**PLACE, POSITIONALITY AND TEACHER PREPARATION**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the relationships between teacher and student length of habitation and knowledge of place and the process of learning to teach. A qualitative analysis of social studies instructional units developed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers working in rural and urban school settings across Alaska, considered in relation to the interns’ relationships to the communities where they were teaching provides the foundation for a framework considering the different ways in which place-based education might be enacted. Data analysis addresses the questions of how individual relationships with place impact the integration of place into the classroom, how a new teacher learns to enact place-based teaching in a way that allows his or her students to reap the benefits of this pedagogical mind-set and whether strategies for learning how to teach in a place-based manner vary depending on the contexts in which the students and teachers are situated.

**Keywords:** Place-based teaching, teacher preparation, Indigenous education, rural education, Alaska Native education

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*…In a remote village in the interior of Alaska, a white pre-service teacher from Arkansas is struggling to connect a unit on ancient Egypt to the lives of the sixth grade students she met eight weeks ago . . . students who are indigenous to the river community, while she has been in Alaska only since June.*

*…About 300 miles to her south, a young white man who grew up fishing in south central Alaska prepares to take his class of fourth graders, most of who also grew up in the small community, on a kayaking trip across the bay to a wilderness camp to explore the coastal environment.*

*…Meanwhile, 500 miles due west of him, on the far western coast of Alaska, a Yup’ik woman looks for ways to incorporate the knowledge she and her Indigenous students have about local landmarks and their use in navigation and subsistence into a social studies lesson on mapping.*

Each of these pre-service teachers has expressed the desire to practice place-based teaching in their classroom, but the ways they will approach it vary tremendously depending on who they are, where they came from, and the students they are teaching. While there are skills and dispositions that are beneficial in all pre-service programs, teaching is an inherently contextualized endeavor. How one approaches teaching a group of immigrant children in an urban environment is different than how one might approach teaching a class of Native Alaskans in a rural community. A teacher’s relationship and understanding of the context where she/he is teaching will inevitably impact the skills and dispositions necessary to effectively work in that environment. This paper explores the relationships between teacher and student length of habitation in, and relationship with, a place and the process of learning to teach. These relationships are explored in the realm of place-based teaching and in regards to the ways in which new teachers can learn about and build on place connections within their classrooms. How does a new teacher learn to enact place-based teaching in a way that will allow his or her students to reap the benefits of this pedagogical mind-set? Should strategies for teaching how to teach in a place-based manner vary depending on the contexts of the students and teachers and the relationships they hold with their places? A qualitative analysis of completed social studies methods assignments of Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers provides the foundation for a framework considering the different ways in which place-based education might be enacted, depending on the length of habitation of the teacher and the students in their community. An orientation and purpose for enacting place-based education is proposed specific to different teacher/student context scenarios, along with the implications for differentiated teacher education.

**Literature Review**

A rationale for an education rooted in place exists across all educational contexts including those populated by students indigenous to an area, those serving students with long histories of habitation in (but not indigenous to) areas and schools populated by children new to their communities and places. Across these contexts, the need for place-based teaching has been justified as necessary to promote ecological consciousness and environmentally sustainable behaviors, and as a means to increase student academic engagement and connections with the academic curriculum. Having students engage deeply with the land around them as part of their educational experience is said to “encourage an emotional attachment to a place (that) will lead people to care and learn about that place and, subsequently, produce a desire to protect the place” ([Ardoin, 2006, p. 119](#_ENREF_1)). Russ, Peters, Krasny and Stedman (2015) note that “people tend to protect places that are meaningful to them, which implies that strong ecological place meanings may encourage people to protect nature-related elements of those places” ([p. 75](#_ENREF_8)). As Singleton ([2015](#_ENREF_9)) articulates, for students not actively engaged in school “love, purpose and authenticity can be infused into the curriculum through the context of place” (p. 10).

