Ethics Research in Environmental Education

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Abstract

This paper takes a research orientation towards ethics and, in so doing, frames ethics as processes of inquiry and stories to be told. First, it explores ways that ethics might be 'reimagined', situated in everyday contexts and interpreted in ways that allow its stories to do work and invite readers and listeners to consider ethics. Second, it creates some openings to imagine ethics as a series of re-constructive experiments. Finally, this paper is an invitation to engage in 'ethics research' within environmental education.

Ethics Research in Environmental Education[1]

Twenty-five years ago I moved to the Yukon and began teaching in a small rural school. Most of the students were First Nations. It was a challenging job, but one that provided many lifelong lessons and I am indebted to many people for these opportunities. One important teacher was Mrs Lucy Wren, a community elder who came to the school to teach the Tlingit language, traditional crafts and to tell her stories. She was also my first environmental ethics teacher – though she wouldn't call it that.

Mrs Wren told many stories but I was most moved by the one about how owls came to be as they are today. She told me how, in the old days, owls were much larger than they are now and how, in difficult times, they could threaten children and old people when other food sources weren't available. This story featured conversations with animals, in this case an owl. It also featured a struggle between a wise old woman and a threatening owl. The result was, through some cleverness and trickery by the old woman, the burning of the big owl. But that wasn't the end. As I recall the story, the ashes from the burning owl ultimately became the small owls of today. There are of course many layers to this story that I don't remember and meanings that I don't understand. And, it is Mrs Wren's story to tell. But this brief snapshot of recollections provides a starting point for my story.

For me, the work of this story really began when it was contrasted with another story in the school's curriculum. As it happened, this other story was the tale of St George slaying a dragon and rescuing a young princess. What Mrs Wren's story did was to enable me to see a story from my own cultural heritage in a new light. At the time I saw the destruction of a dragon contrasting with a more relational and accommodating, experience with the owl. It struck me that we, at least sometimes, tell different stories, a thought that I learned later was expressed the same way by another Yukon elder, Mrs Annie Ned (Geddes, 1996).[2] It was my first glimpse at

Western cultures' anthropocentrism (or human centeredness), though it would be another year before I discovered this terminology.[3] It was also my first glimpse at 'storytelling as research', though that thought has also taken some years to evolve.

Key to this evolving understanding of storytelling came from another Yukon elder, Mrs Angela Sidney. According to Julie Cruikshank (1998, 2003), Mrs Sidney was particularly interested in the work that stories do. She was interested in relationships within the stories, but also how the stories help to construct relationships. For Mrs Sidney we tell stories (at least in part) so people have something to think with. On hearing these reflections, I was again challenged to think about 'storytelling as research'.[4]

With the preceding as background, it should be no surprise that stories, storytelling and the work that stories do, will provide an organising theme for this paper.

Another key organising story occurred at the 7th Invitational Seminar on Research in Environmental and Health Education hosted at Anchorage, Alaska, in 2003. While previewing seminar discussions a number of flip-chart pages were posted for participants to raise questions or comment. The page titled 'ethics' immediately received a number of comments that cast the emerging theme as the 'ethics of research'. As important as the ethics of research are, it was more 'ethics as research' that I had in mind when requesting this theme to be posted. Yet, this discrepancy underscored differences in perspectives about the nature of – or at least a number of people's first impulses regarding – ethics. And, these impulses highlighted, by omission, a potentially underdeveloped area of research in our field of environmental education.

While underdeveloped in our field, the idea of ethics as research is not new, philosophy departments have been doing it for a long time. In saying this, I am just interested in establishing that there are precedents for this work that are probably as old as written scholarship. I am not advocating that we necessarily emulate philosophy departments. I am, however, advocating that we take seriously a research approach to the field of ethics. This paper, somewhat speculative in nature, is an attempt to open space for discussion about ethics and suggest some approaches to this research. Some of these approaches may be considered 'traditional' while others will be more 'innovative'.

