate to nature, to see images of it often, to be close to its beauty, to experience it when we can. Much of our built environment, those parts not crafted with care; many of the things of human design mass-produced with mass-consumption in mind, "seem sadly superfluous and dull when we identify with our bodies and taste the world with our animal senses (Abram, 1996, p. 64). In a fast-paced world that carries us ever further from the possibility of mindful, careful living and contact with the natural world, our desire for some sort of renewal is intensified. Whether within or outside of the city, natural objects, natural places, and well cultivated things of human design which speak to us of the nature held within seldom disappoint us..

Whenever we assume the position and poise of the human animal -- Merleau Ponty's body-subject -- then the entire material world itself seems to come awake and to speak, yet organic, earth-born entities speak far more eloquently than the rest. Like suburbanites after a hurricane, we find ourselves alive in a living field of powers far more expressive and diverse than the strictly human sphere to which we are accustomed (p. 65).

But once again, in what way is our profuse interest in the natural world only a semblance of what it could be? In answering this question, we must see that for the most part, it has become based on recreation

and artistic appreciation. Such interest does not consider in a deep sense our connectedness with the Earth -- that "the whole Earth is our 'kind' our kin" (Jardine, 1992, p. 47). Certainly, in our outdoor pursuits we become more comfortable with the natural world as we learn to cope with changing weather patterns, the different seasons and inherent dangers. We become more aware of what plans to make and actions to take in meeting our basic needs in the wilderness. In all likelihood, we will grow to know and respect and appreciate nature to a greater degree than before. We may even say that we love the natural world. But what is our motivation? From whence cometh our desire? Do we love the natural world for what it is, or for what "it can do for me"? Is it not true that we see pristine wilderness areas fouled by the cans and bottles and plastic bags left by its supposed human lovers?

We commonly experience the Earth through recreation and artistic appreciation, but can this lead us to interrelate with and care for nature in the deepest sense? Does not such interest "skitter across the surface", ignoring the extremely complex and interwoven web of interrelationship that exists just beneath?

We need to strive to attain a deeper awareness , an awareness which focuses on the needs of the Earth, an awareness that is the result of a two-way conversation between ourselves and nature, a result of listening to what nature is telling us. Could this not lead us into the development of new understandings about the Earth's life systems and

deepened feelings of love and respect for the natural world? This form of Earth awareness would hold as its primary interest the future health of the planet and the preservation of all life forms upon it. Rather than the question, "What has the Earth to offer me?" it would ask "What must I do, what are the 'gestures' (Levin, 1985, p. 116) I must make in order to help the Earth continue supporting my life and all life?". Could not this deep form of Earth awareness lead to greater environmental health? Would we not all be most grateful if once again we could enjoy a drink of pure water, a breath of clean air, and good health under a friendly sun?.

What can we do to better prepare future generations to live in an increasingly environmentally sensitive world? Under what conditions does a deep awareness of the Earth manifest itself? Certainly we want it to manifest itself in the presence of the world of human design. There are already many fine examples of well cultivated things within our built environment, things which are not only beautiful and unique but long lasting and we should strive to build these instead of mass-produced "disposables". It can manifest itself in our social relationships when we have caring concern for each other, and in our relationship with the Earth's others. It can manifest itself in our care of children. It can manifest itself when we spend time in the natural world experiencing its wondrous diversity. This study explores the ways in which parents and educators can help children develop Earth

awareness through giving them experiences in the natural world, in the biggest classroom of them all. It is this particular thread in the development of Earth awareness to which my research (see appendix for methodology) and thesis turn. We know that the beginnings of a meaningful, life-long relationship with the Earth happen in early childhood and it is upon these beginnings that I hope to shed some light.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

*Free thinker! Do you think you are the only thinker
on this earth in which life blazes inside all things?
Your liberty does what it wishes with the power it controls,
but when you gather to plan, the universe is not there.*

*Look carefully in an animal at a spirit alive;
every flower is a soul opening out into nature;
a mystery touching love is asleep inside metal.
"Everything is intelligent!" And everything moves you.*

- Gérard de Nerval (1854), "Golden Lines"
(translated by Robert Bly)
(Bly, 1980, p. 38)

For far too long, we have believed that we stand *apart* from the Earth, have refused to acknowledge that we are *a part* of the wonders of our planet; that we are of-the-Earth, born to-the-Earth, Earth's gifted ones: the ones to whom so much is given, the ones that should

therefore be most thankful.

The logic of Cartesianism has blinded our eyes and muted our senses. We have become severed from the natural world, a world in which relations of care are possible. We have lost our sense of connection with that which supports our lives. But connected we remain, connected to a natural world no longer healthy, no longer whole. In wounding the Earth, we wound ourselves. "Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth" (Chief Seattle in Fellers, 1984, p. 86).

Heidegger speaks of a much needed saving power (1977, p. 34). When he refers to this power as a poetic revealing, he is speaking of the power held in deep and sensitive interpretations of our world: through the arts, through our writing, through our ways of dwelling in it. Under the rule of empiricism, our interpretation of the world has become lifeless and stultified. "The typical, consensually validated understanding of Being, the shallow understanding which is characteristic of everyone-and-anyone, and which we all tend to in-habit without giving it deep and original thought, *reduces* Being to thinghood" (Levin, 1985, p.12). Phenomenology and hermeneutics demand that we see things as they truly are and this renews and enriches our world-view. We who have devised ever more clever enclosures, diversions, divisions and disguises in an attempt to escape our earthiness are beginning to pay attention to the "other". We are starting to look

outside of our selfish interests, outside of ourselves, and at the same time inside, at our perceptions and motivations, at our Being.

This is what the Earth needs, this is what Earth's children need. We need to turn "and walk the road, and find once more the lost path! And turn and feel in our own hand the warmth of the good hand of our mother" (Machado in Bly p. 108).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is part of this turning. It is "ecological and pedagogic at its heart" (Jardine, 1992, p. 121). It desires to examine life as it truly is, it demands that we relate to the Earth on its own terms and allow the "other" to shape our understandings, our feelings, our actions. When phenomenology encounters the complexity, the mind boggling diversity that is the wonder of nature, it does not turn away or for one moment demand that it somehow conform. It does not simplify or gloss over the reality of what is encountered but accepts it as *Being*.

Phenomenology is, at its heart, a poetizing activity. "It tries an incantive, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice into an original singing of the world" (Merleau-Ponty in Van Manen, 1990, p. 13). In understanding and feeling and making a commitment towards the natural world, there is much more to be experienced, much more to be done, than ordinary words can convey. Words, stripped of metaphor and subtle meaning, of invoked feeling and primal understanding become lifeless. Just as surely, words can be

powerful tools of interpretation, saying more by what is evoked than by what is written. Edith Cobb (1977) speaks of the word "poetic" as being used in the original Greek sense of *poien*, "to make", a root word that "bespeaks the sources of poetic perception in harmonious rhythms of energy systems and those formative processes of the body that are continuities of nature's biological and cosmological behavior" (p. 16). In speaking of the danger that modern civilization faces and using the words of Hölderlin, Heidegger (1977) says:

*But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.*

and then, in contemplating the nature of the saving power he states:

. . . poetically dwells man upon this earth. (p. 34)

Dwelling poetically on this earth, "true *techne* or *poiesis* would mean letting beings manifest themselves with the least interference and the most cooperation" (Zimmerman, 1983, p. 108). If we need to convey more than facts and figures tell us (and we do have to convey much more), if we are to touch the inner reaches of ourselves, our awareness, our attitudes, our commitments, our gestures, then we must look for that poetic revealing that brings forth the "true into the beautiful" (p. 34) found in art and poetry and music and care-filled human design, found when our interpretation "sings the world" (Merleau-Ponty in Van Manen, 1990, p. 13).

Pedagogy is called upon to interpret the phenomena of *that which is* for our little ones, “to tell the children the full richness of the tales of the Earth . . . [and to bring the children] into the telling” (Jardine, 1992, p. 121). Understanding the complexity of the Earth's ecology requires deep thought. Understanding the nature of the child's relationship with Earth requires a similar depth of perception. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides us with tools to openly and honestly begin to discover the deepest needs of both.

CHAPTER 2

RE-MEMBERING

The Past Decade

Be A Friend to the Earth / Preservation

*There was a time when the Earth was free
Of mankind's mastery
The rivers ran clear the rivers ran free
And the air was pure*

*Myriads of animals lived on the land
Forests of tall trees did silently stand
The oceans were filled with life oh so grand
And their waves pounded the shore*

*But life was hard, and life was cruel
And you know, yes you know, mankind was no fool
This two legged animal has come on the scene
This animal knows how to scheme and to dream
He knows what his scheming and dreaming will mean
You know he sees it all*

*The generations passed and the human brain grew
Until there was little that man couldn't do
He conquered the land and conquered the sea
And finally felt set free*

*Set free from the dangers of everyday life
Set free from the elements that caused him such strife
No longer the frightened, no longer the prey
It's the dawn of a brand new day*

CHORUS

*Now we're faced with a new kind of danger today
 We know beyond doubt it just won't go away
 Our children, their children will be those who pay
 As the waves pound on the shore*

*There was a time when Earth was free
 Of mankind's mastery
 The rivers ran clear the rivers ran free
 And the air was pure
 Let's think about the future
 Will there be happiness or sorrow
 There are days, there are ways
 To build a bright tomorrow
 We're that two-legged animal we're here on the scene
 We know that we know how to scheme and to dream
 And we know what our scheming and dreaming can mean
 You know we see it all*

*Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend*

*Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend to the Earth
 Be a friend*

*Let's think about the future
 Let's think about tomorrow
 Cause if the human race doesn't have any place
 It won't be in the race at all
 ... at all
 ... at all
 ... at all*

I wrote this song for an environmental fund raiser a few years ago. This was during a time in my life when my environmentalism was

running at an all time high. I would think about the plight of the Earth nearly every day. For nine years, I spent my workdays, in one way or another, trying to help young humans increase their Earth awareness. What good fortune I had in becoming an outdoor and environmental education specialist. My two greatest passions could be explored and enjoyed while earning a living for my family. And yet, as important as these experiences were to me, they have taken their place in my personal history. I returned to the regular school setting and all that it entails. In falling back into the mainstream of public education, I fell away from my relationship with the natural world. It is true that, with the information age and a continual barrage of new and time consuming technologies upon us, we become ever more immersed in the world which humans have created, we become ever more entangled in our electronic, economic, technologic connections. It is evident that as "technology more definitely characterizes and regulates the appearance of the totality of the world" (Heidegger, 1972, p.58), we become forgetful of our relationship with the Earth. Thus the paling of the green movement in the 1990s. Thus my entanglement with the everyday life of a teacher. Thus our forgetting that "all the children are wild" (Le Guin, 1989).

Today the demands I'm faced with as an educator are greater than ever and leave little space or time -- they crowd out thoughts about the Earth and our ecological predicament. The busy-ness of

teaching, leaves little room for anxieties about the environment to surface.

Bit by bit, my locus of concern has shifted away from being centered on the Earth and its others, towards being centred on the young humans that I meet and work with every day. But is this shift from Earth-centredness to child-centredness really as great a shift as it might appear? "Pedagogy . . . too, requires the very same love, care and generosity of spirit as ecological awareness. Ecology is silently and inevitably interwoven with pedagogy" (Jardine, 1992, p. 177).

The understandings, the feelings, the awareness of children will be critical to the future health of the world they will live in. Is today's child being blindly carried along on our "magic carpet ride"? Is it not a fact that many of our environmental quandaries will be inherited by the little ones? And do we, with our caring concern for the future of the Earth's young, not have a responsibility to prepare them in the best way possible for the enormous challenges that lie ahead?

In our journey of discovering the ways in which we need to act, the directions our lives and practice should take, it helps if we take the time to reflect on our own childhood. It helps if we take the time to remember the beginnings of our own awareness of nature.

My Childhood

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature -- of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter -- such health, such cheer, they afford forever! . . . Shall I not have intelligence with the Earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?

- Henry David Thoreau, "Walden"
(Suzuki, 1997, p. 177)

It has been my good fortune to be raised in the country. I say "good fortune" because we certainly do not choose where, when or to whom we come into the world. Heidegger (1962) would say this is the thrownness of Dasein (Dasein being the site of the understanding of one's being, one's mineness).

This characteristic of Dasein's Being -- this 'that it is' - is veiled in its "whence" and "whither", yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the "thrownness" of this entity into its "there"; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the "there" (p. 174[135]).

I came into the world in the mid-forties, one of four children born to a farmer and school-teacher. The war was recently over and the economy was booming. Agriculture was having new demands placed upon it by the accelerating urbanization that was taking place. My father moved us farther west into a more undeveloped region of the country where he could afford more land, even if much of it was

"unbroken". And so it was that, during my formative years, I was given lots of wild nature to become aware of.

I found joy in my childhood encounters with the natural world. There were the exciting days of increased warmth and melting snow leading up to the spring runoff -- rubber boot days. The water level in the sloughs would rise and soon be teeming with new life: tadpoles, blackbirds, insects of great variety. And then there was the springtime sound of the creek as it became a torrent, carrying away the melting snow, rushing over small but impressive waterfalls. How that creek called out to me! And we would leap across the narrow spots, or brave the fallen-tree bridges to get to the other side. Oh, the adventure of it all!

Our farm consisted of many acres of cultivated land through which the treed creek ran. It also included a half section of coniferous and deciduous forest cut in half by the meandering water. The trees called out to my brothers and sister and I, and thus, countless hours of our youth were spent exploring every nook and cranny of these woods. We gave names to all of the features of our wild playground.

There was the Main Trail that led to the Little Opening and on to the Big Opening which was bounded on the south side by the creek. That trail ended at the South Opening near the winding dirt road and The Bridge. Where the water passed under the bridge there were little shiny fish and cowslips and frogs.

There was the Big Tree Trail that led to the Woodpile Opening which was always filled with the purple violets that my mother loved, and then on to the Saskatoon Opening with its succulent saskatoon berries. That trail continued on, dropping elevation until it reached The Swamp where there were hundreds of shooting stars and cowslips and the Big Tree, a grandfather spruce so big that three of us with hands joined together couldn't reach all the way around. The Swamp itself was all hummocky and you could leap from hillock to hillock with only an occasional miss and the resulting wet feet. It contained a proliferation of wildlife; frogs and toads, snowshoe hare, mice, weasels, squirrels, hungarian partridge, blackbirds, blue jays and songbirds, dragonflies, butterflies and so much more. Then there was the West Trail that led to another swampy area and The Muskeg. That Muskeg had swallowed at least two horses and there was a stick with a red flag warning us to stay back because it would swallow little boys and girls too.

Our childhood was spent exploring these wonderful natural areas. We came to intimately know every detail of our natural playground. For us there was no television, no organized activities and few toys. There was little to take our focus from the environment which surrounded us. Having so little gave us so much.

All of us have memories of our early experiences with nature. Buried within these memories are firmly grounded understandings of how children learn, how they develop certain attitudes and dispositions,

how they become aware of the world around them. My own memory of childhood tells me the importance of having a place in which this can happen. In the introduction to The Geography of Childhood - Why Children Need Wild Places (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994), Robert Coles relates a conversation with an inner-city girl whose experience stands in stark contrast to mine. The girl says:

A lot of the time. . . I wish I could walk out of that school and find myself a place where there are no whites, no black folk, no people of any kind! I mean, a place where I'd be able to sit still and get my head together; a place where I could walk and walk, and I'd be walking on grass, not cement, with glass and garbage around; a place where there's be the sky and the sun, and then the moon and all those stars. At night, sometimes, when I get to feeling real low, I'll climb up the stairs to our roof and I'll look at the sky, and I'll say, hello there, you moon and all your babies - stars! I'm being silly, I know, but up there, I feel I can stop and think about what's happening to me -- it's the only place I can, the only place. (p. xxi)

What is magnified here for me is the importance of having a place that connects us, "to the land, to the air, to the sky, and to the world it holds" (p. xxii). For this inner-city girl, all of this which, "she senses in her bones, rather than thinks in her head, will give her, yes, back to herself" (p. xxii).

