

Rising with the Corn: The Educational Ecosystem

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Note: this is the second in a six part series on the ecosystem of education. While, in many ways, each article stands on its own, many concepts and terms are used in unusual ways, ways that are explored in the preceding article: Building Unconditional Confidence. There we define the nature of the unconditional; here we explore how we can make that a reality.

“Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another.”¹ Poetic and potent. This understanding is the foundation, the guide, and the safety check for all things in Enki Education. AND its veracity is something that can *never* be proved. So rather than proofs, I offer this question: given that science has long since proved the very same thing that indigenous cultures the world over have always taught – i.e. that the phenomenal world consistently operates according to natural laws – why would we doubt that our growth and learning operate according to the same natural laws?

In Enki, we start there, with trust in the laws of the natural world and curiosity about them.

It was late August 1991, hurricane season, and even two hours from the ocean in inland Massachusetts, we were being pummeled by Bob's wrath. All night we heard him howling and pounding and I worried about the garden, especially the nearly ripe corn plot, but there was nothing I could do.

Still, sleepless fretting meant I was up with the first of the light. I went to see if the garden had survived. I walked to the huge glass windows slowly, fearfully, and then my tears ran almost as hard as the pounding rain: the whole corn field lay flat on the ground; every single stalk was down. I was heartbroken, but my sons, 9 and 12 years old, saw only opportunity! Not even noticing my meltdown, they put on shorts and raced out to splash barefoot in the giant puddles and spin around in the pounding rain. For them, the wind was but a wrestling partner.

Watching them run around the garden (the area around it was the deepest in water), I couldn't help but smile. I stood in the window and watched as their dad joined in the wet chase. The squeals were irresistible. I stood a long time, long enough that – to the boys' dismay – the rain and wind died away and the sun came out. I was about to head down to see if I could stand any of the corn back up (yes, completely nuts), when I noticed that something was happening in the corn field. I walked closer to the window and looked hard. The corn was lifting, rising on its own. From my vantage point pretty high above the field, it looked like it was lifting straight up.

I gasped and stood very still. I stayed there a very long time – hours – watching. The corn was rising up to the sun, really; the whole corn field was rising like an orchestra moving toward the crescendo. Even as I write this, almost 30 years later, I can feel the moment of witnessing a miracle: heart pounding hard and faster, breath high and in small gasps, eyes barely able to blink. Wow! Just wow. The miracle of nature's laws.

¹ Juvenal, ancient Roman poet

I came and went from the window over the next six or eight hours – I did have three children to attend to! – but with each check, the miracle continued. Before evening, the whole field was standing tall again. I went down to the garden to check. I will admit that in the innocence of my “miracle mode,” I thought the corn had just stood right back up. But when I inspected the field, I saw that each and every stalk had obeyed the laws of nature in the same way: about six inches of stalk lay along the ground and then each bent upward to reach for the sun. The laws of gravity were obeyed, but the sun had called forth the laws of expansion and contraction as well: one side of each stalk had had to contract and the other to stretch in order for the stalks to shift back to reaching upwards. There was a twist here, a bend there, and many a torn leaf, but all kept a steady focus on the sun. Just wow!

The beauty of the corn field was not in the uniqueness of each plant or in clever schemes and new directions; the beauty, the miracle, was in the community of corn obeying the laws of nature and reaching the unified goal of sustaining life. What is so beautiful and reassuring about nature is that it does follow deep and unyielding laws, and simultaneously, it manifests endless flexibility. Herein lies our healthy individuality. It does not lie in a free for all or an expression of the whims of desire, but in creatively and responsively aligning ourselves with the basic laws of nature.

Each of my three children began to crawl at precisely the same moment, so much so that it felt a little spooky: At five months, they excitedly rocked on all fours making a sound that was between a grunt and a hum and a victory cry; then five and a half months and they were off in a full forward crawl. But walking! Not so similar. They still all walked right at a year, but the process for each was so different. My daughter had been couch surfing and walking holding a hand for about six weeks, but she showed no interest in ever walking on her own. Then on her actual first birthday, she got up, walked across the room, plunked down and smiled quietly. My next child, a “devil take the hindmost” little boy, had done so much climbing and falling off things that we hardly noticed his first steps! They followed many a crash and face plant and were just another part of “what has Evan gotten into now!” Actually, they just speeded up the rate at which he found more mischief. My third, another boy, at about 10 and a half months discovered he could stand by himself and bounce up and down in place. He would stand there, hands in the air, elbows bent, bouncing and laughing that so full baby laugh, just 100% in the delight. Periodically he would say “aiye-di-di” which sounded an awful lot like “I did it,” though he was still a good year from having the “I” concept. Still, it caused us to laugh too. When he did walk, it was a step at a time, punctuated by bursts of laughter.