One of the first things to do in this project is to begin reconciling some of the differing perceptions about ethics that were evident in the Anchorage anecdote. First, the response described is legitimate and the ethics of research is important. And, it is not uncommon for individual impulses to turn first to a conception of ethics that concerns itself with codes of behaviour or practice such as those for research. These often take the form of recommended guidelines formulated by subgroups in society as a way of controlling members within those groups and protecting a larger community. In this case researchers were interested in relationships between their own conduct and others – research subjects and/or the larger community to which they belong. These relationships are frequently shaped by university guidelines that are often, in turn, in need of shaping and revising.[5]

On the other hand, ethics can also be thought of as a process of inquiry – a philosophical investigation of those varied and often contested stories (including rituals, ceremonies and daily actions) that constitute our social reality. That is to

're-search' these stories for new meanings, points of departure, or new possibilities. Here I use the term 'research' broadly. It seems to me that there are a great many ways to observe, feel, be in and think about – that is to re-search – the world and relationships in it. In this broadly conceived research and the stories we tell about it, we can create opportunities for new understanding and new meaning. And isn't creating new understanding and meaning the essence of research? I am aware that this approach blurs boundaries between what has been traditionally called research and what has been called art and literature (see for example, Dunlop, 1999 and Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). And this excites me.

The purpose of this paper is, then, to open up a discussion about possibilities for ethics research, specifically in environmental education.

A fairly traditional (and still useful) way to approach ethics, cast as inquiry, has been to ask philosophical questions. In ethics, researchers might ask: What is a good way to live? Or, to refine that question in important ways, what is a good way to live in a given context? What ought we do in this case or that? What would good relations between people and societies look like? What about good relationships between people and animals, species, ecosystems, or the more-than-human world? These questions are often followed by another string of increasingly probing questions like: Why? What do you mean? How do you know? And, what does this mean where I live?

Some think of ethics as relationships that have included reference to action and doing. While there are many sources that underscore this point, I am drawn back to my First Nations colleagues and in particular Louise Profeit-Leblanc (1996). She said, especially since she became a grandmother, that ethics is about doing that which 'enables' us. She asks, 'What makes us noble? . . . What do I do everyday to prepare myself to become the creature which the Creator wants me to be?' (p.14). She adds that ethics 'has to do with upright living and making moral decisions based on this goal of being noble in our everyday activities' (p.14). With this thinking, another line of questions is opened: What are possible relationships between ethics and actions? How do ethics inform everyday activities and conversely, how do everyday activities inform ethics?

One of the themes running through the preceding few paragraphs about ethics as a philosophical inquiry is that, seen this way, it is an open-ended process with the potential to expose new challenges and generate new possibilities. Here ethics is not about codes, or codified behaviour, but is rather about how ethics can be enacted everyday in myriad ways. It is a process. This doesn't mean that decisions and actions are never taken. This process-oriented ethics doesn't have to be paralysed by perpetual self-doubt and/or relativism. It does mean, however, that ethical positions are open for discussion, re-examination and revision.

Taking a research orientation towards ethics and doing so in a way that frames research as a process, creates some interesting openings for consideration, discussion and inquiry. The first is to think about a continuous and possibly evolving, nature of ethics. And, the second is to think about how we can take 'little rests' from this continuous process such that we can respond to everyday issues that require decisions and actions. Rests that enable emerging stories to do work. I will discuss these two openings in the next section that draws from a more 'traditional' form of environmental ethics. Of particular importance will be Mrs Angela Sidney's idea about the work that stories do. The final section will consider ethics as reconstructive experiments.[6]

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics, as a formal field of study, has been around for just over twenty-five years – that is, as marked by the inauguration of its first journal (Hargrove, 2004).[7] Over this quarter century much interesting thinking has accrued and insights gleaned. However, the field has been criticised too. Some critics, suspicious of meta-narratives and universalising theory, have argued that environmental ethics as a field, is highly moralistic and unreflexive about the full extent of its normalising effects (Darier, 1999). And, there is much to consider here.

