Float School

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Pedagogical Experiments
and Social Actions

Edited by
Holly Schmidt and
Justin Langlois

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Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations

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deeply with these lands.

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Welcome to Float School

Justin Langlois and Holly Schmidt

Float School is the catalyst and culmination of many embodied, affective, and improvisational experiences that create the opportunity to ask, "what can school be?" We find ourselves asking this question, as artists and educators, because we are often drawn to imagining how else we could learn together, and under what other terms, feelings and environments learning could occur. Float School is at once a site, a time, a collective endeavour, and a school.

Floating itself is a destabilizing state that produces different vantage points—water/land, air/ground—offering opportunities to think, feel, and be otherwise in relation to the world. This makes it possible for the form of the school and its pedagogical approaches to be responsive to the conditions of any given locality. The guiding principle is slowness as a decisive move away from the frenetic pacing of everyday life and systems of education as shaped by logics of capital and enclosure. When presence has been co-opted and deep attention becomes impossible, Float School proposes a form of social practice that retreats from those expectations. We look to small experiences that can last an hour, a day, or a week, things like having a long conversation, deep listening, wandering, sharing a meal, or observing natural systems, all

of which have various embedded forms and expectations for proximity and overt sociality. These activities are the basis of embodied learning and the generators of what curator Lucy Lippard calls "social energies yet to be called art."[1]

Float School takes the shape of a School in the earliest understanding of the word, drawing from the etymological base of skholē, which translates as spare time, leisure, rest, or ease. It considers these practices to be important, vital, and even sacred ways of learning together. Float School aims to work beyond dominant narratives of public and private western education, instead looking to the slowness of floating, as the spatial and temporal condition needed for meaningful resistance and the creation of a new capacity for social action and radical presence. It takes as its focus the study of the everyday and the world around it through concentrated embodied and social actions and reflections, understanding the contemporary moment through presence and dialogue.

These embodied and social actions are emergent, only appearing as a curriculum retrospectively. One action such as baking bread produced with a small group of collaborators, may be expanded to include others within a network of people involved in food production. These actions may remain within more intimate settings or be expanded in scale and outlook to engage diverse publics through events. With extensive documentation, these actions regardless of scale become accumulative, and are always available for re-presentation and transformation.

1 Lucy Lippard. "Critic Lucy Lippard on Trading Conceptual Art for Environmental Activism." Interview by Ian Wallace, Artspace, May 1, 2014. Accessed August 25, 2020, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/qa/lucy_lippard_interview-52240

What is Float School? *Annie Canto* in conversations with *Annie Canto*

What is Float School?

Honestly, I've been attending Float School for two years now and it's still difficult to say, but that's definitely part of it, amorphousness.

That's a little weak wouldn't you say?

Okay fine, let's get into it. Float School is paying attention to a whole slew of learning moments that we tuck away or ignore as we move towards our designated spaces. And you can filter experiences lightly through the lens of going-to-school. Float School is loitering in the park after canoeing with your summer camp crew. It's trying to split a soft baguette on the beach without sprinkled sand. It's studying book covers on the floor of some used-book store in a new town. It's smelling a rock and asking other people to smell that rock just to see. It sounds a little childish sometimes but I think that's because it's trying to tap into the ways we learned to learn or learned what and where learning is supposed to take place. Float School is a little corny like that—or "pulpy" as you might read later in this text.

Sounds like naming regular day experiences. Or turning them upside down?

Yes. Naming regular day experiences but with the added complications (good complications) of doing organized and unorganized activities with a group of people. Float School takes place with your class for the week, a homeroom made partly through invitation, partly through happenstance.

Organized and unorganized?

You'll see in this publication that we name a bunch of things we did so that new groups can try things out or try out the Float School learning mentality. You can see sectioned lists of activities and ideas filtered through an editorial lens for others to consume. But in the different original moments of action, spontaneity and intuition kind of ran the show. Float School, then, often ends up living in processes of reflection.

Like images in a glassy pool?

Woah there, we haven't yet tackled the extensive use of water analogies that Float School demands.

I think we can trickle them in.

Anyway, about reflection. Float School creates new senses of time. Learning doesn't take place in a one-block-on-top-of-the-other way, or linearly at all. Reflection is a process synonymous to an attentive moment as well as weeks or months after that moment. Ideas pump into each other and move into new thoughts when you least expect it. Learning takes place at the pace of your life.

1. Float School is

duration, retrospect, reflection, culmination. variations in durations; minutes, hours, days, weeks. emotional time, social time, negotiated time, share time, time to loiter. offering new ways to measure time, where curriculum is written in retrospect, in storytelling, in memory, and ideas come and go, stop and start.

What happens if we take
the same care with our relationships
as we invest in our practice? What happens
if we take the same care with our practice as we
demonstrate with our relationships? — *Chloë Bass*[1]

1 Chloë Bass, "Where Who We Are Matters: Through Art to Our More Social Selves," in *Art as Social Action: An Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Teaching Social Practice Art,* ed. Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass, and Social Practice Queens (Allworth Press, 2018).

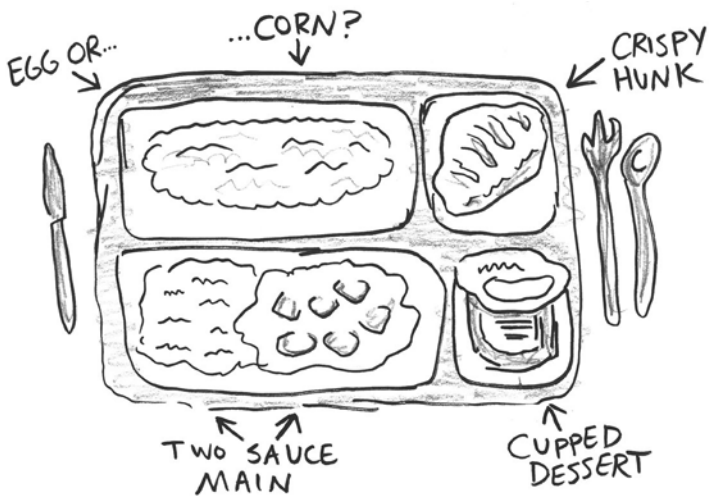
When Did You Eat?

Annie Canto

Eating seems like it doesn't count because you have to do it. Lunch period is mandatory whether or not you have something to eat. Lunch breaks are allocated to you once you've graduated to a full-time employee. Eating doesn't have anything to do with learning. It only seems to follow the course of the day. It follows the prescribed schedule of the institution, of the task at hand.

Eating seems like something that needs to be done in order to get on with the productive stuff.

My experience of school could be told by memorable and unmemorable meals. The time my mom found me chopping lunch meat into a Tupperware of rice to bring to school. The same time, being embarrassed about what I had to eat. The period of time I got to school early enough to eat french toast sticks dipped in butter flavoured pancake syrup from the school cafeteria. The period of time my friend's mom would wrap two halves of a turkey sandwich separately knowing she would give me one. The period of time I'd get a cup o' noodles at the student store and waste the first half of lunch waiting for it to cook and cool. The period of time I skipped the eating part and had horrible breath during the fifth period.



At home, food is how I understood what to do and what to do next. Eating is the centre of our group activities. We plan everything around when we will eat and when we will eat together. Eating tells you what you did right and what you did wrong when feeding judgemental relatives. Eating allows you to share what you've learned. Eating tells you what few ingredients to buy that extend over the most recipes for variant flavours. Eating tells you where you came from and what it tastes like to be far from there. Eating brings people home and to your home.

For Float School, I played lunch lady/food server/picnic packer much of the time. I didn't think much of this knowing somewhere that food is a must for productivity and food brings people in. We needed to eat to meet each other where we stood. We needed to move on in order to eat. Eating was breaking between activities, in-between time that dictated our time together.

Forests, Fantasy and the Knowledge Industry

Caitlin Chaisson and Liljana Mead Martin

What is the relationship between forests and the knowledge industry? This idea stems out of an exclamation made in Miguel de Ceravantes *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605), and perhaps appropriately, requires a more detailed preamble.

The story follows the adventures of Alonso Quixano who reads so many romances that he loses his sanity and decides to set out to revive chivalry, undo wrongs, and bring justice to the world under the name Don Quixote de la Mancha. In the beginning of the novel, Quixote's niece and housekeeper are worried about his mental state, so they invite two independent observers, the Curate and the Barber, to the house to ask for assistance. The Curate and the Barber comb through Quixote's library, and are shocked to find it stuffed with books of knights and dragons and medieval magic. They proceed to throw all the books out the window so they can burn them, and—in their view—save what is left of Quixote's sanity. An arduous task, at one point in the

purging the Curate exclaims with exasperation, “What over-grown piece of lumber have we here?”[1] as he tosses another unsavoury piece of literature into the pile.

What does it mean that the Curate sees fantasy or mythical literature as nothing more than an over-processed tree? What kind of impact does this statement have on the knowledge industry? What does this mean for a materialist understanding of knowledge? If one considers the connection between forests, wood pulp, fantasy and ‘pulp fiction’—which have long supplied the imagination with ample room to roam, we may also consider how we learn and the spaces in which we attempt to do so.

BOOK COLLECTING

In response to this sentiment that fictional or fantasy books are nothing more than an overly processed tree, we intend to investigate further by spending time in used book stores and exploring fictive stories, characters and ideas.

1 Read p. 20–24, Chapter VI: OF THE DIVERTING AND IMPORTANT SCRUTINY WHICH THE CURATE AND THE BARBER MADE IN THE LIBRARY OF OUR INGENIOUS GENTLEMAN

STEPS

1. Find a local used book store (for the purpose of this exercise we are looking particularly for fiction and fantasy.)
2. Go to browse, perhaps on a weekday, ideally with another person or small group.
3. Seek out lesser known titles.
4. Share findings.
5. Consider the connection between these stories and the local imagination.
6. Purchase a couple novels for further study.

UNFOLDING

A small group of us walked into a warm second-hand bookstore in downtown Prince George. There was an enjoyable kind of chaos, stacks of books overflowed onto the floor, piling up around the edges of the shelves. Each person in our group drifted between different sections of the store. Several books stood out to us and with the permission of the store clerk we set up a spot to document some covers and backings. Titles in the fantasy fiction section had exciting, funny, confusing and sometimes salacious summaries. After flipping through and documenting books for about an hour we purchased several. Some of the most interesting parts of this exercise happened in the days and weeks following. In follow-up conversations, and in looking at the documentation created, we encountered a synthesis between ideas and attitudes we noticed in the local environment and fictions we came across in the bookstore. Could this assemblage provide insight into the desires and aspirations of the local community? We have come to think of this time as a separate activity under the title *Pulp, Synthesis*.

Pulp, Synthesis

Caitlin Chaisson
and Liljana Mead Martin

Pulp is mushy. It is pliant and soluble, but also capable of hardening into a solid state. We began to think of pulp as a cognitive metaphor—grey matter that bore a similarity to the ways in which ideas could be formed. In any experiment, including our own artistic ones, attempts to hurry along a tidy solidification of what something is, or what something means, in the early stages of the process would preclude certain possibilities. Instead, what became important was how we might account for experiences through a reflective process, meaning, how we reflect, document, share or discuss ideas is perhaps the best way of opening up new possibilities. The following steps for reflection can be done at any time, during, immediately after, or long after a work is supposedly finished.[1]

1 Additional Reading: Ursula K. Le Guin. *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota Books, 2020).

STEPS

1. Following the conclusion of an activity, gather what happened. This could be in the form of a short reflection, recordings, transcriptions or notes on conversations, photos, drawings, objects.
2. Out of these granular elements, what kind of "pulp" are you left with? Does it need to dry out, be shaped, be added to or be dissolved again? Should the ideas be further processed, treated with precious care or edited down?
3. Use this pulp as fodder for practicing a new artistic technique or method.

SLOW UNFOLDING

It is often in the leftovers of past activities that new ideas emerge. During and especially after our activities, it seems valuable to reflect as a way to allow things to crystallize, align or disintegrate. We did not have a specific plan for what happened with our walks, site-specific drawings, or paper and book collecting, it was just a way of putting thoughts and ideas to use. However, through reflection, we discovered relationships and affinities between some of the completed activities that we had not considered during the action itself. In our visit to a second-hand bookstore, we documented a picture of a fiery red dragon on a fantasy book cover, and later realized it strongly resembled the carving in a cottonwood tree we had encountered in a nearby park just hours ago. Or, that the colour of lichen growing on the trees reminded us of the yellowy fore edge of the aged pulp fiction novels. These kinds of realizations helped to serve us in thinking about the relationship between these two independent activities more closely.

Gratitude Exercise

Rebecca Bair

We gathered under a gazebo at Buntzen Lake shortly after the rain that defined our group canoe/kayak trip had ended. As the sun shone bright and the snacks we had gathered filled our bellies, we could spend a few moments to reflect and be grateful for the time spent together, our shared situational privilege, and our personal pleasures.

STEPS

1. Gather to discuss location, surroundings, and positionality.
2. Take time to sit in the sun and in the grass or under a tree, time to gaze at the water, or the mountains, or the sky, time to listen to the birds, and the waves and the wind.
3. Regroup to discuss gratitude and verbalize thoughts.
4. Encourage one another to continue this practice in our every day and activity.

