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(Re)inhabiting Waldorf education: Honolulu teachers explore the notion of place

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Abstract

This article tells of an unfinished journey we took with a group of teachers in Honolulu as we investigate and navigate notions of place and belonging. We explain how we are developing and transforming relationships with our values-embodied expressions of aloha and anthroposophy – and how we are challenging previously held ideas. The journey is being taken against the backdrop of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum with the idea of disrupting tradition by discussing the ‘un-sayable’ and, through this, to allow an original, authentic living educational theory to evolve; we believe that (re)inhabiting the curriculum is necessary for meaningful, relevant teaching.

As part of the research, the teachers in this community prepare for an audit of their curriculum, possibly the first of its kind in a Waldorf school. We offer a series of snapshots taken along the way following an action research model and laying out our living educational theory, involving discussion groups, artistic responses, engagement with local communities, and practical projects.

Keywords: Waldorf Education; Place-based Learning; Disrupting Traditions; Steiner Education; Living Educational Theory.

Introduction

This article documents a communal process, which investigates aspects of place and belonging in Waldorf education. It records the (unfinished) journey of a community of teachers in Jocelyn's school in Honolulu, Hawai'i, as we work through questions and explore tensions and contradictions raised during a twelve-month process.

Our experience in Waldorf schools, as well as in other educational arenas, is extensive.

Jocelyn Romero Demirbag has been administrative director for two Waldorf schools in Hawai'i for 18 years. During this period she has served as a school licenser and on accreditation teams, co-founded and chaired the Maui Independent Schools Organization, as well as serving as a board member for the Hawai'i Council of Private Schools, the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, and RSF Social Finance. She has also served as the co-coordinator of the Development and Administrative Network of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and been a member of various committees for all of these organisations. She taught at a Catholic college preparatory high school for seven years, and for four years led non-profit organisations.

Jocelyn: The values I bring to my work come from being raised in an ethnically diverse community and in a mixed-race family on Maui, alongside the Hawaiian culture (Demirbag, 2015; Alencastre, Demirbag, Hattori, Ikeda, & Kahumoku, 2017). My parents emphasised being friends with everyone, accepting all creeds and colours. In this diverse and inclusive environment, I adopted aspects of many cultures, including speaking Hawaiian Creole English, a literal melting pot of words. Looking back, I can see that what was advocated was really the aloha spirit – a warmth, acceptance, and inclusion extended to everyone. In addition, the Hawaiian cultural belief that the land is alive with spirit was one that eventually connected me intimately to the cosmos and then led me to anthroposophy, the philosophy which stands behind Waldorf schools. As a professional educational practitioner, and as a doctor-educator, I have been involved in formally articulating the values I espouse with others while sharing my living theories (Demirbag, 2015; Alencastre, *et al.*, 2017; Whitehead & Huxtable, 2014).

As I am now working in a small school on Oahu, I believe I can bring my small town, neighbor island, Maui-based experiences to fruitful use in a big town as well. My continued research also provides me the opportunity to further articulate my spiritual values: that human beings are spiritual beings impacted by larger beings present in the land and in the cosmos, and that recognising these beings may cause us to flourish, achieve our personal missions, and evolve in our consciousness (Demirbag, 2015, p. 74).

Neil Boland has taught in Steiner settings from early childhood through primary and secondary to tertiary. He is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand, where he teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate programs and is the coordinator of the undergraduate and graduate programs. As well as working in mainstream, initial teacher education, he has been active in Waldorf teacher education around the world since the 1990s and has published and lectured widely critiquing aspects of current Waldorf practice. Over the last five years, Neil has become increasingly

aware of areas of tension, dispute, stagnation and possibility regarding the transmission of Steiner's ideas in different cultures, locations and times. In his teaching, speaking and writing, he strives to encourage teaching professionals to challenge accepted norms.

Neil: Values around inclusion, social justice, and education for social justice have become increasingly important to me; they form a major impulse for my research. Treading a path towards a (likely unattainable) ideal of a socially-just education and remediating societal injustices through transformative educational practice is a driver of my work.

Equally fundamental to my work is striving to embody a lived spirituality. In this context, spirituality is something separate from religion. Religion I take to mean as a defined system of belief or worship; this can be Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and so on. I use the term spirituality here to define the link between the human being and the cosmos. One may choose to follow a particular religion or not, but the link to the cosmos, to the divine in the cosmos, is a spiritual one. This echoes Thayer-Bacon, who wrote: '...'Religion' is a concept that usually stands for organised, institutionalised forms of spirituality that involve membership and participation in the dogmas of some particular church, whereas 'spirituality' describes one's metaphysical approach to life.' (2003, p. 256). In this project, this metaphysical approach takes the form of strengthening the relationship to the land, to one's surroundings, and to the elements of nature; we have termed it *(re)inhabiting the curriculum*.

We first met by Skype through the introduction of a mutual friend who thought we shared an interest in place-based education. We were already both involved in questioning the Waldorf curriculum, in particular the degree to which the curriculum was identifiably Eurocentric when used in places where Polynesian cultures predominantly lived.

Based on this shared concern with Waldorf education, as well as the orientation toward action-for-change that we share, Jocelyn invited Neil – on behalf of the Honolulu Waldorf School – to be the keynote speaker at the 2016 Pacific Rim Conference for Waldorf teachers, being held in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The decision was quickly made that the keynotes would centre around three audits: an audit of place, an audit of time, and an audit of community. Taking Foucault's notion that, '... all knowledge, meaning, identity and practices are social-cultural products' (Gale, 2014, p. 58), one of Neil's intentions in his talks was to trouble and destabilise unreflected practice, challenge passively accepted norms, and explore aspects of the 'unsay-able' in a Waldorf context. Accounts of his keynotes are gradually being published and translated (Boland, 2016; 2017a, b).



Video 1. When we found this to be a topic we wanted to engage with

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VSvhDP_rlW

This conference invited Waldorf practitioners from around the Pacific region and, as we are both active in promoting our living theories (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010) locally, regionally, and internationally, we have a broad reach within the world of Waldorf and Steiner education. Indeed, a year after our project together began, there are already signs of significant ripples moving through the Waldorf movement, including Neil being invited to share his thoughts on the importance of this audit process for schools as keynote speaker at the 2018 North American annual conference for Waldorf educators (Boland, 2017c). The concept of auditing Waldorf education was suggested by Gordon (in Hougham 2012, p. 70) but, to our knowledge, this is the first time it has been attempted (and certainly the first time it has been documented) by a community of teachers. The current article approaches the first of these audits – that of place.

Literature Review

Laidlaw (2008) identified her values as standards of judgement: ‘These standards of judgement help me to frame my educational practice and theorising.’ (p. 74). With our values of diversity and lived anthroposophy as our standards of judgment, we reviewed the literature for a critique of eurocentrism, colonisation, and dogma principally within Waldorf education but also in wider literature. We conclude that the notions of a ‘sense of place’ and ‘homecoming’ found within the literature are in harmony with our standards of judgement.