Interestingly, however, one of the field's predecessors anticipated these very discussions. Aldo Leopold (1966) commented in this *Sand County Almanac*, first published in 1949, that, 'nothing so important as an ethic is ever "written"' (p.263). Here Leopold is aware that ethics is importantly a process. He spoke of it as an ongoing social evolution and one that never stops. Implicit in this description are participants who are constantly engaged in the reworking of relationships between themselves and, as he termed it then, the land. Implicit also, is an eschewing of any presumptions of a 'true' or 'final' ethic. Then he adds,

> Only the most superficial student of history supposes that Moses 'wrote' the Decalogue; it evolved in the in the minds of a thinking community and Moses wrote a tentative summary of it for a 'seminar.' I say tentative because evolution never stops. (p.263)

Anthony Weston picks up this theme in a series of papers that begin in the mid-1980s (1985, 1991) and come into focus in a paper titled 'Before environmental ethics' (1992). Following Leopold, he argues that environmental ethics is at an 'originary' state of development and that we have no idea where this field will take us (1992). For Weston, environmental ethics is in need of a great deal of exploration. We should expect, at best, a long period of experimentation and uncertainty.

So, it is clear, that from within the field of environmental ethics (and before) there are strong voices promoting ethics as a process that produces, at best, tentative results and involves experimentation and uncertainty.

In an interesting elaboration Weston argues that our challenge is not to systematise environmental values, but rather to create the 'space' for environmental values to evolve (1992). By space he is speaking about the social, psychological and phenomenological preconditions that are needed to enable this evolutionary process. He is also speaking about the conceptual, experiential and physical freedom to move and think. Here Weston is concerned that individuals and groups *can* actually begin to create, or co-evolve, new values through everyday practices. And our job might thus be seen as 'enabling environmental practice'. At this point an interesting convergence occurs between Leopold, Weston and more recent Foucauldian scholars (Darier, 1999),[8] who speak about ethics as 'the active constitution of subjectivities which constantly rework humans' relations with themselves, with other life-forms and with the world generally ... the endless process of "ethicisation" of being human in the world' (Darier, 1999:27). For each of these three authors, ethics is importantly a process of reflection, imagination and experimentation, where individuals and/or groups create new ways of being in their part of the world. This is central to an idea of ethics research.

In an interesting turn, Weston (1992) also asks readers to re-examine the way they read (and write) literature in environmental ethics. This, he suggests, is consistent with a more creative and experimental outlook towards this field. In a scholarly context where readers are frequently encouraged to read critically, or as some might say, 'read against the text' or 'interrogate the text', Weston is suggesting that we also read imaginatively and 'with the text'.[9] By this he suggests that the arguments, or theories, in environmental ethics be read as suggestive and open-ended challenges rather than attempts to demonstrate particular conclusions based on presumed premises. For Weston, reading arguments this way is more creative than summative; read this way their force lies in their potential to open up opportunities rather than to settle, or close, questions.

Another and related, way to look at these arguments and/or theories is to think of them as stories. Framed this way, we might return to Yukon elder Mrs Angela Sidney's interest in stories. Fundamentally, she was interested in the work stories do – how they help their listeners (and now readers) to construct relationships and how they give people something to think with (Cruikshank, 1998). Again there is an interesting convergence. Not only do Mrs Sidney's ideas resonate with those of Anthony Weston, but also with Aldo Leopold. Remember, Leopold (1966) described written ethics as tentative summaries, as if for a seminar. So, thinking about the opportunities that environmental ethics offer and the 'resting spots' from constant re-examination that the 'seminar summaries' provide, researchers can ask: What work do these stories do? Rather than: Are they correct, true, moralistic, or definitively prescriptive?