WHAT TOOK PLACE

The sun was warm and bright and seemed to reach our bones, a depth the frigid rain had penetrated not long before. We gathered once more in a circle to speak about

gratitude—to situate ourselves and to think about where we were and how we had gotten there. It was a moment to acknowledge what had just happened out on the water, the way we persevered and that we had come through it together. We encouraged one another to sit alone and to focus on gratitude; what that meant differed for everyone involved. As we regrouped after about 10 minutes, we got to share what we were grateful for. Some related anecdotes about the experiences we had shared over the course of the week, others were grateful to be sitting in the sun with their peers. I was grateful for the sun, for my peers and for their tenderness. I was grateful to have the time to share in that experience with people I had learned to be vulnerable with. I was grateful to be able to share in their gratitude, and to use their words as a way to acknowledge and be grateful for new things in my life that I hadn't yet identified as good. We verbalized gratitude as a way of sharing and focusing on positivity. The sun remained as we sat in gratitude together.

COLLABORATION

The collaborative and influential nature of positivity was very evident as we sat together. To ask an individual to focus on positivity is a powerful and effective request, as it requires a kind of presence and reflectiveness that accounts for ones every day, and for one's every delight. This kind of meditative practice, when shared, becomes an exercise of collaboration, of vulnerability.

REFLECTION

An exercise such as this one allows for a consideration of pleasures that are otherwise overlooked. It is a reminder

that greatness and joy can be found in the smallest and most mundane experiences. It is a practice of identifying the good which might follow us even on our darkest days, or in our darkest hours. To commit to this experience with others is to share with others your presentness and awareness, and to share in theirs. Thus, entering into dialogue about gratitude has to be foregrounded by a reciprocal relationship of interest and commitment. The sharing of gratitude suggests that there is a mutual desire to care and to celebrate what makes each other happy, which is in turn a request for a certain degree of intimacy. What is then learned from an experience such as this is the power of trust as well as the importance of reflecting on gratitude. When practiced alone, one's daily life and mundane activities become brighter.

Take a moment to acknowledge that you are grateful for your morning coffee, and your whole day will be prefaced by that sensitivity to gratitude.

bargain bin

Rob Budde

‘taking what is given’

hurting aside
struck by
futility, the poem
as it is, in a pile of other poems

what was there
dug up, dispersed

the poem or poems
or you, remaindered

the surplus of culture
is not waste by
lack of comprehension
but spite

nothing memorable, nothing remarkable

metaproletariat
like a stolen word over beer

the cashier rings
it through you
hold it out

you take it
like a northerner

2. Float School is

immersion
+precipitation
sensory
+
embodied
learning,
encouraging deep
attention + presence
+ acknowledgment
of
the body

rain, ripple,
patter,
snow, silence,
crunch,
cold, puddle,
play

wet hair,
damp skin,
wrinkled fingers,
chilled bones,
huddled bodies

sensation
empathy
absorption

overlooked spaces,
overflow, precarity
(meniscus)

I saw white pelicans rise
from the waters of morning
run the wide valley, going.
I saw trees white with snow
rise silent from clouds
in the deep mountains, returning.
Heavy, noble, solemn the gesture
of the wings, the branches,
a white writing destruction.
—*Ursula K. Le Guin*[1]

1 Ursula K. Le Guin, "Riding the Coast Starlight," in *Ursula K. Le Guin: Conversations on Writing*, ed. Ursula K. Le Guin and David Naimon (Tin House Books, 2018).

Walking on Snow

Holly Schmidt

There was a lot more snow than anyone expected in Prince George. It was March after all, but a recent snowfall was heaped into snow banks the size of small mountains throughout downtown. Two Rivers Gallery invited me to give an artist talk and to share a bit about Float School on the first night of the trip. During the Q and A, a woman offered to loan me an old pair of snowshoes for the weekend. The kind with wooden frames and gut lacing. I hadn't worn a pair like that since I was a child, and even then, they were my Dad's, so they were enormous for my small stride. I took her up on her offer and picked them up from the gallery the next morning.

STEPS

1. Find the right place. Keep in mind fresh snowfall makes for good snowshoeing conditions. Avoid packed down snow on trails.
2. Strap on the snowshoes. This can be challenging with snowy mittens. Ask a friend for help!
3. As you begin to walk, you may have to adopt a wider stride depending on the width of your snowshoes.

A few things to notice while floating across the snow.

- The slap of the snowshoe coming up to meet the heel of your boot.
- The slight sinking sensation with each step as the snow pushes up through the laces.
- The specific sound of the snow collapsing under your weight. Whoomph, swoosh, umph, swoosh, click.
- The way the rhythm of your breath and heartbeat aligns with your steps
- The blue wake of your steps in the snow behind you.

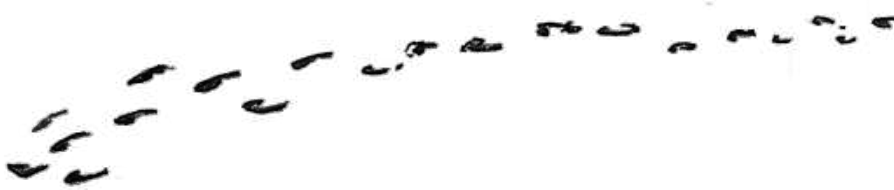
UNFOLDING

Initially we had ideas about floating on the river, but the large skin of ice holding firm to the bank made the decision for us. Instead we ended up at the Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park (formerly Fort George Park, reclaimed in 2015 as a traditional village site). I required a fair bit of assistance with binding the snowshoes. Short leather laces and freezing hands made it difficult to get them to stay on. Thankfully, Justin managed to get the laces tight enough to carry on. It was a crisp, sunny day, perfect for snowshoeing alongside the Fraser River. Step by step I played with the sensation of sinking and floating on the snow.

Sinking / Floating

Photography by Caitlin Chaisson and Holly Schmidt

Locale: Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park, Prince George,
on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh



Float Adrift On A Memory Bliss Of Dew

Courtesy of Ben Lee via the Float Community ltd.

The Inter/intra - Æffectual Jungle Boogie/Stumble within an ongoing Episodic Expedition Float School Observation Systems Inc.
Locale: In the Lynn Valley, on unceded territories of the Squamish nation- North Vancouver

DESCRIPTION/STEP/UNFOLDING/COLLABORATION/ ELABORATION/REFLECTION
Descriptive Evocation of assignment nostalgia

In this episode: Water is in the air, on the ground, all around us, in fact water is on everything, or rather everything is on water. After all, everything is made of water, this thought redefines and refines what it means to float. This epic deluge of water is forcing us to come to terms with this relationship with floating, and this is the important part, especially when we are not the ones in the water, but the water is in us. It is safe to say we are out our depths. And so it is that our hoods were held ever more tightly against our heads by the weight of falling water, and in anticipation of more water as it falls. We collectively sigh, and collectively strain to see through the misty haze and hear ourselves think, and subsequently speak over the soundtrack of the woods, one waterlogged rhythm after another, made by the drops and drizzle of the deluge. This makes for great "edutainment" once you make

peace with being wetter than water. If you can get past the fact that you are drenched to the bone, you begin to feel at home in your own body of water. The sad, but funny thing is, this lesson in the life of water costs very little, if not nothing, to experience as very few people do, myself included, as in wet times like these it seems we all "naturally" seek shelter, but looks can be deceiving, as entering into this stream, transforms rain into not just something falling from the sky but as a complete atmospheric quality! Like turning mountains into mossy hills. You can literally drink straight from the air here, the fog of the forest is so great one can't help but wonder why we are so...dry.

STEPS to ensure a runaway SUCCESS that you can walkway from with BREATH DEPTH.

1. Facilitate foolhardiness
2. Levitate one's senses
3. Oscillate between states
4. Advocate for ambivalence
5. Titivate your awareness

1. How to float through the wood(s) as Thoreau(ly) as possible for wanton Walden pondering of wanderlust.....and F.L.O.A.T.
2. How to where's Waldo Emerson yourself in a wet and muddy trough so thoroughly through immersive floating, that upon saturation being reached, realization of osmosis is both a biological and inter-relational phenomenon.....and thus F.L.O.A.T.
3. How to Donna our hats and Harraway in the hide away with the forest heartland in our hands and recalibrate our positionality in relation to one another and the eco.....and F.L.O.A.T.

4. How to make like a Tree and Leaves of Grasses your wits "wo/man!" and Walter your way past security, and break out the confines of the cities compartmentalization, and sequester ourselves if only for a fleeting moment in the valley of forgotten fauna.....and F.L.O.A.T.
5. How to submerge ourselves in the striations of cylindrical spirals as Fibonacci as necessary, through immersive theory, into nonlinear Leonardo laugh lines as praxis for inner peace initiatives, in order to be a lean mean golden machine tuned to a better frequency for channeling creative secular epiphanies..... and F.L.O.A.T.

Alleviate your listening, by lowering your level of awareness to the ground floor... put your ear to the ground and listen without getting your knees wet, try it, it's harder than you think, it takes a good ear and a green thumb to push off of. Come and take a moment to endure slight discomfort to be rewarded with elation from being a patient of patience, an agent of opening up to the obviousness of oxygens' effect on our perceptions.

Walk like moss walks, not as easy as it seems, until you understand that moss floats. Walk like the rain, not that easy until you understand that rain doesn't walk it floats.

Floating like no one's watching, float like everyone is watching, everyone being the trees and their bushy counterparts. The stumps are instruments if you listen. The dirt is telling you something. The murky mud is mumbling a mystic message of how to move through it with meaning. Listen to the timbre of the timber as the tambour and your inner troubadour will hear the music. If you listen, the wood will tell you how to move.

UNFOLDING like a chair that wasn't a folding chair to begin with.

There is enormous weight lifted, like when you find out you're not late. The feeling of losing the unwieldy weight of a backpack of big books, and you begin to feel yourself floating, becoming unhinged, levitating above your location. The loving feeling of losing the guilt of not visiting the woods more often, not being in nature, it is our duty to be there for the trees and bushes and shrubs, who are here for us, just as much as we are here for them. It is not unlike the famous double slit physics experiment where it was discovered that by observing the experiment, the outcome on the object/subject is æffected differently, just by observing, just by being a part of something you change it, and that was just light particles. So now how do you think the trees feel? Our admiration of their very presence, their inherent beauty, whether genetic or otherwise, it's a transcendent beauty. Here beauty as a word is used simply as a stand in for something otherwise undefinable.

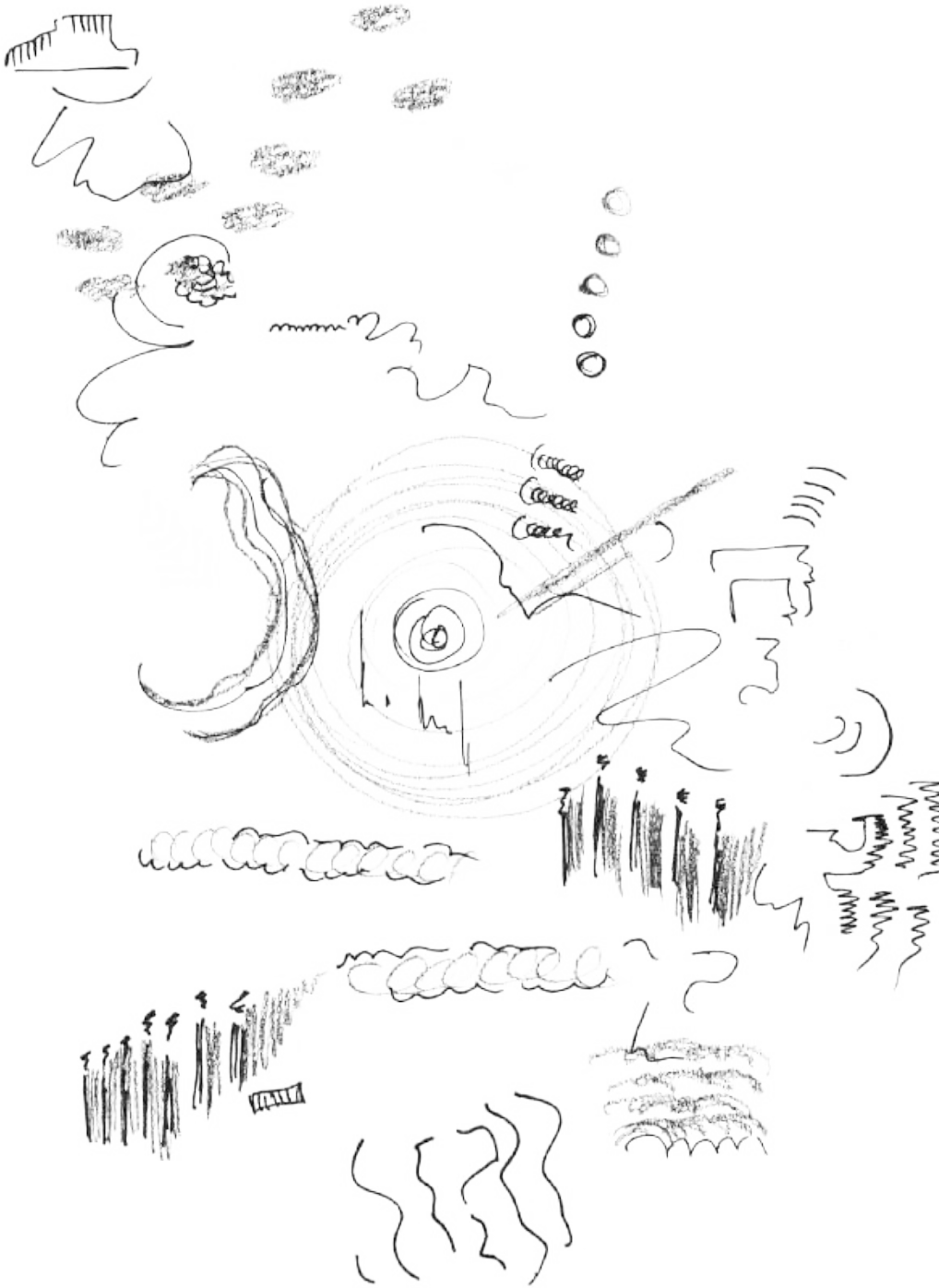
Scent Walk

Holly Schmidt

Under a canopy of trees in Lynn Valley, we dispersed into smaller groups for walks led by participants. I volunteered to lead a walk guided by scent. For this walk we allowed ourselves to follow our noses. This vital sense, often under-utilized for navigation, opened up another set of relations with the surrounding forest community.