In my childhood, our piece of wilderness strongly attracted me. This was, in part, because there were few distractions. Today, childhood is filled with the products spawned by our technologies:

such wonderful inventions as television, the video arcade, computer games, the internet, movies, new and amazing toys and virtual reality. These technological marvels have an enormous impact on the lives of the young. Like ourselves, they are as completely fallen into their own brand of everydayness.

Those of us born years ago had plenty of time for the natural world with no organized sports or clubs to rush to before and after school (nor bleary-eyed parents frantically driving us here and there). There were no time-consuming pastimes like computer games and the internet and television. As a child, I was expected to do my farm chores and schoolwork; but otherwise, my time, my childhood, was literally mine.

When Gary Paul Nabhan interviewed children in the summer of 1992 (children who had easy access to natural areas), he found "the kind of solitude in nature that historically instilled a sense of wonder in many incipient naturalists was shared only by a few of the kids interviewed" (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 90). Furthermore, he found that "a significant percentage of kids today are not collecting, carrying around, or keeping . . . natural treasures as nearly all children have done throughout history . . . the casual collection of feathers, bones, butterflies, and beautiful stones" (p. 91).

For Earth awareness to flourish, it becomes obvious that children need more than access to natural surroundings. They need time . . .

time to experience the Earth, time to discover their relationship with nature. And this means freedom from other attractions and distractions.

An Unconventional Experience

. . . a ditch somewhere -- or a creek, meadow, woodlot, or marsh . . . These are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin.

. . . Everybody has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches and the fields, the woods, the ravines -- can teach us to care enough for all the land.

- Robert Michael Pyle, "The Thunder Tree"
(Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. ii)

Children, "thrown" into the world, have little control over how and where they spend their time for much of their young lives. Adults have considerable influence on the experiences of children. For example, public schooling, which dominates a major part of a child's life, is both mandated and welcomed by society. Few think to question what the trade-off is. Few bemoan the resulting "erosion of childhood" (Suransky, 1982), the loss of more natural ways of "ushering in" a new generation.

In thinking back to my school days, a memory that remains clear

for me is that of my first and only nature-based field trip. It was during my fifth grade. We had worked together all year on reading and writing and arithmetic, and then June was upon us. The weather was absolutely wonderful: bright sunny days with clear blue skies and soft, warm breezes. We would soon be saying goodbye for the summer. To celebrate a successful year the teacher had something special in mind for us. She said that she would like to take us on a picnic. That Friday, weather permitting, we would walk to the destination she had arranged, and we were each to bring a special picnic lunch.

Finally Friday arrived, and like all the other days that week, it dawned warm and clear. Of course, we had to do our regular studies for the entire morning, but when the noon bell rang, the class gathered their lunches and lined up outside of the school building. Then we started to walk down the road to the east. We hiked along in little groups, sometimes venturing into the ditches, sometimes running ahead until we had gone about one-half mile. At that point, the teacher opened the farmer's barbed wire gate and we started down a seldom used path into a pretty little piece of the natural world. After walking a few hundred yards through the trees, we came upon a grassy knoll in a clearing. To one side a lazy creek was winding its way through the willows. There were yellow marsh flowers and white wood violets and lots of little tree frogs in the grass. Picnic lunches were consumed with haste and then we began our exploration. As we were catching frogs,

someone discovered a large toad which we were warned not to touch "because we could get warts". There were robins' nests and the smaller nests of wrens and sparrows. Some nests had speckled eggs, others were empty and one contained three featherless babies. We were asked not to touch any of the eggs or the nests and especially the baby birds for fear the mother would abandon them. Many of us had jackknives and we made whistles from willow branches and from the tall thick stems of wild oats. Our adventure ended abruptly when the teacher said we must leave quickly if we did not want to miss the buses home. I remember to this day how quickly that afternoon flew by!

I can recall this experience much more easily than most others I had in school. I remember the marshy smell, and the bird song, and the fine weather we experienced. Most of all, I remember a special teacher who thought enough of the natural world and children, who believed enough in the value of taking students out into nature and letting them interact freely with it, that she planned this memorable adventure for her class. By today's standard, it doesn't seem like very much. But at least one of her students has remembered it for over forty years.

Yes, adults do hold a tremendous power over children. They most often control where the child goes and what the child does when they get there, and in many ways, this is as it should be. Guided by mandated curriculum, parents and teachers decide what comprises the child's school-day. Speaking about schools and classrooms, a

consultant in the field of environmental design for young children expresses concern about the type of world that young children are being exposed to:

An exclusively child oriented world . . . filled with bright plastic things and pictures of animals and fairy tale characters is a very limited world in which to spend 40-50 hours a week. Walks and field trips take children into a different world of sights, sounds and smells (Greenman, 1982).

Today, there are some tremendous outdoor trips conducted by caring teachers which make my grade-five experience seem minuscule. Sadly however, such experiences are only a random sprinkling across the fabric of education. And today's children, whether we can see it or not, are suffering from a lack of exposure to nature. When you consider the many hours young children spend indoors both at home and school, and the kinds of outdoor environments they have at their disposal, experiences that take place in natural settings become of paramount importance. And in these natural settings, there needs to be time set aside for each to interrelate with nature in his or her own way, bringing them to know and appreciate the natural world in a deeper, more personal way. The tremendous feeling of well-being enjoyed by children and adults when they venture into wild places together could be experienced again and again and again.

We must ask ourselves, why do we not take greater advantage of the opportunity and enjoyment that nature so freely bestows? Why is it

that we, who live on the edge of one of the world's most renowned wilderness areas, don't venture the scant forty minutes west and give ourselves and our children experiences we could so easily have? It is because we are battling the allure, the enchantment, the fascination of our modern technological society. We are battling our own desire to be comfortable, to be entertained, to be sociable, to be in control, to be at ease. We are battling the nihilism of our age. We are battling fallenness.

CHAPTER 3

SOME OF THE OBSTACLES

Fallenness

The World Is Too Much With Us

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
 Little we see in nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not. -- Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.*

- William Wordsworth
 (Lancashire, 1997)

In my search of the literature I have been drawn to the phenomenology of Heidegger and particularly to his massive analysis of human existence given forth in Being and Time (1962, 1996). In this treatise, the concept of *fallenness* has shed new light on both my life experience and the phenomenon I study. Heidegger has helped me to

understand more deeply the underpinnings of the phenomenon disclosed in this thesis, that being the lack of Earth awareness that pervades our society in the face of environmental crisis. Heidegger has helped me to come to grips with my struggle to retain a caring and active awareness of the natural world within the everydayness of modern life.

Fallenness, to one degree or another, is experienced by all and is a direct result of what Heidegger calls *leveling*.

This essential averageness of the they is . . .
grounded in an original mode of being of the they.
This mode is given in its absorption in the world, in
what can be called the *leveling* of being-with-one-
another, the leveling of all differences. (Heidegger
cited in Dreyfus, 1991, p. 234)

Averageness and leveling down are aspects of what Heidegger calls *publicness* and it is this publicness that determines what society, in general, will hold as important. "Publicness proximally controls every way in which the world and Dasein get interpreted" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 165[127]).

Publicness affects how we treat nature, how we go about educating our children, what we hold as precious, and what we hold in disdain. It is that which is in play when public pressure is brought to bear on an issue. The astute politician is very aware of this publicness and if governments harmonize with it, they usually get re-elected.

This public world . . . is right in everything, not by

virtue of a primordial relationship to the world and to Dasein itself, not because it might have a special and genuine knowledge of the world and of Dasein, but precisely by taking over everything while not going "into the matters" and by virtue of an insensitivity to all distinctions in level and genuineness. (Heidegger cited in Dreyfus, 1991, p. 234)

As educators, we are expected to accept the publicness of our profession and to work within it. We strive for excellence in our practice, but it is excellence within certain curriculum guidelines. And let us not forget, mandated curriculum has undergone the process of levelling down.

In 1989 and 1990, I was one of three authors responsible for Alberta Education's Junior High Environmental and Outdoor Education Curriculum. We had been doing intense research and writing for approximately half a year and finally the rough draft was complete. This draft was examined by experienced outdoor educators from within our own public school system (a system known across North America for being at the leading edge of outdoor and environmental education) and withstood the test of their scrutiny. Their suggestions led us to make certain additions and some deletions, but in general they loved it. When Alberta Education and their provincial committee became involved, they started a "watering-down" process that lasted through to final publication the next year. Remember, the curriculum had two main thrusts. It was to give a framework for both environmental and

outdoor education. The outdoor strand, that part which detailed outdoor recreation, i.e. outdoor skills and activities, was never a source of disagreement. Neither were the parts on personal and group development. The parts that were in dispute were those related to the environment. In a province where the economy is built on "ordering the real as standing reserve" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 19), where oil, agriculture, forestry and mining are powerful industries, it would not be possible, said the provincial officials, to be too "one-sided" in talking about the environmental problems we are faced with nor to be too critical of choices the province and its citizens make. For example, it would not be acceptable to include in the curriculum a "lifestyle inventory" to help students examine the impact that their lives are having on the natural world -- that might bring them into conflict with their parents values. And certain in-depth activities designed to deal openly with the question of human impact must be removed from the document because they would be too controversial. Although never voiced, this whole process spoke to the fact that the approved curriculum must be publicly acceptable and this meant not going into the matters too deeply. The curriculum was "leveled".

Teachers, for the most part, accept and teach curriculum as approved by their government. We are held accountable to do this. When mandated curriculum undergoes levelling, it follows that student learning is compromised. And too often this "average intelligibility . . .

is out of touch with the primordial" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 234).

Falling in with the public causes Dasein to fall away from itself. We are all always fallen. "Initially and for the most part, the self is lost in the they. It understands itself in terms of the possibilities of existence that 'circulate' in the 'average' public interpretedness of Dasein today" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 351[383]). My fallenness expresses itself in the way I am always too busy. I fall into the possibilities that exist within my job as an educator, always taking on more than I should. As a case in point, I began writing this thesis in 1991 but could not find the time necessary to finish it. It is now fully six years later and even with the space and time that a sabbatical allows, I have been forced to cloister myself away in a cabin, where there is no phone or family distractions, to complete the writing. The demands of everyday life have become so great that only by physically removing myself can I find the clearing in which to reflect and read and write. I know fallenness "Oh So Well!"

What then is the effect of fallenness on our relationship with the Earth? For me, it means that I have little time to spend in the natural world. Since falling back into the mainstream of public education, I have only occasionally been able to experience the wilderness and then it has usually been with a group of students: my class, or the Peer Support Team, or the Bowcroft Hikers. The site of the understanding of my being, the public stand I take on myself, my mineness, Dasein, "*yields*

to the pull of the world it is absorbed in . . . so as to let itself be *turned away from* what is primordially in the world and in itself” (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 233). It is fallenness that prevents us from coming to deep understandings about our relationship with the ground of our being, our relationship with the Earth. It is fallenness that has caused Earth's people to ignore the World Scientists' Warning to Humanity (Suzuki, 1997, p. 4).

Heidegger (1996) points out that in our fallenness into everydayness, we busy ourselves with idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity (p. 157[168]). Idle talk is described as the human attempt to grasp understandings of things without the bother of studying them deeply. Idle talk gives us the illusion that we are knowledgeable and divests us of the task of genuine understanding (p. 158[169]). Not that I claim to be an expert, but a particularly difficult task for me is having to listen to idle talk about the environment, where claims are being made that the environmental crisis is a hoax, that clear cut logging doesn't hurt the Earth as long as we replant, that old growth forests are about to fall down anyway so what do they matter, that our use of the automobile has nothing to do with global warming and so forth. People holding such views are incensed if you suggest that there might be a need to investigate such matters more deeply. They believe, or at least hope, their idle talk is true.

Fallenness is also characterized by curiosity. Curiosity “takes

care to see not in order to understand what it sees . . . but only in order to see. It seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 161[173]). Sightseeing is a common example of this. Looking at the natural world through a car window or from a view point along the highway does not bring understanding. Guided nature walks characteristically do not go deeply 'into the matters' either and thus are also exercises of curiosity. And when we really think about it, doesn't much of today's curriculum comes closer to engendering mere curiosity than deep understanding? Heidegger draws our attention to the fact that idle talk controls the ways in which we might be curious because it says what one is to have read and seen. "The being everywhere and nowhere of curiosity is entrusted to idle talk. . . . Curiosity, for which nothing is closed off, and idle talk, for which there is nothing that is not understood, provide themselves (that is the Da-sein existing in this way) with the guarantee of a supposedly genuine 'lively life'." (p. 161[173]).

When we approach life through idle talk and curiosity, we soon are unable to decide what is disclosed in genuine understanding and what is not (p. 162[173]). Thus, ambiguity comes into play. Ambiguity extends not only into the world but also into our relationships with others and even into our image of ourselves. "Ambiguity is always tossing to curiosity what it seeks, and it gives to idle talk the illusion of having everything decided in it" (p. 163[175]).

And so we see that fallenness characterized by idle talk, curiosity

and ambiguity is, for all of us, the way in which we exist in the world. Fallenness diverts our attention away from that which could yield deep understandings about our lives on Earth. Fallenness saps our energy and makes it difficult for us, in service of the Earth, to be creative, to make commitments, to follow our convictions.

Heidegger's disclosing of fallenness helps explain why there is such a lack of Earth awareness today. It also help us to understand why there is not a concerted effort to teach the children about the ground of their being, their primordial home, and how their lives are interconnected with all things.

Heidegger's disclosing of fallenness helps us all to see our own fallen state, helps us to see the idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity that has a controlling, disabling effect on our lives, on our potential-to-be. It helps us see why, even when faced with indisputable evidence showing there is an environmental crisis and we are the problem, even when faced with the horrific possibility of our own demise, we continue our reckless pursuit of economic and technological growth. In a recent newspaper article on the global warming issue, David Suzuki draws this parallel: "It's like being in a huge car driving at a brick wall at 100 miles an hour and most of the people in the car are arguing about where they want to sit" (Jagodsinski, 1997).

The Built Environment

Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand. There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in the spring or the rustle of insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind itself, cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with the pinon pine.

- Chief Seattle (1854)
(Fellers, 1984, p. 86)

Whenever I drive from my home in the city to our cabin by the river, I feel a sense of coming home. I leave behind the frenzied activity, noise and acrid air of the city environment and am welcomed by the soothing sounds of the water and the comforting presence of the trees. Bird song and howling coyotes replace the noise of traffic and wailing sirens. As I sit under the arching boughs of my favorite grandfather spruce and watch the sparkling water dance over the rocks, a pair of mergansers land on the curving expanse of shining, quiet water upstream. Red blood courses through their bodies, like mine; they are inhaling, exhaling, like me. We share the sound of the river, the faint rustling of the trees, the warmth of the sun in this place

at this moment. We are of one Flesh (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

Abram (1997) explains this uncanny resonance we share with nature.

These shapes and species have coevolved, like ourselves with the rest of the shifting earth; their rhythms and forms are composed of layers upon layers of earlier rhythms, and in engaging them our senses are led into an inexhaustible depth that echoes that of our own flesh. The patterns on the stream's surface as it ripples over the rocks, or on the bark of an elm tree, or in a cluster of weeds, are all composed of repetitive figures that *never exactly repeat themselves*, of iterated shapes to which our senses may attune themselves even while the gradual drift and metamorphosis of those shapes draws our awareness in unexpected and unpredictable directions (p. 64).

Although many city dwellers strive to live in mindful, careful ways, technology tends to demand more and more of them. To a greater and greater degree, urban life tends to be characterized by frenzied activity. We have all experienced the way that cars, sometimes bumper to bumper, speed from place to place, each driver having a destination unknown to the other, each alone in their environment-controlled capsule, all trailing noxious gases in their wake. There are schedules to keep, deadlines to meet, products to make and profits to take, errands to run, . . . are we having fun? "All that is and man himself are gripped in a structuring that exhibits a mere skeleton of their Being, of the way in which they intrinsically are. In all this the essence of technology

rules" (Lovitt, 1977, xxx).

