

Enhancement

Chapter Six

Fruiting...

Welcome to Country

Place Conscious Learning Practices

Working Artistically in Place



The Jade Paladin and the Flying Garuda, WAVE 2007

Plant life appears in its highest manifestation in the blossom, and the rose becomes the summit (enhancement) of the phenomenon. (Goethe quoted in Allen & de Ris Allen 1995: 17)

In this chapter I will examine the detail of place conscious learning practices at Shearwater that were integral to developing a successful place conscious education and developing students as place makers.

Journal Entry, June 10, 2011

I have come home quickly following a research interview with a former Shearwater parent. An incoming rush of cold air has interceded to cool an unseasonably hot and humid day, which has seen the temperature plummet by twenty degrees Celsius. Dark cumuli have blotted out the sun and billowed to fill the sky with a dramatic cloudscape that has taken on the sickly green hue of a nasty bruise. In town, from which I have just come, those in the know had commenced precautionary measures against the real possibility of a squall and the hail that it brings; rolling up awnings, bringing in sandwich boards and coffee chairs and tables from the street, closing bi-fold doors and parking cars under shelter. After all, it's the Bundjalung season of Jarramali, the time of thunderstorms.

After rushing home, I do the same. The blinds on the balcony are already fluttering horizontally and the cats have hidden themselves indoors. I tie up the balcony curtains and as I hasten to collect the outdoor furniture, the first flash of lightning explodes with an immediate crack of thunder. That was close. I rush indoors to the deafening rattle of hailstones drumming the corrugated iron roof. As I secure the last of the doors and windows I see the tips of the Bunya pines swaying precariously near to breaking point. The backyard patch of grass turns from green to white as the hail descends as frenzied assault.

Then came the driving rain whipped along by the howling wind that continued to bully the trees and torment the palms. Dead twigs and palm fronds begin to litter the yard. I am forced to go outside to check the gutters. As suspected, they are unable to cope with the volume of rain. The overflow is threatening to stream under the house. Water is rushing off the neighbour's lawn, and is coming my way. I find a spade and dig a diversionary trench as the lightning continues to flash. The gap between flash and thunder clap is widening and tells me the moving away. If it continues to rain the possibility of flooding and the roads being cut is a reality.

Welcome to Country

As a mark of respect, many non-Indigenous events in Australia acknowledge the place on which people are gathered with a welcome to country, which recognises and names the traditional owners and custodians. When spoken sincerely, especially where the presence of the first nation people has been erased, their hidden involvement with place is momentarily revealed and brings to consciousness the recent layers that that have been added since the arrival of Europeans.

I recall the Kormilda Field Trip into Kakadu National Park with students from Kormilda College and how 'permission' was requested to enter country. We were led deep to the flood plain by the traditional owners and stopped by a billabong for lunch.

Belinda walked purposefully to the water's edge, alert to her surroundings and called out something in 'language' before washing her hands and gathering water.

'A kind of prayer to the spirit of this place,' replied Alan. 'Look,

there's a sea eagle. It's a sign that we have been made welcome. I don't know much language, but when we go anywhere in the bush, I usually wait to be welcomed - a goanna might cross the track, or a heron land in a stretch of water in front of me ... It's like waiting to be invited into someone's place, you know, you wouldn't just walk in.'

This is an awareness that I share with many of the new settlers who came to live in the Byron Shire and my colleagues at Shearwater.

In the process of enrolling their children at Shearwater, which included an interview with the Administrator and myself, the parents (and children) are conducted on a tour of the school buildings and grounds as a welcoming gesture. They often remarked on the atmosphere.

Why did I decide to send my children to Shearwater? Well, I don't like being all warm and fuzzy, but it was the feeling of the place. I'll try and explain myself. We were relocating from Europe and we were looking for a Steiner School and we liked the look of Shearwater and its location - close to the beach, close to an airport, rural. We arrived for the interview and were shown around by Stan. You didn't have the attractive buildings or the landscaping that you now have. What really sold us was the feeling of the place. The kids were playing happily and were polite and friendly. There was an energy about the place that we too wanted to be a part of (Martin F, 2011, pers. comm. 12 May).

The response of this parent is not an isolated case. They often enrolled their children on their first impression, which was invariably responsive to the feeling of the school. Some referred to it as 'energy', 'buzz', and 'vibe' or as one mother imaginatively described a 'beehive on a sunny day' (Chrystal W. 2011, pers. comm. 12 May). Among the parents enrolling their children were teachers themselves and a significant number joined the staff. Attracted to a place conscious school was a response that Pinar (1991) noted in the USA as a response '... against the development of a context-free, homogenizing curriculum of standards and testing that claims to be applicable 'anytime

and anywhere' (p. 165).

What made this pervasive mood of contented productivity possible and identified Shearwater as such a desirable place for children to be educated? When asked this question, one of the responses came from a teacher who himself attended a Steiner school as a student.

From the beginning, we wanted to make the grounds at school, imaginative and child friendly, to become a place of play and learning. When landscaping the play areas, we took into account a variety of environments that the children could experience: the creek, bush land, open fields, permaculture gardens and shade gardens around the classrooms.

In the primary school areas, children are allowed to climb trees, run across the ground in bare feet and get wet when it rains (so long as they have a spare set of clothes). The lessons are related to the local environment and as they grow older the classes go on extended trips and camp and explore the places they are studying. These trips are some of the best memories I have of going to school

Artistic delivery of the lessons continues up into the high school where it finds sophisticated expression through the Wearable Arts. Children want to love the world and contribute to it. If they are meaningfully engaged we have happy students who love coming to school (J Rushton, 2012, pers. comm. 4 September).

As indicated by Joshua, our intention was to continue and extend our welcome to country to include local, regional and global environments. In the process of enhancing place, it became part of Shearwater's teaching practice to draw images for stories and lesson content from the local environment. Direct experience of place: running bare-foot through the bush, building cubby houses and climbing trees in a clear air, sunny environment – developed body co-ordination skills that allow children to feel strong and comfortable in their bodies. Fine motor skills (sewing, drawing, knitting, hammering, sawing and weaving) enhanced bodily experience. As a former Shearwater pupil remarked:

I loved being at school. The holidays were boring. I couldn't wait to get back to the creek and the trees. I also loved the craft. I remember when we wove baskets out of those prickly 'wait-a-while' vines we collected out of the rainforest with Julie (Janine D, 2011, pers. comm. 17 July).

This nexus of experiential learning and art education developed self-assured students comfortable with their bodies. My daughter, a Lorien graduate noted while working at *Splendour in the Grass* (a music festival held in the Byron Shire):

I could pick out the Shearwater students and ex students from the others. They were confident in a self assured way and had a creative dress sense. It was not flamboyant or outrageous but their clothing made a statement about their identity. They were also socially at ease (M Korobacz, 2014, pers. comm. 24 January).

Place Consciousness Learning Practices

In geography the achievements of all the other lessons should meet and flow together in all sorts of ways. (Steiner 1967:143)

Gruenewald (2004) considers three educational traditions that contribute to the implementation of place-conscious education: natural history, cultural journalism (place-based investigative research within the discipline of the Social Sciences and the Arts) and action research (pro-active problem solving community projects).