A recent article in an environmental education newsletter (FORED BC, 2004/05) provides some clues about the potential for environmental ethics (and/or animal welfare ethics) to do work. Titled 'The unkindest cut', it informs readers how Virginia had joined eight other states in the United States that currently require school districts to provide dissection alternatives. For some students, it is reported, 'an aversion to dissecting lab animals is based on squeamishness, while for others it may be a question of values' (p.8).[10] This news indicates a marked change in policies concerning dissections over the past couple of decades. Some critics might charge that this is just an example of the normalisation of particular ethics in society. But that would depend on how tightly normalisation was defined. It could also be read as a provision of more alternatives and a greater range of options, as students work to construct their own subjectivities – through reflection and their actions in everyday activities. Also, the final comment in the article read,

> While agreeing that students with moral, philosophical, or religious objections should be able to use alternatives, the President of the National Association of Biology Teachers, Rebecca Ross, has this to say about the Virginia legislation, 'I don't think there was anybody speaking for biology teachers'. (p.8)

The nature of this comment suggests that while there may be some acceptance of the policy changes, the discourse is hardly normalised.

Speaking more personally, I can recall being contacted a number of times by newspaper reporters and asked to comment on a local environmental issue. On one particular occasion, I

was in the midst of preparing for an environmental ethics class. My reply was strongly shaped by the language, questions and fragments of theory that were gleaned from the paper I had just been reading. I didn't ascribe to this story, at least as a complete theory, as a moral imperative, or a normalising influence. But, this 'tentative seminar', or 'resting place' in the midst of ongoing reflection, did provide ready access to ideas that enabled me to make some tentative judgements relative to an issue before me. It gave me material to think about and tools to work with.

These are small examples and by themselves, inconclusive; it is difficult to draw cause-and-effect relationships at the best of times. But, as stories, they can point in directions useful for future research and practices. And they suggest that theorising about ethics – that is research – is still useful and the resulting stories can work to reveal new possibilities and useful perspectives on everyday issues.

Another way to experiment with environmental ethics is to imagine what they would look like if applied, in various manifestations, in a particular context. Or, what kind of stories could be told if the ethics of an issue were interpreted and told through different conceptual lenses. This is the approach taken by Patti Clayton in her book *Connection on the Ice: Environmental ethics in theory and practice* (1998). Here she decided to explore a particular issue – the rescue of ice-entrapped gray whales near Barrow, Alaska in 1988. She attends to the stories recounted by the participants of the rescue as she tells and retells these stories from the perspectives of three philosophical traditions: the tradition of rationalism, the 'care' tradition and the phenomenological tradition of Martin Heidegger. In these tellings she is seeking to do several things:

- 'establish a space for such storytelling within environmental philosophy' (p.xiv),
- explore the effects of traditional thinking about environmental ethics,
- explore the potential of alternative frameworks in environmental ethics,
- understand the particular issue (of the whale rescue) more deeply and in doing so,
- understand better the real-world grounding of environmental ethics.

In the end, her stories are 'offered in the spirit of respect for our own stories and those of others' and the conviction that 'in the sharing of such stories we find our own voices and we are all teachers and learners' (p.xxiv). They are also about real-world – or everyday – ethics.

Research Possibilities

With the preceding discussions as background this brief section will begin to outline some research possibilities. The suggestions given are tentative and only provide beginnings. With creativity, imagination and an innovative 'research attitude' (Naess & Jickling, 2000:51) many more possibilities will follow.

Conceptualising environmental ethics within education. One notable absence in the preceding discussion has been placing environmental ethics within the context of environmental education. Much of this discussion is suggestive of educational possibilities, but these have not been developed for a couple of reasons. My interest in this paper has been to first help generate a sense and breadth of possibilities for interpreting environmental ethics. This is sufficient scope for a single paper. Second, I think this placing of environmental ethics within our field would be a good topic for a series of papers by a variety of authors. So, I will leave readers with the

research question, how can these emerging possibilities for environmental ethics be interpreted educationally and pedagogically?

Experimenting with conceptual and theoretical problems. Tell new stories that others can work with; there is much work to do here especially as boundaries created by traditional (rationalist/ extensionist) ethics are stretched and/or penetrated. There are some good recent leads. Anthony Weston (2004) and Val Plumwood (1999) have both troubled the anthropocentric/ eco-centric dualism and created new possibilities through their work on 'multicentrism'.[11] And Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston (1999) have opened some new ground for exploring relationships between ethics and epistemology through their work titled 'Environmental ethics as environmental etiquette: toward an ethic-based epistemology'.[12] Following Weston (1992), we need a great deal of exploration in this area. What conceptual and theoretical problems are troubling? And, how can these be interpreted and presented such that they can do good educational work?