Technology is captivating and can be thrilling. "The public world is presented by Heidegger as a seductive haven of flight in which, far from feeling despairing or homeless, inauthentic Dasein is fully at home with things and 'can dwell in tranquillized familiarity' " (Dreyfus, 1992, p.308). We willingly flee into our technological excesses, throwing ourselves into any number of distractions and attractions. Today the "ideal of superabundant life" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 70) reigns supreme and many of us are co-opted, racing around, actively pursuing it, actively consuming it. With every new technological marvel, every new toy, comes a short-lived thrill that is strangely disappointing, strangely un-fulfilling, strangely alien.

The Danger of Technology

*Man, introverted man, having crossed
In passage and but a little with the nature
of things this latter century
Has begot giants; but being taken up
Like a maniac with self-love and inward conflicts
cannot manage his hybrids.
Being used to deal with edgeless dreams,
Now he's bred knives on nature turns them also inward:
they have thirsty points though.
His mind forebodes his own destruction;
Actaeon who saw the goddess naked among leaves
and his hounds tore him.
A little knowledge, a pebble from the shingle,
A drop from the oceans: who would have dreamed
this infinitely little too much?*

- Robinson Jeffers, "Science"
(Bly, 1980, p. 100)

In his treatise The Question Concerning Technology Heidegger (1977) methodically examines the essence of technology. When mankind reached out to nature, not simply with openness but rather with a "challenging-forth", and put to nature "the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such" (p. 14), the modern technological age was begun. Heidegger sees the essence of technology as, "that challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as standing reserve: "Ge-stell" [Enframing]" (p. 19). We are led by Heidegger to see that this essence is itself nothing technological (p. 4): neither machinery nor electronics nor buildings.

Rather, Enframing is "the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve" (p. 20); Through Enframing, all being is reduced to a storehouse of resources to be drawn on by technology. Humans become a resource like all the rest -- a *human resource*.

As a result of this process, we are in danger of being denied "a more original revealing" (p. 27) that would allow us to experience "the call of a more primal truth" (p. 27). We are in danger of becoming groundless, of losing our connection to the primordial roots of our being. Heidegger emphatically states that "*precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence*" (p.27). Because of our relationship with the Ge-stell of technology, we experience "an astonishing dissociation -- a monumental forgetting of our human inheritance in a more-than-human world" (Abram, 1996, p. 260).

It is not that all things technological are bad. Quite to the contrary. Do we not need and should we not promote carefully cultivated *techne*, technology that has lasting value, technology that is in harmony with the natural world? Should we not strive to lessen the development of technology resulting from Enframing, the kind of technology that flies in the face of nature? And in today's frantic sensory involvement with a myriad of new technologies, from computers to cellular phones, should we not consider the degree to which our perceptions and thoughts, and those of our children, are

being altered? “We can be sure that the shapes of our consciousness are shifting in tandem with the technologies that engage our senses” (p. 115). We become different than we could otherwise be when technologies draw our senses away from “the matrix of earthly life in which we ourselves are embedded” (p. 65).

In “the End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”, Heidegger says that the need to question technology appears to be “dying out to the same extent that technology more definitely characterizes and regulates the appearance of the totality of the world and the position of man in it” (1972, p. 58). That human beings lose the essence of what it means to be human, on this Earth, at this time, is what Heidegger sees as “danger in the highest sense” (1977, p. 28).

Abram (1997) points out that our technological world can leave us feeling strangely unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

The mass produced artifacts of civilization, from milk-cartons to washing machines to computers, draw our senses into a dance that endlessly reiterates itself *without variation*. To the sensing body these artifacts are, like all phenomena, animate and even alive, but their life is profoundly constrained by the specific “functions” for which they were built. Once our bodies master these functions, the machine made objects commonly teach our senses nothing further; they are unable to surprise us, and so we must continually acquire *new* built objects, new technologies, the latest model of this or that if we wish to stimulate ourselves. . . . It is thus that so much of our built environment, and so many of the artifacts that populate it, seem sadly superfluous and

dull when we identify with our bodies and taste the world with our animal senses (p. 64).

We are fallen into a life-world that is a world-of-human-design. It is this world that dominates our time and the time of our children.

Fortunately, we preserve and design places where we can be close to nature. Where and how we choose to live can either assist in the process of developing Earth awareness, or present a formidable obstacle. For some, there exists the possibility of choice. For many living in our cities, struggling day to day to put food on the table, the choice of where to live can be limited. For the little ones, there is no choice at all.

The Loss of Story Telling

Tell me the story of the river and the valley and the streams and woodlands and wetlands, of shellfish and finfish. A story of where we are and how we got here and the characters and roles that we play. Tell me a story, a story that will be my story as well as the story of everyone and everything about me, the story that brings us together in a valley community with every living being in the valley, a story that brings us together under the arc of the great blue sky in the day and the starry heavens at night . . .

- Thomas Berry, "The Dream of the Earth"
(Suzuki, 1997, p. 207)

The land speaks to us in many ways, from the howl of the coyote and hoot of the owl, to the cracking, crunching, crashing of the river ice during spring break-up. And there are signs, forms of primitive writing that the natives of North America were highly skilled at reading: the sprayed marking of territory, animal tracks and scat, broken twigs and bent grass; signs, left by the animal others. Ancient Egyptians adopted a pictographic system of writing closely related to nature. The Chinese developed a complex conglomeration of symbols whose shapes had their roots in the world around them.

Abram (1996) notes that the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks, vastly different cultures, curiously had two things in common. First of all, these two cultures seem to have "sown the seeds of our

contemporary estrangement -- one seeming to establish the spiritual or religious ascendancy of humankind over nature, the other effecting a more philosophical or rational dissociation of the human intellect from the organic world" (p. 95). And secondly, "they were both, from the start, profoundly informed by writing. Indeed, they both made use of the strange and potent technology which we have come to call 'the alphabet'" (p. 95).

The alphabet does not have the same close connection to the Earth and its life that pictorial forms of writing do. In fact any relationship that existed in early times was eventually forgotten as phonetic writing became completely un-earthed. Those using it were solely in communication with each other with no need to consider the sensuous forms of the world. The alphabet allowed our speaking and writing to become independent of the things of this world and thus severed and ungrounded to move up into our heads.

At one time, story and song were used to pass on knowledge about the land, the animals, the plants, the water, the sky; and human relationship with these. Such oral traditions still exist in the world's tribal cultures, but they are slowly fading away.

There has been a greater intergenerational atrophy of such traditions among indigenous peoples during the last three decades than ever before. While their communities may not immediately recognize the severity of this loss of orally transmitted knowledge about the natural world, the consequences are

perilous, for once the reservoirs of folklore have been dissipated, it is increasingly hard to replenish them. (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 86)

What a loss this is to the Earth! For too long our language has "float[ed] free of the surrounding landscape" (Abram, 1996, p. 134). In interpreting the Earth and its life, and our place in it, we might be led to re-discover our ancestors oral tradition. Our children need to be told "the full richness of the tales of the Earth" (Jardine, 1992, p. 121). It is not enough that they hear these tales. They must be "brought into the telling" (p. 121). And the children will *re-tell* and *re-member*, "thus transforming the stories by adding their own breath and bone and blood to the corpus of their being understood" (p. 122).

When the native peoples of North and South America were faced with Europeans who used a form of language and written communication that permitted them to be "duplicitous and *lie* even in the presence of the sun, the moon, the forests" (Abram, 1996, p. 134), the Indians felt their own rapport with these sensuous powers, or gods, beginning to falter. They could not go against the order of nature and had to answer, "in their actions as in their speech, to the whole sensuous natural world" (p. 134) that surrounded them. Their defeat was swift: the aggressors possessed the alphabetic writing system. They needed to "answer only to themselves" (p. 134).

With the logic of Cartesianism and its disconnectedness with

nature being so prevalent in the Western World, it is not surprising that its alphabetic/phonetic way of communicating is also Earth-severed. In many ways, our system of reading and writing prevents the young child from gaining sensory experience of the Earth. There is always a book between the child and the things themselves. The present day focus on early literacy means that children spend more time than ever learning the complexities of our alphabetic/phonetic writing system, more time than ever on this completely cerebral process. ("Have you forgotten? All the children are wild" (Le Guin, 1989). The alphabet itself has no connection to the natural world or the young child other than the ones which we give it. It is part of the world-of-human-design, part of technology. And today, parents are *possessed* with the notion that their little ones must learn to read and write at an increasingly early age. When a child has difficulty with this learning process, as many do, they are labeled, their self esteem is damaged, and as they spend even more time trying to do that which is not natural for them, they feel their "own magics wither and become useless" (Abram, 1996, p. 135).

The present tendency to push school and reading down to even younger ages -- three and four -- further discourages. . . whole brain/body learning. . . . [this experience is often] accompanied by fear and loathing. In whole brain/body learning the child is always "surprised by joy". . . . The child desperately needs to interact with the whole world, while we demand that he limit himself to the narrow space of the school room. It is no wonder children retreat into sullen apathy, and teachers go quietly insane trying to

control the repressed energy. (LaChapelle, 1978, p.65)

To function in the modern world, the child does need to learn to read and write. However, we must ask ourselves, would more children experience success if we did just the opposite of today's trend, if we pushed the teaching of reading and writing to a later grade? Would the young child be better off interacting with their world in more concrete, play-oriented, child-like ways during their precious, never-to-be-repeated, early years of childhood?

CHAPTER 4

THE LITTLE ONES

Their Predicament

The Little Ones Must Walk On

*Here we are, my little darlings
Things we dare not bear to know
Strengthen your hearts, my little charmings
You've got a long long way to go*

*The little ones, they must walk on... walk on
The little ones, they must walk on... walk on
It has no reason, it has no tense or time
It's human treason, it has no sense or rhyme
But when everything has gone, the little ones must walk
on*

*Look around, at what we leave you
Yours to repair and try to save
The broken stone, the withered forest
The sad and empty ocean wave*

*But, the little ones, they must walk on... walk on
The little ones, they must walk on... walk on
It has no reason, it has no tense or time
It's human treason, it has no sense or rhyme
But when everything has gone, the little ones must walk on*

*- Dougie Maclean
(MacLean, 1990)*

Children born at the end of the twentieth century are born into a particularly difficult predicament. They are born into a human situation

where all is not right with their world. They have had nothing to do with the fact that there are toxins in the first breath they inhale. They have had nothing to do with the deteriorating environmental conditions into which they burst forth. Nor will they have anything to do, during the early years, with the life experiences they encounter -- those will be the choice of parent and teachers.

Human parents . . . have not only summoned their children into life through conception and birth, they have simultaneously introduced them into a world. . . . The responsibility for the development of the child turns in a certain sense against the world: the child requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world. But the world, too, needs protection to keep it from being overrun and destroyed by the onslaught of the new that bursts upon it with each new generation.
(Arendt, 1961, p. 186)

The world they live in, the world they will inherit, the world they will, as adults, seek to repair or further damage, is a world far beyond a child's control. And yet the very food they ingest, the very shelter within which they live and the toys with which they play -- everything they encounter -- has sprung from the Earth. Unknown to them, as their needs and desires are fulfilled, and, through no choice of their own, our innocent ones impact the health of the planet that is their home.

Furthermore, the predicament that children are born into is a completely new one. There was a time when human "being" would demand safety and survival tactics quite different from those of today.

Imagine for a moment a world where human children would, by necessity, learn the lessons of survival in an unfriendly and often pitiless environment: how to stalk prey, how to protect oneself from wild animals, how to find shelter from the cruel elements, how to obtain edibles from the natural world. Nature was provider and harsh teacher. Its lessons would be passed on from generation to generation to ensure the tribe's survival. That was the way of the world - the survival of the tribe was paramount and it was inherently known that survival depended on the balance of nature being preserved.

In North American native cultures, the well-being of the Earth and its life was perceived as being tightly linked to the well-being of the tribe. Chief Seattle explained the native perspective: "We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices of the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man, all belong to the same family" (Fellers, 1984, p. 86). Within Native North American culture it was unthinkable to carelessly abuse the sacred balance. Rather, the natural world was revered, honored, respected and loved.

Today's child is born into radically different circumstances from those of tribal societies. When considered over the course of human history, these circumstances are, indeed, unique. Things that we take for granted today have never before been encountered by humanity or

the Earth. Never before have there been so many human beings on the face of the planet. Never before has there been the level of technological development that is with us today. Never before has information been so accessible or passed so rapidly around the globe.

The natural world no longer presses in on us. Rather we press out on it. What was once wild has been stripped of its wildness. What was once feared no longer causes anxiety. In the urban environment, for the most part, the natural world is "out of sight, out of mind". We are fallen into the everydayness of our lives (Heidegger, 1962, p. 210[167]): our family and friends, our jobs, our pastimes. We are more concerned with the workings of the stock market than the workings of nature, we are more concerned with our own "creature comforts" than with the comfort of other creatures. We think there is no longer the need to teach childhood lessons about survival in an overpowering wilderness, "the possibility of touching the Earth, this attunement, [which] is rooted (perhaps also uprooted) early in life" (Jardine, 1992, p. 172). Rather, the focus of our teaching has become how to survive in an overpowering, overpopulated world-of-human-design. Today, a child's formative years are spent learning how to read and write, to do mathematics, to use and depend on our technological inventions, and how to get along with others in our populace society.

The contrast between "then" and "now" is a stark one. In our headlong rush to teach the future generation the lessons they need to

be successful in a world driven by economics and consumerism, we are neglecting to think about, much less talk about or come to understand, how the natural world which sustains our lives and must sustain our childrens' lives into the future, is going to survive. It is from within these difficult circumstances that the words of Chief Seattle ring out with a new resonance:

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves. This we know. The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. (Fellers, 1984, p. 86)

As we welcome the young into our world, are we prepared to accept the gifts they bring, their newness, their fresh approach, their untapped ideas? "It is the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into the old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomer's hands their own chance at the new" (Arendt, 1961, p. 177). As we welcome the young into our world, are we prepared "to assume responsibility for the world into which [we] have brought the

children" (p. 190)? Can we see the kinds of experiences they require, the kinds of lessons they must learn in order to develop the understandings and feelings and abilities that keep open the possibility "that the people of this precious Earth . . . may live" (Jardine, 1990b, p. 111)?

Their Need

. . . that was the main thing about kids then: we spent an awful lot of time doing nothing. . . . All of us, for a long time, spent a long time picking wild flowers. Catching tadpoles. Looking for arrowheads. Getting our feet wet. Playing with mud. And sand. And water. You understand, not doing anything. What there was to do with sand was let it run through you fingers. What there was to do with mud was pat it, and thrust in it, lift it up and throw it down. . . . My world, as a kid, was full of things that grownups didn't care about.

- Robert Paul Smith, "Where did you go?"
"Out." "What did you do?" "Nothing."
(Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. vii)

Today, the vast majority of the world's children spend most of their time within the confines of urban areas. We have migrated from the country to the city.

By the year 2000, close to half of the world's children will grow up within metropolitan areas of a million or more human residents, while non-human residents will find fewer and fewer habitats for survival. Already, 57

percent of the children born in developing countries grow up in shanty towns, ghettos, or simply on the streets. For them, access to places not dominated by other humans is increasingly limited, artifices are on every horizon, and exposure to wildlife is limited to animals that are caged in zoos or thrive in dumps and alleys. (Nabhan cited in Suzuki, 1997, p. 180)

Certainly, there are lessons that must be learned about the world-of-human-design, and such lessons are invaluable as we move into the twenty-first century. They help the child cope with life in a fast-paced, crowded society. But there are also lessons that the urban environment cannot teach. Although carefully manicured backyards and playgrounds serve an important role in the lives of children affording them space for outdoor activity, such environments are not sufficiently diverse to help them fully appreciate the richness of life on our planet. Those who have caring adults who will take them to natural settings are fortunate indeed for this is the way a child builds the foundations of Earth awareness. I believe that humans have a deeply ingrained need to experience first-hand the peace and harmony of the natural world. In the words of John Muir, "There is a love of wild nature in everybody, an ancient mother-love ever showing itself whether recognized or no, and however covered by cares and duties" (Teale, 1954, p. 311).

