

# WADING

Issue 13

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

Sept 2022



Maggie Groat, *strange attractors, fluid flows, butterfly effects*, 2022, found paper. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

## **wade** (v.)

Old English *wadan* "**to go forward, proceed, move, stride, advance**" (the modern sense perhaps represented in *oferwaden* "wade across"), from Proto-Germanic *\*wadanan* (source also of Old Norse *vaða*, Danish *vade*, Old Frisian *wada*, Dutch *waden*, Old High German *watan*, German *waten* "to wade"), from PIE root *\*wadh-* (2) "to go," found only in Germanic and Latin (source also of Latin *vadere* "to go," *vadum* "shoal, ford," *vadare* "to wade"). Italian *guado*, French *gué* "ford" are Germanic loan-words.

Specifically "**walk into or through water**" (or any substance which impedes the free motion of limbs) c. 1200. Originally a strong verb (past tense *wod*, past participle *wad*); weak since 16c. Figurative sense of "to go into" (action, battle, etc.) is recorded from late 14c.



*The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* is a serial broadsheet publication produced by the Blackwood, University of Toronto Mississauga. Initiated in conjunction with *The Work of Wind: Air, Land, Sea* in 2018–19 to expand perspectives on environmental violence through artistic practices, cultural inquiry, and political mobilization, the SDUK continues as a signature triannual Blackwood publishing initiative in 2022.

Reflecting the Blackwood’s ongoing commitment to activating open-ended conversations with diverse publics beyond the gallery space, the SDUK serves as a platform for varied forms of circulation, dispersal, and diffusion. The series shares interdisciplinary knowledges; terminologies; modes of visual, cultural, and scientific literacy; strategies for thought and action; resources; and points of connection between local and international practices—artistic, activist, scholarly, and otherwise—during a time increasingly marked by alienation and isolation. Distributed free-of-charge as a print publication, and available through a dedicated reading platform on the Blackwood website and as a downloadable PDF, the SDUK engages a diffuse network of readers and contributors.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE (SDUK)

*The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (SDUK) composes and circulates an ecology of knowledge based on the relationship and antagonism of “useful” ideas. The name of this innovative platform is borrowed from a non-profit society founded in London in 1826, focused on publishing inexpensive texts such as the widely read *Penny Magazine* and *The Library of Useful Knowledge*, and aimed at spreading important world knowledge to anyone seeking to self-educate. Both continuing and troubling the origins of the society, the Blackwood’s SDUK platform asks: what constitutes useful knowledge? For whom? And who decides?

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Please note: the Blackwood Gallery and offices are in intermittent use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contact staff by email.

# Butterfly Effects

Maggie Groat

The title of mathematician and meteorologist Edward Lorenz’s 1972 paper “Does the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?” nearly used a seagull instead of a butterfly. The change, suggested by Lorenz’s peers, to the more poetic imagery of the butterfly, is likely in reference to Ray Bradbury’s 1952 sci-fi short story “A Sound of Thunder.” In Bradbury’s story, the accidental (unscheduled) death of a single butterfly, in a meticulously planned dinosaur-hunting time-travel trip gone wrong, drastically alters the course of the future. The characters then spin into existential crisis after realizing the full weight of their actions. In his 1993 book “The Essence of Chaos” Lorenz defines The Butterfly Effect as “the phenomenon

that a small alteration in the state of a dynamical system will cause subsequent states to differ greatly from the states that would have followed without the alteration” (204). I can’t help but wonder: what changes have resulted from the alteration of the name of the concept itself? Would Ashton Kutcher have still starred in a 2004 film if it was *The Seagull Effect*? Would I be writing about it now?

I was thinking of rippling, of the potential chaos of small encounters, of the paralysis of unknowability, of cascading environmental crises, and of real possibilities of time travel, as I recently crossed a littered shoreline and waded into the calm waters of Lake Ontario one afternoon with

my children. How to capture the efforts, the effects, the trust, of wading, into a meadow, into a body of water, into an unknowable future? In what way might deep-time, multi-sensory encounters be visioned, or as witness to the brief and utopic glimpses into the macro, the interconnected, the unraveled, the other-worldly, the blip in the endless, ancient, continuum?

The handmade collages *twins*, *webs*, *ripples*, *shifts*, *sounds* (p. 28) and *strange attractors*, *fluid flows*, *butterfly effects* (cover) are a part of an ongoing study into imperfect symmetries, the utility of images and possibilities of alternative documentations of otherworldly, unseeable, or uncaptured interactions.

# How to Read this Broadsheet

Our thirteenth SDUK broadsheet dives into approaches for navigating social and ecological crises. **WADING** complements the Blackwood’s summer and fall presentation of *Lyfeboat prototype* and event series, *Nearshore Gatherings*—both platforms for community engagement with ecology and environmental activism. This issue traverses further from the shoreline into the vast oceans of inquiry on land-based education, institutional critique, biocultural diversity, food and land sovereignty, and equity in the outdoors.

Education is crucial in addressing the climate crisis; at its best, it can provide the knowledge, skills, and values to shape agents of change. Departing from the human-centric discourse of the Anthropocene, Fikile Nxumalo’s essay asks: **How might centering the more-than-human world in education support a justice-oriented response to environmental precarity?** Citing the omission of Black land relations in environmental education, Nxumalo advocates for the integration of Black ecologies into primary school curricula (p. 20). Lianne Marie Leda Charlie shares an account of fishing and trapping at the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning (p. 7), demonstrating how land-based learning can facilitate Indigenous peoples’ connections to land. Carolynne Crawley’s *Water Invitation* (p. 19) similarly encourages readers to slow down and

reflect on the land and water, to better defend and protect it.

Environmental stewardship is a shared responsibility. In many Indigenous worldviews, knowledge is relational, shared amongst all. Through this lens, **how do we collectively wade through climatic and sociopolitical challenges together?** Céline Chuang considers water as a common ancestor and truth-teller; she compels readers to turn to water’s wisdom to unlearn colonial pasts, and rewrite present and future histories (p. 4). Magdalyn Asimakis reflects on gardening as a key cultural practice of stabilization and survival for many diasporic communities (p. 33). Maggie Groat’s collages (cover and p. 28) take inspiration from the “butterfly effect,” reminding readers that the actions we take yield divergent dystopian and utopian visions across varying time scales.

Amidst current global upheavals and the ongoing pandemic, **how are artists, researchers, and educators navigating institutions?** Scholars Aimi Hamraie, Maria Hupfield, and Zoë Wool discuss how they are re-figuring research, collaboration, and community involvement in their research labs (p. 24). In an interview, The Forest Curriculum asks the co-creators of Omehen (a teaching garden and art project) to reflect on activism and solidarity within a university environment in

the Philippines (p. 13), while poems by Madhur Anand straddle poetic and scientific knowledge systems in reckoning with environmental collapse (p. 16). Extending these contributors’ dialogues, Christina Sharpe (p. 30) speculates on alternatives to the logic of renewal that continues to mask ongoing institutional violence, extraction, devastation, and exhaustion.

The security and sovereignty of our food webs are deeply tied to environmental instability. Considering the intersection of food systems and ecosystems, readers might ask: **how are food cultures and movements responding and adapting to the climate crisis?** *Filling Spirits* reflects on how community-informed practices such as cuisine, gardening, and local farming support food sovereignty, equity, and self-determination (p. 10). Asunción Molinos Gordo’s *Peasant CVs* acknowledge the contributions of rural communities by calling attention to the knowledge and skills that are passed down intergenerationally through small-scale farming (p. 21).

This broadsheet concludes with a glossary intended to further illuminate, complicate, and enrich the contents of this issue. Visit the Blackwood website for an extended lexicon featuring concepts that animate the SDUK series and broader gallery programs.

# what the river reveals: remembering like the water

Céline Chuang

I was co-facilitating a writing workshop in the Downtown Eastside, Vancouver, unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories, when one of the participants told us about the dragonfly she saw hovering over downtown. She saw a glimmer of wings darting up and down, left and right over the streets, buses, cars, and high-rise buildings. Guided by some elemental instinct or generational memory, this dragonfly was searching for water to lay her eggs. “The funny thing is,” she said, “the water *is* there—it’s just underground.” As a group, we talked about the network of tiny streams tucked beneath the city, and how the water returns in quiet, often unseen ways: puddling rivulets of spongy grass and emergent ponds, flocked by birds, after heavy rainfall. The workshop was on climate change, a theme that touched on love and grief, childhood memories and future visions, relationships with our non-human neighbours.<sup>1</sup> It was a prescient theme choice for a year defined by scorching heat, wildfire smoke, record overdoses, and the pandemic expounding the pressure. For those of us with the privilege of distance, the interlocking impacts of the climate crises were getting harder and harder to ignore.

Just that past fall, the Abbotsford floods devastated local farmers, with significant loss of poultry and livestock and over 3,000 people forced to evacuate their homes. While the events were heartbreaking to witness and assuredly more so to experience, nonstop coverage of the damage

neglected to mention that Sumas Prairie, the site of the flood, was the dwelling place of an extinct lake. Extinct is not quite the right word, as it evades responsibility. Sumas Lake, which stretched between the Sumas and Vedder mountains on unceded Stó:lō land, was extinguished by white settlers in the 1920s, who pumped the water into the river and parceled the lakebed into farmland. The death of the lake was apocalyptic for the Séma:th and other Coast Salish people related to, and reliant upon, its life—the ending of a world. So I question the popular narrative of the flood, which fails to acknowledge any “before” other than the Before and After of the disaster. The protracted and murderous mechanisms of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism, which drained the lake in the first place, are the original disaster—systems that still deal death and exacerbate the climate crisis in the name of progress. But other before do exist, as lovingly documented in *Semá:th Xó:tsa: Great Gramma’s Lake*,<sup>2</sup> kept alive by the Séma:th, the berries, and the medicine, all of whom are still here. And so too is the water, finding its way back home.

I’ve been learning a lot from water, especially from Vancouver artist Laiwan’s 2021 Chinatown installation, *How Water Remembers*. Laiwan’s project, created in collaboration with Skwxwú7mesh storyteller and ethnobotanist T’uy’t’anat-Cease Wyss, re-stories the salt water marshland (known as Skwachays) that underpins much of the city of Vancouver, including Chinatown.

In Laiwan’s words, the attention to waterways and reclaiming of ancestral knowledge can “daylight other ways of knowing that had once been invisible underground networks, in the same way underground streams are daylighted and recovered for fish, phytoplankton and numerous critters to once again find their way home.”<sup>3</sup> She includes this quote by Toni Morrison: “You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. ‘Floods’ is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be.” The grandmother in *Semá:th Xó:tsa: Great Gramma’s Lake* tells her grandson about how after Semá:th Xó:tsa was drained, farmers would still find sturgeon alive, wriggling in the mud. Even after the lake was lost and the fences were built and the English road signs were erected, the water remembers the lake, and the sturgeon remember the water.

Like the dragonfly over Burrard Street, I’m seeking and sensing the water buried underground, following its wake, histories, and trajectories. Under escalating climate catastrophe, the voice of water will only get louder. But it’s more than that. Water is teaching me a language of freedom and fluidity, softness and solidarity, communion and treaty. When I ascended Burnaby Mountain in the spring of 2018, invited to practice solidarity with Tsleil-Waututh water protectors warring up<sup>4</sup> against the Trans Mountain pipeline, an Elder brought

me to the watch house and told me to introduce my ancestors to those of the territory. I looked up through gaps in the cedar boards, where living branches swayed with the rain, and brought to mind all the unnamed ancestors whose lives gave me life: the migrating Hakka, the river-aged Fujian folk, my own ocean-traversing grandparents. Like other diasporic descendants, relating to water is, for me, an inescapable inheritance.

But I was raised by the river, so it is to the river I turn now for revelation.

—

*am i in the water, or is the water in me?  
i stretch out, fluid, slow  
limbs undulating  
sensing on all sides  
am i in the water, or is the water in me?*

—

Growing up in Calgary, my earliest memories of water were of the Bow River: the swirl of rushing movement, streams of blue scattering sunlight, frozen pale in the winter, brown in the spring like the rest of the city. And then there was the reservoir, a great swath of still green water further south. As a kid, I used to wonder why this great body of water wasn’t called a lake. Nobody told me at the time that reservoir meant man-made, and the enormous swell of pent-up water was the result of the Glenmore Dam. Built in 1932, the Dam walled off the downstream flow of the intersecting Elbow River, supplying the expanding city with drinking water—and increased waterside properties.<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, hydrologists are raising concerns about the impact of relentless real estate development on the river’s alluvial aquifer, that liminal zone hidden underground wherein pulses the river’s “slow, hidden heartbeat.”<sup>6</sup> Pressure on the watershed exacerbates floods, like the 2013 one that swamped downtown Calgary and swept away entire houses. A 2017 study showed that the intensity of flooding damage in houses located by the Elbow River was due to groundwater flooding, the subsurface water table rising up through the permeable aquifer.<sup>7</sup> Recommendations for the city include installing groundwater monitoring wells and limiting development. The river is remembering, and it’s speaking back.

But first, a history. After all, “city,” like country, is an innocuous word for a jagged thing, deployed to draw blood. Calgary was settled as a North-West Mounted Police (which became the RCMP) outpost on the floodplain of the Bow and Elbow Rivers on Treaty 7 territory. The Numbered Treaties, contrivance of the newborn nation-state of Canada, served to expedite the theft of Indigenous land and restrict Indigenous movement in the prairies.<sup>8</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Indian Act—formalized the same year as Fort Calgary—codified assimilation and apartheid into Canadian law.<sup>9</sup> As part of Treaty 7, Tsuu T’ina Nation 145 (formerly the Sarcee Indian Reservation) was created; reservation, like reservoir, speaks to restriction, a wall-

ing off and hemming in. The gathering place at the confluence of rivers became ground zero for settlement, Fort Calgary, a quadrant of tall sharp-tipped wood posts we used to visit on school field trips, my hometown’s original incision. Perhaps a better metaphor—one that is in fact, quite literal—would be the first fence posts in a wall. A wall contains, closes off, turns land from complex relational network<sup>10</sup> into private property to be enforced and policed. But in this history of water, the ground is porous, and walls are always constructed, never inherent. To remember that such walls (and by extension, other carceral systems like prisons and borders) require relentless fortification to quell the flow of life is to invoke their eventual impermanence. Poet Rita Wong wrote about the fight against Site C Dam, “the land will have the last word, on its own time.”<sup>11</sup> Along with the river, the land and the people are talking back.<sup>12</sup> In other words, what seethes at the edges of progress is worth paying attention to. And nothing seethes when staunched like the water does.

—

*am i in the water, or is the water in me?  
my skin, smooth and burnished by sun  
glows beneath the surface  
a polished stone  
i move without effort  
drift and sway  
the water leads and i follow  
i glide & the water follows me  
am i in the water, or is the water in me?*

—

By the 1920s, Calgary’s population was over 63,000. When the City had secured permits and funding for the dam, it moved forwards in purchasing land in the area deemed necessary for the project. 539 acres of this land were located on Tsuu T’ina Nation 145. The City of Calgary paid Tsuu T’ina Nation \$50 per acre for the land, in contrast to the \$100-400 given to other landowners. While the government reached a \$20 million settlement with the nation in 2013 for the inadequate compensation, like those in twenty-nine other First Nations reserves, residents still do not have access to free-flowing clean drinking water.<sup>13</sup> Following the histories of water unearths the underside of urban development and capitalist prosperity—the reality of continued Indigenous dispossession, what Secwépemc leader George Manuel called the “Fourth World.”<sup>14</sup> More than once, the reservoir has exceeded its capacity and the river erupted, like in 2005. Hydrologists noted that a flood of such magnitude is estimated to occur once every 200 years. Consider the deep time of the water’s cyclical swell, a rhythm older than the country of Canada. Meanwhile, climate crisis, while deepening inequity, has also revealed the fragile falsehood of limitless expansion and the cost of silencing water and its protectors. Lush prairie wetlands, drained for agriculture, no longer serve as a natural sponge to buffer the water’s rise and fall. Warmer temperatures mean melting glaciers, increased rains, and more frequent floods. Discourse around watershed pro-

tection may be laced with newborn urgency, but recognition of past injuries is shallow and thus solutions are surface-deep. Look to the water and see fissures are appearing in the wall’s foundation. The water confirms what Indigenous hosts have known since occupation began: the settler-colonial palace is built on soggy, stolen ground.

I don’t mean to minimize the destructive effects of climate change, or to suggest that floods are a form of poetic justice; across the globe, rising sea levels and extreme weather like floods and hurricanes most heavily impact Black, Indigenous, colonized, racialized, and poor people.<sup>15</sup> The 2013 floods that swept through Calgary also heavily affected nearby reserves, which did not receive the same level of response, or outpouring of support. On Siksiká Nation, over 100 homes were destroyed and 1,000 people evacuated, some of whom were still waiting for permanent housing five years later.<sup>16</sup> What I do want to call attention to is how the water—this profound, sacred, living being with its own voice and agency—is a truth-teller, revealing the roots of the climate crisis, resisting containment, and bearing witness.

