

# "Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society ~ Finding Our Ways"

## WECAN Early Childhood Educators' Conference February 10-12, 2023

### In-Person Workshops

In-Person Workshops (In-person attendees choose one two-session workshop)

#### 1. How Can We Approach "Free Unfolding" Without Hurting Each Other?

Brigida Baldszun

During the two sessions, we will practice the eurythmy movements for "Free Unfolding" and explore what can grow out of this. We might even create a new story.

*Brigida Baldszun was educated and trained in Germany. After a career of teaching and performing, she works now as an independent eurythmist.*

Supplies: Eurythmy shoes and a notebook

#### 2. A Practical Look at Creating and Running a Thriving Waldorf Birth to 3 Program.

Jada Berg

Come join Jada Berg, Director of Sweet Clover Nursery, for a slideshow and presentation about creating and running a thriving Waldorf Early Childhood program for infants and toddlers over the past 7 years. Jada will discuss how she and her team designed and run her Birth to 3 program, lessons learned, problem-solving challenges along the way, surviving and thriving through the Pandemic, working with licensing regulations, and being a pioneer Birth to 3 program in the Waldorf movement. Following the presentation, there will be time for discussion, questions, sharing, and supporting each other in this pioneering work. Participants are invited to bring their questions, curiosity, and observations about this important work.

*Jada Berg is the Director and Lead Teacher of Sweet Clover Nursery of Orchard Valley Waldorf School. She was a member of a small team that was instrumental in starting the Birth to 3 program there in 2016. Jada attended Waldorf School as a child, earned her Birth to 7 Certificate at The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth, and completed a Bachelor's Degree in Progressive Education from Goddard College. Jada has been teaching since 2001*

Supplies: None

#### 3. Inclusion Through Ring Games

Nancy Blanning

"Forming a ring" is always a gesture of inviting inclusion. Ring games from many traditions hold the gesture of joining and creating a whole out of many parts. Some ring games also join, separate, wander or journey, and come back home to be part of the whole again. This workshop will explore ring games and work with examples that hold the wisdom of inclusion through the simple and profound act of joining and moving together.

Supplies: Note-taking materials

*Nancy Blanning is a long-time early childhood educator primarily involved in teacher training at this time. Bringing inclusivity into all of our Waldorf early childhood classes is a priority for our social and human future.*

#### **4. Creating Festivals in Changing and Evolving Communities**

Heather Church

Could you imagine creating new festivals based on place and community membership? Could we learn from each other's personal experiences with festivals and be inspired by the origins of festivals? Could we develop capacities that will help us to intuit, transform, and create/recreate new festivals that will meet the continuously changing and evolving communities we live in?

Bring your stories, your observations, successes, and failures with festival life in your own communities. Together we will listen to each other, collaborate, and begin to create new festivals through creative artistic processes and begin to develop in ourselves capacities for new imagination, new inspiration, and new intuition. (some presentation, discussion, sharing, and hands-on exercises)

*Heather Church is a member of the WECAN board and works together with Magdalena Toran as Birth to Three Coordinators in support of birth to three programs, conferences, and teacher training in North America. Heather is active in teacher training and New Adult Learning. In the past, she worked in leadership positions at the Halton Waldorf School and the Toronto Waldorf School and was a WECAN regional representative. She now lives in Gores Landing, Ontario, Canada.*

Supplies: \$5 fee for watercolor paper

#### **5. Turning a Decolonial Lens to Outdoor Education Practices**

Aimee de Ney

Outdoor education and Waldorf early childhood education have just about become synonymous in the past few years. How can we assure that as we take our young children out of doors, we are actively seeking to minimize harm and inequity in our work? In this workshop, we will delve into the histories, stories, and ways of being that have built our relations with lands and each other. With this foundation, we will begin to find new ways of being, relating, and educating our children that move toward generating love, healing, and liberation for all – human and otherwise. This workshop will include a presentation, group discussions, and exercises, and we will likely spend some time outside interacting with our other-than-human colleagues.

Supplies: Come prepared to go outside! Journal and pencils.