Joseph Chilton Pearce contends that, between the ages of one and seven, the child has a need to experience nature exactly as it is on one hand, and play with it in ways that it is not on the other. The child

need only interact with rocks, trees, grass, bugs, sun, moon, wind, clouds, rain, snow, and a million things using the five senses and bodily movement in order to structure knowledge about the world (Pearce, 1977, p. 95). At seven the child has developed logical processing and is ready to learn through interacting dynamically with the Earth (p. 149). But the stage-specific period for bonding to the Earth and the possibilities for operational relations with that Earth begins to fade at age eleven and largely disappears around age fourteen or fifteen (p. 179). It is during these years that John Muir's "love of wild nature" is instilled in the human being.

At one time in mankind's distant past, such experiences happened quite naturally. Certainly, the native North Americans lived within a culture that easily transferred to their children the ability to live in harmony with the world around them. The same can be said for most indigenous, tribal peoples (Abram, 1996; Suzuki, 1997). In sharp contrast, Western civilization has become "so estranged from non-human nature, so oblivious to the presence of other animals and the Earth, that our current lifestyles and activities contribute daily to the destruction of whole ecosystems -- whole forests, rivers, valleys, oceans -- and to the extinction of countless species" (Abram, 1996, p. 137). We are descendents of a civilization that has been taking from nature for centuries with little regard for its health, with little concern for giving back. We have developed and adopted a life-style that

requires domination and an abuse of the natural world. And our innocent children are born into a society that continues to be ever more materialistic and wasteful. We can now see what the ultimate consequences of our carelessness might be. For the sake of our children we need to look at the world in a new way.

If we take steps to help children bond with the Earth, we will be giving them a precious gift.

Once the emotions have been aroused -- a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love -- then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning. It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts he is not ready to assimilate. (Carson, 1956, p. 45)

The foundations of a deep and abiding emotional attachment with the natural world which are laid during childhood will blossom into a concerned love for the Earth which will affect all that they do in their future years. On the other hand, if we neglect to give children the chance to develop feelings for and understandings about nature, they will be ill-equipped to handle the problems that are now looming on their horizon. They will be unwilling and unmotivated to work together in crafting sustainable lifestyles.

But is it more than just experience in the natural world that is needed to change the child's future relationship with the Earth? It has

long been known that children watch adults and model themselves after what they see. We pass our traditions on to our children in countless unsuspected ways. Heidegger states:

Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. (1962, p. 43[21])

In the interests of the future generation, we have a responsibility to bring into question our own lifestyles and traditions, and to begin to model human practice that is in keeping with a strong environmental ethic. When young children see adults interrelating positively with the natural world, and treating it with care in their everyday lives, they sense that it has importance. Through our actions, we must show them that we are concerned with nature and will work to live in harmony with it.

Their Alienation

*There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon, that object he
became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a
certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.
The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning glories, and
white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint
litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf.*

- Walt Whitman "There Was a Child Went Forth"
(Untermeyer, 1949, p 346)

Hundreds of thousands of trained professionals make it their business to know about the education of the young. Well-meaning parents and teachers truly concerned about the well-being of children do their best to give youth the foundations that will allow them to live happy and productive lives. Happy and productive lives. These notions are ingrained in us but let's examine them for a moment. We would all agree that we want our children to be happy; joyous would be better, but happy is good. However, should we not question our goal of productivity? Pearce (1977) has concluded that "the training and education of children is designed to lead to better tool invention, production, consumption, and handling" (p. 36). It is true that we develop tools to feed, tools to communicate, tools to transport, tools

to ease work, tools to entertain, tools to promote health, tools to build, tools to manufacture tools that manufacture tools. Tool production would appear to dominate our lives.

How much better off the Earth would be if, instead of having the goal of production, we were intent on designing and making things that would last for generations, that would endure as nature endures.

Reproduction . . . is nurturing, patient, resigned to the pace of seasons and lives, respectful of the nature of things. Production's tendency is to go "all out"; it always aims to set a new record. Reproduction is more conservative and more modest; its aim is not to happen once, but to happen again and again and again. (Berry, 1986, p. 217)

However, we are fallen into productivity and it robs us, and our children, of that which is every living things's birthright -- the freedom to be. We are amazing creatures upon a wondrous vessel of life. It seems that we no longer have the time and space to experience the joy of what it means to be human here on this planet, now, at this time - a human Being. This is the knowing that we severely lack, the knowing that could bring a greater authenticity (Heidegger, 1962, p. 70[44]f) to our lives. Adults have become "shackled to a rich man's misery" (Maclean, 1990). Must our children, too, be thus imprisoned?

And, worst of all, our drive for productivity has robbed nature of so much. Everything we invent, everything we manufacture, everything we use, everything we own, everything we consume was once part of the

natural world. Everything! Pieces of the natural world become "imprisoned within the technologies that plunder the living land" (Abram, 1996, p. 64). And this same productivity robs us of natural places. With no place to relate, we lose the Earth as our relate-ive. We and our children become alienated from it. We.... become.... alien.

ooooo

As we move across an open field, Benjamin and Natalie hum to themselves. We stop just short of the woods so I can talk to them for a moment about being Earthlings. I take out some Earthling pendants, circles of wood (tree cookies) with an applique of the Earth in space.

"You see, to be an official Earthling you need something like what I'm wearing. You know what that is...."

"Earth," says Benjamin.

"That's our planet all right, that's where we live. In fact, that's Africa. We live over on the other side. How would you like to have one of these to wear

when you are out doing Earthlings' stuff 'cause Earthlings always wear these... This says you're an Earthling."

"That's what the aliens call you," says Benjamin. Then he speaks with an evil sounding voice saying, "We must kill the Earthlings. Then we can take over the world."

"That's what they might say all right, Benjamin . . ."

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The Institute for Earth Education has given the name "Earthlings" to a program they are developing for four to six year old children (Van Matre, 1990, p. 283). This term takes on special significance when it is naming a little child who is trying to be in touch with the Earth and its life a child who sings "Earthlings care for nature, nature cares for Earthlings too."

What Benjamin sees as being the opposite of Earthling, the alien, hits much closer to home than he would wish. The alien is not from outer space but rather is an aspect of ourselves. We become alienated when we are out-of-touch-with-reality, the reality of Earth and its life.

Alienation from the unconscious and from its

historical conditions spells rootlessness. This is the danger that lies in wait for the conqueror of foreign land, and for every individual who . . . loses touch with the dark, maternal, earthly ground of his being. (Jung cited in Levin, 1985, p. 284)

We are, in essence, alien if we do not fit in with the natural processes of the place in which we live. As aliens we “. . . can't hear the wolf calling [us] brother . . . can't hear the earth calling [us] child . . . only [our] own words making up the world” (Le Guin cited in Jardine, 1992, p. 79).

Alienation is a state of being that has been characteristic of humanity over the eons but to those in the Western World it has become acute in the past few hundred years. Living out Descartes' nightmare (Jardine, 1990a) we have strived to become un-natural, we have become more and more civil-ized, more and more anthropocentric. . . “I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is Other -- outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what matter is for. I am that I am . . .” (Le Guin cited in Jardine, 1992, p. 30).

We're sorry, Benjamin, oh so sorry. The aliens have taken over the world. . . . We are the alien-ated. And the Earthling within you? Well, it has quite a struggle ahead of itself.

CHAPTER 5

GETTING OUT IN THE NATURAL WORLD

Awakening a Sense of Place

Sitting in a poplar grove, crawling through willows, running through tall grass while experiencing a small piece of prairie habitat may seem rather mundane. As adults we need to “jump-start” our senses with a brilliant sunset, a perfectly stunning reflection, a majestic panoramic view. It seems that the more experienced we are, the less natural surroundings of the everyday type excite us. Young children do not have any preconceived notions about what they will or will not pay attention to and as a result, the natural world opens up to them.

Children are always sensing. It is how they learn about their world. “New patterns for sensory organization . . . form . . . as [the child] interacts with the world through the body” (Pearce, 1977, p. 95). To the little ones, everything is new. When asked how she feels about visiting the natural world, five year-old Victoria says, “I feel kinda . . . I feel like there's butterflies in my tummy . . . 'cause it's fun looking for things . . . there are so many new things to see . . . you can watch a tree grow!” We cannot imagine the variety of responses that take place within a group of young children when they are taken to a totally new

environment. One response that was consistent during my field work with the Earthlings program was the outpouring of pure and unadulterated joy. I think back to one of the visits we made to the prairie.

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The stage is set. The barbs on the wire fence are covered with padding and tied apart to form an inviting opening just right for an Earthling to pass through. And on the other side, a little patch of nature teeming with life: wildflowers of every size and color, tall prairie grass waving in the breeze, insects buzzing here and there, and most noticeable of all, the constant twittering and cheeping of birds. What a perfect place for twenty curious kindergarten children to spend their afternoon. And yet, it is like any one of a thousand spots you can pass on the highway and not even notice.

We have prepared the children over the last few days, teaching them Earthling songs, reading them stories about the wonders of nature and spending some time out in the schoolyard searching for signs of life (we found grass and ants). The kids have been investigating their own backyards and flower beds to see what can be found. Now they are very eager to be off on their first big Earthling's adventure.

Soon twenty very excited boys and girls are spilling out of the cars. One spots a frog in the ditch and the kids excitedly gather around for a look. "Let's be careful . . . so many little feet might accidentally

hurt it . . . watch where you step . . ."

The hole through the fence leads into a dried up slough with long, coarse grass and beyond, to a grove of willow and poplar trees. The group has barely made it through the fence when, to the amazement of the adults, they respond in unison to this moment, this place, the sun, the breeze and singing birds. All at once they run headlong into the tall grass laughing and squealing and giggling. What an outpouring of joy! Never have I seen a group of children react with such spontaneity, display such wild abandon. ". . . have you forgotten? All the children are wild" (Le Guin, 1989, p. 47). They could not have been choreographed to react so delightfully. We too are swept up in the moment and smile and laugh with them.

Reflecting on this experience makes me remember what a joy early childhood was . . . a carefree time spent learning about the world in my own way, at my own pace. Words weren't necessary -- things were simply "disclosed" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 105), a random flow, the senses reaching out and taking in. "For the child, the eternal questioning of the nature of the real is largely a wordless dialectic between self and world" (Cobb, 1977, p. 31). There is a likeness between the little ones running into the tall grass and horses turned loose into summer pasture. They kick their heels, whinny, toss their heads in the air and race together in wild ecstasy -- there is a unity of consciousness, a reaction to being free in this place at this time.

With just such a unity of consciousness, the Earthlings have announced their arrival to the prairie. We now spend the rest of the afternoon enthusiastically exploring this small piece of sacred, unspoiled, natural ground. Everything is as it should be. The birds are in their nests, singing in the trees and swooping through the air. Small animals are scampering through the undergrowth and peer out at us from their burrows. Insects are hopping, crawling and flying all around. The trees rustle in the breeze. Only minutes from the hustle and bustle of the big city, this little piece of very ordinary yet *so extraordinary* natural world is abundant with life, exuding that sense of well-being and harmony, and cooperation that nature so freely bestows.

As we gather in a natural clearing for our sharing circle, the hushed tones speak volumes. The deep reverence for nature shown by the Earthlings touches me. They possess an ability that adults have often left behind, the ability to clearly and openly sense the wonders of the natural world just as it is, in its most finite and intricate detail. They sing:

*Earthlings care for nature
Nature cares for Earthlings too
Earthlings care so they go out there
There's so many things to do-dee-do-dee-do
I know nature is my friend
Will this wonder never end
Being with nature is so much fun
I think nature is number one
It's awesome
Do-dee-do-dee-do*

ooooo

Isn't it strange that, with natural areas such as this so accessible, we don't take our children out for a visit more often? Consider for a moment our lives in the city, and what a normal day for a child might consist of: arising for breakfast to the sounds of the radio, watching some television, playing with their toys, maybe going out into the backyard, having lunch and then going to school to spend time on various activities in their classroom, returning home for some television, possibly some outdoor play, supper, some indoor play and then off to bed. In all of this, how much nature is really encountered?

Edith Cobb spent a lifetime investigating what she has termed the ecology of the child's imagination. From her study of three hundred autobiographies of creative thinkers, she found that adult creative genius has its roots in childhood relationship with the natural world (Cobb, 1959). The openness of the child to the world around them, their innate capability to process the never ending stream of sensory input, everything "observed to an almost intolerable extent" (Pasternak cited in Cobb, 1977, p. 93), is the source of the fountain from which creativity flows.

It is the capacity for returning reductively to the use of universals, to the 'materials' that furnish human beings with the power to create imagery, that inspires adult creativity. In childhood, this behavior is innate and spontaneous, the normal process a child employs

when fulfilling his basic appetite for knowledge.
Wordsworth writes:

*Such, verily, is the first
Poetic Spirit of our human life;
By uniform control of after years
In most abated or suppressed, in some,
Pre-eminent till death.* (Cobb, 1977, p. 95)

We seldom give thought to the significant effect that our sensory experiences with nature, especially those of childhood, have on our imagination and our creativity in later life. "The truly creative adult contrives to raise primary, less highly organized but deeply intuitive, aspects of awareness closer to consciousness with all the respect of the artist for the beauty and simplicity of his own primary materials" (Cobb, 1977, p. 94).

Imagine for a moment if such places as our small piece of prairie were readily accessible to all children. I seriously doubt if they would ever choose to stay inside with the sun shining and the birds singing at their special natural place. As concerned adults wishing to help children in their quest for wholeness, we might question commonly held beliefs of what school yards should be. Grass and ants do not provide a rich learning ground. Shouldn't parts of a school yard be teeming with indigenous species: tall grass and ground cover, wild shrubbery and trees, ponds with tadpoles and water bugs, birds and berries and butterflies?

Children . . . need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles and watch ants, to build with dirt and

sticks in a hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds and chickadees . . . these . . . experiences . . . form the secure foundations to which we return again and again in our struggle to be strong *and* connected, to be complete. (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 75)

What does all of this tell us about the young child and Earth awareness? Is it not true that the natural world is out there just waiting to be experienced by our children and re-experienced by ourselves? We need only visit it. If we go out into the woods and sit and watch and wait, something will happen. And when something happens out there, something happens inside.

Removing Disguises

The day dawns bright and clear. It will be perfect for our outing. After getting the gear in order I call on my two five-year-old participants. They are very excited to be Earthlings and are most anxious to get going. We soon arrive at a beautiful, naturally wooded area near the Elbow River. We have the whole day ahead of us to experience the woods, the fields, the river and the marshy areas.

Before we are even out of the parking lot, Benjamin and Natalie spot some sheep in a pen. The tape recorder that Ben is wearing captures the moment as they run to see the sheep. The first noises heard are the two of them attempting to talk in sheep's language. They are doing their best to entice the sheep to come closer. Benjamin breaks into English. He states, "I feel sorry for animals."

"Yeah, they get killed," Natalie replies with sadness in her voice.

"Yeah," responds Benjamin quietly.

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These two five-year-olds clearly know something that most people choose not to talk or think about. And they don't like it. I remember the grief of another small boy, grief still carried today, when the neighboring men would arrive at the farm to help butcher an animal. It would be shot and bled, hoisted onto a large tripod, gutted and butchered within the span of an hour or two. How could this be done

by a loving father and good neighbors? A living, breathing wonderful being one hour, chunks of flesh for consumption the next. The boy could never watch, he would never participate . . . but he could consume the somehow different, disconnected and delicious prepared meat along with everyone else.

. . . if we do eat meat it is the life, the bounce, the swish, of a great alert being with keen ears and lovely eyes, with foursquare feet and a huge beating heart that we eat, let us not deceive ourselves. (Snyder cited in Jardine, 1992, p. 146).

It is a simple fact that we regularly and sometimes ruthlessly use other wonderful living things to satisfy our needs and wants. It is big business. When we and our children roll the shopping cart alongside the meat counter and make our selection, the fact that this was, a short time ago, a living being like ourselves, doesn't enter the picture. It is well hidden. "What is discovered and disclosed stands in the mode in which it has been disguised and closed off . . ." (Heidegger, 1996, p.204). In our modern world, in our disconnectedness, there will be no uncovering, no thanks for the life that has been given, no explanation, no tradition that honors the other.