The enduring myth of the nation-state depends on a violent forgetting, a truncated construction of history that eliminates undesirable (genocidal) pasts and subdues dissent.<sup>17</sup> What is here now has always been. To me, part of the call to decolonize is a call to remember like the water. Collectively retrieving forgotten before is a political and life-giving act, one that can help non-Native people like me in unlearning loyalty to a singular history. Remembering like water complicates the colonial “past” and rescribes present and multi-valent futures, forming—or re-forming—relations with what is still present and bubbling up from below. Before the railway, highway, and sidewalk, the wild rose, yarrow, and sweetgrass. Before the fields of canola, hay bales and grazing cows, the prairie potholes, waterfowl, and shorebirds.<sup>18</sup> Before the reservoir, the river. I learned as an adult that many of the Indigenous names for the place where Calgary began, including in Siksiká, Stoney, Tsuut’ina, and Cree, mean Elbow, after the rivers meeting. Although my only language is English plus a handful of patchwork words salvaged from my family’s multiple migrations, I’m still learning the language of the water—of kinship, movement, abundance, return, and resistance. And I hope that through this, I’m continuing to honour that Elder’s request on Burnaby Mountain. I’m introducing my ancestors to those of the territories where I live.

—

*am i in the water, or is the water in me?  
my skin a membrane  
my gills a memory  
like to like, you recognize me  
shedding light, i beat like a drum  
i hear the hum of my mother tongue  
am i in the water, or is the water in me?*

—



The water also draws me back to ancient ancestral knowledge. In traditional Chinese medicine, blockage or stagnation of qi slows blood flow and accentuates pain, which leads to ill health. Foundational to this understanding is that the vital life force of the universe, material and immaterial, is always in flux, and wisdom lies in following the contours of change rather than coercing or controlling it. I've been reading translations of the Tao Te Ching, which brims with water imagery, a precursor of modern science; we are, in fact, mostly water, and the water within us remembers too. Before everything, we swam. Before ears, gills; before tongues, we spoke water. Water is our shared origin point, our common ancestor.

I think about the water bearing witness, and I recall the river on cold spring mornings: invisible beneath the cover of trees, a snaking dragon-shaped cloud of fog hovering above. Whether we join or reject its course, the water is already at work remembering, destabilizing unjust foundations, steeping soil and seeding life. It may take years, and it may take millennia, but the water always finds a way. It already has.



Céline Chuang, *land as palimpsest / water, waking*, 2022. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

# Dechinta | In the Bush: Northern Harvesting and Land-based Learning

Lianne Marie Leda Charlie

I am standing on the back of a wood sled that's being pulled behind a snowmobile. We're crossing a one-kilometre portion of Tjndee | Great Slave Lake from Mackenzie Island to one of the back lakes just north. It's April. The lake is frozen; the ice is about eight-feet thick. Breakup will start in a few weeks. Until then, the ice roads and snowmobile trails allow folks to travel for spring hunting. On this day, we're heading out for muskrat. John Crapeau has been a bush professor for Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning since 2019. Dechinta is an Indigenous-led, land-based education organization that is dedicated to creating a future of Indigenous cultural revitalization through a reconnection with the land. We are in John's home territories. He's driving the snowmobile that I'm being pulled behind. His two nephews sit behind him, a Dechinta student—a young mom from Fort Simpson—and her daughter sit in the sled upon a foamy and wrapped in thick blankets. I feel exposed standing on the thin wood extension off the back of the sled with not

much to hang on to, but two handles. If I lose my footing, I'll fly off the sled, there's no question. My son, Luka, is in a sled being pulled behind another Dechinta bush professor. He's bundled up with the children of other Dechinta students and staff.

I've ridden on a snowmobile a couple of times, but this is my first time standing at the back of the sled. I remember the first time I attended a Dechinta course as a guest instructor in 2018. Luka was less than a year old then. We were gathered on the lake shore just as a Dechinta staff member was arriving with his son literally in tow. There was three-year-old Antwon standing on the back of the sled. His body effortlessly absorbed every bounce and skid. He had a huge smile on his face and even managed to wave to us, much to the delight of his dad and everyone watching.

I feel stiff and nervous compared to my memory of Antwon. I'm worried about

falling. At the same time, I want Luka to see me on the sled. I want him to see me trying something new and attempting to build my bush legs, so to speak. Bush legs like Antwon's: steady, strong, comfortable with the shifts in the land and the surface of the ice on the lake, prepared for what the trails ahead might bring.

Once John starts ripping across the lake, he doesn't look back. The first stretch is straight and fast. My hands grip the handles through my thick mitts. I stagger my feet and soften my knees to absorb the bumps. My body weight shifts forward and back as John slows down and accelerates. A few minutes in and it is proving to be a full body workout staying upright and attached to the sled. John stops once we get to the shoreline and we wait for the rest of the snowmobiles to catch up. I adjust everything—my hat, my mitts, my stance. The wind is cold, and it cuts through all the layers that I'm wearing.

1

Some of the finished pieces can be found in Megaphone Magazine's latest anthology, *Stealing Looks at the Sun* (2022).

2

This collaborative book and exhibition, co-authored by Thetáx Chris Silver, Xémontélot Carrielynn Victor, Kris Foulds, and Laura Schneider, "recalls a time when the lake was thriving, using memory and story to allow the lake to live on today." From *The Reach* gallery in Abbotsford website.

3

Background notes on *How Water Remembers*, from the artist's website.

4

This phrase was a call to action from Ta'ah (Amy George), Tsleil-Waututh grandmother, shared with supporters at anti-pipeline and land sovereignty actions that spring.

5

In testament to the intergenerational wealth reaped from the river and from those who stewarded it, many areas bordering the reservoir and subdued Elbow River are still among Calgary's most expensive neighbourhoods in the SW quadrant, based on residential sale prices (CREB website, stats from 2019).

6

Kevin Van Tighem, "Requiem for a River," *Alberta Views*, April 1, 2022.

7

"Groundwater flooding, not sewer backup, blamed for damaging homes along Elbow River in 2013," University of Calgary. Study: "Groundwater flooding in a river-connected alluvial aquifer," led by Jason Abboud.

8

I frame the Numbered Treaties through the lens of accumulation and subjugation not to convey any dismissal for the nations who took part in these treaties in good faith, but to contextualize how the project of Canada was built on an unjust foundation; many promises made in the treaties were later broken or never fulfilled. Maybe one way of thinking of it: how Canada used treaties was an early example of cultural appropriation.

9

The Indian Act, which has been modified but still exists, would go on to influence Hitler's brand of fascism in Nazi Germany and the South African government's apartheid system.

10

This description of land is informed by much of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's work. In "I Am Not a Nation-State," she describes her nation, and Indigenous nationhood more broadly, as a "web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos and our neighbouring Indigenous nations... an ecology of intimacy." See the piece in its entirety on *Unsettling America: Decolonization in Theory & Practice*.

11

Rita Wong, "What I learned about violence in B.C.'s Peace Valley," *Canada's National Observer*, July 30, 2020.

12

Mike Gouldhawke puts it this way: "In settler-colonial societies, land appears as an immense accumulation of property titles. To traditionalist Indigenous Peoples, in contrast, land is not a thing in itself but a social relationship between all living and non-living beings... The land has always been here and we've always been reclaiming parts of it." This is from his piece in *Briarpatch's Land Back* issue.

13

Jayne Doll et al., "Running out of water a constant fear for some on Tsuut'ina Nation," *Global News*, March 1, 2021.

14

Peter d'Errico, "Reissue of George Manuel's *The Fourth World Aids Indigenous Scholars and Activists*," *Indianz*, April 9, 2019.

15

Environmental and racial justice activists like Elizabeth Yeampierre lay it out clearly: "Climate change is the result of a legacy of extraction, of colonialism, of slavery... [on a] historical continuum... people of color, indigenous people, have always worked multi-dimensionally because we have to be able to fight on so many different planes." This is from Beth Gardiner, "Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change," *Yale Environment* 360, June 9, 2020.

16

Tamara Pimentel, "Five years after devastating Alberta flood, First Nation still waits for home repairs," *APTN*, June 28, 2018.

17

Scholar Lisa Lowe describes how "the forgetting of violent encounter" is a project of the liberal archive—a continuation of the colonial archive—in *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015).

18

Prairie potholes describe the myriad seasonal wetlands once found throughout the Great Plains, the shallow depressions having been carved by retreating glaciers over 10,000 years ago. The majority of prairie potholes were drained for agricultural purposes when the land was colonized, and only small pockets remain. (For more, see the [Prairie Potholes page on the National Wildlife Federation website](#)).



Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning. ALL PHOTOS: MORGAN TSETTA.





We head into the bush with the rest of the group. The snowmobile trail is about a metre wide. It weaves around trees and through willow brush. It rides like a kid's rollercoaster. It's fun; there's only a slight hum of potential danger. I duck below tree branches that are like clotheslines across the trail and, on tight corners, I lean into the turn to help keep the sled upright.

I grew up in the city and on the coast: Victoria, BC, to be exact. I didn't grow up riding snowmobiles, cutting fish, setting nets or traps, fixing muskrat or caribou. Dechinta has played a big part in facilitating my reconnection to the land, and the Dene Elders and bush professors have played an even bigger part in teaching me and many others through living the Dene Laws. I have brought my son to Dechinta programming four times. Dechinta's family-centred approach means that students, staff, and

faculty can bring their children to camp. This past winter semester, Luka was four years old and the most independent he's been at camp since we started coming. He was fully emersed in the Dechinta programming geared at the young learners.

A typical day in a Dechinta course is a mix of classroom time facilitated by Dechinta faculty and time on the land led by the bush team, Elders, and bush professors. At one of our April courses, after a morning in the classroom tent, everyone goes out to check the fishnet that was set under the ice. We take turns breaking the ice that formed over the hole. We use a long metal pole-like ice chisel. One end is pointed, the other end has a rope on it that you put around your wrist so as not to lose it once it breaks through the ice. The first few times we checked the net, we watched the bush professors—long-

time Dene harvesters—do all the chisel work. Now that we've seen how it's done, we take turns trying. A couple kids try; then a young woman asks to have a turn. She pounds the ice with a confident, rhythmic motion. A murmur of approval ripples through the Elders present. They reward effort with positive words of encouragement and nods of approval. It's a kind and gentle coaxing performed by the Elders that has a way of bringing out the best in students and kids. In return, the Elders get to see young people's confidence grow over the days we share out on the land.

The kids help fish out the rope attached to the net, and we begin to pull it out of the water. Everyone hoots with excitement when they see a fish in the net. Once the net is all the way out, we start collecting the fish. I try releasing a frozen, wriggling

fish from the tight nylon strands of net that are caught in its mouth and gills and corseting its whole body. "Grab hold of the gills, like this," says Brenda, the camp cook, her middle and index finger deep in gills on each side of the fish's head. "Then you can pull it through the net like this," she shows me. I use her technique from therein out.

After setting the net, I watch Luka race back to the hole: "Can I drop the rock in?" he asks. I realize then that he has learned the different steps. He knows that after we set the net, the next step is to drop a rock that is tied to the net through the hole and into the water. The rock holds the net open below the ice. It was a subtle remark, but it stood out to me because it exemplifies the grace of experiential learning. For Dechinta, it's a simple equation: bring people together, teach by example, and learn to open ourselves to be guided by the land, Elders, and Dene ethics.

We help carry the fish and tools back to the classroom tent. Bush professor Irene Sangris is ready and waiting. Her workbench is set up. There's cardboard on the tabletops, rubber gloves, and an array of sharpened knives. We watch as she begins filleting a fish. We listen as she shares the Willideh names. T'áncháy Redvers, a Dene / Métis two-spirit creative and facilitator, is a guest instructor for the course. They share a memory of watching their mom and auntie's hands as they cut fish. They say that hands remember. I slide the knife along the fish's spine and begin following the ribs down towards the belly. The knife

tip lightly tip-taps against the fish's thin rib bones; its like playing a tiny xylophone.

After lunch, we meet outside to practice setting the traps we use for the muskrat. We are circled around John, kneeling in the snow. John, who has likely set traps like this since he was a kid, teaches us by doing it again and again in front of us. No talking, no explanation. He just keeps setting the traps at varying speeds as we watch. His hands move with ease. With a light flick of his finger, he rests the pin on the trigger, holds it up to show us, then places it on the ground and uses a stick to snap it closed. It's our turn to try.

I am anxious. I watch the others. There's lot of giggling and jokes as everyone handles the traps. A student hands me a trap and asks if I'd like to try. I take it reluctantly and begin prying it open. I realize almost immediately that the pin that sets the trigger is in the wrong position. To get it in the right position, I need to close the trap again, and I need to do this without snapping my fingers. I panic with the wide-open trap in my hands and start to talk louder and faster: "I don't know what to do. Somebody, please help me." Minowe, a sixteen-year-old Annishnabeg student and daughter of one of the faculty, takes the open trap out of my hands. She is now in the same situation that I was just in: gripping open jaws of a metal trap strong enough to kill a muskrat.

John ends up taking it from her, and we both sigh with relief. Luka has been watching the whole thing. As I was panicking,

he came and sat next to me and snuggled in close; he may have sensed that I was scared. I knew then that I had to try again to show him that I could do it, even though I was nervous. Minowe sits close to me as well. We talk through the steps as I squeeze open the trap, this time with the trigger pin in the right position. I switch hands, as John had done, set the pin and slowly release the jaws of the trap into the set position. Luka watches as I focus, as we help each other, as we laugh with relief, and as we celebrate each other's newfound skills.

We end the day by meeting back in the classroom tent. We're taught how to finger knit mitten strings by Gwitchin artist and guest instructor Karen Wright-Fraser. Everyone selects the colours they want and cuts their strands. A couple students pick up the knitting motion effortlessly, others are dealing with massive knots in their yarn. Kids are coming in and out of the tent. The blast of cold spring air is a welcomed reprieve from the woodstove heat. All of us—students, instructors, children, adults, locals, visitors, born-and-raised, and returnees—are brought together by a love for the land and Dechinta has made our journey to each other possible. We tend to the fire. We sharpen knives, chop, and stack wood. We work together to set and pull net. We ride snowmobiles and cut fish. We finger knit mitten strings that will secure warm mitts to our bodies that in turn will keep our hands warm as we head out, once again, to check traps and nets, and on each other.





# Filling Spirits: Community-oriented Cuisine and Gardening

Robin Buyers, Sienna Fekete, Sonia Hill, Camille Mayers, Vasuki Shanmuganathan

*The corner of St. Clair and Rushton is an unlikely place to find wild strawberries. The west wall of St. Matthew's United Church now joins buildings and billboards at the north-south corners of the intersection to create an "urban canyon." Even on a calm day, there's a wind, often with a red-tailed hawk riding the updrafts, hunting pigeons below.*

*These small plants that creep humbly along the ground—"ode'min" in Anishinaabemowin—took root and spread widely here. Seeing the Strawberry as a relative, an older sibling, and learning to reach out to others from her is among the lessons these gardens have to teach.*

In describing the unique setting of Toronto's Noojimo'iwewin Gitigaan/Healing Garden, gardener Robin Buyers touches on many issues at the forefront of contemporary food cultures: urban reclamation, interdependence, self-determination, and food sovereignty. Across diverse contexts throughout the GTHA and beyond, we invited chefs, entrepreneurs, gardeners, curators, and scholars to reflect on the interconnected effects of new movements in food, cuisine, and gardening. Each were asked similar questions about how they fit into community-oriented food practices. Alongside Buyers are responses by Camille Mayers, Chef and founder of East York's Black and Indigenous Deeply Rooted Market; Vasuki Shan-

muganathan, founder of Scarborough-based Tamil Archive Project; Sonia Hill, program manager of Kahnékanoron, a Hamilton-based initiative within the Indigenous Sustenance Reclamation Network; and Sienna Fekete, New York City-based curator, and publisher of the two-volume *Community Cookbook* series.

**How do cultures of food, gardening, and/or cuisine fit in within broader systemic issues of food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination?**

**Robin Buyers:** Started in 2019 as a response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, this small space raises more questions about food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination than it answers. After all, the weekly harvest is no more than that grown in a backyard garden; less, in fact.

What grows best are conversations. About acknowledging the Land by stewarding the Land. About following practices of Indigenous peoples who cared for this place for generations before Europeans arrived. About Sacred Tobacco, and planting and harvesting protocols that came to us from the Na-Me-Res Mashkiki;aki'ing/Medicine Earth Garden in nearby Hillcrest Park.

The children from the Hippo Nursery School now learn about plants, pollinators,

and how the foods they eat grow. Guests at The Stop Wychwood Open Door Drop-In see new greens in their salads. Seniors from nearby Bracondale House and Rakoczi Villa reminisce about gardens now gone. Neighbours gift seeds.

Demonstrating what can grow in our city speaks to issues of food sovereignty and self-determination, yes. Including plants such as purslane and lambsquarters—labelled “weeds,” but deliciously edible—which raises questions about food security. At the heart of this place, however, is relationship: with plants, people, Land, Water, Sun, Moon.

We began by planting a Medicine Wheel of Tobacco, Sweetgrass, Sage, and Cedar to honour Indigenous wisdom and spirituality, from which Elder Catherine Brooks discerned a name, Noojimo'iwewin Gitigaan/Healing Garden. Then pandemic lockdowns led us to include food crops, and to contribute to Grow Food Toronto and Toronto Urban Growers.

At the same time, we joined the coast-to-coast-to-coast network of National Healing Forest projects, in keeping with our focus on remembering the Victims and Survivors of Residential Schools; Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, 2-Spirit, and Trans People; and those lost to the Child Welfare System.

Generous donors and a federal grant meant that we could hire a gardener,

Olivia Dziwak, and 2-Spirit Anishinaabe conceptual artist Bert Whitecrow, to create commemorative earthworks: a winding, pebbled pathway to a conversation circle of upturned logs and, along the sidewalk, moon-shaped rain gardens. PollinateTO and Project Swallowtail helped us access plants necessary for native bees and butterflies to flourish.

Today, Bert's painting, *Ode'min Giizas/ Strawberry Moon*, hangs high on the wall opposite the Full Moon Rain Garden. We held our first Moon Ceremony for women, 2-Spirit, and trans people in June, a year after first celebrations of the Solstices and Equinoxes of the Sun cycle. We celebrated the Strawberry, and prayed for the Water, our responsibility. At moonrise, we each placed Tobacco in the Sacred Fire.<sup>1</sup>

**How do cultures of food, gardening, and/or cuisine fit in within broader systemic issues of food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination?**

**Camille Mayers:** Currently the dominant food structure is dictated by capitalism. Capitalism has created a globalized industrial agri-food system that puts profit over people. We have become very far removed from the source of the food we consume. In most cases food is transported thousands of miles before it reaches the local chain grocery stores and in turn, undermines local farmers and food chains. In addition, the mass industrial production of food means that the quality and nutrition we receive are inadequate to satisfy our bodies' requirements, thus compromising our overall health.

As a Chef and member of the BIPOC community, which also happens to be the most negatively impacted by this, it is important that I do my part to combat this system. This is done through making intentional choices when it comes to the ingredients I purchase and provide, whether it be for catering events or personal use. Whenever possible I make use of products sourced from local BIPOC farmers. I have also created Deeply Rooted Farmers Market for everyone: it's a market by the Black and Indigenous community to diversify Toronto's food industry, provide access to locally sourced products, and further strengthen local grocers—all of which is a part of reclaiming our food sovereignty.

**Can you give an example of a local crop or a dish that holds significance for you, and why?**

**CM:** Callaloo is a traditional Trinidadian ingredient that was very common in my household growing up and so holds much significance for me. Oftentimes my mother would pair it with crab (Callaloo and Crab) and now as a Chef, it is an ingredient I often include for my clients. I source the ingredients from two Black-owned farms within Toronto, which is important for me as I want to ensure that my dollar is circulating within our community. Un-

fortunately, the Black community is the number one community to usually spend their dollar elsewhere, and I want to do what I can to combat that statistic.

**How do cultures of food, gardening, and/or cuisine fit in within broader systemic issues of food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination?**

**Vasuki Shanmuganathan:** “We are what we eat” under colonial conditioning where we accept unsafe drinking water in Indigenous communities, exploitation of migrant workers growing our food, and inaccessibility of diverse produce for communities in food deserts.

Nourishing ourselves is intimately tied to colonial and emotional histories. Large-scale food production is part of ongoing colonial migration that disrupted local pathways, existing caretaking of land, and autonomy of Indigenous people on Turtle Island and elsewhere. Much of the work the Tamil Archive Project collective does is centred on communal care and honouring processes that make us aware of our connections to these complicated histories.

Some members relied on farming for survival, were driven off the land by the military, and forced to flee the country with their families. They reconnected to food practices through participation in local farming and learning gardening. Others created cooking programs to offer culturally informed spaces for racialized youth to talk about mental health. Food advocacy forms another integral part of a trauma-informed approach in calling for the decentering of Western food practices, which disassociate people from reciprocal relations to land, and the changes brought by diasporic formations and their culinary practices.

Among Tamil people, the cultural protocol is to ask, “have you eaten?” This gesture signals a responsibility towards communal well-being. Some of us grew up missing meals due to poverty or have parents who worked on farms picking food. Having food at our events was another way we attempted to dismantle barriers we experienced ourselves. Food is a means for us to share with others where we came from.

**How does a dinner circle facilitate healing?**

**VS:** Healing Arts Dinner Circle was an arts and dinner series meant to take place at different locations in the Greater Toronto Area from March 2020–21 but we were forced to go online with the onset of the pandemic. Conversations exploring feelings and making space for joy, alongside our converseance with trauma, was and still is our way of practicing communal care. The intention behind the series was to create experiences which move us towards healing with the understanding that this is only part of the picture.

Reduced to Zoom meetings, restrictions on movement between neighbourhoods, daily reports of illness among family and friends, we were feeling disheartened and unprepared for what unfolded. The ongoing pandemic forced us to better understand what communal care looks like when it is most needed. Our response was to turn to each other first and ensure we were feeling supported in our collective. This inward turn is perhaps unsurprising given we were part of these communities experiencing the impact and in need of mental health, food, and social supports too. The decision helped us understand ourselves in crisis and how this looked different for everyone.

Racialized youth from other countries were looking for our space because they lacked it in their local community. Food remained part of the conversation. Instead of cooked meals, we sent FoodShare vouchers for people to choose what and when they wanted to eat. While we were concerned about what was lost by going online—like sitting at a table in deep conversation over a meal—other people finally gained access to much needed programming because barriers for them were no longer in place.

**How do cultures of food, gardening, and/or cuisine fit in within broader systemic issues of food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination?**

**Sonia Hill:** When we can sustain our communities off food produced within and for the community, we become less dependent on the settler-state and all its oppressive and alienating structures and institutions. In the last couple of years, I feel more connected to Indigenous practices of processing traditional foods and medicines. Throughout COVID-19, the price of food and necessities has skyrocketed within so-called Canada and beyond. In working with community at a grassroots level, I've seen all levels of government leave our people hungry while communities step up to organize gardens and food shares to supplement groceries for folks. Over the last couple of summers, the CUPE 3906 Indigenous Solidarity Working Group in Hamilton has donated thousands of dollars through our Community Impact Fund to families, individuals, and grassroots groups for the development and maintenance of community and family gardens. The Hamilton regional programming with the Indigenous Sustenance Reclamation Network has dedicated summer/fall programming to planting, harvesting, and processing our traditional foods and medicines. More and more Indigenous folks are getting reconnected with our ways of feeding communities. Planting, harvesting, and processing of traditional food sources by and for community is a practice of self-determination and community care that nourishes communities in so many ways while shifting our collective dependence away from the settler-state.



How does food fit into your conception of community care and water protection?

SH: To me, community care is all of the ways we are working towards the survival and nourishment of the communities we are part of. As Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse, the Six Nations) our relationships with food, plants, and animals is very different than in white settler society. Speaking about food plants specifically, ours are medicines—and the ways they nourish us are not taken for granted within a Kanien’keha:ka (People of the Flint, Mohawk) worldview. We have responsibilities that include more than watering and making sure they get enough sun. There are songs to be sung to specific plants at specific times. There are teachings about, for example, when there is more than one corncob wrapped in a husk. Our food plants teach us how to take care of them, and remind us how precious life is. When you look at a cob and think of that, it’s hard not to apply this appreciation of worthiness to yourself and those around you. Every stalk of corn is unique, with stories to tell, and lessons to share, just like every person. Kahnekanoron is a Kanien’keha (Mohawk language) word that translates to “water is precious.” Water is in every living being. When you truly believe water is precious, you start to see that inherent worth in every being. Commodification and exploitation of these beings and our relationships with them becomes an act of harm that cannot be accepted. Continuing to engage with ways of feeding our communities that sustained our ancestors is a deeply nourishing act of community care that fills bellies and spirits, and fuels Indigenous nationhood and self-determination. Reclaiming Indigenous food and medicine teachings and protecting land and water are deeply connected practices of community care.

How do cultures of food, gardening, and/or cuisine fit in within broader systemic issues of food sovereignty, food insecurity, equity, and self-determination?

Sienna Fekete: There are many elements that go into the building of an ecosystem of equity and care, and even more that go into sustaining it. Food is a beautiful and intimate medium through which we

can begin to make these connections. With recipes and the stories behind them—the cultural histories rooted within them—certain dishes can bring you to tears with a single bite by unlocking a forgotten memory or feeling. The *Community Cookbook* was a project born out of curiosity and wanting to connect more with my friends and family. During the spring of 2020, I invited my community to contribute their most cherished recipes, which I then compiled into a printed and digital PDF book. The directions for each recipe in the *Community Cookbook* are brilliantly laid out by each contributor, written with intention and care. At the early stages I was thinking about how food acts as a tool for communication, passion, and an entryway into much larger conversations surrounding food sovereignty. At the same time I was conceptualizing this cookbook, I was also taking a graduate course as part of my Art & Public Policy program called *Exploring Inclusivity Through the Culture of Food* taught by Professor and Chef Scott Barton. In this class, we explored food as a praxis for engagement, activism, and care that is rooted in long-term and sustainable growth. We studied a myriad of current and historic food movements and makers like A Festa da Boa Morte (The Festival of the Good Death) in Brazil, cacerolazos (pot-and-pan rebellions in France, Algeria, Spain, and beyond), Fannie Lou Hamer’s Civil Rights-era “Pig Bank,” the work of Vandana Shiva, Blondell Cummings’ dance performance *Chicken Soup*, the interracial maroon fishing community on Malaga Island, Rachel Harding’s *Welcome Table*, and the history of Clay Eaters of the American South.

What have you learned about local and global culinary cultures through your collaborative cookbooks? What has most surprised you?

SF: I have learned much about the art of cooking through my community. Cooking as a way to feel home, at peace, express oneself, connect with family and ancestors. Through this process, I learned that food was a spiritual practice for many, as well as a way to connect with personal histories, cultures, and traditions. You can hear each author’s voice distinctly by the way they describe their dish—what it means to them, how to prepare

it, and all the specificities and memories that come along with it. People submitted poems, playlists, stories, YouTube links, vivid descriptions, family traditions and their joy alongside their recipes. To cook the food of those you love is to know them a little bit better. I feel grateful that so many friends were excited by the project and eager to contribute. It started out as a bcc email asking recipients to submit their favourite recipes, not knowing what people would come back with, and the result was a celebration of all the dishes that my community hold dearly to their hearts, and the step-by-step preparation to experience it with them.

There is a wide range of recipes and types of dishes as the prompt simply called for recipes that mean something special to the author. I’ve learned about the ways in which certain foods and ingredients pollinate across different cultures and are present across diasporas. One of my favourite ingredients, hibiscus, is prevalent in many cultures and cuisines. Take for example the various hibiscus-centred beverages that exist across continents—bissap (West Africa), agua fresca de jamaica (Mexico), sorrel (Jamaica/Caribbean), etc. I am intrigued by the many ways in which ingredients find themselves being remixed across cultures utilizing the same central flavour profile, properties, and palette.

Can you give an example of a cookbook contribution that was significant for you, and why?

SF: Jazzy Romero’s Ceviche de Coliflor<sup>2</sup> is a dish I’ve had the pleasure of tasting myself, brought to me as a birthday treat during the summer of 2020. It’s the most scrumptious, acidic, lime-y, crunchy snack! Everyone sat in the park together, spread out on a mismatched assemblage of blankets in the grass, and excitingly dolloped helpings of this vegan ceviche onto crispy tostadas with fresh avocado and lime. I have never experienced such a delicious and flavourful ceviche to this day. It’s a recipe that her mom taught her that she makes in the summertime when she’s missing the marisquerias (seafood restaurants) of Los Angeles. It’s clear this dish was prepared with skill, familiarity, lots of love, and it showed.

<sup>1</sup> Author acknowledgment: Gratitude for the Teachings of Elders Catherine Brooks and Dan and Mary Lou Smoke as well as conversations with Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Group and Noojimo’iwewin Gitigaan Crew colleagues.

<sup>2</sup> Jazzy Romero, Ceviche de Coliflor, *Community Cookbook Volume 02*, (New York: self-published, 2021), 64.

# Interview with Omehen

## The Forest Curriculum



Omehen’s Gardens, Manila. PHOTO: KARL CASTRO.

The project Omehen (which means “harvest” in Manobo Talaingod, the Indigenous language of the Mindanao region in the south of the Philippines) was conceived by Alfred Marasigan, Karl Castro, and Guelan Luarca in collaboration with the Lumad Indigenous community<sup>1</sup> in exile in Manila. The project took shape against the backdrop of Rodrigo Duterte’s violent attacks and bombings on the Lumad Bakwit Schools<sup>2</sup> (2017–onwards) during the ongoing armed conflict in Mindanao. Subsequently, the Lumad people found refuge in various academic institutions in Manila, including the Ateneo de Manila University, where the artists teach.

Harvesting is an integral part of the cosmological practice of the Lumad communities, and therefore fundamental to their systems of education and knowledge sharing. Thus, the artists worked together with members of the Lumad community and University students to create a space of harvest within the academic institution and to facilitate the continuation of this practice and the mutual sharing of knowledges. Omehen, as its co-creators mention, aside from being a garden, was also a place to rethink pedagogy, an artistic

project and residency (initially funded by the Areté Sandbox Residency at the Ateneo), and a space of activism and resistance. Omehen as a platform brings together conversations operating at the intersection of Indigenous knowledges, university pedagogy, food security, forms of precarity and labour, and addresses questions that are central to imagining new worlds to come. Omehen was conceived and set into operation by late 2019, and while halted and disrupted during the pandemic, and even thrown into disarray by recent typhoons in the Philippines, the project lives on as podcasts and images, 3-D printed vegetables, and stories from the garden and the classroom.

The following interview was conducted between the co-directors of the Forest Curriculum, Abhijan Toto and Pujita Guha, and Karl Castro and Alfred Marasigan, co-initiators of the Omehen project at Ateneo De Manila University. The conversation touches upon the historical context against which Omehen emerged, knowledge formation in the university, Indigenous sovereignty and activism, and the material, pedagogic, and even bureaucratic practices in which Omehen negotiated its lifeworlds.

The interview was conducted in late January 2022. Whilst in the process of transcribing and editing, on February 28, 2022, Chad Booc, teacher and educator at Lumad Bakwit Schools, his fellow Lumad school volunteer teacher Gelejurain Ngujo II, community health worker Elegyn Balonga, and their accompanying drivers Tirso Añar and Robert Aragon, collectively known as the New Bataan 5, were brutally murdered by the Philippine Army (10th Infantry Division in Brgy. Andap, New Bataan, Davao de Oro). The New Bataan 5 were returning from conducting fieldwork in Davao, when they were killed by the state; even their autopsies while claiming death from multiple wounds and gunshots remain shrouded in opacity. Members of both the Omehen Project and Forest Curriculum express their solidarity with the New Bataan 5, and dedicate the interview to their work with Lumad Bakwit schools. May their souls rage in peace.

Abhijan Toto: I think the beginning is always a good place to begin, isn’t it? So maybe Karl, I was wondering if you could set up a little bit of the context within which Omehen emerged from, about what was happening in the Philippines at



that time and how did this group of people come together in this university space?

**Karl Castro:** So, when we conceptualized Omehen I think it was in a very interesting moment in the Indigenous struggle in the Philippines. I guess the context of this was the Duterte regime. And while there was a camaraderie between Duterte and the Lumads early on, this was quickly overturned when Duterte started bombing Lumad schools, displacing them, siding with mining companies, sending more troops to Lumad territories, etc. Then in 2015, and 2017, there was an Indigenous people’s caravan called the Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya, where representatives of many Indigenous groups would come to Manila and hold camps, protests, solidarity activities, etc. In particular, my experience as a volunteer in the 2017 Lakbayan, hosted by the University of the Philippines, was very interesting, especially to see how the university actually welcomed the Lumads, not just as visitors, but as guests who they can learn from. Which you know is quite different from previous decades when Indigenous people were treated like savages, people who had to abide by universities, be civilized, educated, etc.

The Lumads on their own were also establishing the Bakwit schools where they would continue schooling in evacuation camps, making the school a protest site as well. And since various universities had hosted the Bakwit schools, we thought why not formalize it and make this part of the curriculum [at the Ateneo de Manila University]? How do we intersect these two things in such a way that the academy would formally recognize these very different modes of learning? To have a curriculum vetted and recognized, and students actually be able to get a grade for participating in things like that, and at the same time to have Lumad students coming to the university as students, as co-learners. I think the goal of Omehen was not merely to decolonize, because there have been attempts to decolonize from within the university, but it was also an attempt to de-regionalize and de-class the university. Even with the attempts to Filipinize the curriculum, there was still an exclusion of the Indigenous worldviews, and Indigenous students as well. So, I think Omehen was very interesting in that sense. It was trying to break several glass ceilings at the same time.