Waldorf-Steiner education is based on the work of the Austrian polymath, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). His collected works (some 40 books and 6000 lectures given 1900–1924) form the basis of a worldview called anthroposophy. This is notoriously difficult to explain in a few words. The simplest definition is possibly: ‘Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge which seeks to unite the spiritual in the human being with the spiritual in the universe.’ (Steiner, 1924/2007, p. 26). The first Waldorf-Steiner school opened its doors in 1919. From its beginnings in southern Germany, schools are now established worldwide in an increasing variety of settings, cultures and geographies. The education receives full state support in some countries (for instance in Germany and New Zealand), none in others (Switzerland) and exists within the charter school / free-school movement (e.g. the UK and the USA). Recent growth has been most noticeable in Asia, above all in China (Cherry, 2014). This resilience and durability indicate that, for many, the education retains relevance nearly a hundred years after its founding.

When speaking about his hopes for the young Waldorf school, Steiner spoke repeatedly about the need to ‘... read the child’, to adapt the education to the needs to the child (Wiechert, 2014a). He envisioned teaching to be a path of exploration, of constant questioning, of critique. In essence, all Waldorf teachers were expected to be action researchers. This illustrative extract comes from his first lecture to the new faculty: ‘We want to transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction ... We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse.’ (1919a, pp. 30–31).

Despite this hoped-for flexibility, both inside and outside the Waldorf movement, authors have commented on the education being self-referential (Hougham, 2012) and ‘self-institutionalising’ (Ullrich, 2008, p. 167). This is seen to affect its openness to wider

educational debates. Bast (cited in Frielingsdorf, 2012, p. 111) states, ‘... there is much within Waldorf education ... which is hermetically closed to things other than ‘Steinerish’ thoughts and processes; it is a ‘normative education’ and to a degree ‘even fundamentalist’ in its disinclination to critique its founder.’ Speaking out of her experience of Waldorf schools in the United States and Brazil, de Souza (2012) comments that the Waldorf curriculum ‘... privileges a certain body of knowledge (it is visibly Eurocentric) and neglects important cultural, economical, and political issues.’ (p. 60). This is an aspect of Waldorf education that goes against values or standards of judgment that we hold in terms of the central importance of diversity and inclusion.

For a number of years, teachers and academics have begun to draw attention to the fact that – despite its evident outer ‘success’ in being adopted in an increasing number of countries – there are specific issues around the contextualisation and localisation of Steiner education and, specifically, how they manifest themselves in non-European contexts. In the United States of America, Dewey has reported on the lack of racial diversity among teaching staff in Waldorf schools (2012). Wiechert and Sagarin have sought to expose ‘Waldorf myths’, practices applied uncritically by Waldorf teachers which over time become traditions despite sometimes being completely at odds with Steiner’s intentions (Sagarin, 2003, 2008; Wiechert, 2014b). Though it has been claimed within the movement that ‘... for some time Waldorf education has ceased being a Eurocentric education movement’ (Kullak-Ublick, 2012), de Souza’s comments above indicate the opposite – that established European or Eurocentric traditions still play an over-large part in pedagogical practice in Steiner settings, notwithstanding their widening geographic and cultural diversity. This is supported by research undertaken among Māori teachers in New Zealand (Boland, 2015).

Ida Oberman wrote in 2008 that ‘normative constructs’ within the Steiner curriculum (p. 13) limit processes of adaptation to local cultural contexts. ‘The curriculum remains remarkably unchanged, even under the last decade’s pressures to disavow Eurocentrism ... Even in inner-city Milwaukee, the Waldorf teachers continue to tell the Norse myth of Odin and Thor’ (*ibid.*). Two years later, Rawson (2010) highlighted an overall lack of criticality, which can be observed when Steiner schools are established in different cultures and contexts:

Waldorf education is being offered in more than 60 countries and is growing rapidly with major new areas of development in Asia. In the process of becoming global, it has spread from its origins in Europe, yet it has barely begun to reflect critically on what this expansion means in terms of the transmission of ideas into different cultures and different settings. (p. 2)

Aonghus Gordon put this expansion in stronger terms, questioning whether it is a form of colonisation, establishing settler outposts overseas to bring civilising influences to those in need of them.

There are many different levels of colonialism, and not only the economic model but also the spiritual mode, and it would be imperative in any school right now, in my view, to actually do its own audit of the time and place. (quoted in Hougham, 2012, p. 70)

The notion of Waldorf curriculum as colonising force may seem harsh but using the language of colonisation is legitimised by Neil’s research findings (Boland, 2015). At least in a

New Zealand context, a degree of disenfranchisement of Indigenous Māori within Waldorf schools was, until recently, perceptible. Growing awareness of this is what led Neil to put an increasing amount of time into challenging unconscious cultural biases in Waldorf education.

Regarding Gordon's 'spiritual colonisation' in his book, *Becoming native to this place* (1996), Jackson asserts "Conquerors are seldom interested in a thoroughgoing discovery of where they really are.' (p. 15). Evans enlarges on this by arguing that '... the abuse of place by modern conquerors derives, in part, from perceptions of conquered spaces as other.' (2012, p. 155). This lack of interest or 'othering' in Jackson's language (1996, p. 97) can be countered by non-indigenous inhabitants working to establish living connections with their surroundings, becoming 'homecomers' – 'digging in' and beginning '... the long search and experiment to become native.' (*ibid.*). Resisting this perception of 'conquered spaces as *other*' is central to our work together; we attempt it by using the Hawaiian concept of *aloha*.

Cajete (2010) critiques the response of the United States' education system to questions of sustainability as unproductive, and as one which replicates the dislocation of young Americans from their environments. This in turn encourages a view of the earth as a resource to be used at will for financial gain. He argues for a '(re)inhabitation' of the environment, of an ever-closer experience of one's locality, what Jackson (*ibid.*) calls 'coming home'.

In this study we use our values of *aloha* and lived spirituality as standards of judgement by which we document and observe steps taken along the path by a community of teachers (K-12); we explore notions of place and belonging within the structure of the Waldorf curriculum taught in Honolulu. We use these values to explain how we are working to generate a living-educational-theory of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010).

The Context of Honolulu

Honolulu is a diverse city with a predominantly Asian population (42.2%), followed by individuals reporting two or more races (21.6%), 'white alone' (19.5%), and then by Native Hawaiians, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African Americans, and American Indians and Alaska Natives (United States Census Bureau, 2015). It offers a broad array of educational choices; 41% of its students attend private schools (Demirbag, 2014). These include some of the largest and oldest schools west of the Rockies, America's wealthiest independent school (which is the only school limited to students of Native Hawaiian ancestry), schools that subscribe to philosophies such as those of Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, America's first Buddhist high school, International Baccalaureate schools, public schools including Hawaiian-language immersion streams, and numerous charter schools, including culturally based schools. It is a city that in many ways epitomises diversity, inclusion, and *aloha*.

It is also a city that has been colonised, first culturally by American missionaries in 1820, nationally with the American overthrow of the Hawaiian government in 1893, and then linguistically in 1896 when the Hawaiian language was forbidden in schools across the state ('Aha Pūnana Leo, 2015). The Hawaiian cultural renaissance of the 1970s ultimately led to widespread interest in the Hawaiian culture, the start of Hawaiian language private immersion

preschools in the 1980s, and then the opening of Hawaiian language public immersion schools that run K-12. There has been rapid progress made. In 1984, there were fewer than 30 native Hawaiian speakers under 18; currently there are 23 Hawaiian immersion public and charter schools throughout the state (Hawai'i State Department of Education, 2017) and it is estimated that approximately 10,000 youth now speak Hawaiian in Hawai'i ('Imiloa, 2017). In addition, the study of Hawaiian history is now required in the public school system. The Hawaiian culture is alive and well in Hawai'i and there is a marked and increasing sensitivity towards issues of colonisation (Luning, 2007).