The "wound" of separateness is healed through the *denial* that there ever "was" any union. There is nothing to mourn, nothing to lament. Indeed . . . epistemological anxiety is evoked, not over [the] loss [of], but by the suggestion of *union*; [such a suggestion of union] obscures objectivity [and] muddies the clear lake of the mind. (Bordo, 1987, cited in Jardine, 1992, p. 36)

It is difficult for the clear thinking young child to come to grips with such ambiguity. Their sadness wells up from deep within, from that place where we all carry a burden of collective guilt for the way we have come to treat other life forms with whom we share the planet. When Benjamin and Natalie speak quietly to each other at the edge of the sheep paddock, they are sharing that burden. It could be otherwise.

Most indigenous hunting peoples carefully avoid speaking about the hunt beforehand, or referring directly to the species that they are hunting, lest they offend the listening animals themselves. After the kill, however, they will speak directly to the dying animal, praising it, promising respect, and thanking it for offering itself to them. (Abram, 1996, p. 88)

We must remind ourselves that we are of the Earth. We need sustenance and this requires “willful (and one hopes, mindful) destruction of others (Jardine, 1992, p. 146). We are part of a great connectedness, a great exchange of nutrients, a flow that runs from the sun to the plants and animals, to our own bodies. This is as it should be. Our problems lie in how this is interpreted or, should I say, not interpreted. Not interpreting the connections we have with the Earth especially those that are inherent in the food we eat is a missed opportunity to build Earth awareness. For ourselves and our children to become wholly human we need to honor these connections. We need to be vigilant in the uncovering, in the removing of disguises, in seeing things as they truly are. David Jardine (1992) illustrates the

complexity of our interrelationships.

This paper from which you are reading does not simply announce itself, announce what it "is." It is not exquisitely this piece of paper because it requires nothing but itself in order to exist; it is not a *substance* in the Scholastic sense. Rather, it is what it is because it is what it is not -- it announces sun and sky and earth and water and trees and loggers and the meals they eat and chainsaws and gasoline and pulp and the dioxin produced by the bleaching of this paper and the effluent and the poisoned fish near pulp mills, and the cancer and the pain and the death and the sorrow and the tears and the Earth and the trees growing up out of it, full of sun and sky and earth and water. (p. 104)

For the sake of the Benjamins and Natalies of this world, for the sake of us all, we need to find our "interpretive voice" (p. 145).

Nurturing the Sense of Wonder

John Muir never lost his childlike enthusiasm for nature -- his sense of wonder. He once wrote in his journal "I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in" (Teale, 1954, p. 311). During a storm, most people head for shelter, but not John Muir. With a keen zest for life, Muir would be drawn outside. "When the storm began to sound, I lost no time in pushing out into the woods to enjoy it" (p. 184). He tells the story of climbing a tall "Douglas Spruce" and riding out the storm, "free

to take the wind into my pulses and enjoy the excited forest from my superb outlook" (p. 187). This man had a keenly developed sense of wonder! The Muir Trek (Van Matre, 1974, p. 159f), fashioned after John Muir's philosophy, begins before sunup and lasts until after sundown. It is designed to keep the participant in the here-and-now, with no reflection on the past and no speculation about the future. The Muir Trek helps us re-member abilities long lost, helps us re-turn to the ways of childhood, helps us remember that "the time is always now, the place is always here" (Pearce, 1977, p. 106). It is this characteristic of children that results in their phenomenal sense of wonder.

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength (Carson, 1956, p. 43).

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"There is something else you need when you're an Earthling. We have to practice something that Earthlings get very good at. That is careful watching. See... you can walk through the trees and not really 'see' anything... isn't this right?... But you know, if you look really carefully you never know what you're going

to find. I have something special for both of you to use, it's called a 'third eye'. You have one eye here and one eye here and I'm going to give you a third eye to help you see things better, okay?..."

I present Benjamin and Natalie each with a powerful magnifying glass and soon we are closely inspecting the wildflowers and the bugs that are crawling on them as well as the miniature grasshoppers clinging to the tall grass.

"It's right there."

"There it is. It looks just like a little grasshopper. It leaps from stem to stem... did you see that?... There. I've got a good look at him from here."

"I do too."

"Wow."

"Wowwww."

"It's hanging onto that leaf with its front feet and its back feet. It's kinda got them wrapped around."

"It kinda looks like a bunny a little."

"It does kinda look like a bunny a little bit. It has two feelers at the top, do you see them?"

"Yeah."

"Can you see its eye?"

"Yeah, I can see its eye."

"Oh, now watch it. There's big powerful back legs, they're like big muscles, see its big back legs? That's how come it can jump so good. You see it uses those big back legs. What color would you say it is, Benjamin?"

"It's kinda skin colored."

"There, I'm looking right at its eyes. See how its eyes

stick out at the side? Take a look at its eyes, Natalie.
Can you see them? They're kind of gold and bulgey.
See if you can get it right in your lens."

"Wooow."

"You see it?"

"Holy. It is neat. It has neat eyes."

"Do you think it is eating?"

"Yeah."

"Maybe it has got a needle stuck into the stem and it is eating. You know, we could eat that too. I know what it tastes like. You know how good that tastes, eh. See, I'll show you how good it tastes. You pull one (grass blade) like this and it slips out of the stem. Now, you munch on this soft white end..."

aaaaa

Wonder is, first of all, a response to the novelty of experience. Wonder is itself a kind of expectancy of fulfillment. The child's sense of wonder, displayed as surprise and joy, is aroused as a response to the mystery of some external stimulus that promises "more to come" or, better still, "more to do" -- the power of perceptual participation in the know and unknown. Cobb, 1977, p. 28)

When you go out into nature with children, your own sense of wonder becomes sharpened. Our encounter with the tiny leaf hopper was totally unexpected. And yet these "others" are all around us, all of the time. We need only keep our senses open. All that is required for the child to know that nature is "oh so wonderful", that nature is "oh so full of wonders" is a tiny piece of the natural world.

Experiencing Emotion

In working with the Earthlings, I wanted to find out what sort of internal responses were taking place in the children. Benjamin's Mom tape recorded the conversation at the supper table after their first outing. Let's listen in as Mom asks Benjamin and his cousin Natalie to tell about their favorite parts of the day they have just experienced.

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Benjamin: Um... I think... making that place where the water went through and stuff, with the waterfall, you know that...

Natalie: Yeah I *liked* that place too but that wasn't my favorite.

Benjamin: That wasn't all, Mom. I *liked* going and looking at the sheep.

Natalie: Yeah.

Benjamin: That was *real fun*.

Natalie: I *liked* picking up all those *neat* rocks... and I *liked* building that castle and *like* putting my feet in the mud and stuff.

Benjamin: And, and I *liked* it in that swamp thing...

Natalie: Yeah, *me too*.

Benjamin: I dropped my sea shells...

Natalie: Actually not a sea shell, a snail shell that was empty.

Mom: Well can you tell me something you learned today that you didn't know?

Benjamin: Hummm... I learned about being an Earthling.

Natalie: Me too.

Benjamin: And then when we were where the ant's hill was... well there was lots of ants.

Natalie: And remember the highway... I *liked* the highway of the ants.

Benjamin: Hummm...

Natalie: I *liked* finding all those neat things.

Benjamin: Yeah... Our neat... our awesome bags.

Natalie: Yeah *it was fun*. I *liked* those necklaces too.

Benjamin: Me too. Picture of Earth.

Natalie: I *liked* Tim.

Benjamin: Me too.

Natalie: He was *nice*.

Benjamin: If Tim wasn't there right... Natalie...

Natalie: Yeah?

Benjamin: If Tim wasn't there we couldn't have made the castle and stuff, right?

Natalie: Do you want to see the frog?

Benjamin: Yeah. Tim taught us it.

Natalie: Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit.

Benjamin: See the eyes right there?

Natalie: Ribbit.

Benjamin: See Mom?

Both: Ribbit ribbit, ribbit ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit.

Benjamin: Tim taught us that.

Mom: Well it was a good day, wasn't it. Did you get tired? Could you have stayed longer?

Natalie: Oh yeah.

Benjamin: Because I was like... this (shows Mom big grin).

Natalie: Me too (Another big grin).

Mom: I liked those bunny rabbits.

Benjamin: Yeah, I *liked* the rabbits.

Mom: And then I found a skull, a big piece of a skull.

Benjamin: Remember that...

Natalie: It was sort of umm it was sort of *sad* seeing the dead squirrel.

Benjamin: Did you see its guts...

Natalie: Yeah...

Benjamin: Its tummy?

Natalie: Yeah...

(Quiet pause while they reflect on this)

Natalie: And I *liked* that tooth that I got.

Mom: You got the tooth eh?

Natalie: Yup.

Benjamin: I found the bones of the little mouse.

Natalie: How many?

Benjamin: Two.

Natalie: Yeah.

Benjamin: I wonder where wolves kill the mice?

Natalie: They're running around.

Mom: It may have been an owl though. It may have been an owl. If it was a squirrel it could have been even a male squirrel

Benjamin: But Mom, the squirrel... perhaps the squirrel could've been killed by a coyote...

Natalie: I've seen so many great horned owls in my back yard.

Mom: That's true you do, don't you.

Benjamin: Great horned owls?! When?

Natalie: Well, I don't know, all the time.

Benjamin: At nights?

Mom: You had a snowy owl didn't you have a snowy owl?

Natalie: Oh yeah... this big owl flying it was ... as big as a baby when he would fly.

Mom: Well, if we didn't have the owls eating those mice

we would be overrun with mice. Its kind of like a chain. They feed the owls...

Benjamin: Are you *scared* of mice?

Mom: No.

Benjamin: Me neither. I *like* the mice.

Natalie: Me too. I *really like* the mice.

ooooo

The first thing that is very obvious from this conversation is that our two young participants have enjoyed their experience in the natural world. In fact they use some form of the word "like" fourteen times in this small passage. When asked to reflect on their day, feelings take priority in their communication. They do not look upon their experience as an adult might, as a series of concepts learned. They do not even go into details describing the physical activity that they have experienced even though there was lots of it. Rather, what they focus on very clearly is what they liked "doing" (liked going, liked looking, liked picking-up, liked building, liked putting, liked (being) in, liked (finding) and the physical things that they liked (liked ant's highway, liked (Earth) necklaces, liked Tim, liked rabbits, liked tooth, liked mice).

Other feelings come into their conversation (sad to see dead squirrel, are you scared of mice). We can gather from this conversation that it is the feelings of the children that are being effected by such

outdoor experience. On the two occasions when mom tries to help them synthesize what they have learned, they barely pay any attention; they are not ready to respond in that way. What is meaningful to them is how they *feel* about their experience. What they communicate back to the adult are the *feelings* they have about being in the natural world. Conceptualizing will become important later in their lives. The memory these five-year-olds have is one based on how they have reacted emotionally.

If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. (Carson, 1956, p. 45)

"The emotions and the impressions of the senses": these are what we are effecting when we see to it that our young children spend time in the natural world forming an emotional attachment to the Earth our preeminent home, an Earth that can be intimately known only as a result of rich sensory input.

These children are just embarking on the adventures that life has in store. They want to experience everything around them, to drink in the world in big gulps. They are open to it all. Somehow, the world of human design, that of the home, the classroom, the playground, the shopping mall, does not gently hold the child's interest the way nature does. When taken into a wild natural area, kids are in their element.

("Have you forgotten? All the children are wild" (Le Guin, 1989, p. 47).) It is fertile learning ground. There is so much to explore, so much to experience, so much to take in, so much to do-dee-do-dee-do.

Fostering Care

If there is one concept in the world today that we need to be mindful of, that we need to be reminded of, it is the concept of care. The five and six-year-old Earthlings involved in my field work show us in so many ways that they care for nature.

"Yeah, they get killed," Natalie replies with sadness in her voice.

"I feel sorry for animals." says Benjamin.

"Yeah," responds Benjamin quietly.

ooo

Natalie: It was sort of umm it was sort of *sad* seeing the dead squirrel.

Benjamin: Did you see its guts?...

Natalie: Yeah...

Benjamin: Its tummy?...

Natalie: Yeah...
(Quiet pause while they reflect on this)

ooo

Chantelle: Earthlings help the Earth..... I know that..... we save the Earth.

Ron: How do you save the Earth?

Chantelle: Save all the living creatures....

Ron: Save all the living creatures?

Chantelle: Yup. (speaking proudly) "I will be a defender of the planet."

Ron: (thoughtfully) A defender of the planet.... that's a good thing to be.

Chantelle: (giggle) And we will help worms to live.... and help caterpillars.... and leaves.... we will save leaves.... and help the Earth grow.... and give love to the Earth.

Chantelle, not yet six years old, has a solid idea of what it means to be caring of nature. She says that "Earthlings help the Earth . . . save the Earth . . . save all the living creatures . . . help worms to live . . . help caterpillars and leaves . . . save the leaves . . . help the Earth grow . . . give love to the Earth." The Earth and all of the animals and the leaves can be saved by the caring efforts of Earthlings. We can see that Chantelle wishes to live in harmony with the natural world through helping, saving, giving, loving.

Wesley and Denver explain what they think Earthlings do. In Denver's opinion, Wesley has trivialized our discussion when he

imagines an adventure. Denver is being serious. He is concerned about the animals.

Wesley: Earthlings take good care of nature. You wouldn't break up a beaver dam if there was a beaver in it.

Denver: Earthlings take care of all the forests in the whole wide world. You, like, you don't litter the forest, you don't leave garbage because the animals might eat it and die.

Wesley: Yeah, because they don't understand.

Denver: And uh, like their homes. If Earthlings see an ant hill they don't kick it to see like... you know, what's inside. You don't climb down a hill, and there's some water down at the bottom, you don't just go down and take all the sticks out, you don't just kick the beavers home down.

Wesley: Then you might accidentally slip. You might go whoaaaaa... splash.

Denver: (annoyed) I'm not talking about that, Wesley. I'm just talking about, like, taking care of the animals. Not yourself! The animals!

Here a few more of the children's' ideas when asked about the things Earthlings do:

Carolyn: We take care of animals. We take care of plants. Earthlings could look at things on the ground, like ladybugs.

ooo

Jenna: Care for nature. Finding stuff. Care for animals.

ooo

Ian: Care for nature. Do stuff that you can't do inside. Thinking about nature.... that there was no garbage. Collect garbage from the forest.

ooo

Christen: Someone who takes care of the world.

ooo

Earthlings are speaking the truth when they sing:

*Earthlings care for nature
Nature cares for Earthlings too*

A primordial "sense of care" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 185[199]) pervades human *being*. "Ontically all the human being's behavior is 'full of care' and guided by . . . 'dedication' to something" (p. 185[199]). The words of these five and six-year-olds would indicate that they are interested in caring for nature. Certainly, they need caring adults to help them realize their objectives but their intentions come from the heart. While being *cared for*, they *care*. Heidegger sees care as a ". . . twofold structure of thrown project" (p. 185[199]). We are thrown into the world *taken care of* and we project ourselves into the world *taking care*.

ooooo

On a windy summer afternoon, when hiking with Benjamin and Natalie to the heron rookery, we spot a pair of small, agitated birds above a willow tree. As they take off, we see the reason for their anguish. There in the tree, being violently shaken by the gale, is a small nest, badly askew, on the verge of dropping to the ground. And there, barely clinging to the steep nest, are three downy baby birds.

Benjamin: Oh no! This is awful! The wind is going to blow their nest right out of the tree! Oh no, look at the babies, they can hardly hang on

Ron: Careful now, we mustn't touch them or the adult birds might just leave. Just a minute, now. Let me think here.... what we can do?....

The wind is whistling and the tree is waving back and forth. We can see how close the nest is to dropping, how close the baby birds are to falling out.... they keep fighting each other to get to the top edge.

Natalie: Do something, Mr. Sweet! Please, do something quick...., please!

Benjamin: How can they hang on? Can we save them?

Ron: Maybe some of those thin willow branches....

Natalie: Oh yes! That'll work.... Hurry, they're all gonna fall!