*Aimee de Ney is a long-time Waldorf early childhood teacher working with supporting young children and their families to develop reciprocal and loving relationships with the land and her inhabitants, primarily at her school, Bird Song Children's Garden, on the shores of the Salish Sea in Olympia, WA. A puppeteer, storyteller, and student of the land, Aimee is a doctoral candidate whose research centers on developing pedagogy that prioritizes generating loving and healing relationships with the land, other, and self through decolonial land education towards land and social justice. Aimee is currently serving as a WECAN regional representative and is a member of the WECAN I.D.E.A. committee.*

#### **6. Exploring Indigenous Waldorf-inspired Pedagogy: Individualizing the Waldorf curriculum**

Otsistohkwi:yo Elliott and Wahsonti:io Hill

This workshop will take a dive deep into the experimental work being done at Skaronhyase'ko:wa, the Everlasting Tree school, to individualize the Waldorf Early Years pedagogy into a land-, place-, culture- and language-based program that is relevant to the Mohawk community it serves. These processes used by Indigenous initiatives can serve as a model for renewing our relationship with the Waldorf curriculum, finding the essential, questioning the traditions passed down to us, and creating something unique and relevant to our communities. We will work with 7-fold processes of adult learning, encourage discussion around anthroposophy, and create a safe space to inspire new questions on what it means to work with the Waldorf curriculum.

Supplies: None

**Otsistohkwí:yo** is Kanyen'kehá:ka/Mohawk from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. She has taught for over 5 years in the Skaronhyase'kó:wa (Everlasting Tree School) Kanen'shón:'a Early Years program – the first Canadian Indigenous Waldorf Inspired school. She is a graduate of the Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Early Years Part-Time Teaching program, a recent graduate of the New Adult Educator program, a member of WECAN's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access committee, and an affiliate of the Haudenosaunee and Waldorf Initiative.

**Wahsonti:io Hill** is Mohawk, from the Turtle Clan of the Rotinonhsyón:ni, born and raised at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. A mother of 12 and grandmother of 17 with a very large extended family. Traditional practices are a conscientious part of her life. She's had a lengthy career in Rotinonhsyón:ni-determined education since 1986. Wahsonti:io is Ontario Teacher Certified, trained in Waldorf Early Childhood, and has a bachelor of Onkwéhonwe Language Degree.

## 7. Aspiring to Openness

Meggan Gill

Through our burgeoning and lifelong relationship with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, we often find ourselves in ebbs and flows of learning and vigor, stagnation and resistance; fear and frustration, enthusiasm and energy. As we continue along our paths and with our colleagues, we can *aspire to openness*- to ever-changing opinions and perspectives, to giving and receiving feedback and to taking responsibility. This two-part workshop is designed to allow participants to engage in self-reflection and explore well-known meditative and mindfulness practices of inquiry that help sustain us in hard times and give us courage when we need it most. We will also practice preparing for "hard conversations," active listening and explore the anatomy of an apology. We will look at approaches to self-care, how to interrupt (micro)aggressions and setting healthy boundaries versus shutting down.

In order to build the courage and will needed to step into personal accountability, we will approach our time together with a gesture of healing, inquiry and compassion.

Supplies: Journal, comfortable clothes

**Meggan Gill** graduated from the Evergreen State College with a B.A. in Health Sciences and from the Early Childhood Program at Sunbridge Institute, where she now serves as the Director of Education and Organizational Culture. She spent 24 yrs teaching in Kindergarten, Parent and Child, and Toddler classes, moving from the forests of the PNW to the concentrated communities of NYC. Meggan has a passion for teacher training, adult education and mentorship, with a focus on infusing DEI work into all aspects of Waldorf education and institutional workings. She has served on the WECAN IDEA and conference planning committees and a BIPOC advisory group for AWSNA, and is a founding member of Alma Partners. Meggan considers herself a lifelong student and has taken courses through the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, Teachers without Borders, and RISE for Racial Justice. She is currently pursuing her MEd. through

*SUNY, Empire. She is a Certified Yoga Instructor and enjoys finding connections that integrate meditation and mindfulness practices with philosophy and academic learning.*

## **8. Gender Identity in Early Childhood Settings: Our Work with Parents and Children**

Ray Lighthouse

Ray (they/she) will facilitate an authentic dialogue on the topic of gender identity in early childhood classrooms. Participants will be asked to share experiences, stories, and knowledge about gender identity that they have acquired over their years of working with young children.

- 1) How do you define gender?
- 2) What experiences have you had with children regarding gender identity and gender awareness?
- 3) What gender stereotypes are being played out in our classrooms, and why?
- 4) How do we as teachers think about and behave differently towards “boys” and “girls” in our classrooms?
- 5) Is there a place for two-spirit, genderqueer, and non-binary children in your classroom, and what does that look like?
- 6) What changes do you think need to be made (or that you have already made) to the early childhood curriculum in order to be conscious and inclusive of various gender identities?
- 7) Does your enrollment committee/school make enrollment decisions based on sex (i.e. balancing the “boys” and “girls” in the class)?
- 8) Has your school dropped or considered dropping the “Mr.” and “Ms.” prefixes?