Anyone who knows my three children, now adults and parents themselves, is laughing at this point because right there in how they approached walking, they announced who they were and how they would meet the world, and yet all were doing essentially the same thing. All of them were working with the laws of gravity, balance, and physical alignment, and all were moving in the same basic direction, i.e. up. We assumed – and hoped – they would all walk and would do so in pretty much the same way as any other person. Still, we parents delight in this very normal event as the miracle it actually is. Certainly each baby’s particular way of standing up and readying to walk is adorable and seems monumentally important. Yet it is in the way these obey the underlying laws of nature that we recognize the miracle – none of them would be quite so adorable if they didn’t result in walking effectively.

There are many places, like walking, where we delight in this alignment with nature without hesitation, sharing in the experience of the child's accessing that inherent-vitality. This same alignment - and delight - can be the core of all our work with the children. In all areas, **we can best help the children to clear away the clouds of confusion and experience the open flow of their inherent-vitality by aligning ourselves with the underlying laws of growth and development.**

Each time we align ourselves and our work with the laws of nature we have flipped that now-proverbial canoe back up. In so doing, we help set this experience of connecting to inherent-vitality as true-north on the children's inner compasses. This becomes the place toward which the children turn when confusion clouds their way or missteps land them flat on their faces. That is what we are after; I doubt any humans will stay connected to their inherent-vitality 24/7, or anything like that, and that is not our goal. The goal is to turn back toward accessing inherent-vitality each time we stray or trip or even fall flat on our faces. Then what was once shame becomes curiosity, and what was once a hardening becomes an openness.

To turn back towards our inherent-vitality when we fall, we must realign with the laws of nature. The foundational law of nature is the law of ecosystems, the law that all aspects of our world are interdependent and are constantly impacting one another. Most people reading this are more than aware of the importance of respecting this interconnectedness in nature. However, we are often less conscious of the fact that every single aspect of life operates in its own micro-ecosystem. This applies to everything, from the cellular groupings in our bodies, through the organs, through family, community, country - and through growth and learning, i.e. education.



These micro-ecosystems work like a series of Russian nesting dolls, or microcosms within macrocosms. From the smallest of these out, each ecosystem must fit within and be in harmony with the next, and the next and the next, right up to the largest, that of the natural world. How does this happen? **Each micro-ecosystem follows the same natural laws, but each has its own expression of those natural laws.** That expression determines the health of all beings in that system, and, in turn, the health of all that surrounds it. So we flip the joke above 180 degrees and say to the ticket teller, "Yes, really one ticket."

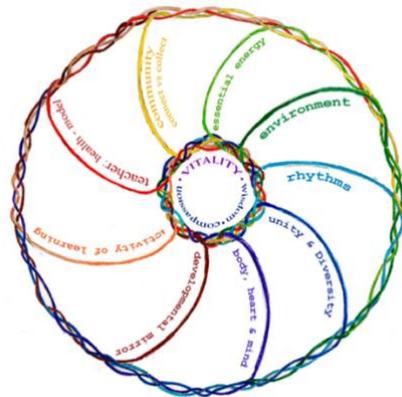
All this would make it easy to conclude that, in education, honoring the natural laws would make us choose an outdoor program. One might, quite logically, think that the best alignment would happen in Forest Schools or Wilderness programs. Not necessarily true. Certainly these *could* be an option. However, one could be aligned with the laws of growth and learning in New York City, or out of alignment in rural Canada. One could be fully in alignment in a structured brick and mortar program, and completely out of alignment in an open-ended forest or wilderness one. Same applies the other way round. Certainly time in nature matters for us all and I don't mean to diminish the importance of that, but *just* being outdoors does not guarantee an alignment with the underlying

laws of nature. Critical to full alignment – and therefore to experiencing our inherent-vitality – is working with the *processes* involved in growth and learning. These can be honored anywhere; here we are talking about *processes*, not about curriculum content, or place.