In addition to the overarching rationales of promoting ecological and environmental consciousness and enhancing student engagement, place-based teaching also offers an avenue for Indigenous communities to begin to “decolonize” the school curriculum and integrate pedagogies that are rooted in their land and local knowledge. The Alaska Native population, like their counterparts in the “Lower 48,” has suffered the effects of colonization, missionary schools, and the externally forced eradication of their Indigenous languages, cultures and ways of life over the last two centuries. Until the 1950s, the formal educational system for Alaska Natives was imposed by the colonizers and “was strictly a one-way process, mostly in distant boarding schools with the main purpose being to assimilate Native people into western society” ([Barnhardt, 2014, p. 5](#_ENREF_2)). This one-directional educational process “has had a devastating effect on Indigenous students, contributing to a contemporary educational deficit that expresses itself in lower academic success rates and experiences of racism and alienation in the classroom” ([Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014, p. III](#_ENREF_11)). Place-based teaching can and should serve as a cornerstone of the decolonization efforts of Indigenous people, including the Alaska Native population. Schools serving Alaska Native student populations, like those worldwide serving Indigenous populations, can use place-based pedagogies to “support decolonization, grounding programs in Indigenous philosophies of education” ([Lowan-Trudeau, 2013, p. 45](#_ENREF_6)).

How can new teachers learn to teach in a place-based manner in a way that, as articulated by Ardoin ([2006](#_ENREF_1)) takes into account “the diversity of place attachments that exist and cumulate from a range of relationships with the landscape” (p. 120)? Should a preparation in place-based teaching differ for teachers who are working in communities they are new to, as opposed to teachers who will be teaching in the communities where they have grown up? In examining sense of place in a developmental context Hay ([1998](#_ENREF_5)) differentiates five distinct levels of association with a place: tourists and transients, short term residents (e.g. those with vacation homes in a place), new (permanent) residents without roots in a place, residents with roots in a place and Indigenous residents with “both roots in the place and spiritual ties” (p. 9). Given that most teachers are not transient to the level of tourists or short-term residents, this article will utilize the last three distinctive groups identified and defined by Hay.

Outside of an article by this author ([2015](#_ENREF_10)), few resources exist specifically examining teacher preparation in relation to place-based education. However, several authors have addressed issues related to teacher preparation of individuals with Indigenous ties to the schools and communities they will be working in. Brayboy and Maughan ([2009](#_ENREF_4)) address the need for a conscious welcoming and accommodation of Indigenous knowledge when working with pre-service teachers in an Indigenous teacher preparation program and assert that “Indigenous Knowledges are contextual and contextualized; they are lived and are an integral part of survival” (p. 11). Brayboy and Maughan contend that “many Indigenous people view their own places within the larger cosmos of all living thing” (p.13). This orientation to place is most likely not shared by an individual who has recently moved to a community, or even one who has lived in a community for many years but does not share an ancestral connection to the land. A 2014 article in a statewide newspaper discussed the issues associated with helping teachers new to communities assimilate into their new places and the author notes that “statistically speaking, the classrooms of rural Alaska are populated by teachers who tend to be from the Western or Midwestern states and fresh out of school” ([Boots, 2014](#_ENREF_3)). Becoming effective place-based teachers is as important for these individuals as it is for those indigenous to their communities, but first they have to establish a sense of place. Boots notes that “cultural orientations [for teachers new to rural Alaska] are becoming more common but are still not widespread” (2014).

A final consideration regarding strategies for place-based teacher education rests in the opportunity for learning that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. Root ([2010](#_ENREF_7)) has considered the “decolonizing journeys of white outdoor environmental educators” and asserts that, when considering learning within Indigenous and non-Indigenous cohorts “relationships . . .characterized by trust, mutual respect, and open honest dialogue lead to the deepest learning” (p. 112). This suggests that individuals who desire to learn more about places from Indigenous residents must do so in an open and respectful manner, with a strong desire to learn about the local community and place.