**AT:** Thank you so much for that, because I think that’s also giving us so much to sit through and unpack. You mentioned a little bit of this entire question about the Filipinization of education, which we would argue is a wider question of internal colonization as well. And Omehen, we believe, is beyond just the formal idea of Indigenous curriculum that has been in practice for a long time in the Philippines, which in a way it intersects with, but also builds upon and creates different kinds of space for. It speaks both to larger concerns of decolonization, but also perhaps

to the micro-habits with which we inhabit a space, here of the university.

**Alfred Marasigan:** I think in a way Omehen attempts to localize the struggles of the Lumads. A big part of the coverage of their struggles is always second-hand, that is mediated, and the idea of using a garden or a plot of land was to make that experience and their stories a little bit more tangible. And I think that’s also why they journey to the capital, to not only have their voices heard, but [to have] their struggles co-participated in. Omehen also challenged the idea of outreach because it made pedagogy, or the act of imparting knowledge, a two-way process. Sir John,<sup>3</sup> the agriculture and math teacher of Lumad Bakwit schools was able to teach us a lot about the project we initiated, which is not exactly the plan we had in mind but was a great outcome of it.

**KC:** Indigenous culture is not always that distant, so that’s also why even before Omehen, I also tried to introduce my students to the Lumad Bakwit School. It would be a weird exchange. I’d ask a student and a teacher from the Lumad to visit my class and then, in the next session, my class would be visiting their evacuation camp or wherever they are. This was very interesting because many of my students have never met an Indigenous person before, so that was making it real; they were not just pictures that you see in books but real people. And for the Lumad student it was important to not be seen as a victim, but a real person. Not a marginalized entity, but an entity. In some classes, the Lumad kids would teach beadwork and in the process of doing it, the university students would find out how their classmates were being shot, how their parents have been arrested, their schools being bombed. So they were learning from these much smaller kids very complex beadwork that even they, college students, would have difficulty with. So, it was quite inspiring, for my students, to have a deeper appreciation of the mental and physical skills involved in making these “what they thought were just trinkets.” But also, it gave the Lumad students a bit of dignity; that they have mathematical excellence, they have very fine hands, they were able to comprehend these processes way better than my students.

And you know, I think Omehen was an interesting space where that would happen and made for an interesting question as to what a university space should be, and who participates in it. In looking for the garden plot, we discovered that actually we were not allowed to have vegetable gardens or fruit trees in the campus, because students might climb trees and get into an accident and the school doesn’t want to be responsible; or employees are discouraged from having these gardens because it might be distracting from their work. We really had difficulty in just finding a plot of land to use.

**AM:** It’s all very tangible, actually, to get

your hands dirty, literally. It’s also a lot of nitty-gritty. Like, you can’t put the garden in here, because the kids might fall off into the river. Again I think there’s something so simple as growing a vegetable that hits so many things about developmental learning. So, that kind of compels us to keep going even if it’s also very difficult for us, because there’s still so much to share with these students and the Lumads also have a lot to tell.

**Pujita Guha:** Building off of stories to tell, there has been a lot of conversation especially in the present on questions of Indigenous design, especially this sort of primitive environmentalism, right, Indigenous communities have some sort of innate access to cosmological and environmental knowledge. That’s one thing: living, building, crafting things like that, things that anthropology knows really at the back of it. And there’s a separate conversation on Indigenous activism that comes from a different set of spheres like fighting for climate justice, extractive economies, infrastructural building and resistance. So I was just wondering if you thought of Omehen as weaving or braiding questions of Indigenous design with Indigenous activism? And because for me, for example, the quilt, was some sort of exemplar or condensation of that idea within the university.

**KC:** I guess I will talk a little about the quilt. The quilt [“Weaving our Unity”] was a project we made in 2018. It was a way to show support for the Indigenous struggle, for the Lumad struggle. So we invited anyone to contribute a fabric-based work or print. At the same time we also invited Lumad kids to do it. It became a huge quilt—I never imagined it would grow that big, although I hoped that it would. The real question was, what do they do with the art? When we launched the quilt in a protest rally, people were just handling it, which is very different from how a similar tapestry would be handled in a museum or gallery setting. And then, over time we had the problem: where do we store this enormous thing, because we don’t have art storage? At the evacuation camps, it acted as a kind of curtain, suspended and separating the girls from the boys, the visitors’ area from the private area. It was a backdrop for certain events like graduations and other programs. It just traveled much more than I have, and I find that also interesting: what can an artwork mean in this situation, when it is not some kind of sacred object, the way we’ve been treating them in the art setting? What is the function of an object that is also not too precious? Or does its preciousness come from the fact that you can touch it, that you can actually dirty it and use it as a curtain?

**AM:** It’s really not that compartmentalized. Actually, I like the mess, personally. With the students, we are able to impart the idea that in the design process, output-orientedness is given more primacy than process, and I think that somehow people

feel that if they don’t have their output, they don’t seem successful in a specific design project. I think it was important not just in design classes, but also in art classes, to sit with the complexity and actually decide what you would end up with because I think that encourages a lot of care that is very much absent in the ways people proceed and are part of the systemic pressure that put these Lumad people [in the margins] in the first place. I’m always surprised when students are given an open-ended requirement of creating, like “make anything you want,” and if it’s translated mentally it’s almost as if the student is saying “wowwww, do I have agency?” So it’s no surprise that Lumad people are very adamant on this system for self-determination, because for teenagers—developing citizens—they are already conditioned, they do not have a choice in... Not just in creativity, but also in moving forward with whatever life they want to shape. So I think it’s a kind of lesson that extends also from Omehen.

**PG:** I think we’ve been seeing into the tune of not being output-oriented, but there is the garden that very much changes the temporality and labour of doing an output-oriented material practice. So we were just wondering if you could circle us back into the materiality of the garden and the process of reorienting us to a different idea of doing output-oriented work.

**AM:** I’ve thought a lot about it. And I think that there are three levels—the garden, the farm, and the forest—that intersect and form the ecology of Omehen. Several exciting moments from our garden came around when we were preparing the land. I think you have to aerate the soil and then

we were just looking at the other creatures that were getting out of the soil, like this frog, that insect... And so, everyone was making jokes about the termites: “that is like Duterte” [we said]. I remember that exchange between all of us within the class, and I think there is a tangibility that land lends to this kind of knowledge format. And the funny thing is that it deals with extremes, because after being 100% tangible, it was literally in a cloud, like swept away by a typhoon in the middle of a pandemic. Now it’s just a podcast. So I think, the theme of maintenance is also something that permeates this project, because it is an ethos that people want to nurture something, like a vegetable, and have to practice a lot.

**KC:** For me the garden was an interesting way to create a problematic for everyone involved. For the art students it was like, where does art happen, does it have to be in a studio or in an atelier? What are art students doing in a garden? What are we doing in this plot of land? Why do we have to step out of our air-conditioned classrooms with our shovels and be in this weird and undefined part of the campus that was not actually allowed, because no one wants to administratively take responsibility for it?

**AM:** And I also like that a while ago they talked to me about cosmology, all of this mysticism, like verbatim, and later said that they wanted a scientific approach to education. Which is then again also complicated by the panubadtubad, or the land-clearing ritual that they conducted. They could still ask for permission from the natural forces before they get to plant, and still be scientific about it. It’s also very ecological, because when you say asking permission it’s almost like acknowledging

the collaborative aspect of tilling land; you would think it’s common sense, but sometimes in land-grabbing, it’s not common sense because it’s not collaborative, it’s coercive. I think this is where the good fight is: to handle that complexity and to somehow surrender our understanding of it. With Omehen I was made aware to think of what solidarity even means, because it also gets thrown around sometimes, but the difficulties are not very much highlighted. So I think that even in our classes, I always highlight that just because you align with a specific cause, doesn’t mean that it will be easy or straightforward, because you have to manage many different things: [it is] in this management, where you learn how to actually belong, support each other.

**KC:** Solidarity is very messy. And it’s also very exhausting, but that is how it is. Beyond parroting a slogan, what one can actually do—I think it’s something that we touched on here. I wonder, if the pandemic ends in the Philippines, whenever that may be, will this class even happen again? Will the university go out of its way to invite and host Indigenous students within the campus? Will they open the grounds of the university to non-classroom activities? We don’t know, but I think that’s the achievement here in Omehen, even if, again, it didn’t fly quite as we thought: the fact that there’s a precedent, something that people can look back on and understand, that other universities can take as an example. That’s already a big thing for me, and even for them.

**AT:** On that note of being unfinished, I think that’s a great note to end this conversation. Thank you so much Alfred and Karl. May our gardens and resistances continue to flourish.



PHOTO: ALFRED MARASIGAN.

*This text was originally commissioned for Our Teaching Takes Shape As We Go, a publication edited by Cindy Sissokho and Soukaina Aboulaoula. The publication attempts to explore the current collective efforts and questions of critical artistic education.*

- 1 A Cebuano term for “native” or “Indigenous,” Lumad refers to Indigenous groups of the Southern Philippines.
- 2 Lumad Bakwit schools refers to provisional and nomadic schools run for internally displaced (“bakwit,” or to evacuate) Lumad students.
- 3 Names have been altered to protect privacy.



# Parasitic Oscillations

Madhur Anand

## SATYAGRAHA IN TÜBINGEN

I have seen it before, felt its upright tips across  
my palms. Some marsh. Some protected coastline. *Ein bischen*

*bitte* of the greenery behind the fishmonger's  
glass. I watched the moments caught—yesterday, he insisted—

separated from their heads, from their tails, from their scales,  
from every certainty, and he spoke so fairly

of taste, omelettes. I did not hide my light: *Sie haben*  
*forgessen...das Grün*. He has not charged me. He waves one

hand above his head. Something evaporates there.  
My little mouth, full of sea, my little head, full of

mud. Alone and red-handed in a rented room at  
noon, finding correct names—sea samphire, sea pickle, sea

asparagus—worse than corrupt ones: Saint-Pierre, patron  
saint of fishermen. The succulent stem was a straight

tablespoon of salt. At the middle of my life I  
want that. Directness. More than what my cells make from tides.

Look! I shout out the window. I'm hidden in plain sight!  
Someone else is thirsty. One granule crystallizes.

Past the coconut stand at Dandi beach a tourist  
finds a clay pot floating in the surf. He removes black

sludge from inside and packs it among his belongings.  
From the airplane the Arabian Sea looks like death.

The clay pot was in fact an urn. He discovers this  
in dreams, in his bed with dirt under his fingernails.

The urn, the names, the marsh, the charge, the cells, and Gandhi  
march on. Shall it be restored? My mother will die soon.

Last time she fell they spent weeks adding salt to her blood.  
It is dripping from the roofs of castles, from IVs.

It is going where it is needed most. A.O. Hume  
made a customs line from a hedge. I am reading it

now as the *biergarten* empties down the street. There is  
a tax so large it becomes a cavern. We ride through

on a boat at a rate precipitated by stone.  
The water there is the purest. I can taste it with

one finger. The German word for sea is *meer* and more  
is *mehr*. Residue, residual, knowing difference.



NORMAL FORMS ON HOPE BAY

Crystal-clear oscillations, sustained expirations  
of Newton’s equations, it can take fifty years to  
find a feather shaped like an arrow. I curl my lips  
to simulate northern cardinals, ancient cedars,  
low-dimensional puritans, shed imitations  
of my upright stance. The escarpment, a dotted line,  
purple and white trilliums announcing more vaccines.  
Science in retreat, Kishori Amonkar sings *man  
mein anand, tan mein anand*, as third waves deposit  
funeral pyres along the banks of distant rivers.  
I dream of American museums I could not  
imagine, Indian songbirds conserved in drawers.  
I play with three parameters of Bogdanov  
-Takens bifurcation mapped to stiffness, pressure, and  
time scale in the syrinx. I hear it first, the future.

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Msit No’kmaq:  
Deepening Relations with Mother Earth

Carolynne Crawley

I recall sitting in the tipi long ago during a Full Moon ceremony listening to an Elder share teachings about all of our relations. “Life is sacred and all life has purpose,” she said. Those words have always stuck with me. I have learned from Elders in my life that we have an individual and collective responsibility to be in a healthy and reciprocal relationship with our Mother, the Earth. Many Indigenous teachings speak of the need to think of the seven generations ahead when making decisions. However, it isn’t only about thinking of the people not yet born, but also of all living beings. All of creation must be considered as family and be treated with respect, love, and gratitude. We are intricately connected with one another, not separate from nature, but part of it. This has helped guide my vision to create opportunities for people to develop a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Mother Earth to ensure a better future for all beings.

In 2019, I started a social enterprise Msit No’kmaq (All My Relations in Mi’kmaq) based in Tkaronto. I offer programs to corporate, grassroots, and not-for-profit

organizations, as well as the public. My work focuses on reconciliation with the Earth, which continues to be harmed through colonial and capitalistic practices. I create opportunities for people to restore a healthier relationship with Mother Earth, so we may walk in balance with all of Creation once again. Some of the ways that I create these opportunities is through leading guided walks and programs in High Park to increase accessibility for those who are unable to travel to forests in the countryside.<sup>1</sup> During a walk, I share knowledge of the surrounding plant relatives—from food and medicines to the black oak savannahs—and offer sensory experiences for people to slow down and connect with their surroundings, a practice also known today as forest therapy. Practices like forest, eco, and nature therapy aren’t new concepts. They are new words for practices that have existed since time immemorial amongst Indigenous peoples.

To build a relationship with Mother Earth, it is important to prioritize spending time on the land. I suggest finding somewhere

outdoors, whether a backyard, balcony, or a local park, and go there at least once a week. Prioritize it as you would schedule time with a loved one: be there for at least twenty minutes without an agenda, turn off your cell phone, and listen from your heart. If accessibility is a barrier, sitting by an open window to notice the sky, clouds, treetops, or passing birds is an option.

When people take the time to build a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the lands, waters, and all beings, they will be more likely to defend and protect those relations from harm as they would do for a human loved one. So, I offer this invitation to build a deeper connection with nibi (water in Anishinaabemowin)—a thread that binds and sustains all living beings.

<sup>1</sup> A recent initiative that I co-founded is Turtle Protectors, an Indigenous-led program that promotes land and wildlife stewardship: <https://turtleprotectorshighpark.wordpress.com/>.

Water Invitation

1. Find a place to sit along a body of water. It could be a creek, river, pond, or lake. Find a spot to either sit or stand while using any necessary caution.
2. Get comfortable and take a moment to notice where you are.
3. If it feels right for you, take a few slow inhales through your nose, and exhale through your mouth, slowing down the rhythm of your breath.
4. Take a moment to notice any scents in the air. Feel free to move your head from side to side to catch a scent moving through the air.
5. Bring your awareness to the water and notice if you can pick up a scent. Continue to slowly breathe.
6. If it feels comfortable for you, close your eyes fully or half-gaze just for a minute or two while you notice the sounds of the water. Then slowly expand your awareness to other sounds surrounding you in the moment.
7. If you are able, find a safe way to connect with the water through touch or extend the palms of your hands towards the water to see if you can pick up any sensations coming from the water, such as a breeze or the warmth of the sun.
8. Bring your awareness to your sense of sight and just gaze at the water for a few minutes. Notice the movement, colours, and the relationship water has with other beings.
9. Be with the water using all of your senses. Notice any feelings that may be rising within you as you sit with the water.
10. Take a moment to ask, “what are you noticing?”
11. Find a way to offer something back to the water as a way of reciprocity for the time you shared with the water.



# Thinking with Black Ecologies in Educational Research

Fikile Nxumalo

I am interested in possibilities for educational research and practice for and with young children that responds to current times of unevenly inherited environmental precarity. I join others who point to the necessity of situating the causality and current effects of this precarity within past-present atmospheres of racial capitalist extractivism, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness.<sup>1</sup> This work speaks back to apolitical, universalizing, and human-exceptionalist discourses of the Anthropocene; instead suggesting the need for multiscalar, situated, and justice-oriented modes of attunement and response.

I am particularly interested in intervening into the erasures and deficit constructions of Black people’s relationships with the more-than-human world in education. In this regard, I have turned to the conceptual and methodological openings provided by Black ecologies. Black ecologies offer an orientation toward Black relations with the more-than-human world, both imagined and embodied, that centre more-than-human recuperation, relationality, reciprocity, and kinship.<sup>2</sup> Black ecologies are filled with possibilities of inquiring into Black people’s liberatory relations with the more-than-human world, in particular spaces and places. Black ecologies attend to and resist the ways in which these relations have been and continue to be impacted by anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, including their interconnections.

Black people and their historical and present land relationships are absent from Ontario elementary and middle school environmental education curriculum guidelines.<sup>3</sup> Alongside this absencing, I have also written about the coloniality and anti-Blackness inherent in normalized pedagogy that positions Black children living in urban contexts as lacking relationships with nature.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, Black ecologies

also insist that Black people’s material and imaginary ways of knowing and becoming-with the more-than-human world cannot be contained by ongoing structures of harm. For example, Justin Hosbey and J. T. Roane, writing on Black ecologies that have emerged from maroon communities within the context of Tidewater Virginia and the Mississippi Delta, point to colonial discourses that “depict Black people either as equal partners in ecological destruction or simply as victims of extraction.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Katherine McKittrick, thinking with Sylvia Wynter, underlines the importance of a deciphering practice that shifts away from descriptive accounts of the oppression of Black people. As an alternative, a “deciphering practice imagines and enacts an aesthetics of black life outside the intense weight of racism.”<sup>6</sup>

Holding close to these teachings, what might it look like to centre Black ecologies in Canadian education research and practice? One possibility is to take inspiration from multiple temporalities. That is to say, Black ecologies are not only concerned with past and present more-than-human relationalities. They also include an engagement with future-oriented, liberatory world-making. I see this as an invitation to imagine what environmental education grounded in Black onto-epistemologies might look like, feel like, and sound like. In my work, I have considered what kinds of pedagogical orientations might be needed to engage children in speculative Black storytelling that centres desired reparative and reciprocal relations with the more-than-human world.<sup>7</sup> With my friend and colleague kihana miraya ross, I have experimented with Black speculative fiction—set in the future amidst the ruins of ecological devastation and anti-Blackness, our story imagines a school for Black children centred on reparative, reciprocal and relational Black land relationships.<sup>8</sup>

These speculative imaginaries disrupt colonial constructions of “pure nature” separate from humans. This means that urban spaces and places are also sites of real and imagined Black ecologies. In taking seriously the liberatory potential of imaginaries I am guided by two ethos. The first is that pedagogical responses to environmental precarity need to be interdisciplinary; entangling ecological caring, anticolonial and anti-racist ethics and politics, Western science, Black and Indigenous knowledges, the arts, and more. Interdisciplinarity is one antidote against “the grandiosities, myopia, and heroicisms of Man”<sup>9</sup> that continue to plague responses to the so-called Anthropocene. The second is a lesson from Black studies on creative expression as a place from which to theorize and make visible what Kevin Quashie calls Black aliveness.<sup>10</sup> Katherine McKittrick powerfully describes this attention to creative expression as:

*the rebellious potential of black aesthetics—stories, music, poetry, visual art, the beautiful ways of being black that are unarchived yet tell us something about how we can and do and might live the world differently.*<sup>11</sup>

Staying with the potentialities offered by interdisciplinarity and Black creative expression, I am currently engaging in a research inquiry aimed at centring Black ecological relationships in climate change education, in both present and future terms. Thinking with *Black futures*, I am interested in engaging a group of Black families with young children in Toronto schools on their *collective desires* for the climate justice education for their children. Thinking with *Black presence*, I am inviting the same group of Black families to share images and stories of their more-than-human relations and environmental practices in Toronto. This research builds on

my previous research, which has focused on young Black children and made visible their complex relations with the more-than-human world in urban places and spaces.<sup>12</sup> As the earlier discussion on enacting deciphering practices suggests, I am particularly interested in going beyond revealing the unending ways in which environmental injustices manifest and take hold in Black communities. What can emerge from making visible the Black ecologies that are always, already present in multiple situated forms in the city places and spaces that Black people inhabit? By “making visible” I mean that my theories of change are oriented towards educators and education policy makers who are meeting the imperative of designing situated climate justice education that holds to the inseparability of racial and climate justice.

Rather than a universalized how-to, my intention is to create pedagogical and curricular openings that are meaningfully and specifically connected to Black communities’ ecological desires and more-than-human relations. My research also aims to intervene more broadly into neoliberal multicultural approaches as a key way of addressing difference in the education of young children in Canada. In my work with young children and educators over the past decade, I have found multicultural approaches unable to hold the specificities and complexities of Black subjectivities. Rather, such approaches oscillate between erasing the long durée of Black onto-epistemologies in Canada and constructing Black life in Canada in deficit ways. For me, taking seriously that “Black matters are spatial matters”<sup>13</sup> means finding ways to attend to Black place relations and knowledge-making that are refusals of neoliberal multicultural formations. Black ecologies, at multiple registers—both real and imagined—are filled with such refusals.

1 See for example, Françoise Vergès, “Racial capitalocene” in *Futures of Black Radicalism* (2017): 72–82.

2 Romy Opperman, “We Need Histories of Radical Black Ecology Now,” August 3, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/we-need-histories-of-radical-black-ecology-now>.

3 Ontario Ministry of Education, *Environmental Education: Scope and Sequence of Expectations*, 2017, [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/environmental\\_ed\\_kto8\\_eng.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/environmental_ed_kto8_eng.pdf).

4 Fikile Nxumalo, “Place-based disruptions of humanism, coloniality and anti-blackness in early childhood education,” *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 8, no. SI (2020): 34–49.

5 Justin Hosbey and J.T. Roane, “A Totally Different Form of Living: On the Legacies of Displacement and Marronage as Black ecologies,” *Southern Cultures* 27, no. 1 (2021): 68–73.

6 Katherine McKittrick, “Dear April: The Aesthetics of Black Miscellanea,” *Antipode* 54, no. 1 (2022): 3–18.

7 Fikile Nxumalo and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, “Centering Black life in Canadian Early Childhood Education,” *Gender and Education* (2022): 1–13.

8 Fikile Nxumalo and kihana miraya ross, “Envisioning Black space in Environmental Education for Young Children,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 22, no. 4 (2019): 502–524.

9 Africa Taylor, “Countering the Conceits of the Anthropos: Scaling Down and Researching with Minor Players,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 41, no. 3 (2020): 340–358.

10 Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

11 Katherine McKittrick, “Dear April.”

12 Fikile Nxumalo, “Disrupting Anti-Blackness in Early Childhood Qualitative Inquiry: Thinking with Black Refusal and Black Futurity,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 27, no. 10 (2021): 1191–1199.

13 Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

# Peasant CV

Asunción Molinos Gordo

In *Peasant CV*, Asunción Molinos Gordo employs the aesthetics and language of professional resumes to highlight the skilled labour of peasant farmers in León, Spain. Through use of bureaucratic buzzwords, Gordo satirizes the rhetoric of state and NGO-led conservation practices that often de-value local knowledges. Gordo employs this language to foreground the expert knowledges gained through multi-generational working-class experience. The land-based knowledge of peasant farmers is often dismissed as archaic; this stigma further endangers a peasant way of life. With the ongoing expansion of industrial agriculture that privileges monopolies, monocrops, and global markets in Spain and beyond, small-scale farmers face threats to their lifeways. Not only does peasant farming provide employment to rural people, it also carries traditions of valuing biodiversity, using sustainable cultivation practices, maintaining culture, and building interconnected communities. The loss of peasant farming would also mean the loss of the life-preserving practices that come with it.

The resumes in *Peasant CV* implicitly chart peasants’ struggles against exploitation, food insecurity, and ecological crisis in an industrial age. Gordo’s practice begs the questions: How can community-based knowledge and rural livelihoods be acknowledged and honoured? How can traditional conservation strategies be preserved through farming? What sustains dignified work?



# Aurora Cisneros Aller

Peasant, born in Quintana del Castillo, Spain on the 18th of February, 1952



## Professional Targets

- To keep family farming in full operation.
- To develop strategies to survive the current processes of depeasantization of farming.
- To gain negotiating power with respect to the organizations that limit the commercialisation of their products.

## Areas of expertise

- Applied Agriculture and Livestock Farming
- Observational Astronomy
- Applied Meteorology and Climatology
- Edaphology and Soil Preservation
- Forestry and Woodland Conservation
- Bromatology and Food Processing
- Human Resources
- Health

Education: High School diploma

Internet Use: Medium to high level

Affiliations: Bobbin Lacemakers Association «El Niño»

Hobbies: Hiking and Pilates

## Personal Profile

Multi-skilled agricultural professional, with a long-standing history of local leadership that cultivates a spirit of research, experimentation and excellence, while acting as a catalyst for collaboration and exchange of knowledge for the regeneration of the agrarian society. Intellectually proactive, motivated and encouraging, she is always alert to unforeseen discovery of new resources, and understands serendipity as a form of dialogue with the world.

## Responsibilities and duties

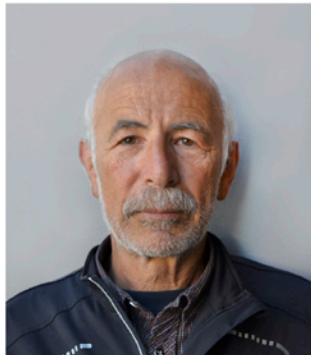
- To conduct cutting-edge research to find well-founded solutions to the new economic challenges arising from the liberalisation of the markets and the commodification of cereals.
- To develop pioneering techniques for the defense of the rights of the small- and medium-sized producers, aiming to achieve a qualitative leap in terms of autonomy and local sovereignty.
- To avoid biodiversity loss and safeguard natural heritage through the conservation and use of native seeds, which do not endanger human health and guarantee animal welfare.
- To undertake collective management of woodlands, prevent fires and keep forested areas safe through the use of traditional techniques based on an efficient use of resources and in communal land management.
- To make sure that economic operators comply with legislation and guarantee fair and equitable practices in the food trade.

## Skills

- Building and maintaining food production systems that guarantee the future of the coming generations and secure their well-being and quality of life.
- Advocating for community colloquy ensuring intra- and intergenerational solidarity and reinforcing social cohesion.
- Demonstrating resolve to understand the reasons that lie behind the rural crisis and spare no effort to propose bottom up solutions, without losing heart every time her proposals are ignored.
- Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the Administration, with the required patience and self-control.
- Diversifying the sources of income by working in the service sector, including rural tourism.

# Heliodoro Santos Mejía

Peasant, born in Valencia de Don Juan, Spain on the 30th of May, 1951



## Professional Targets

- To keep family farming in full operation.
- To develop strategies to survive the current processes of depeasantization of farming.
- To gain negotiating power with respect to the organizations that limit the commercialisation of their products.

## Areas of expertise

- Applied Agriculture and Livestock Farming
- Observational Astronomy
- Applied Meteorology and Climatology
- Edaphology and Soil Preservation
- Forestry and Woodland Conservation
- Bromatology and Food Processing
- Farm Equipment Mechanics
- Human Resources

Education: High School diploma

Internet Use: None

Affiliations: “Los Míticos” Club

Hobbies: To do the pools, to play the lottery and to participate in an annual mus (card game) tournament.

## Personal Profile

Multi-skilled agricultural professional involved in a broad spectrum of activities, Heliodoro is able to identify, distinguish and apply good agricultural practices that ensure both the stability of his work and a prosperous future for generations to come. Politically active and with a high capacity for self-organization, his resilience to change serves him as a tool of empowerment for survival.

## Responsibilities and duties

- To enlarge the common intellectual capital of the peasantry and protect invaluable intangible assets, keeping them alive and avoiding their disappearance.
- To prevent erosion and desertification processes in the territory, preserving the fertility and stability of soils by applying traditional methods of groundcover vegetation enrichment.
- To keep watch over his property and equipment, since these days patrols of the civil guard seem to be more committed to the task of tax collection and of imposing fines, than to the fight against organized crime.
- To participate in collective actions, taking a stand against the new market policies that favour global players and allow them to manipulate the value chains of food products.
- To be the contact point for all Government investigations, responding to questions from regulatory authorities and keeping all relevant administrative records updated.

## Skills

- Acting as a cross-cutting player for the sustainability of rural areas and to be a vital element for the survival of society.
- Supplying the entire production chain with raw materials of high standards.
- Community building through interactive processes, responding promptly to requests for assistance from others and forging strong and durable bonds of reciprocity.
- Facilitating of generational shift by sharing his knowledge and experiences with the young, participating in the co-production of meanings.
- Ensuring the efficient and responsible use of resources, securing environmental quality and preventing the degradation of natural capital.
- Challenging conventional thinking through popular wisdom.



# How Not to be Consumed: Thoughts on Building Critical Humanities Research Labs in the Time of COVID

Aimi Hamraie, Maria Hupfield, Zoë Wool

**Zoë Wool:** Academic institutions are extractive spaces. But, as la paperson reminds us in the radical text *A Third University Is Possible*, they are always also more than that. Folded between their layers of bureaucracy, nestled between their conventional pedagogies and methodologies that conserve colonial and white supremacist forms of prestige and expertise, otherwise practices take root.

In fall 2021, I launched the TWIG Research Kitchen, a feminist research space devoted to experimental work on themes of toxicity, waste, and infrastructure across the social sciences and humanities. Praxis-oriented, we explore what convivial modes of research might be like. Formed in relation to disability justice, we try (and sometimes fail) to build models of scholarship that are sustainable and nourishing, rather than extractive and exhausting.

In hatching the Research Kitchen, I am lucky to have excellent examples to learn from, including Andrea Ballesterio's Ethnography Studio, Aimi Hamraie's Critical Design Lab, Maria Hupfield's Indigenous Creation Studio, Max Liboiron's CLEAR lab, and Michelle Murphy's Technoscience Research Unit.

The Blackwood invited me to talk with two of these scholars about how we're re-figuring research, collaboration, and community involvement. The conversation below is an edited transcript of the really nourishing discussion I got to have with Aimi Hamraie and Maria Hupfield.

Hamraie's Critical Design Lab is a collective of disabled designers, artists, and researchers currently spread across three countries exploring and making technology and media using a disability culture framework and approach. Hupfield's Indigenous Creation Studio is a space for students, researchers, scholars, and community members to build trust, responsibility, and accountability with Indigenous Peoples and communities through Land and arts-based practices. Together, we reflect on how we as researchers navigate institutional waters, and what tools and strategies we're using to wade through the unfamiliar waters of our contemporary moment.

**What projects in your space are you excited about these days?**

**Aimi Hamraie:** One of the projects that my lab does is the Remote Access dance party. It's organized by a group of people spearheaded by Kevin Gotkin. We started out doing those parties in March 2020 as a way to show all the different disability culture protocols that can be entered into a digital space and made into ways of relating, having social time, and partying at a distance.

Various people who have organized the parties have tried doing a hybrid version, like moira williams, a disabled Indigenous artist who's part of the collective. They had this boat party on an accessible barge in New York City, with a digital component. Party planners are just constantly trying to figure out how far or how close

we want to meet other people. How do we dance? How do we, like, let our bodies do what bodies want to do in a dance party space, after having them so isolated for a long time? How do we do this in person, and at a distance?

**Maria Hupfield:** We're taking on a digital archive as a curatorial project; one of the items is a wiigwaas jiimaan led by Kyla Judge, who brought together a group of Indigenous youth at the Georgian Bay Biosphere to make a traditional birchbark style canoe. She has developed all this protocol around it, Anishnaabemowin language, including handmade tools and seasonal care, and so we want to find a way to include these relations into our Indigenous Living Archive.

At the Indigenous Creation Studio, when I think about what art is I'm looking at this as trans-disciplinary because the term allows us to open it up holistically and move away from European or Western ideas of art as a painting on the wall. Art may be a performance or it could be a body but it never really includes the full scope of what some of these items are that come from Indigenous communities. So we strive to put our content back in right relations. In addition, we ask how art can be shown as living and a connected part of life today. Our efforts, much like my own practice, involve connecting artistic creations with movement and sound and wellness and doing this fully, not only to include the mind and the body, but also the spirit and the emotion as well.



Heirloom seeds. COURTESY MARIA HUPFIELD.



Mashikiki Gitigan, medicine garden on UTM campus. COURTESY MARIA HUPFIELD.

In addition to the curated archive project we are looking at the campus as being in the middle of a medicine garden. The English translation *strength of the earth garden*—the word that we use Mashikiki Gitigan is the same word that you use for medicine and it's the same word you use for food and, well, all of that is considered strength of the earth. Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer and Leanne Simpson write about this, so it's known but we really want to apply it and understand and practice it here at UTM.

## PROMPT 1: MOVING WITH CARE THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL WATERS

**What relations are there between our labs/spaces and the institutional landscapes, which they are part of? Do these contrast with relations to other communities and other alliances?**

**AH:** When I was a graduate student at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, my advisor Rosemary Garland-Thomson was very active in recruiting faculty all over the university into disability studies and convincing them that what they were doing was actually disability studies. I didn't really get why she was doing that until the university cut a bunch of departments one year out of nowhere. I talked to her shortly after those departmental cuts happened, and she was like, "this is why we develop relationships with people across the university; because they can't cut disability studies if it exists in every single department." It was really striking to me the technique of building relationships as a way of building a field

and also creating power in an institution, as opposed to asking a Dean for money and space that can just be taken away tomorrow. I was also doing union organizing at the same time, and was having a lot of really frustrating run-ins with the university administration around that, and how they responded to forms of power that were legible to them.

When I was starting out at Vanderbilt [University], I was trying to figure out a version of that strategy. The campus was really inaccessible and the official institutional narrative was that the campus is 100% compliant with the law. And so I wanted to figure out, how do we get our campus to understand that that narrative is not true? So I created a lab and I called it that, because it's a legible forum to all my scientist colleagues, and they understand a lab as a kind of social and academic gathering of people.