What are the natural processes or laws that rule each ecosystem? Each ecosystem is a web, a literal web. We often talk about the “web of life” as though “web” was a metaphor, but all aspects of life form a literal web. Think of a spider’s web. Each has radial or warp threads that move from the center out and provide the scaffolding for all else. The same is true in all ecosystems. For plants, these radial threads are sun, water, soil, and nutrients. All plants work with these elements, and each element has its stable and vital contribution to make. For example, water brings hydration, not heat. Sun brings heat and activates photosynthesis, but it doesn’t bring hydration or nutrients. And so on. Always true, and yet not all plants use these elements in the same way: a desert cactus works differently with them than does a New England maple. Because of the radial threads, we have the coherence of a self-sustaining, law-abiding ecosystem, and yet do not lose dynamic variety.

The radial threads are the principles or elements through which all else weaves, whether we like it or not, and whether we align ourselves with them or not. Therefore, in each and every micro-ecosystem, these principles cannot be ignored without straining the health of that system and every member of it, and, in turn damaging all surrounding systems. So whether choosing an approach to teaching reading or wilderness skills, painting or sports, independent or teacher led structures, and so on, if we are to have an ecosystemic education, it is necessary to “weave” each approach or issue through the radial threads of the web. This means asking oneself how the specific method, material, location, or activity, aligns with the principles of each radial thread of the educational ecosystem. Over the years, I came to see that the radial threads in the ecosystem of education are:

- 1) Environment;
- 2) Rhythms;
- 3) Unity and Diversity;
- 4) Integration of Body, Heart, and Mind;
- 5) Mirroring Child Development;
- 6) The Activity of Learning;
- 7) The Teacher – as a model and in her own health;
- 8) Community – connection vs collection;
- 9) Essential Energy.



Certainly, there are other ways to describe the issues that make up these threads, but, I believe, these are the fundamental factors that impact all learning and growth. These radial threads themselves are interdependent and impact one another moment to moment – as illustrated in the diagram above. With experience, we come to see the world through the lens of these radial threads all the time and we have an overall feel for where there are alignment issues and where harmony is flowing. Over

time, it becomes only an occasional event that we systematically go through all the threads in depth, but when something is stuck, even 30 years in, I step back and go through each thread, all in search of new understanding.

Each of these radial threads is more than a banner headline; each carries a perspective and a breadth and depth of understanding. In turn, this understanding forms the questions through which we, in Enki Education, explore any and all educational possibilities. We will look in some depth at a couple of these radial threads in future articles, but what matters first is getting a feel for the whole – otherwise each one becomes yet another item for collection, and, as always, it is connection, not collection, that helps us access our inherent-vitality. So let's start there.

The whole: each situation we meet, each idea we come up with, each difficulty we face, will engage all of the radial threads – such is an ecosystem. But in different situations, different radial threads will call for our attention to different degrees. This happens throughout nature; for example, access to sunlight is the prime issue for a forest plant that already has water, soil, and nutrients; and water an issue for desert plants where sun abounds, but both plants are still working with all the core elements, or radial threads, of their ecosystem. To get a feel for this, I will describe a couple of challenging situations in terms of the specific radial threads in need of attention for new insights to open.

Situation #1: My class was a horror with their special subject teachers

After seven years of working with Waldorf Education at the preschool level, I did the full teacher training and took a job as a class teacher for the grades. There were many wonderful aspects to this work but there was one struggle that kept recurring, and it was one that I had not found at all at the preschool level: the children got very agitated as the day progressed and behaved downright terribly with their special subject teachers, the teachers bringing in crafts and foreign language and the like. They pretty much always settled when I was back with them.

Lots of easy conclusions could be drawn, but I had seen several of the special subject teachers with the class and the teachers were wonderful and seemed to be balancing the kinds of things they asked of the children in a very similar way to how I did it – but with very different results. Because of this, and because I am always suspicious of easy answers, after more than a year of trying different solutions to the problem and seeing no further into it, I decided I needed a more indepth understanding of what was happening. I decided to spend two full days with the class, teaching my sections, and going through the rest of each day just as the children did – no teacher breaks or prep periods for me, no leaving because there was another teacher, just being with them.

By the middle of the first day I felt like I was choking for air. I thought a lot about what the other teachers were doing with the kids and I couldn't see any reason for this reaction. They, too, were including movement and music and art in their classes. Taken as its own unit, each had a very nice balance. So I widened my vision, and eased my focus to take in a bigger picture. Two things stood out most: first, the endless time of being in a big social group felt claustrophobic; and second, the sense of needing more air was intense. The activities and undertakings themselves were not very different from what happened in my two hour classes, but they happened in short, 45 minutes clusters, one right after the next, and all felt very tight.