Experimenting at the interface between theory and practice. Eugene Hargrove (1994a, 1994b), founding editor of the journal *Environmental Ethics*, once remarked that philosophers have produced quite a few good theories about environmental ethics, especially since 1986, but that there is a large gap between theory and practice. Bridging this gap – and this may be interpreted in many ways – remains an important challenge to environmental ethics research and one that Patti Clayton (1998) has begun to explore.[13] What case studies would make good stories to share? And, how could these stories help our students find their own voices?

Reimagining Environmental Ethics: Ethics as reconstructive experiments

The preceding section on environmental ethics suggests beginning with relatively traditional approaches to this field and then encourages speculation and experimentation in a way that opens up possibilities. It encourages us to tell and re-tell our stories in ways that might make them useful to others as they work through issues, seek their own voice and make daily choices. There is plenty of terrain here for good research.

This section encourages even more experimentation and imagination. How, for example, can we remagine environmental ethics as research outside of these relatively traditional approaches? What other experiments can we do?

In the spirit of these questions, this section offers a different beginning. If we agree that environmental ethics is in its originary stage and that ethics as research should help in the developing and evolving of values and help individuals construct their own subjectivities and bases for actions, then what can we do to create opportunities for ethics to evolve, develop, or recreate itself? We can go a step further and also ask, what kind of relationships can exist between ideas about ethics and everyday practices? And, this leads to the question, how can educators create the conditions, or space, for ethics and practices to co-evolve?

Australian novelist and essayist David Malouf (2004) provides one starting point for thinking about these questions when he talks about the 'temper' of a time and place. For Malouf this temper arises from experiences, apprehensions, needs that work below the level of events, arguments and decisions and yet it enables practice to take one shape rather than another.

Perhaps this 'temper' is tied to enabling conditions. He describes what constitute, for him, some aspects of this *lower* layer in a people's life:

- the experience that embodies a people's interaction with the land they find themselves in,
- the kind of language people use in articulating their world and dealing with one another,
- the habit of mind they bring to the contingencies of daily living: open and inquisitive about new possibilities, inventive, unafraid of failure, or anxiously hedged about by rules, traditions that no longer fit, fear of the uncontrollable and unknown,
- a stance that does not always need to live with certainty but is happy, or happy enough, with open questions, with unfolding time and the unfinished, with what is still 'in the making'; that is curious about ends but happy in the meantime with the challenge and surprises of being 'on the way'. (p.5)

Again, some may find a convergence of ideas that is suggestive of research possibilities. New perspectives on ethics research can be gleaned through picking up on what Weston (1992) describes as 'enabling environmental practice', or creating 'space', for environmental ethics to evolve and/or Darier's (1999) ethical constitution of 'green' subjectivities through the endless process of 'ethicisation' and/or Malouf's (2004) attention to the enabling qualities of 'temper'.

Reimagining Research Possibilities

In what follows are a few more examples of starting points in a challenge to reimagine environmental ethics and research in this field. While they may be grouped in many possible configurations, I begin by considering research possibilities that arise out of examining barriers to ethics as an everyday activity. What stands in the way of enabling practices, ethicisation, or a productive temper? The next section identifies a few examples of recent research and practices that are loosely gathered under the heading 'enabling environmental practice'. And finally, I share a story that brings ethical perspectives practice and actions together in the context of a particular issue. Research possibilities are discussed in each section.