STEPS

1. Walk until a particular scent attracts your attention. Bring your nose in towards the scent and breathe deeply.
2. How would you describe the smell? In English, scent is often described as good or bad or an association is made with an object. For example, it smells gross, or it smells like citrus. In response to the lack of vocabulary for scents, take this moment as an invitation to create new words to describe the smells that surround you.
3. Record this new scent vocabulary in your sketchbook. If you're walking with others share your words and see if they can guess which scent is implied.
4. Consider what remains hidden from your senses as you continue to walk through the forest.



UNFOLDING

As a group of four, we wandered along the hiking path veering off now and again to detect the scent of a plant, tree, mushroom or rock. We stopped to gather and take note of what we smelled and the conditions for smelling. The cold and rain made it harder to distinguish smells. Warmth is needed for scent, so we tried cupping our hands around tree branches and rubbing warmth into the needles to release it. We talked about the language of scent and the work of Sissel Tolaas, a Norwegian chemist and artist who is working to build a dictionary of new words to describe what we smell.

We discussed the limitations of the human olfactory system. Most of the scents we noted were at the height of a human nose. How might a dog move along the same path? Nose along the ground, up in the air, along rocks and tree trunks. With a sense of smell 10,000 times more acute than humans there is an intimate world of fragrance guiding them through the forest. As we continued our walk, we attempted to become dogs. Crouching and lingering we found new ways to be in the forest. Sniffing high and low, we discovered earthy smells of the forest floor. Someone pointed out that rocks have a smell, and at that moment, we were left to consider what remains hidden from our senses as we walked through the forest.

Empathy Walk

Rebecca Bair

As you begin to walk the trail of Lynn Canyon park in North Vancouver BC, there are steps that lead deeper into the forest and down to the rock lined pool of water. As you step down, the trees become taller, and your sense of self becomes smaller. The forest becomes your neighbourhood, the trees become your neighbours, and every step on the trail feels like an encroachment on their well established lives. This exercise embraces the conditions of a slower and more engaged experience of our environment and of our movement through it. This slowness represents an opportunity to pay attention to and be aware of one another in intense and embodied ways, which serve in turn as tools for empathy. Empathy being a shared awareness; every step considered as it represents a closeness with another being, a distance from a previous neighbour. Empathy being the ways in which some of us will move in the same direction, and others will drift apart. Empathy being a heightened attention to the many different experiences which can be had in a single space and the many spaces which might share very similar experiences. Empathy being a collaboration with one another (and one's self) to direct, suggest or enable experiences of closeness, of similarity, and of difference.

STEPS

1. Gather to discuss location, surroundings, and positionality.
2. Take a few moments to consider senses and how they are heightened by the environment.
3. Silently walk through the forest amongst our peers (human and botanical).
4. Consider the closeness and how you might try to understand what your peers are feeling and experiencing. Empathise.
5. Reconvene to discuss findings and experience.
6. Return into the forest to empathise once more.
7. Reconvene to discuss.

WHAT TOOK PLACE

It was a rainy and cold day when we visited the park, and so we gathered close to discuss. We considered what it might mean for us to traverse this space—the impact of our feet on the soil below, how the trees experience the rain differently than we do. We discussed the different ways in which we were seeing and feeling the forest. Either individually or in groups, the participants dispersed into the forest with a cue to be empathetic towards the forest and to challenge our sense of feeling and being.

COLLABORATION

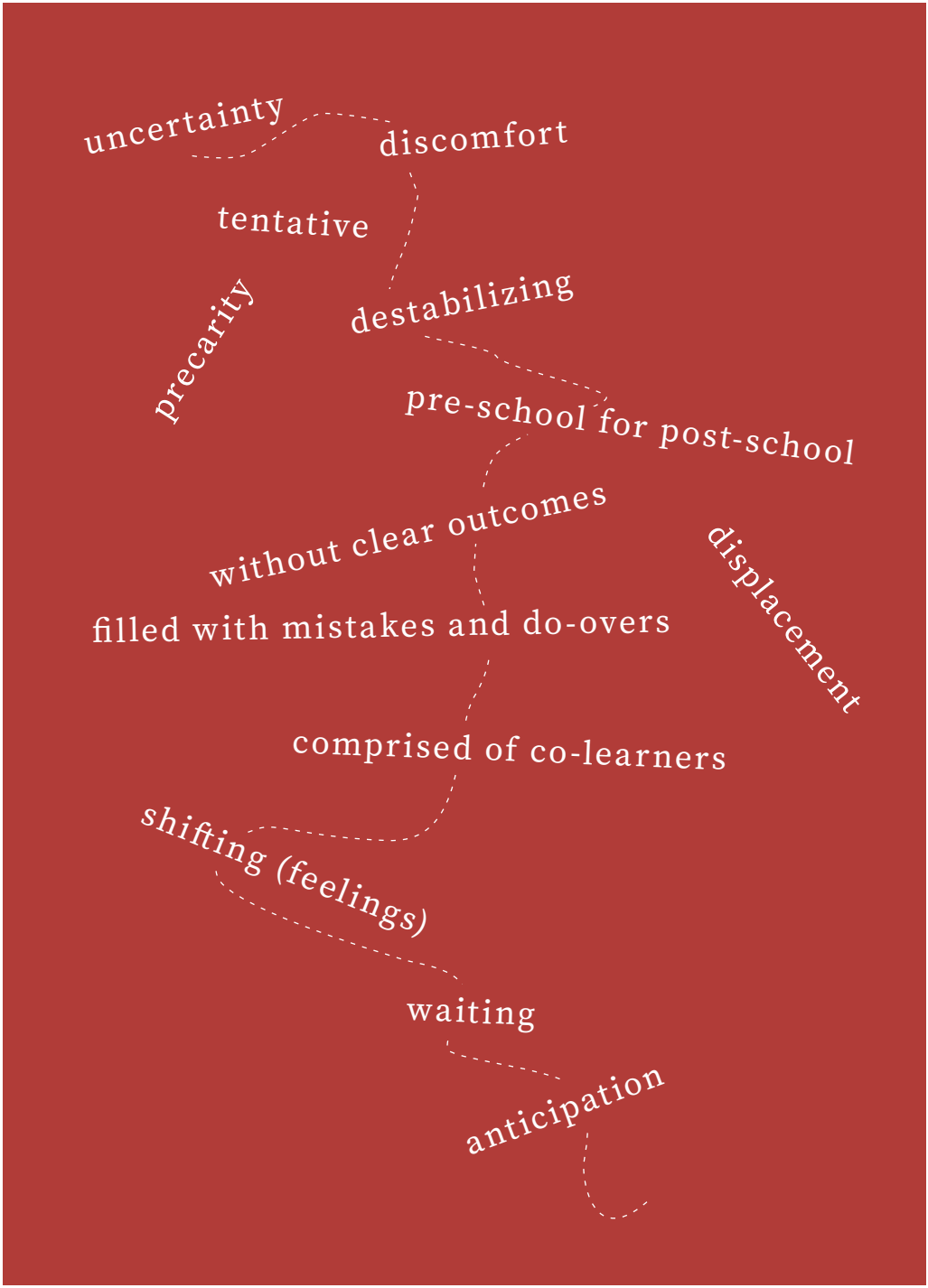
As we reconvened as a group, we reflected on our experiences, and the ways in which we engaged with the forest around us. Some noted that while they sat or moved through the space, the silence was filled with the life

of the forest—which they had not noticed before slowing down. Many acknowledged that they wanted to be lower to the ground, others had felt the magnitude of the trees for the first time. After sharing our experiences with one another, we scattered once more, this time with the empathetic awareness of our peers. Upon gathering for a second time, many noted that they licked rocks, smelled moss, and listened to the water rush through the rocks in the pool. Some touched the water, and were taken aback by the experience of both rain water falling on their heads, and the frigid pool water that swept past their now cold hands.

REFLECTION

The exercise encouraged a new engagement with one's surroundings and with our taken-for-granted world. The empathy walk asked us to slow down and to be present—to tune in to our senses, to really acknowledge our surroundings. Not only were we considerate of the space we occupied and the impact of our presence, but we were also empathetic to one another; to what we were each experiencing and the ways in which our experiences could be informed, directed and augmented by that of another. Driven by our empathy, participants found new ways to engage with their surroundings and peers; new ways of being in relation to one another. The empathy walk was about listening, seeing, feeling and tasting as informed by our surroundings, our peers, and our new neighbours.

3. Float School is



We
can be
shattered
by what
we come
up against.
And then
we come
up against
it again.
We can be
exhausted
by what we
come up
against.
And then
we come
up against
it again.
—*Sara Ahmed*[1]

1 Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017).

Under her eyelids

Romane Bladou

Lena's childhood was full of salt. It was in her hair, on her pillow, in her brother's jokes. She was very careful not to leave sand all over the house, but the salt was always here. As if it poured out of her body hours after she went in the water. She grew up on the coast. Not a rugged one, it was a coast of sand—the ones where you feel like you're walking for miles into the ocean. When even if you're a child, the water reaches just above your knee and you can't find your parents when you look back at the beach. Maybe the water was indeed shallow, but she believes now that her eight years old self probably exaggerated this notion of distance. Lena grew up in fear of the waves that take you, tumble you like a single piece of clothing in the washer. Contorting yourself in those fifty centimeters of water, odd somersault that you didn't plan, with salt in your sinus and sand in your swimsuit. You roll back to the shore not knowing where the sun is, where the north is, where your mum is. No compass and big big tears.

Yet it was also a very playful time, and Lena doesn't believe that she's encountered anything as powerful as those waves since then. They still breathe in her stomach. As she learned to be wary of them, she also learned to understand

them, to practice this dialogue of movement and anticipation. The key was to dive in at the right moment, just before the wave's ready to succumb, meeting her so that she wouldn't swallow you. It's cyclical, and like any cycle, if you're slightly off, then everything becomes overwhelming. You need to follow its rhythm, to be in sync. Timing is the line between danger and play and very young, she started to see the ocean as a clock, waves as seconds and tides as days. That's how she saw the world, and her parents would give her instructions such as "come home when the tide starts rolling in love."

She moved out. Left the waves, grew up. Today, she's reminiscing, floating on a lake. It took her a long time to learn how to float on saltless water. And anything she feels takes her back, as if any sensation, any concept that a child learns is to her associated with water. Fear and boredom, color and distance. She was thinking that even sensuality is aquatic, how it oddly resides in childhood memories.

Here in this lake, she misses the fear perhaps, the power of waves over man, the burning salt, the burning sun, the burning sand. She misses the tides, the tales of some forever gone; the horizon and all that you can't grasp. But she can float—without looking back to see where the current is taking her. She can float without the fear of the sail or of the shark. She can float in this in between, erase herself from both worlds and feel very alive in this liminality. She would go to sleep and still feel as if she was in water, her body not understanding the solid structure of the bed it's laying on. She was thinking that in order to fall asleep, she needs to feel heavy, to sink her body into the mattress,

into the night. Whereas when she is floating, she needs to elevate it, to feel light, so light, so awake and aware. Aware of every sensation, of every sound. Feeling the sun burning her skin, contrasting with the cool of the water on all the back of her body. Until then, Lena had never thought of her body as having a front and a back—a hot and a cold, exposed and immersed, who she was and who she could be. Each subtle movement of water was drawing a new line on her flank. Her ears were half in water, hearing nothing clearly of either world, not belonging to any, dipping in one, drying in the other. Her eyes were closed to an orange mess of floaties, shapes of seahorses and of yesterdays. And once she'd open them everything would appear blue in contrast, not true to life either. Under her eyelids, life was yellow, red, kaleidoscopic. Life was more or less warm depending on the branches passing over her head, depending on the branches under which she passed. And when she'd catch herself looking behind her head, to see where she was, she had to keep repeating to herself "there is no current here, there is no current here."