**Place-Based Teaching and Curriculum Development with Pre-service Teachers**

I am a faculty member in an elementary teacher preparation program that serves pre-service teachers across the state of Alaska. Our teacher preparation program culminates in a year-long internship in an elementary classroom and participants have the option of completing their undergraduate or post-baccalaureate degree and certification program entirely through distance-delivery methods. Alaska has been offering distance-based teacher preparation programs since the 1970s, predominantly as an option for Alaska Native teachers who want to remain in their home communities and receive their certification while working in these (mostly rural) areas. Nowadays, our distance-delivery program serves both Alaska Native students across the state as well as non-Indigenous individuals who choose to complete their internships while remaining in their home communities for a variety of personal and financial reasons. The typical size of a yearly distance-delivery cohort is between eight and twelve interns, and in any given year approximately one third of the cohort will be comprised of Alaska Native students completing the internship year in their home communities. The term “home community” carries weight in this context, as discussions of place and habitation with these pre-service teachers reveal that the majority (fourteen out of fifteen Alaska Native interns in a five-year period) have at least one parent with Indigenous ties to the local land that go back to nomadic times.

As part of a course I teach on integrated social studies and language arts methods the interns are required to develop, teach, and reflect on a week-long social studies instructional unit in their internship classroom. As part of the unit development process, interns are required to identify community-based resources that are available for integration into the unit and to articulate how they will integrate the local resources in a meaningful manner. To receive a rating of “acceptable” on the assignment rubric they must connect the content of the unit to the lives of the students or the context of the community in a meaningful manner, make a meaningful connection between the unit topic and the Alaskan context of the students, and integrate a local resource (defined as a community location, a local expert, or something found in your community that is not found elsewhere) into the instruction.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Listening to the interns learn and reflect on place-based pedagogy for fifteen years has afforded me a unique perspective from which to consider questions regarding the ways in which place-based teaching can be enacted and how best to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to promote powerful place-based new teachers. Anecdotal observations led me to notice that the orientations the Indigenous, Alaska Native interns had towards their communities and places were uniquely different from the relationships with place and community exhibited by their non-Indigenous peers. Additionally, the majority of Alaska Native interns working in their home communities ended up creating wholly original curriculum units that were rooted in their communities and places, whereas the units of the non-Indigenous interns were sometimes place-based, but often not. I decided to delve into a five-year set of data (45 distance-delivery interns graduating between 2011 and 2015) to learn more about these differences.

In addition to this larger sample, I also obtained IRB permission and written permission from individuals to closely examine relevant work samples from twelve interns who have graduated in the last two years. From this group of twelve, I gathered and examined social studies unit topics and unit reflection papers. In the course of their elementary internship year I had instructed this group of interns in at least seven credits worth of coursework and had spent countless hours in class with them so I knew them all well. Nevertheless, I collected the autobiographies and resumes that they had submitted as part of their internship application to triangulate my knowledge of their personal histories.

**Findings**

In examining the data I was interested to see if there was a difference in the ways in which interns were enacting place-based teaching in their communities and to ascertain what might account for these differences. In consideration of the research on residential status and relationship to place presented by Hay ([1998](#_ENREF_5)) the primary basis for comparison emerged in relation to the intern’s residential status in the community as well as the residential status of the students in the intern’s school. I divided the five-year data set of forty-five interns into nine groups based on their relationship (time in place) to the community of their internship classroom, and based on their students’ relationship (time in place) to the community. The categorizations used were Indigenous to place, established in place but not Indigenous, and new to community. A description of each group can be found in Table 1. Classification of the student population was based on information provided by interns in a “classroom profile” assignment submitted at the start of the internship year and corroborated with information provided in class discussions. Classification of the intern teachers was based on intern autobiographies submitted during the internship year admissions process, along with information gathered during class sessions. For ease of discussion I have assigned a letter (A-J) to each intern/student profile.