Added to these three traditions is the understanding of human development that informs the processes, methodologies and implementation of place conscious education in Steiner Schools. These were developed in an interesting way at Shearwater.

Rudolf Steiner considered geography (place), together with language (narrative) as the foundation of learning in schools (Steiner 1976b). Influenced by the monumental and seminal work of the geographers Humboldt and Ritter, Steiner

introduced their living geographical ideas and methods to the Waldorf School curriculum in 1919. He regarded the earth as a living organism, which has an interconnected and interactive relationship with human beings, each imprinting and influencing the other (Brierley 1998).

In communicating these ideas Steiner (1967) gave the teachers detailed instruction in story-creation and story telling. He regarded these capacities to be essential for healthy communication between teachers and primary age students.

... those whose task is to teach children of this age need an artistic ability that will imbue everything they bring with life; everything must be alive. Teachers must let plants speak, and they must let animals act as moral beings. Teachers must be able to turn the whole world into fairy tales, fables, and legends. (Steiner 1986b:169)

The teachers at Lorien Novalis and at Shearwater paid these thoughts close attention.

Working with Place

The Early Childhood Environment

Learning commences with stories incorporating venerative nature study. (Susan Whitehead, c. 1974, pers. comm.)

If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it (Sobel 1996: 39).

During the years of Early Childhood (birth – to the commencement of the second dentition), the principles of imitation and the unguarded absorption of sense impressions are all important processes through which the child learns (Steiner 1965). In Steiner schools deep respect is accorded to young children and care taken to create a carefully crafted and protective environment for the child to experience.

At Lorien Novalis, the Kindergarten area was the first purpose built environment created in the school. It was designed to be enclosed within discreetly



Active place – making. My three-year-old grandson at work, helping his dad. (Photo: J Rushton)

erected walls, where gardens were intentionally planted with shrubs that would flower brightly in a studied array of colours and scents, fruit bearing trees (oranges, lemons, peaches), aroma bearing herbs and permaculture vegetable gardens - all stimuli to the aesthetic experience of the senses. There was a sandpit for creative play, natural playground structures: balancing beams and logs, swings, ropes to climb and swing from, mature liquid amber trees to climb and incomplete ‘cubby house’ structures to which the children could add to and with which they could imaginatively work. Winding pathways and timber decking bridges connected these activity areas (D Jacobson 2011, pers. comm., April 12).

On special occasions the children are taken out of their Early Childhood environment for mini excursions. There might be a walk to explore the primary School play area with its adjoining rainforest trees or down to the creek.

Once a week we would take the Kindies to the creek and explore along its banks. Sometimes we would bring along the boats we had made in class and sail them on the water, following their course as they flowed along with the tug

of the creek's seaward journey. If it were hot, some of them would be allowed play in the shallow curve of the creek to cool themselves (J Michaelis 2011, pers. comm., May 21).

In Mullumbimby and the Byron Shire generally, most of the children were acclimatised to open air living. Many had started life with their parents living in tents and/or cabin style accommodation. Their parents were often regular campers and took their children with them.

It was no surprise when Bev Clarke, Shearwater's first Kindergarten teacher, took the group for an overnight camp to nearby Brunswick Heads, bedding down together in the Scout Hall, nestled between the South Arm and the beach. With the sheltered children's beach Torakina nearby, the children had a wonderful time exploring the local geography during the daylight hours (B Clarke 2012, pers. comm., May 13).



A Kindergarten plays presentation at Shearwater. (Photo: Shearwater archives)
Venerative nature stories of place are enacted that aesthetically embody and facilitate imaginative relevance and immediacy to the children's lived experience.

I also recall spending an overnight Kindergarten camp at the Evan's Head Caravan Park. Sally Davison, who was then the Kindergarten teacher, chose Evan's Head as a destination as it was a place she was deeply connected to during her childhood. Hailing from Casino, she and her extended family moved to Evans Head every year during the summer holidays. They had a regular camping spot in the caravan park. In the natural wonderland of that pristine estuarine environment they explored and played from dawn to dusk (S Davison 2002, pers. comm., December 3).

Journal Entry, February 2014

I have just returned from Shearwater where I dropped off art folios for Deirdre. While walking past the Design and Technology workshop, Greg calls me over and shows me the plans for the Trade Centre. It includes a strong agricultural element that would see the cow bales renovated and brought back to their original function as a dairy. He enthused about children experiencing the milking of cows, separating the milk and making butter and cheese. He takes me over to see nine-year-old children working in the biodynamic garden. I recall starting up a garden as soon as we moved into the Willows in 1993 and found a photo of us, which was published in the local newspaper.

Geography is the science of places... The object of our geography is to know the earth, its total character. (Brierley 2004:16)

The teaching of geography is continued in the Primary School and early adolescence with what Steiner termed *Erkunde* (Physical Geography) and *Ländekunde* (Social Geography) in the High School. The former commences with imaginative studies of the home environment (place) and continues to include the home cultural region, followed by studies of the home continent. A world geographic perspective is then realised by a study of the earth's climatic zones. In adolescence,



Young place-makers hurry off to tend to their gardens. (Photo: The Byron Shire Echo c. August 1993, Shearwater archive)

world exploration and comparative continental and oceanographic studies are complemented by a study of the peoples of the earth and their cultures in relation to their environment. Through culture people are seen to have formed their natural surroundings. This leads to a study of trade and transport (Social Geography). Brierley (1998:20) summarised the curriculum: 'Geography is a study of the earth's surface as a unity in relation to human activity.'

The Home Environment Lesson

I wake up to the morning light;
See the Sun come shining bright,
Eagle soars on thermal heights,
The waves crash on the shore.
The waves crash on the shore.

(Korobacz 1993:1)

The lyrics of this song (See Appendix 1) were sung every morning with the children of my class during the early months of 1993. Inspired by the local beauty of the Byron Shire landscape, the song came to be the aesthetic focus for the all-important 'Home Environment' lesson taught to all Class 1 children in Steiner Schools.

This lesson is about place: where the children live and make places and how they get to school – a new place. At this stage of their lives, the children begin to orientate themselves in space and become more aware of place.

Six Directions

The Sun dawns East with a soft pink glow,
Far from the North, the Monsoons blow,
The stars above blaze overhead,
While down below on earth I tread.
Deep in the South the albatross flies,
The Sun sets west and colours the skies.

(Korobacz 2010:10)

Placing the school at our centre, we develop a pictorial map of the area. To our map we add the prominent landmarks which we can see, such as Mullumbimby Creek, the Koonyum Range escarpment, Boogarem Falls. We continue to add features the children see on the way to school: Mt Chincogan, the Main Arm, the Brunswick River, Brunswick Heads and Cape Byron. We then mark the places where all the individual children live.

Every Friday we hire a bus and travel with the children to visit each other's home and explore their places. On one occasion we visit Tess and her family in Huonbrook. We walk up to the Saddle beneath the Walls of Jerusalem, where a wonderful panoramic view takes our breath away. There in front of us is the Doughboy, a dramatic volcanic outcrop associated with Wollumbin, the central core of that ancient shield volcano and foremost iconic landmark in the region that stands tall in the far distance.