Identifying barriers

John Ralston Saul (2001) has described ethics as down-to-earth and practical. Like others he eschews the ideologically driven or codified versions of ethics in favour of ethics as a matter of daily activity. To Saul, ethics is central to the way we see ourselves and ourselves in relationships. However, he also observes that, 'in our world, the very idea of making a personal, public, ethical choice is treated as unprofessional. It is often ridiculed' (p.77). In short, ethics in Saul's world – rooted in Canada that is – have been largely marginalised. Further, citizens continue to marginalise ethics when they defer to heroic figures that represent heroic actions – or defer to experts who reside elsewhere. Saul identifies problems, or barriers that contribute to the distancing of ethics from our lives. Some of these include:

- a growing distance between theory and practice,
- a fear that letting ethics off their leash will result in misplaced certainty, moral rectitude, or ideology and
- a reliance on reason to identify and use ethics.[14]

Other writers add to this list. Notably Eugene Hargrove (1994a, 1994b, 2000) argues that in North America we are linguistically ill equipped to talk about ethics. He claims that the language of values and ethics has slowly been marginalised from respectable discourse. He describes how, as an example, 'intrinsic value' is on the verge of disappearing from ordinary language. David Abram (1996), Holmes Rolston (1999) and Anthony Weston (1994) have also discussed (or told stories about) the limitations of existing language, images and metaphors in enabling the process and practice of ethics.

So, this is a beginning. But what other barriers are there? What barriers do biologists, managers, civil servants, teachers and other citizens experience when they wish to discuss ethics? What successes have they had? How do these experiences contribute to the 'temper' of particular contexts? What can citizens and educators do to reduce barriers to participation in conversations and practices of ethics? To create space for a more productive temper to emerge? What good stories are there that we should share?

Enabling environmental practice
What kind of research and learning environments enable practice and reflection that can allow ethics as a process of inquiry, with occasional resting spots (or tentative theories), to emerge? What space is required to allow individuals to construct and re-construct their subjectivities?

Weston (1994, 2004) argues, again from a North American perspective, that the environmental crisis is a disconnection from the earth that many people experience. Through this disconnection, he argues, schools and other public institutions often cut people off from knowledge and inspiration that arises through an experiential contact with the world. This should not be confused with an appeal to natural laws. Rather it raises epistemological questions – questions about the value of experiential knowing, of a 'know-it-in-your-bones' kind of knowing. It also suggests important relationships between knowing and feeling. And finally, it opens up questions about relationships between ethics and epistemology (see also, for example, Bell, 1997, 2001; Jardine, 1998; Abram & Jardine, 2000; Naess & Jickling, 2000; Naess, 2002; Jickling & Paquet, 2005). Discussions around these questions all have bearing on how educators consider enabling environmental practice.

But, how would these kinds of concerns manifest themselves in other parts of the world? Could they also be cast as concerns about estrangement from language, traditional stories, or traditional practices, any of which may imply relationships between people and their landscape? How else? What other factors need to be considered?

In other experiments of this kind, Heesoon Bai (2004) challenges us to step outside the boundaries of traditional ethical thinking that is often interventional in nature and put into operation once harm has been done. Her reconstructive experiment is to imagine what preventive ethics might look like. In her project, she identifies ways that we might pay better attention to community well being on a daily basis. What would preventive ethics look like in particular contexts? And, in these contexts what would an educational response to preventive ethics look like?

In yet another recent experiment in ethics, Luigina Mortari (2004) draws on the traditions of 'care', where care for other beings lies at the core of emerging ethics and phenomenological

research where the ethical impulse is often described in the context of lived experiences.[15] Here she explores conceptual relationships between ethics of care and education and relationships between the practice of care and reflections in and about these caring relationships. And finally, she tells a story about a project designed to cultivate ethical dispositions to care through caring for plants. What more can we do to understand relationships between care and ethics? What barriers exist, in particular contexts, to developing a caring disposition? Or, to put this another way, how can conditions be created to enable a caring disposition to emerge? And, in a final thought for now, Mortari encourages us to consider relationships between practice and reflection. This point is taken up again in the next section.

Co-evolution of ethics and practice: action stories

One particularly interesting story about ethics 'in and as' action, from a region where I live, is taken from the *Regulations Summary for Fishing in the Yukon* over several years. These annual regulations outline rules for angling each year. The issue here surrounds a perennial debate over the correctness of 'catch and release fishing', that is using a rod, line and hook to catch fish that are landed by the angler and then released back into to the water. Given enormous difficulties associated with regulating 'catch and release fishing', a creative approach is taken in reporting the challenges inherent in this issue.