Hawai'i's sense of place reflects the often deep relationship that residents have with their environment, describing this relationship as one would describe a relationship with a loved one (Olivera, 2014; Lindsey, 2006). The Department of Education in Hawai'i recently developed a series of outcomes for every public school which recognises the importance of place in a child's life.

What makes Hawai'i, Hawai'i – a place unlike anywhere else – are the unique values and qualities of the indigenous language and culture. '*O Hawai'i ke kahua o ka ho'ona'auao.*' Hawai'i is the foundation of our learning. Thus the following learning outcomes, *Nā Hopena A'o*, are rooted in Hawai'i, and we become a reflection of this special place (Department of Education, 2015, p. 2).

This personal relationship with place directly corresponds with our understanding of a lived spirituality – of viewing the individual as a part of the cosmos, and acknowledging that there are spiritual beings connected to the land which can be experienced.

Recognising the nature of a 'special place' has numerous precedents in literature. Lawrence said in the first chapter of *Studies in classic American literature*: 'Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars; call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality.' (1923, p. 17). We believe that Steiner and Waldorf education can (and must) also acknowledge the effect and power of place in a child's education. (Re)inhabiting place – its spirit, land, culture, people, values – is key to being a Waldorf School. It requires us to live anthroposophy *i.e.* to acknowledge our relationship with the cosmos, and to work on inner development. Thus, living anthroposophy helps us to integrate place and to live *aloha* – and vice versa.

Methodology

We chose action research as the basic methodology of this study. It is a model highlighted by Steiner in the initial address to teachers when the school was being founded: 'We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse.' (Steiner, 1919a, p. 31). It is a method that acknowledges that the standards we bring to research are socially constructed (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). In addition, the premises of action research resonate strongly with Steiner's objective of social renewal through restructuring society's cultural, political, and economic spheres, and with the goals of education in general (Steiner, 1919b). McNiff and

Whitehead (2010) emphasise that the goals of action research include social renewal through improving practice, explaining practice, and holding ourselves accountable in our practice.

This moves action research beyond a focus on serving existing economic and political self-interests into a new focus on the development of an economic and political sphere, in which people share their stories of practice as the main currency of learning how to live together successfully. ... We believe that the world would be a better place if everyone committed to showing how they hold themselves accountable for what they are doing in terms of the values and understandings they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. (p. 2)

We engaged in the process of a standard action-research cycle: *plan | act | observe | reflect*, before moving to the next iteration of the cycle and starting to reflect again. Not only did this allow for emergent themes and planning, but it recognises our reality of two practitioners sharing ideas, deciding to move one way, touching base on the progress, and then setting up another cycle for exploration. In its simplest expression, we acknowledged three feedback loops for our reflective listening and adjusting practice (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). In this way, the methodology can be seen as developmentally transformational, allowing us to address new questions as they arise in the research process, and to generate a living-educational-theory (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Action research also allows this on-going process of reflecting, planning, acting, and observing, and then reflecting again to start a new cycle in order to explicitly acknowledge and utilise the values and intentions held by practitioners, or in this case, the teachers of Honolulu Waldorf School.

You decided to take action to improve the situation, first by improving your understanding of how you were positioned in that situation. You began to make your tacit knowledge explicit. You and others worked collaboratively to raise your colleagues' tacit knowledge about your shared values to a conscious level. You offered reasons for your actions. You are able to share how you tried to exercise your educational influence in your own and other people's learning, so that you all became more reflective and aware of your positioning in social situations, in order also to take action to improve those situations by influencing others. You are now able to demonstrate how your actions are underpinned by moral commitment, and how you are aiming to help other people also to understand the need for moral accountability. You are aiming to transform practice into praxis at an individual and collective level. (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, p. 191)

Our hope was that through repeated cycles of reflection, aspects of the hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1970) at Honolulu Waldorf School would begin to surface and then faculty could start creating an explicit curriculum consciously addressing the concept of place in the education.

The initial process the school went through looked as follows:

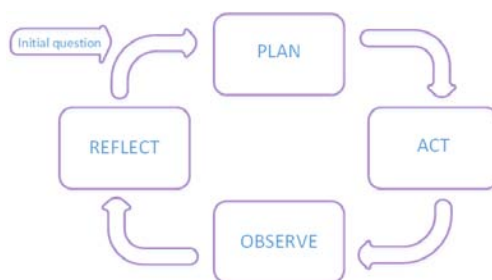


Figure 1. The basic action research loop

The school had discussed the role of Hawaiian culture and values in the school for many years since its founding, and regularly included chant, *Hula*, and Hawaiian protocol as a part of the important communal gatherings and meetings. Native Hawaiians were hired to teach *Hula* and conduct blessings of the school and its work. For the purpose of this study we are calling Cycle 1 as work that began after Jocelyn arrived at the school and before Neil became involved (see **Figure 1**). The school had begun an exploration of the impact of place on a school in response to work that Jocelyn had done in her dissertation and at the Haleakala Waldorf School (Alencastre, *et al.*, 2017):

Upon completing my Dissertation in Practice (DiP), I carried the thread I was following with me and soon realized that it was actively shaping my leadership. I was applying the ideas presented in my research and conference workshops to my new school's direction, the *kuleana*¹ of its mission, and the presentation of its curriculum. As a school we explored the history of the land beneath the buildings and asked questions: who had owned it and lived here, and what did the family that gave the land to the school stand for? What values did they support that allowed them to make this gift, and what *kuleana* did we accept when we accepted this land fifty-five years ago? Today my living educational theory of practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010) is that understanding what is imprinted or ensouled in the land beneath the school, along with the intentions of the school's founding families, will reveal the school's *kuleana* and serve as the foundation of a living mission (Kornberger, 2016). It will form the backbone of Honolulu Waldorf School's unique form of social justice that is the purpose of Waldorf education (Neil Boland, personal communication, February 13, 2016). And the school will flourish once we can articulate this unique *kuleana* and mission, attracting those families who resonate with it. (p. 230)

The Cycle unfolded as follows:

- Initial questions: What is the nature of the location of Honolulu Waldorf School (HWS) and how does it impact the mission of the school today? The historical timeline of HWS was superimposed on the historical timeline of the land where the school is located in order to uncover repeated patterns or themes in the school's history in relation to its interaction with place (April-May 2015). These questions expressed Jocelyn's belief that the founding and historical values of an organisation

¹ *Kuleana* can be described briefly as 'responsibility.'

directly impact the 'being' of that organisation even 50 years later and stem directly from her value of lived spirituality.

