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# *Digging Wells, Divining a Curriculum of Hope in Slipping Fidelities*

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**Abstract:**

Joanna Macy (2009) suggests that a shift toward a life-sustaining civilization includes reassessing values and relooking at perceptions of reality. In this editorial, the metaphor of divining is used to explain the creation of hope in the grief-filled epoch of the Chthulucene. Authors in this issue collectively ask: How do we live together? How do we see the world? How do we make meaning? How do we tell truths? How do we make a better world? Imagination is the self and the world merging and emerging, entanglements of making that challenge our commitments and obligations as researchers. As we conduct research, we are constructing new life worlds, dreaming and shaping futures. In this editorial, I'm thinking about hope, of metaphorically digging wells, committing to the difficult work of moving through layers of barriers toward the ordinary whys, and knowing there are multiple truths and needs. In this process we can come to places of relation, understanding, self- and world-healing.

**Keywords:** editorial; JCACS; curriculum of hope; world-healing; fidelity; simulacra; imagination; relation

## **Creuser des puits, deviner un programme d'espoir face aux fidélités glissantes**

### **Résumé :**

Joanna Macy (2009) suggère qu'un changement vers une civilisation qui soutient la vie comprend la réévaluation des valeurs et la relecture des perceptions de la réalité. Dans cet éditorial, la métaphore de la divination s'utilise pour expliquer la création de l'espoir à l'époque remplie de chagrin du Chthulucène. Les auteurs de ce numéro demandent collectivement : Comment vivons-nous ensemble? Comment voyons-nous le monde? Comment faire du sens? Comment pouvons-nous dire des vérités? Comment créer un monde meilleur? L'imagination est le moi et le monde qui fusionnent et émergent, des enchevêtrements de faire qui défient nos engagements et nos obligations en tant que des chercheuses et des chercheurs. Alors que nous menons des recherches, nous construisons de nouveaux mondes de vie, rêvons et façonnons des futurs. Dans cet éditorial, je pense à l'espoir, à creuser métaphoriquement des puits, à m'engager au travail difficile de franchir des couches de barrières vers le pourquoi originel et à savoir qu'il existe de multiples vérités et besoins. Dans ce processus, nous pouvons arriver à des lieux de relation, de compréhension, de guérison de soi et du monde.

**Mots clés :** éditorial; JCACS; curriculum d'espoir; guérison du monde; fidélité; simulacra; imagination; relation

*Exasperated, he says, "Like a top spinning out of control, so many questions, all why-questions that have no answers."*

*"Why?" I ask.*

Simon Sinek's (2009) TEDx talk is one of the most viewed since the program launched in 2009. He explains that leaders inspire action through the "why". He says people will not buy the *what* or the *how*, but if people can connect with the *why*, you can start a movement. When I think about movement, I am thinking of personal and collective movements. How do we move, become unstuck, change our ways, change our lives for the better? Brooke Charlebois and colleagues (this issue) challenge us to unsettle ourselves, to consider extensions of our identities.

I ask why to try to understand. How do I wake up and still hope when struggles surround me, abound, bombard and press from every news and media source? Loss and grief engulf. Mourning is a steady requiem my noise-cancelling earphones cannot silence. It hums me to sleep even in my deeply joyous times with my children.

We cannot shut off the injustices around us: we cannot shut off our collective grief—because we are relationally symbiotic. What happens to one ripples out and affects many. The mirror is always before us, implicating us, repeating, replicating actions into patterns.

I believe seeking the whys help us try to understand the other. The answers to why provide motive. Understanding another's perspective offers us a path, a path to compassion and hope. Hope comes from recognizing patterns and paths we are on, having the courage to question, then having the capacity to open, to imagine forward from what we know.

Imagination is the self and the world merging and emerging, entanglements of making that challenge our commitments and obligations as researchers. As we conduct research, we are constructing new life worlds, dreaming and shaping futures. In this editorial, I'm thinking about hope, of metaphorically divining and digging wells, committing to the difficult work of moving through layers of barriers toward the originary whys, and knowing there are multiple truths and needs. In this process I come to places of relation, understanding and self- and world-healing. This editorial stems from reading this issue's papers together and recognizing the collective hope they generate.

### **Diviner as Mediator, Finding a Path with Heart**

A few years ago, I invited three quotes from well drilling companies. One came with a map marked with my neighbours' well locations, another asked where I wanted the well, and the third brought a diviner. The diviner walked around the house slowly, elbows bent, fists outstretched carrying two metal hangers bent into the shape of an "L". All three companies suggested the same location for the well.