Rather that providing rules, these summaries tell the catch and release story from multiple perspectives. These perspectives are often characterised as First Nation and Non-First Nation stories and this seems to provide a useful starting point. But the stories are, in reality, more diverse and complex than this. First Nations positions have often been associated with statements like, 'Fish are to eat, not to play with', or, 'The fish comes to you as a gift. It's offering its life to you. And if you don't accept it, that's an insult. Sooner or later the fish will stop coming to you'. Other anglers, supporting catch and release fishing, suggest, 'that for me a fish is priceless too. I can't put a value on the peace of mind I get when I go fishing. I can't put a price on how important it is to me to be with my family: my son, my daughter, my wife in the kinds of places where you find fish'. These kinds of statements are supported by information about methods for careful release of fish, 'live release ethics', and the 'use everything – waste nothing' tradition of First Nations peoples.[16]

At first this may seem like an irresolvable ethical dilemma, but it doesn't have to be. For years these contrasting stories have been presented together. And each time an angler flips through the regulation booklet he or she is invited to consider them. Put another way, the public is invited into a personal discussion about ethics and invited to consider how she or he will respond.

The authors seem to have worked towards presenting the stories in a non-judgemental fashion. For many, this opens up new space for ethical consideration and new possibilities for practice. Each year revisions to the previous booklet suggest some movement and creative interpretation, as one respondent recently said, 'At the end of the day, we are all Yukoners. We share a common resource and the foundation of our thinking on both sides is respect'. Some readers may critique this statement, but I don't think it should be considered an end, or a product, rather it is a snapshot of an individual engaged in a process that is ongoing.

But there is one final step to this story. The angler must decide what to do when landing the fish – when the person and the fish come into physical contact. Will the angler keep the fish for food or release it? How will the ideas presented in regulations (or drawn form other sources) affect his or her judgement and actions? How will knowledge about sise, breeding potential, or survival rates for released fish affect his or her decisions? How will actions – in releasing or keeping the fish – affect his or her theorising and emerging personal ethic?[17]

This final step is particularly interesting within the framework of reconstructive or experimental approaches to environmental ethics. It raises research possibilities, told through stories, about ethics emerging from particular practices, judgements and decisions. I expect that there is a vast range of stories about important issues – especially issues that affect people personally – yet to be told. If these stories have substance and are well told, then citizens are invited to become involved. The word 'ethics' may not always be used but the process is a kind of ethics research.

And Now . . .

Finding, researching and telling stories – from our own communities and from our own experiences – need not be a heroic undertaking. The stories need not resolve questions about right and wrong, or good and evil. But, good stories can do work, enable relationships and connect people to real-world, everyday issues. They can invite listeners or readers into an ethical life. This is not a life of narrow ideological positions and moralising, but one of careful actions and reflection. Seen this way ethics is down-to-earth, useful and a matter of daily practice. However, we aren't there yet.

And, of course, there is much reimagining required as emerging possibilities for environmental ethics are interpreted educationally and pedagogically.

For its own part, this paper is another story. It is also an invitation to engage in ethics research within environmental education. It will be a good story if it enables readers to do more work in this field; and, we have lots of work to do. Best wishes.

Notes on the Contributor

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Endnotes

1   The original title of this paper was 'Ethics as Research in Environmental Education'. It was, perhaps, more provocative. But it was also designed to open up space for inquiry. Contrasting ethics *as* research (or ethics research) with the ethics *of* research was a device designed to open up space for inquiry by disrupting prevailing orientations. I have found it commonly assumed that ethics in a research setting refers to the ethics of how one conducts research into whatever phenomenon or idea under investigation. This can reduce ethics to codes or rules of conduct for others' research, rather than a vibrant field of inquiry in itself, a field that sets out to examine and reflect upon, values and responses to value-laden issues. It is the latter that I wish to establish. However, with thanks to the two blind reviewers, I see that the original title can also introduce other difficulties and hence the switch.