Why? With this wider gaze, it became clear that the overall rhythm of the day was off. After a few hours of sinking into movement, music, story, and art as a group led by the teacher, these second grade students needed a different kind of space, one that was more individualized and looser. Here I saw why it was so different from the preschool day where, being with the children throughout, I naturally shifted to these different learning formats.

By the end of the second day it was clear to me that, although each class could be seen as having a coherent rhythm and a dependable sequence of balancing activities, the day as a whole did not. I spent the last few hours of this exploration watching my own breathing, and noticing how different the inbreath and the outbreath were from one another, and noticing the quality of the transition between the two.

“Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another.” Nature was showing me a healthy rhythm, the rhythm of the breath. I thought about day and night with their transitions of dusk and dawn. I thought about the seasons with the transitions of Spring and Fall. And I realized that a healthy day for the children needed to flow like the breath and the day and the seasons, with time for the large group teacher led work, time for individual pursuits, and time for smaller group, peer driven work.

Relieved to have some insight into the problem, I did what I could to right the rhythm within the limits of the situation. I could only control my own classes, but I looked for ways to honor these rhythmic needs within that. I began including more individual time before the children went to special classes, even when it meant giving up other things that I felt they needed. I ended the day with peer projects whenever possible. And things did improve - not perfect, but improved.

What this did change, at a deep level, was my attention to the overall rhythm of the day, the week, and the year. As a result, in the Enki approach we always flow through the day with attention to all three aspects of nature’s rhythms, which in the school setting show as large blocks of time for each kind of activity: full group/teacher led; the individual work with its self-initiation and teacher support; and the transition between the two that is more playful, social, and open-ended with the teacher as background.

So in this situation, even though many of the radial threads were well honored – the activities were developmentally appropriate; they nourished body, heart, and mind; they were supported by the physical environment; and the teachers were fully engaged – still, the program could not fully nourish the children without coming into resonance with the natural flow of rhythm. That, in turn, impacted how we worked with all the other threads.

Situation #2: The children went flat

Let’s go back to the story of Micah in the first article, to his realization about Copernicus, and look at how the Enki Web influenced our approach to this study. Really, in Micah’s reaction and the class’ response to it, one can see the impact that working with the web can have – the impact on both the depth to which the children will go and on their willingness to step into the unknown wholeheartedly. But in order show the impact of

working with the web, I will need to go back many years, to the first time I taught this unit, a time before I was conscious of and working actively with the principle of an educational ecosystem at all.

I was working with a particularly lively group of group of seventh graders, very engaged and used to putting 100% into all they did. Sure, there were exceptions and struggles, but the overall mood of the group was one of unusual gusto. Yet when I told them the story of Copernicus and showed them the accompanying star charts, I felt that gusto go flat. They were excited to make models of the geo-centric and helio (sun) centric systems, and they were eager to share whatever research they uncovered, but their focus was on showing how much we know today, how much smarter we are. The tone was very much one of collection and competition, and no one walked out on that precipice of the unknown that Micah fearlessly approached; they didn't seem to notice the precipice before them. No one stretched to sit inside Copernicus' experience, to connect, nor did they apply their own imaginations to their perceptions to the information I set out before them.

So years later, when I was deeply involved in developing Enki, when the time came again for me to teach the unit to a different group – Micah's – I spent some time with the Enki Web to see if I could uncover a doorway to deeper learning, to connection. I began to explore the issues brought to light by the radial threads: rhythms; environment; and mirroring child development, and all these seemed to be in good alignment. But when I got to the Essential Energy thread I could see that work was needed.

Essential Energy is the one radial thread that is not about the children; it is about the material itself, about what lies at the heart of the material and, therefore, why we would teach it at all. I knew that at the broadest level, from the science perspective, it is not the facts that are essential – the children can get those online any time. Collecting of facts is not science. Essential to science is entering into the wonder of the unknown. All scientific progress starts there and returns to this "living in the question and standing with new, reality-shaking possibilities." As Einstein said, "Learning is experience; all the rest is just information." From where I had been standing, I could only offer the children information, so no real learning was possible; now I saw the issue was experience.