We quickly cut some thin branches and with them, luckily, are able to pull the nest back upright, securing it in to the swaying tree. Benjamin's and Natalie's anguish and despair subsides immediately....

Benjamin: Whew! That was close! They'll be okay now won't they?

....but the Earthlings' experience with death is only averted for a short time. When we arrive at the heron rookery, there, at the foot of a thirty foot poplar is a dead baby heron. Benjamin and Natalie are sad but grimly accept what they have no power to change.

aaaaaa

Heidegger (1996) leads us to see that "... the primordial totality of being of Da-sein . . . reveals itself as *care*" (p.171[182]), that Dasein has "the 'origin' of its being in care . . . [that] 'Being-in-the-world' has the character of being of 'care'" (p. 185[198]). As adults in today's world fallen into the world-of-human-design and fallen away from mindful, thoughtful, careful living, we (and the Earth) suffer a "loss of Being" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 142). Although we are born into the world as caring beings, as we mature in our technological environment, we suffer a

“loss of care” (Wilde, 1996, p.37). Following the thinking of Heidegger and Jung, Levin (1985) details today’s three dimensions of human existence:

In the beginning, the time of the infant, we experience a wholeness and integration which are largely unconscious; in the middle, the time of our adulthood, we experience the affliction of a decentered ego lost in the material world; in the end, the years of our maturity and wisdom, there is the possibility of a wholeness and integration that would constitute the deepest fulfillment of our ontological self-awareness. (p. 18)

Considering this, it is not surprising that the Earthlings react to nature with care. Childhood is characterized by “pre-ontological attunement . . . primordial openness-for-being” (p. 114).

The question we must ask ourselves is to what degree and in what ways do we as adults in a fallen state actually pull our children away from the primordial attunement that is their birth-right. I would suggest that the pull is considerable and irresistible. The young human is beholden to its surroundings: “Dasein gets dragged along in thrownness; that is to say, as something which has been thrown into the world, it loses itself in the ‘world’ in its factual submission to that with which it is to concern itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p.100[398]). Rather than feeling a twinge of conscience, today’s adult seems oblivious to the effects which the young child’s surroundings might have. “Conscience manifests itself as the call of care” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 322[277]). When

we allow our children to spend hours in front of the T.V., the "Time Vacuum" as it has been dubbed by singer/songwriter Ken Lonnquist (1992), is our "guardian awareness" (Levin, 1985, p. 50) aroused? Don't we consider that T.V. might impede the normal development of the child? According to Pearce (1992):

Television floods the brain with a counterfeit of the response the brain is supposed to learn to make to the stimuli of words or music. As a result, much structural coupling between mind and environment is eliminated; few metaphoric images develop, few higher cortical areas of the brain are called into play; few if any, symbolic structures develop. (p. 166)

And considering that the very time spent in front of the television could be spent in caring ways, on recycling and clean-up projects, on planting and tending a garden, on going out into the natural world to get in touch with nature, on learning a new and useful home-grown skill, makes its effect doubly damaging, makes our adult-care-less-ness twice as glaring.

It is clear in the modern world that our sense of care has become corrupted and debased. We know we have misplaced care when the things to which we caringly dedicate ourselves are themselves destructive of human Being, destructive of Being in general. We have ignored our guardian awareness, forgotten the vulnerability of our children in their primordial openness-for-being.

How often do we give children the opportunity to exercise their

sense of care for the natural world? We must ask ourselves how often we model caring for the Earth and its life? Are we living in a careful, mindful way? How open are we to "the call of conscience" (Levin, 1985, p. 115) as we usher the young into the world? Surely, there are many ways for us to practice and model what it means to be caring. Levin (1985) sees that our bodily gestures speak much louder than words.

In our present epoch, gestures of grasping, seizing, and clinging, gestures of rage and violence, and gestures of mechanical indifference seem increasingly to prevail. If our experience of being, and of the Being of all beings, is indeed powerfully determined by our technological world-epoch, and if this technological world-epoch can in turn be traced back to a life-world shaped by the activity of our hands, then it would seem reasonable to suppose that, should we find within ourselves the capacity to cultivate an awareness which modifies our way of relating to the things we touch and handle, we could indeed begin, albeit with small and insignificant gestures, to *break out* of the reductive nihilism of our present historical epoch, and begin, with a different experience of truth, to hold open for human existence a new historical possibility. This new possibility is to be found, I submit, right in our hands. (Levin, 1985, p. 133)

It is with this thinking in mind that we teach the Earthlings to sing:

*My head's a good head
My head can learn lots of things
My head's a good head
Lots of thoughts it brings*

*My heart's a good heart
My heart can feel lots of things*

*My heart's a good heart
Lots of love it brings*

*My hands are good hands
My hands can do lots of things
My hands are good hands
They do the work of Earthlings.*

Finding Our Childlikeness

There is so much that adults can easily do to help children become aware of the Earth and its life. We are enriched and the Earth is enriched, when we seize opportunities to share nature with our own children, with our nieces and nephews, with the kids next door. There are many wonderful books filled with great ideas of how to go about this: Acclimatization (1972), Acclimatizing (1974) and Earth Walks (1978) all by Steve Van Matre, Sharing Nature With Children (1979) by Joseph Cornell and Rachel Carson's classic The Sense of Wonder (1956) to name just a few.

In helping a young child attain Earth awareness, you do not have to be an expert in any way. Many adults feel a sense of inadequacy when confronted with the eager, sensitive mind of the child on one hand and the complex diversity of the natural world on the other. They might feel that they are not up to the task of teaching the child anything about nature based on their own lack of knowledge about the different

animals, trees, birds and plants. However, to help the young child gain an awareness of nature you don't need a lot of nature lore. "It is not half so important to *know* as it is to *feel*" (Carson, 1956, p. 45). You only need to be open to the eternal child that dwells within you.

The 'eternal child,' which is hidden in the typical adult, and which cries out for recognition and the opportunity to develop itself, is what Heidegger would call the 'authentic Self': that implicit dimension of our existence which is always and already enjoying a primordial attunement to Being-as-a-whole. (Levin, 1985, p. 6)

And you do not need pristine wilderness to be successful. As Rachel Carson explains, nature can be experienced almost anywhere.

Wherever you are and whatever your resources, you can still look up at the sky -- its dawn and twilight beauties, its moving clouds, its stars by night. You can listen to the wind, whether it blows with majestic voice through a forest or sings a many-voiced chorus around the eaves of your house or the corners of your apartment building . . . You can still feel the rain on your face and think of its long journey, its many transmutations, from sea to air to earth. Even if you are a city dweller, you can find some place, perhaps a park or golf course, where you can observe the mysterious migrations of the birds and the changing seasons. And with your child you can ponder the mystery of a growing seed, even if it be only one planted in a pot of earth in the kitchen window. (p. 49)

It is a matter of taking the time with your child to focus on nature in small ways. Even in wilderness areas, children focus only on one thing at a time, on the here and now. The important thing to remember is

that, for the sense of wonder to thrive and grow, children need “the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with [them] the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in” (p. 45).

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One sunny August afternoon my extended family meet in the corner of the south quarter of my younger brother's farm, the farm of my childhood, for a woodland picnic. I seize upon this opportunity to take my own son and daughter and six nieces and nephews, aged five to eleven, on a nature hike.

I explain that there are some ancient coyote dens a little ways to the east and ask who would like to go and look at them. All the kids are enthusiastic so we start out through the trees. I have not been in this place since I was a boy and I'm just as excited as the young ones. We cross the little creek and are on our way.

The smell of the trees brings back childhood memories and I tell the story of how we worked one whole winter getting out some logs for lumber in the bush just over there, how it was one of the “winters of the rabbit” and how a snowshoe hare was hiding under every tree, how

their trails through the snow were wide and hard-packed, criss-crossing everywhere.

Soon we arrive at the dry, hilly, wooded area tucked back in the furthest corner of the farm. I explain how grandpa always let this corner be, saying it was reserved for the coyotes. And sure enough, there are the dens, just the way they were in the days of my childhood. They are impressive and deeply dug into the top of the knoll, high and dry. There is lots of evidence of the "others" who live here: tracks in the dirt, bits of hair, scat, and we can sense them underground, listening. It is plain to see that this is a vibrant, thriving coyote community and that all is well. We are intruders. We turn and start back.

Our hike is nearly over when we come upon some rotting stumps covered with moss and fungus. I have some Earth education props along and so the kids and I do the Micro Parks activity (Van Matre, 1978, p. 192). It takes only a few minutes to introduce and soon, working in pairs with string for their park boundary and miniature flags for the feature markers, they have found and named four unique, tiny parks centred around various rotting tree stumps. All of us are given a guided tour of each park using hand lenses to help magnify the features -- the cave of the giant

spider, mushroom mountain, the forest of ferns these micro parks seemingly catching the childrens' interest even more than the coyote dens.

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As adults, we need to keep in mind that young children build their relationship with the natural world by focusing on the environment directly around them. They "scour the ground for bones, pine cones, sparkly sandstone, feathers, or wildflowers" (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 6). They don't require grandeur and panoramas, and although a visit to the coyote dens is great, the micro-worlds that adults often overlook will do just fine. "Exploring nature with your child is largely a matter of becoming receptive to what lies all around you. It is learning again to use your eyes, ears, nostrils and finger tips, opening up the disused channels of sensory impression" (Carson, 1956, p. 52).

Renewing Our Spirit

Today we are faced with a growing sense of spiritlessness. As the "power of technology continues to expand . . . the field of spiritual wisdom is being increasingly closed off" (Levin, 1985, p. 153). Heidegger notes:

The spiritual decline of the earth is so far advanced

that the nations are in danger of losing the last bit of spiritual energy that makes it possible to see the decline (taken in relation to the history of 'Being'), and to appraise it as such. (cited in Levin, 1985, p. 68)

Nietzsche, in The Will to Power, states that "a growing sense of emptiness in our daily lives, and a powerful nihilism which reflects this in our thinking, may be virtually inevitable, because 'We have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world'" (p. 263). And Lame Deer, Sioux Medicine Man says "Only human beings have come to the point where they no longer know why they exist. They . . . have forgotten the secret knowledge of their bodies, their senses, their dreams" (p. 167).

Seeing the natural world and its myriad forms not as something to be consumed, but rather as something to be honored and respected and protected, something with an integrity of its own, feeds the human spirit. Having a positive relationship with nature can lead humans, young and old, to fulfillment, wholeness and health.

Finding our centeredness in that true center of meaning around which our life can pivot in a relaxed, well-balanced way, is crucial not only for our health; it is critical for our emotional well-being, and therefore also for our steadiness of principle as moral agents. (Levin, 1985, 271)

When we are grounded and centered, we become part of "the sacred balance" (Suzuki, 1997, p. 185). Heidegger tells us, "Freedom reveals itself as the letting-be of beings" (Vycinas, 1961, p. 157). Paul McCartney

sings about the serenity that visits us when we "Let it Be" (Lennon & McCartney, 1970). We can be part of this "letting-be" in our relationship with the wilderness, in our relationship with children, if only we remember we live "in wild country", that "all the children are wild" (Le Guin, 1989).

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Shane (9): It's fun. It makes me feel warm and happy. Nature's my friend. It's something schools should do more with kids. I feel that I can do a lot of stuff out there. I can look at things carefully, I can hike, I can use my senses. It's helps me feel better about myself to go out into nature. We are freer.

Brian (10): Nature has so many fascinating things that nobody could ever learn about it in a day! You need time and you really need to have a heart for nature. It's like.... how I feel.... it is like a missing part in my life. When I am in there, the missing piece goes in, when I go out the whole thing shatters. But when I go in again it is like pieces going together in the forest and every time I go in it feels more like my home. Everybody should like something in their life... everybody should have at least one experience like this.

R J. (9): When I'm hiking I feel really good and I feel that I am out in the wild and it feels really good. Its cool. I think man should live more into the wild than in here. Mother Nature makes everything different. If we didn't have nature we would be in a lot of trouble. Mother Nature is good to me. If I want I could do anything. It provides me something to do every day, it has trees, it provides me with water, it gives food. Man can

live without computers but can't live without nature. If we didn't have nature, nothing would be here, not even us because we are part of nature. If I had a choice I would try to go out five times a week or maybe even six because I love nature.

Justin(11): It made me feel great, it feels great to be in nature and learning how to be outside. The surroundings, the smell of the wind. You use what you were given first thing - your body. I like it much more out there, learning about out there and doing. It gives me a lot more confidence just to be out there like when we climbed Mt. Baldy. I didn't think I could do it but I did it and it was so amazing! Nature's my friend.

Matthew (12): Well it's like I'm in a whole different world and everything and you're more at home around nature. It really brings out what I like to do, my hobbies and everything and its really beautiful. I like the eagles, almost every single animal that's out there, and its a lot of fun and I feel at peace. It would be pretty neat to be out there learning every day. I feel more at ease with it. It's like I'm me and there's nobody else like me and when I'm out there I feel just fine.

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I have been privileged to spend three years as assistant principal of Bowcroft Elementary School. This vibrant, high-needs school is situated in the heart of the densely populated, low socio-economic area of Bowness. The schoolyard's most recent claim to fame has been the terrible stabbing-to-death of a thirteen year-old by a fifteen year-old.

During my first month at Bowcroft, before the school-year starts, I am forewarned about the kinds of discipline problems I might encounter, and wonder with some trepidation what my new job might hold. One only has to look around the community to see the lack of opportunity that some children were faced with. Many have spent their entire summer within a few blocks of their home. Some have never yet visited the mountains, a scant one hour drive to the west. Isn't it lamentable when children are deprived of simple experiences that build a sense of connection with the Earth, a sense of connection with their own selves, and hope for the future, simple experiences that can bring balance to their lives? All too often they are abandoned to cope with their anxieties in whatever way they can and as John Dewey points out "the neglected body, having no organized fruitful channels of activity, breaks forth, without knowing why or how, into meaningless boisterousness, or settles into equally meaningless fooling" (Dewey cited in Levin, 1985, p. 228).

The words of David Jardine (1992) resonate with my most deeply held beliefs about teaching, about our responsibility, our ability to respond, to the children in our lives; about our responsibility, our ability to respond, to the Earth.

At the heart of "teacher-knowledge" is the knowledge that the world is interpretable. This is equivalent to knowing that each child is fecund in relation to the world and this is equivalent to knowing that the world itself is multiple and generative in its facets. Believing

that the child is fecund is not simply believing that interpretation is *possible*. It is believing the world *needs* interpretation for its own renewal. And this is not simply loving children for their newness and ebullience and uniqueness, but also loving the world in its full multiplicity, its full, agonizing *interpretability*. If we don't help this child's newness and ebullience and uniqueness work its way out into the world, we abandon the child and the world -- the child will remain isolated in difference with no soils for sustenance

[thereby remaining "unwhole,"
wound-severed from the
world -- "puerile," the worst
aspect of children]

and the world will remain unrenewed

[thereby remaining "unwhole,"
wound-severed from the
young and the possibility of
its own transformation --
"senile," the worst aspect of
age]. (p. 188)

The school's resource teacher, Jim Hogaboam, and I identify eighteen of the our neediest students, some with low self-esteem, some with learning difficulties, some with behaviour difficulties, some who have simply had rough lives; and on the third day of school, these students become The Bowcroft Hikers. The school will cover expenses, the students will be accepted into the group unconditionally. Here is a small part of the story.

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Much to the surprise of the kids, our inaugural hike is taking place on the first Saturday, just six days after the start of the school year. We choose to drive the kids to Larch Valley up by Lake Louise because the larch trees are magnificent at this time of year. The Hikers are on their best behaviour for the two hour trip. We park the vehicles and pile out, gazing up toward our destination, a hanging valley located far above the lake. The excited kids are undaunted and on the way across the parking lot Kirk catches up to me with a big smile on his face and says "I got a hole in my heart you know." He lifts up his T-shirts and shows me the fist sized indentation in his chest. This hadn't been mentioned on his health information form! I think for a second about the implications and then gather the group at the trail head. "I'd like to introduce the leader for the day. Captain Kirk here is going to set the pace for us."