It was October and each day the water was colder than the one before. She'd go swimming with a friend now, they'd take off their coats and slide in the water. One day, their shadow came to disrupt her luminous rêverie, hovering over her floating eyelids. She didn't hear them arrive, she saw them with her eyes closed. Now, their bathing times were long and silent, almost ceremonial. She was thinking that she had always been more of a bather than a swimmer, more of a walker than a hiker. She'd spent a lot of time floating. How long, she couldn't tell for everything was suspended

in those moments. She was laying in there, where in space, where in time, above all of that always scared her, the deep unknown, the deep under. All of that we can't see. But isn't it even more scary once we look at it anyways?

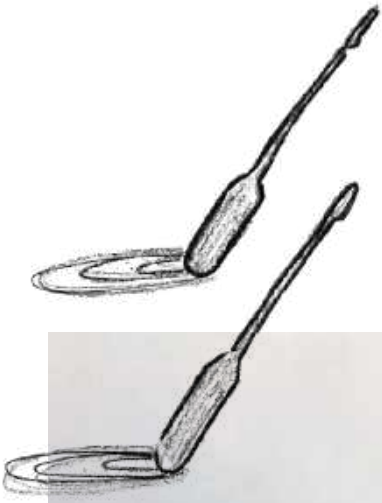
Lena thought that she had often been told about tides, currents, and all of these aquatic swirls that can make the strongest of men helpless. It goes away, it comes back, it takes you away and it doesn't care. But now, every time she walked into the water, with more and more difficulty, she thought that no one ever told her about the wave that came, uninvited, over her belly button when she only allowed the thigh. There are some sensations that we learn on our own, that nobody tells us, that the narrator, or the mother, have forgotten in their numbness.

Canoeing Negotiation

Photography by Justin Langlois

Locale: Buntzen Lake (managed by BC Hydro), on unceded Tsleil-Waututh and Stó:lō territory

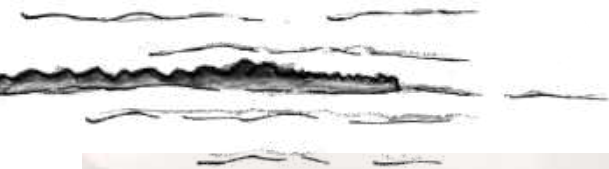
On pagaie, On pagaie!



Ou t'as mis la pagaie!

On pagaie, On pagaie!

On pagaie, On pagaie!




Ou t’as mis la pagaie!

Line of Sight Walk

Justin Langlois

On an afternoon in Prince George, we went to Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park for a series of activities and exercises. To locate ourselves there, we embarked on a group walk with a single rule: walk in silence wherever you like, but keep at least one other person in sight.

STEPS

1. Gather with at least a few people.
2. Find an open space, whether a park, a field, a parking lot, or a forest.
3. Look around you and determine a direction in which you'd like to walk in silence and agree upon a duration for the walk.
4. Keep an eye on at least one other person while you walk, ensuring that you never get so far away that you lose track of everyone else. You may end up changing your course in response to other people's movements.

UNFOLDING

We stood in a loose circle, going through the simple instructions together. Most people walked away from the circle as if we were a firework. I walked southeast, near some trees but

off of the path. I looked at some of the branches and leaves of those trees, but I quickly needed to move along to keep other people in view. I found myself following the general trajectory of some others, until we got close to a bridge and the banks of the river. The incline there meant negotiating the edge of the park in a way I wouldn't have otherwise managed on my own. I stayed still for a while, echoing what I saw other people doing. Gradually, we began to head back to where we started, though I'm not sure who made the first move. When we got back, we shared what we saw and how we moved.

COLLABORATION/ELABORATION

Moving on contingencies and invisible tethers to one another meant splitting our attention, in a way. It's not that it's difficult to keep someone in your view, at least in a space the size of Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park, but it's something about watching out for one another, or about paying attention to paying attention to one another while also being present with where you are. It's kind of like an act of accountability but also a practice of care. It is also a spatial collaboration, wherein we cover the ground together, and we come to know that place in ways that we wouldn't know on our own.

Bone Tapping

Annie Canto

YOU ARE SOLID

If you tap a knuckle on the back of your hand you feel the pulse move through to the palm. If you tap along your collarbone, news travels fast to your heart and your throat. You feel a thud in your ears and your lungs.

STEPS

Stand in a circle or on your own, take a few breaths to slow your pace. Starting with the feet, use your fingers to tap along the bones that lead down to your toes. Work the outside muscles of your feet with hard pats. Use a fist to knock the soles of your hard working feet. Moving up the body, tap through your skin and muscles to the bones holding you up. Use greater force with your larger bones. Pat or knock your thigh bones, your hips, your chest. Think about the connections in your body, the muscles and organs held together by your particular structure. Tap through to your stomach, your lungs, your liver, your joints, all working to move you through your day. Tap down your arms one at a time and around the pads of your hands then back up. Use your fingertips to tap over your shoulders, collarbone, and to the back of the neck. Tap from the base of your skull along your jaw to the chin. Tap lightly over your facial muscles as they begin to relax with your touch. Finish with slow taps starting with your temples and moving back, around, and up to the crown of your head.

YOU ARE WHERE YOU ARE

This activity can be done to bring you or your group to a quiet presence. It can be a transition from one part of the day to the next. It can be awkward with others especially when you make eye contact with someone who is really slapping their hips. It can be done in sections alone when you'd like to pay special attention to your hard-working feet or your expressive jawbone. This activity is meant to connect you with your body, tap by tap, and show you the particular way your body formed to hold you.

CONNECT

If you feel comfortable, do this activity with another person. Take turns tapping along your partner's body. This exercise can produce a kind of affirmation that is rare and physical. Work with someone you trust and affirm the solidity of their presence. Take time to understand how their arm connects at their shoulder or where their eyebrows meet in the middle. Acknowledging someone else's body is a difficult and vulnerable thing to do. We can share thoughts and reflections that open our hearts to others, but the body is something we hide because we are so often formed by shame or rejection. When I tap the back of another person, along the ribs and over the spine, how do I start to understand the hidden parts of them, the organs and muscles that make them sturdy and soft? While I tap the bones in their feet and hands, how do I begin to understand my own?

Healing With Water

Reyhan Yazdani

It was now late afternoon and I was driving as fast as I could to get to the house. My hands were shaking on the wheel. I couldn't breathe. All my muscles were tense and I could feel my heart in my chest beating as fast as a trapped birds'.

He was sitting in the living room on his green vintage chair, reading when I opened the door and threw myself into the house. There was an open room in the left corner of the living room which could have been a bar but he had decided to turn it into a small library for himself when they first bought the house. He would put his chair close to the lamp, and sit there for hours reading and taking notes. Sometimes he would nod his head as if he agreed or disagreed in silence with the writer.

"Reyhan!" he got up and closed the book, put it on the table.

The sky was getting darker. I lay down on the coach and gradually felt the tension changing into a pressure of tears on my eyelids, heavy and persevering. He went straight to the kitchen looking calm and undisturbed. I could hear him opening and closing cabinets and stirring something. It took him a few minutes before coming out and walking towards the couch with a glass of water in his hand. He sat gently beside me.

"Can you get up and sit for a second?" he asked.

I thought he brought me a pain killer, so I sat but kept my eyes closed.

"Whatever she is carrying with her, those stressful fearful thoughts, things she is worried about, in the future or the past, Water, please take it away from her. Give her stillness, presence, calm, and peace. Teach her the awareness of existence. And take away the pain, and the fear." He whispered as he held the glass of water close to him.

I listened.

"Now drink it, please." He said and passed me the glass.

I held the glass of water in my hands for a few seconds and then took a sip. I could feel the water as it was moving in my veins, cooling down the heat and releasing the pressure.

"Water can heal!" he said in a reassuring voice.

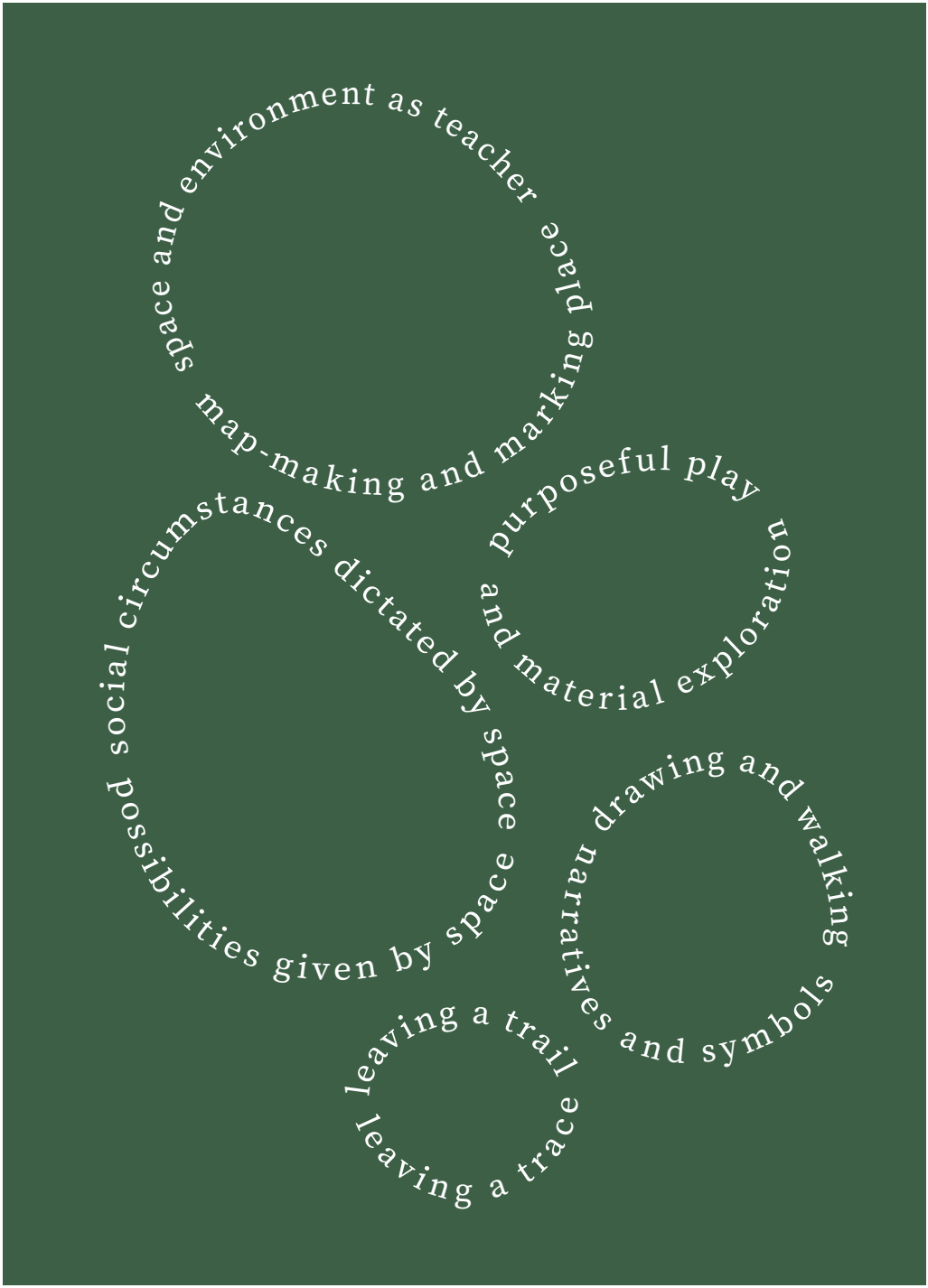
STEPS

- This activity can take place indoors or outdoors. The most important aspect of it is awareness and connectivity. If happening outdoors, choose a peaceful, quiet place close to nature.
- All that is needed is a bowl, a body of water, and a spoonful of rose water.
- It is important to know where the water for this activity comes from. Spend some time to think, discuss and reflect on how much you know of this water you are using. Is it from a natural source you went to directly? A river? A small lake? Is it from the city pipes?
- You need a bowl and it is important to have a bowl made of natural material, ceramics, or glass. Wash the bowl three times with water.
- Then fill the bowl with 2 cups of the water you have chosen, brought or found and the rose water. You can also add a few fresh leaves, such as thyme, to this mix.
- Sit in a circle and a comfortable position.
- In turns, hold and keep the bowl of the water in your hands and close your eyes. Let your senses activate and feel. Feel the chilliness of the bowl's surface in relation to your skin. The weight of the water and the bowl in your hands. The smell of the rose water, the sound of the water moving with your breath. Focus on the water.
- Wait until you are ready. When you are, bring the bowl closer to your body and whisper. Whisper your thoughts, your fears, your bad dreams, your worries, wishes, anything that the water needs to know!

Keep passing the water until everyone has done the same thing. Then, find a creek or a stream of water, stand close to each other, and try to hold the bowls together. Now, it is time to let your energy out in sound and while doing that pour the water in the stream.

It will take all you've shared with it and move it through the universe. You are now connected to the water, to the stream and to the world.