***Table 1***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **STUDENTS** | | |
| **New to community** | **Established,**  **but not Indigenous** | **Indigenous to place** |
| **TEACHERS** | **Indigenous to place** | * Teacher indigenous to community or region teaching a student population new to the community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient population) * N=0   **Profile A** | * Teacher indigenous to community or region teaching a non-Indigenous but established (extended period of habitation in area) population * N=0   **Profile B** | * Teacher indigenous to community or region teaching an Indigenous student population in their home community or region * N=15   **Profile C** |
| **Established,**  **but not Indigenous** | * Established (extended period of habitation in area) but non-Indigenous teacher teaching a student population new to the community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient population) * N=5   **Profile D** | * Established (extended period of habitation in area) but non-Indigenous teacher teaching an established (extended period of habitation in area) but non-Indigenous population * N=14   **Profile E** | * Established (extended period of habitation in area) but non-Indigenous teacher teaching an Indigenous student population * N=4   **Profile F** |
| **New to community** | * Teacher new to a community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient) teaching a student population new to the community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient) * N=0   **Profile G** | * Teacher new to a community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient) teaching an established (extended period of habitation in area) but non-Indigenous population * N=3   **Profile H** | * Teacher new to a community (e.g. immigrant, military or transient) teaching an Indigenous student population * N=4   **Profile J** |

Within each box in Table 1 there is an N number that corresponds to the number of interns from the five-year sample of forty-five who fit each descriptive category. All but two of the forty-five interns taught in classrooms where at least half the student population reflected a single classification (Indigenous, established but not Indigenous, new to community). In the last five years within the distance delivery intern cohorts, we have not had interns who fit profiles A, B or G, although in our corresponding “on campus” cohorts (students who complete their internship in the community of the university and through face-to-face classes) we have had interns who fit all three.

The different topics chosen by or assigned to each intern for their week-long unit development and teaching were analyzed in relation to the associated profile. At the start of the fall semester, interns are instructed to negotiate with their mentor teacher to determine a developmentally appropriate topic for approximately five hours of social studies instruction. In some cases the topic was assigned by the mentor teacher based on established curriculum requirements and in other cases the mentor teacher merely offered suggestions or even left the topic selection wholly to the discretion of their intern. It is not difficult to discern when the topic has been assigned to an intern, as it is frequently a topic that the intern does not initially have much “buy-in” with and it is often not related to the local community. Examples of mandated topics among this group of interns include a unit on early European explorers assigned to an Alaska Native intern teaching in her home community, a unit on the U.S. constitution and Bill of Rights assigned to a non-Native intern teaching an immigrant population in her home community, and a unit on ancient Egypt assigned to a non-Native intern teaching an Alaska Native population in their home community. It is important to note that this is not to suggest these topics should not be taught. All are typically found in an American social studies textbook and/or curriculum. However, interesting patterns emerge when interns (both Alaska Native and non-Native) are given the freedom to choose their own topic, or determine a topic in collaboration with their mentor teacher. Parsing unit topics illuminates the ways in which Native and non-Native intern teachers attempt to make sense of their own positionality and the positionality of their students while connecting the academic curriculum to local knowledge and place.

**Non-Indigenous interns enact place-based education**

Let us consider first the unit topics selected by or assigned to interns who were teaching in communities where the interns had an extended period of habitation, but to which they were not Indigenous (profiles D, E and F). Five non-Native interns working in their home communities found themselves teaching a highly transient or immigrant population (profile D). All five were assigned topics that were not tied directly to the local area and could be considered “context free” in that they are topics that are taught across the United States. They included branches of government, the Northeast region of the U.S., types of shelter and Ellis Island. All five interns struggled with making connections between the lives of their students and their assigned topics, but were able to bridge the gap between the academic content and the existing knowledge of their students, all of whom were new to Alaska and most of whom were new to the United States. When teaching the branches of government to fifth grade Filipino students in a fishing community in south central Alaska, an intern had her students consider the governmental structures in the Phillipines and then compare that to the United States. The emphasis, however, was on helping the students grasp the basic structure of American government. This intern reflected

*We also talked a lot about Alaska and our government here and how the checks and balances work at the state level. I was surprised that many students did not know who our governor was prior to this lesson. Students were very aware that an election was taking place during this time but were a little confused about what that meant.*

The intern tasked with educating her diverse urban immigrant population about Ellis Island and American immigration in the 1900s made connections between some of her students’ personal experiences and those of earlier immigrants. She wrote

*Many of the students in my class have also had immediate family members who have immigrated to the country so they could easily connect the immigration process from 100 years ago to today. There is also a student who recently immigrated into the country from the Philippines so students were able to get a picture of what it was like for that student who had very real knowledge of the process. They students were much more engaged when they were talking about topics related to their lives than they were when just doing rote activities.*

A significant portion of interns fell in the category of non-Indigenous interns with a long history of habitation in their community teaching a local, but not Indigenous population (profile E). Described in a different way, these were non-Alaska Native interns who had grown up in, or lived for an extended period of time in an Alaskan community where they were now teaching students who were like themselves. Of these fourteen interns, ten chose to build on or extend their long-standing community knowledge by creating social studies units that were derived from the local or regional place or its history. Some of their chosen topics included local history projects, family history projects, an examination of human impact on the local environment, school government, dog mushing history, and investigations of how the local land and climate impact the local culture. To varying degrees, these interns sought out local experts to visit the classroom and share information, or arranged field trips to take their students out into the community to visit local sites of interest. When reflecting on the impact their community connections had on student learning, they nearly unanimously said that the connections to the local place and local knowledge significantly increased student engagement.

*I connected the unit (on recycling) to the community by sharing my experience borrowing the recycling kit and making connections with people who cared and acted for the environment. Since the unit completion many students have openly shared with me connections and ideas they have about environmental care.*

*The unit was saturated in personal connections for the kids. The history they already knew was nearly always connected to their lives somehow. For instance, a student knew the history of a building because a family member had worked there and taken him in to see it and learn about it, or they cared that the roadhouse was one of the first buildings in town because they eat there all the time and know Trish, the owner. They had so many personal connections during the museum tour that we had to stifle them. Likewise with the guest speaker’s presentation of local flora and fauna; they had seen nearly all of the animals and plants before, and they wanted to know more about them. I anticipated these connections to their lives, but I didn’t facilitate them. They were innately part of the topic.*

The interns in profile E worked to connect their topics to the lives of their students through selecting relevant topics (when given the opportunity), utilizing local resources, taking their students outside of the school, and making connections between the students knowledge and experiences and new disciplinary knowledge learned through a local lens.

**Indigenous interns enact place-based education**

The largest intern group represented in Table 1 is profile C, Alaska Native interns teaching Alaska Native students in their home communities. Of the fifteen interns fitting this profile, all but two were given the opportunity by their mentor teachers to develop original social studies units derived from the local community and place. This fact itself is encouraging as it suggests that the mentor teachers these interns were paired with – most of whom were not themselves Indigenous – respected their Indigenous interns’ knowledge of the local place and saw the need to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum. Chosen unit topics included using local landmarks for subsistence and navigation, local history, Alaska Native dancing, family genealogy, community relocation history, the seal party and its significance in Yup’ik culture, technology and modernization in rural Alaska, the impact of tobacco on the local community, the role of geese in Yup’ik culture and Yup’ik family genealogy terms. Most of these units relied heavily on community resources, including both guest speakers, visits to sites of significance and the knowledge of the Alaska Native interns themselves.

*I had a guest speaker join us one day, and he did so good in engaging the students. He showed pictures of commercial fishing out on a boat. Each student asked about five questions and they were all fishing related. This unit really connected well with the students because it is based on their family lifestyles.*

*I told a story about my mother’s experience having to go to school, six of her brothers and sisters dying from TB and how all the different communities from the rivers and bay had to come together to build the new community. The students were very interested and were excited to go home to ask their parents of their experiences or their grandparents and they shared at the next class period.*

*I had my students interview an elder. They came up with questions that they’d ask the elder about why seal parties are held and how they started. The students not only learned about seal parties in school, they also learned that there are other resources outside of school available for them that they could learn from.*

The impact of teaching curriculum derived from and connected to the lives of their students was multidimensional for the Alaska Native interns. In reflecting on their units, interns spoke of the impact the locally-based curriculum had on student achievement and engagement, and also pointed out the value of validating their students’ knowledge and experiences and the need to incorporate local knowledge and history into the school curriculum. A reflection in relation to achievement and student engagement included

*I was surprised at how much the students participated and how eager they were each day that I taught, because during my week of teaching math, I seemed to bore the students a lot. They couldn’t really relate to everything I was teaching them. ALL the students raised their hand this past week when I asked a question about a landmark. I also got a lot of students who would speak before I even called on them, that’s how eager they were to share their thoughts and to explain what they knew about each landmark.*

Reflecting on their students appreciation for having their voices heard and their knowledge validated in the classroom, and on the larger benefits of incorporating curriculum that went beyond the provided textbooks and mandated curriculum, Alaska Native interns wrote

*A lot of what we did during my social studies unit related to the students’ lives, so they were pretty much able to connect their prior knowledge with everything this week. The locations were familiar to the students, they knew exactly what activity takes place at each location and during which season, and also, I asked the students to tell me at least one story of an experience they had at one of the locations. Even when I did not ask, but when I mentioned a location, one or two students would say, “Me and me dad went there…” or “One time me and my friend went down…” and I would let these students tell their stories before moving on.*

*The students definitely showed great interest in housing differences and how the local people lived before oil development. The students constantly asked questions off topic related to local history. This indicated that they were certainly intrigued by local history. The students asked questions about how life was back when they (Indigenous people) lived in itchaliks (caribou skin houses) and ivruliks (sod houses). The discussions among the students and myself showed that they were curious about the differences.*

*I love the idea and implementation of meaningful education. Meaningful education is lacking immensely in our village. By completing this unit, I see more of an importance of connecting units to the students’ lives. They are more interested and they are more on task.*

The development and implementation of local curriculum for use with their Indigenous student population was seen as validating to both the students and to the Alaska Native interns themselves.

**Interns new to a community enact place-based education**

The final intern profile to be considered is that of interns new to a community teaching an Indigenous population (profile J). Although only four interns in this sample group fit this profile, the profile applies to a large portion of the practicing teachers currently serving the Alaska Native population in rural Alaska. Alaska Native schools off the road system are staffed by a population that is 75% non-Alaska Native and the vast majority are new to the community ([Boots, 2014](#_ENREF_3)). Of the four non-Native interns who chose to complete their internship year in an Alaska Native community, only one intern was assigned a unit topic (ancient Egypt) by her mentor. While making connections between this topic and her Athabaskan students in interior Alaska was challenging, she honed in on their understanding and relationship with the local river and made connections between the river and the role of the Nile River for ancient Egyptians.

*I connected the unit to the context of their community by comparing the Nile River to the local river. The students completed a homework page that had them discuss with their parents the ways they use the river. The students documented these answers and shared them in class the next day. When the class compared the Nile River and their river during the activity the next day, students were able to see how, in a lot of ways, it was like the Ancient Egyptians and the Nile.*

The other three interns were able to negotiate topics that either came from or could be easily connected to the local community. The topics were mapping, Yup’ik spirit masks and family trees. These interns made strong efforts to utilize local resources and connect the topics to local knowledge.

