

unlearning colonial habits of being

FOREST WALK INVITATIONS



acknowledgements

These invitations were created through and on the lands of the Coast Salish Peoples. Specifically the Stolen, Unceded and Ancestral lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tseil-Waututh) and Snuneymuxw Nations.

These walks are directly inspired by the waters, trees, stones and histories of these places. As uninvited guests on these unceded lands, it is our responsibility to acknowledge our complicity in the ongoing genocide and ecocide of the colonial project as well as our accountability to work towards actively dismantling colonial structures within and around us.

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contents page

the invitation	4
why forest walks?	5
caveats	6
root practices	7
how to work with the walks	10
<u>the walks:</u>	
re-turning time	11
privilege, at whose expense?	18
property and (own)ership	23
cellphone / self-on	29
sensing at the edges of lifelines	35
inner-landscape walk	43
falling to pieces	49
weight of waste	55
(re)membering	62
bibliography	68

the invitation

This series of forest walk invitations offers 10 exercises of (un)learning based on excerpts from texts written by Indigenous authors that call for a decolonization of our ways of thinking, feeling, relating, sensing, and imagining.

Each walk consists of an introductory excerpt or text from an article by Indigenous authors, a step-by-step invitation, and reflection questions. Each article-excerpt invites you into a deeper understanding of the violence that coloniality¹ inflicts on land, Indigenous Peoples, and our collective existence. The excerpts were chosen for their ability to invite us into thinking, sensing, and imagining otherwise.

The walks are designed to expand our collective capacity to:

- face and navigate complexity and uncertainty;
- sit with difficult and uncomfortable issues without feeling overwhelmed and immobilized;
- see ourselves as entangled with land as a living entity who is bio-intelligent without selecting to connect only with what is beautiful and elating about it
- hold space for the good, the bad, the ugly, the broken, and the seriously messed up within and around us.

This recalibration work requires practice, discipline, and stamina. In this series, we start with invitations that are more familiar and gradually increase potential discomfort. Re-wiring our thinking and neurophysiology can be painful, frustrating, and overwhelming at times, but it is all part of the (un)learning process.

¹ Coloniality is also a habit of being that conditions how we exist in society, relate to each other, land, time, death and to living. It is how we feel and respond emotionally to what is happening within and around us and engage intellectually with our social realities. These are the realms where we can be (un)trained and stretched. But this requires deep unlearning of behaviours that are both conscious and unconscious.

why forest walks?

The impacts of colonialism are evident in various ways, including the occupation of lands, the subjugation of peoples, and the delegitimization of ancestral knowledges. Colonialism represents a way of life that transforms land into mere property and resources, assigns value to individuals based on their contribution to "progress," and rewards those who align with its agenda with privileges, comforts, and buffering from the realities of violence. Our current livelihoods are underwritten by colonialism, both locally and globally, which perpetuates violent and unsustainable practices of property ownership, economic production, overconsumption, and "waste" disposal.

Challenging colonialism at systemic and political levels is extremely difficult due to its entrenchment in the laws of settler Nation-States. While contestations at these levels are vital, they alone are insufficient. It is crucial to recognize that systemic and political transformations must also address the embodied nature of coloniality and colonialism.

To effectively contest colonialism, engagements must go beyond the systemic and political spheres and consider the ways in which colonialism is deeply ingrained in our bodies and personal experiences. This entails critically examining our own attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, perceived entitlements and desires that have been shaped by colonial legacies. By acknowledging and understanding the conditioning of the body and the unconscious in relation to colonialism, we can begin to identify, destabilize and transform the internal structures that perpetuate these harmful dynamics.

important caveats

I. readers come from various social, cultural, and economic backgrounds and, therefore, some invitations will be more or less relevant depending on the persons

We encourage you to discern your positionality, where knowledge may or may not apply to you and also when to stretch your comfort zones. We do not see these walks as universally applicable—they were designed to expand the sensibilities of those from low-intensity struggles who were conditioned within modern, colonial ways of being, thinking, and relating.

II. acknowledgement of access to ‘nature’

Not all people will have the possibility of visiting a forest due to the systemic inequality of (in)access to urban ‘green spaces’. We encourage you to use your creative license to engage with these walks in the spaces you have access to.

III. acknowledgement of (dis)abilities

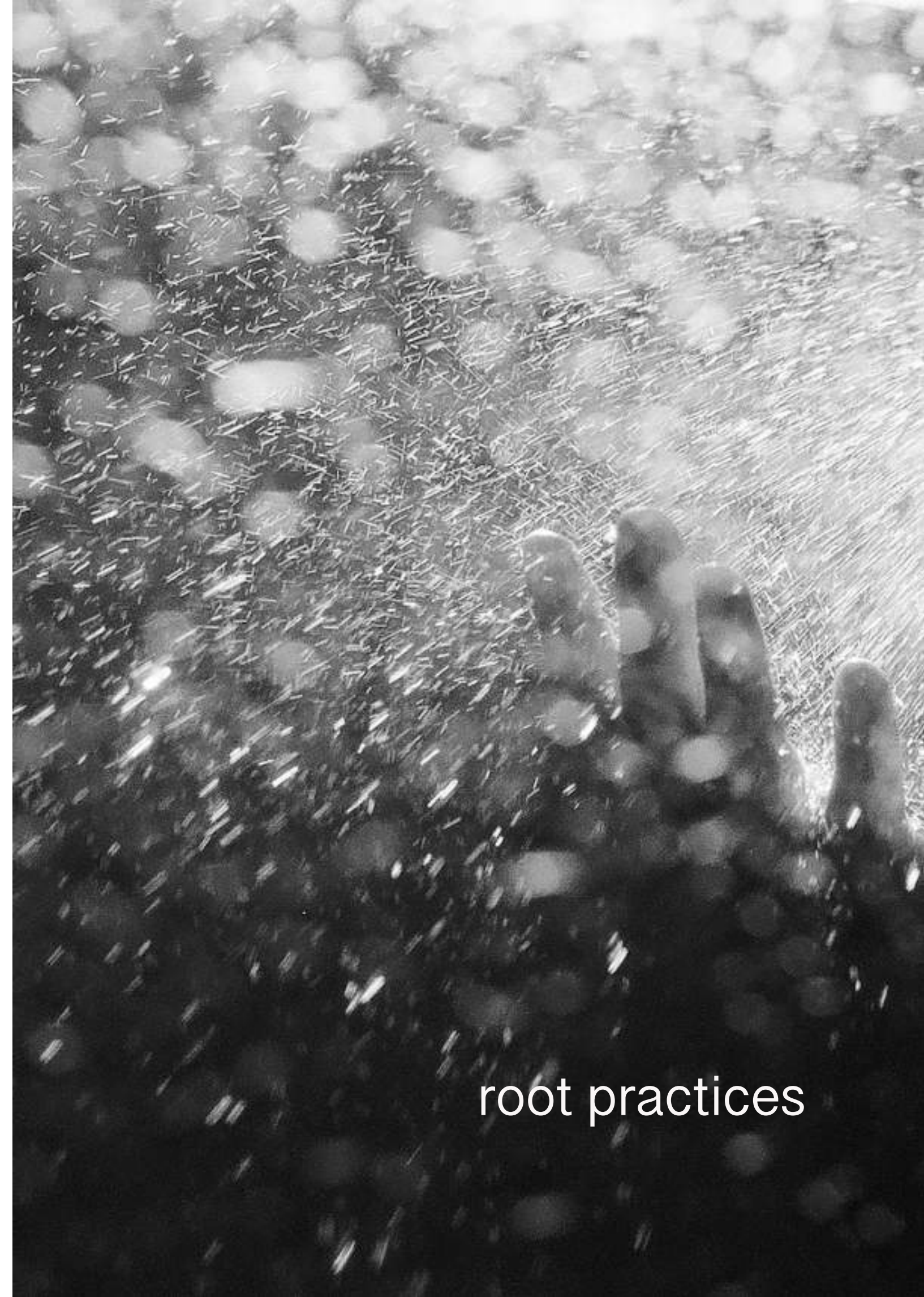
These exercises were not designed centering the experience of those living with (dis-)abilities. This is in part due to lack of accessible and safe forest spaces for differently abled folks, and a significant limitation of this series. We encourage you to use your creative license to engage with these “walks” in the spaces and ways you are able to.

IV. acknowledgement of diverse Indigenisms

Every walk opens with a quote from an Indigenous author. It is crucial to acknowledge that there are digressing opinions and ways of being between Indigenous Peoples as well as within each Nation and community. Therefore it is important to be cautious against tendencies to Pan-Indigenize as well as to idealize Indigenous Peoples as those that hold all the answers for our complex times.

V. acknowledgement of Place

Many of us have been educated within the negation of the existence of Peoples other than ourselves that share the same spaces. Conversely, Indigenous ontologies emphasize the co-existence of beings other than ourselves in these shared spaces. Therefore, we invite you to consider ethical ways of learning from the Peoples who are the traditional custodians of the Lands where you live or where you will walk.



root practices

ROOT PRACTICES

Learning and practicing something new is often awkward and difficult, especially when starting alone. We have created a series of root practices that might support breaking through the discomfort of unfamiliarity. These root practices serve as an introduction for anyone who may be new to invitations of sensing otherwise.

We sit with the following questions:

How has colonialism limited the ways you experience the world, the scope of your relationships, and what you can imagine as real and ideal?

What practices can help us to heal the ways we relate to each other, to the Land and to our own selves in these hyper-complex and uncertain times?

Try one of these invitations everyday, for minimum 3 days:

WATER

1. How many times a day do you encounter water? In your everyday life, take time and pause before you interact with water (washing hands, drinking, showering etc).

a. In this pause, can you bring awareness to the waters (inside and outside you) and how they sustain you

b. Offer your thanks through a pause, saying “thank you” or simply acknowledging. Perhaps say the word for water in your language

c. Reflect on this practice after 3 to 5 days

2. Before you take a sip of water in the morning (eg. water, coffee, tea, etc), pause and try to think about all the water in the world—oceans, clouds, rivers, vapour, waterfalls, springs, dams and water tunnels—polluted and clean, domesticated and free. Water in plants, other than human beings, and your own body. Pour some on the earth, or for your house plant in acknowledgement of all the waters. Then drink, and pour the water into yourself. What happens when you do this every morning? Reflect on this practice after 3 to 5 days.

FOOD

3. If we prioritize relationships in the way we see and relate to the world, your food carries all the relationships involved in its existence. Imagine all the relationships that might have gone into your food, including harmful relationships with the Earth, labour, plastic, storage, transport, and resale. Instead of measuring your food in calories or nutrients, for a week, you are invited to measure your food in relationships. Try this by holding your plate in your hands and reflecting on all the relations for one minute, in silence, before eating. Observe what this practice activates in your body and whether it compels you to relate differently to food.

4. What is our relationship to the nutrients of the Earth that fuel these bodies? When eating your next meal, try to:

a. focus your attention on the process of the food becoming part of your body-system

b. follow the ingestion from your mouth to your bowels, bringing awareness to all the nerves, hormones, bacteria, blood and organs of the digestive system that process the foods and liquids you drink and consume everyday; and, then, ask yourself: what larger (violent and otherwise) systems are we consuming when we consume these foods and liquids?

how to work with the walks

The walks are best facilitated in pairs or wider groups, but they can also be done alone.

When working with them alone,

read the invitations aloud and try to pause between sentences. Take time to sense the invitation, let them land in your body, reading sentences multiple times if need be.

If you sense that the invitations have unconsciously become a cognitive instruction, slow down. Let go of the exercise for a moment and try to tap into your surroundings again before returning to the place you left off at.

When facilitating in groups,

assign one person as the facilitator. When reading, remember to be attentive to the experiences of participants. This means giving them enough time between instructions for them to sink into the invitations.

re-turning time



re-turning time

themes: time, whole-body intelligence, re-calibrating relationships

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“North America’s old growth engaged in a cultural relationship with the minds and spirits of everything that once existed and still exists in the spirit world. Yet diminishing biodiversity augers against the continued capacity to know how to think with everything. The principle that every being participates in everything immunizes against anthropocentrism and through a satisfaction with Creation, offers a conscious humility that keeps humans in their place of thankfulness, respect, and appreciation. This ensures Creation’s continuation. Humans think at their best if they know they are the last beings created. Literally, after all, humans are totally dependent on everything else.” – Roronhiakewen “Dan Longboat” and J. Sheridan, 2006

overview:

In modern/colonial times we are conditioned to relate to time as a linear, progressive, clock-based resource that needs to be optimised so that it can be used “productively”. This walk invites you to relate to time and narratives of history differently. You will also be invited to consider how the narratives we subscribe to and benefit from are directly related to privilege, systemic violence, and the im/possibility of different futures.

This walk consists of 3 parts. In Part A you will go on this forest walk invitation (this can also be done in a park in a city, if you don’t have access to a forest). In Part B there are reflection questions. Then Part C is an optional artistic invitation to deepen reflections.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART A: in the forest

1. when you have arrived in a safe space or clearing in the forest, walk half speed slower than you would normally.
2. bring your attention to your feet and pay attention to the contours of the ground. As a poetic invitation to arrive here, try to listen through your feet to this place. Walk for as long as you need to arrive.
3. as you walk, try to pinpoint yourself in the Stories of these lands. Think about all the peoples, other-than-human, animals, and all the other beings who have moved through here (in the soils, on the ground, in the air, and through the skies).
4. walk consciously with all of these layers until you intuitively find somewhere to stop.
5. from this place, imagine it transforming through multiple seasons—expanding time and place with your mind's eye.
6. *take a deep breath in.*
7. now, focus on one being within the forest (eg. a rock, plant, tree, or patch) and try to reverse the strings of time around and through this being. See the vegetation grow backwards. Slowly at first and then increasing speed. Keep going back hundreds of years.

how has this place transformed? What, and who, has lived here?

8. sense how the ancestral people of these lands lived. (Be watchful of desires to romanticize or detach yourself from this Story.) If you know the names of the Peoples in which the territories and lands you occupy are, speak them aloud now.

9. see the hardship, the ceremonies, the conflicts, the love, the heartbreak, the compassion, the pain, the joy, death, humour, spite, and jealousy. See the Stories told, twisted or forgotten. Think about how the land has held space for everything that happens.

10. close your eyes, and pay attention to your breath. See if you can feel these Stories with your skin. Sense and feel about how the land has held space for everything that has happened. All the Stories interwoven, birthing, growing, decomposing, and all the Stories told, untold, and yet to be told in this place you find yourself being.

Where in your own thoughts does this memory begin and end? Who taught you this version of history?

11. now, trace time towards your being in this forest.

How did you get here? What stories have you been carrying?

12. from this place, within and around you, take 30 seconds to be still. Thank the being you were meditating upon for their presence, then continue your walk while trying to integrate these layered stories.

13. when you feel that your walk is done, come back with the lessons you may have been gifted and give thanks to the forest.

PART B: reflections

How have colonial systems limited the ways we sense and relate to time and to our intergenerational responsibilities?

What practices could expand the ways we relate to time and activate an irresistible visceral form of responsibility towards ancestors past and present?

For settlers and visitors:

Whose historical narratives are you unknowingly or knowingly telling? How can expanding your sense of time change the way you relate to the lands you are on?

If we are participating in the ongoing occupation of stolen Indigenous territories, what steps do we need to take to correct the historical wrongs of our ancestors?. What work do we need to do on ourselves to become genuine allies and accomplices in Indigenous struggles?

artistic invitation:

Write a note, prayer or poem addressed to the forest. If you feel comfortable, invite a friend to do this with you and share your notes as a pedagogical exercise.

Begin the note by introducing yourself to the forest and lands where you stand:

What are the lineages you carry and/or that carry you?

How did you end up here?

Why are you here?

What are your intentions and aspirations?

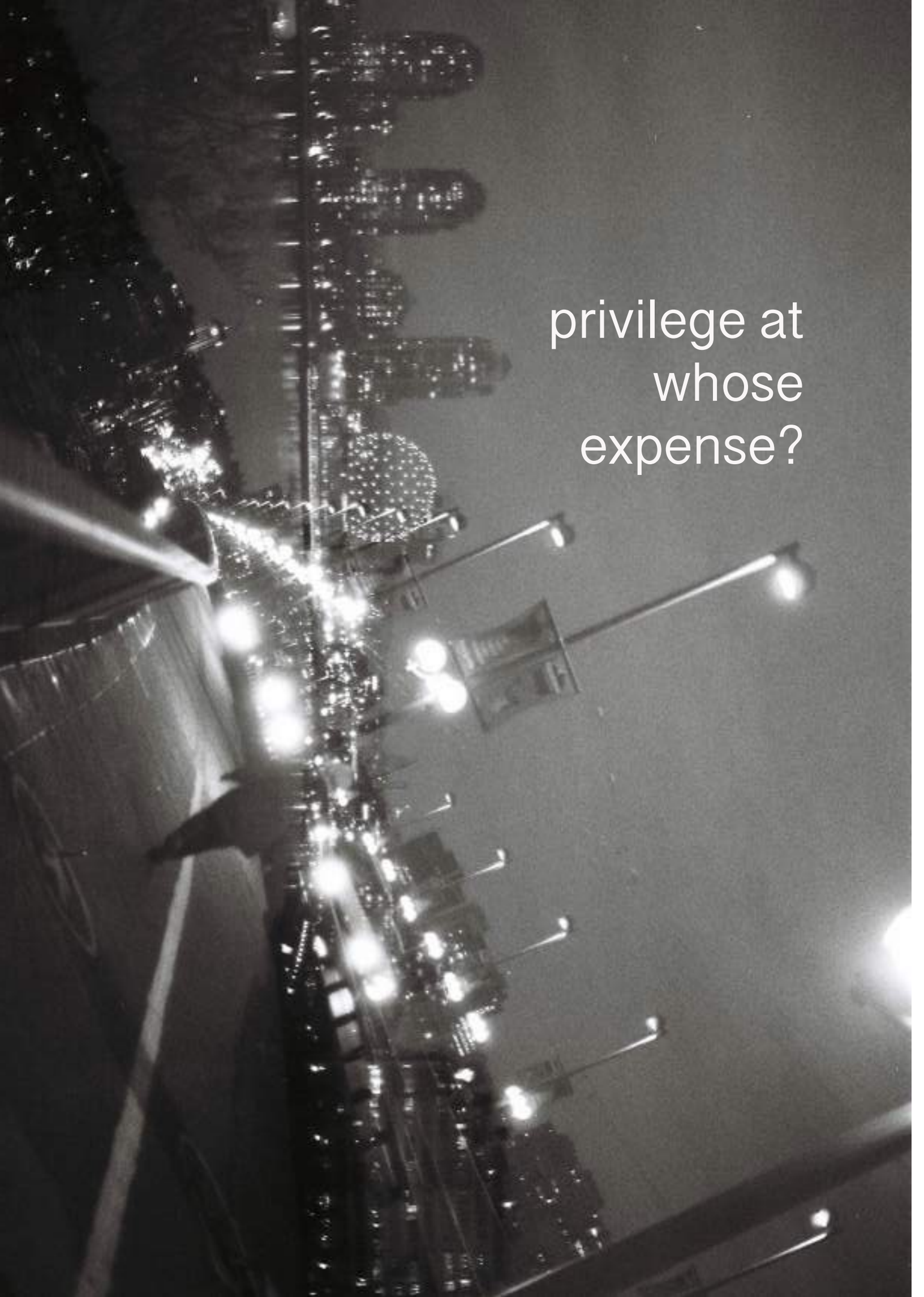
On the other side of the page:

What is your relationship to the Indigenous peoples of these lands or the lands from which you come?

What do you know of their histories and “herstories”?

Reflect on how your presence in this place we call Canada, or the nation-state you are in, has impacted the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

Have you thought about your responsibilities towards the Earth as a living organism and towards the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples around the world?



privilege at
whose
expense?

privilege at whose expense?

themes: responsibility, complicitness, consumption, entanglement

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

In North America many Indigenous traditions tell us that reality is more than just facts and figures collected so that humankind might widely use resources. Rather, to know “it” – reality – requires respect for the relationships and relatives that constitute the complex web of life. I call this Indigenous realism, and it entails that we, members of humankind, accept our inalienable responsibilities as members of the planet’s complex life system, as well as our inalienable rights.”

– Daniel R. Wildcat, 2009

overview:

This forest walk invites you to consider how your comforts and securities are directly related to the violence that happens towards the land and other bodies. You will be invited to consider what daily and intergenerational imprints you are leaving on the planet.

This exercise requires you to go for a walk with two important numbers that may be difficult to carry:

- 1) the number of planets we would need if everyone had your lifestyle and
- 2) the number of modern slaves that your lifestyle already requires.

This walk consists of 3 parts. In Part A you will calculate your footprints at home. In Part B you will walk with the weight of these numbers in a forest (or a park in a city, if you don’t have access to a forest). Then you will close with Part C: Reflection questions.

what you will need: inky marker/pen, internet (before forest walk)

PART A: before the walk

1. at home calculate your ecological footprint and your slavery footprint. These numbers can be calculated at: www.footprintcalculator.org and slaveryfootprint.org
2. once you have calculated these numbers, use a marker/inky pen to write these numbers on the palm of your hands. One hand for the number of planets needed to support your life, one hand for the number of modern day slaves working for you.
3. with these numbers on your skin, go for a walk in the forest.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART B: in the forest

1. walk around the forest for 15 minutes. While walking, hold close the numbers on your hands and the excerpt.
2. in order to make the numbers present in your walk and real for you (so that you do not get distracted), find ways of representing them in your walk (for example collecting leaves that add up to the numbers, counting trees, steps, or number of breaths you take).

How does it feel to carry these numbers?

What do these numbers ask you to do?

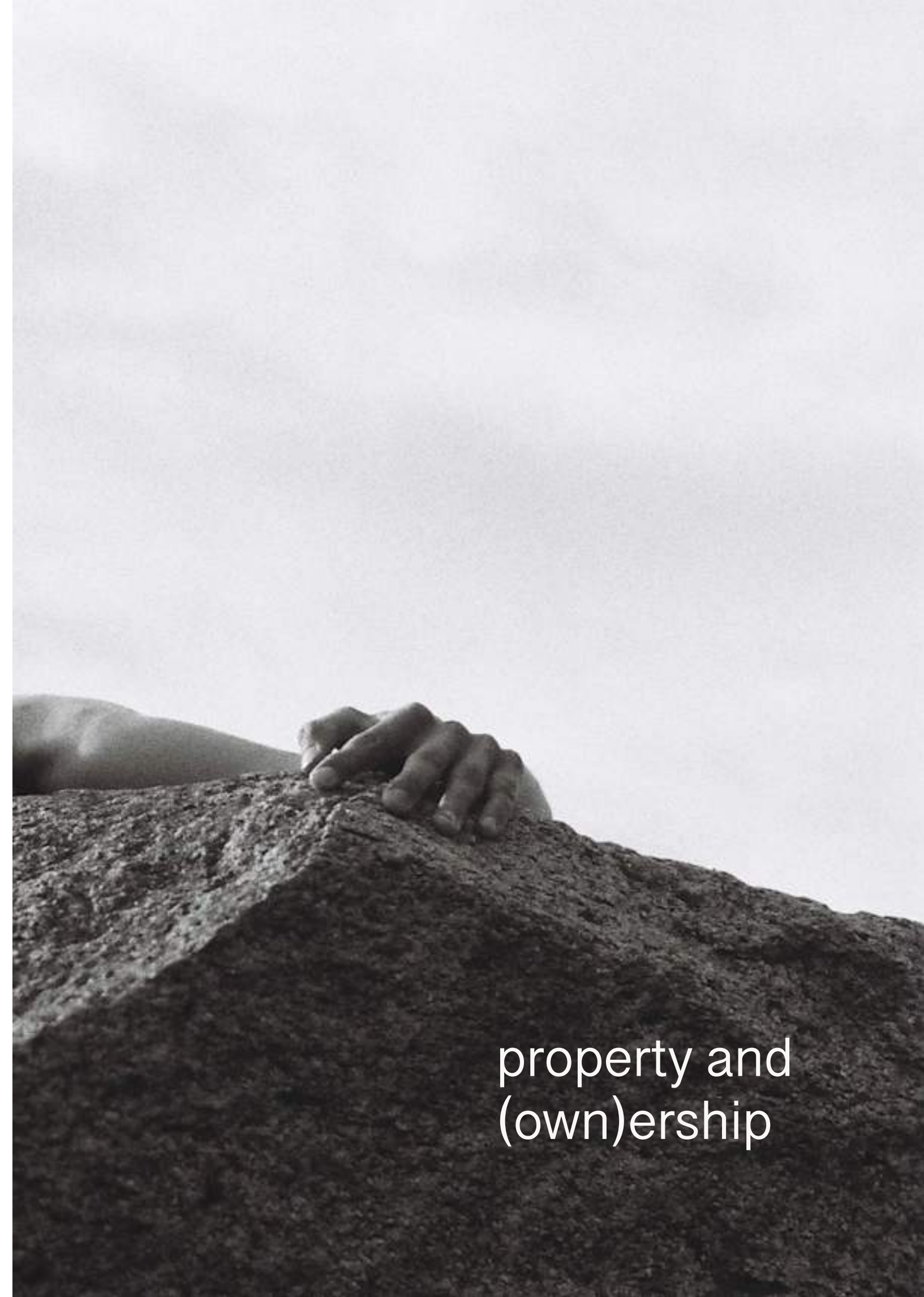
Reflect on your formal education so far. How often (if ever) have you had to think about these numbers before? What does that say about our educational institutions and how they create and maintain violence and denial?

PART C: reflections

On your way back, walk in silence holding the teachings that this encounter may have gifted you.

- Reflect on the ways you resisted carrying these numbers during the exercise (with deflections, distractions, anger, frustration, dis-identification with the exercise). What range of responses showed up in the exercise (e.g. desire to "fix" the problems, confusion, sense of being overwhelmed)? Try to sit with the different responses without investing in them.
- What is our responsibility to the land and the planet? What is our responsibility to future generations? How do we become good ancestors for all relations?

If you are a settler or an (uninvited) visitor, remember your responsibility to this land as Indigenous territory - the place you are in is ancestrally connected to the bodies of the Indigenous People(s) who have lived and have stewarded this place since time immemorial.



property and
(own)ership

property and (own)ership

themes: ownership, validation, possessiveness, entitlements

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand, in this article.) Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. This is why Patrick Wolfe (1999) emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event. In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage.” – Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang, 2012

overview:

This forest walk invites you to question relationships to property, possession and possessiveness. You will also be invited to consider how colonial impositions of property/ownership condone violent relationships to the land and ourselves.

This walk consists of 3 parts. (Part A) You will bring an item from your home to the forest (or a park in a city, if you don't have access to a forest) and walk with it for about 20 minutes or until you find a space where you can do the exercise (Part B) in a safe way. Then you will return with the reflection questions (Part C). This should take about 40 minutes of your time

what you will need: an item you own from your home

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART A: in the forest

1. before you walk into the forest remember to bring a small item that you own from your home and carry it to the forest with you.
2. walk for 10-15 mins in the forest until you find a safe place to begin this exercise (such as a clearing or an open stand of trees).
3. feel the warmth of your hand interacting into this item. Inquire with your touch about the texture, weight and shape of the item.
4. as you walk around the forest, visualize the story of this item, from its own standpoint while holding it in your hand. *How and when did this item find its way to you?*
5. reflect on all the human-led processes that had to happen for this item to be extracted, shaped, altered, transported, and at some point owned by you. Relate to this item as an entity made of parts of other living beings: this can include paper or wood (trees), plastic (decomposing plants and animals), metal (mountains and waters), etc.
6. if there were processes of extraction, manufacturing, and transportation, it is highly likely that there were human-bodies involved in such processes. It is highly likely that those bodies were overworked and underpaid. It is likely that those bodies seen as property are exploited in the name of profit. *If you own this item, do you own these processes too?*
7. still holding the object, continue to walk until you encounter some being in the forest that resembles, in some way, the item you have brought. It could be a rock that resembles in colour, tree bark that resembles in shape, texture, weight, smell, sound, or any other quality. Try not to over analyze this step—let it come to you.

8. place the entity/being you brought from home next, or close, to this other being on the forest floor. [pause to observe]

9. consider the question of ownership once again.

Would you say you own the being in the forest? How come you own one and not the other?

Whether that be a person, a nation-state, an institution, or a group of people, is the forest you are in their property?

10. now, ask yourself, who are the people who are intergenerationally related to the place you inhabit today? Whose lands were stolen and claimed as settler property? If you can, speak their name out loud now. (If you do not know, we invite you to do some research and learn of their Stories.)

11. leave the being of the forest where it is and continue your walk through the forest.

12. if any discomfort has arisen, try not to react to any sensations and simply observe and witness. If need-be, place your hands on the land to help hold this.

PART B: reflections

On your way back, walk in silence holding the teachings that this encounter may have gifted you. Hold space for the following question:

What are the illusions of property that exist today in order to sustain your privilege, comfort and sense of security? How is this related to perpetuating violence upon the Land, Indigenous Peoples, and people whose labour is exploited?

Further thoughts and reflections:

Reflect and write down reflections from at least 1 of the following questions:

- For those who have the privilege of owning or inheriting land (that is stolen): trace back the processes that had to happen for that land to become property and eventually become your property. Ask yourself, do you really own that land? Are you willing to also 'own' the violent histories that enabled this "ownership?"
- Read your reactions, refusals, entitlements, and defence mechanisms when asked for tangible reparations to give land back.
- Whose property is your body? Do you own your body?

cellphone / self-on



cellphone / self-on

themes: technology, consumption, entanglement

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“Mohawk grandmother and traditional midwife Katsi Cook teaches that, “women are the first environment.” She also explains that in the Mohawk language, one word for midwife is *iewirokwas*, which means, “She’s pulling the baby out of the Earth.” These teachings describe how the waters of the Earth and the waters of our bodies are the same; for better or for worse, there is an undeniable connection between the health of our bodies and the health of our planet. Violence that happens on the land is intimately connected to the violence that happens to our bodies.” – Women’s Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2016

overview:

This forest walk invites you to experience the land differently and to consider how the violence that happens to the land for the sake of our comforts is also violence towards our bodies. You will also be invited to consider how technology is intertwined with both systemic violence and the possibility of different futures.

This walk consists of 2 parts. You will walk in the forest (or a park in a city, if you don’t have access to a forest) for about 20 minutes or until you find a space where you can do the exercise in a safe way for you, that is also considerate towards others. Then you will return. This should take about 50 minutes of your time.

what you will need: a cellphone with a camera

PART A: in the forest

1. enter the forest. Walk for 20 minutes or until you find a place (a clearing or space) where you can do the exercise.
2. once you find a safe place to perform this exercise, take your phone out. Turn the camera function on and hold it right in front of you. Resist the temptation to take photos or videos. Use the camera to notice your surroundings. Try to connect to what is around you only through the small screen of your phone for the next 3-5 minutes. Notice if there is any compulsion to “capture” something with the camera. Observe it and let it go.
3. once you get used to observing what is around you without the desire to capture or consume, check through the camera if something in your surroundings is trying to catch your attention. It can be a stone, a trunk, a slug, or a stick. It may not be “beautiful” in the way you understand beauty. Once you find that something who is trying to connect with you through the screen of your phone, get as close as possible with your camera.
4. come even closer, as close as you can without the image blurring.
5. now begin to follow the shape of this being closely through the screen of your phone. For example, if it is a branch, follow the branch with the camera, slowly looking at its intricacies, until you find a part you relate to deeply and stay with it on the phone. Again, resist any urges to capture.
6. now remove the phone quickly from your line of sight and look again without the screen.
7. now with your eyes, notice the differences.

8. as you look, notice if there are any changes in your body. See this other being who, in their own way, is also seeing you.

- *What other senses are returning now?*
- *Can you notice differences between seeing, sensing and connecting?*
- *Can you notice differences between seeing the being in front of you as an object or as an entity that is also seeing you?*
- *Can you hold your gaze without consuming this being?*

Stay with this sensation of *seeing* this being, who is *land* looking back at you. Close your eyes and hold this sensation.

9. now focus on your sense of **touch**.

- hold your phone with one hand, stretch and touch this being with the other hand. Touch in a way that the touch itself asks permission. **This is land**. Sensing for temperature, texture, respectfully investigate.
- with your other hand holding your phone, bring your attention to the metals in your phone. **They are land too**-from all over the planet. lands that have been subject to resource-exploitation, modern human-slavery and long supply-chains of violence. Violence that subsists on accumulation of profit on one end, and poverty on another. Land that has been transformed into the mega-tool you hold now.
- bring your attention to yourself, **you are also land**. Your bones, skin, flesh, hair, the food being digested, your thoughts, all your fluids, blood, saliva, snot, urine are made up of and sustained by the same: the land. You come from land and one day will return to land.

[pause]

artistic invitation: cellphone / self-off

10. whenever you are ready, turn the camera of your phone on again for a selfie of a different kind. Try to create a picture of this encounter that de-centers yourself and your ideas of beauty. *What would be photographed if the land around you could take the picture?*

11. try to make a photo of the land of you both through the image. Try to shape your body to be in alignment with this being, not the other way around. How can you move in ways that make space for this being's own existence to come through, as opposed to changing it for your socialized ideals of beauty?

12. take only one picture, and thank those (human and non-human) who have taken part in this learning experience with you.



PART B: reflections

On your way back, walk in silence holding the teachings that this encounter may have gifted you. Hold space for the following questions:

Where does the land end and begin?

What would it take for people to shift from a paradigm of separation that treats the land as property or resource, to the realization that the land is a living entity, that we are part of it, and that what happens to the land also happens to our bodies and communities?

What is needed to continue to un-numb to the pain of the land in all of us?

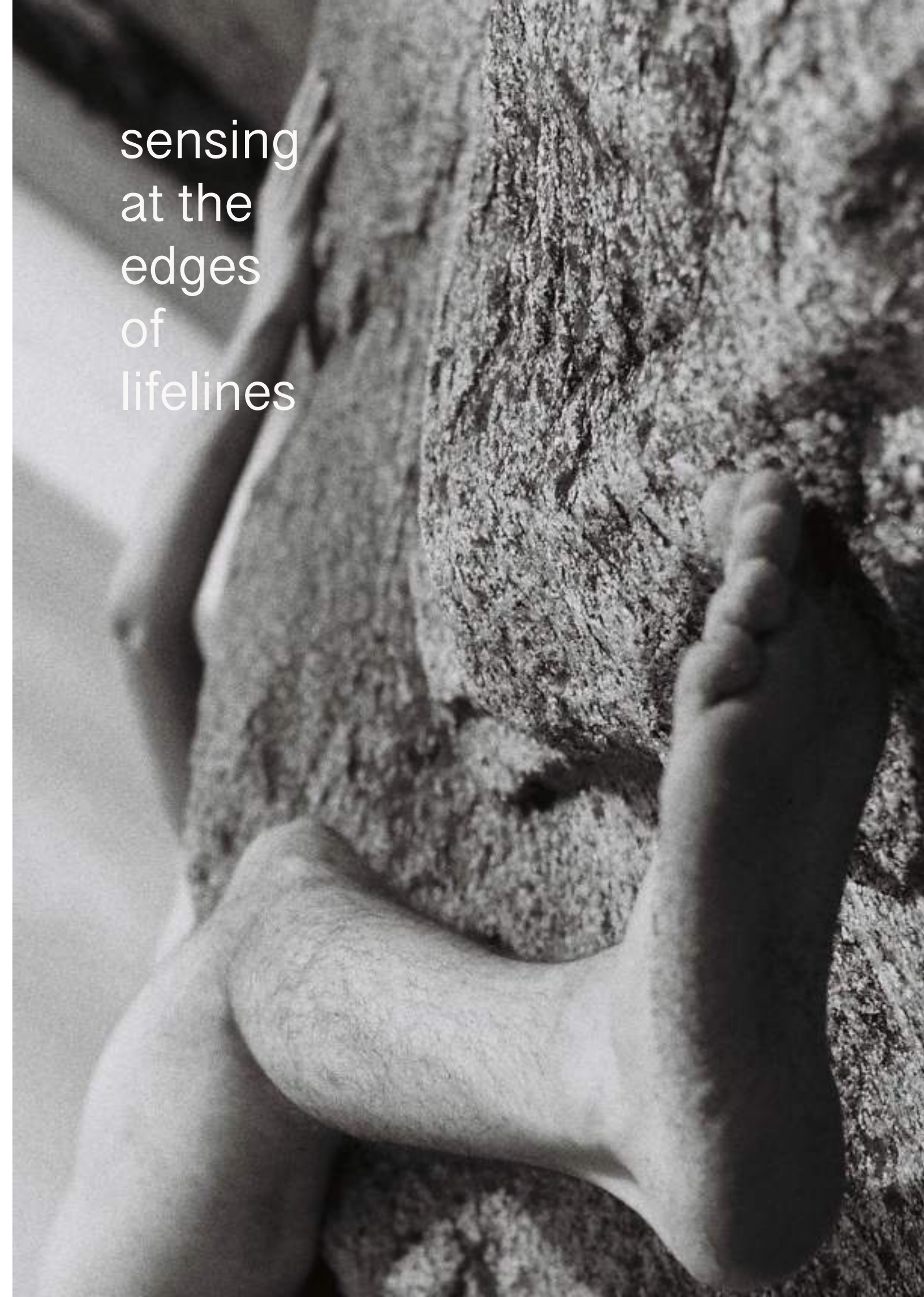
This exercise has invited you to start to see the connection between the technology available to you and the violence that the land suffers so that you can have access to this technology. For example, the minerals in the device you are using right now were mined in ways that dispossessed Indigenous

communities, contaminated the land and exploited the labor of multiple people in the production and supply chains. There are also other aspects of informational technology that contribute to the continuity of violence and unsustainability.

Further thoughts and reflections:

- How does information technology feed hyper-individuality, vanity and systemic narcissism? How does it fuel our desires for aestheticization and validation?
- How does it encourage and reward us for treating everything (including knowledge, experiences and other people) as objects of consumption?
- What role does it play in dissociating us from our senses? What layers of perception get flattened by a compulsive use of digital technology? Reflect on the difference between seeing, sensing and connection.
- How does social media reinforce the walls of our identity, further intensifying our sense of separation?

sensing
at the
edges
of
lifelines



sensing at the edges of lifelines

themes: time, expanding history, intergenerational, ancestral and multispecies relationality

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“Grandmother and knowledge-keeper Sherry Copenace and Dylan Miner have discussed with me the Anishinaabemowin (Neshnabé´mwen) expression aanikoobijigan (yankobjegen). The expression means ancestor and descendent at the same time (Copenace, 2017; Miner, 2017). This meaning suggests an Anishinaabe perspective on intergenerational time—a perspective embedded in a spiraling temporality (sense of time) in which it makes sense to consider ourselves as living alongside future and past relatives simultaneously as we walk through life.

Spiraling time, for me in this essay, actually refers to the varied experiences of time that we have as participants within living narratives involving our ancestors and descendants. Experiences of spiraling time, then, may be lived through narratives of cyclicity, reversal, dream-like scenarios, simultaneity, counter-factuality, irregular rhythms, ironic un-cyclicity, slipstream, parodies of linear pragmatism, eternity, among many others.”– Kyle P. Whyte, 2018

what you will need: pen/cil, colored pen/cil, paper

overview:

This forest walk invites you to expand your sense of intergenerational relationality with humans and your ancestors differently. You will also be invited to consider how human and more-than-human, past and future, ancestors are inseparable from the land and from complex colonial histories. You will be asked to hold different layers of time, history, and responsibility, as well as the possibility of different futures.

This walk consists of 3 parts. (Part A) With a piece of paper and a pen, you will walk into a forest (or a park in a city, if you don't have access to a forest) for about 20 minutes or until you find a space where you can do the exercise (Part B). Then, you will return and reflect (Part C). This should take about 40 minutes of your time.

REMINDER : take 2 pen/cils (of different colors) and a piece of paper to the forest and walk for 20 minutes or until you find a place (eg. a clearing, bench, etc) where you can do the exercise in Part A.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART A: in the forest

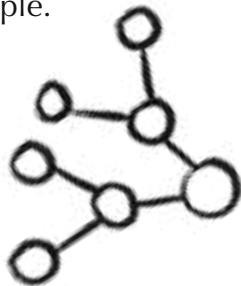
1. find a comfortable place to sit in the forest and take out your pens and paper.
2. on the centre of a piece of paper, draw a circle that represents yourself. Take a moment to reflect on who you are and all that this circle represents.



3. now, draw two other circles next to yours—these represent your parents. Draw lines from your circle to theirs to represent your connection to them.

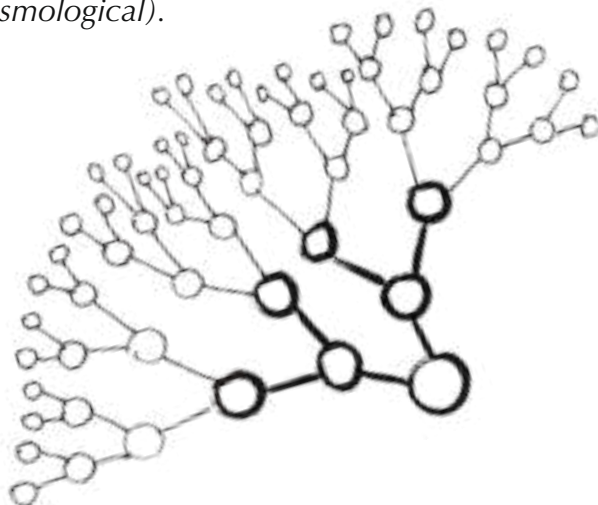


4. continue to web your matrilineal and patrilineal lineages outwards, connecting two more circles representing your grandparents. Go only as far as you can remember the names or stories of these people.



5. when you don't know the names or stories anymore, stop and switch the color of your pen (color is represented here by a thinner line). Continue to grow the web, circle by circle, until you reach the seventh generation back.

**take your time in this process, acutely sensing into the stories of these people. Each circle is a life with struggles, relationships, and complexities (physical, social-political, ecological and cosmological).*



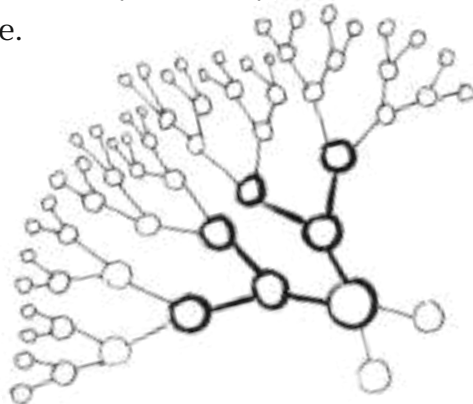
6. while looking at this map, can you sense into all the foods, lands, peoples, wars, migrations, waters, rage, hope, sacrifices, violences, and memories that kept these people alive and, in turn, enabled your life. *Try to sense into the thousands of generations of life you are connected to in your every breath.*

7. now, take your pencil and poke holes through most of the circles in your page. Make sure the holes are large enough to see through them.

8. hold the page up against the light and look through. Play with the distance of your eye with the page, notice how the patterns of forest beings fill the spaces. Sit with this image and reflect on the relationship of your family with other species.

[pause for reflection]

9. now bring the paper down again and with the same color, draw two more circles next to the circle that represents yourself—these are your future ancestors. These entities do not necessarily need to symbolize your own children, but they do represent the generations to come.



10. now, draw seven generations forward. Remember, they are also the next generations of waters, trees, other animals, air and foods that are inseparable to the living and survival of all species.



11. Sit with the following question: *How long until the harm in multispecies relationships is irreparable?* Notice any emotions that may arise without investing in them.

12. now, holding your ancestral lines, begin to make your way out of the forest and begin Part B.

PART B: walking back

13. as you walk back, try to sense how you are not alone. All the previous ancestors are here too, walking with you. They are holding your steps and, likewise, you are the inheritor of their breath.

make sure not to romanticize them. Take responsibility for their mistakes, especially the harm that enabled your lifestyle, and learn from them so that you can only make new mistakes in the future.

14. now, bring all your future ancestors in front of you. Do not romanticize them either. Know that your choices and investments in this lifetime will largely determine theirs—both human and non-human.

15. as you move, collapse the distinction between past, present and future (it is all happening at once), sense the pull of ancestral, relational responsibility in every direction. Feel the ways in which you are not walking alone in this forest. All of your ancestors, past and future, human and more-than-human, are walking with you.

[pause for reflection]

16. walk in silence holding the teachings that this encounter may have gifted you.

PART C: reflections

Reflect or write down reflections from at least 1 of the following questions:

- This exercise is still a linear and flattened map, how can this be imagined in Whytes' invitation to perceive spiralling and rhythmic time?
- What do you know about your affective intergenerational inheritance - the unprocessed traumas, fears and other emotions that have been passed down through generations? How might this inheritance be influencing some of the ways you show-up in the world today?
- What are ways to tap into the intergenerational resilience you have also inherited from your ancestors in order to show-up with more maturity, sobriety, discernment, and accountability in the world?
- What is the connection between broken multispecies relationships and ecological balance and survival? How can you uphold and advocate for our non-human relatives?

inner-landscape
walk



inner-landscape walk

themes: stamina, whole-body intelligence, overlapping crises, entanglement, multi-layered selves

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“The problems of exploitation, expropriation, and ecological destruction are related to hopes and dreams of unending exponential economic growth and consumption, dreams that are only realistically available for one seventh of the population. As we approach the biophysical limits of the planet and the economy becomes increasingly unstable, the desires for continuity or even expansion of this futile dream are prompting dangerous responses: intolerance, volatility, social polarization, fragmentation, and the rise of populism fuelled by the mobilization of hate. This nervous “pressure cooker” situation has taken a huge toll on our global mental health. Indigenous practices of entanglement with the land can offer a different possibility of relationship with reality. However, non-Indigenous people have often instrumentalized these practices for consumption, stress relief, personal development, and self-actualization. In addition, many people engage with Indigenous communities looking for convenient answers and resonances to suit their own agendas. This often happens without consideration of issues of historical violence or cultural translation, which can further entrench harmful colonial relations.” – Cash Ahenakew, 2019

overview:

This forest walk invites you to sense the separation between humans and the land as an illusion. You will be invited to re-member that violence on the planet is violence to ourselves, and vise-versa.

This walk consists of 3 parts. You will walk in a forest (or a park in a city, if you don't have access to a forest) for about 10 minutes or until you find a space where you can do the exercise (part B) in a safe way. Then you will return with the reflection questions in Part C. This should take about 30 minutes of your time.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART A: in the forest

1. enter the forest. Walk for 20 minutes or until you find a place (a clearing or bench) where you can do the exercise safely.

2. when you have found that space, take a moment to sense into your body. Try to take a few breaths in to help you arrive.

3. take your attention to your left ear and visualize yourself as a tiny being about to crawl inside yourself through your huge ears. Feel the viscous feelings of crawling through. Try to let go of anatomical illustrations you have seen before and allow yourself to inhabit this space without the distraction of the intellect or even of 'creativity'. Now start making your way down inside yourself. Maybe you are going down some stairs, down a rope, a slide, or climbing downwards - see what appears for you, don't try to make it into what you would have preferred it to be.

4. as you take your next step into the forest imagine you are entering your inner landscape, the one that you just climbed into (e.i. the forest floor as your flesh, the atmosphere as your memory, the sky as conscience, the stars that you cannot see during the day as the unconscious , etc). For a few minutes meander the forest with that layered awareness of this space as an internal landscape within you.

5. notice the extent to which you are projecting yourself upon this space rather than sensing into the invitation to see yourself as an extension of the land. As you observe your relationship to imagination reflect on the ways in which colonial systems have limited the scope of our imagination and predefined its role.

[pause for reflection]

6. now, inside this layered forest, find a place where you feel familiar or safe. Here, take your shoes off and use your hands to carve a hole in the soil and bury both your feet in the ground. (if this is not possible, simply take your shoes off and place your feet on the ground).

7. from here, read the following facts about the intersecting crises we are living in¹

a. **There are 26 years left until the earth runs out of food** if global food systems are not transformed. There will also be 3,302,386 Tons of food lost or wasted today.

b. **Over 37,000 species are threatened with extinction today.** That is 28% of all assessed species in the world.

c. **There are ~40,300,000 Enslaved people in the world right now.** 40 million people in modern day slavery is three times the total number of enslaved African people sold during 400 years of transatlantic slave trade.

if you notice resistance, reluctance or a dissociated mental response to these facts, try to take three deep breaths in. Reading each word very slowly helps bypass some cognitive barriers that stop us from feeling these realities.

8. sit with the following questions:

- *If “progress” is defined as modernization and modernization is inseparable from colonialism, is it really progress? How is the illusion of linear progress blocking us from recognizing the failures of colonial-modernity?*
- *what are the numbing strategies that prevent us from recognizing these difficult truths?*

9. try to let these facts land and move through your body. Ask the land around your feet, (which is both you and more than you), to help hold this.

What happens when we trust our bodies and the land to hold these facts, these pains and hard truths? Stay here with your feet planted in your inner-forest.

¹ Last Updated May 2023. Source: TheWorldCounts.com


PART B: reflections

On your way back, walk in silence holding the teachings and openings that this exercise may have awakened. Hold space for the following questions:

- What painful and violent realities are you not willing to see and feel? What relationships (human and non-human) can help build the stamina that keeps us from being overwhelmed and/or dissociated?
- What comforts and securities keep us in denial from seeing the magnitude of the problem? Are you willing to question the entitlements and narratives that we have been conditioned within? Where is there resistance? Where is there space?
- In sensing the levels of illusion we exist within, how can you critically approach histories of colonialism and the narratives and myths set in place by so called 'canada' (or the nation state where you are located)?

Sit with this quote for further reflection:

“And just as stories that want to be told find their tellers, the expression across species diversifies itself by thinking in the consciousness of all beings. One need only keep company with coyotes, wolves, or foxes to know this with certainty. Yet as the experience of biodiversity wanes, so wanes the capacity for thinking with nature and beyond species-specific consciousness.” (Longboat and Sheridan 2006, pg 371).

A black and white photograph capturing a massive, dense field of clouds, likely a volcanic eruption or a powerful storm. The clouds are thick and billowing, filling the entire frame. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the texture and volume of the cloud mass. The overall mood is one of immense scale and potential destruction.

falli
ng
to
pie
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falling to pieces

themes: stamina, whole-body intelligence, entanglement, multi-species accountability

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“What we contemplate here is more than ecological restoration; it is the restoration of relationship between plants and people. Scientists have made a dent in understanding how to put ecosystems back together, but our experiments focus on soil pH and hydrology—matter, to the exclusion of spirit. We might look to the Thanksgiving Address for guidance on weaving the two. We are dreaming of a time when the land might give thanks for the people.” — Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013

overview:

This forest walk invites you to reconsider the at times useful, but ultimately inaccurate, belief in the separation between our bodies and the broader metabolism from which we all emerge and to which we will all return.

This walk consists of 3 parts. You will walk in a forest (or a park in a city, if you don't have access to a forest) for about 20 minutes or until you find a space where you can do the exercise in a safe way for you that is also considerate towards others. Then you will return. This should take about 50 minutes of your time.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART A: breathing

1. enter the forest. Walk for 20 minutes or so focusing on the sensation of breathing.
2. breathe in through your nose for 4 counts, pause for 4 counts, and exhale through your mouth for 4 counts. *Pay attention to the expansion of your chest, the rise of your shoulders, the feeling of your diaphragm pushing against your belly and navel.*
3. although it is common to think of air as “nothing”, it is a fluid, similar to water, with weight, texture, and odour. It can be cold, warm, hot, humid, or dry. It can feel fresh or stale. The air you breathe is composed of approximately 78 percent nitrogen and 21 percent oxygen. This fluid enters your lungs to exchange the oxygen particles in the air with the carbon dioxide particles in your bloodstream. On average, we inhale/exhale about 16 times per minute - over 23,000 breaths per day.

If you realize you are no longer being attentive to your breath - consciously return back to it without judgment or pressure.

PART B: exchanging

1. now that you have spent some time witnessing your breath, experiencing the sensation of flow in and out of your body, and reminding yourself of the gas exchange occurring at the cellular level, look around and notice if there is a plant that catches your attention.
2. gaze gently in the direction of the plant and ask permission to approach. If you feel consent is given, get close to the plant. Sit and breathe with the plant. [pause for observation]
3. in your mind's eye, picture the flow of fluid between your body and the plant. Remember that the oxygen that is released by the plant is the oxygen that is entering into your lungs, diffusing into your bloodstream, and being delivered to your cells where it is used to make energy, to keep you alive and whole. It is becoming a part of you. It is you, as you are them.
4. sit with the plant and send them your gratitude.

Next, remaining in resonance with your plant companion, consider the insight offered by Andreas Weber (2017, p. 57) in his book, *Matter and Desire: An erotic ecology*:

“Do you still remember your days in school when the biology teacher drew the so-called citric acid cycle on the board? The circle of biochemical reactions details the central “energy motor” of every cell. (...)The carbon atom does not come from the ingested nourishment. It comes from somewhere else, from the cell itself, from the cell’s own body. So metabolism means. I subsist on what becomes my body, and I exhale into the air what was my body. I am the grain of the field that died for me, and I die constantly and transform myself into what the plants inhale, such that my body becomes their new bodies. The organism is a closed being and at the same time matter flows through it. Matter drifts through the bodies of a vast array of organisms...the circle of life on Earth depends solely on the fact that we all share in the great body of matter and pass through one another reciprocally.”

4. exhale. Feel the stream of breath leave your mouth. The carbon that is leaving your body is a little bit of you. When you exhale, you are literally falling to pieces, releasing your material self back into circulation, to be enmeshed with your relations all around you.

In our journey towards decolonizing our minds/bodies, institutions, and societies, we will need to pay closer attention to which patterns of material and social metabolism need to be interrupted.


If we are already experts at letting our bodies fall apart, so much so that we don’t often realize what is occurring, can we trust our metabolic intelligence of disintegration to release our violent colonial habits of being?

5. take a few more moments to breathe with this plant. When you are ready, thank this plant for their time, attention, and oxygen, and begin the process of returning to your starting point.

PART C: reflections

On your way back, feel yourself falling away. Think about the pieces of you that are constantly being left behind everywhere you go, 23,000 times per day (more or less). Hold space for the following questions:

- If we are in a constant state of ingesting and releasing matter, where does your body end and the outside world begin?
- If the misconception between the separation of our bodies and the external world is valid, what other myths of separation can you think of that are operating unchallenged in the modern world?
- What harmful entitlements stem directly from the illusion of separation?



weight of waste

weight of waste

themes: complicitness, building radars, stamina, decluttering

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“My sister from another mother, Mama Maria, is from Valle Sagrado in Peru. She is Quechua and lives in a place called Pincheq, near Pisac, in a piece of land at the top of a steep hill. When we found each other 20 years ago, that land had three small adobe buildings. The one with the thatched roof was the kitchen, and it had been built by her great-grandma 100 years before. The other two buildings, with tin roofs, were small bedrooms that also worked as living areas. There was no toilet on site. None. When I visited, she would insist that I take one of the two adobe, tin-roofed buildings for the length of my stay, while the rest of the family (5 people, including small children) would sleep in the other building. I always felt embarrassed to be taking up so much space and tried to argue my way out of it, but there is no arguing about hospitality with Mama Maria!

Another thing that made me feel really uncomfortable in the beginning was the toilet protocol. Every night, Mama Maria would bring a bucket to my door with a huge smile on her face. In the morning, I was expected to hand her back the bucket with liquids and solids inside. I am convinced the huge smile was there to disarm me – she knew I would try to resist letting go of my bucket and she was ready to gracefully and humorously stand her ground. The first time she came for my bucket in the morning, I refused to hand it in. She insisted. I felt really attached to my bucket. I hugged it close and told her that I would dispose of the contents myself. She wouldn't let me do that. She explained to me that I would not know what to do: that the liquids would go in one place, with one type of potato peelings, and that the solid stuff would go somewhere else, in another compost pile that served a different purpose. Besides, it was rainy and muddy and the terrain was steep, so it would definitely be more work for everyone if I fell and broke my ankle, than to just hand in the bucket.

I knew I could not win that argument. I had to put my pride and vanity aside and surrender the bucket. In our relationship, the practice of handing in the bucket, and later of holding the bucket, were to be repeated copious times; both literally and metaphorically. [...] The project of the house of modernity is about achieving perfect form: efficient functionality and maximum regulation, including sanitary regulation. The intention is to control nature and to achieve timeless permanence; to defeat decomposition and death. In order to do that, the house of modernity needs to hide the shit. Flush toilets are a great way of doing that. Flush toilets have been designed to sanitize our metabolic reality. We sit comfortably, dump our shit in clear water, and with a magic flush the shit disappears. It is taken “away” forever. However, if we can pause for a second our sense of separability inherited from modernity, in order to see the planet as a dynamic metabolism, we may realize that there is no “away”: our shit goes somewhere even if we don’t know exactly where or face any responsibility for it.

Without flush toilets, Mama Maria knew what to do with liquids and solids in my bucket—she had metabolic literacies that modernity had deprived me of. It was clear in this case that my privilege was also a loss of capacity to “read” a lot of things. In this sense, modernity’s toilets make us illiterate—we lose the capacity to read what comes out of our bodies and how that part of us goes back into the land to feed other beings that in turn feed us as well. Without practices of metabolic literacies we cannot see ourselves as living metabolisms nested in wider metabolisms. Having the flush toilet as the “most civilized” practice of shitting is a terrible idea from a metabolic perspective. Flush toilets reinforce the belief that we are separate individuals entitled to poop comfortably, to send shit away with the water, and to not have to ever think about it again. Metaphorically speaking, this aversion, avoidance, and lack of ability to compost shit may be what got us into the mess we are in.” – Vanessa Andreotti, 2021

overview:

This forest/city walk invites you to consider how you relate to the 'waste' you produce – both organic and non-organic. You will be invited to reflect on your capacity to see the planet and yourself as interconnected metabolisms and to evaluate your metabolic literacies – to evaluate to what extent you are capable of reading the dynamic processes around you and to what extent you are prepared to compost shit.

This walk consists of 3 parts. In Part A, you will read part of a story from the book *Hospicing Modernity* about how the author learned to relate differently to what we call waste. In Part B, you will walk with the visibility of your waste in a forest (or a park in a city, if you don't have access to a forest). Then, you will close with Part C where you will be invited to reflect about digestive practices.

what you will need: container/bag to keep your waste

PART A: before the walk

1. for two days, collect all your 'waste' from your trash-can (the waste that will end-up in the land-fill) by placing the objects in a separate container. Notice if your consumption patterns change just by this invitation.
2. your task is to visit the forest/city carrying this bag of 'waste' in a visible way. Notice any feelings that may arise in relation to the people who you encounter. If you have to take public transport to the place of your walk, you may need to find creative ways to bring it with you.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

PART B: in the forest

1. walk around the forest carrying the bag of 'waste.' Notice any feelings of shame that may arise such as frustration, embarrassment, anger, and/or humour.
2. as you hold this bag, start paying attention to the sensation of its weight. Now, sense into all the other "wastes" you produce that are not in this bag right now: the CO₂ and greenhouse gases that are byproducts of our lifestyles; the toxins in our urine from antibiotics and hormonal products; the chemicals in our dish soaps that poison the water ways; sound, air, and light pollution; etc. *Can you feel the bag getting heavier?*
3. as you keep walking around the forest with this bag, notice if you feel like it is a burden. Do you have the urge to throw it "away?" Remember that when we 'dispose' of 'waste,' we are only re-distributing the burden to the land: plants, fungi, other animals, and humans who work and live in/from landfills. When we throw stuff 'away,' it does not disappear. We are just hiding it.
4. now, notice the ways in which matter is transformed in this forest.

PART C: reflections

On your way back, think about the fact that everything that you put in your mouth is either already dead, or dying, and will be decomposed. Or, is alive and will add to the living ecology of your guts. Everyday, each person poops an average of 500gr of fecal matter. We have around 7.8 billion people alive today—you can do the arithmetic yourself.

Another interesting fact is that many cultures have prayers for things that go into our bodies, but not for what comes out. Across cultures, we have practices of gratitude towards those responsible for bringing the food to our tables. Some cultures also pray for the food to give them health and strength to be in service of others. However, what would a prayer look like for what we return to the earth? Who or what would you be grateful for? What could be a good prayer for your shit and the land that will receive it (think beyond your own digestion)? If everything is sacred, pooping should not be an exception. What do you think your toilet socialization has given you and deprived you of? The next time you need to go to the toilet, pause for a while as things are brewing and contemplate that part of you that will be released in a metabolic cycle that does not stop with the flush.



(re)membering

(re)membering

themes: stamina, whole-body intelligence, entanglement, multispecies accountability

Indigenous insight/hindsight/foresight:

“The Honorable Harvest, a practice both ancient and urgent, applies to every exchange between people and the Earth. Its protocol is not written down, but if it were, it would look something like this:

Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek. Abide by the answer. Never take the first. Never take the last. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Take only what you need and leave some for others. Use everything that you take. Take only that which is given to you. Share it, as the Earth has shared with you. Be grateful. Reciprocate the gift. Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the Earth will last forever.” — Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2020)

overview:

The first part of this exercise starts at home. We invite you to engage in a way of fasting that is healthy for you. Examples of variations are eating only after sunset and/or 1- 4 days without food and/or water. It is up to your discernment to choose a length of fasting that is a healthy and safe challenge for you. If fasting from food is not an option for you, we invite you to fast from words; this is often called a ‘silent fast’. Many different cultures fast for different reasons including recalibrating their relationship to and respect for food, water, and spirit, offering hunger as sacrifice or as a way to remember that food affordances are temporary.

In the current and intensifying food crisis, it is important to learn to fast while it is still optional. If fasting is a choice for you, this choice comes at the expense of humans and other species who do not have access to food as a result of the violent and unsustainable food systems in place.

PART A: beginning

1. the fast will begin right after you have had your last meal. Eat this meal with as much presence as possible, don't just consume it. Try to pay attention to the sensations of eating, as well as where these foods came from.
2. while fasting you are encouraged to keep a journal with you to reflect on what you are noticing within yourself, your cravings, your patterns and your thoughts.
3. once you have completed your fast, you are invited to break your fast in the forest by bringing a piece of fruit or broth with you. Only turn to the next page once you are about to enter the forest.

suggestion towards learning consent and reciprocity:

Many Indigenous communities do not make a distinction between objects and subjects, or humans and nature. The rivers, the mountains, the trees, other-than-human, animals, and the forests themselves are experienced as conscious entities who are much older relatives and who, like human beings, require engagements based on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability.

Therefore, we invite you to consider your relationship with the land where you will do this exercise, be it a forest, park, or the paved streets of a city. Before you start the walk we suggest that you establish contact with the land by requesting “safe passage,” which is a way of asking permission to experience it as a relation, rather than an object to be consumed, a property to be owned, a resource to be used, or a benefit to be enjoyed. Then, try to offer something in reciprocity. The offering/request can be quite simple. For example, you can request permission to enter and offer a song, or berries, or a flower. You can also request inspiration and guidance and offer your labor in service to the land as a form of reciprocity. Listen with your whole body for a response from the land—sometimes you can be told it is not a good time to proceed.

remember to bring the food (i.e. fruit, broth) that you will break your fast with.

PART B: breaking

1. walk around the forest *slowly* for 20 minutes and notice how your senses might be different - how are you perceiving sound, light, your own gravity, and the presence of other beings in the forest?

2. find a place where you can sit in order to break your fast. Before breaking the fast, sit with these questions:

a. reflect on how 'green spaces' are often created and curated to present a version of 'nature' that is beautiful, consumable, predictable and convenient. think about how you habitually engage with this place in instrumental and transactional ways (i.e. to 'de-stress' and relax) as opposed to encountering it in all its complexity—sitting with the pain, the historical ecocide, and the unknowability of all the life and death that is present here.

b. how can you engage with this place in ways that repair and weave interspecies relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and accountability?

3. as a gesture of interspecies accountability, you are invited to offer half of your fruit or broth to the forest before you take your first bite or drink. Only after the offering has been made can you break your fast.

PART C: walk back

As of May 10th, 2023, scientists say we have 26 years left before we run out of food on this planet unless our current food practices and systems change dramatically. Our global food system is one of the greatest causes of deforestation, biodiversity collapse, and waste. It is also one of the main emitters of greenhouse gases.

On your walk back, reflect on the following questions:

- To what extent are you aware of your own compulsions and unhealthy-, reality-coping mechanisms? How do you justify the continuity of these patterns to yourself?
- Where are your cognitive, affective, and relational compensation patterns coming from, and in what ways could they be part of the problem?



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PHOTOGRAPHS

kyra royo fay

cover: *snow drops* (35mm), experimental film processes 2022

root practices: *rain* (35mm), 2021

re-turning time: *air mataku* (35mm), double exposure 2020

privilege at whose expense: *moonwalker* (35mm), double exposure 2019

property ownership: *between* (35mm), 2020

cellphone / self-on: *tightrope*, DSLR, handheld prism 2022

sensing at the edges: *memory* (35mm), 2020

falling to pieces: *fields* (35mm), 2022

(re)membering: *untitled* (35mm), 2021

closing: *untitled* , DSLR, 2019

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open-pitt copper mine Australia, Getty Images

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sewer, Getty Images

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