Supplies: None

***Ray Lighthouse** has lived in the DC Metro area for 16 years and grew up mostly in the southeast United States. After graduating from the University of Maryland, College Park with a degree in Elementary Education, Ray stumbled upon the Waldorf School of Baltimore at a teacher job fair and immediately fell in love with Waldorf Education. Since that time, Ray attended Waldorf grades teacher training, and has participated in annual WECAN conferences for eight years, worked at Waldorf schools in the DC metro area, and operated a Lifeways-inspired home daycare in Northern Virginia. Ray earned a master's degree in Early Childhood education in 2021. Ray has one child attending Potomac Crescent Waldorf School and another child at Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten & Nursery, where Ray currently works. Ray's hobbies include healing work, writing, handwork, cooking, minimalism, and tiny house living.*

## **9. Woodworking for the Early Childhood Classroom**

Kemal Lowenthal

We will be learning different methods of shaping wood: rasps, carving, sawing, and sanding. We will talk about different projects that can be made with simple tools: boats (shaping and drilling the mast), blocks, animals, etc. We will also explore how to use donated or found wood as well as talk about the properties of different wood species for different tasks.

Supplies: None

***Kemal Lowenthal** is a graduate of Green Meadow Waldorf School with a BFA in ceramics and an MEd in Waldorf Education. He has taught in Waldorf schools for 11 years (Maine Coast and Green Meadow) teaching 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade woodwork, applied arts, and math. Kemal has also been an instructor at Sunbridge Institute for the past three years, teaching in both the Early Childhood and Grade sections.*

## 10. Finding Our Way Together: The journey within and without

Linda Ogden-Wolgemuth, Ph.D.

*“To truly know the world, look deeply within your own being; to truly know yourself, take a real interest in the world.”—Rudolf Steiner*

Each of us learns and grows through the relationships we make in the world, sharing our gifts and making a difference with every encounter. Taking time to review moments of connection can better help us to understand ourselves as well as fellow travelers. Through both individual artistic work and small group discussion, participants will have the chance to connect to their own biographies as well as to learn about those of others. Exercises will include using postcards and creating simple drawings (supplies provided) and will include time to talk with others about one’s discoveries

Supplies: Colored pencils or pastels if possible.

*Linda Ogden-Wolgemuth is a recent graduate of the Center for Biography and Social Art’s three-year certificate program and is currently enjoying serving as secretary on its board and leading biography workshops with individuals and institutions. In her more recent past, she worked as a class teacher, college member, and board member at the Rudolf Steiner School of NYC, where she was also a longtime parent. An alum of Sunbridge Institute’s Elementary Teacher Education Program, Linda joined the staff at Sunbridge Institute as its Director of Education from 2019 through 2022 and continues to serve there occasionally as an adjunct faculty member and workshop host. Linda is graciously embracing middle age by staying active as an educational consultant and by cooking, traveling, theatergoing, and spending time with family and friends.*

## 11. Ensouling Story with Care and Compassion

Janene Ping

In seeking to honor our full world of humanity through storytelling arts with the young child, we strive to create living pictures of care and compassion for *all of the living beings of the earth*. Storytelling arts bridge the implicit with the explicit in education. In this workshop, we will explore how to ensoul this intention of compassion through our words and deeds in this essential aspect of Waldorf pedagogy. Other aspects that will be touched upon include how to learn stories, understanding universal archetypes or capacities, celebrating diversity in world wisdom tales, and transforming traditional fairytales for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Participants are invited to bring a favorite puppet to the workshop... we will end our shared time playing with gestures and movements that demonstrate the workshop’s theme.

Supplies: Please bring a favorite puppet friend from your work with children... If these are too shy to join us, a selection of table puppets, marionettes, and hand puppets from Janene’s storehouse will be available for movement exploration.

*Janene Ping, a kindergarten teacher at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in upstate NY for over 30 years, is the founder of the Magical Puppet Tree Theater and president of the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts. She is also a core faculty member at Sophia’s Hearth Teacher Education Center in Keene, NH.*

## 12. Singing Games

Anna Rainville

Anna has lifted spirits with singing games and group harmony for decades. An experienced Waldorf educator, she travels widely to mentor and teach. Her book, *Singing Games for Families, Schools and Communities*, is cherished by early childhood teachers.

Supplies: None

***Anna Rainville** Singing games are a part of every culture and an invitation to global awareness. Let's increase our repertoire and inclusive flexibility. Come learn traditional and new singing games that celebrate the seasons, develop sensory integration, build community, and bring joy to the dancers in the forest, in the classroom, or even on zoom.*

### **13. A Needle-felted Spring Story**

Celia Riahi

You will leave with all you need for a little puppet play for springtime. We will be felting a caterpillar and a butterfly to go along with a tiny poem and two songs. Then, as a bonus, you will learn how to make lovely coffee filter butterflies with your class.

Supplies: Additional \$35 supply fee for songs, poem, instructions, wool, and felting supplies.

***Celia Riahi** has been a Waldorf early childhood educator for 47 years. She has worked in two Waldorf schools and she and her wife have run *The Cottage Garden*, a Waldorf Home Day Care, <http://www.thecottagegarden.org/>, for the past 15 years. Celia is also a fiber artist, teaches felting workshops, and has both an Etsy Shop and a fiber website, <http://www.cottagegardenfibers.com/>.*

### **14. Social Development of the Young Child in our Time**

Katherine Scharff

There are societal expectations, pressures, and rules of how children are supposed to act. How can we support young children and parents to navigate this world?

We will explore the development of the social and emotional life of the young child, how to strengthen attachment, rhythm, the role of imitation, guidance around clear boundaries, self-initiated cooperation, and conflict. What tools can help us in the classroom and childcare settings to support this development?

This workshop will include presentation, discussion, and experiential exercises.

Supplies: Notebook

***Katherine Scharff** is the Director of Teacher Education at Sophia's Hearth. She has been a preschool and parent-child teacher at the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs and has advanced training in the Pikler approach.*

### **15. Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Doors: Exploration of visual narrative in our classrooms**

Rie Seo

How can we use the pictorial/visual elements in our classroom to change the existing narrative and create a true representation of our children, their families, and the communities? What could we use to create windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors for all children? Together we will explore visual elements in our classrooms, such as picture books, postcards, paintings and felt pictures on the wall, and so on. The workshop includes a presentation of practical examples and a discussion of our challenges. We will then have time and space to create more visually diverse seeds for your classroom. It includes looking through a collection of books to start your picture book library or coloring a seasonal picture of your own with a much wider color palette.

Supplies: A favorite picture book or postcard/painting (for classrooms). A set of colored pencils or crayons if possible. Skin-tone crayons would be wonderful

*Rie Seo is a lead kindergarten teacher at the Waldorf School of Garden City. She holds an MFA in theater design from New York University and a certificate in Waldorf EC training from the Sunbridge Institute. Rie is originally from Japan and is the proud parent of two children.*

## **16. Working with White Children**

Chris Shaw

In this workshop, we will sew a simple, beautiful, Black-skinned table puppet that you can also sew with your rising first graders. We will discover together through presentation and sharing some of the ways very young white children harm their Black classmates and also some of the ways teachers can disrupt or heal racialized harm at the moment and pedagogically over time.

Supplies: \$10 sliding scale

*Chris Shaw (she/her) is one of four cis, white, female, predominantly outdoor, mixed-age kindergarten teachers at the Hartsbrook school in Hadley, Massachusetts. She is the mother of three nearly grown children, a wife, and a student of Abolition and of Anthroposophy.*

## **17. Developmental Movement & Music for These Extraordinary Times**

Lynn St. Pierre

Given the extreme challenges of these last three years, we are seeing developmental delays and gaps in the children. What is it that the children are needing most in these times? What best supports teachers in the daily preservation and overall rejuvenation of our life forces? We will learn Ellersiek plays for the children, adapted especially for these times, and Spacial Dynamics® forms and hands-on exercises to deepen teacher and parent self-care.

Supplies: None

*Lynn St. Pierre joyfully presents developmental movement in the form of loving touch, hand gesture and large movement plays, singing in the mood of the fifth, and Spacial Dynamics® at Waldorf teacher training centers, conferences, and schools internationally. Lynn offers workshops and a two-year deepening program at Star Dance Farm, a retreat center near Ann Arbor, Michigan. Lynn is a certified trainer in the developmental movement for early childhood created by Wilma Ellersiek and a certified Spacial Dynamics® Teacher Trainer. Lynn is the Morning Glory preschool teacher at Eastside Community School in Issaquah, Washington.*

## **18. The Ups and Downs of Self-Regulation During Collaborative Work**

Jane Swain

How do we 'lower our temperature' when we're getting 'hot under the collar' because we don't agree with another's point of view? How do we 'ground ourselves' when we're starting to 'fly away' during a seemingly endless meeting? How do we manage to meet a demanding situation when we feel like we've been 'run over by a truck'? These common phrases capture the essence of the challenges of self-regulation. We will explore very practical exercises from the domain of Spacial Dynamics® which are specially designed to help us further our abilities to self-regulate.

No previous experience is necessary.

