

Information Letter and Consent Form for Research Participants

Research Project Title:

Possibilities of Place: Tracing the roots of place-responsive K-12 educator practice in North Central BC

Who is conducting the research study?

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This research study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a PhD and will be part of a doctoral dissertation (public document). This study is being supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

The various parts of this research project and online versions of information and consent forms can be found at the project website: <http://placeresponsive.ca/research>.

What is the purpose of the research project?

This research study focuses on the lived experience or “lifeworlds” of place-responsive educators in North Central BC. In particular, I am interested in how, why, and where these educators encounter and develop pedagogies of place and particular dynamics of practice that emerge while teaching and learning in place. Place-responsiveness builds on the idea of place-based, land-based, experiential and outdoor education. More than simply learning in locations outside the traditional classroom, place-responsive education is about a reciprocal relationship with place, seeing and responding to land as a teacher.

Who can participate?

You are invited to participate in the first part of the study if your work as an educator in any capacity engaged or engages K-12 students in BC with place, land, outdoor spaces, or physical environments outside of the typical classroom. Employment with a school district is not required. You do not need to be an expert in place-responsive education – simple interest in the project is enough, and some experience taking students out of the classroom. The second and third parts of the study are only open to educators from North Central BC.

What will happen during the project?

K-12 Educator participants will be recruited through participating School Districts, the BC Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association, and the BC Retired Teachers Association via announcements online and through School District channels. Stories will be gathered from educators from around BC, and then used to guide sensemaking activities by educators in North Central BC (area served by School Districts 27, 28, 57, 91). There are three ways in which to participate in the research study: 1) submitting stories; 2) joining a focus group;

or 3) taking part in an interview about a particular program. Educators that consent to submit a story do not need to join a focus group, and those that join a focus group do not need to submit a story. All parts of the study are optional and participants can withdraw from the study at any time.

Part One: Stories

Participants from anywhere in BC, and especially in North Central BC, will be asked to submit stories of teaching practice that demonstrate or reflect on their engagement with place. Participants from around BC will be recruited through the Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association, contact through School Districts 27, 28, 57, and 91, and the BC Retired Teachers Association. Participants who submit stories may choose to remain anonymous or may opt to provide a short biography to provide connection and context for their stories. The research project website will guide participants through the story criteria and submission process. Most stories will be short, requiring an hour or less to compose and submit. Participants that submit stories will receive a \$10 gift card to a coffee shop or bookstore. Participants can submit a joining a Sensemaking focus group, or join a focus group without submitting a story.

Part Two: Sensemaking

Educators from North Central BC – the area served by School Districts 27, 28, 57, and 91, will be invited to participate in one of seven focus group where we will spend time making meaning from the stories gathered in Part One in response to a variety of discussion prompts. These 2-3 hour group sessions will take place in local communities and will include food, door prizes (books), and mileage reimbursement if coming from outside the community. At this stage, the planning is for these sessions to take place in Fort St. James, Mackenzie, Prince George, Quesnel, Valemount, Vanderhoof, and Williams Lake in early 2023. Focus group participants will receive a \$15 gift card to a coffee shop or bookstore. Approximately a month after each focus group session, I will invite the focus group participants to join a virtual 60-minute meeting (Zoom platform) to review the notes I have gathered, compiled, and summarized from the field notes from their session. This is an opportunity to point out anything that might have been missed or misrepresented in my summary. This extra review step is completely optional.

Part Three: Vignettes

Interviews will be conducted with 3-5 individuals or groups who have developed place-responsive programs in School Districts 27, 28, 57, or 91. The information from the interviews will be used to build a vignette or snapshot of place-responsive practices, lived experience of educators, and dynamics of practice within the program. Alternately, individuals or groups can submit a written description of their program, and we can interact about what the final vignette will look like. Interviews or vignette submissions will occur in 2023 and will typically take two hours to complete. Participants in these interviews will receive a \$15 gift card to a coffee shop or bookstore and a resource or book from the Outdoor Learning Store. There is an option to indicate interest in a vignette interview on the online consent form.

Note: retired BC K-12 educators are welcome to participate in Part One, however only those who have worked with K-12 students in the last five years (since 2019) are eligible for Part Two or Part Three.

Are there benefits to participating in the project?

This research may benefit participants who submit stories by providing an opportunity to reflect on practice and gain access to the research results; it is hoped that this may provide a theoretical backing for their place-responsive work as well as quality resources for place-responsive education. This research may benefit the sensemaking focus group participants by offering connections to other place-responsive educators, and opportunities to express and deepen their own understanding of their work. This research may also benefit other educational stakeholders such as curriculum leaders and teacher education programs with recommendations relevant to their work and insight into the nature and possibilities of place-responsive practices.

Are there risks to participating in the project?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts related to this research. It is considered low-risk research and will be low-risk in terms of physical, psychological, social, cultural, and legal risks. However, if any participant wishes to access counselling or mental health services for any reason connected to this research, the following services are available free of charge:

- For employees of SD 27 Cariboo-Chilcotin and SD91 Nechako Lakes – BCI Consulting: <https://www.browncrawshaw.com>
- For employees of SD28 Quesnel – WorkHealthLife: <https://www.workhealthlife.com>
- For employees of SD57 Prince George: Walmsley and Associates: <https://www.walmsley.ca/login.html>
- For others in Northern BC – Crisis Prevention, Intervention, and Information Centre: <https://crisis-centre.ca>
- For all of BC – contacts for virtual mental health supports, including culturally responsive services: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-mental-health-supports>

Confidentiality, anonymity, and data storage

Part One: Stories – data management

Participants who submit stories may remain anonymous at their request, and have any identifying elements in their stories removed. However, educator identity is a key part of this research project and participants may want to identify themselves as the authors of the stories as this will provide a context for the educators who will engage in the sensemaking focus groups. If authors decide to provide a short biography, they can choose what to include and what not to include, e.g., name, location of teaching, and background information. Regardless of whether authors choose to identify themselves, each submitted story will be assigned a number upon submission, so that their stories can be removed from the study if participants decides to withdraw from the study, in which case their stories will be securely deleted and any hard copies shredded.