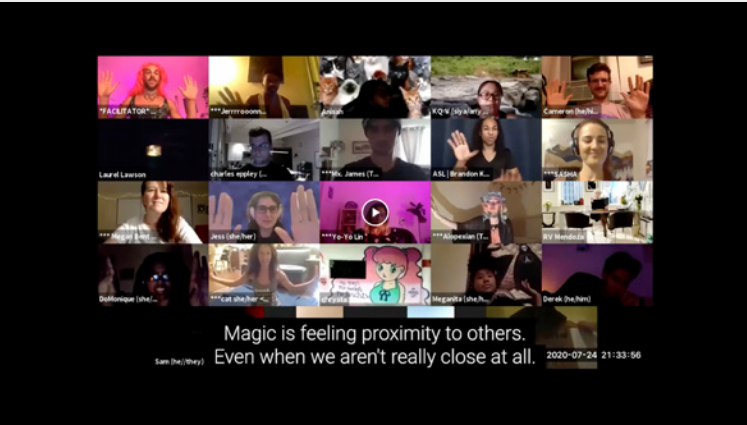
But what we do in the lab is of course very different than other forms of research. I intentionally never asked for space or official institutional recognition or anything like that, because then it could exist regardless of whether I have permission, and I could involve other people who do not have the same institutional forms of access that a lot of my students have. The Critical Design Lab is part of the university in the sense that I am part of Vanderbilt, but it's also floating above and beyond it, and exists in a lot of different cultural spaces within disability community.

**MH:** The pandemic changed everything. Whatever I thought was going to happen

was absolutely not the case. One of the shifts I made for this year had to do with partnerships. I already was reaching out to try and build trust, connect with folks. I want to build community—or not even build it, but just try and get a sense of the landscape that's here and what's possible.

Also UofT was like, "Okay, this [lockdown] is lifting" and then suddenly it was like "Oh, we have [CAUT] censure and so now we can't host anyone anyway, even if we wanted to." I decided the way forward was to focus on these partnerships and then by handing the money over to organizations, they would host the events and that became a way to connect, to redistribute some of the resources that were available to me. How can the work that is happening in unconventional spaces support multiple levels, different types of careers, different types of livelihoods? That's something I've really hit up against when trying to connect Indigenous with Institutional models.

The other thing is people who specialize in Indigenous research; they're in high demand. So how do we not overtax our community? Aimi, you talked about how individualism is rewarded in academia. And I think that if we're wading through common waters, what I'm interested in is moving away from this idea of *one*—of a standard based in a singular male genius anchored in white supremacy and patriarchy—and moving towards something that is nonhierarchical, towards mutual support and alliances. I suppose the term that we often hear is "decolonial" or an "anti-colonial" model that opens up



Remote Access dance party. COURTESY AIMI HAMRAIE.





other ways of imagining a future that does not traumatize. So right off the hop at the Indigenous Creation Studio we developed a protocol handbook based on insights and guidance from the Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory led by Dr. Jas Rault and Dr. T.L. Cowan, Assistant Professors of Media Studies in the Department of Arts, Culture and Media (UTSC) and the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. They directed me to the work of Dr. Max Liboiron’s CLEAR lab at Memorial University in Newfoundland, which applies feminist approaches to a research lab across multiple disciplines. There’s a lot of models out there, but not necessarily in the visual arts.

Marim Adel, one of the students working as a Research Assistant at the ICS, has been working on an accessibility handbook as well, so we can include it into our practices as we bring guests onto the campus, including Elders. I think Zoom life really opened up a lot of thinking around Indigenous knowledge and access. There are certain Elders I would never have imagined being on Zoom giving teachings. Now people are able to attend all kinds of language classes and access other Knowledge Keepers. So how do we promote but still protect that knowledge in this digital sphere? How do we look at contracts as artists, so that we’re not just increasing amounts of unpaid labor?

**ZW:** Maria, this idea of promoting but still protecting—this is so important in the institutional era of equity, diversity, and inclusion (or EDI) that we’re in right now. It gets so appropriative. Aimi, as you were saying, there’s this pull for you or your work or your praxis to be made into the property of the university, even a crown jewel. This is in stark contrast from a key lesson in both disability and Indigenous work and worlding: the need to prioritize relations. This seems not to be happening in EDI, where people are operating in this extractive and consumptive mode, and then the question of relations just goes out the window. With the Research Kitchen I’m trying to be mindful of the time it takes to build those relations.

I’m also trying not to assume that I’m entitled to have any particular set of relations with any group of people, particularly outside the university. And actually, most of the work I’ve been doing to build the Kitchen thus far has been focused on building this space within the university. With the exception of a collaboration with Heritage Mississauga, the Kitchen hasn’t branched out yet, because I feel like we’re not there yet; I haven’t built those relations yet. It’s really important to be able to move slowly. This is certainly part of wading; moving slowly, not diving right in. I learned this from my previous position at Rice University, where I did dive in but it ended up being really wasteful. Wasteful of the resources I had access to, wasteful of my own energy and the energy of other people. I was building on a sense of enthusiasm that people had, rather than relations.

## PROMPT 2: SHOW AND TELL

**Can you share an artifact of your work that speaks to how your research space is being shaped by this particular historical moment?**

**ZW:** What I have is a piece of paper from a very large notepad. It’s got coloured lines making different quadrants, and writing in different colours showing different tasks, skills, and desires. It’s from some delegating and brainstorming work that we were doing to organize an intensive month-long undergraduate research project. On our first day together, my co-facilitator Sophia Jaworski and I decided to take the students outside and to drag a whiteboard to a patch of woods on UTM campus where one of Dylan Miner’s platforms is installed. I had assembled this giant bag of cushions and clipboards and markers and things, so we could work in the fresh air. And one of the things that happened was these students who had signed up to do an intensive research project found themselves sitting in the woods eating Persian herb omelettes and thinking about what they need to flourish.

The work on this piece of paper is from a day that the students decided—without prompting from me—that they didn’t want to work in the kind of dark classroom we’d been assigned, and instead wanted to go sit on one of Dylan Miner’s platforms out in a little patch of dandelions.

In the end, we had some terrific outputs but those outputs only emerged out of practices indebted both to feminist research praxis and to principles of disability justice. It was really wonderful and in some ways, concerns about COVID provided almost an alibi for these wacky practices: the idea of working outside made people slightly less uncomfortable than it would have otherwise. People were perhaps more ready to wade into new waters.

**AH:** I do have something, and I want to share a backstory. So, one of my touchstones for doing work that is out of sync with the institutional productivity demand is critical race theory, which interrupts the idea that the law is this objective fact. Derrick Bell, in his book *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, has this chapter where he tells

you that he’s in the woods typing on his laptop, and he’s writing a kind of boring didactic law review article, when all of a sudden this person who looks at first like he could be a white supremacist— they’re holding, like, a gun and walking around in the woods—comes up to him and starts talking to him. And Bell says, “I was doing this weird but beautiful thing, producing my article by sitting on a chair typing on this laptop,” (which was then new technology that enables this in the woods), “and now there’s this person who’s here and like, am I safe? What’s going on?” It turns out this person is part of some white anti-racist group, and they have a whole conversation about institutional racism. It’s kind of a parable, because critical race theory uses narratives and stories and fiction to make different academic arguments. But I think about that all the time, the striking image of somebody sitting in the woods and doing academic work in that setting, in recognition of their connection to that space and their sidedness, but also how it’s the complete opposite of working in an academic office.

So this image is a screenshot from the second Remote Access party and it shows a grid of like twenty people like on Zoom. Some have pink light behind them. There’s an ASL interpreter, and almost everyone is holding up their hands to the edge of the screen as if to touch the other people, at the direction of the facilitator and DJ. This is a moment of connection across time and space, with all these other people. The caption says, “magic is feeling proximity to others, even when we aren’t really close at all.”

This is one of the first instances of what Kevin Gotkin—who’s the DJ in the upper left-hand corner wearing this green dress and a cool necklace and a pink wig and a beard—called “access magic,” and the magic is the forming of connections and webs across space. In the early days of the pandemic, we all really needed that. There was a lot of healing and that sense of “I can’t touch anybody, I haven’t touched anybody for four months, but here I am touching people across the screen.” That became a blueprint for other forms of connection that could be created through these digital formats. So I wanted to share that and it’s a little bit like typing a law paper in the woods, because it’s using this technology that I think was made for bankers to have meetings across time zones or something, but you know, having a crip dance party.

**MH:** I’m really curious about some of your archive strategies, Aimi. One of the things we’re always trying to think through is what to include and how. For example, I talked about the jiimaan, but we also have another item in the archive titled “My Grandmother was Born on the Blueberry Patch,” which is a little purse that’s been beaded on hand-tanned leather. We’ve been able to document it with photogrammetry, so you can see it in the round. There’s little bells on it and beautiful bead-

work on both sides. When we talked to the maker, an artist named Caitlyn Bird, we asked what else we could include with it. One of the things that came up was the whole blueberry economy in the north.

Caitlyn interviewed their grandmother’s sister—because their grandmother passed away and they didn’t know their grandmother—so we could have those audio pieces in the archive as well. Then their grandmother’s sister also passed away. So, we’re navigating all these different ways to fully represent something like “My Grandmother was Born on the Blueberry Patch.” How can we really realize it, locate it within family and geographically within land relations?

**AH:** What you’re doing is so interesting because you’re creating a material archive that has the stories of the material things, places, and people who are connected to them. It’s a similar approach that we want to take for the *Remote Access Archive*. We’re not just doing oral histories on their own. But sometimes the material is lost, and so it can only be described and recounted. For example, disabled people used telegrams to get in touch with each other across long distances, but they’re only in someone’s memory. Then, sometimes, you’re able to find the actual object and digitize it in some way, or to find historical documentation of it somewhere, and include that.

I was talking to the disability historian Susan Burch. All her work is about institutions, and she had written about the institutionalization of Black men in the Jim Crow era and has a new book about the institutionalization of Indigenous people in North Dakota in what was called a “mental asylum.” She shared that one of the ways people connected outside of the institution was through quilting. There were messages sent back to families through quilts, and there was an equivalent practice with residential schools in that same area and time. So I’m trying to find out what those kinds of things are. I don’t think those quilts exist anymore, but Burch had stories about them in her book.

Then there’s this whole other history of the present part. How do we capture this ongoing history? There’s so much that’s happening around COVID, how do we capture that in real time? I’ve asked people to do oral histories about the present, and they’re kind of confused because they say, “it’s happening now, how could this be historical?” There are students at UCLA that have been doing sit-ins to demand remote learning for months, and they were like, “Here’s our protest signs but we’re not ready to talk about this yet. We will do an oral history in a year, maybe, but right now we’re just too in the weeds of what’s happening to even be able to reflect on it and know what’s important to share.” I’m sure there will be interesting things once they start talking, like with telemedicine and telehealth. There’s a lot to navigate around how you share your

medical encounters and what needs to get redacted or what’s community information versus information that can go to public archives.

**MH:** Thank you—you just shifted something in me. It feels like, “Of course!” Taking that extra leap from object to voice is necessary. We really want to hear a voice with each of these objects. The speaker’s positionality can connect us back to truth and context; context is everything. In history museums, they historically didn’t even bother to know who the maker is—who collected it often is all that’s important.

I’m going to talk about something I use a lot in my own practice. You may have seen these before; it is just a little Jingle. It starts as a circle cut out of tin that gets hand-curved to make a cone. It looks a lot like a bell but it doesn’t have a hammer inside it so they need each other to make sound. I think this is a really nice way of thinking about individual versus collective models. The other thing about the Jingle is that they are worn on a Jingle dress which is a healing dress, and a very recent dance form. It shows cultural innovation and survival and something that we have learned during the pandemic was that this form of dance started during another pandemic [the 1918 influenza pandemic]—that’s when the Jingle dress surfaced.

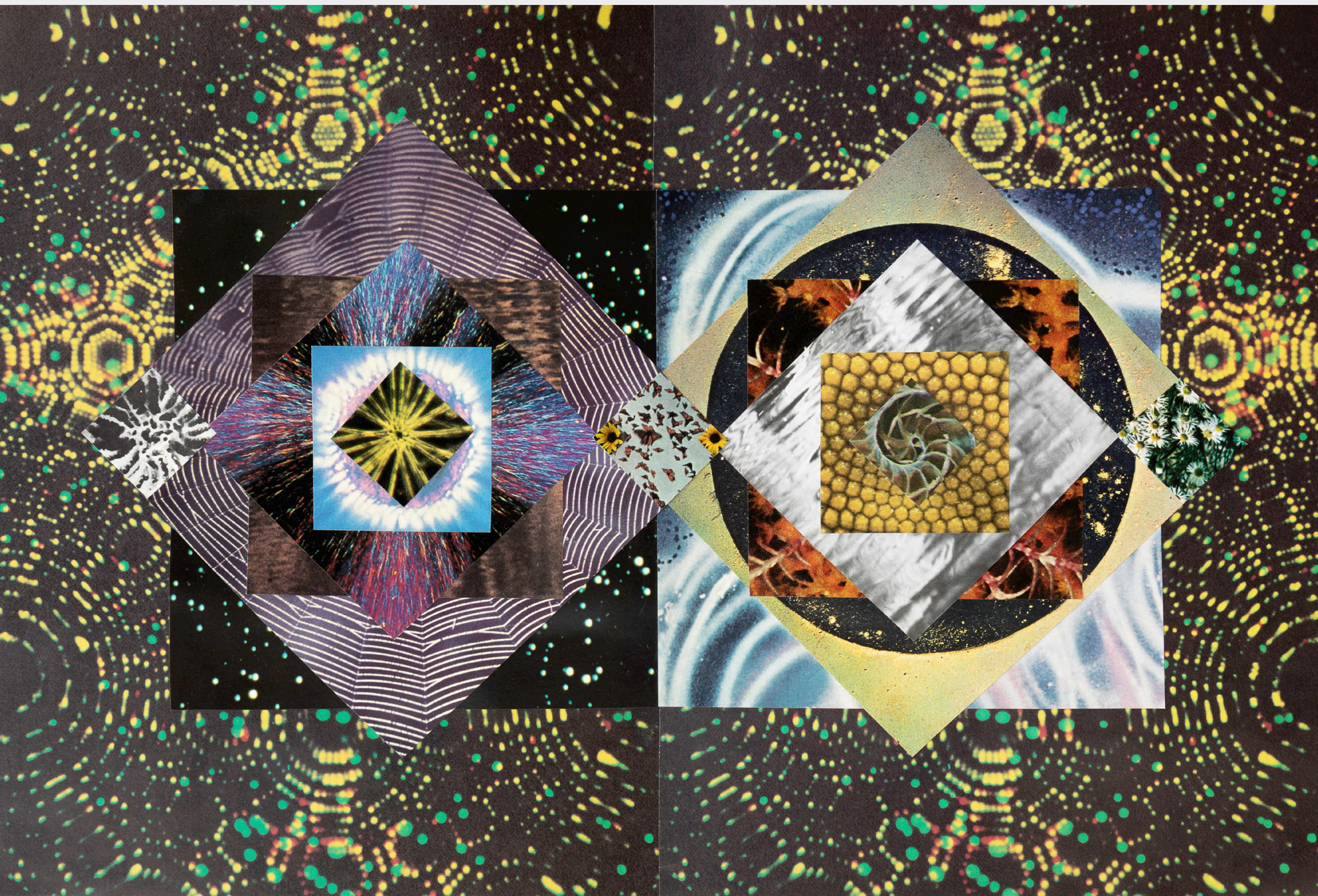
Thinking about the Jingle as a sound; how do you embody sound? This changes your movement but also this idea of sound and thinking about the word “truth.” Jim Dumont talks about truth, the word debwe. The ending of the word “we” or “we-we” (pronounced way-way), which has to do with sound, so listening to your truth. A Jingle, and the Jingle dress, the sound of it, which is also like a shaker or sheshkwaw also recalls water. All of these things are connected. The healing and the wellness of water and the sound of the water in the womb: that takes you back to creation. So with these ideas of truth and embodying knowledge and living a truth in mind, I’ve been thinking about how to listen, how to listen deeply. That takes me towards future work that has to do with language and voice and speaking. Not just embodying it but also the responsibilities that come with speaking when you’re based in an oral tradition like I am as an Anishinaabe person. When you’re putting words out in the world, what those mean, living it versus just writing it down. These are other methodologies, that we can look to, that have always been there, but haven’t been visible or active in the same kind of way. I agree that we’re in a moment where there’s a lot of experiential learning that I’ve been called upon for at UofT. These little jingles are part of that work I’ve been doing.



UTM students and faculty gather on *Agamiing – Niwaabaandaan miinawaa Nimikwendaan* // *At the Lake – I see and I remember*, platform by Dylan A.T. Miner. COURTESY ZOE WOOL.

Following spread:  
Maggie Groat, *twins, webs, ripples, shifts, sounds*, 2022, found paper.  
COURTESY THE ARTIST.







# Against Renewal

Christina Sharpe

## 1. definitions.

**Renew:** noun:

**a.** The action of renewing or re-establishing something, or the state of being renewed, *spec.* the action of extending the period of validity of a lease, license, etc.;

**b.** the action of resuming an activity after an interruption.

The action of replacing, repairing, or improving the condition of something. See also *urban renewal* n. at urban adj. and n. Compounds.

**renew, v.1**

**1. a.** *transitive.* To make (something) new, or like new, again; to restore to the same condition as when new, young, or fresh.

