

**Research Topic:** problems of practice in BC K-12 geography education

### Research Themes

- ▶ contested ground of geographic epistemology, e.g. the challenge of indigenous ways of knowing to the social and physical scientific foundations of geography education (in K-12 or elsewhere)
- ▶ the storytelling / critical thinking dynamic in BC Social Studies
- ▶ the spectrum of understanding among educational stakeholders (particularly curriculum stakeholders) about the goals of geography
- ▶ the experience of teachers and their students in learning about land, place and people, including experiments and reflections on place-responsive learning in BC K-12
- ▶ the role and impact of emerging issues of practice such as climate change and reconciliation/ inclusion of indigenous perspectives
- ▶ dead reckoning<sup>1</sup>: the extent to which teachers are moving into the new BC curriculum with some kind of path integration, e.g. without meaningful landmarks or navigational aids

These synthesize many of the inquiry topics I included with my PhD application. Ideally these converge into a single research question; they do share similar spaces, so the prospects are good. One of the things they have in common is the question of how teachers interpret and conduct geography education, and by extension, how they stand in relation to land-based, place-responsive, and indigenous-informed practice -- areas of concern for geographers and curriculum stakeholders alike -- in the context of the revised BC curriculum.

### Domains of inquiry and literature -- DRAFT

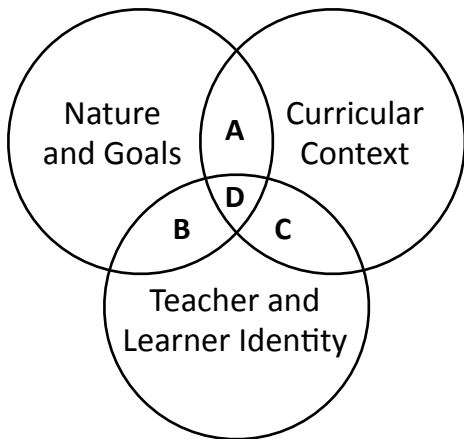
1. The nature, goals, and philosophies of geography education —> How is it defined (global to local)? How is it understood by teachers? Why do it, why is it important? What theory attends to the practice, and what divisions exist in theory? How closely does practice follow theory? How does geography relate to the educated citizen? How does geography relate to other projects such as indigenous reconciliation, sustainability, or social justice?
2. The curricular context for geography education —> How geography education is framed and contextualized in the BC K-12 curriculum (or elsewhere in K-12)? How do it's "framers" and stakeholders (e.g. MoE, BCTF, FNEESC, academic consultants) see it being implemented? What issues exist related to implementation (policy, jurisdictional, cultural, financial, organizational, political, etc)? How does "geography" (variously defined) fare in the area of curricular competencies and content?
3. Identity and geography education —> Who are the selves that teach about land, place, and people? What guides them? Who is learning about geography and why? What's the actual

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<sup>1</sup> I mean this as a metaphor or conceptual framework to describe and explore the experience of teachers with curriculum & pedagogy, not a study of the actual navigational process of dead reckoning. Nonetheless, metaphors often become working theories and sometimes models. It's also fair to mention that I have a number of other conceptual models that are shaping my thinking around the research themes; currently this takes the form of a Douglas Fir.

experience in BC (or elsewhere) of teaching geography and embedding related concepts & perspectives? What are the implications for the self, i.e. how does geography education transform the individual, and how does this extend to the community and beyond?

### Possible domains

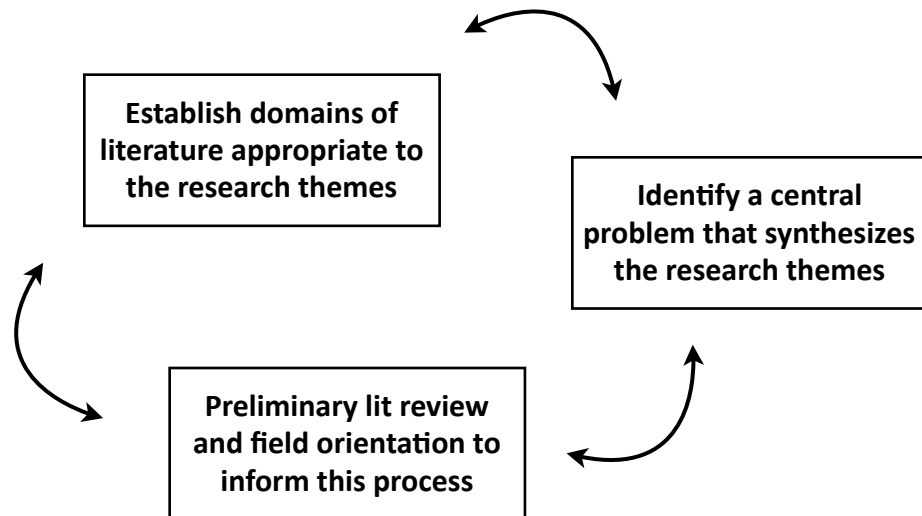


### What might be in-between?

I suspect here be gaps in the literature, notable problems of practice, and a corresponding usefulness in doing this research.

- A. interplay of geographic theory and geographic pedagogy, esp. in teacher education program
- B. the extent to which teachers actually understand and take up the goals of geography education
- C. the extent to which curriculum actually guides teachers practice with regards to geography education
- D. undervalued role of praxis in conceptualizations of geography education (e.g. the role of storytelling)

### Initial research trajectory



### Questions

- ▶ The problem with stargazing -- am I missing out on key research themes, or do some of the ones I have fit better with other constellations... how much of the sky should I try to take in?
- ▶ I have a long history with the research themes and thus a tangle of known and unknown biases that could either help or hinder authentic inquiry -- how best to reflect on the effect of my own narrative on my chosen area of research?
- ▶ Speaking of the tangle -- how will I know if my assumptions are limiting my understanding of theory, curriculum, and the work of teachers as they relate to geography education?
- ▶ Research is informed by past, present, future -- experiences, conversations, reading, identity, etc. Not all of this is "on the record." Where does the formal research ethics begin -- is there a place for informal orientation to a field of study? Must this all take place in the review of literature, or can it include embodied research, interaction with others, and so on?
- ▶ Chickens and their eggs -- to what extent should my research question anticipate the limits and possibilities of preferred methodologies and research ethics?