

# **Affective Education: The Pedagogical Possibilities of ‘Feeling it Through’**

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## *Abstract*

This essay will argue that education, as a practice, and as a relationship between teacher and student, must redefine itself with ontological questions in mind. Locating the question of what it means to “live well” within educational philosopher Sam Rocha’s ontological “Trinitarian lens”, we become more aware of, and attentive to, the context of being, the subsistent life forces, and the material existence that define who we *are*. It is no less than a dedication to *knowing* our students, of talking *to* them, as opposed to *at* them, and returning to them as they are. Rocha’s Trinitarian lens implies that educators must adopt new ways of desiring, sensing, and seeing.

This paper will incorporate some of my reflections on my experiences as a mentor and tutor to Native youths in Winnipeg’s inner city who are affiliated with gangs and live a ‘gang life’. My experience has taught me the importance of ontology, and how educators must push themselves beyond thinking about education in a purely epistemological framework (teaching to *know* rather than simply to *know-about*). Interrogating some aesthetic and embodiment theories, I will argue that the perceptual world is crucial to an ontological approach of learning. Paying attention to the perceptual allows us to better understand the subsistent forces that flow through us and reflect our desires and fidelities through our bodies and thoughts. Such ontological concerns have obvious impacts on formal education, but they also force us to embrace new ways of being that transcend the classroom. Such ontological concerns are on the minds of today’s leading Indigenous thinkers and activists, and central to the theory and practice of decolonizing our minds and lands. The ontological question of ‘knowing thyself’ is crucial for realizing healthy communities.