- **Planning:** Jocelyn developed a faculty in-service program that aimed to connect teachers to sense of place (June 2015). She believed that a teacher cannot assist children in developing a relationship with place unless that teacher is first developing her own relationship to/with place.
- **Acting:** Jocelyn executed the in-service to include experiences of cultural practices and to conduct community-service work at a cultural site near the school (Kanewai Spring) along with departments discussing methods of integrating sense of place into the curriculum (August 2015). She hoped that these discussions would increase the faculty's consciousness of the many ways that the curriculum could be localised. She also hoped that the experience of community service to benefit the land would help to foster a sense of responsibility to care for where we live – *aloha 'aina* – or love for the land, was an expressed value of the school.
- **Observing:** Jocelyn observed faculty in terms of what they chose to implement from their list of possible curriculum changes (Fall, 2015). The big question was, would an increased consciousness of place lead to change in teacher practice?

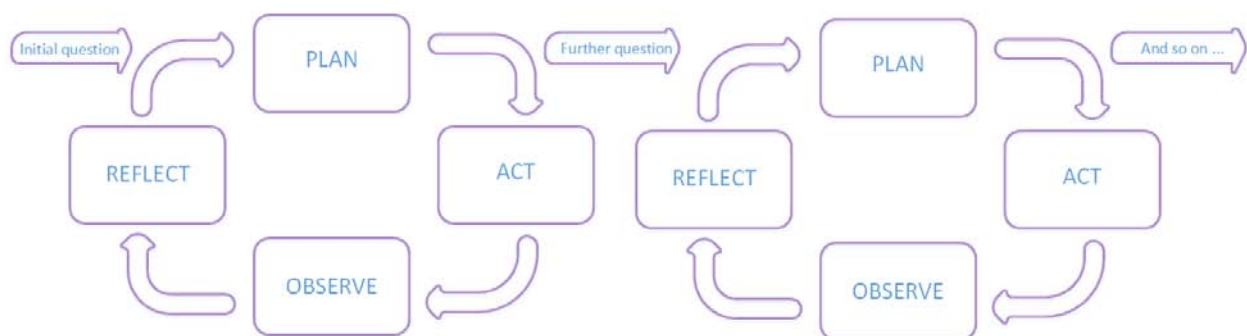


Figure 2. Continuation of the cycle

Cycle 2 of the school's investigation into place (see **Figure 2**) picked up momentum when a faculty member introduced Jocelyn to Neil. The decisive step was that Neil then agreed to be the keynote speaker at the Pacific Rim conference in February 2016. His talks provided clear motivation for faculty to look at what they were doing, as a school and as individual practitioners, and provided the impetus for the group to investigate changing its practice.

- **Reflecting:** Faculty member introduced Jocelyn to Neil; we held a series of discussions via Skype on sense of place (June 2015). These extended, exploratory conversations allowed the two of us to get to know each other, identifying and then exploring common interests, values and concerns. What became clear over a short period of time was our mutual interest in the importance of 'place' in

pedagogy² and the significance of establishing this link to place in childhood. The conversation widened to take in pedagogical approaches which help establish a connection to place and others which hinder it (Gruenewald, 2013; Kornberger, 2016; Malone, 2012).

- **Planning:** Jocelyn discussed the idea of using a sense of place as a theme with the school's leadership group (August, 2015), and of having Neil as the keynote speaker for the annual Pacific Rim Waldorf conference to be held in Hawai'i in order to gauge their support for this idea. The conference organisers decided that all workshop presenters would develop a field trip that connected to their workshop in order for participants to have a direct experience with the land.
- **Acting:** The conference was held in Hawai'i (February, 2016) where participants listened to Neil's keynote talks, took part in artistic activities, attended workshops, and went on field studies all connected to the theme of the day's keynote and to place. As an integral part of the conference, Neil asked all participants to respond artistically to the day's work by working with pastels (examples are given below). Participants consistently remarked on the 'flow' and 'breath' of the conference that the art and field trips provided. Given the theme, we thought it important that participants were able to respond in different media as well as explore aspects of the local area.
- **Observing:** Jocelyn observed faculty in terms of what curricular changes were made after the conference and faculty observed each other (Spring, 2016). Again, did consciously expressing our values regarding place impact faculty practice?

In Cycle 3 we initiated a formal research discussion between us, including a written reflection two months after the conference and another audit prep session four months after the conference. The purpose of gathering teachers' reflections at these stages was to look consciously into the process that teachers go through when reconsidering the values they bring to their own practices.

- **Reflecting:** Jocelyn asked teachers to write their reflections two months after the conference in terms of what still seemed significant to them in April, 2016, and then again in June, 2016; they also shared their experiences in conversation with their colleagues and observed how others were beginning to make attitudinal or curricular changes. This was an opportunity for teachers to actively learn from each other as they explored how place could come into the curriculum.

² Place-based education might be characterized as the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her homeland and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place. Place-based education challenges the meaning of education by asking seemingly simple questions: Where am I? What is the nature of this place? What sustains this community? It often employs a process of re-storying, whereby students are asked to respond creatively to stories of their homeland so that, in time, they are able to position themselves, imaginatively and actually, within the continuum of nature and culture in that place. They become a part of the community, rather than a passive observer of it. (Lane-Zucker, 2004, Foreword)

- **Planning:** (March, 2016) Jocelyn and Neil developed the format for conducting an audit of the school's curriculum in August 2016. We hoped that providing a formal opportunity for faculty to reflect on their actions together would serve as the basis for stimulating action toward change as they saw how some of their peers were actively engaging with reworking the curriculum.
- **Acting:** Neil returned to HWS to lead an audit of the curriculum (August, 2016). This happened over the course of three days, looking at place, time and community, as in the conference six months prior. Neil led a mixture of plenum sessions and work in small groups, often subject- or sector-based. Questions he asked included:
 - What in the school and in the teaching connects students to the place where they live, and what disconnects? How does this differ by sector (early childhood/primary/secondary)?
 - What do teachers want more of? What do they want less of?
 - What is working well and what could usefully be revised?
 - How are cultures represented in the school? What is the hidden curriculum within the teaching plan? Do teachers want to work with this?
 - With which communities does the school engage? Which does it not engage with? How is it seen in the local and wider community?
 - Can we identify 'low-hanging fruit' which can profitably be addressed first?

Following service work at Kanewai Spring, Jocelyn led the grades teachers (1-8) in a meditative meeting there, and also made arrangements for a traditional weaving workshop using coconut fronds (see **Figure 8** below). This was based on the idea that teachers who have taken part in and are comfortable with Hawaiian culturally-based experiences would be much more likely to offer such experiences to their children.

- **Observing:** Jocelyn observed faculty implement changes in their curriculum based on the audit, and faculty learned from each other how they might continue to work with this topic of place (Fall 2016). The social construction and evaluation of values in action were key elements to teachers learning from each other, and provided us with evidence that our values were having an effect on the faculty as teachers actively began adapting curriculum.

Findings

The findings below focus on the faculty voices expressing changes they had noticed in themselves or in their practice over a period of one year, especially around notions of place and belonging, following the February 2016 conference with Neil as keynote speaker. They exemplify a community learning together, learning from each other, and actively working with the values that we introduced.

New Zealand educator Elwyn Richardson (1925-2012) was an early promoter of the value of educating through close connection to the land as well as the pedagogical merit of learning through the arts (1972). This is also a fundamental aspect of Waldorf education. To this end, all participants responded artistically to Neil's lecture each day by drawing using pastels. Below are three participant responses to the question *How do I experience the place where I now am (Honolulu)*? The pictures are data we collected immediately after the lectures and provide the first impressions experienced by the faculty (see **Figures 3, 4 & 5**). They reveal the concept of duality: dual or multiple cultures, the insider versus the outsider, the known versus the unknown. The teachers' practices, and therefore the school's, are embedded in between these spaces.