As we move up the trail we come upon a small, tumbling creek. Stopping for a drink of the crystal clear, icy, "best water I've ever tasted!" prompts the kids to quickly empty their city-filled bottles. Equipped with this somehow much tastier, somehow different liquid we continue on. There are many breathtaking sights, turquoise blue lake framed by dark green towering spruce, shining white glacier against purplish mountain, and we climb switch back after switch back, suddenly emerging into the beautiful, rock-strewn valley with its tall grasses and ponds, its brilliant larch trees, its peace and tranquility.

This place would be spectacular at any time of the year, but with the larch in their full, golden splendor it is awe-inspiring. We settle down for lunch in the warm sun. The grey jays delight the kids as they accept edible tokens of friendship from outstretched hands.

Climbing further we find a little lake and its perfect reflection of the gigantic mountain behind. The bright blue sky, rusty-brown rock and brilliant gold trees are etched into memory. And what is there to do? . . . A hundred things! Scramble up the long scree slope, climb the much-bigger-than-a-car boulders, closely examine the water for bugs, run to the far end of the lake to explore the huge rock maze piled there, sketch a picture to show mom, take off those shoes and socks and experience the freezing water. . . . Two hours is not nearly enough time to get to know this wonderful place. I point out switch backs that go to the top of the ridge and suggest to the group that when we come back next year, we might make it to the top. The next year comes but our goal remains unrealized. The icy water, the scree slope, the huge boulders gently hold us once again.

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By Frazier Creek Falls

Standing up on lifted, folded rock
 looking out and down --
 The creek falls to a far valley.
 hills beyond that
 facing, half-forested, dry
 -- clear sky
 strong wind in the
 stiff glittering needle clusters
 of the pine -- their brown
 round trunk bodies
 straight, still;
 rustling trembling limbs and twigs

 listen.

This living flowing land
 is all there is, forever

We are it
 it sings through us . . .

(Snyder, 1974, p. 41)

This approach to dealing with children aims at helping them become grounded, helping them find balance, filling them so full of the wonders of nature that they are bubbling over, their "outlook" and their "inlook" forever changed. The adults in this situation are choosing the kind of time they spend with kids, the alternative being characterized by discouraging phone calls to disappointed parents, stern warnings received with anger and defiance, feelings of frustration, feelings of hopelessness, feelings of homelessness with no positive effect.

In the past three years, and joined by the school's youth liaison

officer, Constable Art McAtee and the new resource teacher, Dr. Brenda Abbey, the Hikers have trekked up canyons, to caves, to waterfalls, have climbed mountains, have explored badlands, have visited a heron rookery and listened as beaver suckle their young, seen elk, moose, deer, mountain sheep, coyotes and much, much, much more. Together, we have slept under the dinosaurs at the Terrell Museum and in a tipi and in a cabin in the woods, and gone rock climbing, and experienced the glory of the Kananaskis on cross-country skis.

And how are the Bowcroft Hikers doing as individuals? Has this changed their attitude to life? I could relate many stories of individual success but let it suffice for me to say that during the past three years it has been only on the rarest of occasion that a Hiker gets in trouble. One of the oldest boys in the group came to us from the neighboring school accompanied by the kind of warning you hate to hear: "You are getting our worst kid - trouble with a capital 'T'." During the entire school year he was in trouble only once, and then it was relatively minor. We attributed this happy result to the fact that he was a Hiker.

Is it not true that most dysfunction demonstrated by difficult students is brought on by situations which our world-of-human-design creates? "However much it is brutalized, it is also the body of experience which bears the most uncompromised implicit understanding of the revolutionary opportunities that could favor us at the present historical moment with an opening up of the 'healing

dimension'" (Levin, 1985, p. 74). At home and at school, the fact that nature calls out to our children is not often honored. But nature remains generous to us -- remains the Great Healer. In the words of John Lennon we need to "Get back, get back, get back to where [we] once belonged" (Lennon & McCartney, 1990). It feeds our bodies, it feeds our minds, it feeds our spirits.

Quieting Night Fears

"Who would like to come out with me and call the coyotes?" In response to my question, a dozen wide-eyed seven to ten year-olds bundle themselves up. With toques and mitts and warm snow boots, we venture outside. The night is beautiful, the air crisp, the sky starry, moonlit. Our senses sharpen.

Before walking the few hundred feet to the edge of the ridge upon which the big log cabin sits, I caution the children to move quietly so as not to disturb whatever creatures might be nearby. We come to a promitory where we can gaze out over the wide expanse of the valley. In whispered tones, I explain how they are to cup their hands and throw their heads back and howl, how I won't demonstrate because my voice is too deep. Then I ask who wants to be the first to attempt it.

Patrick cups his hands and lets fly with a loud, deep pitched aahooooow. We listen. . . no response. I explain that the pitch has to

be higher and yippy, that these coyotes are not going to talk to a wolf. Ryan is second to try, his call is a high pitched wail that echoes through the night. We listen . . . still no response. Jeff is next and I encourage him to make it yippier and to keep it high pitched like Ryan's. This third caller sustains a loud, high, yipping, coyote-howl. Immediately a pack begins to answer from across the wide valley. What an amazing chorus! In a few seconds they are joined by a pack a quarter mile to the south, and then, as if to make the sound completely fill the valley, a pack to the north starts up. We are enveloped in the raucous howling of dozens of coyotes as they yip and yelp to each other across the moonlit vale. It sends shivers up and down the spine. It is glorious! In a few seconds all goes quiet.

Everyone else takes a turn at calling out to the night. There are no more responses, but still, we are overjoyed. The coyotes have given us what we were hoping for. We quietly return to the warmth and safety of the log cabin with their gift tucked away in our memories, in our hearts.

We carry such special experiences with us for the rest of our lives. They are the fabric of our Earth awareness and speak clearly of the others with whom we share this planet. If we call the coyotes and they answer then surely we've found a likeness, surely we are kin.

I am convinced that night hikes are good for children, that they do much to open senses, much to quiet fears of the dark. I have three candle lanterns that I use for just that purpose -- candle light being so much in keeping with the peace and tranquility of the night. After circling up and lowering the 'veil of silence', we start into the woods. Places familiar to us in the daytime take on an other-worldly look when lighted by only a candle. The here-and-now, our present, becomes defined by the soft circle of light; bounded by the darkness. Perceptions sharpen. A rotting, moss-covered stump becomes a surreal mountain covered with caves and lush greenery and trees of odd shape and color. A spider becomes a gigantic monster. An illuminated flower is a treasure with colors that reach out to us, that speaks to us as never before.

On night hikes we have encountered adult and baby porcupine, beaver and field mice all going about their night antics. We have been spoken to by owls in the trees above, we have been startled by large quadrupeds as they crash away through the bush. On the soft earth in a small, round forest clearing, we have lain on our backs in a circle, like the spokes of a wheel, heads together, and with candles extinguished have gazed skyward through the tunnel formed by the tall trees to the patch of brilliant stars directly overhead. And we have wondered . . . and thought our thoughts . . . each one alone yet mysteriously together. We have not relit the candles but rather made our way back to the

lodge in silence, in the darkness, with only our feet to guide us, the children amazed that their feet “seem to have eyes”. The feeling of belonging, of tranquility, of sheer amazement, is overwhelming. No words are necessary, our spirits have been fed. We have have moved further down the “Path” (Van Matre, 1990, p. 308) of caring deeply for the Earth.

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Always, the unexpected happens -- that is the wonder of a night hike -- no two are ever the same. In taking a group up the river ice in January, the river has become a wide beckoning passageway into mystery. With the moonlight and starlight reflecting off the snow we don't even need the candles so they are extinguished. As we round the bend in the river we begin to see eyes peering out of the trees on the far bank. We are being watched by the others and this is only a little unnerving for everyone since we know that only coyote, deer, moose, porcupine, hare and the like inhabit this particular area. We wonder if these others are thinking they are invisible to us in the darkness. Do they know their shining eyes give them away? And isn't it incredible that the eyes appear and disappear so soundlessly, animal stealth allowing them to melt away into the surroundings. When we reach the place-of-the-dens, I explain that this is one of several locations where the coyotes, who have been singing us to sleep each night, live.

Soon the time has come to return to the lodge. Myself and two children tarry while the rest start back. Suddenly, as we pause there still facing the area of the dens, two eyes are looking directly at us. It sends shivers up the spine. Are our eyes shining too? What is this "other" thinking? Surely we are being closely scrutinized. One student nervously whispers to me, "Would coyotes ever attack a human?" I whisper back that wild animals are very wary of humans, especially when in a group, but sometimes . . . if someone lags behind . . . and with these words, I am left standing alone. Both children have taken off, running hell-bent-for-leather toward the larger group which is just disappearing around the bend.

Don't think for a moment they are terrified. They are laughing. Children love this sort of excitement, this sort of adventure. It is much better than any computer game, any movie, any television program, any book. It is much better to them because it is real . . . they sense it in every pore.

The Gentle Teachings of Solitude

John Muir's solitary experiences with nature around the turn of the century have become legendary to us, an inspiration. All he needed to do to get ready for an expedition was "throw some tea and bread in an old sack and jump over the back fence" (Teale, 1954, p. xii). In his

journal he writes "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves" (p. 311).

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Tyler (11): When you get back into the mountains its not so noisy and you sit down and everybody's quiet and you can just... you can hear the birds. It is so quiet. One of the things that really amazed me was that when I looked around I saw two eagles coming around where there was a bunch of trees on one half of the mountain there was two eagles flying around. I could see that. You don't usually see that back here.

Brian (10): It makes me feel good in the forest, in the trees. Once I went to Bowness Park having a hot dog roast and my mom let me go back into the bush for five minutes. I went up the side and I sat down on this log and listened to how silent it was and it made me feel real good to hear all the stuff there was in there. I felt welcome. I felt like I belong and that I could live there. I had this other time when we were out hiking and I went up the trail a little bit where the grass was long and I sat down and I felt the wind in my hair. Even a place in a park that has a whole bunch of trees surrounding me makes me feel really good. It's like, I'm in here and nothing will hurt me cause this is nature and then if mother nature looks after you then it must know that I love mother nature.

Matthew (12): I go out and lay on my back and look at the sky a lot. It gets a lot of stress off my mind. Its kinda like when I'm out there it's more like the whole forest and everything is my friend and I'm barely

alone when I'm out there because I've got so much around me, so many living things.

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We all can benefit from quiet times, times of solitude in the natural world. "Through watching nature in silence, we discover within ourselves feelings of relatedness with whatever we see -- plants, animals, stones, earth and sky (Cornell, 1979, p. 123)." The out-of-doors is only partially experienced unless we set aside time for ourselves and our children to be alone with nature: magic spot time (Van Matre, 1979, p. 188). I've had an ecstatic student come running up after magic spots with the news that a deer has just approached him and sniffed at his clothing. Squirrels regularly put on a show for anyone who settles down to watch, and birds flit and fly through the trees and sing their songs right next to you.

Within fifteen minutes you should begin to feel as if you're being engulfed. The life of the community takes up where it left off. Squirrels may play around your feet, deer poke inquisitive heads into your clearing, birds alight on your shoes! This is seton-watching; a technique designed after the observation emphasis of the naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton. It is not possible to describe the unitive feeling of wholeness which sweeps over a seton-watcher. (Van Matre, 1974, p. 47)

And let's never underestimate the ability of the young child to sit quietly and observe nature. I can still recall one of the earliest experiences I had with solitude; I was only four or five. It was on a

perfect summer day, a day when the whole world seemed to belong to me... or should I say, I seemed to belong to it. My special memory is one of lying on the soft grass of a south-facing slope with the wind whispering through the trembling aspens and the clouds floating lazily overhead. The sky seemed like a big blue dome and I lay there in awe of its beauty and what might lie beyond. There was just that big ol' world and me... no sense of time, not a care in the world, a feeling of pure peace and joy and belonging. Dolores LaChapelle has done considerable research that indicates there is a window of time within which such experiences are most likely to happen.

Never again is the human being as open to the whole. Above all else a small child must be allowed time alone in nature -- even if only under a tree in a backyard. . . . Just as there is only one time in a human's life which is the specific stage for learning language, there is only one specific time in life for building this total trust relationship with the earth. (LaChapelle, 1978, p. 105)

Edith Cobb explains that when a child spends quiet times with nature, "there is a fusion between emotion as the energy of spirit and the spirit of place as the energy of the behaving world . . . a delighted awareness that knowing and being are in some way coincident and continuous with a larger process" (p. 32). She draws strong links between such experiences and the development of the child's imagination.

When going on outdoor experiences with our children, we need to

include quiet times with nature, it can be as simple as sitting under a tree and watching the clouds go by, or quietly watching a sunset. And as Brian explains to us, a lot can happen in a few minutes of such time: “. . . I went up the side and I sat down on this log and listened to how silent it was and it made me feel real good to hear all the stuff there was in there. I felt welcome. I felt like I belong and that I could live there. . . .” Rachel Carson tells of allowing her nephew Roger to stay up late to watch the full moon riding lower and lower toward the far shore of the bay. “He sat quietly on my lap for some time, watching the moon and the water and all the night sky, and then he whispered, ‘I’m glad we came’” (Carson, 1956, p. 22).

It is the sensitive, imaginative adult who will make such experiences happen by seizing upon opportunities for the child to develop a quiet and thoughtful relationship with nature.

The human ‘personality is capable of being deepened. . . . we can enjoy a powerfully energizing sense of the body *as a whole made whole* through our rootedness in the depth of the earth. . . . This bodily felt sense of wholeness hermeneutically disclosive of Being, is *necessary* for the unfolding of Self as an *ontological* being. . . . We are, or can be, fully human only by virtue of our relationship to the earth. (Levin, 1985, p. 291)

We need to exert a special, loving effort and build more and more of these times into the lives of our children so they can feel connected, feel thankful; so they say “I’m glad we came”.

The Gift of Music

In his discussions about the danger of technology, Heidegger talks of hope for the future: "But where danger is, grows the saving power also" (1977, p. 34). The disclosure to man of "all beings whatsoever as objective, calculable, quantifiable, disposable raw material" (Zimmerman cited in Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 99), this incredible affront to our connection with the Earth and its life, is danger in the first degree. It is evident in the technologies that our lives have come to serve. But Heidegger (1977) explains that once "the *poiesis* of the fine arts also was called *techne*" (p. 35) and goes on to ask if it is this *poiesis* that we will be our saving power.

In the sixties and seventies there were many songs written that expressed our dismay at losing contact with the Earth and its life. Joni Mitchell (1970) expresses our concern singing "Don't it always seem to go, you don't know what you've got 'til its gone," and Cat Stevens (1970) when he sings "Tell me where do the children play?" As we move closer to the end of the century, as we become more and more enamoured with technology, there seem to be fewer and fewer songs to remind us of our relationship with the Earth. In "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", Heidegger indicates that "the need to ask about modern technology is presumably dying out to the same extent that technology more definitely characterizes and regulates [everything]"

(1972, p. 58).

We need to remember that music and poetry and art speak directly to the heart. Singing songs with young children about whales and the forest and raindrops and sun and snow and eagles and aardvarks is a powerful way to help them become more aware of the Earth and to help them strengthen their positive feelings about it.

Friend and fellow musician Peter Lenton is dedicated to helping children and the Earth and spends his time traveling around Canada presenting environmental concerts to school children. I was telling him that his work is part of the saving power of which Heidegger speaks and we mused about what would result if songs about ecology and the wonders of the Earth and endangered species were being sung everyday in all schools in the land. He shared this story with me:

I traveled to Lower Hay River in Northern Alberta and did some concerts in the schools there. In this one school, we had just finished doing a bunch of songs, "Dragonfly Rap", "Listen to the Water", "The Whales Are Waiting" and lots of others, and the kids had really been great. Anyway, it was over and I was just finishing the job of packing everything out to the car when a beautiful little smooth skinned native boy, maybe six or seven was going past me in the hall. All of a sudden he reeled around and grabbed both my wrists in his hands. Gently pulling on my arms and looking in my eyes he asked gruffly, most seriously, most beseechingly, "Where are your songs?" I was taken aback, he was so forthright and earnest with his question. He said again, "Where are you songs?" I hesitantly replied, "Well . . they're in my head . . . and on a good day they're in my heart too." Still holding

my wrists, he looked straight in my eyes and said gruffly, emphatically, "Well, they're in my heart too!" and then took off. You know, a shiver went up my spine. What that little boy shared with me made my long trip to Lower Hay River, made all my long trips to all the schools, worth every minute.