*I tied my social studies unit to the community when I had a guest speaker come in and talk to the students. The guest speaker is a respected village elder and really engaged the students when he presented his thoughts on why culture and traditions are important to keep. After the guest speaker presented, we had a community potluck. Students’ parents were invited as well as other people from around the community. It was successful, but we only had a few extra visitors.*

*Another way I was able to connect my lessons to real life situations was through the walking field trip. During this lesson students were able to understand how travel in their culture is different to travel in urban culture. Here the main modes of transportation are four-wheeler, snow machine, boat and plane. After completing the walking field trip I had students write in their journals about an experience they had while traveling the river or by plane.*

These interns reflected on reaping the benefits of place-based education through increased student engagement, as well as through the act of validating their students’ local knowledge.

*I connected the content to the lives of the students by using maps of their own community and school. This made the content relevant to their lives, rather than showing maps of places they were not familiar with. By making these connections, the students were much more engaged and gave me their attention. When I made references to more unfamiliar places, their discussions drifted off subject due to their confusion.*

*One way I was able to connect the social studies lessons to students prior knowledge was by showing them their Yup’ik culture is important. In the process of that, students were able to tell me what type of traditions their family practiced. One important practice in the Yup’ik culture is moose hunting. Most students had moose on their Yup’ik Spirit mask.*

**Implications of Place and Positionality for Teaching and Teacher Education**

The diverse experiences in social studies instruction of these forty-five interns suggest that enacting place-based teaching is a highly varied experience that (not surprisingly) depends to a great extent on the relationship both the teacher and his/her students have with the local place itself. Teachers with longstanding ties to a community have a different level of knowledge – and obligation to share that knowledge – than do teachers who are new to a community. Conversely, teachers new to a community must recognize their lack of local knowledge and learn to look for, learn from, and respect local experts (students and community members), resources and knowledge. Teachers Indigenous to the community where they are teaching are in a unique position to help their students and the community as a whole recognize and value the local knowledge and expertise inherent in the community and seek ways to bring that local knowledge to the forefront of the educational system. As for the students, the benefits of place-based teaching vary depending on the context of the students but a compelling justification for place-based learning exists whether students are brand new to a community, have lived there for an extended period of time, or are descendent from the original inhabitants of the local land.

What, then, is the role of teacher education in relation to promoting place-based teaching practices and strengthening the place-based instructional skills of future teachers? There are core skills in place-based teaching that should be included in all teacher preparation programs which include the ability to create high quality instructional units and materials based on local topics, the ability to locate local resources to enhance instruction and to meaningfully integrate those resources in the classroom, the ability to organize and facilitate guest speakers, and to take students on educationally rich field trips (Vinlove, 2015, p.101-107). Additionally, a pre-service education in place-based education should include skill building in the art of managing students outside of a classroom or school. Finally, any education rooted in place should build upon the knowledge of the local Indigenous population as these individuals possess the deepest and longest standing ties to the local land and resources. Consequently, place-based teacher education should incorporate historical and current information on the local Indigenous population and help pre-service teachers learn how to locate Indigenous individuals and resources that can augment place-based curriculum inquiry.

In addition to these core place-based teaching skills the data presented in this paper suggest that teacher education in place-based pedagogy should also be differentiated based on the backgrounds and school contexts of pre-service teachers and their students. Pre-service teachers need to understand that how they enact place-based teaching will depend on their own positionality and the positionality of their students in relation to the local community and place. Differing roles and responsibilities for teachers in each different context/profile are proposed in Table 2.