A diviner is intended to be a mediator, a reconciler, who draws a connector between the known and unknown, between two points, between the top of the proposed well and the running water sometimes far below the ground surface. When the location of the well is decided, and the drill

goes down, the hope is to make strong contact with a heart source so that flow can be established. Finding flow is the goal.

Life happens in patterns. If we can't yet see the pattern, we are too close, or not enough time has passed. What happens in the individual is amplified in the collective. More than a decade ago, Twenge and Campbell (2009) reported the new plague in *The Narcissism Epidemic*. MacDonald (2014) describes sub-clinical narcissism and narcissistic traits as having reached "epidemic proportions with serious consequences" (p. 144), with interconnected trends, including planetary disregard, callous moral attitudes, group greed, wide-scale corruption, self-obsession, mental health concerns and more. Carriero (2019), a curriculum theorist, aligns narcissism with the neoliberal agenda and calls for a restructured self, a communal selfhood.

Narcissistic personality disorder includes the creation of a false self, a simulacrum of the true self because the authentic self is not deemed valuable or good enough. A simulacrum is a slipping representation that becomes the perceived real (Baudrillard, 1994). The presented false self is much shinier, armoured. Subsequently, the memory path from the outside to the true self is lost. Note, the "true self" is not a static identity. The true self, itself, slips and evolves. I think of the true self as a truthful self and the false self as an idealized self. See Rafiq's discussion on accessing intuitive and primal knowledge (this issue). His book review speaks directly to breaking through the simulacra, the false outer self.

## **Fidelity**

Juxtapose simulacra to the idea of fidelity, an emboldened "faithfulness" and "loyalty" to precise reproduction. Perhaps when portable cassette players in the '80s were popular, we cared a lot more about the high fidelity of our recordings, knowing that each play on a walkman machine or cassette player was degrading the original recording quality. The narcissist does not care about fidelity because there is no value placed on the original. The veneer of grandiosity is protection for the latent fear of inadequacy. I play with the term fidelity here because unlike the slipping simulacrum, fidelity seeks a reproductive exactitude and replication that is true to the original.

The word fidelity is more commonly used in its opposite—infidelity—broken trust, broken promises, broken homes, broken dreams. Infidelity is an action of value judgment. We have been unfaithful to the Earth, to one another and to ourselves. In varying degrees, we have all lost fidelity to the real. Capitalist motivations stand in place for wellbeing, power for freedom, educational standardization for pedagogy.

We need to divine the originary, find the well source, our foundations and values, and project/make hope. I imagine trajectories that grow from pasts, that intersect with the now and which point ahead to where we could go. To be ahistorical is to be unstable. This is not to say that we will stay on the same trajectory. If we are aware and awake, we will move intentionally one way or the other and still remain connected to the goodness of an underground aquifer.

Against what he calls "our contemporary ethical ideology", which is "rooted in the consensual self-evidence of Evil" (2001, p. 58), Badiou maintains that every ethics worthy of the name takes

shape through a subject's fidelity to a good, and to a "truth" that "punches a 'hole' in knowledges" (2001, p. 70) in such a way as to demand the affirmative creation of new ways of acting and being. (Barbour, 2010, p. 254)

The authors in this issue speak from their local stances, but they are in a conversation about similar concerns. The authors ask: How do we live together? How do we see the world? How do we make meaning? How do we tell truths? How do we make a better world? The investigations in one place are not better than in another place, only different. Cynthia Chambers (2004) in her JCACS article, "Research that matters: Finding a path with heart", expresses the uneasy relationship between truth and research. She uses the idea of localized, partial and universal truths. All are truths. I understand Cynthia's explanation better through a conversation with Mélissa Villella, the new JCACS Community Co-ordinator. Villella helpfully shares that translation has two processes. First, there is the literal translation and, second, there is the contextualization or adaption of the language to the local/context. I understand this process as trying to honour the integrity of the original.

### Turning Together

The Great Turning, explained by Joanna Macy (2009), offers three dimensions for the shift toward a life-sustaining civilization: 1) actions to slow damage to Earth and its beings; 2) analysis of structural causes and the creation of structural alternatives; and 3) a shift in consciousness. The shift in consciousness is rooted in our re-evaluation of values, our perception of reality. Macy (2009) advises:

The insights and experiences that enable us to make this shift are accelerating, and they take many forms. They arise as grief for our world, giving the lie to old paradigm notions of rugged individualism, the essential separateness of the self. They arise as glad response to breakthroughs in scientific thought, as reductionism and materialism give way to evidence of a living universe. And they arise in the resurgence of wisdom traditions, reminding us again that our world is a sacred whole, worthy of adoration and service. (n.p.)