4. Float School is



Throughout the
morning and into the after-
noon, I sat in my business suit
beside the house, as I had sat the day
before, but I was no longer impatient
or eager to be elsewhere. I was absorbed
in watching what passed before me—birds
disappearing into the bushes, bugs crawling
around stones—as though I were invisible,
as though I were watching it all in my own
absence. Or, being where I should not be,
where no one expected me to be, I was a
mere shadow myself, lagging behind for an
instant, caught in the light; soon the strap
would tighten and I would be gone,
flying in pursuit of myself: for the
moment, I was at liberty.

—*Lydia Davis*[1]

1 Lydia Davis, "The House Plans," in *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis by Lydia Davis* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009).

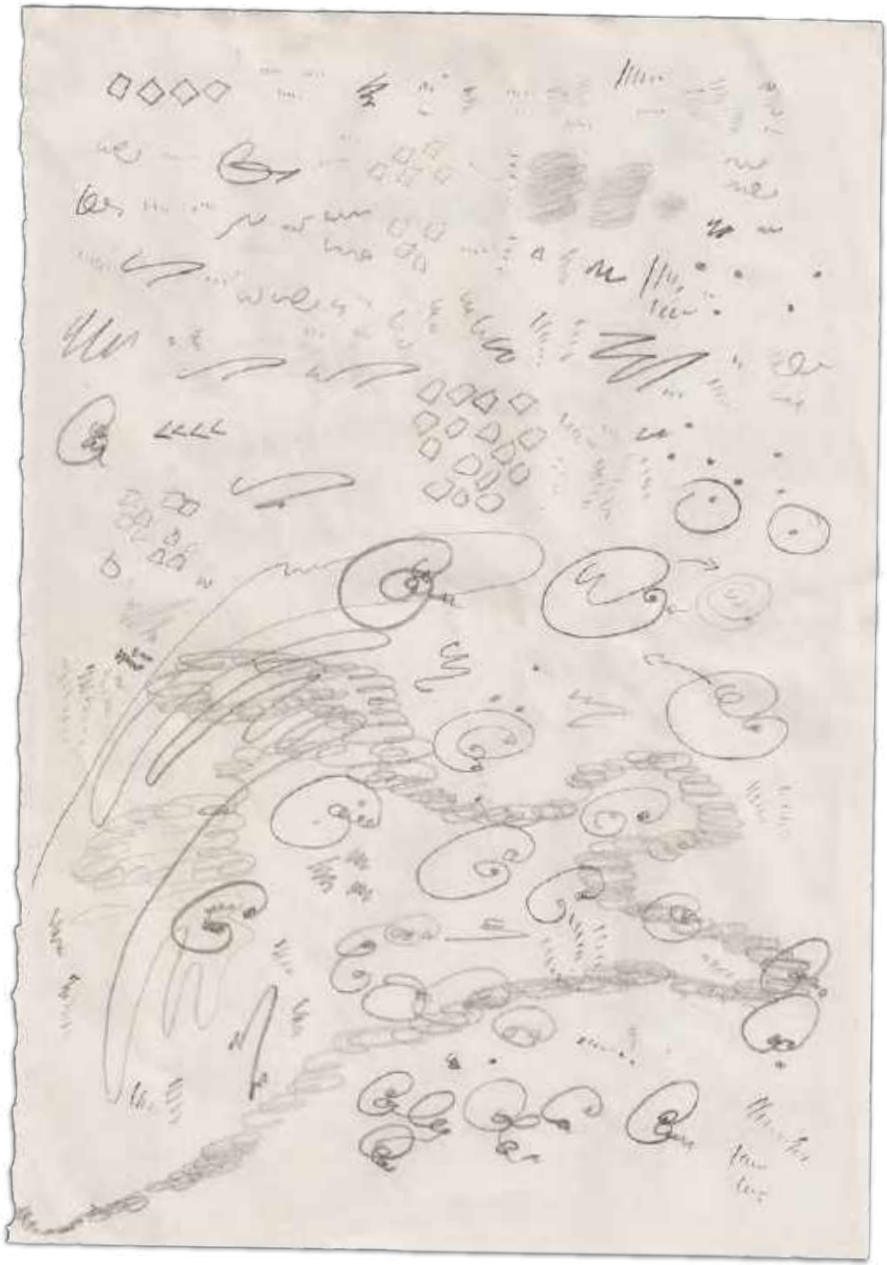
Sound Score Choreography

Holly Schmidt and Annie Canto

On the west side of Jericho Beach in Vancouver, BC, there's a pond and an outstretch of field that houses a large population of birds. It isn't routine for many to be driven by sound, to move and respond to sound over sight or compulsive thought. In this activity, we practiced attention to sound in an atmosphere teaming with song.

STEPS

1. Gather to introduce the area through personal connections.
2. With a sketchbook in hand, separate to find solitary resting places.
3. Listen to the sounds of birds, wind, rustling neighbours, and bugs.
4. Sketch a score of the surrounding ensemble.
5. Listen for the regathering of the group in what feels like thirty minutes.



UNFOLDING

In a group of twelve, we began in a circle standing on an incline as Holly described her connection to the park. She had spent time getting to know the trees and remembered the spot as a sanctuary for birds. We were instructed to bring sketchbooks and drawing tools and wander into the surrounding area to sit alone. Quiet spaces erupted in sound as we sat still in our spaces. In combinations of writing and drawing we patterned what we heard onto pages staying present with the onslaught of new noises. After a quick thirty minutes, we returned to the group to share our scores.

COLLABORATION/ELABORATION

Understanding the score as a document to be performed, we refrained from explaining the order of our sheets and came up with the idea to trade sketchbooks and perform each others' scores. We were to create a movement or series that embodied these newly made choreo-scores. We separated to practice gestures, somehow demonstrating the marks made by our peers. In what felt like thirty minutes, we returned with the option to perform our movements, displaying the score sidelong to provide a walk through of our choreographies.

Quiet Spaces Erupted in Sound

Photography by Justin Langlois

Locale: Jericho Beach Park, Vancouver, on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh territory

Making Connections with Moss

Twyla Exner

I live about a 30 minute drive south of Prince George on the traditional, unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh. The forest is my backyard. I grew up on the prairies and have lived in many different cities across Canada, but have never felt as connected to my environment as I do here. To me the forest is magic. I walk the same trails every week, but nothing is ever the same. Of the many diverse species that comprise the forest, moss is one of my favourites. I walk by one incredible moss-covered log almost every day and always stop to see what's new. The touch, smell, and sights of this decaying log dazzle my senses.

As I write this in May of 2020 during our "great pause" and time of distance from others, I am contemplating how we might connect with one another through simultaneous tactile and interpretive experiences while remaining in our separate places. With more than 9,000 species of moss all over the world and the versatility of mosses to grow everywhere from deep in the forest to cracks in the sidewalk, I am looking to moss to provide a point of connection.

STEPS

1. Virtually collect friends, colleagues, or open minded strangers willing to engage in a mossy experiment. This activity can be experienced with two or more individuals.
2. Set a date and time to connect using a mobile phone or online platform of your choice. In advance of your scheduled "gathering" ask each individual to think of or go out and find an accessible and safe (please be aware of wildlife) mossy place.
3. On your scheduled "gathering" day/time, grab a sketch-book and drawing implement of your choice. Connect with your group and walk "together" to visit your chosen moss.
4. Sit down and get comfortable in the presence of your moss. Dedicate 5-10 minutes to sitting silently together/ apart with your respective mosses.

5. During this quiet time, examine your moss closely and create a drawing of it in your sketchbook. Take some notes about the location of your moss, why you chose it, how it looks, smells, and feels.
6. Breaking the silence and taking turns speaking one at a time:
    a. Explain why you chose your particular mossy spot. Descriptive language will prove to be very important in this exercise. Describe in great detail what your moss looks, feels, and smells like.
    b. While each person is speaking, every other person must draw the other's moss based solely off the description (no cheating by sending photos).
    c. Participants may ask questions or for further descriptions as necessary. When everyone has described their moss and drawn each other's moss, thank your moss and head back home.
7. Once home, photograph or scan your drawings and share them with your group via your preferred online platform.
8. Schedule a second phone or online "gathering", review the drawings, and reflect upon your shared experience.

Site Drawings with Metal and Sunscreen

Caitlin Chaisson and Liljana Mead Martin

Prince George has a significant industry based on forestry, wood and paper production. This setting provided the conditions for producing drawings that engage with a forested site. Using locally sourced wood, paper and some aluminum tent poles, we considered several methods for creating drawings in wooded areas. For this activity, we created large scale drawings using paper as a tool for measurement, and metal poles as tools for drawing. One of the locations we planned to visit was Cottonwood Island Nature Park, which is an island connected by a small bridge beside the Nechako River. Our goal was to trek through the deep snow amidst cottonwood trees and dogwood shrubs, responding to the woods through experimental drawing.

STEPS

1. Collect drawing tools i.e. charcoal, pencils, paper, rope, string, tent poles.
2. Prepare artist bodies for being in the elements i.e. sunscreen, warm layers, hydration.
3. Travel to a forested area.
4. Trek, seeking out sites and trees of interest for drawing.
5. Generate drawings in relation to the landscape using methods that do not depend on a) a flat surface b) pencils c) distant observation.

WHAT HAPPENED

We traveled to Cottonwood Island Nature Park. It was cold and bright. Snow covered the ground in varying depths. We prepared ourselves with sunscreen, gloves, scarves and hats and walked across the small bridge to the island. We did not discuss in much detail what we were going to do, but we had ideas for how we wanted to use our drawing tools. We walked off-trail into deeper woods. We wrapped paper around an old growth tree and secured it with string, then rubbed charcoal over the paper to reveal the ripples in the bark. We found a small clearing and took out our tent poles, playing with the lines they created. By animating the metal poles against the snow, and along the lines of trees, they acted as mark-making tools, gestures and lines. A local carver, Elmer Gunderson carved various faces and creatures into trees along the path which added an element of “watchfulness” to the experience of walking through the woods. Green lichen emerging from the deep cracks in cottonwood bark looked iridescent in contrast to the high-key greyness of the hibernating trees.

Portrait of Prince George / Lheidli

Rob Budde

accumulations of gravel, service industry workers, disposable income, and traversing the side of the hill sand as it slides. i don't want to be in love with this place—it asks too much. a beer can thrown from a crew cab lands cradled in a saskatoon bush bursting with juice because of the recent sun and heat. and because it can. moss squelches against your shoe and you wonder why you've wandered into this ditch, dew-wet, chip bags and cigarette package cellophane flowers, where the road edge crumbles, where you begin. i don't want to come back but the sun is descending and the mosquitos will come out. vehicles crash past—too many, too fast this machine is overheating, its gears screeching, its oversized stores in foreclosure, 50% off everything. no-see-ums in your waist band. streaks of airplane trail overhead. gradations of reclamation as weeds repopulate the ditch. a toad decides not to move as i trudge by. new developments down the road have no yard—the complete erasure complete. but here—roadside strawberries, small and bang on. one two three each a rung of forgiveness, an embrace of mercy. standing still, taking this day and its light playing over the river valley, balsam breath, and you sink a little further into the soil.

5. Float School is

orientation,
coordination.

negotiation of

collaboration,
social spaces,
bonding,

differing
vantage points.

dancing,
movement,
collectivity,
vulnerability,

tethered to any given locality.

As we
walk, with each step
we simultaneously rise up and
anchor down. Propulsion, it turns out,
requires grounding. Walking is a process
both of co-ordination and connectivity. It
involves alternating between touching earth
and rising up and putting that process in
motion in life.—*Kate Fletcher,*
Louise St. Pierre and
Mathilda Tham[1]

1 Kate Fletcher, Louise St. Pierre and Mathilda Tham, eds., *Design and Nature: A Partnership* (Routledge, 2019), 144.

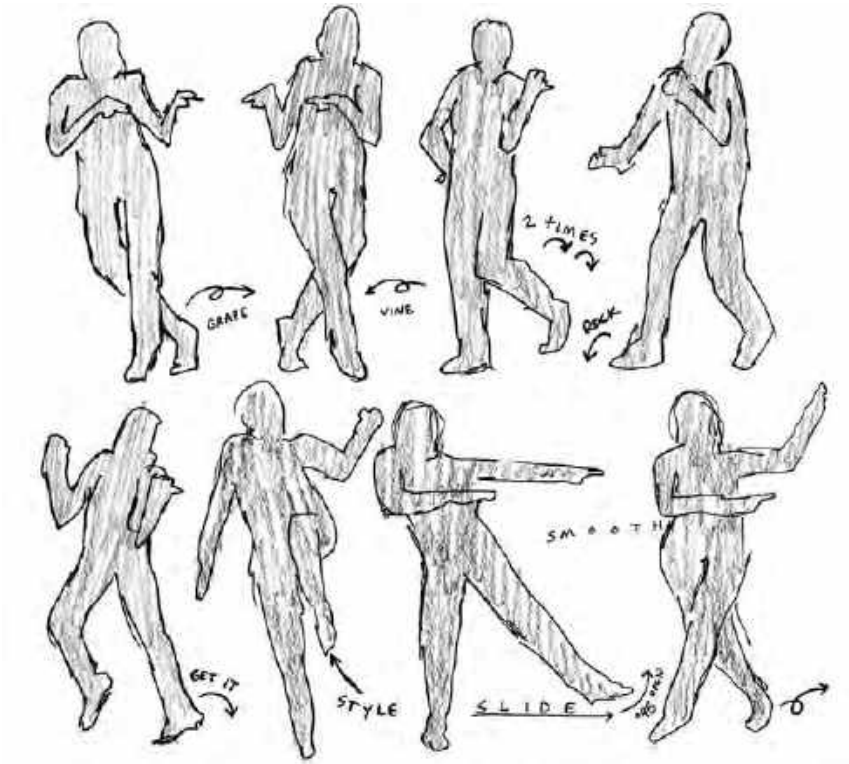
Unexpected Electric Boogie

Annie Canto

As a culminating or icebreaking activity depending on the closeness of the group, *Unexpected Electric Boogie* launches participants into familial status. *The Electric Boogie* (or *The Electric Slide*) braids itself into family histories from varying cultural crosspoints. At the class reunions of my Filipino Titas, the dance floor or plaza clears for the self-possessed entertainer in the family (often my dad) to lead concocted line dances stemming from The Electric Slide, the foundational dance pattern burned into our collective muscle memory. Different versions of The Slide blend on party dance floors with telling finesse that depicts migration and locality; from small town Washington, disco era Queens, or Houston suburbia.