On the coast, we visit Brendon's place at Yelgun, where his father shows us middens long abandoned by the Indigenous Arakwal branch of the Bundjalung people. While visiting David and Sonja's home in Brunswick Heads, we walk along the southern break wall and a seasoned local tells us a story of a fishing boat that was wrecked on the rocks. A cooling swim at Torakina, a protected beach inside the mouth of the river and a favourite place of the children breaks the heat of the day. We allow the briny water to wash over us and build sand sculptures at the tide line.

On another occasion we walk to the Cape Byron Lighthouse and see dolphins and the visit the Whale Centre. At the end of term we spend a day picnic on the beach at Broken Head, south of Suffolk Park, swimming and exploring. Other visits include a traverse across a boulder strewn rainforest at the foot of Boogarem Falls, a walk to the foot of Minyon Falls, a visit to Robbie's home in Main Arm, and on another occasion we swim in the tea-tree lakes at Tyagerah.

The highlight of our exploration of local places was the view from Mt Chincogan, the iconic landmark that looks over Mullumbimby. Gabriel Mangleson, a parent who grew up in Mullumbimby and knew all of its secret places, including the owners of the property through which we had to traverse, to commence our ascent, led us up its slopes. We all made it to the summit where we sat and soaked up the three hundred and sixty degree birds-eye view. There was Cape Byron with its lighthouse and famous beach. Further to the south was Broken Head, to the west, the green mountain hinterland and to the north Wollumbin itself. Down below was Mullumbimby in miniature (the children who lived there tried to pick out their homes) and traced the easterly meandering of the Brunswick River to the sea.

The feel of salty water on the skin after a swim in the ocean, the fine misty spray of water at the base of a waterfall, the squelch of river mud between the toes and the earthy smell of rainforest decay provide children with experiences of embodiment. Classroom learning and the extension of focused and further experience of the natural and made environment enhance this active engagement with the world around us.

A Seasonal Synopsis of Local Flora and Fauna

In preparing material for her main-lesson on Time, Dhyana, a teacher at Shearwater, wanted to align local weather events and their effects to place. Among the children in her class was the daughter of Gary Opit and Carmel Opit-Daoud, both of whom worked as environmental consultants. Together with Dr Andrew Benwell, also a founding parent of children at the school, they conducted the initial flora and fauna survey of the Willows in 1993. The results of the survey were submitted as part of the Shearwater's Development Application (DA) to the Byron Shire for approval to conduct a school on the property (G Opit 2011, pers. comm., 27 May).

Dhyana questioned Gary and Carmel about these things and with the information they had gathered about the local area over many years, they produced a Seasonal Synopsis for the Fauna and Flora of the Mullumbimby Area. (See Appendices 2 and 3) For the embracing understandings on which this Synopsis was developed, Gary drew on the seasonal knowledge of the Indigenous Bundjalung, which he discovered in that 'contact zone' of multiple and contested stories that Somerville (2010:338) characterised as being ... significant in the relationship between Indigenous, and other subjugated knowledges, and Western academic thought' .

Bundjalung Season	Weather Conditions	Months of the Year
KAMBAR	Heavy rain	January – March
KABAKABADA	Light rain	April – June
BULURIJI	Dry time – cold nights	June – August
WANGARIJI	Height of the dry season	August – Sept.
JARRAMALI	Thunder storm time	November – Dec.

Table 4. The seasons according to the understandings of the Bundjalung people of Northern Rivers, New South Wales. (Shearwater 2007)

The Bundjalung stories about country were based on a sentient awareness of what was occurring in the natural world throughout the cycle of the year and how the plants and animals responded to changes in identifiable weather patterns and to each other and in doing so recognised five distinct seasons.

In response, Dhyana adapted these observations into verse for the children, attempting to bring awaken an awareness of what they were experiencing through their bodies in place.

As Mother Earth Breathes

It's Sunny Sun who has a say,
About it being night or day.
Wet or cold, hot or dry?
It's Sunny Sun who tells us why.

Around him Mother Earth twirls and spins a dance of the seasons;
Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring
As she dances, she breathes.
Sometimes her breath is hot
At times its freezing.
Mostly it is warm to cool.
Australia's part of Mother Earth
And offers more than four seasons worth.

We live in New South Wales
In Mullumbimby
Four seasons are a hoot!
In just one day we can have cold, dry weather,
Hot, then humid rain to boot!
An old Clever One winks.
"Come!" she says,
"I'll tell it to you my way.
Mother Nature teaches us a five-verse song,
Five seasons that come around and are never wrong.

In the heavy rainfall time of Kamar,
Brush turkeys hatch from their mound in the ground, ready to fly ...
Giant earthworms one metre long emerge at night in the rain and slide by ...
(Gillard 1995)

The Seasonal Synopsis (See Appendices 2 and 3) is a practical and informative document about place and has been included in the Shearwater Teacher Handbook

(2006) since 1996. Teachers draw on it as a source of inspiration for their lesson content and, because of its immediacy, find that they are able to engage the children directly with the activities of the natural environment in which they are living and encourage their observation of seasonal events.



A drawing by Zara, a Class 1 student, of a local Brush Turkey standing on top of his mound. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

Teachers set up nature tables in their rooms to which the children are encouraged to contribute the found objects of the bush: cicada shells, the sloughed skins of pythons, cockatoo feathers, abandoned bird nests, drift wood, seed pods, dried grass tufts, strips of paper bark and bunches of native flowers. Children eagerly report on the immediate activities of animals at home and in the school grounds and class inspections (from a respectful distance) are encouraged, such as a visit to the newly created bower of the satin bowerbird.

Interest and respect for life and a love of the natural world is encouraged. Mindful engagement leads to caring commitment to the environment and to each other.

In the face of controlling centralised power this simple process of making place the focus of consciousness can be seen as a small step towards realising every place as a centre, whether that place is one's body, home or place of work.

City art galleries displaying the prized work of Aboriginal artists, often refer to the places where the painting originated as 'remote'. The artists, who paint the Dreaming of their country and its associated story of the creator ancestral beings, are in no doubt about the importance and centrality of the place in which they live.

Understanding Place and the Art of Story Telling

A narrative models not only a world but the minds seeking to give it meaning. (Bruner, quoted in Lesser, Johnson & Webber 2011:8)

As a child I recall waiting for the Christmas parcel from my German grandparents to arrive. On receiving the blue airmail letter, written in my grandmother's curious and illegible Gothic script, which informed us that the parcel had been sent, my younger brother and I would ride our bikes daily to the local post office, eagerly awaiting delivery.

Among the wonders packed inside were beautifully produced advent calendars with exquisite images of Northern European winters. These were placed on the kitchen wall and I was allowed to open a little window or door every day. The last door was opened on Christmas Eve and displayed a coloured illustration of the nativity scene.

Together these images, and the stories my mother told me about the splendours of European civilization, built within the recesses of my imagination an ideal world that seemed to delegate everything about the cultural life of Australia to second best. European animals were somehow more regal and noble, their furry coats thick and full and to all intents and purposes superior to own shy and awkward marsupials. The straggly gum trees with their exfoliating bark creating an eternal bush of blue haze appeared to me untidy when compared to the perfection found in oak and linden, especially with their painterly autumn colouring. The European flowers too, carefully cultivated in urban front gardens were appreciated and admired, while the local wildflowers went largely unnoticed.