**b.** *transitive.* To cause to be spiritually reborn; to invest with a new and higher spiritual nature.

**c.** *transitive (reflexive).* To become new

again; to take on fresh life or return to full strength or vigour; (in early use) *spec.* (of an animal) to restore itself in a healthy condition by replacing old body parts; (also) to reproduce.

**Renewal:** noun:

**a.** an instance of resuming an activity or state after an interruption.

**b.** the replacing or repair of something that is worn out, run-down, or broken.

**c.** the replacing or repair of something that is worn out, run-down, or broken, i.e. “the need for urban renewal.”

**2.**

In the opening pages of *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom*, Rinaldo Walcott writes, “The conditions of Black life, past and present, work against any notion that what we inhabit in the now is freedom. We remain in the time of emancipation.... Postslavery and post-

colony, Black people, globally, have yet to experience freedom.”<sup>1</sup>

That this is true should be clear to anyone paying even minimal attention to the cascading violences of the ill world. These are deeply dangerous times, urgent times. Times in which we are told and shown repeatedly that (many of our) lives don’t matter.

A brief inventory:

The conservative outlawing of critical discussions about race and racism, the banning of books in schools and libraries, the banning of Plan B, the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, the rush by many states in the US to make abortion illegal, the criminalization of miscarriages, the banning of conversations that make people (and we are meant to understand people here as white) uncomfortable.

The rise, spread, and organizing of the far right.

All money for war, not for education, not

for housing, not for jobs and job training, not for universal income, health care, or moving away from the killing dependence on fossil fuel. Money for killing not for living.

The tightening of borders (for some and not for others) as in Canada, the US, and Fortress Europe where whiteness and whiteness making in the interests of racial citizenship are on full and undeniable display—as we are seeing in relation to those Ukrainians constituted as white and cis fleeing Ukraine.

Over one million deaths from COVID-19 in the United States and yet there, as here in Canada, the persistent mantra is of a return to “normal” and “business as usual,” which means the end or suspension of even basic measures to protect the most vulnerable among us, and to keep each other safe.

More than 500 people became billionaires and more than 150 million people moved into the numbers of extreme poverty.

In a report issued several weeks ago, the UN Secretary-General says the world’s biggest carbon emitters must start drastically cutting emissions within the next 36 weeks to avert climate catastrophe.<sup>2</sup> The weeks are counting down with no action taken.

These crises summon the power of the call of something like renewal.

**3.**

I’ve called this **Against Renewal** and I mean it as a **provocation** and an **invitation** to think, imagine, be, and do differently in the spaces where we find ourselves and in the midst of so much that is catastrophic that the idea, the promise, of renewal sounds like a lifeline. (This is true, even if, we also find joy and tenderness and manage to do good and meaningful work in these spaces, through it all.)

Metaphorically and materially the languages and modalities of renewal often mask and abstract continued use that is sometimes, even oftentimes, violent, and certainly extractive.

Think of: Urban renewal—which has so often displaced black and brown and poor people—renewal by way of displacement and ejection of unwanted, underserved, and overpoliced populations to make way for others.

Or Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives which are so often structured to fail and most certainly to defer radical change by incorporating the institution’s others into existing structures and frameworks. EDI and its various other nomenclatures operate on the logic of renewal that is really one of fungibility, incorporation, and exhaustion.

Many of our metaphors falter: Think re-

newable energy, for example, which often relies on rare earth elements that are used across a range of technologies to generate this “cleaner, renewable energy”: wind turbine magnets, solar cells, smartphone components, and the cells used in electric vehicles, among others.

Who is doing that work of extracting the minerals? Who is risking their lives in order to try to live? Who is at risk of being trapped, dying, or being murdered? Whose lives are at risk for the renewables that are not available to them and the mining of which also means the polluting of water sources and the earth, and the creation of cancer clusters and more?

The languages of livability often produce more unlivability; the logics of renewal produce renewed devastation and ongoing exhaustion.

**Another word for this renewal is resilience.**

**Another still, self-care.**

**Example:** I was part of the exhibition project and process for *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America* (2021) at the MoMA, in which the work that the curators, architects, and advisory board did made and held space. However in the end the museum did not change.

The incredible project we developed was swiftly replaced by *Automania*, a show on automotive design and culture, which would run for much longer. As Olalekan Jeyifous recently tweeted: “It is SO ironic how our show, shortest of its kind by half, will be replaced by one on cars: Automania. A veritable [highway] plowing thru the show like many thru Black hoods in every major US city.”<sup>3</sup>

But then there was this: a writer and his son, both black, went to the *Reconstructions* show and in his review the writer reveals his seven-year-old son’s response to the show: “Where is this? Is it real? Is it a video game? Can we go there?”<sup>4</sup>

**What is the horizon of renewal? What are its grammars?**

**4.**

What might it **mean** to think/imagine/insist on renewal (mostly imagined as a kind of return to normal) in the midst of catastrophe? More importantly what might it **DO** to think/imagine/insist on renewal? Sylvia Wynter tells us that the work of deciphering the meaning of a work and deciphering what it is that a work **does** are not the same practice.<sup>5</sup>

My worry is that in one direction, renewal becomes a fetishized notion of something called resilience or self-care.

For example, the call for Black and Queer and Trans and Brown and poor and peo-

ple without papers and Indigenous people (this is not a full list) to be resilient is an insult. It is violence—violence to call on people to respond to structural violence without changing the sources of it. (I am wary of overusing the word violence but I know this to be violence.)

As Kaiama Glover once reminded me, part of the definition of the noun resilience is not only “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness”<sup>6</sup> but also the ability to return to that shape that one, or the object, was in before the difficulty, or injury, occurred.<sup>7</sup>

The goal is to eliminate structures that cause and perpetuate harm; not to make ourselves rebound from continuing harm.

And then there is self-care but not self-care as Audre Lorde meant it but its misappropriated, de-politicized, de-radicalized form. Renewal deployed via self-care. **This** iteration of renewal is atomized, individualized, and in the end recuperative of white supremacy and the institution.

**Example:** There is an ongoing struggle among Black and Asian American medievalists who have been targeted by alt-medievalists and their “liberal” counterparts. A recent instance involved attacks on Professor Mary Rambaran-Olm around—but not only around—her review of a recent book. In the midst of this a white woman who is implicated in the matter notifies people that she is not responding because she is going on vacation—writing, “Trying that ‘self care’ thing Audre Lorde was talking about and that.”<sup>8</sup> A reference to Audre Lorde on self-care is offered as the reason for her silence in the face of antiblackness. Lorde is used in order to excuse antiblackness in the name of [white] self-care. White self-care in the interest of sustaining the antiblack status quo.

What Lorde actually wrote is: “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”<sup>9</sup>

The care of the self that Lorde so carefully invoked was in the interests of countering “the devastating effects of over-extension” toward having a self that was able to rejoin a collective struggle for liberation.

**5.**

I want to insist that we refuse renewal on the terms that have been offered to us within the neoliberal university (or the museum or gallery): atomizing and individuating as if the challenges that we face are personal and not relations of coloniality, structural, intentional, and managed.

This version of renewal has a limited horizon—which is the current capitalist and heteropatriarchal order and **its** renewal.



What would we want to renew? US democracy? The US Supreme Court? Policing? This conception of renewal offers no challenge or threat to white supremacy.

When we look at the creation of EDI positions and offices and the movement of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, disabled, and other racialized and queer and trans and nonbinary folks into these administrative positions we often encounter people who really want to make change. They are people who want the university to be a different university or who want the art institution (museum or gallery) to be a different art institution but, counter to their individual desires and actions, these positions that are offered and narrated as gains leave the world-as-it-is, intact.<sup>10</sup>

Part of anything that I want to name as renewal has also got to be a refusal of inclusion into **what is**. Real renewal has to be reimagining and engaging other ways of doing one’s work. In relation to the North American university, the **against** in my title was my attempt to name a relation, to name proximity and friction. We might refuse to be renewed only in order to return to the same structural position. Because as Dylan Rodriguez writes, “Despite and \*as a result of\* showcase diversity measures, “research universities” continue to be fortresses of epistemic and administrative white supremacy/antiblackness/coloniality.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite and as a result of.

6.

What does renewal **do**, now?

Sometimes the obstacles that we face in doing our individual and collective work are couched as invitations. We confront this in and out of “the academy” in relation to renewal. It appears in the ways as it is so often conceived and offered, it falls entirely short of the mark; it fails to realize how the university (or the art institution) functions.

The university will use you up; the university will not love you; the university will not fundamentally change because the university is not a radical place; the university is an arm of the state, is a corporation, is an instrument of capital.

We cannot proceed as if we believe that ushering marginalized people into the existent structure is renewal. As people of colour, to quote Dionne Brand and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in *Temporary Spaces of Joy and Freedom*: “We constantly make concessions to white supremacy by yes, accepting remediation instead of liberation. Concessions to, and characterizations by the state instead of the demand for our full lives.”<sup>12</sup>

7.

Our full lives.

A key word in my title is that preposition—against.

As in: in opposition to. in or into physical contact with (something), so as to be supported by or collide with it. in anticipation of and preparation for.

If we don’t cede the question of renewal or the project of renewal or the promise of renewal, and we might not want to cede it, what might it look like? My thought is to tarry with the preposition, to struggle with it, in order to think with and against renewal’s own temporalities in and out of the academy.

We might take this as an invitation, to reject accommodation to tyranny and to work instead for the annihilation of tyranny—that would renew us.

What if we imagine and enact a different set of relations, where we think and work toward another kind of university through which we could shed some of that tiredness that necessitates modes of being often called self-care (as individualized). What is individual wellness in an ill system?

8.

Temporalities

I am thinking about the pace of things. I’ve also been caught up in University time, book-writing time, teaching and class preparation time, putting out fires time, emergency time, keep moving time.

We are all exhausted. And rightly so. I am exhausted. The demands on our time have not diminished. In fact, for many of us they have increased as we contend with unclear, contradictory, piecemeal, and often insufficient responses to COVID-19 in the places where we work and the states, nations, and municipalities where we live.

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At some point during the early days of restrictions on movement for everyone but those people doing what was called “front line work,” I suggested on Twitter by way of thinking out loud with people that we might have to move from solidarity to something like distributed risk.

We might, then, think renewal as a form of distributed risk that is about commitments to each other (and our students and colleagues and to our work) and not to an institution.

What if we tarry with renewal in that mode—what if we renew our commitments to each other? What if we carry forward and multiply projects like Scholars Strike Canada?—which was an important (and archived) gathering of scholars and activists from across the place called Canada who organized and came together to think through our current urgent challenges and our opportunities for connection and change. It was a clarifying call to action. It was renewal as a determined wading into.

What might renewal in that direction activate? What might that conception of renewal’s political horizons, its new temporalities, and modalities, be?

Wading as refusal of the logics of our domination and diminution.

# Rooting in Exile

Magdalyn Asimakis

Migrating from East Anatolia to Greece during the 1923 Greek and Turkish population exchange, artist Eleana Antonaki’s family relocated multiple times en route to their refugee settlement on the east coast of Greece. Each time they stopped along their journey, they planted flora, most often Yucca trees, Persian silk trees, and Bougainvillea. Though they knew they would not see the growth of the plants through, the gesture of planting maintained a form of agrarian familial knowledge despite no longer being “home.” This tradition was passed down generationally, and as a result Antonaki grew up around the same flora as her great-grandparents. This fact exceeds nostalgia, as Antonaki notes that the act of planting was indexical to—or an extension of—her family’s experience migrating; planting was a part of relocation, and the plants themselves

became imbued with familiarity and a sense of home. At the same time, they carry family narratives and generational trauma.

As a result of governance like forced population exchange, families experience the material effects of these decisions in their daily lives. We have long known that the imperial division of people based on singular, identity-based factors contradicts the material conditions of life, which are tangled, messy, and malleable. Those who experience politically-motivated migration do not snap into new spaces like puzzle pieces. Their traditions, joys, and traumas leave trails in their paths and manifest uniquely into their new homes. In turn, their absence haunts the spaces they once inhabited. Like gardens, roots remain in the soil, seeds can be transported, and

new plants grow on top of, and with, those that were there before.

Antonaki’s series of paintings entitled *Uncanny Gardening* depicts fictional fragments, found or excavated: a Greek newspaper clipping, a clay shard with a partial portrait, a Polaroid photograph, and a Yucca plant. They also include two books entitled *Uncanny Gardening: A Complete Handbook to planting Yucca trees, Persian silk trees, and Bougainvillea* and *How to vanish into the sea with instructions*. The artist’s practice is underpinned by a critique of Western knowledge systems, specifically their desire to control all aspects of natural life. The former title presumably represents a book related to the planting traditions of Antonaki’s family. Is relocation part of this instruction manual? Or is it strictly about the act of planting?

Eleana Antonaki, *Uncanny Gardening II* (detail), 2017, gold thread on silk, cotton fringe, metal rod. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



1 Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 1.

2 <https://twitter.com/climateben/status/1518587982139252736?lang=en>.

3 Diana Budds, “After MoMA, the Black Reconstruction Collective Plots Its Future,” *Curbed*, June 7, 2021, <https://www.curbed.com/2021/06/black-reconstruction-collective-moma-history.html>.

4 “Free Forms: Jay Cephas on ‘Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America,’” April 19, 2021, <https://www.artforum.com/architecture/jay-cephas-on-reconstructions-architecture-and-blackness-in-america-85515>.

5 Sylvia Wynter, “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice,” in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye B. Cham (Trenton: African World Press, 1992), 237–279.

6 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/resilience>.

7 Resilience is also defined as: “the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilience>; and “Elasticity; the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending, etc.,” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/resilience>.

8 Dr Eleanor Janega, <https://twitter.com/GoingMedieval/status/1523536385114017792>.

9 Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light: and Other Essays* (New York: Ixia Press, 1988/2017), 130.

10 As Rinaldo Walcott notes, often the mere existence of the position serves as a stand-in for doing the actual work.

11 Dylan Rodriguez, <https://twitter.com/dylanrodriguez/status/1520846084087500801>.

12 “Temporary spaces of joy and freedom: Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in conversation with Dionne Brand,” *Literary Review of Canada*, June 2018, <https://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2018/06/temporary-spaces-of-joy-and-freedom>.



Are those gestures separate, any longer? There is no answer, as the book is fictional, but the artist here inserts some humour, suggesting that even her family’s traditions might be co-opted for the gain of others.

By positioning her work from the perspectives of her ancestral, present-day, and future family, and referencing contemporary vernaculars of Greece, Antonaki draws an important distinction between institutions and lived experience. The act of gardening leaks outside the bounds of structures that dictate movement, and becomes a subaltern practice of survival. This is particularly poignant in a place like Greece where the lives of citizens are generally far removed from the ruins of antiquity and island tourism they are known for. Antonaki draws attention to the stabilizing nature of gardening, or creating home while in exile, and how this occurs as an unsanctioned practice not recognized under the umbrellas of “culture” or centralized governance. Significantly, practices like gardening survive political upheavals and migration over generations because of their connection with our everyday rhythms as humans.

In 2018, ma ma—the curatorial collective I co-founded with Heather Canlas Rigg—collaborated with The Table, a project by the Toronto-based artist Brittany Shepherd. We invited a multidisciplinary group of individuals to share a meal with us, and discuss a recipe or food from which we inherited familial knowledge. Having come from diverse communities and diasporas, we engaged in a rich conversation about what we gained through this knowledge, what may have been lost in translation, and the challenges of being in contrast to local dominant culture. This contrast can often feel like it takes up our immediate space, due to the decentralized nature of collective memory, but as Antonaki notes, “we have a very distant relationship to collective memory, because it exceeds us generationally, but at the same time it’s very intimate.”<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps this intimacy that supports the resilience of community, inherited knowledge, and familial gardening as gestures of stabilization and survival, as such practices require care, observation, and a gentle touch.

The organization Ojibiikaan emphasizes that growing and eating the food of one’s ancestors is rooted in ceremony, storytelling, and honouring land, their beliefs underpinned by an emphasis on Indigenous food sovereignty. Meaning that growers should have agency over and access to land in order to grow traditional and ceremonial foods. In contrast to settler-colonial practices—which the horticulturalist Emma Lansdowne notes was designed to communicate power in a manner akin to a cabinet of curiosities: a “careful curation reflects an individual’s taste, values, and goals made possible by their sociopolitical context”<sup>2</sup>—this perspective acknowledges the bodily relationships between living things, especially

in cases of consumption, as something sacred. As the organization points out, there is a responsibility in gardening to nurture relationships with nature by using traditional growing and harvesting techniques that are rooted in understanding the land one is gardening on.<sup>3</sup> In a similar sentiment to Antonaki’s project, Ojibiikaan highlights that the repetition of practices over generations are not merely strategies of survival, but are also imbued with collective memory.

