

## Sensorial Walk – A few self-guided moments

Materials: sketchbook and pencil, a piece of clay or plasticine

### Stand still

Take a moment to acknowledge this forest community. Look up at the branches overhead and down at the soil underfoot.

You are in contact with a vast fungal network called a mycelial net. It's suspended in the humus beneath your feet. Comprised of single cell-walled strands, it has no mouth to grasp with, no eyes to see its way, and no ears to hear your footsteps above. Acting as a large external stomach, it releases enzymes into the soil, breaking down organic compounds to feed upon. These tendrils connect the trees around you, providing an exchange of nutrients to sustain the forest. It is the way trees talk to each other.

Walk in silence for a few minutes. With each step consider your place in this forest community.

### Hear

Find a clearing where you can sit. Take out your sketchbook and pencil. Set a timer for 10 minutes. Listen and record every sound you hear with a symbol of your own making. For example, you might detect a birdcall and use a V symbol to record it. Whenever you hear that call you mark a V. You might notice the birdcall is overlaid with the sound of the wind moving through the trees and make a ~ symbol. Over time you will produce a graphic score of the forest in that moment in time. It might appear something like this... VV~~~~V~V

Consider the sounds produced by your body and how they are part of this bio-acoustic ecology.

### Smell

Walk until a particular scent attracts your attention. Take a moment to find the source. How would you describe it? 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. There is a lack of vocabulary for scent, so take this moment as an invitation to create new words to describe the smells within a few metres' vicinity. Bring your nose in towards leaves, branches, rocks and mosses and record this new scent vocabulary in your sketchbook.

You may notice that the odours you detect are at nose height. Consider how a dog might move through the same area. Nose along the ground, up in the air and repeat. With a sense of smell 10,000 times more acute than humans, there is an intimate world of fragrances guiding them through the forest.

Consider what remains hidden from your senses as you walk through the forest.

## Touch

As you walk, let your arm drift from your side and your fingers splay. What sensations of touch do you notice as you brush your fingertips along bark, rocks, leaves and mosses? If you have a piece of clay with you, press it against the surface textures around you. Run your fingers over the negative impression in the clay. How is the sensation of the texture transformed? How does it feel different from how it appears?

Consider how you might be touched by the forest if you remove your shoes. Try it.

## Look

Find another clearing where you can sit. Pull out your sketchbook and pencil. Take a moment to attend to a pinecone, a leaf or a twig on the forest floor. Pick it up and hold it in your hand and look closely at its colour, texture and shape. Let your eyes drift along its contours. With your pencil, trace the journey of your eyes. Capture this journey multiple times from different perspectives – face on, side, top, bottom ...

Consider its journey from origin to the forest floor, how it was composed and will decompose.

## Taste

Depending on the season you may encounter berries, leaves or flowers that are edible, or you can come prepared with a mug of tea made by local Indigenous herbalists such as Cease Wyss and her daughter Senaqwila of Raven and Hummingbird Tea Company of the Squamish Nation. Sip the tea. Let the fluid roll around on your tongue. Sensations of taste such as bitter, sweet, salty, sour and savoury will emerge from biochemical interactions in your mouth, but preferences for these tastes come from social and cultural experiences. Where do they meet on your tongue? Does your tea remind you of a time when you shared food and drink with someone else? Take a moment to record those flavours of interaction.

Consider the act of ingesting this tea and the alimentary relationship between you and the forest.

## Acknowledgements

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This walk was created on the traditional and unceded territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səíłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. I am grateful to live and work on these lands.