The authors in this issue, through varied projects, tell stories, curious about how to live well together, how to use multiple modalities simultaneously. The authors describe social imaginaries with words such as co-operate, co-operations, co-relationality, transactions, collapsed temporal moments, community-based theories of change, pluriverse, becoming-together, intertwined *tentacular* existences. The authors describe mutual reciprocation that enables thriver-lives in a reconfigured milieu. Authors across the papers write about gaining perspectives in our histories, establishing views to the roots of our thinking, questioning our axioms.

Adam Davies (this issue) describes Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) critical humanism, a co-relationality of interconnective matrices of power, worldviews and life practices. Mignolo and Walsh seek to liberate "pluriversal humanity" (p. 170). Richard Wainwright and Shannon Stevens (this issue) explain Haraway's (2016) timescape, and in it, the Chthulucene, an epoch that Haraway expresses as a *becoming-together*, a place and time where human and nonhuman are interdependent in a *sym-poiesis*, a "making with" across species in co-existence.

Cynthia Morawski and Catherine Dunnington (this issue) and Claire Ahn (this issue) talk about the self, making meaning independently but in an interconnected environment. Various authors describe a need for independence but interconnection with others. This interweaving also arises in Adrian Downey's book review (this issue), on *métissage*, a methodology of gifting—giving value to story, heritage, voice, modality and diversity.

A conception of self surrounded by community is raised in various papers. Cathryn van Kessel (this issue) uses Badiou's simulacra to encourage *becoming subjects*, independent but interconnected, and draws attention to the power of ordinary and interconnected lives shaping societies. While the stories told by van Kessel's maternal grandparents are personal stories, she explains that they are told in the context of their communities, strengthening her belief in community-based theories of change. Morawski and Dunnington (this issue) quote Denzin (2001), that "in narrative collage, we know that 'the interval between temporal moments can be collapsed in an instant'". Our histories and experiences merge into our current action. Our individual memories create a web of meaning, which in turn creates an institutional and collective memory that offers us stability—that is, if we can acknowledge our collective knowings.

### **Our Axioms of Home in Community**

In Monica Prendergast's (this issue) keynote closing poem to the late Dr. Carl Leggo, she writes,

you are / spinning with the stars / & / falling free in moonbeams / shining down in /  
particulate waves / on the snows of / Lynch's Lane / & / York Harbour, / Newfoundland / that  
you are / finally / and forever / at home /

Constructions of home are also echoed in other articles in this issue. This issue's cover artist, Anna Romanovska, shares her struggle in finding home between the place she left and the place where she arrived. In reading Hannah Spector's (this issue) discussions on place, alongside Prendergast's and Romanovska's writings, I'm urged to rethink my axioms of value in relation to place and home, and in so doing my notions of self-situatedness change.

With many others in this community, I mourn Carl Leggo, a mentor who passed in 2019. I remember a phone conversation he had with his wife, Lana, while we were in a meeting in his office, a long time ago. His tone was gentle and loving. He didn't rush. He called her "Honey". He told her he was meeting with me and the time he'd be home. Carl grew up in Newfoundland, but spent the majority of his career at the University of British Columbia. When he spoke of home, it didn't matter which ocean he was closest to, home was Lana and his family.

Drawing from Carl's wisdom, Spector (this issue) quotes him saying, "I no longer ask, is this a good poem? I ask, what is this poem good for?" The question reminded me of Carl, as a diviner, as a mediator connecting the top of the well to the source. In personal communication, he wrote,

I hope that some readers will hear or read the poems as if they have been written for them. I always hope that the poems will connect readers to the heart and earth, to ecology and energy, to wonder and wisdom. . . . I write my poems and I offer them with a cloud's eagerness

to rain wherever the rain will fall. The cloud probably doesn't even know that some will want the rain, and some will not. The cloud is doing what clouds do. I am a poet, and I write poetry, and I offer the poetry to the world. (October 10, 2004)

I believe our collective hope lies in doing what we each do, recognizing that some welcome rain and some have had enough. With different words, the authors in this issue do what researchers do well—they seek the path of heart and offer their gifts to the community.

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