

**Dr. Polly L. Knowlton Cockett, PhD**

Sessional Instructor: 2014-2021

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**Teaching Philosophy Statement**

*Understanding ecological interdependence means understanding relationships. It requires the shifts of perception that are characteristic of systems thinking – from the parts to the whole, from objects to relationships, from contents to patterns. A sustainable human community is aware of the multiple relationships among its members. Nourishing the community means nourishing those relationships.*

- Fritjof Capra (1996, p. 298) *The Web of Life*

The evidence presented in this package truly speaks to my lived ecopedagogy of authentic engagement and the fostering of interrelationships that are “characteristic of systems thinking” (see Capra quote above). This is as true in the balance of my professional and personal life as it is in my classrooms where I nourish meaningful interactions amongst my students as a discrete community, as well as more broadly for them as individuals as they continue to develop their personal teacher identities within the context of whatever course content is at hand.

With an extensive background in science and writing, a deep appreciation of the arts, diverse teaching and leadership experiences, and within interpretive methodologies, my passions include sense of place studies, place-based education, socioecological cartography, and wild pedagogies, including within urban native biodiversity conservation.

These involvements manifest themselves in the wide array of courses I have taught in the Werklund School of Education over the last seven years: in the sciences, arts and humanities, design thinking and health and wellness, and in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. Whether in person, on campus, or supervising practicums in local K-12 schools, or online for graduate, overseas, or distance students, or due to emergency remote teaching needs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a major focus of my teaching is on the *processes* of learning complex and nuanced material. As such, formative feedback is critical every step of the way to scaffold new understandings within both pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Creating connections and facilitating opportunities, opening possibilities and encountering questions, and closely interrogating that which we take for granted is part of the hard work of teacher education. Becoming self-aware of one’s own pedagogy is an ever-unfolding process for educators, and is an outcome of deep engagement in both theory and practice in a demanding and multifaceted profession. Celebrating these engagements through sharing is also a fundamental part of the summative nature of self-assessment in our collaborative field of endeavour.

Ethnoecological education – arrived at through *in situ* experiential learning, community collaborations, integrated curricula, and professional development – is critical to fostering a connectedness with place and each other and for nurturing stewardship and sustainability, thus honouring the complexity of ways we can and do understand and interact with our world.