In the meantime, the environment in which I lived, my home places, continued to imprint their marks on me in the form of bodily experience. As a child we loved the summer Christmas holidays: the beach, the turbulent waters of Bass Strait, the balmy weather, exploring the bush, playing in the creek looking for platypus, roaming over the grassy paddocks and when older, working with the farmers bringing in the hay. In response to its silent and persuasive ways I gave this place my allegiance.

In pursuing her interest in the local Indigenous understanding of the seasons, Dhyana was stimulated by the debate that continued in Steiner schools about the cultural content that is delivered to the children. During the 1970s the teachers at the Lorien Novalis School in Sydney questioned the practice of bringing to the children stories derived from other cultures and places. Stories about reindeer, and a white Christmas were at odds with the expansive experience of the Australian summer. They considered the idea of being served Christmas roast goose and rich dried fruit and nut pudding while enduring the heat of an Australian summer to have colonised our imagination in a way that has contributed to making us place blind and at odds with our embodied experience and ultimately our identity. In the 1970s Australia's cultural

identity suffered from an inferiority complex that required its artists, writers and academics to spend time in Europe to experience real culture.

In response the Lorien teachers committed themselves to creating place conscious stories and lessons for children that took into account the local geographical and historical/cultural contexts.

To my surprise at the time, this creative endeavour attracted heated opposition and criticism of many Steiner teachers and others who perceived their European cultural allegiances to be challenged. Did erasing the silent voice of place and the subsequent colonising superimposition of uniformity from another place allow them to feel safe? Undeterred by opposition, hundreds of stories and songs were created for the children at Lorien Novalis that were directly related to a living curriculum (one that took account of the developmental needs of the children) and to place. (Alan and Susan Whitehead, founding members of Lorien Novalis, have published many of their original songs and stories in their Golden Beetle series.)

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) saw in the conflict of culture and differing ways of proceeding as a situation ‘... pregnant with potential for new worldviews, with new internal forms for perceiving the world in words’ (360). Had the protagonists in this collision of cultures (including myself) been aware of Bakhtin’s dialogic understandings, perhaps a living and robust exchange of ideas exploring diversity and difference could have led to a more fruitful exchange of educational practice among Steiner teachers and schools in Australia.

Lessard, Johnson & Webber (2011) suggest that in juxtaposing these narratives we should ‘... not aspire to create an overarching story to which we all agree.’

Rather, the aim is to complicate our purchase on the world by embarking on a project that entails not the erasure of histories, either Indigenous or non-Indigenous, but the recasting and repositioning of the stories that comprise our histories. (6)

They go on to cite James Clifford who observes:

[i]ntervening in an interconnected world, one is always to varying degrees, inauthentic: caught between cultures, implicated in others. Identity is conjunctural, not essential. (6)

As conscious, reflecting adults these thoughts are forgiving and considerate, but as receptive children we lack mature discernment and find ourselves sensitive to the absorption of impression.

I am still puzzled by the emotional disturbances that erupt and clash when cultural difference emerges. Is this what Somerville (2010:338) refers to as the ‘discomfort zone’ of cultural contact? I am beginning to find some understanding of her theorizing in relation to ‘contact zones’ that offer ‘... a material and metaphysical in-between space for multiple and contested stories’ where one is asked to hold ‘... different stories in productive tension’, preserving difference, even to the point of suspending meaning (Carter 1992). In asking researchers to ‘refuse easy answers’ in undertaking what she identifies as ‘precarious, risky and difficult emotional work’ she challenges me to enter that inner space that allows a possibility of spiritual experience. I find it is from this inner space that new understandings and stories arise.

The founding teachers at Lorient sought out this in-between space of the contact zone to discover the silent voice of place: locally, regionally and of the continent and its surrounding oceans. We were rebelling against the stories that had arrived in Australia with the settlers and that were continuing to colonise the imagination of the children born in Australia. The teachers at Lorient were seeking to provide children with a context of learning that was in keeping with the place in which they were growing up, and in doing so, reaffirm what they were experiencing in their environment. They did this by including and developing local knowledge as part of their school learning experience. The teachers were convinced that the inherent truth of a place story inhabited by local animals – a flock of gang-gang cockatoos for instance, whose call the children would regularly hear and see fly overhead - would cultivate

greater inner health and confidence than the story about a nightingale, a creature they would never find in the Australian bush. In colonising the children's imagination with the clutter of images of other places, we cause place blindness. How far is that primal act of place blindness in declaring the continent of Australia *terra nullius* removed from the thoughtless bulldozing of a natural environment to make way for a placeless housing estate?

In a world where the natural environment is seriously threatened, how would an adolescent deal with their deeply embedded childhood image of Little Red Riding Hood's hero huntsman being accused of the crime of eco-terrorism? (Shearwater 2005:8) Wolves are protected in North America! As there are no wolves in Australia, does the story sanction the killing of dingoes?

The stories created at Lorien Novalis were often nature based and were aimed to speak to the feeling life of the child. The possum is characterized as cheeky and opportunist, the crocodile as cunning and brutal; the shearwater as industrious and committed while the flea as freeloading and dependent. Often the stories were related to the inner reflective qualities of the children in the class and the teachers discovered that stories were effective therapeutic tools.

The following tells a story created for an eight-year-old girl at Lorien Novalis (let's call her Louise) who was struggling to integrate socially with her class. The birds that inhabited the local rural area became the characters in the story. Louise dearly wanted the acceptance of her peers, but her manner and lack of centredness made it difficult for the others to include her in their games. She would often role-play what she thought would attract inclusion. Her imitative attempts were only spurned or rejected.

Here are excerpts from the beginning and the end of the story.

Echo's Song

Out in the ferny vale where the tumbling creek wound its way through accommodating sandstone boulders, tall grandfather Angophora watched over a stretch of bush that was home to many families of birds. The angle of light through his outstretched branches told him it was nesting time, as did the caroling of the magpies and the call of the bellbird. The bowerbird was gathering items for his bower, which already boasted blue plastic bottle lids, and the brush turkey was busy scratching leaves to build his mound.

A lone lyrebird wandered around furtively not knowing how to join in with all this interesting activity. He didn't wish to interfere with the busy work of the birds – he couldn't fly like the others – so he decided to find favour, using his best asset: his voice.

He listened to the versatile singing of the magpie and said;

'I can do that!'

And he did, perfectly.

The magpies didn't notice at first, but then went silent in disbelief.

'Don't echo us, sing your own song, you're disturbing our conversation. You're not a magpie!' they rudely responded.

From that day on, they called him Echo.

The magpies followed and the fledgling was rescued. The birds of the forest now recognized Echo's consummate skill and made him a member of their bush land family, enjoying the beauty and variety of her repertoire.

(Korobacz 2010)

The story was retold over a number of days and used as content material for drawings, paintings, writing practice and improvised drama activities. Louise, for whom the story was created, enjoyed the improvised plays and found that she could readily take up the role any of the bushland characters. The children in the class were encouraged to play different characters and were able to vicariously experience the distress of the social disharmony. As Louise's efforts and developing acting capacity were slowly being appreciated, the instances of her teary unhappiness decreased. By

the end of the term she had become an integrated member of the class.



