Intro: *All knowledge known by a knowner becomes known somewhere.* It is here today, in this room, that this presentation takes *place.* What is done here or is not done here is *what happened,* and is truth. I would like to acknowledge the TssuTina Nation, whose ancestors have lived human lives with this land *where* we now gather, for millennia, and whose enduring presence brings much knowledge about this place. For while we live here, or visit here, these *heres,* these *places,* these *wheres* are sometimes considered merely peripheral adornment affixed to the *real* story (take a moment and glance around this room, or any of the rooms you will gather in today... will you recall these rooms?).

My trajectory in this presentation is 1) to present philosophical evidence establishing a domain of *where,* as particular in and of itself (and distinct from *who* - what I call pedagogy- and *what* -curriculum), 2) to establish the *outdoors* as a domain of *where,* 3) to present evidence of benefits of being outdoors, 4) to examine current educational practices which malign outdoor *where,* and finally, 5) to provide a current illustrative example of outdoor learning that I am involved in, as a way to highlight my academic effort in activism towards change (all this in 20 minutes, I am hesitant to guarantee...but let's proceed... strap yourselves in...).

1) *Where:*

The Canadian poet, Anne Michaels, writes, *"We long for place; but place itself longs."* My aim in this section is to present diverse pieces of conceptual evidence illustrating a feeling of *where* as an essential (*ontological*) concept. This evidence shall serve to act as primary testimony to my claim that *where* is a unique and constitutive aspect
of being (sufficient and necessary). Standing on this “foundation”, I will be able to move to my next task of establishing outdoors as a realm of where. At his point, I wish to clarify that I am not suggesting where as a synonym for place, but as a broader conceptual frame to which place belongs.

Heidegger writes in Building Dwelling Thinking, “From the simple oneness in which earth and sky, divinities and mortals belong together, building receives the directive for its erecting of locations.” His unity of being (Dasein) and the fourfold described above, acknowledge where as an ontological imperative.

In my master’s thesis, I suggested that key question domains of the interrogative (who, what, where, when, why, how), might provide insight inclusive of the fourfold. Of educational aims, I wrote: “State needs to begin where we are and radiate outwards. This must be a first and foremost task of state and therefore education-state of being, to listen and respond to “the where”, “the who”, “the what”, “the why”, “the when”, “the which” and “the how”. I wrote that in 2003, the same year that David Gruenewald wrote Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education, where he argued for the need for educators to take place into account in their teaching. Over the past 13 years I have worked in the field of outdoor learning, and I have experienced how the outdoor where is unjustly biased against other realms (curriculum-what and pedagogy-who) and where domains of indoors and digital interfaces, even though there is a significant and an ever-increasing volume of research findings supporting the benefits of time spent outdoors for health and well-being, outdoor where remains largely marginalized.
Edward Casey, the philosopher of place, wrote: “The point is that place, by virtue of its unencompassability by anything other than itself, is at once the limit and condition of all that exists” (1993, p.15). Environmental Educator David Orr, writes, “We are reflections of our places. Locality is etched on our minds in more ways than we can know.” P. 234. Everything can be *whered*, every moment happens some *where*. *Where* may be physical (indoor/outdoor), or mental (memory), or cybernetic (chat room), or otherwise (political, critical, etc), however *where* does have connections to primary perceptions, those bedrock perceptions that guide our everyday existence. I will provide some examples, starting with the cybernetic and memory realms, and then turning towards the outdoor realm of *where*. If you wish to examine or need examples of the indoor realm of *where*, please consider where most of your day has occurred thus far...

In the cybernetic realm of *where*, we are able to transport ourselves, through modification of our basic perceptions, to other lands, virtual realities. In *Collaborative virtual environments: digital places and spaces for interaction*, Churchill, Snowdon, and Munro discuss virtual reality as having clear and significant parallels with physical reality. The following excerpt describes challenges faced by digital environment designers in capturing the complexity of weather in the virtual *where*. “The weather is another resource for orientation. A woman states “there’s going to be a storm”, as a cyclist is proceeding towards a vista of dark clouds on the horizon. However, the fact that “the weather” does not worsen even though they
should be getting closer to the center of the storm exposes it as governed by different physical laws than weather in our familiar physical environment” (p. 93). Nowadays, the digital where is ever present in much educational research and policy documents. The 2016 BC Ministry of Education’s education plan’s fifth key element (and there are only 5) is- “Learning empowered by technology”, succinctly situates the cybernetic as priority.

Memory is also a distinct sense of where. The poet Mark Strand writes: Each moment is a place you’ve never been. Consider Heidegger’s reference to memory as where in Building Dwelling Thinking. “Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. We do not represent distant things merely in our mind- as the textbooks have it- so that only mental representations of distant things run through our minds and heads as substitutes for the things” (p.334). He goes on, “If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg [or the Peace Bridge in Calgary], this thinking towards that location is not mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the essence of our thinking of that bridge that in itself thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location.” (p.334). The Geographer Tuan comments in his text Space and Place, that “Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accretion of sentiment over the years” (1977, p.33).