In the GTA we are familiar with the importance of gardening to many diasporic communities for sustenance and survival, both physical and cultural. On a local level we might witness domestic gardening and its varied specificities, its environmental adaptations, and its usefulnesses, such as for food, medicine, ritual, and nostalgia. And as land becomes increasingly privatized, developed, and expensive, resulting in decreased accessibility, community gardens and projects—where they are possible—become spaces for refuge and growth. In addition to Ojibiikaan, there are numerous examples of community-run organizations and initiatives that create spaces for the resiliency of cultural knowledge, more than I can mention here. The Milky Way Garden in Parkdale is an apt example of how gathering together and access to space can sidestep and exceed the restraints of a city obsessed with development and profit. Milky Way is cooperatively owned and cared for by adult ESL students, largely from Tibet, who live in the high-rises nearby. This is a space that is protected by its privacy, and the fact that it is a land trust protected from development and profit-driven land use. It has nurtured the growth of newcomer communities through gardening, as well as maintaining and nourishing their collective memories, both oral and through the plants themselves. Practices like these recognize gardening as a stabilizing gesture, and one of survival, including and beyond direct nourishment.

These few instances of organizing around gardening exemplify the strength in connecting our day-to-day rhythms with that of organic growth, where possible. I have often recalled a story my grandmother told me about her father, in which he was planting olive trees in their village in southern Greece after the civil war. A neighbour walked by and asked him why he was bothering to plant, when all the youth were leaving. My great-grandfather responded by saying that they will return when the city’s resources fold on themselves, and cannot sustain growing life. As political governance continues its moves to separate our bodies from ourselves—whether through lack of representation or limitations of individual rights—practices of community and nurturing will continue to decentralize to survive. And perhaps it is the very nature of being outside of centralized governance that has allowed for gardening and planting, and all the knowledge they produce, to survive.

## Biographies

**Madhur Anand** is a poet and professor of ecology at the University of Guelph. She is the author of *A New Index for Predicting Catastrophes* (2015), *This Red Line Goes Straight to Your Heart* (2020), which won the Governor General’s Literary Award for Nonfiction, and *Parasitic Oscillations* (2022).

**Magdalyn Asimakis** is a curator and writer based in Toronto. Her practice considers embodied knowledge in relation to Western display practices and methods of knowing. She is the co-founder of the curatorial project *ma ma*, and a PhD candidate at Queen’s University.

**Robin Buyers** co-leads the Noojimo’iwein Gitigaan/Healing Garden at St. Matthew’s United Church, Toronto. Gifted the name by Elder Peduhbun Migizi Kwe, Noojimo’iwein Gitigaan is “a place for healing, learning, sharing, and reflection about Canada’s history and the legacy of Indian Residential Schools.” By stewarding the small green space differently, the Church’s Indigenous People’s Solidarity Group and volunteers seek to model how small urban spaces may become sites of re-connection with Creation and respect for Indigenous spirituality.

**Lianne Marie Leda Charlie** is Wolf Clan and Tagé Cho Hudän (Northern Tutchone-speaking people of the Yukon). She was born in Whitehorse to Luanna Larusson and late father Peter Andrew Charlie. Her maternal grandparents are Donna Olsen (Danish ancestry) and Hjálmar Benedict Larusson (Icelandic), and her paternal grandparents are Leda Jimmy of Tânintşë Chû Dachäk and Big Salmon Charlie of Gyò Cho Chû. Lianne has a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, and is a faculty member at the Dechinta Centre.

**Céline Chuang** is a writer, designer, and facilitator with familial and ancestral ties to Hong Kong, Mauritius, and Moiyen and Fujian, China. Her interdisciplinary practice engages memory, lineage, diaspora, and de/anti-colonial spatiality. Céline’s work has appeared in *GUTS*, *The Funambulist*, *Geez*, and *The Waking (Ruminate)*. Raised by the river in Mohkinstsis, Treaty 7 territory (Calgary), she now lives in ᐃᓯᓂᐅᓯᐃᐅ / amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton).

**Carolynne Crawley**, founder of Msit No’kmaq and co-founder of Turtle Protectors, is Mi’kmaw with Black and Irish ancestry. She is from Mi’kma’ki territory, but Toronto has been her home since a child. She is dedicated to social and environmental justice. Carolynne is also a Forest Therapy Guide, Kairos Blanket Exercise Facilitator, Holistic Nutritionist, Storyteller, and a member of the Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle.

**Sienna Fekete** is a curator and educator based in New York City with a background in radio, podcasting, and music. She is the host of the Points of View podcast, a Curatorial Fellow at The Kitchen, and the co-founder of Chroma, a cultural agency and creative studio centring the work and per-

spectives of women of colour. She looks forward to creating more women of colour-led initiatives, producing audio projects, spearheading public programming, and growing her practice as a curator who builds collectively with her community.

**Maggie Groat** is an artist, mother, birthworker, and gardener whose current research surrounds states of becoming, decolonial ways-of-being, how plants and gardens can be portals, slowness, the utility of images, and the transformative potentials of salvaged materials during times of living through climate emergency. Her methodologies are informed by states of being in-between, acts of care, site-specific responsiveness, strategies of collage, and hopeful speculation.

**Aimi Hamraie** (they/them) is Associate Professor of Medicine, Health, and Society and of American Studies at Vanderbilt University, and Director of the Critical Design Lab. Hamraie is author of *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), host of the Contra\* podcast on disability and design, and a member of the U.S. Access Board.

Shé:kon, sewakwekon Sonia ionkias. **Sonia Hill** is Mohawk from Six Nations, Lebanese from Beirut, and Scottish. Hill was born and raised in Hamilton. They are currently finishing a Master’s degree in Sociology at McMaster University, Director of the Indigenous Sustenance Reclamation Network, and the network’s Regional Program Coordinator for Kahnékanoron.

**Maria Hupfield** is a transdisciplinary maker working at the intersection of performance art, design, and sculpture. She is the 2022 inaugural ArtworxTO Artist in Residence; with solo projects at Patel Brown, Toronto, and Nuit Blanche 2022. Hupfield is an Assistant Professor and Canada Research Chair, cross-appointed to the Departments of Visual Studies and English and Drama at UTM, with a graduate appointment in the Daniels Faculty. Hupfield is lead artist at the Indigenous Creation Studio. She is Marten Clan and an off-rez member of the Anishinaabe Nation belonging to Wasauksing First Nation.

**Asunción Molinos Gordo** is a research-based artist influenced by disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. The main focus of her work is contemporary peasantry. She has produced work reflecting on land usage, farmers’ strikes, bureaucracy on territory, transformation of rural labour, biotechnology, and global food trade. Molinos Gordo won the Sharjah Biennial Prize 2015 with her project *WAM (World Agriculture Museum)* and represented Spain at the Havana Biennial, 2019.

**The Forest Curriculum** (Bangkok/Yogyakarta/Manila/Seoul/Berlin/Santa Barbara) is an itinerant and nomadic platform for interdisciplinary research and mutual co-learning, based in Southeast Asia. Founded and co-directed by curators Abhijan Toto and Pujita Guha, and with Rosalia Namsai Engchuan, Dennis Dizon, bela, Zeke Sales, and others, it works with artists, collectives,

researchers, Indigenous organizations and thinkers, musicians, and activists to assemble a located critique of the Anthropocene via the naturecultures of the forested belt that connects South and Southeast Asia.

Chef **Camille Mayers** comes from a long line of chefs: their grandmother spent her life catering in Guyana, passing down those skills to their mother, who began teaching Camille from a young age. Passionate for locally sourced foods and increasing diversity within Toronto’s food industry, they were motivated to create the city’s first Black and Indigenous Farmers Market. As a Black, Non-Binary, and Queer person, they have always felt compelled to combat anti-Blackness and oppression, and are always looking for ways to incorporate food with love for their communities.

Dr. **Fikile Nxumalo** is Assistant Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, where she directs the Childhood Place Pedagogy Lab. She is also affiliated faculty in the School of the Environment at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on anti-colonial, place-based, and environmental education.

**Christina Sharpe** is a writer, Professor, and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Black Studies in the Humanities at York University. She is also a Senior Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Race, Gender & Class, University of Johannesburg, and a Matakayev Research Fellow at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands at Arizona State University. Sharpe is the author of *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (2010) and *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016). Her third book *Ordinary Notes* (April 2023) will be published in Canada by Knopf. Her critical introduction to *Nomenclature: New and Collected Poems* of Dionne Brand will be published in fall 2022. She is working on *Black. Still. Life.* (2025) and *To Have Been to the End of the World: 25 Essays on Art.*

**Vasuki Shanmuganathan** is a researcher, artist, and curator. In 2016, she founded the Tamil Archive Project collective, which combines art, knowledge sharing, and archival practices into accessible events centred on communal care. Her emerging art and curatorial practice engages with archives and symbiotic connections to trace the borders of the digital. She has curated exhibitions for The Public Gallery, Scarborough Arts, and Make Room, exhibited most recently at Lakeshore Arts, and has an upcoming digital exhibit at DARC. Vasuki holds a PhD from the University of Toronto in Critical Race and Cultural Studies.

**Zoë H Wool** is Assistant Professor in Anthropology at the University of Toronto Mississauga, where she teaches about toxicity, disability, and the tyranny of normativity. She is author of *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed*, co-founder of Project Pleasantville, a community-engaged archive of Black leadership and environmental racism, and is Director of the TWIG Research Kitchen, a convivial feminist space for work on toxicity, waste, and infrastructure.

1 Eleana Antonaki Interview in *A Big Heritage with a Glorious Past*, ed. ma ma (Toronto: Critical Distance Centre for Curators, 2021), 15.

2 Emma Lansdowne, “Making and Unmaking Place: Revisiting the Colonial Legacy of a West Coast Garden Estate,” *A Complete Guide to Seeds, Gardening, and Rootlessness*, ed. ma ma (Toronto: ma ma, 2018), 28.

3 <https://ojibiikaan.com/about-us/#mission-and-values>



## GLOSSARY

### An entangled lexicon for a rapidly changing world

**Absenting** is used as a verb by Fikile Nxumalo (p. 20) to describe omissions of Black presence and history in environmental education. Departing from “absence” as passive or innate, Nxumalo suggests that omission is an active process worthy of critical examination; in her example, the erasure of Black land relations in Canada begins conspicuously in elementary and middle school education. See Nicholson (*SDUK12*, p. 14) for poetic writing on Black land relations in Canada.

Conceptualized by artist and researcher Kevin Gotkin, **access magic** recounts a moment of crip connection in virtual space. By equating access with magic, Gotkin re-frames accessibility as a joyful and expansive act of collaboration rather than a gesture of compliance. Conjuring feelings of proximity across time and distance, the magic of accessible remote spaces works against ableist technologies to support principles of disability justice (see Aimi Hamraie, p. 24; **cripping**).

**Experiential learning:** participatory, collaborative, and self-reflexive methods of teaching. Animating diverse spaces to facilitate learnings—indoors, outdoors, rural or urban—experiential learning defies the static and hierarchical notion of the classroom; often employed as a strategy for crippling and decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy. See Charlie (p. 7) for experiential learning guided by intergenerational teachings, hands-on work, and learning from the land.

**Fluid** is a substance; and a descriptor for substances whose particles move freely among themselves. Often employed figuratively to refer to intangible things that are not fixed, firm, or stable. Water is fluid, and a fluid; Groat (p. 3) discusses ripples as unpredictable effects of fluidity, and Chuang (p. 4) reflects on water as a medium to carry notions of freedom and memory.

**Food desert:** An area with restricted access to healthy and affordable food, resulting from racist, colonial and capitalist policies that under-serve neighbourhoods, subsidize industrialized farming, and limit residents’ access to arable land through financial and bureaucratic means. As such, food deserts overwhelmingly affect Indigenous and racialized communities, creating barriers to adequate nourishment and traditional food practices; for initiatives that resist this narrative, see “Filling Spirits,” p. 10.

**Forest therapy** is a practice for supporting wellness through immersive engagement in natural environments. Fostering physical and mental health through guided outdoor walks, gathering(s) and exercises, forest therapists offer multisensory experiences that encourage slowness, tranquility, and attunement to nature. Commonly considered to have emerged in the 1980s from the Japanese notion of *shinrin-yoku*, or “forest

bathing,” forest therapy—as Crawley highlights (p. 19)—is merely a new term to describe longstanding Indigenous practices of healthy and reciprocal relationships with lands, waters, and all beings.

A **garden** is a source of food, and thus survival. Though Western landscaping practices historically framed gardens as symbols of class and control over the environment (see Anand, p. 16), other forms of community-driven gardening show that they can be places of multifaceted growth, spontaneity, interspecies collaboration, and healing. Indigenous gardening practices are integral to maintaining cultural teachings and resisting colonialism (see The Forest Curriculum, p. 13; Gordo, p. 21), while diasporic gardeners can cultivate connections to their homelands (Asimakis, p. 33). As access to food and land continues to be unequally distributed, gardens serve as spaces of political action (see **weeds**; **food desert**).

**Knitting, knotting, and quilting** are forms of handicraft using threads and yarns; they are also embodied ways of knowing, cultivated through teaching and practice, that have often been excluded the narrow frame for cognitive development set by Western knowledge systems. Craft can be a transformational way of teaching and learning (see experiential learning; Charlie, p. 7; Wool et al., p. 24), and for nurturing cultural practices for diasporic and Indigenous communities (Kurd, *SDUK12*, p. 32).

**Maroon:** a community of African people and their descendants founded to escape the transatlantic slave trade (see Nxumalo, p. 20; Fekete, p. 10). Maroon settlements are found primarily throughout the Americas with origins dating back as far as the sixteenth century. Deriving their name from “maroon” as being left “isolated in a desolate place,” maroons are remarkable for their survival and resilience amid insufficient living conditions and persistent threats of retribution from enslavers and colonial governments. Many maroon communities developed distinct languages, religions, arts, and cultures, rooted in the varied African traditions of their founders, and influenced by participation and trade with Indigenous peoples. Maroon legacies continue today through remaining settlements and family ties.

**Memory:** The cognitive processes that acquire, store, retain and retrieve information for later use. While seemingly straightforward, memories are not infallible—forgetting and misremembering are common. **Collective memories** are formed when a group’s shared experience circulates in a public or semi-public sphere. **Generational memory** (a closely related concept) connects experiences beyond individuals’ lifespans; SDUK contributors frame it as a necessary tool to support decolonization (Chuang, p. 4) and resist epistemological erasure (Afful et al., *SDUK11*, p. 22). Collective memories are shared through many means including language (Dion Fletcher, *SDUK10*, p. 7), embodiment (Beeds, *SDUK11*, p. 8), and ritual (Asimakis, p. 33).

**Nibi** (“water” in Anishinaabemowin) is a

life force that sustains, nourishes, and connects all living beings. As many Indigenous communities continue to face polluted drinking water, and devastating droughts and floods ensue on a global scale, water protection has become critical to slow the climate crisis. Organizations such as Kahnekanoron—“water is precious” in Kanien’kéha (Mohawk)—offer reminders of water’s gifts in programs that share food and medicine teachings (p. 10). On walking as a practice of water protection, see Beeds (*SDUK11*, p. 8).

**Ode** is Anishinaabemowin for heart. Scholar Andrew Judge remarks that, when spoken, its sound mimics the rhythm of the beating organ, pumping blood and giving life. **Ode min** means strawberry in Anishinaabemowin and translates to “heart berry” in English. The fruiting plant is regarded by Elders as an older sibling with lessons to share (see “Filling Spirits,” p. 10).

**Self-care** is a term popularized by Black feminist writer, poet and educator Audre Lorde, referring to self-preservation amid activist cultures that often undervalued personal healing, wellness, comfort and care. The term has since come to encompass many forms of self-preservation far beyond Lorde’s original intent. Critics of self-care (in its everyday usage) highlight the neoliberal urge to find virtue in aestheticized acts of leisure (see *Take Care* broadsheet, p. 14). In light of its ubiquity and misuse, what could self-care look like for people facing precarity and marginalization? What can sustain the self in an oppressive world? What can *community* care do that self-care can’t? (see Sharpe, p. 30).

Popularized by postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, **subaltern** refers to individuals or groups marginalized through colonialism and cultural imperialism. Spivak’s analysis originates in the varied colonial contexts across Southeast Asia, where subaltern social classes—such as Indian citizens amid British rule—are denied self-determination and political representation. Beyond governance, subalternity has social and cultural effects, where traditional knowledge systems or lifeways are suppressed. Subaltern peoples are characterized as a distinct group with unique oppressions and desires, as opposed to generalized class groupings such as the “working class” (see Asimakis, p. 33; Gordo, p. 21; see also **hegemony**; **epistemology**; **margin**).

**Weeds** are plants that quickly root in an ecosystem, often abetted by evolutionary advantages such as hardiness and efficient seed dispersal. In ecological succession—the study of how ecosystems develop, change, and adapt—weeds are the first to grow in a barren area. However, the linear logic of succession is often challenged by human interventions such as transplantation, plant trade, and urbanization. Weeds are thus commonly understood as the undesirable plants in a planned growing environment. Many voices challenge this characterization, however, based on their edibility, usefulness, or hard-earned opportunism (see **Garden**; “Filling Spirits,” p. 10; Liao in *SDUK12*, p. 30; Cooley in *04*, p. 22).