2   I do not wish to imply that all Western and First Nations stories suggest this sort of contrast. I am speaking here about the work of particular stories.

3   Another layer of interpretation and reflection can also be explored by considering the religious imagery often ascribed to the 'St George and the dragon' story.

4   I am normally happy to talk about narrative inquiry at this point in a discussion. However, here I am reminded of David Abram who said, 'As far as I can tell, narrative and story mean exactly the same thing. It's just that you kind of need an advanced degree to know what narrative means' (Jickling, *et al.*, 2002:292). Though I am sympathetic to his perspective, I don't completely agree. But since this paper begins with reference to First Nations elders and their stories and since theirs is a world of storytelling, I will continue to talk about storytelling. And, why not? Storytelling is a perfectly good term, more respectful (to those whose insights I have valued and shared), more accessible and more aesthetically pleasing – to me at least.

5   Here I am building on previous work (Jickling, 1996; 2004) where I have distinguished between ethics conceived of codes of practice and ethics described as critical reflection and reflective practice.

6   This idea is derived from work by Anthony Weston (1992, 1994) and Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston (1999).

7   The word 'field' is used in a provisional way. I recognise that the boundaries are permeable and that environmental ethics, thought of this way, rests on preceding histories and oral traditions.

8   This is an interesting text and one that readers may find useful. However, Darier does seem to delineate environmental ethics in a way that is, from my perspective, far too narrow – almost as a caricature. For example, some of the exciting and self-critical work done within the field, by people like Anthony Weston and others, is not included.

9   I am aware that some readers may want to argue that this 'reading with the text', as it is employed here, is really a version of 'reading against the text', that it might alternatively be discussed in terms of ideas about the 'death of the author', or that deconstruction, or rigorous critical analysis, doesn't imply destruction and hence this preference is unnecessary. However, in making my present choice, I'm appealing more to the usefulness of 'everyday' vernacular rather than some more arcane distinction.

10   We could ask, what is the matter with being squeamish? And, what relationships might exist between squeamishness and a person's values?

11   Anthropocentrism, a concept meaning human centred, has become quite common in the literature of environmental thought, ethics and philosophy. However, use of this term to examine humans'

tendency to place their own interests at the centre of concern seems to generate a need for an opposite pole. Hence, some speculate about new ethics that place ecosystemic needs at the centre of concern. Still others wonder if the resulting bipolar, or dualistic, thinking is also a problem. An imaginative solution, offered by some, is to think of the world where all entities are thought of as centres of interest – hence multicentrism. A task now will be to think about what multicentric ethics might look like in practice.

12 This is a rich paper, but essentially it explores relationships between a researcher's functioning ethical framework and the kind of knowledge it generates (the epistemology).

13 For another recent example of interpreting a contemporary issue through environmental ethics see a recent paper by Jickling and Paquet (2005).

14 In his book, *On Equilibrium*, Saul describes humanism (or human potential) as a dynamic equilibrium between six human qualities of common sense, ethics, imagination, intuition, memory and reason. Failure to attend all of these qualities (as with a reliance on just reason) results in imbalance and failed humanism.

15 In environmental ethics consider, again, the work of Patti Clayton (1998) and Aldo Leopold (1966), but also Neil Evernden (1985) and Val Plumwood (1991) as some starting points. In education consider, for example, Nel Noddings (1992, 2002) and John Dewey (1938).

16 These comments do not represent a systematic survey of the fishing regulations, though that would be a good project. Rather, I've sampled the regulations published between 1998 and 2004 by Yukon Environment.

17 This issue has also been explored in a more 'traditional' way in the journal *Environmental Ethics*. See for example de Leeuw (1996).

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Editor's Note

Practical teaching activities that extend the ideas in this paper can be found in a workbook for educators: Jickling, B., Lotz-Sisitka, H., O'Donoghue, R. & Ogbuigwe, A. (in press) *Environmental Education, Ethics and Action. A workbook to get started*. Nairobi: UNEP. (The workbook will also be available on the UNEP website www.unep.org.)