These two aspects of where provide a bit of evidence of where as memory/mental image and virtual reality. Now, I turn specifically to where as physical place.
2) **Outdoors as Where:** Another domain of *where* is very physical. This is the tangible world we all dwell in. In this *where*, when something heavy falls on your foot it hurts, and you can show others *where* it hurts. This sense of *where* is captured by Mark Strand in *Keeping Things Whole*:

*When I walk*
*I part the air*
*and always*
*the air moves in*
*to fill the spaces*
*where my body's been.*

Different philosophers have offered indications in their writing on the role of the physical *where* in our lives, particularly as outdoor *where*. Buber, in I-Thou, describes three spheres of life (nature, man, spiritual), and the first sphere—life with nature—is positioned physically, as *where*. Lingis comments that human life is actually comprised of earth. “One whose flesh is made of earth—dust that shall return to dust—who stands facing another with the support of the earth rising up in him or her” (1994, p.117). He goes on to state that reality will never become solely *virtual* or *academic*. “[T]he space where the things are encountered is not suspended in the network of geometric dimensions or in the void. It extends in the light, in the warmth, in the atmosphere, and in a clearing stabilized on the supporting element of earth” (1994, p.123). Maclntyre, in *After Virtue*, points out, “a setting has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not
only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible” (1984, p.206-7).

For these philosophers, along with many others, outdoor where is a unique ontological domain (and thus epistemological), yet this in not the case when we examine prevailing present-day educational discourse, even though there is a large and growing body of literature supporting benefits of time spent outdoors. The next section will outline some of these benefits.

3) **Benefits of time spent outdoors (TSO):** There is a growing body of literature from health, wellbeing, and physical education connecting time spent outdoors (TSO) with overall health. Louise Chawla’s 2015 paper *Benefits of Nature Contact for Children*, is a solid place to begin. Chalwa uses Sen’s and Naussbaum’s “capacities approach” to well-being as a guide. This framework parts from Aristotle’s telos for life, “eudemonia” or flourishing, and contrasts this against the more popular medical notion of *absence of illness* to establish health. Her paper reviews both qualitative and quantitative studies investigating a wide range of benefits including: Physical Health, Cognitive Functioning and Self-Control, Psychological Well-Being, Affiliation and Imaginative Play, along with ethnographic studies around- children’s special places and aboriginal connections to place. Her summary concludes: “A compelling body of evidence exists that trees and natural areas are essential elements of healthy communities for children.”
What follows is a brief list of findings from Medical, Health, PE and Environmental literature around health and wellness findings for TSO. Waite, et al. (2011) found that outdoor play-based education supported sharing, team building, and collaboration amongst children; Gill (2014) conducted a systematic review of 71 studies that concluded, “findings support the view that spending time in nature is part of a “balanced diet” of childhood experiences that promote children’s healthy development, well-being and positive environmental attitudes and values” (p. 10); Taylor and Kuo (2009) concluded that, “not only does exposure to nature enhance attention in children with ADHD, but also that this effect holds for a wide variety of children, settings, and activities” (p. 407); Cleland, et al. (2008) resolved that TSO, “may be an effective strategy for increasing physical activity and preventing increases in overweight and obesity” (p. 1985); Barton and Pretty (2010) stated, “acute short-term exposures to facilitated green exercise improves both self-esteem and mood irrespective of duration, intensity, location, gender, age, and health status” (p. 3950); Thompson Coon et al. (2010) found that “exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression, and increased energy” (p. A); Sherwin et al. (2012) demonstrated, “a 2% reduced odds of myopia per additional hour of time spent outdoors per week” (p. NP). In conclusion, Russell et al. (2013) summarized, “[t]he positive effects of nature on physiological health and mental health have been unequivocally documented” (p. 494). And, this list is just a sample of emerging evidence around some benefits of TSO.
Eric Zencey writes, “Transforming the world immediately outside the classroom into a laboratory will tend to erase the artificial boundary between the roles of student and citizen, thereby encouraging in the latter the habits of the former. A citizenry that is curious, skeptical, and reasonable, one that takes little on faith and is accustomed to carrying careful inquiry into the world, is a citizenry that more nearly fits the mold that democracy requires.” P. 19. TSO also has social impacts that strengthen the fabric of our relationships, our communities, and our societies.