Part Two: Sensemaking – data management

Participants in the focus groups will collectively discuss and make notes as they make sense of educator stories. Their individual responses will be coded with a number and remain anonymous in any collation of responses or field notes, and they will not be identified in the dissertation, unless a participant has specifically requested that their name be associated with their responses. If the participant decides to withdraw from the study, any data tagged with their assigned number can be removed and disposed of securely – shredded or securely deleted. Due to the nature of focus groups, I am unable to assure anonymity; however, I am requesting of everyone who participates that they respect the privacy of others and the project, and not communicate about their participation. With this measure, I am still unable to ensure full anonymity. The follow-up Zoom call will be recorded without participant windows included, just the researcher window, the shared screen, which will include a Word file with the researcher's notes taken during the meeting, and the audio.

Part Three: Vignettes – data management

Vignette interview participants will be audio recorded in order to provide transcription and field notes. While there is no requirement to use names, the interviews are about programs which are identifiable, therefore I am unable to assure anonymity; however, I am requesting of everyone who participates that they respect the privacy of others and the project, and not communicate about their participation.

All participant responses will be accessible to the researcher (myself) and the individual respondents at their request. For example, participants who submit stories can get a copy back by supplying the story number they were assigned upon submission; similarly, focus group participants can ask to see any research notes or data that are tagged with their individual participant number. Each focus groups will also be invited to a follow-up Zoom session where I will show them the summary of research notes from their focus group section to check for accuracy and clarify any inclusions that are unclear. This is known as the Return Phase in Participatory Narrative

Inquiry. Anonymized participant responses may also be seen by my supervisory committee if they ask to see them. If I invite any other colleague to offer advice on my research, I may also show them anonymized data with an understanding of that this information will remain confidential.

The research information gathered from participants will be stored confidentially in a) a locked filing cabinet in my office at UNBC for paper-based data, or b) in an encrypted FIPPA-compliant drive for digital data (current default for this at UNBC is SharePoint). The data will be shredded or securely deleted within five years of the completion of my dissertation. If this research data will be used from any subsequent research project, e.g. further analysis or celebration of educator's stories who have identified themselves, I will seek their permission to use that data for any further purposes.

Study Results

Participants can indicate in the consent form if they wish to receive a copy of my research when it is complete. The results from this research will be presented in writing via my doctoral dissertation and likely in journals read by educators and geographers in order to help them better understand aspects of place-responsive teaching and learning.

Questions, concerns, or complaints about the project

In case of any questions, please contact me and my supervisor directly:
Glen Thielmann (PhD candidate) – thielmann@unbc.ca or 778-349-7978
Dr. Catherine Nolin (supervisor) – catherine.nolin@unbc.ca or 250-960-5875

Any concerns or complaints about the research project should be directed to the UNBC Office of Research – research@unbc.ca or 250.960.5852

Yours truly,



Glen N. Thielmann, candidate
Natural Resources and Environmental Studies PhD Program
University of Northern British Columbia

CONSENT (you should use the digital version posted at <https://placeresponsive.ca>)

I have read or been described the information presented in the information letter about the project:

YES NO

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this project and to receive additional details I requested.

YES NO

I understand that if I agree to participate in this project, I may withdraw from the project at any time up until the report completion, with no consequences of any kind.

YES NO

I have been given a copy (or access to a digital version) of this form:

YES NO

I am above 18 years of age, identify as an educator in BC, and would like to participate in the first part of the research project by submitting a story about my experience with place-responsive teaching and learning.

YES NO

While stories can be submitted anonymously, I agree that if I choose to include my name and/or any biographical information, this information can be used in association with any stories I submit.

YES NO

I agree that any stories I submit can be considered for future research and publication, attributed to me, with prior permission sought before this takes place.

YES NO

I am an educator in North Central BC (the area served by School Districts 27, 28, 57, and 91) and would like to participate in Part Two of the research project by joining a focus group to make sense of stories in relation to my own experience with place-responsive learning. Note: you do not need to participate in Part One (Stories) in order to participate in Part Two (Sensemaking)

YES NO

If I participate in a focus group, I am also willing to participate in a Zoom call about a month after the focus group meets in order to hear what the researcher has done with the focus group field notes, and offer any suggestions to modify the field notes. Note: the audio will be recorded on these optional Zoom calls.

YES

NO

I am an educator in North Central BC (the area served by School Districts 27, 28, 57, and 91) and would like to participate in Part Three of the research project by being interviewed about a place-based program with which I am involved. I acknowledge that while there is no requirement to use names, the interviews are about programs which are identifiable, therefore anonymity is not assured; however, it is requested of anyone who participates that they respect the privacy of others and the project, and not communicate about their participation.

YES

NO

If interviewed, I agree to be audio recorded

YES

NO

I would like a copy of the research when it is complete.

YES

NO

Signature (**or note of verbal consent**):

Name of Participant (Printed):

Preferred email contact (Printed):

Date:
