In most of my writing the term inside, outside and beyond has been used to focus on location, a site for play and learning with the natural world to occur. This framework is useful in that it provokes people to consider the relationship between locations and how the nature pedagogy we develop influences that relationship. However, in this article inside, outside and beyond goes further to have a second metaphor. Inside is within self, the emotions and thoughts each of us has, that may be termed the soul. Outside represents our relationship with others, the living and the non-living aspects of the planet that we encounter. Beyond, is the unobservable, the undefined web of in betweenness that stretches across the observable and unobservable aspects of our lives. The sense of spirit that many people feel when they allow themselves to be with nature we encounter. Beyond, is the unobservable, the undefined web of in betweenness that stretches across the observable and unobservable aspects of our lives. The sense of spirit that many people feel when they allow themselves to be with nature.

Nature is complex in its presentation as a term, as it is used to describe both the physical world and a force or phenomenon. In this writing I view it as a force or phenomenon of the metaphysical world and as that I suggest that there is an interrelatedness between all parts of the natural world; that it is in constant movement, flux and adaptation; that it is living.

With this as the working definition of nature, how can we not allow children to cover a leaf in paint to make a picture and say we do nature pedagogy. We need to observe and play a part in the leaf’s journey from growth to death and into the unobservable stage of its participation in the whole ecosystem. Whilst the leaf has grown and died, our human journey has been alongside it but in a different time frame of adaptation and change. All humans are in a constant state of becoming something else, just as the trees, rocks and sand are constantly changing so are we. I suggest that children benefit from being in this natural location, not as a panacea for all ills, but as a situated, complex location that varies across lived experiences. In these locations all of us have a wide variety of encounters with the rest of the natural world. These expand the meshwork (Lefebvre 1991) of experiences that create an understanding of everything from a raindrop to a vast desert.

In short, nature pedagogy for me is a relational way of teaching that embraces the art of being with nature inside, outside and beyond. It places humans as an integral part of the natural world, that have an unobservable and observable relationship with the living and the non-living aspects of it.

These values of nature pedagogy run beneath the many models of nature-based education, not all of which acknowledge the non-living and unobservable world. In some cases the models we chose to follow limit the time children have to be with the natural world, models of practice can over structure the experience to such a degree that the empowerment and voice of the child is suppressed and therefore the relationship is altered; the resources used mimic the natural world through being the same toy but made of wood so that the pedagogy has not changed merely the material the toy is made from. These, I suggest, are examples of educational reductionism. In this thinking, the natural world is seen to only to be a resource, rather than a relational context, resource and location.

When humans objectify the natural world, they view it as something other than them. In this perception humans view themselves as supreme and can easily nullify themselves to the impact their behaviours have on the planet as a whole. When we consider some of the smallest words in our repertoire such as in, for, about and with, they have a massive impact on our pedagogical thinking. If we say as humans we are in nature it suggests that we can go to a location and visit it, and yet in a relational pedagogy it focuses on the connection between things. How can you visit something that you are a part of? When we say we are for nature does that mean we are eco-centric, or that our environmentalism excludes humans as something other than nature. In expressions such as learning about nature, we study it as something apart from us as humans. In this pedagogy, leaves are to be studied in a scientific way, to be classified and objectified in order to define and name them rather than to explore how they relate to each other. Learning with nature (Warden 2015) framed nature pedagogy as more than bush kindy, a walk in a park, or playing in the outside area, it seeks to engage educators in a more inclusive pedagogy for the 21st century to connect us through a meshwork of practice values rather than silos of nature-based identities that can create elite, divisive and hierarchical practices.