Frank Binkley, the Shearwater Business Manager as Grandfather Big Fig in the play *Lily Lagoon and the Croaker Loker Chorus*, written and performed by the staff for the children. Through the magic of theatre, they watch with fascination as their teachers and members of the office staff transform themselves into creatures of the bush, revealing the less revealed side to their personalities. In this case the ‘grumpy’ accountant shares his generous and caring nature in a role that allows these aspects of his personality to find expression. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

As storytellers we situate the tale in time and space and by making conscious use of place, the story is given a credible lived character. Using carefully crafted images the characters are allowed to act in accordance with their lived nature (magpies act aggressively to other birds) as the story line unfolds. Good stories (the ones children wish to hear repeatedly) remain open to multiple interpretations and ambiguity.

... the greater the range of interpretative possibility, the more power the narrative has. (Bruner cited in Hessard et al 2011:8)

Liberated from admonition, the 'no blame' nature of story allows the children to interpret the pictures freely.

The Seasonal Synopsis continues to be a source of inspiration to create imaginative stories that include place. In celebration of the season that the Bundjalung referred to as *Kabakabada* and the easing of heavy rain in April, the Shearwater staff wrote and performed a play for the children whose content relied exclusively on the information provided in the Seasonal Synopsis. The play was entitled: *Lily Lagoon and the Croaker-Loker Chorus or Little Yellow's Search For Home*.

This story is one of many written by teachers at Shearwater. Those written for the Early Childhood and Primary aged children, such as the one outlined above, are highly imaginative but never the less based on scientific fact. The story is set in the place that is familiar to the children and the animals are characterized according to their habits and behavior. These stories seek to '...make connections between ordinary and exceptional ...' and '... render comprehensible the norms and departure from them' (Lessard et al. 2011: 8). The stories are not only an account of a series of events, but hidden in their plots and in the storyteller's emphasis is a model of how to understand and what to make of them.

The staff enjoyed performing for the children and the children were beside themselves with fascination and laughter as the world of nature that they lived in was imaginatively brought to life before their eyes.

The Shearwater Field Trip Program

A place-based curriculum can mirror the expanding scope of the child's significant world, focusing first on the home and school, then the neighborhood, the community, the region, and beyond" (Sobel 1996: 19).

Following on from the home environment lesson, further field trip destinations were determined by continuing to place Shearwater as the centre of orientation and radiating out in ever-increasing distances to integrate the surrounding regions.



A drawing completed by a Class 2 student following the storm on Wollumbin. Through the completion of this drawing, she was able to reflect and give expression to her lived experience. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

Shearwater is fortunate to be placed amidst a variety of stunning scenic locations that form the Wollumbin Caldera area. During the early years of learning, the school grounds' geographical features are explored. The most interesting is the creek that flows along the edge of the property. In Class 1, as outlined above, day trips are taken to explore places of local interest. Activities included walks, swimming, picnic lunches and playing and exploring. In Class 2, the program's geographical focus expands, with a three-day camp at the base of Wollumbin. Camping on the Tweed River, within the rainforest remnant found at the foot of Wollumbin itself or at the mouth of the Tweed River at Fingal are options that class teachers may choose, according to and reflective of the content of the lessons they have developed. Experience of place is all-important. In 2004, Shearwater Class 2 teacher Michael Lester set out on the track leading up the summit of Wollumbin with his class. During the climb, they found themselves caught in a thunderstorm that roared around them. It was a powerful experience none of them ever forgot. (M Lester 2011, pers. comm., June 14)

In Class 3, the northern walls of the caldera are explored with a four-day camping trip to Binna Burra, O'Reilley's Rainforest Retreat or west among the Tweed Ranges. In Class 4, the children are taken further afield to Fraser Island, the largest sand island in the world. This scenic wonder with its spectacular Pacific Ocean beaches is made up of the sand that has its origin as the eroded rock of the Wollumbin Caldera, washed into the sea by the Tweed River and finally swept northward by the ocean current.

By Class 5, the students are ready to meet the larger world and a ski trip takes them to the Southern Highlands, with urban stopovers in Sydney and Canberra.

The Class 6 field excursion, reflecting the learning program's strong emphasis on geography and earth science, travels into the outback of New South Wales. A favoured destination is the Warrumbungles with their spectacular geological formations and the Anglo Australian Observatory.

The end of the Class 7 primary teacher cycle climaxes with an eight-day stay on North-West Island on the Great Barrier Reef.



Students return from an Advanced Dive during their excursion to North West Island on the Great Barrier Reef. 2003. (Photo: G Braithwaite, Shearwater archive).

In high school, the trips are geared to gaining competence and skills with outdoor activities and cultivating risk management strategies. These include rock-climbing, abseiling, caving, scuba diving and skiing. Cultural trips have also been undertaken to China, New Zealand and Japan.

These experiences of place bring about a significant knowing; that we are inextricably bound up with the earth and its future; that it would be unconscionable to avoid taking personal moral responsibility. Connectedness stimulates ethical and moral thinking and action.

SHEARWATER FIELD TRIP PROGRAM

Kindergarten

Overnight Camp Local Area

Class 1

Overnight Camp in the Local Area (e.g. Brunswick Heads, Evans Head, Broken Head).

Class 2

Wollumbin Area, Fingal, Woody Head

Class 3

Border Ranges: Binna Burra, O'Reilly's

Class 4

Fraser Island

Class 5

Southern Highlands: Skiing

Richmond River: Canoeing

Class 6

Country NSW, Canberra. Geological and political/historical focus.

Horse Riding,

Class 7

North West Island (Great Barrier Reef)

Class 8

Sydney/City Experience, New Zealand Skiing

Class 9

Outback Australia, Top End

Class 10

Scuba Diving, Outdoor Education, Vanuatu

Classes 11 and 12

The field trips are optional and relevant to that year's field of study and/or interest. Various destinations have included: Japan and China.

Table 3. The Shearwater Field Trip Program.

These field trip learning experiences were developed as a response to the concern about the growing inability of people to connect with place. Relph (1976) in

his book *Place and Placelessness* introduces the concept of ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ in the human experience of place. Insiderness is referred to profound existential connection and identity to place and outsiderness as alienation. He then develops the term ‘authenticity’, a sincere attitude that ‘... consists of a complete awareness and acceptance of responsibility for your own existence.’ An ‘insider’ has an authentic attitude to place.



Where the multiplicity of relationships between people and people and people and places intersect, we find social places. Our experiences are mediated by culture and education and places are products of culture. People make places and places make people. In this photo, we find students enjoying a communal meal during a WAVE rehearsal at Shearwater. The Tuck Shop has always been a focal point for the school’s social life. (Photo: Shearwater archive).

Having gained their scuba PADI certification, the students participated in a reef repair program, led by an American PhD student, Christopher Bartlett, who was undertaking research with the locals and creating marine protection zones. The students were involved in removing Crown of Thorns Starfish and tagging turtles.

They also assisted Chris in surveying the water uses and water needs of the villagers (G Braithwaite, 2012 pers. comm. 11 July).