Supplies: None

For **Jane Swain**, *Spacial Dynamics* is deeply embedded into her work as a pediatric physical therapist, classroom consultant, and adult educator—as well as into all other aspects of her life. She is a senior therapeutic trainer with the *Spacial Dynamics® Institute* and has studied and taught with Jaimen McMillan for many years. Jane also is an associate director of Sophia's Hearth's EC teacher education courses.

## **19. Enkindling Relationships Through Culturally Responsive Work and Play**

Lynn Turner and Chemay Posavec

In this workshop, we will journey together weaving threads of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access that support healthy rhythms, connections, and joyful learning in our Modern Waldorf early childhood classrooms. We will share our experiences, resources, and questions about what elements are essential to a thriving and joyful classroom that celebrate and empower the diversity and universality of humanity.

Supplies: Journal, comfortable shoes, drawing materials-pencils, pen, coloring pencils, & open hearts and minds.

**Lynn Turner** is a native Washingtonian, wife, mother of two children, and the proud descendant of enslaved people. She has been a culturally responsive early childhood educator, teacher trainer, and leader in the movement of Waldorf Education in Northern America for over twelve years. Lynn currently serves as a WECAN Coordinator of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access. She is also the Director of Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training at Great Lakes Waldorf Institute.

**Chimay Posavec** currently teaches kindergarten at Wildcat Canyon Community School in Northern California, on unceded Ohlone land. She enjoys being outdoors, looking out for red-tailed hawks, butterflies, and coyotes, with her kindergarteners each day. Chimay has helped facilitate IDEA within Waldorf schools for the past few years and finds this intersection powerful and imperative in the Waldorf movement. Chimay also worked at San Francisco Waldorf School, Potomac Crescent Waldorf School, and Golden Bridges School. She enjoys hiking, yoga, painting, and reading in her free time. She currently serves on the WECAN I.D.E.A. Committee.

## **20. Harriet and the Stars: Implicit and Explicit Storytelling**

Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton

How do we create stories of *Inclusion* and then transform them into puppetry? How can we open the hearts of young children through stories that embrace diversity and positive representation of *all*? Can we begin to explore what is *implicit and explicit* through *thinking, feeling, and willing* in our storytelling? How do our stories embrace cultural diversity and positive self-identities that will plant seeds and nourish souls for the future?

We will explore these questions through engaged and heartfelt conversation and learn how to create I.D.E.A stories and transform them into lap plays for very young children and table plays with standing puppets for nursery & kindergarten. Leslie will also discuss the inspiration, creation, and development of *Harriet Reaches the Stars* and will have on hand the marionettes from Friday night's performance.

Supplies: Journal, pen, drawing paper, colored pencils, crayons. Feel free to bring a sewing kit & materials from home to make one standing puppet of your choosing. I will have limited supplies on hand.

**Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton** is currently a WECAN Coordinator, a member of the WECAN EC Research Group, and a member of the core faculty of Sound Circle Center in Seattle. A lifelong Washingtonian, she taught Parent/Child & Three Day Nursery programs at Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten & Nursery School for more than 17 years. Leslie mainly spends her summers traveling abroad or at her beloved beach home in

*Chincoteague Island, VA with her family and lifetime friends. Leslie loves handwork, storytelling, seeing the world with a broadened perspective, and Art. Her beloved son Matthew will graduate this May from Vassar College.*

## **21. Cultivating a Festival Life that Embraces an “And, Also” Approach**

Meagan Rose Wilson

How do we as teachers consider how we might create a festival life within our classrooms that

- attunes the children in our care to spiritual and cultural parallels and differences (Diversity)
- regularly honors and acknowledges what community members, classmates, and friends are celebrating (or not) at any given time each year (Inclusion)
- consistently reflects and includes festivals and traditions other than the ones the children celebrate at home (Access), and
- disrupts cultural norms which center the importance of some holidays or festivals over others (Equity)?

This will be a presentation with lots of time for individual reflection, journaling, and contemplation.

Supplies: Paper or Journal and pen/pencil crayons etc.

***Meagan Rose Wilson** is a parent educator and author of the now-retired seasonal *Whole Family Rhythms* series. After finishing a BA, she went on to complete her Foundations in Steiner Education and Anthroposophy at Sydney Steiner College, as well as her Waldorf Early Childhood Certification at the Rudolf Steiner Centre in Toronto. She has received her certification as a Simplicity Parenting Family Life Coach and has supported hundreds of parents to create a strong family rhythm unique to their own values and culture. She has four young children currently attending the Toronto Waldorf School. Meagan provides resources, support, and information to parents who are looking for a bridge to cross between their unique family life and their children’s (often but not always) Waldorf schools.*