Figure 3. Participant response to place (Frances Altweis)



Figure 4. Participant response to place (unknown)



Figure 5. Participant response to place (Jocelyn)

In recalling the conference two months after it had happened, the predominant aspect that remained with the teachers was the call to audit place within the Waldorf curriculum. Fifteen of the 23 responding faculty cited thoughts around sense of place as especially memorable, six cited the concept of time, and three cited the community. The primary theme expressed was that, *Hawai'i is unique both as a place and in its identity*. Three principal motifs emerged within this theme:

- connecting to our place and the Hawaiian culture;
- providing a mirror to our children that includes our environment—the animals, plants, trees, etc. around them;
- acknowledging the many cultures within Hawai'i.

Important ideas that some teachers retained (in their own words):

- Children should be reflected in the images in the environment around them.
- To seek the knowledge and wisdom of the place where we are and infuse ourselves and the curriculum with that.
- Hawai'i's position in the Pacific, and the relationship between Hawai'i, anthroposophy, and the culture of the Hawaiian peoples.
- The place and communities are of great interest to me, coming from Indigenous roots myself and, being a Waldorf teacher, I love Waldorf education but have a hard time when the communities they are in are not reflected back to the people. I have been very aware – painfully aware of this – for a very, very long time.



Video 2. Working in the school during this transformational process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yQCprtdRVM>

The secondary theme that emerged was how do we take action as teachers? This is where we see if any of the values that we stressed had an effect. The teachers wished to put ideas into action. Some of the suggestions were what we expected – using local geography, stories, plants, and animals. However, other suggestions were indicative of the inner work which is a key part of the work of Waldorf teachers, and the basis for a lived spirituality.

Teachers stated that they needed to question why they do what they do, and they needed to work on themselves: on their own perceptions and reflections. This is the work critical to unlocking the hidden curriculum:

- I really try to decipher the hidden curriculum, to question why we do things: how it serves the children. I'd like it to help me help my colleagues to work together for a better understanding of the timelessness and relevance of the core aspects of the education, once I have better clues as to what those really are.
- Each one of us has the power to make a difference in the world: through lifestyle choices, through attitude adjustments (getting rid of a colonial mind-set), and through social and political engagement with the world. As a teacher I can use the Waldorf school curriculum to change the world – one child at a time. However, first I must change myself to live what I want to teach.
- To not simply repeat or regurgitate Waldorf dogma but to make these teaching experiences our own and come to an individualised understanding of teaching the content. We promote (as educators) critical thinking skills of our students. So we then too must be critical thinkers. This is where the freedom is found.
- I feel the major issue that stops us from growth, transformation, and renewal is a clinging to the old, traditional dogma that doesn't serve anything except some warped ego.
- I could not separate the place from the communities around: to Native peoples these two are especially intertwined; there is not one without the other.

Within two months of the conference, a number of teachers had already taken action primarily focused on incorporating a sense of place into their teaching. They told stories that included Hawaiian culture, Hawaiian animals, and Hawaiian plants. They also actively looked at the plants, animals, and insects on campus, and planted kalo (taro):

- To transform many archetypal stories and use the Hawaiian resources and actual places, using more material from nature.
- I am really working with the images, people and stories of this place creatively. For example I made a story about Mango Menehune. Menehune are little people of legends here and mangos grow here. I made up puppets for the story and a song. I have really enjoyed this work.

It is important to note, that when asked which of the three conference focus areas were relevant and which needed more focus, the concept of time stood out almost equally to the concept of place. Indeed for some of the teachers it was quite difficult to separate place, time, and community, and that, like the nature of the curriculum we teach, these three areas are integrated. Steiner spoke about children choosing a particular place to incarnate as human beings, as well as this time and the communities in this place (Steiner, 1919a):

- All of them are absolutely important! They all assist the students with a better understanding of their identity and purpose in life. It is imperative that what we teach is consistent with where we are.

- All are relevant: what are we doing to turn off the community around us? How can we show what we are doing is *relevant* for today? How can we incorporate the spirit and essence of this place into our work, our mission, our *kuleana* (responsibility)?
- We are gardening with the children and exploring natural resources. Will these resources be here next year? How can we live so that everyone, everywhere can live as well as we do, even into the future?

Other teachers did not feel called to immerse themselves into the Hawaiian culture, and had not yet taken any steps to integrate the conference themes; however, when asked their thoughts about questioning why we do what we do they responded positively:

- I love the idea of questioning (then studying) why we do, what we do. This has made a willingness to be open to new Waldorf ideas more pronounced. I will hope that it helps us all to come to our own connections with our work.



Video 3. Why this is important to us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1ZGzHWOWEA>

In June 2016, four months after the conference, Jocelyn led the faculty in a prep session for the audit that was to come in August. A series of questions was developed by Neil and reviewed by Jocelyn, with teachers answering some of them individually, and some of them through group discussions. Individually, two-thirds of the faculty stated that they related to the following statement posed by Neil:

The teacher needs to feel free to explore the spiritual foundations of the curriculum day by day, to put it into practice according to his or her insight. If this path does not happen, the curriculum first becomes a worn-out path, then tradition and finally a mere list of norms which have to be adhered to. (Denjean, 2014, p. 20)

They recognised that if they did not make the curriculum their own, or if they implemented curriculum as a tradition or a 'supposed to' rather than as well thought-out instruction, meaning was lost, both for themselves and for the students.



Video 4. What happened between visits

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32jaNepRufY>

The majority of teachers felt the freedom to implement the curriculum as they wished, but some believed there was not enough specificity regarding exactly what must be taught. Others thought that there was not enough deep consideration of the spiritual foundations. A few teachers thought that things were just fine. As the counter-pole, at least one teacher expressed the opinion that we projected a worn-out path to the community as well as hanging on to other traditions which were no longer relevant (*e.g.* St. Nicholas celebration). Another felt we have no basis for even knowing what path we are on:

- As a school, we don't share enough of what we do to know if the curriculum is actively taken up or if it is just seen as norms we adhere to.
- The curriculum content for teachers is clear, but the inner work and reflection are not. Perhaps this is why so few people can pursue this path daily. Active spiritual work and sharing with the support of older, wiser colleagues would help everyone. I worked from tradition.
- I would like to believe that I open up to see what the children are showing me they need from each lesson I bring. I sometimes feel bound or that I am rogue against the school's 'traditions.' Because of the work, I sometimes rely on 'worn-out paths' of what I did the first time I took a class through a cycle of eight years or a colleague's suggestion – but it usually morphs into what is needed. The school has a clear list of norms and traditions that sometimes feels stifling.
- Freedom without form is not healthy or balanced. For this statement to be complete and balanced, I think there must be some mention of form. Otherwise we become lazy and use the statement *I am spiritual* to defend our actions. I often feel that it is this over-dependence on saying that one is working out of a spiritual foundation that leads to this worn-out path. I see it as often those who consider themselves hard-core anthroposophists that tend to say things like 'that's not Waldorf' and so keep us from transforming.
- I think that many of us are on the worn-out path saying, 'This is how we do it and how it's done here'. Some people push, but most seem to want to remain comfortable. Do what's

been done before. I think we are sometimes rigid in what year we do what. The rigidity gives us security without having to think.