Students Becoming Place Makers Tikalas, Vanuatu

‘Come over to my place’, is a universal invitation made by both young and old. It identifies home as an intimate place replete with intimate meaning. Having friends visit home is an invitation to share things personal; your interior decoration and furnishing preferences, paintings, music and if they are staying for a meal, food. Bachelard (1994), Heidegger (1971) and later Tuan (1975, 1977), Seamon (1980), Porteus (1990) and Brierley (1998, 2004) all acknowledge the importance of home, especially for the formative years of children. In order to illustrate his fundamental concept of ‘Dasein’, Heidegger chose the example of a Black Forest farmhouse to demonstrate an authentic existence. Tuan developed the term ‘topophilia’ (love of place) to refer to the ‘affective bond between people and place’ (Tuan 1974). The concept of place was becoming enriched with terms such as ‘value’, ‘meaning’ and ‘belonging’.



Place making. Students, teachers and parents construct a section of the runway for WAVE 2006. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

Shearwater's inclusive education programs were geared to cultivating 'insiderness' and authenticity in the children. Steering clear of sanitized tourist packages, Shearwater's Year 10 students regularly travel to Vanuatu. The islands were first visited in 2004 but it was not until 2006 that a contact was made with the village of Tikalas. Only then were long-term and authentic connections made.



Shearwater students constructing the frame for the Kindergarten building on the village of Laonamoa. (Photo: G Braithwaite, Shearwater archive)

Place and home were inseparably linked to the life of the islanders of Tikalas in Vanuatu. The villagers were hospitable, friendly and relaxed and the students found the ways of the Ni-vanuatu people mysterious and enchanting. The uncluttered life of people living in a pre-technological, pre-industrial village was intriguing. No electricity, no Wi-Fi, no iPhones or tablets. 'The Shearwater visitors were transformed by their experience in many ways' (G Parkes, 2012 pers. comm. 11 July). The sense of belonging was so deeply experienced by a group of the students that they continue to independently visit the island on a regular basis.

The field trips to Tikalas continued. In 2007, Greg Parkes travelled to Pele Island to meet with the chiefs to negotiate a more formal cultural exchange program. Apart from working with Dr Bartlett, Shearwater wanted to give something back to the islanders. The villagers wanted support to create an income for the local communities in order to purchase basic equipment such as generators, lighting and a freezer. It was decided that the staff and students on the next Vanuatu trip would build an eco-facility to cater to paying tourists.



The bungalow built for the village by the teachers and students and community members in 2012. Initiated by Deirdre Korobacz an art teacher at Shearwater, the mural was designed and completed by the villagers and the students, using local (shells, coral) and imported materials (paint, glue). The ocean theme of the design is keeping with the local geography that determines so much of their lives. (Photo: D Korobacz, Shearwater archive)

Love of one's own place was deeply embedded in the experience of the Shearwater staff and students and they recognized its importance to the island

villagers. The Shearwater students were eager to join in with the life of the village and in return, wished to share their skills and to contribute their labour as place makers.

Later in 2007, Greg Parkes arrived with another teacher Gabriel Mangleson equipped with tools and plans (drawn by Greg) to build a bungalow. Using timber and other materials sourced both locally and from Port Vila, teachers, students and villagers worked under Greg's guidance, constructing a small one-room bungalow at Laonamoa village. Students again experienced the joy and wonder of spending time amongst the 'happiest people on Earth'. (G Parkes, 2012 pers. comm. 11 July)



Group photo with the Kindergarten teachers and students in front of their new Kindergarten, December 2011. (Photo: G Braithwaite, Shearwater archive) This group photo illustrates the commitment of the students to community of Laonamoa village and the inclusive and collaborative practice of place making that takes into account cultural sensitivities and needs.

In 2011, under Gerard Braithwaite's guidance a classroom for the kindergarten students at the local school was built and in 2012, Josh Scott-Jourir led the construction

of a tourist bungalow at Worasifiu village.

All three buildings were constructed using locally made concrete blocks, locally milled timbers and other building materials purchased in Port Vila. The costs for these projects were covered by the funds provided both by Shearwater Steiner School and the many fundraising efforts of teachers, students and parents. Cake stalls, raffles, trivia nights and catering events were held and are still being undertaken to continue the original vision of giving something back to the people of Vanuatu in exchange for the joy and wisdom given to all who have the privilege of experiencing time with them.



Shearwater students share their bush regeneration with local villagers on Pele Island. (Photo: G Braithwaite, Shearwater archive)

A third project that was recently introduced involved the students with the reforestation program that was associated with the Pele Island Climate Change Nursery. Familiar with the Shearwater Creek Regeneration project, students shared their skills with the villagers.

Journal Entry, March 2014

I am back in Yallingup for the new school year, but the editing of this thesis still demands my attention. I am looking forward to walking the beach. I am curious to see what the currents have done to restore the sand to the beach following severe storm erosion in late October.

Enhancement of Place

WAVE - Shearwater's Wearable Arts Vision in Education and the Education of Place Makers through Experiential Learning

Only when concepts are radically enhanced will it be possible today to introduce something, by working with art, that proves art to be the only evolutionary force capable of dismantling the repressive effect of an outmoded social system tottering in confusion towards its demise, and to build a social organism as a work of art... every person is an artist, who through his own directly experienced freedom – which is the place where freedom arises – learns to shape the material that confronts him within a future social order as a total work of art. (J Beuys, cited in Roesch 2013:29)

“Fifteen minutes!”

The show commencement call is echoed backstage and I join some three hundred dancers, models, performers, musicians, stage hands, dressers, make-up artists and technicians who have gathered in the adjunct tent that has been transformed into the backstage area. The twelve hundred-seat capacity circus tent performance venue is steadily filling with an expectant audience. Directly behind the forty-meter long stage runway that cuts diametrically through the tent, the production manager calls his performance team in close and settles the nervous excitement and chatter. Amid the rustle of colourful hand-painted garments and the rattle of post-apocalyptic recycled techno-wear, he speaks slowly and softly, drawing in the crew. Commencing with procedural house keeping announcements, the director proceeds to suggest technical and timing improvements, understandings gleaned from the previous evening's show. With contained enthusiasm he relates glowing audience feedback and encourages a previously timid dancer with a positive critique. The crew supports with

a Wearable Arts Vision in Education

Wave is holistic learning



...finding the art in education, the possibility in numbers, the music in language and the beauty in science.



Art is in everything – all matter, all thought, all lessons, all creativity.

valuing place, ideas, students & community



"education is an art – it must speak to the child's experience. To educate the whole child, his heart and his will must be reached, as well as the mind."

– Rudolf Steiner



Shearwater embodies and promotes all that is creative, artistic, challenging and inspirational.

Finding the beauty and energy in all subjects and every student.



Shearwater

applause. The volume of his voice increases as he exhorts the team to focus on tonight's show and to support and be aware each of the others. Sensing the power of the unified group dynamic, individuals whoop encouragement as a crescendo of clapping hands and stamping feet culminate with adrenalin soaked cries and cheers of anticipation.