***Table 2***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **STUDENTS** | | | |
|  |  | **New to community** | **Established,**  **but not Indigenous** | **Indigenous to place** |
| **TEACHER** | **Indigenous to place** | **Profile A**   * Learn about your students. Where do they come from? What do they bring to the classroom? * Look for ways to make connections between student knowledge and experiences and the community * Recognize that you have valuable local knowledge that can be used to help your students better learn about and connect to the local place. VALUE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND BRING IT TO THE CLASSROOM. | **Profile B**   * Use your local knowledge to design curriculum that integrates or is based on the local community * Utilize your students’ knowledge and their family knowledge * Recognize that you have valuable local knowledge that can be used to help your students better learn about and connect to the local place. VALUE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND BRING IT TO THE CLASSROOM. | **Profile C**   * De-colonize your classroom! * Co-construct curriculum with your students that centers on local knowledge * Integrate local knowledge into the established curriculum or replace it entirely * VALUE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE |
| **Established, but not Indigenous** | **Profile D**   * Use your local knowledge to design curriculum that integrates or is based on the local community * Learn about your students. Where do they come from? What do they bring to the classroom? * Look for ways to make connections between student knowledge and experiences and the community * Look for Indigenous sources of local knowledge to integrate into your curriculum | **Profile E**   * Use your local knowledge to design curriculum that integrates or is based on the local community * Utilize your students’ knowledge and their family knowledge * Learn more about and explore your community with your students * Look for Indigenous sources of local knowledge to integrate into your curriculum | **Profile F**   * Continue to build relationships within your community * Build relationships with Indigenous community members and ask them for advice and information on integrating local knowledge * Use your students as local experts. Find out what they know and integrate it in the classroom. Design activities that value their Indigenous knowledge. |
| **New to community** | **Profile G**   * Learn about your new community – get outside! * Learn about your students. Where do they come from? What do they bring to the classroom? * Explore the community with your students * Look for connections between student knowledge and experiences and the new place you are in | **Profile H**   * Learn about your new community – get outside! * Recognize the knowledge base within your classroom – students and families – and use it to learn more about your new place * Look for local experts to help you connect your curriculum to place * Look for Indigenous sources of local knowledge to integrate into your curriculum | **Profile J**   * Recognize that you are an outsider and it is your job to learn about the community and its Indigenous population * Be respectful to your students, their families and community members * Build your knowledge of the community by learning from your students and from Indigenous community members * Ask Indigenous community members for feedback and ideas on integration of local knowledge into the curriculum |

If teachers are new to a community (profiles G, H, J), they need to put significant effort into learning about the place and community, its history, and the people who live there. They need to recognize their outsider status and work to build trust with their students, parents and the community as a whole. Pre-service teachers who have long-standing ties in a community, but are not themselves Indigenous (profiles D, E, F), should build off their own knowledge and community connections in developing locally-based curriculum, and should also work to deepen their personal knowledge by getting outside, widening their circle of community contacts and local resources, and locating and utilizing Indigenous sources of knowledge and expertise. If cohorts of pre-service teachers include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, opportunities for respectful sharing of information between students should be facilitated regularly, following the guidance of Root ([2010](#_ENREF_7)) in that they occur with a foundation of “trust, mutual respect, and open honest dialogue” (p. 112). Pre-service activities should include requirements that non-Indigenous students seek out and learn from people in the community who have lived off of and maintained the local land prior to western settlement.

Finally, Indigenous pre-service teachers (profiles A, B, C) can be introduced to place-based teaching as a vehicle for reclaiming the educational experience. When Indigenous teachers are becoming certified to teach in their home communities, it is likely that they already know a great deal about the community, the land, and the people who live there. The focus in a pre-service education in place-based pedagogy for this group of students should be on supporting them in their efforts to build and teach curriculum that holds local knowledge at its core and in helping them value their own Indigenous knowledge and bring it into the public school environment. Indigenous pre-service teachers need support and encouragement from their pre-service instructors to learn how to meaningfully integrate local knowledge instruction with core subject areas (such as language arts and math). Additionally, it is essential that Indigenous pre-service teachers comprehend and come to terms with the educational and linguistic histories of their communities and people and the impact of Western colonization so that they can place the current educational context in an accurate perspective and help their students do the same. Indigenous place-based teacher preparation must also include information on educational policy and how school systems operate and change so that Indigenous teachers are equipped to work towards the structural changes necessary to create a system of education that helps Indigenous children navigate the 21st century without losing the knowledge and skills that have served them well through the centuries that came before.

*“Until we start to teach based on where our students come from and where they are headed, we will be stuck in this old world alien education system.”*

*– Inupiaq pre-service teacher*

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