- I believe that in this school there is deep awareness of the spiritual foundation of our work and that we are sincerely striving to manifest it.
- I'm not sure how to explore the spiritual foundations of the curriculum day-by-day but I do try to explore this and give it mindfulness and attention when I am planning for the week but day-by-day I'm not quite sure about how to penetrate that fully.
- I feel I am allowed the freedom with my curriculum to implement as I choose. I feel our school does lack accountability for teaching specific topics that are agreed upon to cover. Sometimes, with too much freedom and no accountability, we can become less than we should be.

The quotations above indicate the marked range of opinions present in the faculty regarding their satisfaction with the curriculum. A frequently-cited reason for those who are discontent was time: there was not enough time to plan, to reconsider curriculum, or to discuss curriculum with colleagues. Others felt that they were being judged by their colleagues when they tried something new. And a couple of teachers were very content in their own personal freedom:

- I am finding my way in this regard. I cannot speak as to where my colleagues are, nor where our school is. I could deepen my work with more time for personal expression and experience and development of my program and less other hats to wear.
- I would like to spend time planning using the school's curriculum guide, yet not feel judged by others as I take risks in new areas. It is difficult to try new things with criticism or self-doubt that I'm on the right path. I like bringing ideas to the group to be worked on together but colleagues often feel threatened by looking at ideas outside of the box. Give each person a chance to heal and grow without pre-conceived notions or cultural restrictions. Strong, clear, direct meeting facilitator with no ego but lots of support.
- I really appreciate the freedom though I usually talk it over with those in the art department to talk it through and get input (which is usually positive and adds depth). I don't really want to change it. I think my colleagues feel the same way.

When Jocelyn asked whether the school was, 'monocultural, Eurocentric, middle class/privileged, uninterested in others, unconsciously arrogant, and guardians of the truth' (Boland, 2015, p. 195) responses were mixed. Groups of faculty stated that school traditions are Eurocentric and others cited a list of multicultural events at the school to demonstrate that the school was not Eurocentric, though having non-European events does not in itself negate the possibility of eurocentrism. Teachers provided examples of being unconsciously arrogant or 'guardians of truth,' and others felt that we were open to learning from others. Some felt that being disinterested in others is an institutional characteristic for all schools rather than a Waldorf tendency, and a lack of diversity was also recognised. Part of the value of this process was to highlight myths and judgements that are prevalent in the school, often unspoken but nonetheless present:

- He's not Waldorf trained, you know ... (unconscious arrogance).
- Steiner's anthroposophy and the 'Christ impulse' is perceived by many as Eurocentric or exclusive but this was not his intent or understanding at all ... this misunderstanding is at the CORE of the 'Eurocentric' misunderstanding.
- Explore colonialism and what it does to the mind; (teacher: non-local, student: local).
- Guardians of truth (College of Teachers' attitude).
- Unconsciously arrogant/rely on tradition – ego around looping (a teacher taking the same elementary class for a number of years), the language used to describe things to parents such as 'holding' the children.

One group focused more on the positive expressions of these myths, as follows:

- There are values and deficits to tradition.
- We struggle with collaborative work.
- We agreed with about 50% of the list.
- We are open to learning from others.
- We are not Eurocentric: May Day, Hula, Salsa Night, Japanese, Spanish. Interestingly, the Hawaiian version of May Day and Spanish language and culture, are not seen as European.

The biggest hindrance cited that prevents the school from being the school it could be was the lack of collegial understanding:

- Lack of harmony. We do not understand each other. Difficulty making decisions.
- Need sharing/dialogue/collaboration to deepen community and relationships.
- Cannot transcend disharmony without time to share and develop interest in each other.
- Biography work needed.

The need to work as a 'we', rather than as a group of individuals, was also cited.

These hindrances point to one of the most common Waldorf school conundrums: that having teachers involved so deeply in school administration requires a significant amount of time that takes away from time preparing for one's classes. Waldorf schools are traditionally governed by the teachers themselves as a republican body. This means that on top of a typical teacher's work of preparing for classes, they must also spend time meeting in committees to plan faculty evaluations, hire teachers, consider the state of the buildings and grounds, and discuss marketing ideas. The same is true for spending time getting to know each other's gifts and biographies so that harmonious working is more possible. We must work to understand who we are, learn how to work together and to resolve conflict. A 'lack of harmony' (see above) points to the possibility that the teachers were not actively working with the value of *aloha* as something they needed to engage in as colleagues.

Ultimately, in preparing for the August audit, teachers were grateful for the opportunity to reflect on these questions. Statements included that the process allowed them to stand in the shoes of their peers and '... look at our community through the eyes of our

colleagues' and to '... change the impulse behind our curriculum choices'. They asked for more time to continue discussing the issues that surfaced, and for help in knowing how to move forward with the thoughts and questions which had been set in motion. The longer teachers worked with the questions, the deeper the thought and the greater the engagement with answers. Jocelyn and Neil felt encouraged that the values they had introduced were producing significant discussion and change. Comments included:

- Such a huge process! Much more time needed! So many new ideas generated from each discussion, which would have been wonderful to follow up on. Certainly underscores the importance of conversation and dialogue with colleagues. This should be an integral part of all faculty meetings: true sharing rather than problem solving.
- Great thought-provoking questions that need to be asked from time-to-time in the course of any Waldorf teacher's career.
- Love the process: it feels raw and thoughtful. I especially like that it's not all 'surfacey' and 'flowery.' (We've gone in that direction before and got nowhere.)
- I'd like to emphasise the merging that is happening among many fields of thought, research, knowledge in the world into a stream or flow that sees the human being as a verb (as they like to say) and not a noun. A consciousness in evolution. A whole identity.

The question that arose in many ways was: *What does it mean to be a Waldorf school?* This might be one of the guides for unlocking the hidden curriculum.

- What makes Waldorf Waldorf without all of the little 'doo dads' and 'rituals' of Waldorf?
- We need a conversation on what it means to be a Waldorf school. What does it mean to be a Waldorf teacher? What does it mean to be Waldorf?

Discussion

Three main themes surfaced for us in the findings. They reflect where the faculty finds itself, a full year after the conference that challenged the faculty's thinking. They centre on the following statements and questions:

Theme 1: Hawai'i is a unique place with a unique identity. How do we connect children to their rich environment?

Theme 2: Inner work is needed by each teacher, not only to develop their own sense of place, but to (re)inhabit their surroundings – a process that requires faculty to question why they do what they do.

Theme 3: What does it mean for the Honolulu Waldorf School to teach a curriculum which arises out of the landscape and peoples of Hawai'i? HWS must identify for itself what a Waldorf school in Hawai'i should look like as opposed to offering a European-based curriculum outlined in 1919.