This is *WAVE* 2006 (Wearable Arts Vision in Education). For a week four hundred children, students, teachers, staff, specialist technicians, parents, artists and members from the Mullumbimby community realise a futuristic educational vision. Through the agency of a range of interconnected arts, Shearwater prepares to present *The Jade Paladin and the Flying Garuda* (*WAVE* 2006), a loose adaption of one of the powerful developmental themes of humanity, the Parsifal story. The tradition of story telling cultivated at Shearwater has now been incorporated into a major performance event.

In this performance, every participant has a role (s) to play: artistic director, production director, actor, dancer, model, choreographer, musician, script writer, make-up artist, dresser, stage-hand, stage manager, sound engineer, publicist, photographer, camera operator, film-maker, copy writer, usher, box office manager, caterer, judge, web designer, car parking attendant, set designer, prop maker, costume designer, costume maker, fabric printer and security attendant. Shearwater The Mullumbimby Steiner School is transformed into a place of performance with a quality show to present.

The content and production of the *WAVE* show is something that has become integrated into the learning program of the students and the professional development of the staff. Eighty percent of the staff and high school students are creative participants in the show and its production. It is in this active engagement within the security of place that I believe, a new way of learning is beginning to emerge.



‘ I had a strange dream last night ...’, Children’s Section, New Worlds New Civilisations, *WAVE* 2003. (Photo: J McCormick, Shearwater archive) In this photo Class 4 children perform cameo roles as forest animals with supportive high school students. This inclusive experience prepared them for future *WAVE* events in which they played leading roles.

Journal Entry, November 12 2013

‘Konrad, could you give Ariel a hand in the art room?’

I go to the art room and find Ariel surrounded by five Year 9 students applying a white stiffening agent on three heavy collars.

‘ What are you making?’ I ask.

‘Cosmonaut space suits for the Section Two. Here’s a brush!’

Its two days before the opening Night of ‘A Faerie Tale’, WAVE 2013. The dress rehearsal is scheduled for later that afternoon and it’s a rush to finalise the last minute details. The mood of excitement is

infectious. Ariel is an artist and my daughter and previously a teacher at the school before kidney failure laid her low some years ago. She is a WAVE veteran and has come back for the occasion to help out with making production costumes. I too have returned from Western Australia for WAVE to witness what I consider one of the most creative innovations in adolescent education in Australia.

Being careful not to splash paint onto my clothes, I locate a large apron in the textile room where sewers are busy on over-lockers and a student singer/performer is having her costume redesigned at the request of the Art Director.

'It needs to be more glamorous and up-beat in keeping with her character', she demands.

This creative flurry calls me to recollect a conversation with Joshua Rushton months earlier. Josh is WAVE's stage director. He was concerned that the show was running behind schedule.

'I can't get any of the teachers motivated to get their sections together,' he lamented.

I carry a cosmonaut costume to the performance venue and watch a section rehearsal in progress. The musicians - guitars, percussionists, keyboards, violins, cello and singers strike up a Central European style polka and 16 Year 9 girls appear on the runway in identical, appropriated and redesigned dirndls - mini- knee high white socks and Doc Martin boots. They stamp, slap and sashay up to the main stage and perform a dance routine choreographed by one of the Year 11 girls. They receive encouraging applause.



Jack (in the far background) with his assistants, sorting the lighting arrangement.
(Photo: Shearwater archive)

As they happily repeat their routine, Jack, the Lighting Technician co-ordinates the lighting sequence. Jack has just completed Year 12 and has been an enthusiastic WAVE participant since holding a spotlight for the WAVE 2008 as wide-eyed thirteen year old. Earlier in the week he had received entry in to an Entertainment Industry course at the Queensland Institute of Technology on the basis of his WAVE experience.

Different groups of students come in and take their place on stage to rehearse. I continue to be impressed by their eagerness to perform and participate and am moved by their application and commitment. Boys join in the dance routines and sing without inhibition. There's not a cynical or rebellious teenager to be found. Section Three begins to rehearse. There are problems with the timing and the entry of the models. Will they get it right before the show tomorrow night? I am impressed with the discipline of the students as they continue to repeat their routines.

Journal Entry, November 12 2013.

Its show night and I've been issued a back stage pass with the inscription: "Don't anger the faeries". There is an air of expectation and nervous excitement as the students in exotic costume and wearable pieces scurry between change rooms and the make-up room. They are helping each dress and apply stage make-up, encouraging each other. Back of stage Brian is all calm and control. Brian is Stage Manager for WAVE 2013. He's a Year 11 student. Section One props are in place and the Section Two props are ready to go.

In a side room the musicians are calmly tuning their instruments and looking cool, as only musicians can.

I venture outside where patrons have gathered to take in the pre-show entertainment. Some of the younger students have been given an opportunity to perform and sing. There's a coffee vendor, a curry stall and a magnificent stand on which hundreds of cupcakes have been arranged. One of the Year 10 students, who was shy and reclusive, but loved cooking, had been encouraged by her guardian teacher to make and decorate cupcakes a la Cupcake Wars - a popular reality TV show. She took to the task with enthusiasm and by the end of the four shows had sold over 800 cupcakes. It was her way of participating in the show and gave her a sense of belonging, even if from a distance (D Korobacz, 2013 pers. comm. 5 November).

I slip into the auditorium where dozens of theatre lights and special effects images are screened on to the back wall of the wide proscenium stage. The house lights dim and the show begins ...

The four nights of the show prove to be a sellout and the students deliver seamless performances.

Once more I muse about Joshua's concerns. It is then that I realise that the students have appropriated the show. It all began with teachers working hard to cover all the bases: from costumes, entries, stage props and performers encouraging the students and the community to join them. During the school difficulties of 2009 and 2010, there were no WAVE productions. With the building of the hall, WAVE was reintroduced. There were doubts if it could be resurrected. In the end, it was student enthusiasm that carried the day.



The allegiance of the students to *WAVE* is complete. They are fully engaged in its production and committed to its ideals. A Faerie Tale, WAVE 2013. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

It is through the *WAVE* that I believe an enhanced form of place making has evolved. As a place of learning and together with its facilities, Shearwater provides not only an artistic opportunity for self-expression but also an experiential education in place making. Working with the physical support of the school (buildings, equipment and organizational infrastructure), the learning community also creates a social body. At Shearwater this ‘social’ body was able to build and weave the living patterns of what Buttimer (1976) and Seamon (1980) refer to as ‘lifeworlds’ (rhythms, routines, cycles) into a culture of reciprocal learning and support. These patterns are not visible in the physical sense but emotionally palpable, feelings that have engendered qualities and values such as good will, collaboration, co-operation, teamwork, and the adrenalin rush of participation and elation of achievement. *WAVE* has become an enhanced expression of place making that no longer involved the construction of buildings but the creation of a vessel of social communion. In doing so it has proved to be a way of communicating the skills of place making to the students, teachers, staff and parents.

a wearable Arts Vision in Education

Wave

Our minds have delved and explored.

Our eyes have sought that which was often difficult to see.

Our hands have drawn, sown, painted, hammered and sculpted and our spirits now soar with joy and pride.

Tonight we share with you our vision and our creations.



