

**A Review of Shannon Leddy and Lorrie Miller's (2024)
*Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies***

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In the era of reconciliation initiatives, educators are grappling with layers of colonial stories and processes naturalized in systems of teaching and learning (MacDonald & Markides, 2021). As a non-Indigenous Canadian of settler-European descent, like others (for example, Root, 2010; Tupper & Mitchell, 2022), my ongoing journey towards decolonizing my practice involves facing difficult truths while navigating pathways to do things differently. In their book, *Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies* (2024), Shannon Leddy and Lorrie Miller generate an inclusive space for educators to come as they are, and to participate in the important work of decolonizing education and centring Indigenous pedagogies. It is the book that I have been waiting for.

Modelling common Indigenous practices of self-introduction (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2021), the authors begin with a welcome and familiarize the readers with who they are, where they are from, and their connections to Indigenous communities. Leddy is a member of the Métis Nation, and Miller is a settler scholar and mother of four children, two of whom have Cree heritage. Both authors grew up on the prairies and now live in Vancouver, where they are art educators at The University of British Columbia. Their voices are distinct as they take up metaphors of weaving—of personal stories, past teaching experiences, and connections to theory and practice—throughout the text. From the beginning, I was drawn to how these two differently positioned scholars share their stories and work together toward the collective good. Likewise, I also felt continuously invited to join the conversation, often through promoting questions and pauses. For example, the authors' dialogic style begins on page 4 when readers are encouraged to place themselves within the text by inquiring about who they are, where they come from, and whose traditional territories they live on. These prompts are offered throughout the chapter, building on the reader's readiness to engage. As someone who has been engaged in similar work, I found the questions useful for self-reflection and bringing these generative ideas to others in my practice.

The book's central focus is on building decolonial literacy and paralleling Indigenous and slow principles and pedagogies for an audience of non-Indigenous educators (K-12). Reflecting on the anxieties that K-12 educators often experience while learning to enact and include Indigenous content, the authors resist offering lesson plans or other prescriptive ways to do the work. Instead, they invite readers to ethically engage with the complexities of history and realities of the present to make connections in their own lives. The physical and metaphorical practices of weaving—with the Medicine Wheel as the loom—offer symbolism and teachings of ethically engaging and connecting along the way. For instance, Leddy and Miller offer how a weaving project can support thinking about curriculum outcomes: “with a weaving project, one needs to decide the end goal (what is being made), the size of the weaving (how large or small it needs to be), the intent of the cloth (why one is making it)” (p. 44). With that, subsequent chapters offer stories, teachings, considerations, and invitations from each quadrant of the wheel (East – Spiritual – Respect; South – Emotional – Relevance; West – Physical – Reciprocity; North – Intellectual – Responsibility). For example, in the South – Emotional – Relevance chapter, the authors address topics around why emotions matter in education, the slow and careful business of decolonization, taking trauma into account, developing effective practices, and circle pedagogy (pp. 85-101). At the end of each quadrant chapter, the authors creatively add a new element to the weaving metaphor with sourcing and prepping materials as additional elements in the first chapter and then building

weaving as the final chapter elements. Offering this arts-based example, with a beautiful image, throughout the book illustrates, at least to me, how each part contributes to a whole.

Drawing parallels between slow and Indigenous pedagogies is a strength of this text. Doing so allows for multiple access points that widen conversations around experiential learning, land/place consciousness, deep relationality, and internal connections in teaching and learning. Throughout, discussions of time as both theoretical and practical (such as having patience, being in the flow, growth, not rushing, circadian rhythms, seasonal change, etc.) are included as a cohesive theme. Simultaneously, the authors do not shy away from complicated conversations stemming from ontological differences. For instance, in the East direction, they discuss spirit, and how it has been avoided in common teaching and learning theories, such as Bloom's Taxonomy (p. 74). The authors provide nuanced discussions around spirit as living in all creation and not belonging to any one belief system. At the same time, they provide important cautions around tokenistic gestures without sometimes-uncomfortable work, and support readers to connect with the present and one's inner self as a way of understanding the spirit, or *soul* work, of humanity.

As the book title suggests, it is essential to know *where* you are, and the peoples, traditions, and ecologies within that place, to build decolonial and Indigenous practices. Since the authors write from British Columbia, they build context from curriculum documents and materials in that place—for example, the *First Peoples Principles of Learning* (British Columbia, 2015). Given this, Canadian readers, and more so those in British Columbia, will find this text speaks into common languages, practices, and protocols of that locale. However, as the authors do not claim to provide a prescriptive agenda, this focus is not a limitation but rather a good model for how to read critically and engage ethically. For example, the use of the Medicine Wheel in this book is guided by teachings that the authors have received, but the teachings are not universal. Therefore, as the authors suggest, the reader will need to do their own learning within their specific setting—this could include learning about local traditions and symbols or partnering with Indigenous community members and Knowledge Holders to take up local knowledge meaningfully. For those who understand that Indigenous education is more than a set of lesson plans, this book is a useful guide to prompt reflection towards good practice in other places. Even for those who are still coming to understand that Indigenous and relational practices involve deep personal work, the book does a good job of explaining why a contextualized and responsive approach is necessary.

The book is ideal for K-12 pre-service and in-service teachers coming to understand place-based, land-based, and Indigenous pedagogies. The narrative style of writing combines theory and practice in an accessible way. In a time of various social and ecological crises, when Generative Artificial Intelligence models are pushing educators to ask questions about what knowledge is most worth knowing, many are turning to experiential and process-driven learning to support student wellness, critical thinking, and holistic understandings. In this way, *Teaching Where You Are* is likely to have an impact on the future, as slowing down and turning to the wisdom of the place makes good sense. Through the generous spirit of the authors, I am given hope that education can go beyond clock time—that is, the relentless and mechanical force of ticking minutes and hours—to enhance human experiences as we work through complexities in dialogue together, knowing that struggle and uncertainty are necessary parts of the process.

References

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