These three themes were developed and deepened within each research cycle as teachers continued to reflect on the topic of place, as discussions continued on the topic, and as they watched each other adjust their curricula. It is notable that, throughout this process,

the faculty recognised and accepted the responsibility to teach as action researchers. They clearly dislike the notion of dogma, and respect and accept the idea of questioning why they do what they do. They believe that when they don't take on the role of action researcher as strongly as they could, and when they don't question the use of someone else's material, that it is primarily due to time limitations.

The school's work with Kanewai Spring (see **Figure 6**) is a prime example of the development of Theme 1 in terms of engaging more closely with aspects of Hawaiian identity and love of the land. In Cycle 1, the faculty went to Kanewai Spring near the school to learn about the water system in the area and to do a service project together. Cycle 2 provided faculty with pedagogical reasoning to consider place and the opportunity to brainstorm on how place could be included in the curriculum. By the end of Cycle 3, five classes from the grade school were visiting the spring and doing service/community work there, and the early childhood department wrote an elaborate puppet show (see **Figure 7**) incorporating music for their students about the story of the spring; members of the public were invited to the three performances of this show at the school's *Waldorfaire*. The puppet show was showcased on a morning news show and people from the area recognised the story of Kanewai Spring.

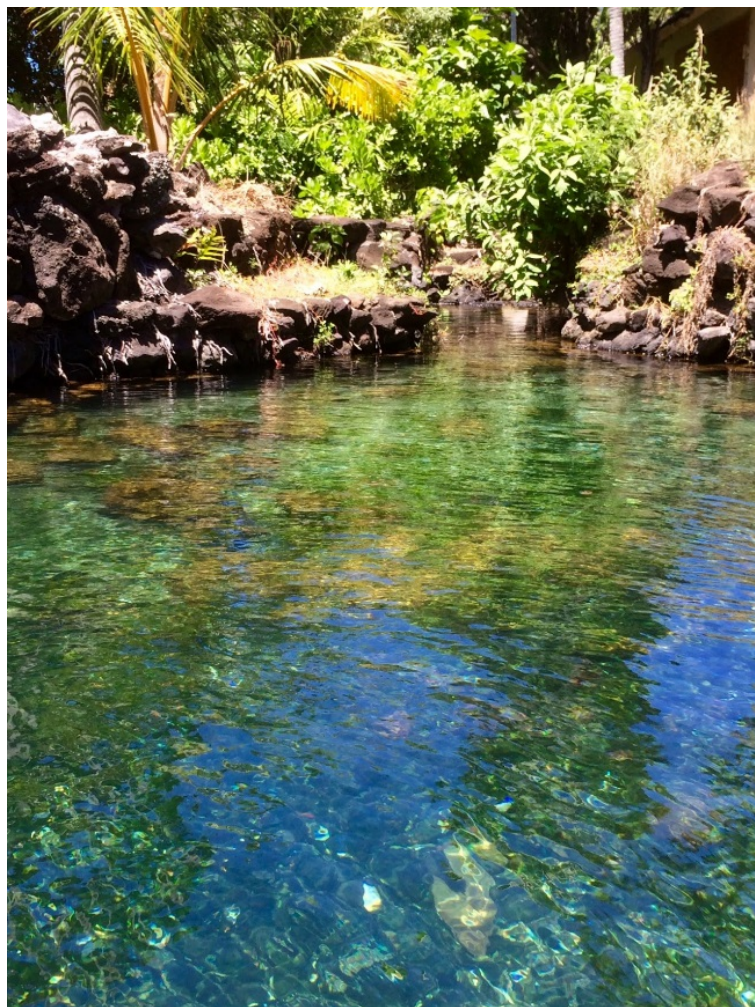


Figure 6. Kanewai Spring



Figure 7. Puppet show set for story about Kanewai Spring



Figure 8. Faculty engaged in professional development at the spring



Figure 9. Students at the spring observing the makaha (gate) between the spring and the surrounding fishpond

Theme 2, acknowledging the inner work and questioning that a Waldorf teacher must undertake, emerged during Cycle 2 and deepened through Cycle 3 with exploration of the curriculum as a ‘worn-out path’ and reflection on whether our teaching was purist, accommodationist, or evolutionary (see Oberman, 2008)³. The faculty acknowledged that it is through questioning that we (and our curriculum) evolve, a major tenet of lived spirituality. Neil explicitly presented the idea of teaching as dogmatic, purist, accommodationist, or as evolutionary in Cycle 3. It is a concept that all Waldorf teachers must grapple with. When the delegates of the Southern California/Hawaii region of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) gathered in February 2017, the group struggled with how to prepare new Waldorf teachers in order that they understand and value the central importance of self-

³ Oberman (2008) identifies three characteristics of Waldorf schools as they develop:

1. Purist – keeping to the given path, being ‘faithful’ to traditions and practices that have been built up over the decades – over-reliance on tradition which can lead to a perceived lack of flexibility and eventually the danger of dogmatism.
2. Accommodationist – developing hybrids between ‘Steiner’ methodologies and new pedagogical styles and language. Can lead to the creation of something not necessarily recognisable as education based on the work of Rudolf Steiner.
3. Evolutionist – adapting to local situations, changed contexts and a different century. Involves going back to the indications Steiner gave a century ago and seeing how they can be used in the 21st century in utterly different settings than originally given. Guidelines for this need developing.

development (personal communications, February 21-17, Southern California-Hawai'i AWSNA Delegates' Meeting).

Theme 3 is where talk and preparation meet implementation. Exactly what makes a school 'Waldorf' and, specifically, what does that look like in Honolulu? A question that explicitly arose during Cycle 3 and that continues to live today is the debate over whether the offering of eurythmy, a form of movement created by Steiner, makes HWS a Waldorf school, or whether the Hawaiian practice of *Hula* could also satisfy part of the movement necessary for children's health in a Waldorf school. Nationally, AWSNA is also asking the question of whether eurythmy is a defining aspect of what makes a Waldorf school. AWSNA has proposed that eurythmy be specifically identified as a subject that accredited Waldorf schools strive to offer (Draft Path to Membership, Principle 3). Hawai'i's Waldorf schools have questioned this, acknowledging that in *Hula* there is an ancient art of movement arising from the Hawaiian culture and that this is a subject that all Hawaiian Waldorf schools already offer.

We recognise that the data, findings, and discussion offered in this paper reflect an unfinished study of change happening at the Honolulu Waldorf School. However, we believe that they provide evidence for our living educational theory that (re)inhabiting place in the school's curriculum starts with the faculty, and is an expression of lived spirituality. Further, an area that has not sufficiently been addressed by the faculty is the myths of Waldorf education. This would be a rich area for further exploration, and would help particularly with Theme 3 regarding the identity of the school. What also needs further work in the area of Theme 2 and questioning is the process of becoming a mature teacher and moving from operating as a purist when new to Waldorf education, through the accommodating phase, and then to blossom as an evolutionary thinker. Similarly, the role of collegiality and *aloha* within the path of self-development is a huge area that needs further exploration.