Welcome to our Wave



Shearwater

Promotional material created for WAVE 2007. (Shearwater archive)

***WAVE* as a Community Event that cultivates Place-Makers**

When anguished questions were being asked in Columbine, USA, following the tragic shooting on April 20, 1999, the community was asked to participate in the culture of school education (Rachel's Challenge, <http://www.sumner.wednet.edu/headlines/rachelschallenge.html>). People are becoming more aware that in a community all things are connected. The question being asked is: How can we weave personal skills and capacities into the fabric of community life, which occurs in place in a way that is meaningful and relevant?

As an arts education project, *WAVE* has proven to be an agent that unites, strengthens, enlivens and enriches the culture of the local community. Working together we become place makers. Unifying the parents, students, teachers and administration and ground staff of Shearwater has proved to be an exciting opportunity for familiarisation, identification and bonding. Students perform with their teachers, parents and friends; the Director of Teaching with the groundsman, a Class 5 student with her father (who is also a teacher), the Administrator with the school electrician. Teachers working together with students and parents working together with their children submit award-winning entries. Bumping out the show late at night after the final performance, all pitch in to dismantle the runway, pack up the lighting, store the art pieces and clean up the rubbish.

***WAVE* and Teacher Learning in Place**

The nurturing of teachers at Shearwater has ensured its success and, when it counted, its survival. The Free Waldorf School was organised '...collegially...' and administered '... in a republican way (Steiner 1986a:38). It was intended that the weekly teachers' meeting was to be a 'living university' for the College of Teachers – a permanent training academy.

Teachers were encouraged to be first and foremost creative researchers and take responsibility for the development of the curriculum. Research in the context of Steiner Education means the practice based cycle of activity that starts with planning and

preparation, with teaching and observing, with reflecting and relating. This in turn leads to educational development. This rhythm of ‘doing-reflecting-doing’ gives a living impulse to the work of every practitioner. As an expanded cycle it includes other practitioner-researchers in groups and is anchored in the weekly teachers’ meetings (and perhaps overlapping with other schools in the region, or even internationally).

As part of their role as principal teacher educators at Shearwater, Gillian Rogers and Deirdre Korobacz are seeking to fortify the apprenticeship model of teacher learning and to resurrect the Waldorf School model in contemporary form that takes place into account. (G Rogers 2012, pers. comm. 12 May)

This form of teacher learning has received support from researchers such as Webster-Wright (2009), who is careful to distinguish professional learning from formal professional development and training programs. Her research domain covers workplace and community education, and emphasises holistic and transformative processes and the co-creation of knowledge rather than the transfer of knowledge. I believe that it is this form of learning that the students experience when working with *WAVE*. She makes a distinction in regard to ‘authentic’ knowledge (understandings gleaned from participation in worldly tasks) as opposed to abstracted and systematised knowledge embedded in hierarchical rankings determined by privileging one form of knowledge over another. *WAVE* is not just about producing a show, but about working creatively with the curriculum and working in place as a place maker.



Section winner, *WAVE* 2004, designed by Dhyana Gillard, a teacher at the Shearwater. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

WAVE has become an iconic event of the Byron Shire and identifies Shearwater as place of educational creativity. WAVE has become an enhanced place making activity that has engendered in its students, staff and members of the local community an enthusiastic allegiance that encourages educators to work in new and innovative ways.



Shearwater staff performing in *Metro City*, Section 3 of *Cosmo Navigators and the City of Light, Wave, 2005*. They researched, designed and created their own costumes and made the set, which was constructed on stage as part of the choreographed performance. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

The simple process of making place the focus of learning in young children and the more sophisticated social conscience cultivated in young adults in the face of controlling centralised power is a step towards realising what Ben-Aharon (1995) identifies as the rejuvenating forces that will grow and mature ‘... only through selfless, decentralized, global ‘peripheral’, cosmopolitan and all-encompassing human capacities and institutions...’ (xxii-xxiii). He believes, as I do, that the important ideas and institutions for the future will be born through conscious individuals from many corners of the globe, drawn ‘... from unexpected cultural, social, national and economic peripheries ...’ (xxii-xxiii). I identify these peripheries as centres, where place makers cultivate place conscious practices.

In this chapter I set out to examine the learning practices at Shearwater. In describing them, I found that I needed to describe their inception and development at Lorien Novalis. By way of example, I related place stories and plays written and performed for and by the children. I then went on to give an account of the origins and evolution of *WAVE* at Shearwater. In reaching out to make those practices real I attempted to flesh them out by using more detail. In trying to make the account authentic I found that I had simply added detail upon detail to form a seamless narrative, with my voice as the sole narrator. Once again I found that place was slipping away. The living quality of the school was missing. The possibility of Spirit, as referred to by Steiner, or the presence of the full dimension of Country were not only missing but any possibility of them being present in the narrative was being prevented. As a form of palimpsest, my narrative was written as a layer over top of the many voices (including place) that I was threatening to erase by privileging my own. The very essence I was trying to examine and uncover was missing.

I needed to disrupt the meta-narrative. I looked at the text and took a lesson from the students. Their joy came in the collaborative experience of putting together *WAVE*. Just as the *WAVE* event derived its power to communicate by juxtaposing contrasting scenes and characters, I experimented with the crafting of the writing, of finding ways of capturing fleeting moments without holding them or allowing them to

dominate the writing. I used a variety of texts and voices: snippets of activities, images, storylines, practices from Lorient that had informed practices at Shearwater, narrative theory, descriptive accounts of living art events and places in which the practices of place making were learnt and through which our student place makers had momentarily inhabited and passed.

What I found was that in the juxtaposing the texts, narrative styles and voices they butted up against each other with such force that they created discontinuity, jaggedness, spaces. In creating these spaces, I sought to provide gaps into which the reader is given the possibility of inserting him/herself, to become a collaborative participant in the process of knowledge making/sharing. In the act of reading, the body in time and in place, in the act of imaging and thinking, together with the contextualized narratives all exist together in one place from one moment to another in a conscious experience of becoming.

What emerges from the chapter is that the activity of place making is something innate and the children were engaged in place making from the outset. The school's learning program found an immediacy of application by the students greater than was initially expected. The intention of the learning program was to plant seeds for the future, that they would become creative place makers as adults. We discovered that place making is not something that needs to be manufactured, nor does it require theoretical preparation but thrives through stimulating engagement, encouragement and positive modeling by teachers who are active place makers.

What emerged from the writing was that I began to allow it to mirror the place making practices of the school, that the form of the writing reflected its content. Just as Shearwater allowed the possibility of spiritual experience for students and staff through engagement in artistic activities that were grounded in place, I sought to recreate the possibility of experiencing spirit and place in the silences, the gaps between the narratives, in the meeting of place and body and art.

Wave

a Wearable Arts Vision in Education



“If you want to build a ship,
do not call people together to
make plans, to divide up work,
fetch tools or cut trees,
rather teach them the longing
for the wide reaches of the
ocean.

Then they will build the ship
from themselves.”

from *The Little Prince*
by Antoine de Saint Exupéry



“A healthy social life is found
only when in the mirror of each
soul the whole community finds
its reflection, and when in the
whole community the virtue of
each one is living.”
— Rudolf Steiner

Shearwater

Promotional material created for WAVE 2007. (Shearwater archive)