We should never underestimate the power of singing. The Dreaming songs of the Aboriginal people of Australia "provide an auditory *mnemonic*.... Just as the song's structure carries the memory of how to orient in the land, so the sight of particular features in the land activates the memory of specific songs and stories" (Abram, 1996, 175). Abram tells how the Aboriginal sing the land into view as they walk along their Dreaming track.

This is the power of the Song.
Through the singing we keep everything alive;
through the songs.... the spirits keep us alive.
(Marshall-Stoneking in Abram, 1996, p. 169)

The oral traditions of these people are passed on through their songs and stories, providing a strong cultural link with the land. We too can form a link with the land through our songs.

Songs have always been a large part of Native North American society. Simon Ortiz, poet of Acoma Pueblo tells what singing means to his people:

The song as expression is an opening from inside of yourself to outside and from the outside of yourself to inside, but not in the sense that there are separate states of yourself. Instead it is a joining and an opening together. Song is the experience of that

opening, or road if you prefer, and there is no separation of parts, no division between that within you and that without you, as there is no division between expression and perception . . . there is something surrounding the song, and it includes us. It is the relationship that we share with each other and with everything else. (LaChapelle, 1988, p. 275)

I have always enjoyed singing with children, from campfires at outdoor school and classroom sing-alongs, to teaching a whole-school music program. I want to experience the heart and soul of music with the kids, and sometimes we do. It is not surprising to me that their favorite songs are the ones about the natural world, about the rainforest and the water, and the trees and the rain and the animals. But those same songs, so wonderful to sing in music class, take on new dimensions when they are sung in a tipi, around the campfire, in the middle of the wilderness. There is nothing that speaks to our hearts quite so eloquently.

Gregory Bateson says "Artistic skill is the combining of many levels of the mind -- unconscious, conscious, and external -- to make a statement of their combination" (p. 275). I hope that, with increased fervor, the world's artists as a part of the much needed saving power , will paint their pictures, write their poems, tell their stories, and sing their songs, interpreting our interactions with the Earth in ways that will speak softly to our minds and our hearts and to the minds and hearts of our children.

CHAPTER 6

GATHERING TOGETHER

Being Open to the Call

*What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone,
in the forest, at night, cherished by this
wonderful, intelligible,
perfectly innocent speech,
the most comfortable speech in the world,
the talk that the rain makes by itself
all over the ridges,
and the talk of the watercourses everywhere
in the hollows!*

*Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it.
It will talk as long as it wants, this rain
As long as it talks I am going to listen.*

- Thomas Merton, "Rain and the Rhinoceros"
(Van Matre & Weiler, 1983, p. 163)

ooo

*Twilight is a time for sharing --
and a time for remembering -- remembering the
things of beauty wasted by our careless hands --
our frequent disregard of other living things --
the many songs unheard because
we would not listen --*

*Listen tonight with all the
wisdom of your spirit -- listen too with
all the compassion of your heart --
lest there come another night --
when there is only silence --*

*a great
and
total
silence --*

- Winston Abbot, "*Have You Heard the Cricket Song?*"
(Van Matre & Weiler, 1983, p. 162)

Listening moves us to a new horizon; listening is the starting point of our renewal. By stopping our frenzied activity, our racing minds, our racing hearts, and carefully listening to the earth, to the others, to our bodies, to the little ones, we will surely hear the call of conscience, the call of our perceptive, felt attunement, our "guardian awareness" (Levin, 1985, p. 50). It is the call of Being, a call into "the deepest recollection of that which has been most deeply excluded from a 'normal' everyday existence" (p. 102). It is a call that demands a certain human response, demands that we "move with compassion . . . move *in response* to the calling -- the suffering and needs -- of other sentient beings" (p. 98). Heidegger (1962) explains that "the call of conscience has the character of an *appeal* to Dasein by calling it to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self; and this is done by way of *summoning* it to its ownmost Being-guilty" (p. 314[269]). The word "guilty" brings a flood of images: our fallenness into everyday affairs, our consumptive ways, our selfish striving, our lack of care, our inattentiveness to the needs of children, our avoidance behaviors, our escape mechanisms, our failure to be *fully human*. It is only in the

second stage of what Levin (1985) terms "The Genesis and Unfolding of Human Motility" (p. 93), the stage of conventional adulthood, that we are susceptible to the call of conscience. It is a call that demands a decision.

Either we seek, or we avoid, an ontologically appropriate motivation and an ontologically attuned configuration of movement. Either we seek, or we avoid, a deeper, more thoughtful grounding. Either we seek, or we avoid a motility more deeply in touch with its elemental field of sense and purpose. As those beings who are gifted with *distinctive capacities* for 'motility,' either we seek, or we avoid, an existence moved by the truth of Being, committed to the continuation of its unfolding as a topology for our dwelling. Either we will find ourselves deeply *moved* by the ontological calling . . . and will resolutely *move ourselves* with appropriate beholdenness; (p. 103)

and thus begin to experience maturity, Selfhood, the transpersonal dimension of our personality (p. 114),

or else, I believe, we will find ourselves *driven* by an ontological anxiety, taking flight in the face of a threat to the structural rigidity, and perhaps the very survival, of our ego. (p. 103)

It is a decision of how we will *live* on this planet, how we will comport ourselves, what values we will uphold, what postures and positions we will take on the issues that face us, how we will treat the others with whom we share the planet, how we will guide and nurture and protect the development of the little ones.

Moving Forward in Resoluteness

We are Earth's gifted ones: the ones to whom so much is given, the ones that should therefore be most thankful. The earth holds us "most benevolently, and keeps us most protectively, when we demonstrate our 'obedience' with a body of understanding, a body which responds to the earth's presence by giving itself away in what Merleau-Ponty would call an *ekstase* of 'consecratory gestures' " (Levin, 1985, p. 292).

Heidegger has called the moment of transformation, from living an inauthentic life to living a life of authentic Being, as the *Augenblick*. The *Augenblick*, this 'moment', is the "form of the authentic present" (Dreyfus, 1992, p. 322). The commitment made in the transformation is both an event in time and eternal. Whereas inauthentic Dasein moves through life in forgetful, wishful, fallenness, a life forgetful of its history, wishfully awaiting its future, continually fallen into everydayness, authentic Dasein has faced its 'nothingness', has come to realize the nullity of self, has changed from being willful to being receptive, from being closed to being open, from making intentionalistic choices to "press[ing] forward into possibilities" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 184[145]). "Authentic Dasein in *forerunning, repeating, resoluteness*, lives out the temporality of Dasein in such a way as to give a *constant form* to its activity, no matter how its specific projects come and go" (Dreyfus, 1992, p. 327). Authentic Dasein does not carelessly *forget* its past,

rather it has a sure *constancy*, does not helplessly *await* the future rather *foreruns* possibility, does not *fall* to the pressures of modern day living rather is *resolute* in answering the call.

Resoluteness is required if we are to rekindle Earth awareness. We need to resolutely articulate "how the presencing of Being has already laid out the 'topology' of an historical journey out of the wasteland -- how it is always clearing a way for our planetary well-being" (Levin, 1985, p. 75). We need to recollect the "lost body of ontological experience" (p. 75). As Earth's gifted ones, we have been given the capacity to respond in "individuating ways to the ontological calling" (p. 70). The work of healing is a process of recollection, a process of retrieving the "rich and full beginning which proceeded the 'loss of Being' and the history of 'decline'" (p. 71). We are not speaking here of going back but rather moving forward.

If Being is now in the grip of technology, then an intelligent political response to the danger it holds would seem to consist in efforts to build a new society, a new community, in which conditions favorable to a deeper understanding of technology, together with conditions hospitable to the gestures most responsive to a radically different ontology, could be continually tried, tested, measured against the ontological difference they would make. (Levin, 1985, p. 130)

Rekindling the young child's relationship with nature needs to be a part of our "intelligent political response".

Finding the Saving Power

In this thesis I have attempted to illuminate ways in which we can help children move towards having a meaningful, life-long, reciprocal relationship with the Earth. We have considered the obstacle to Earth awareness that our fallenness has become and the threatening problem that we are faced with because of technology, the way it is robbing us of our sense of connection with the Earth and Being.

Through showing the places where my practice and belief reflect the collective wisdom of many other concerned and caring people, I have attempted to illuminate some of the loving ways we can use to help children rekindle a close relationship with the natural world: through giving them the gifts of time and place, through fully understanding their need for sensory experience, through honoring their sense of wonder and believing in their ability to care. Our sense of purpose comes from knowing that young children must feel the close, unbreakable connection with the Earth that all living things share, that they must understand the systems of life and the effects we are having on them if they are to craft sustainable lifestyles in adulthood. If we fail to help them on this journey, if we fall short of our responsibility for "the course of the world" (Arendt, 1961, p. 190), it will ultimately be the little ones and their off-spring that will suffer.

Heidegger (1972) encourages us to set ourselves upon the task of

preparing humans for “the possibility whose contours remain obscure” (p. 60). In “The Turning”, Heidegger (1977) reiterates the words of the poet Hölderlin from his hymn “Patmos,”

*But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.* (p. 42)

We are in danger of the truth of Being completely escaping us (p. 43). There is new insight needed to create ‘the turning’, an insight that will be our *saving power* so that we and our little ones can “dwell as those at home in nearness, so that we will belong primally within the fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities” (p. 49). We must move forward with determination, “dwell[ing] poetically” (p. 34) on the Earth.

We are Earth's gifted ones, we have been given so much, we have so much to be thankful for. We have the younger generation and the promise they hold for the future. We must be resolute, we must not await but forerun the danger that threatens us (Heidegger in Dreyfus, 1992, 327) and through our interpretation of the world and ecology and pedagogy, and through mindful, careful living, create the possibility that the little ones, “of this precious Earth . . . may live” (Fox cited in Jardine, 1990b, p. 111).

*May world in its worlding be the
nearest of all nearing that nears, as
it brings the truth of Being near to
man's essence, and so gives man to
belong to the disclosing bringing-to-
pass that is a bringing into its own.*

(Heidegger, 1977, p. 49)

In t h e E n d

We will conserve

Only what we love;

We will love

Only what we understand;

We will understand

Only what we are taught.

-

- *Baba Dioum (Senegal)*
(Large, 1994, p. 2)

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APPENDIX

Methodology

During the winter of 1991, I began to make arrangements to pilot the Earthlings program in Calgary. The piloting had a double purpose. It would yield the major data to be used in this thesis and it would provide valuable information for the program development team. In February, I attended a program writing weekend with the Earthlings Team in Pennsylvania. In April, plans were finalized with the schools for piloting to begin in May.

Two elementary schools were involved in these pilots: Clem Gardner Elementary with one kindergarten class of 24 students, and Cecil Swanson Elementary with four kindergarten classes of roughly 20 students each. One piloting site was located at the eastern outskirts of the city on a natural piece of prairie, the second was at Fish Creek Park, the third was in the Weaselhead and the fourth was at Kamp Kiwanis. As well, piloting was carried on into the summer of 1991 with two five-year-olds, Benjamin and Natalie, at Kamp Kiwanis, Elbow Falls and The Little Red Deer River. A total of twelve separate outings took place during May and June and three during July.

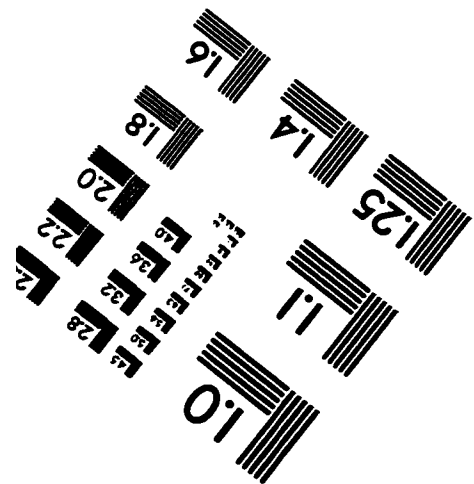
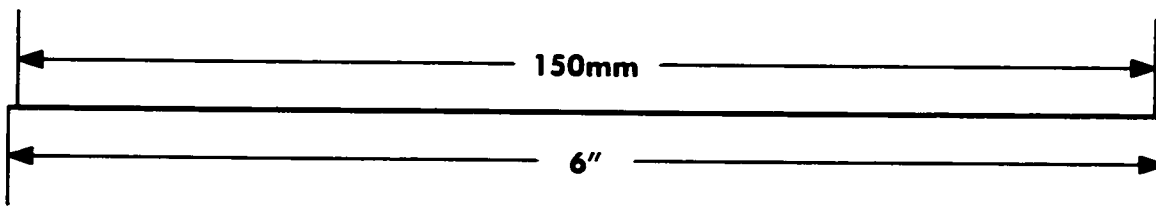
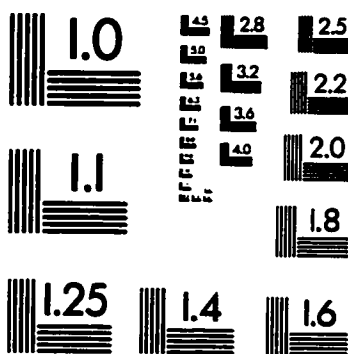
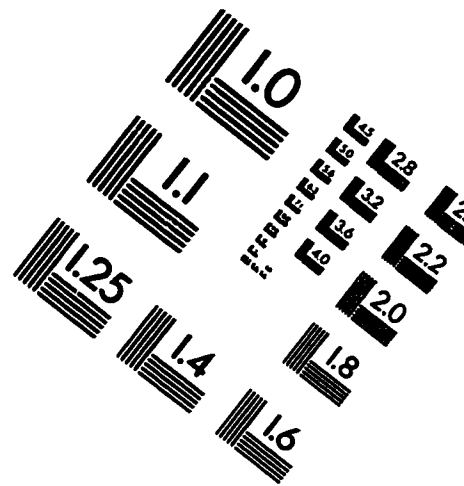
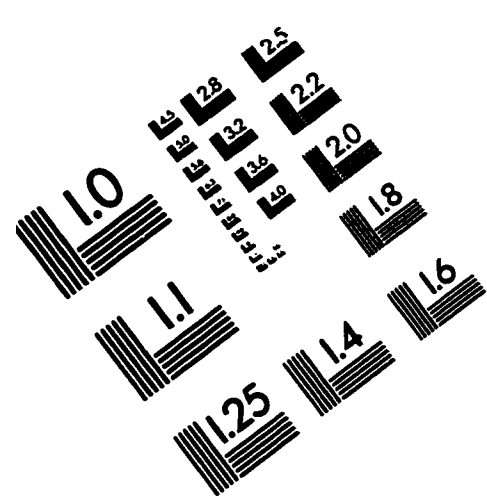
During the piloting process, each activity was video and audio taped. As well, some photographs were taken. As the teachers were in

charge of delivering the program, and parent volunteers were looking after small sub-groups of students during the May and June pilots, I was able to observe with minimal interruption. Myself and two other adults, one with the video camera, were on each of the July outings with Benjamin and Natalie and one of these two children always wore a small audio tape unit. The content of the Earthlings pilot has been edited down from nine two hour videotapes into a one hour summary. Many thorough and accurate scripts have been made of dialogue that occurred during the outings.

There were two other main sources of data used in the thesis. One was Bowcroft Junior and Senior Hiker trips during 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997. The second was The Bowcroft Peer Support Retreats during the winters of 1995, 1996 and 1997. A thorough photographic record of all of these trips has been kept.

From this vast amount of data, only a small number of situations were chosen to be written up in the main body of this document. But all of the outdoor experiences were valuable in informing me about the young child in the natural world and the development of Earth awareness. The thinking portrayed in this work flows from hundreds of outdoor experiences with four to twelve-year-olds taking place over the past twenty-five years.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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