Slowly and repeatedly instruct the coordinated steps of the Electric Boogie to a group of any size. Marcia Griffiths' stand alone hit[1] can contextualize the activity and drive the dancing, but other songs can be substituted depending on the instructor's taste and decided song-length, estimating the overall endurance level of the group. This activity is best kept unnamed until its start time. Dancing is an activity alien to some and anxiety inducing to others. It's best to introduce synchronized dancing at the last possible second in order to break the ice with the humour of the unexpected.

1 Marcia Griffiths, *The Electric Boogie*, Electric Boogie (Single), (Island Records, 1987).



STEPS

1. Grapevine right, tap the left toe and clap.
2. Grapevine left, tap the right toe and clap.
3. Take one step back led by the right foot, tap the left toe and clap, repeat.
4. Step forward on the left foot, swing the right foot forward and rotate 90° with the swing of the body.
5. Transition immediately into a grapevine right starting the sequence from the top.
6. Continue the coordinated rotation, encourage personalization of moves.

WHAT ENDED UP HAPPENING

After a weekend of group walks, embodiment activities, and discussions about public spaces, I was scheduled to lead a final activity in the Omineca gallery, our meeting hub for the weekend. Without having revealed my plan thus far, I was met with excitement and a spattering of dread as I introduced the idea of group dancing. With nervous excitement, I briefly explained the dance floor as a powerful and strange social space and played a portion of Marcia Griffiths' *The Electric Boogie*, describing the dance's evolution from disco to country to disco to family reunions. After speedily giving instructions, we danced to Evelyn "Champagne" King's *Love Come Down (Extended Version),*[2] an eight minute song that allowed ample time to practice the steps and meditate on the experience of coordinated movement.

Over the course of the song, we witnessed the conditioned movements of our newly formed relations exaggerated by the necessary bopping of step by step boogie. Some were quick to learn while others struggled with keeping up, ultimately breaking off to get down in a more comfortable way. By minute five, the coordination ruptured when factions of the group broke off in groups of two or more only following their nearest co-dancers. Without vocal communication other than laughter, the group eventually came back together encouraged by the unrelenting length of the song and insistence of the instructor. Bunched up trios and isolated duets swayed back into the mix, pausing with silent counts to reconfigure their movements.

2 Evelyn "Champagne" King, *Love Come Down,* Get Loose (Expanded Edition), (RCA Records, 1982).

Additional Reading: Adrian Piper, *Funk Lessons* (Berkeley: University of California, 1986);
Jen Delos Reyes, *Discotopia: Searching for Paradise on the Dance Floor.* Utopia Exhibition at CS18, Cincinnati, Ohio (2011).

Story Ropes

Laura Kozak, Charlotte Falk and Jean Chisholm

HOW WE GATHERED

Laura slipped into the alley beside Omineca[1] to gather some branches, grasses and other shrub appendages. We organized the green and growing things on the table alongside our other materials, various ropes and tape we brought with us from Vancouver, curating the palette for our workshop that would start in a few minutes. Overlooked patches of wilderness breaking through cracks of pavement were now carefully arranged just a few feet away from their roots.

Our gathering brought together a loose collection of acquaintances, a mix of old and new friends and collaborators. Half of our party was from Vancouver, the other half from Prince George and British Columbia's northern interior. We planned on spending the weekend together, getting

1 The Omineca Arts Centre is an interdisciplinary, locally-led artist run centre located in downtown Prince George.

to know each other and the places where we were situated. Making Story Ropes was our introduction to one another, a way of tying this loose knit group together.

STEPS

1. Gather together a group of people. Make sure everyone knows at least one person in the group. Allow people to invite their own friends or acquaintances.
2. Gather material for making Story Ropes. Ropes, string, sticks, leaves, and tape work well. Try to include simple materials that people will be familiar with, but inspire unfamiliar methods and forms.
3. Invite the group to choose some materials and create a small section of rope. Offer them some prompts to guide their making. Prompts might include:
    a. When has someone or something helped you?
    b. What is something no one here knows about you?
    c. What is something/somewhere/someone you are really concerned about?
4. Sitting around a table, have each person braid, twist, or weave the materials together to make their rope. Make this time feel loose and convivial. Eat a meal together.
5. After about an hour, when the rope making feels completed, the meal is finished, and conversation has reached a natural break, tidy up and regroup in a seated circle.
6. Going around the circle, ask each person to share the story of their rope.

OPEN ENDS

In sharing our ropes, we shared stories about our past, our current practices, and changes we hoped to see in the future, showing deep care for loved ones, community, and environments. The openness and willingness of the group created a space where many felt safe to be vulnerable and share their concerns.

After each person told their story, we placed our sections of rope on the ground in front of our feet, creating a wreath. We had originally planned to tie the rope together, creating one long, connected piece, but after we had finished sharing our stories we all felt compelled to leave ropes untethered and rest on the floor for the night.

Sites of Care and Concern

Laura Kozak, Charlotte Falk and Jean Chisholm

A WALK

The next morning, each member of the group was invited to pick a site of interest, care or concern, and we embarked on a walking tour of downtown Prince George. Carrying each of our hand-woven Story Ropes from the previous evening, we visited sites of creativity (galleries and public art), care (social services and harm reduction centres), unseen potential (locked campus buildings, poorly considered parks), history (Indigenous memorials), and grassroots efforts (shuttered arts centres, sites of protest).

STEPS

1. Gather together a group of people. Spend time getting to know one another prior to the walking tour.
2. Ask everyone "what is something or somewhere you are concerned about?" and invite them to pick a site, walk or person they would like to visit with the group. If possible, ask this question the day before the tour, to give people time to think about their response.
3. Plan a route for the walking tour with a group, visiting each person's site of care and concern.
4. Allow each person to lead the walking tour and host a conversation about their site.
5. At each site, acknowledge the group's relation to place and with one another.

RISE UP, ANCHOR DOWN

As we visited each site, we responded to built and natural conditions, engaged in conversations about their contextual complexities, and tried to unpack how our personal values have shaped our understanding of them. Walking with our Story Ropes connected this activity to the open and vulnerable conversations we had started with each other the previous evening. As a group, walking through the community and placing our Story Ropes within these sites of concern and care, we were able to connect broad systemic struggles to place and to our own experiences. We were able to witness and consider some of the layers of complexity specific to downtown Prince George, allowing shared values and understandings of place to emerge.

Collaboration in Orientation

a conversation with *Holly Schmidt, Justin Langlois, Annie Canto, Laura Kozak, Charlotte Falk and Jean Chisholm*

In the fall of 2019, Float School (project team Holly Schmidt, Justin Langlois and Annie Canto) and Designing for Public Space (project team Laura Kozak, Charlotte Falk and Jean Chisholm) traveled to Prince George, BC, together to facilitate a series of activities with seven local artists and community stewards.

Jean Chisholm
The way Float School and Designing for Public Space came together last fall in some ways felt really pragmatic; we each had funding to spend, we each wanted to go to Prince George, and we each had old connections that we wanted to revisit. It made sense to do our projects together because there was so much crossover. But both of our projects centre collaboration, so maybe that also supported our teams coming together. Laura and Charlotte, I'm thinking about how so much of what we wanted to do was to listen to and be in place with community stewards, and this idea of leading and being led by. So it feels fitting that we were also able to have the flexibility to collaborate with Float School.

Laura Kozak
One tension—not tension in a negative way, but something I was thinking about—is the balance between planning and spontaneity. So much of how we were able to come together in Prince George was an intentionally planned thing: we had to invite people in advance and make a plan for the time that we were going to spend together. But then so many of the best things that happened, happened spontaneously and flexibly and changed in real time. I think there's so much lost in education because we don't often have the ability to be very flexible or spontaneous or responsive to things. It's a learning for our project too, of being led by. How do you set up the conditions for that—something that involves effort and planning in advance, but then also give up control and allow yourself to be guided and taken somewhere new.

“Being spontaneous sometimes requires being uncomfortable...”

That idea of *being led by* I considered in a cerebral way in advance. I didn’t really feel I understood it in an embodied or visceral way until Annie, you were guiding us to be a compass together. I was feeling the push and pull of everyone’s bodies; we were orienting ourselves in space in a parallel and different way of knowing. It’s that same thing being guided by someone else and allowing for spontaneity.

Annie Canto
I want to pick up on that idea, Laura, since you said the word visceral. I immediately thought of the human compass activity because even as the facilitator, that idea came up really spontaneously. We had built over the weekend enough trust to say, “Yeah, we can try Annie’s weird ideas.” I felt a bit frazzled and embarrassed while leading it. Of the activities I led, that activity pushed us closer through the uncomfortable, through the openness to try—somehow, even more so than the disco dancing activity I made everyone do. That one activity makes me cringe a little thinking about it because it was so unplanned and odd. But that’s great, there’s lots to

reflect on when a memory comes with that kind of feeling. It's interesting how we left space for something like that to happen over and over again.

Holly Schmidt
I think it's interesting that both you, Laura and Annie, are touching on the trust required among a group of people to be spontaneous. Being spontaneous sometimes requires being uncomfortable and allowing for failure to happen in ways that are ultimately really productive. The first evening worked well to set up the conditions for trust. The activity of introducing ourselves by making these ropes to tell our story created openings for conversation. The act of making together, eating pizza and having conversation was very convivial.

It was enjoyable to spend that social time together, but it also helped to initiate trust, so when we introduced our ropes and linked them together, it was very affecting and I felt people were being quite vulnerable and open with one another. Laura, I still remember what it was that you had to share with us as a group because it was so poignant. It was really affecting. It made me realize that we were all there to be present with one another. We weren't just putting in time together, we were doing something meaningful together.

Laura
So a special note to share your deepest fears and weep in front of your collaborators.

Holly
Yeah. Like I said, it touched me. I remember what you had to say.

Charlotte Falk
Shifting to some of the things that we did on Saturday, and thinking about the activities that you were mentioning Annie, like the disco. I think one thing that struck me about the disco activity was the willingness to do something that matters, but that also might feel direction-less or open-ended. Everyone was willing to be there, and be in this space of experimentation, there wasn't a drive to meet a certain benchmark or a certain milestone or achieve a certain learning outcome. It was more to see what happened, and I think a big part of that too, was generosity amidst some uncomfortableness.

There was also a lot of play in many of the activities, to balance off some of the heavier moments. The sense of play really struck with me. Also, what was the term you used when you were talking about stuff we've been doing, Jean, in your thesis defense: radically unproductive.

Jean
Oh yeah, yes.

Charlotte
I appreciate that approach, and for everyone to give their precious time for that too.

Jean
I know in our reflection, we have been thinking a lot about how great it was to have the whole weekend to be together. It wasn't just an afternoon or a check-list of activities. Instead, we had time to eat together and hang out in all the spaces in between activities, to have conversations and meet up at the pub. And all the walking we did in-between destinations.

“Having time to be together unproductively actually creates these meaningful and vulnerable spaces.”

I’m trying to think through how having all these negative or unproductive spaces helps create that meaning or create that vulnerability that might not have gotten revealed if we were working through a short assignment or giving a lecture.

Annie, Justin and Holly, I’m also thinking about the summer Float School in Vancouver. We had that whole week together, and also shared a lot of meals, and had these sorts of in-between destinations and traveling to and from. Having time to be together unproductively actually creates these meaningful and vulnerable spaces.

Holly

That idea of negative space is interesting. I hadn’t quite thought about it that way. Walks are an integral part of Float School. And with the walks, you have moments where you stop and you do something together, but there’s always the time spent getting to the place where you stop, and sometimes that’s by far the most interesting. You have spontaneous conversations and make connections in these in-between moments.

Laura
That's something I feel is really missing right now in the absence of face-to-face contact, because the in-between spaces are not happening. Every conversation is quite formalized on screen—there's no walking downstairs to get coffee where a side conversation might happen. There was so much porousness that weekend in Prince George for those things to happen and I think in some of your other work too. The idea of the scale for those groupings also comes up a lot when I think about both trust relationships and also the amount of time we had with and for each other. So a group of eight or 10 people gather around a spot—how can you make time and space for everyone to get a chance to speak, but then also have the size of a group where, as you move, you start to have two or three smaller conversations in between?