4) **Current educational practices which marginalize where, particularly with respect to outdoors:**

“*Ultimately a few square miles is all we know of earth.*” *H. W. Paige 1992, p.13*

Various scholars recognize that currently and historically, Outdoor Education has attempted to *fit* into either a framework of curriculum and/or pedagogy (Working Group on Environmental Education, 2007; Beams, Higgins and Nicol, 2012). Quay and Seaman wrote in 2013, “the question ‘What is outdoor education?’ became even more confused in the 1960s, starting yet another cycle and representing, but not reconciling, both sides of the method/subject matter dichotomy.” As a result, Outdoor Education remains one theme amongst many, often vying for relevance in this myriad of others. Habitually, this has resulted in marginalization of Outdoor Education by more dominant themes colonizing the conceptual landscape of curriculum and pedagogy (self-directed learning, inquiry-based learning, etc). Much of the above evidence for TSO is in response to a trend of steady declines in the amount of TSO. This is a legitimate concern that educators need to consider.
Consider how in our busy age of hyper vigilance and risk aversion, parents, communities, and law-makers have grown cautious about time spent outdoor, often described as scary. In 2015, the Washington Post reported the tale of the Meitiv children (aged 10 and 6) who were picked up by Child Protection Services for walking home alone from local parks. The article detailed other similar tales from across the US. School too plays a role in the marginalization of TSO with increased vigilance on risk management. The existence of the BC Schools Protection Program, whose advisory committee is made up of diverse provincial regulatory bodies such as the Principal’s Association, BC School Trustee’s Association, and the BC School Superintendent’s Association, and who publishes an Administrator’s Handbook and regular newsletters around risk topic related to school settings, is an excellent example of the pressure school places on TSO.

This does not even begin to take into account present-day fiscal constraints facing school districts that also limit TSO (fewer field trips, costs of hiring additional staff, purchasing equipment, etc), or ever-increasing pressure on schools around student performance outcomes in standardized assessments such as PISA tests and reinforced in ranking such as those from the Fraser Institute. These trends and pressures often marginalize TSO and a culture of being outdoors for learning.

As a result of these discourses, students end up spending more time indoors than ever, engaged in sedentary behaviour (Tremblay, 2015). Findings by Dr. Mark Tremblay, shared in the 2015 Canadian physical activity “Report Card”, through ParticipACTION, on health for school-aged children found that a staggeringly low,
“9% of 5- to 17-year olds get the 60 minutes of heart-pumping activity they need each day” (p. 6). Statistics Canada data stated, “7- to 17-year-olds in Canada report spending an average of 92 minutes per day outdoors (122 minutes in 7- to 11-year-olds and 72 minutes in 12- to 17-year-olds)” (p. 21). When it comes to schools in Canada, the report stated that only, “55% of school administrators in Canada report having a fully implemented policy for daily PE for all students” (p. 36), and that this number has seen a 50% increase since 2006. The report concluded that, “there is evidence that more physical activity offerings at school are associated with more active children and youth” (p. 37). Schools have important roles to play for TSO.

5) **Outdoor learning- Vancouver, BC- An example:**

Over the past two years I have been researching how teachers may increase outdoor learning in their practice. Toward this end I created the Wild About Vancouver (WAV) Outdoor Education Festival. WAV brings together free outdoor learning events, in the city of Vancouver, that teachers and their classes can attend, and then share with others. The inaugural WAV festival in 2015 had 50 free outdoor events throughout Vancouver offered by 37 different organizations representing 8 distinct categories, and attendance between 1500-2000 participants. Of the schools that participated in WAV 2015, 7 were invited to develop outdoor learning plans for their school. UBC outdoor education students contributed to the formation of these outdoor learning programs. The schools agreed to include a WAV event in the 2016 festival and to invite another school to get involved, paying it forward. 6 of the 7 schools allowed the outdoor learning projects to be posted on the WAV website for others to access. 5 of the 7 schools completed the task of inviting another school. In 2016, WAV had 73 free events, offered by 50 community-based partners, and approximately 3000 people attended. This summer, 4 schools and 2 community-based programs will work with UBC students to develop outdoor learning projects. The WAV example highlights some key aspects of creating a viable diffusion model
for outdoor learning in the following ways: 1) real schools participate, 2) school context is used to create outdoor learning plans that are freely available, 3) current schools recruit new schools to participate (diffusion), 4) UBC teacher education students help develop projects though coursework, 5) WAV events align with teacher education practicum periods, and 6) data is being recorded around dispersal rates and impacts. In just two years, WAV has resulted in impact on practice.

Conclusions and Future Direction: Presently, much educational discourse is tethered to either curricular (what) and/or pedagogical (who) theoretical frameworks. As a result, considerations around where learning happens are evaluated within these scopes. Resultantly, where often goes unnoticed, or is left to the caprices of individual teachers to implement. This is particularly apparent when outdoor where is considered. In light of all the benefits of TSO, there is an imperative to increase outdoor learning. Presently, much educational discourse around outdoor learning is connected to place-based approaches, which attempt to find a home in either curriculum or pedagogy. Clearly there is more attention on outdoor and place-based learning nowadays, however without a recognizable and unique domain for outdoor learning, the present trend around place-based learning may become just another fad. In reconceiving the where of education as a unique and distinct framework, novel opening occurs that acknowledges and legitimizes where as not only meaningful but also ontologically and epistemologically valid (necessarily and sufficient) in/of/by educational considerations. Towards this end, this case for where in educational discourse and practice has been put forth.