Conclusion

The journey of Honolulu Waldorf School's faculty has been one of discovery and engagement for the teachers and, equally, for us. Conversations held as a faculty, and actions taken by departments show that over the past two years and, in particular, since the conference and post-conference work with Neil, the faculty has succeeded in deepening its thinking about the Eurocentrism of the curriculum that it offers, as well as taking action to develop and explore what education in a Hawaiian Waldorf school might look like. In February of 2017, 12 months after Neil challenged the faculty to examine its curriculum, the high school faculty decided not to attend the regional February conference that was titled *Nourishing Self, Nourishing Soul*. Instead, the high school department created its own mini-conference that continued to focus on place-based and project-based education. They wanted their own experience that would answer the questions about how to incorporate place, to (re)inhabit where they live, and continue to process concepts and ideas which had begun to develop and form during the previous 12 months. Their time together included a day's field trip to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, an organisation whose vision is '... a future where all people understand and celebrate Hawai'i's cultural heritage and natural history, and use that knowledge to inspire the future.' (Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 2017). They also reviewed

every course offered at the high school and discussed how a sense of place might be included – or is already included – within each.

Almost simultaneously, the lower school was working on articulating its social vision with the purpose of creating a culture that would discourage and ultimately eliminate occurrences of bullying. There was a startling moment of recognition when the faculty recognised that what they were envisioning was the embodiment of *aloha*. They read the *Hawai'i Revised Statute 5-7.5* on the 'Aloha Spirit'. It references such values as kindness, unity, pleasantness, humility, and patience and states:

These are traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawai'i's people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawai'i. *Aloha* is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. *Aloha* means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. *Aloha* is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. *Aloha* means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable. (University of Hawai'i, n.d.)



Video 5. What aloha means to Jocelyn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FajDfzzWjg>

Video 5 describes this moment of realisation, as well as how the concept of *aloha* grew in meaning for Jocelyn and the faculty:

I think that *aloha* has been growing for me – what does it mean – and probably largely because of this process ... I think for me the real click of, 'Oh, my god,' something could be happening here is when we had to try to identify the culture that we wanted at the school for this No Bully program ... it was in this No Bully meeting – how do we want the kids to be with each other? – that I realised that the statute definition could describe that ... and then of course, once you have that thought and are trying to implement it and work with a faculty in a destiny community at the same time, you realise that, 'Oh, my god, this is not a student thing – we all have to live it for real as a culture'.

This realisation that as a faculty we were working towards a deeper embodiment of *aloha* reinforced the awareness of the significant steps we have taken as a diverse group of teachers towards becoming more of a Waldorf school that celebrates and values the Hawaiian culture, rather than solely a Waldorf school located in Hawai'i.

In April of 2017, a group of faculty discussed further expansion to this social vision of *aloha* for the school to include the words of Kumu Hina Wong, a transgender teacher of *Hula* who describes herself and some of her students as '... in the middle' (Hamer & Wilson, 2015). This pledge (see **Figure 10**) provides an Indigenous perspective to the question that founded

Steiner education: What kind of education is necessary for children so that they do not think that the answer to war is conflict? (Steiner, 1919a). It also provides a compelling reminder that frequently the answers we seek are literally in our own backyard. *Aloha* is life-affirming, as is (re)inhabitation for all colonised territories as well as urban ones.

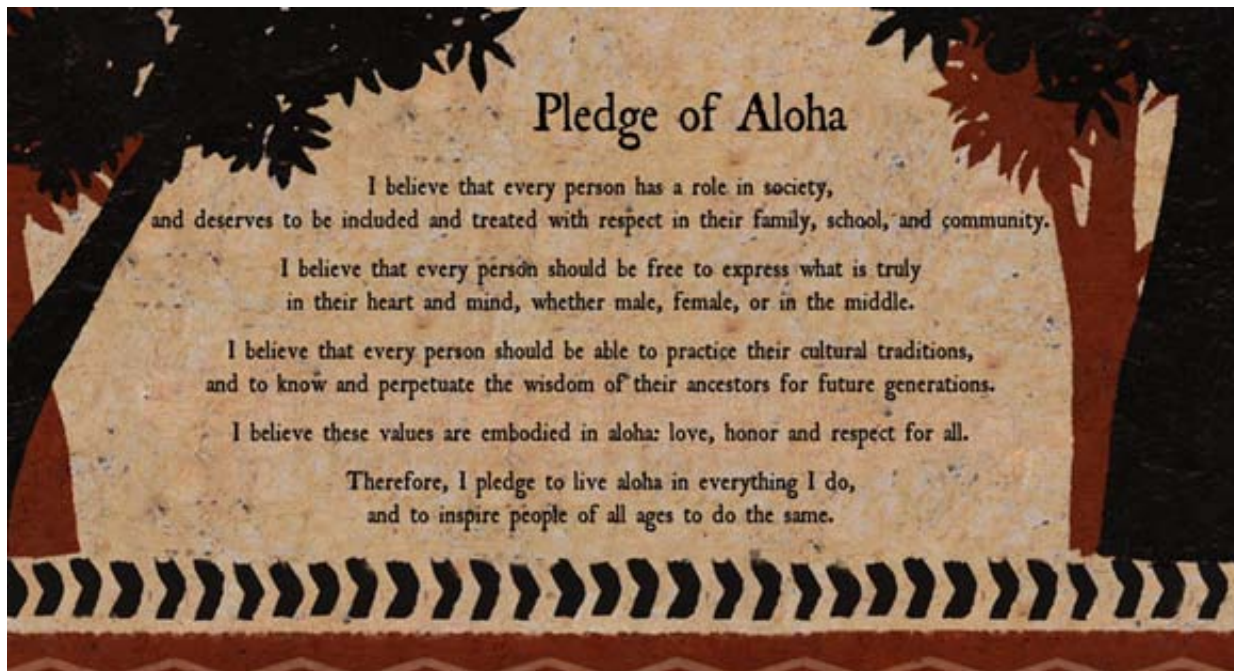


Figure 10. Kumu Hina's Pledge of *Aloha* (Hina, 2015)

In June, 2017, Jocelyn presented the entire faculty with the draft of this article and an opportunity to review their journey thus far. When asked if the article was a 'hit' or a 'miss' in representing the school's journey, 88 percent felt the article accurately represented the school's journey, one person felt it was a 'miss' and that we were still presenting dogma, and one person felt the article was both hit and miss. The idea that seemed to stand out for many of the faculty was that of colonisation, the representation and promotion of non-Hawaiian forms and ideals; the possibility that the school might serve to a degree as a colonising influence discomfited them.



Video 6. Who else has been working this way?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJueHmUmslo>

When Jocelyn asked what they wanted to hear more of, it was the concept of *aloha* as well as practical applications and procedures for strengthening sense of place within the curriculum. Each teacher spoke to the group of something they had done to include a sense of place into their classrooms and/or teaching. They also talked in groups about the ideas they heard that seemed most do-able as well as innovative. To conclude the reflection, a Hawaiian scholar took the faculty through an experience that showed each person was already capable of establishing a personal relationship with the land around them. By strong request, this scholar will be joining the faculty monthly through the 2017-18 school year and teaching them the value, depth, and meaning of *aloha*.

As we have begun to publish various pieces about our efforts to counter aspects of Eurocentrism in Waldorf education (see **Video 6**) and to decolonise Steiner education, we join leaders around the world who are calling for a similar reflection. Honolulu Waldorf School looks forward to remaining an active player in this international dialogue and, in so doing, providing its students with an education that is more meaningful, more reflective of, and more thoughtful towards their own surroundings – an education that allows them to truly be at home as ‘homecomers’ in their world.

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