Charlotte
I wonder though, if there's something valuable about more prolonged Float Schools, if it's these more prolonged times together that allow for the in-between? There's a set amount of things that have to come together for that to happen though, right, like you need the project funding and people need time and they need to have a job, are all these different factors that come into play. Although it's amazing, there are limitations around how often it can happen, and who can participate and how, and I wonder then are there ways to foster similar moments that maybe don't require as much time, but that allow for a shortcut? Are there shortcuts that can be made, or ways to just throw in spontaneity or disjoint a situation or something? Or does that actually undermine it? I have questions, no answers.

Jean
I do want to recognize that a lot of planning did go into that weekend. Laura and Charlotte, I remember reviewing our activity and going over the invitation letter and all of that work. When I was thinking about these moments in-between destinations, those destinations were still planned in some way, either in advance or on the day of. I guess I'm trying to consider the tension between these planned moments and the in-between. And what are ways that can be scaled either really large or really, really small?

Holly
I was thinking about the process of inviting people into Float School. In all of the iterations of Float School, there's been an intentionality behind bringing certain people together, whether it's through relationships or recommendations. The decision to invite people is something Justin and I have discussed at different times in the project. Would Float School be the same if we made an open invitation to show up at nine o'clock in this park on a certain day? Would we be able to build the same relationships and level of trust among participants? Or does it require bringing people together through previous relationships or out of mutual interests and concerns that draws people together, whether it's through being in an art and design community or being connected to a particular locale.

I think these are conversations that we're still having, but based on our experience I would say, it's been helpful to have participants who have a stake in being together. So rather than think about Float School scaling up, we think about it becoming more distributed. And that's where this

publication is valuable. It allows us to share these things so people can initiate these experiences within their own groups.

Justin Langlois
I was just going to say that, I wonder about Float School and its instrumentality, where we say this is part of a Float School activity or it's meaningful to me because I'm a teacher or in some ways by wrapping it in something that provides some legibility, it gives that permission space to trust you, engage you, to do the activities that will still be absurd, even when we're writing them up. I think it's that lived experience brings something to them, but it's also, I don't know how I personally would be able to make sense of it if it didn't have that kind of container that legibility or that thing that says, "Oh, I'm part of something as I'm doing this."

And so I can find meaning because we're doing that thing together. And it is not to say that Float School ever had an intention to not provide some kind of instrumental benefits to teaching practices or art practices, but back to what Jean was saying earlier about a kind of radical unproductivity, you can't plan for the things that come out of it. And reflecting on what, for example, Laura shared with us on that opening night about her family and how it hits you, I don't know how we would have ever come to know that about you, like ever, and that's what's meaningful about it to me is that it provides the license or the availability of emotion and affect and trust to bring out things that just cannot bubble up on their own otherwise.

And so, whatever reframing or meaning comes from that, I guess that's the piece that keeps resonating for me

“I can find meaning because we’re doing that thing together.”

and keeps making me want to do versions of this, or at least hold onto those experiences, because there’s something that I could never invent on my own that comes out of it. And something that I never otherwise make time for or space for in my life. And that seems like a grand statement, but it’s not quite that, it’s just something I have not been able to shake having done these projects together.

Laura
I think about that too. I mean, if somebody else came from out of town and invited me to come and do something unspecified for two and a half days with a bunch of people that I might know one of a little, I’m not sure that I would choose to make time for that. And so I think ‘having a stake in it’ is a good way to describe it. Because it can be a social or relational stake, but it can also be place-based and feeling that you want to participate or contribute to something that’s connected to where you are.

Jean
Especially about the work that I’ve done in Prince George, I think a lot about invitations; who’s coming, and the

relationships between everybody. In part because I have had a lot of close and not close relationships with some of these people for almost 20 years. I feel a lot of tension in trying to figure out what is the intention of these projects so that it feels purposeful for everyone, and that they don't feel extractive. I hate feeling like I'm just whipping back up to Prince George and using this community for my own research. It's been a struggle figuring out what feels mutually interesting and beneficial.

I think centering relationships has helped to uncover a comfort level where my work is not necessarily or totally about project objectives, but it really is about developing and embracing these relationships and seeing what happens within them.

For me, having at least a small relationship with almost everyone in that group helped this gathering feel a little bit more comfortable and organic, and not exploitive like it might with a project that has an open call to engage 'users'. I always feel really accountable to the people we collaborate with, and I'm always searching for that purpose or follow up.

Annie

Jean, you just worded what I've been trying to figure out. In Prince George, the weekend was divided, starting with Designing for Public Space as the leading project and then it transitioned into Float School. In the first half, it was really important for me that we had all these very serious conversations as the way to accelerate the relationships built. I may have been the one who knew everyone the least to start, so I was floored by our ability to have these extremely open and

personal conversations about the communities we are a part of. At many points, though, I wondered, *what am I doing here? How could they be so generous with me that they're sharing all this stuff and I'm not—What am I doing in return? What is the action of reciprocity that I haven't prepared?*

To finish the weekend, Justin and Holly and I bring in these Float School activities that are seemingly, completely unproductive in contrast. It's hard for me to say unproductive because it has such a negative connotation, but we were productive in a way that's not typically useful. The production is making us a little bit closer. There's no knowing before enacting the task if it's going to be useful, so there's room for discovery. With the closeness we had developed through Designing for Public Space, we were open enough to try things for no practical reason. That mentality takes a bunch of the pressure off to perform in a group. We started to find the ways that we are useful to each other and comfortable in these low pressure situations, situations that you rarely have with working collaborators. Jean, what you said about centering the relationship as opposed to the thing that we're doing, there's definitely some tension in the ways that we can do that. But I think that's a good way of putting it.

Laura

I know one of the things that we were reading and talking about in advance and showed up at that time. And it seems it's an ethic of Float School too, and it's from Leanne Simpson's writing about consent or opting in.[1] So how do you make space for people to self-select into the ways, or how much,

1 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

they want to participate and start from that frame of reference, as opposed to, what do we need to find out from these people? Or what's the deliverable or output that we're trying to get together? And I don't know, I think about Dawn on that weekend and how we spontaneously and gradually invited her into that process and she opted in, in so many ways, the whole weekend long. And I found that very energizing to not feel the kind of tension in a relationship that's, "Okay, we have to get this person to do this thing that we need them to do." It was a totally different dynamic.

Charlotte
I think part of that was the flexibility of the structure too, because we weren't asking something of Dawn. And I think she knew that she always...it was clear, "If you can come to dinner, that's great. If you want to participate, great. If you want to come tomorrow morning or not come tomorrow morning or come for a little bit, that's great." And I feel we did that with everyone that was there. There was this openness to be there as much as you wanted or not, which allowed for more willingness from people who felt they could comfortably opt in. It's not, "Oh, if I come to dinner, then I have to commit to this entire weekend" versus "I can just see how it goes." It gave everybody agency, it was a continual opting-in. People had the decision to continually stay or not, and participate as they wished, or not participate at all.

Jean
I'm also trying to think about the role that surprise played throughout the weekend. There's the sense of opting in and flexibility, but it's not like we needed a heavily outlined

"...we don't have a lot of opportunities to step outside of these disciplined ways of being."

itinerary that said "line-dancing" at the end of the weekend. If we had made an outline, and everyone had read that in advance, a few people might have gone, "Oh, maybe I won't do that". But I remember the sense of surprise people had at seeing the material for rope making when they first arrived, or myself being surprised and delighted by every other wild story Dawn shared. And the weekend ending with Annie springing a dance lesson on us. Everyone was so game to go with it in the moment. The unplanned vs. planned, opting in vs. surprise. We seemed to inhabit a weird space in between all of these things.

Holly
And it's interesting that we were a multidisciplinary group as well. Participants came from creative writing, anthropology, social work, education, and the arts. We came from a variety of disciplinary ways of being and practicing.

So when Annie brought everyone together to do the electric boogie, it was pretty incredible to see so many of

us outside of our comfort zone. Everyone was pushing their boundaries and I think, at least within an academic context, we don't have a lot of opportunities to step outside of these disciplined ways of being.

Charlotte
Yes. Even just thinking about our two projects. Designing for Public Space, obviously coming from the design side of disciplines versus Float School being more grounded in the art side. If you want to segment them. The projects, and all the different activities, interwove and bounced off each other so well, and not only was there an element of surprise for the other participants who came in, but even amidst ourselves, because we didn't know what Float School was going to do and you all didn't know what we were going to do, and then it showed all these little moments of connection between them—shared approaches across those disciplines on these two projects.

Holly
I was struck by Sebastian's contribution to the walk identifying sites of care. I met him as an artist on the first evening, so when he spoke about his social work, it revealed a whole other dimension to his relationship to Prince George and those most vulnerable in the city. I think without this variety of activities and ways we interacted with one another, that side of Sebastian and his work may never have been acknowledged.

Charlotte
Even within some of the activities, we keep landing on the fun and surprise element of Annie getting all of us to do

the electric slide at the end. But for me a big part of that, although it came through the culmination, was the generosity that you had, Annie, of beginning that activity by sharing a very personal story about your father and the meaning behind that. It's not like you just got up and told us to start dancing and we danced. Maybe we would have, but I think having the space that you took there and that you shared with us by telling that personal story, I think that pushed it more, and you could see there were a couple of people in the room that were very uncomfortable to be dancing. It almost felt, I wonder if part of that came from a wanting to give back, return that generosity that you gave it, sharing your story and sharing that connection to it.

Laura

In terms of the lightening of all of those heavy things that we had talked about that day, I see that as an essential counterpart or foil to that work, something to pay attention to in relation to things, like opting in because this group who had built all this trust and talked through all of these really difficult things, I also feel we walked away with the feeling that we found a way to have fun together. And that makes me want to opt into other things with that group of people.

I would say yes to gathering with them again, because it didn't feel like we all walked away carrying the burden of all of the things that had come up without something else to lighten that load. The dancing was this thing that was so hard to do and forced us to pay attention in a totally different way than all of the talking we had done before it. I had to concentrate really, really hard to badly do that dance. And that felt a really important relief too, from all the thinking.

Justin

This makes me think of an earlier project that I was doing called the School for Eventual Vacancy. It was trying to change the dynamics that are hard-coded like how we often gather when we're talking about school or education, wherein whoever's at the front of the room, whoever is the 'teacher', we assume that they're there for us and that they're leading the charge for our benefit. And actually what we did continuously was flip that around and make it about generosity and I think we started to feel, "Oh, well, actually, we need to be there for them." Whoever is brave enough to try to lead out on this, the group is there to support them doing that, rather than that person being there to bring the group along.

And I think that these shifts in dynamic really create an openness or vulnerability that just doesn't seem to happen under other circumstances. And that's, I think, what I really am continuously appreciating, is that it builds solidarity, I think that's really important.

Holly

This sense of togetherness didn't stop after the weekend. When I reached out to a few participants to see if they were willing to contribute to the publication, they emailed me back within five minutes and their response was enthusiastic. I was blown away by that because I thought, "Oh a lot of time has passed and people are busy and all the things that get in the way of doing this kind of work that we've been talking about." But they were immediately engaged and excited to take part again. That suggests something transformative happened and it has duration.

Compass for Uncoordinates

Annie Canto

When wandering, there are items on your person that you rely on to guide you, knowledge from others that lead you to where you're going.

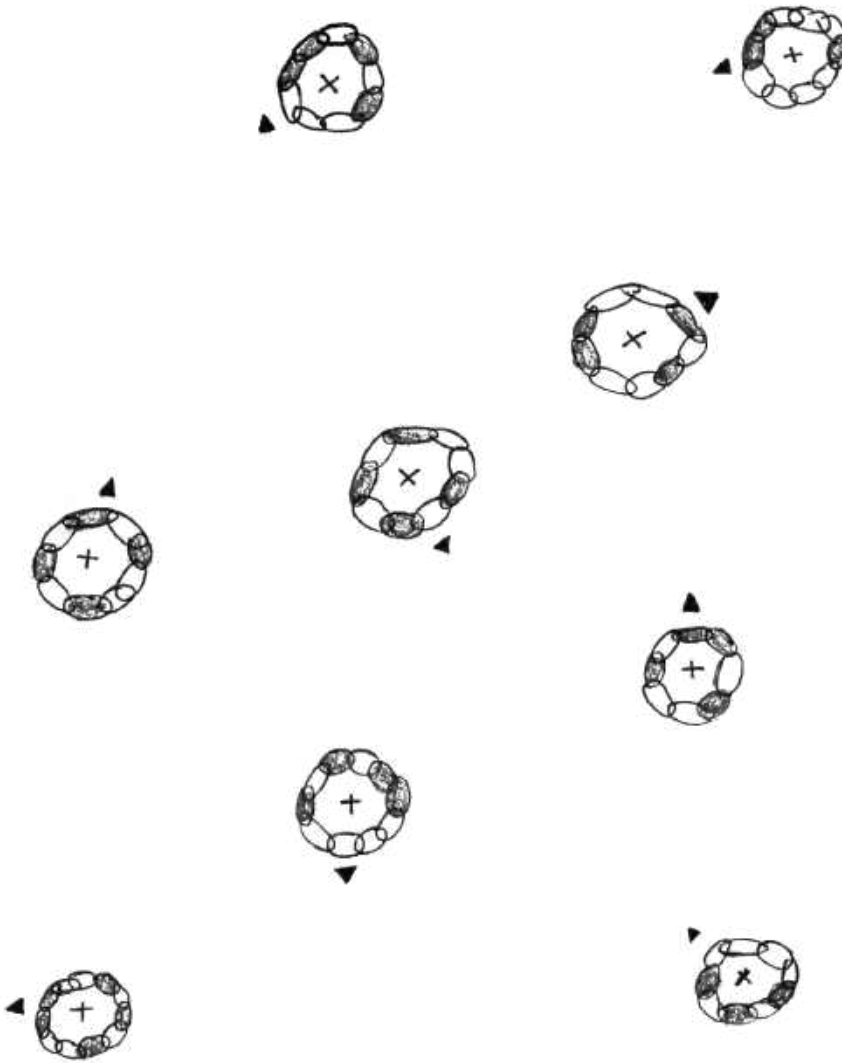
We had spent the morning visiting and discussing spaces around Prince George. Residents generously shared personal knowledge and connections as we moved from building to alley to resource centre to gallery. We drew a map based on our relationships to this place and followed each other's lead discussing inhabitable parks, funding for community spaces, resource redistribution, and empty buildings. Some of us had come as strangers but we were welcomed and invited to participate in serious conversations by our generous hosts.