So now came the fun! To uncover the opportunities for teaching this unit, I worked with another long time Enki teacher to figure out how to make this study a living experience. We knew we needed to experience the skies and find the directly perceivable relationships. We spent many weeks at it, watching the constellations and the planets at all different times of night: we each got to watch the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia circle the North Star while Orion rose and fell and Jupiter went on its own way. A little at a time, patterns began to reveal themselves and the two of us grew so excited we couldn't stop calling each other to report in. Now, the dry information had an entirely different feel and we could design observation activities that would allow the children to see for themselves and enter the magic of the ordinary.

This focus on the Essential Energy thread also shed light on issues arising in relation to our unity/diversity thread and the community thread, but all were righted in the course of working with Essential Energy. And you can see the impact of fully entering the study from Micah's experience and the class' response.

As I mentioned, this is a bare bones peek at what it is to work with the Enki web, just a glimpse; the following articles will go into some of these radial threads more deeply, our online Ecosystems course goes further, and our teacher training courses all take it to real depth. But I offer the glimpse

here so you can see that there is a web, a scaffolding of core principles, that is unchanging. These radial threads are the “sun, water, soil, and nutrients” of the educational ecosystem and we apply them to everything that teachers find of interest or concern, from within Enki or from the world at large.

Exactly how a given teacher sees to manifest these principles for her particular situation will be different teacher to teacher, and home to home, and school to school. But the questions the adult asks, the perspective she brings, will be the same. In an Enki program, the teacher will work with these consciously any time something has that “off” feeling, or anytime any new initiative inspires her. So whether the topic is Brain Gym or Wilderness Awareness, New Math programs or the history of revolution, racial justice or self-directed projects, and so on, we look through the lens of each radial thread to see how the approach might be adapted or integrated into the Enki program in such a way as to support the coherence of the program and, therefore, support child’s accessing of inherent-vitality.

Most importantly, beyond the Enki program, *no matter what system or educational methodology one may use, whether one is conscious of the radial threads or not, these principles are at play.* Like sun, water, soil, and nutrients in the forest, they are at play in all learning situations; the only question is how much we align ourselves with them, and, in so doing, support the accessing of inherent-vitality.

So far we have focused on relating with the separate radial threads. The linear cause and effect nature of speaking requires we begin this way, but it is misleading at its core. Why? John Muir described it perfectly: "*When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.*"

As is true for the elements in any ecosystem, no one element is more important than any other, AND each is impacting and being impacted by all others moment to moment, creating a full system, or “being.” **It is not a linear process or a cumulative one. Rather, in all cases, all the threads come to bear on each other and act in response to each other at every moment - one cannot honor or align oneself with an ecosystemic paradigm if we do not honor this.**

Many programs attend consciously to one or two or more of these threads. In my long search for a deeply nourishing approach to education, I taught in and explored many, many approaches, from free-schools and Headstart, to Integrated Day, Theme Studies, and Emergent Curriculum, to traditional public schooling, to Montessori and Waldorf Education. I found elements of the ecosystem in each, and that helped inform me. And I have seen quite a few wonderful individual teachers who instinctively connect with many of the threads. But still, despite the richness I experienced in many places, I felt something missing. That something is the living pulse of an ecosystem. Why does it matter? It is in the moment to moment relationship between the radial threads that the web becomes an organism and that is what opens access to inherent vitality.

Frequently, the thought of living this truth initially feels overwhelming to teachers and parents – so much happening at once! And it actually *is* overwhelming if we try to chase after each thread separately; then we will just exhaust ourselves and move farther away from our inherent-vitality. This struggle stems from the fact that we, in the modern West, have come to believe in a linear cause and effect reality. But, in fact, this dynamic ecosystem is how our bodies work – we don't ask our hearts to hang on a minute so we can breathe, or our cells to hold still so our blood can pump! This ecosystemic process *is* life, so reconnecting with life means stepping into this all-at-once awareness. Interestingly, once you make this shift, it is much easier to navigate the ecosystemic than the linear because it resonates with our bodies and with the world around us.

This “all at once” living defines Enki Education, and, just as it true in our bodies and in the rest of nature, it is the “all interrelating at once” phenomenon that supports the accessing of inherent-vitality.

We had an interesting exploration of this at the most recent Teacher Training Course.

The teachers had spent the last three years focusing on the separate radial threads and beginning to see how they work together. But the sense of it all working as a breathing organism hadn't quite settled in. Tess, a particularly tenacious trainee unwilling to skip along with partial understanding, kept questioning as she struggled to get it. I pondered how to find a living way to explain.