This activity is meant to enact appreciation. It acts out our gratitude through coordinated movement.

STEPS

1. After being shown a place, express your gratitude with laughter and vulnerability.
2. Come into a circle and touch shoulders.
3. The leaders from the day relax, press into the shoulders of the people on either side and close their eyes.

4. Followers of the day take their turn leading by rotating the circle from North to South, lightly leaning left then right.
5. As the movement comes to a natural end, wait for another person to take the leadership role.
6. Transition into the next activity.



REFLECTION

I had asked myself all day, "Why are they showing me these sites of care, how will I be accountable to this sharing of stories?" And my answer kept coming up short. I could dream of longer-term collaborations that set our day into further motion, but the reality of those collaborations were a stretch for me, not having the capacity to travel from Vancouver to Prince George often, not sure how long I would even live in BC. This exercise came spontaneously out of a need to enact gratitude. At the same time I could start to process the openness of these new connections in sync with our movements. Maybe these new relationships would make sense in collaborations years later where our work could be carried through in community support initiatives. But realistically, all I would do for now is carry the thoughts and ideas we shared forward into my own community, not knowing where they would lead me.

Technicity

Rob Budde

writing a central
"+" crossing lanes of
following form of the recorded
map—the city—meaning
the avenue is industrialized and
institutionalized
almost beyond reckoning
of the land it is made from
really

theory
(and a lack-of-theory theory)
drives of the right-of-way clearing,
software, traffic, fast food, in and
out of the drive-thru day
with instructions for assembly
including the occluded
the outskirts, the outlaws and
then, technically, the invisible

this city is me in
a colonial blueprint

already encoded eyes I
study the civic plan, plan
the trek on older paths

but even here at 15th and Central
the ghosts remain and they are
re-vitalizing the language so
Dakelh reclaims the confluence, reclaims
the hillside, renames the order
of events leading us here

closing

/

opening

Learning with Float School

Justin Langlois

Float School revolves around inventive and often embodied common experiences that are followed by a group reflection. This rhythm wasn't planned, exactly. Perhaps at first it was a way to bring a particular activity to a close but it quickly became the singular connective tissue between all activities. It helps us to recognize that floating is only legible as floating when there are anchors before and after. You know you've floated when you're no longer floating.

STEPS

1. After an activity, gather in a circle. Standing tends to allow everyone to be closer together, in a tighter circle.
2. Taking turns, share what the activity felt like as you did it, or what you're thinking about now. It doesn't have to be profound, it can simply be observational, but trying to bring language to something your body experienced first can often open up new ways to understand what happened individually and across the group.
3. Practice active and empathic listening. Make eye contact, nod in agreement, hum loudly to emphasize something that feels particularly resonant.

UNFOLDING

After an activity or exercise or experience, coming back together to share allows for a sense of communion. We've done activities in the pouring rain, in the cold, and in the warmth of the sun, and in each case, bringing our bodies back together allows us to share that in a way that makes it feel important and not just the context for the activity. Shivering together, for example, creates this resonating, buzzing energy. Taking turns to talk about what we experienced, trying to give language to these small nuances, it builds affirmation and offers reminders of how to tune into those things. And, most importantly, it demarcates what just happened as worthy of attention and study and consideration.

COLLABORATION/ELABORATION

Talking together in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, digging into a shared sense of vulnerability, these things build a way of knowing that is contingent and constitutive. We know more about what happened because we come to know how we experience it individually. We come to consider what happened as a way to learn, as a form of education, as a model for school that relies on paying close attention and in practicing plurality. Experiential learning that accounts for and centres emotional, collaborative, reflective, and embodied learning through Float School allows us to reset the boundaries and anchors of what counts as experience.

Float School Timeline (2018-2019)

March 1–4, 2018

Prince George/traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh, part of the Dakelh First Nations

Participants/Contributors:

Andrew Adams
Clayton Gauthier
Liljana Mead-Martin
Holly Schmidt
Caitlin Chaisson
Justin Langlois
Jennifer Annais Pighin
Roanne Whitticase

May 13–17, 2019

Vancouver/traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh

Participants/Contributors:

Jan Appel
Rebecca Bair
Hayley Carruthers
Artemis Feldman-Poyntz
Justin Langlois
Holly Schmidt
Malina Sintnicolaas
Reyhan Yazdani
Romane Bladou
Annie Canto
Jean Chisholm
Kat Grabowski
Ben Lee
Andrew Simon
Damien Stonick

October 4–7, 2019

Prince George/traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh, part of the Dakelh First Nations

Participants/Contributors:

Dawn Agno
Annie Canto
Twyla Exner
Laura Kozak
Antonia Mills
Noelle Pepin
Joanne Sales
Rob Budde
Jean Chisholm
Charlotte Falk
Justin Langlois
Sebastian Nicholson
Holly Schmidt

Contributors

Rebecca Bair is an interdisciplinary artist based in Vancouver—the traditional and ancestral territories of the Coast Salish peoples. She uses multimedia approaches and Sun collaborations to illustrate her exploration of identity and intersectionality, through the lens of her own experience as a Black Woman on Turtle Island. Bair's artistic, professional and educational goals revolve around common themes of celebrating Black plurality, as well as enabling interpersonal and intercultural care. Bair teaches at Emily Carr University of Art and Design and works as an equity consultant. She is also an educator and coordinator for Black youth in the Vancouver area.

Romane Bladou is an interdisciplinary artist who lives and works on the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of the Coast Salish people. Her practice is one of looking, that is allowed by ways of slowness, walking and transit. She uses methods of writing, photography and videography to record those experiences in space and time, and of projection and reflection to translate these moments into mediated installations. Bladou teaches photography at Emily Carr University of Art and Design where she received her MFA.

Rob Budde teaches creative writing at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. He has published eight books (poetry, novels, interviews, and short

fiction). His most recent books are *declining america* and *Dreamland Theatre* from Caitlin Press, which was shortlisted for the BC Books Prize Dorothy Livesay Award. Manuscripts in process include *Testes* (a poetic engagement with maleness), *Panax* (a cross-genre relationship with Devil's Club), and *The Salmon Wars* (a speculative fiction novel about ecoterrorism in a near-future Northern BC). He co-edits *Thimbleberry Magazine: Arts + Culture in Northern BC*.

Annie Canto is an artist and educator whose practice spans socially engaged art, illustration, critical race theory, and engaged pedagogy. Working with text, comics and food she explores group work and hosting practices as strategies for community organizing and celebration. She is active in her community as a member of the Vancouver Artist Labour Union Co-operative, a unionized workers co-op with a mission to transform labour practices within the arts and cultural sector, and teaches at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Though uninvited as a first generation Pilipina immigrant, her life and work takes place on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səl̓ílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Caitlin Chaisson is an independent curator and critic based in New York. Her research-based practices intersect around questions pertaining to cultural production and the environment. Over the past several years she has largely been focused on work in the environmental humanities. She is presently developing this research at the graduate level, as an MA candidate in Curatorial Studies at CCS Bard.

Jean Chisholm is a designer, researcher, and educator living and practicing in the area of Vancouver, located within the unceded Coast Salish Territory. Her research explores place-based design practices and community collaborations that work towards relational, ecological and equitable ways of living, often with a focus on her hometown of Prince George, the traditional lands of the Lheidli T'enneh, and other northern communities. Jean currently teaches communication design at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, where she recently completed her MDES.

Twyla Exner is a visual artist, educator, and nature enthusiast currently based on the unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh also known as Prince George, BC. She works in sculpture, installation, drawing, and community interaction to explore the wonders of nature, human connection, and the idea of electronic technologies gone awry. Exner received her BFA from the University of Regina (Regina, SK) and MFA from Concordia University (Montreal, QC). She has shared her work through exhibitions, workshops, lectures, and interactive art-making experiences in communities across Canada.

Charlotte Falk is an interdisciplinary designer and educator with a practice spanning industrial design, communication design, architecture and public art. She holds a Master of Architecture (University of British Columbia) and a Bachelor of Design (University of Alberta). She designs primarily for public space and publications, and works with artists to support the design of large-scale public art projects. Her research practice is grounded in public space design

with a focus on experimental approaches for site specificity, intuitive responses to space, and the democratization of design. She is a Lecturer at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, and a Fine Arts Instructor at Langara College.

Laura Kozak is a design researcher and community organizer. Since 2005 she has built partnerships and collaborated on projects with local and international artists, designers and community organizations. A core interest in place-based responsibility and collaborative design of the urban environment informs her research and teaching practice. She is on the Board of Directors at 221A Artist Run Centre Society and is co-coordinator of Emily Carr's DESIS Lab, where she also teaches in the Jake Kerr Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Justin Langlois is an artist, educator, and organizer. His practice explores collaborative structures, critical pedagogy, and infrastructural frameworks as tools for gathering, learning, and making. His work has been presented at the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Toronto), Conflux New York, Nuit Blanche (Toronto), Creative Time Summit (Venice Biennale), Open Engagement (Pittsburgh), CAFKA (Kitchener), Art Souterrain (Montreal), Art Moves (Poland), Manif D'art Biennial (Quebec City), along with galleries and artist-run centres across Canada. He is currently the Associate Dean of the Master of Fine Arts program at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. He lives and works as an uninvited guest on unceded Coast Salish Territory in Vancouver, Canada.

Ben Lee, emblematic of an emblem addict, survives by etching out a living as a jack of all trades and a master of one on the unceded and unrelinquished lands of the Coast Salish, Musqueam and Squamish Nations respectively. He seeks to contribute culturally and repay the debt owed to both the aforementioned indigenous peoples and Black Hip Hop Cultures for which he finds deep inspiration and acknowledges this by virtue of works made. The artist creates contemporary commentaries on complacent consumerist conditioning ignorant of its historic sources of cultural capital. To address this relationship to both land and music the artist channels and mixes cultures creating hybridizations of collective consciousness crossfading between mimesis and pastiche. These observations use irony as a form of truth telling to absurdist æffect in the spirit of the carnivalesque aesthetic.

Liljana Mead Martin is a visual artist living and working on unceded Coast Salish territories, Vancouver. Through sculpture, installation and performed choreographies Martin explores connections between material histories, shifting geographies and embodiment. Over long-term material research and collection processes she develops artworks in response to the needs of bodies and ecologies within sites of ruin. Martin is co-founder of Hyphenated Sites and founder of The Reading Studio, her work has exhibited at The Klondike Institute for Arts and Culture (Dawson City, Yukon), Artscape Gibraltar Point (Toronto Island ON), Far Afield (Salt Spring Island), Dynamo Arts Association (Vancouver), Nanaimo Art Gallery (Vancouver Island) and CSA Space (Vancouver).

Holly Schmidt is an artist, curator and educator that engages processes of embodied research, collaboration and informal pedagogy to explore the multiplicity of human relations with the natural world. Her recent national and international exhibitions, projects and residencies include: COV Engineering Artist-in-Residence (2020-2022), Mantle (2019) Art Gallery of Evergreen, Coquitlam, Vegetal Encounters Residency (2019-2021) UBC Outdoor Art Program, Vancouver, Quiescence (2019) Burrard Arts Foundation, Vancouver. Schmidt is grateful to live and work in Vancouver, Canada, the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səl̓ílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Reyhaneh Yazdani is an interdisciplinary artist/designer currently living and working in Vancouver. She received a Master of Fine Arts from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2019, a Master of Architecture from the University of Tehran in 2017, and BArch from the University of Sistan & Baluchestan in 2012. She has been the recipient of two Tehran Municipality Art Work Awards, for her creative practice and exceptional urban installations in 2015 and 2016. Her interdisciplinary practice investigates the themes of nomadic identities, bi-lingual explorations, and the implications of colonialism and monoculture in today's world.