By good fortune, it happened that the room we were in had a set of harmonic bells, each with a different tone and of a different color. I gave each teacher a bell and an assignment: walk in and out of the circle at any pace you wish, ringing your bell in any rhythm you wish. They did – they had been studying Enki for three years and were used to this kind of learning! At first it was cacophony, and a little painful on the ears. Then, a bit at a time, it settled into a beautiful harmony. The room resounded with this song and it seemed to carry itself – and us – without effort; so much so that the students did not want to stop. Point made.

In fact, we know this ecosystemic pulse in our bodies; we know it in music and dance; we know it in sports, and so on. We just don't trust it in our learning! Odd, but true. Once we move into this kind of thinking – and living – we have made that 180 degree flip and we stand in a new world. It is a different world, different, but in harmony with nature's wisdom. Here, all the old treasures still belong, just inverted. To look at the example with Copernicus, we still observed and analyzed, questioned and looked at charts and theories, but just *when* we did this and *how* we did this was completely different than if our goal had been imparting information. So rather than coming out of the study with a lot of factual information and little else, the children came out with a sense of wonder and the resulting eagerness to look further, *and*, the information and ideas they had gathered had real meaning.

Once we begin to step into this way of living, a different kind of world opens for the children, and for us.

September 2013. As soon as word of the floods in Boulder, Colorado started making the news, I started making calls. I had lived there for 13 years when my kids were little and had many friends who would be impacted. As I sat at the phone going through my list, I got a call from one of the Enki teachers who was out in Lyons, Colorado, which was ground zero for the flooding. She was speaking pretty breathlessly about something that had happened with the children in her class, but I was focused on getting information on the flood and making sure everyone was safe, and I wasn't, at this moment, interested in school events!

Rather impatiently, she reassured me that everyone there had been safely evacuated and that while they did not yet know the fate of any of the buildings, including the school which was right on the flooding river, everyone was okay. Finally I let her tell me the story about the kids, though I was wondering why it mattered to her so much with all the rest that was going on.

"Yesterday," she began, "we went for our usual walk – it has been raining for days so the rain didn't deter us. The kids saw that the river was high, and stopped to dam up a little side eddy of water. But we watch the river go up and down all the time, so I didn't think twice about it, and we went on with our normal day.

"Later in the morning we were out for our playtime and the children immediately noticed that the rising river had pushed their dam over. They went busily into what I thought was normal imaginative play. They all ran to our tree house, some climbing up to the platform while others stayed below. Soon they had an assembly line going, hauling up nuts, and seeds, and sticks. And then some boys tied a bucket to a line and set up a makeshift pulley system to haul up loads more quickly. When I inquired what the work was all about, they responded: 'It is going to flood! It is going to flood! We need to get everything up high to safety; we need to make sure the animals are safe!' I smiled at their wholehearted play, suppressing a laugh at their cuteness.

"For me, this was just a sweet moment in cooperative and imaginative play. I didn't think more about it, but even when the day ended, the children checked in on their bundles and on the river. Still, my attention was on the children, and to me – and the other adults – nothing seemed unusual about the river. We all went home.

"First thing the next morning we were all awakened by the town's emergency sirens. All hell had broken loose: buildings floating down the river, even parts of our school. Families evacuated by helicopter from hillsides. A 100 year flood, but the kids had all the little creatures well fed!

"Can you believe it? They were so connected it didn't matter that we adults had dropped the ball! We were off in our expectations and they were – albeit unconsciously – picking up everything!"

It was clear to us both that, unconsciously, the kids had taken in every detail – certainly the rising water and the falling rain, but these were all-the-time events. Seemed they also picked up on much else: the changes in the wind and the unusual smells it carried; barometric pressure changes and shifts in the temperature; likely even the shift in the sounds and movements of the birds and small creatures on the land.

By the time she finished her story, I had an ear to ear smile. The depth of the children's presence was certainly part of it, but even more was sparked by the teacher's delight. This was a very talented teacher who came to Enki with lots of standard classroom experience, and whose heart and focus

had long been on wilderness learning. She had always been so deeply present in all the outdoor activities, but she had had a bit of a struggle when it came to letting experience teach without adding the overlay of concepts – something that flattens the children’s experience. Now, several years into her work with Enki, she, too, stood on a different ground; she had become skilled at allowing experience to do the teaching, without adding analysis or concept. So my smile now was as much at her growth – and her joy – as it was at the children’s ecosystemic wisdom.