

Self-care as Creation Care

A CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL



FOR THE **LOVE**
OF **CREATION**

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For the Love of Creation is a national initiative that brings together faith bodies and faith-based organizations in Canada under a unified banner to mobilize education, reflection, action and advocacy for climate justice.

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Anna Bigland-Pritchard is a vocal artist, pedagogue, arts administrator, and expressive arts therapy student living in the traditional territories of the Wh-Say-Nech (WSÁNEĆ) and Le-kwung-en-speaking peoples, under the Douglas Treaties (Victoria, BC). She most often finds God in the whispers of trees and the breath between notes. As a music director, Anna is passionate about empowering collaborative creation for both healing and positive social change. Anna believes in the sacredness of nurturing a deep love of self, of neighbour, and prioritizing connection with the rest of creation; This includes a commitment to non-violent peacebuilding, decolonization, anti-racism, intersectional feminism, and art-making for all.

Translated and edited by Sabrina Di Matteo and Beth Lorimer



Welcome to this workbook! This is a creative arts journal to support you in an intentional and restorative relationship with yourself as a part of nature. You may wish to find a cozy blanket, cup of tea, some art supplies, and light a candle. You can do this workbook alone or in a small group, with gathering and centring rituals according to your tradition. Please note that you do not need any previous experience or to consider yourself "good" at any art forms in order to participate fully.

You may choose to start this workbook by listening to and participating in one of three accompanying prayerful meditations. Each meditation is 5-7 minutes long.

Here on this Land meditation: A body-scan meditation for centring and reconnecting with nature and your own spirit.

Outdoor meditation: An outdoors-based guided mindfulness practice to help you connect your senses with the rest of creation. Also possible to do indoors while looking out the window. Finishes with a sung blessing of Larry Campbell's song "And to You Be Peace."

Roots meditation: A mindfulness exercise using the imagery of trees. Includes gentle guided breathing, humming, and body scanning.

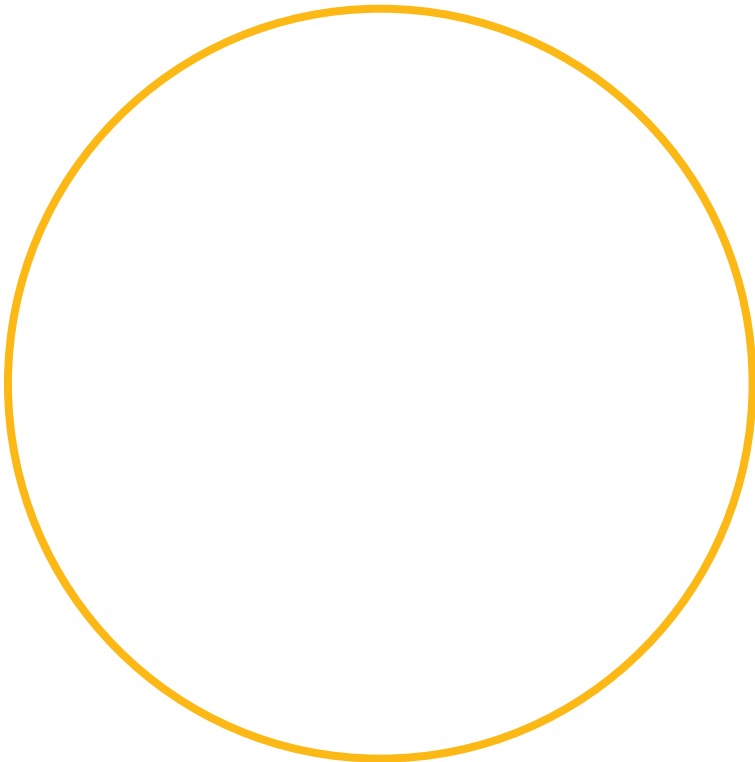
Planting Seeds: Arriving in Gratitude



Thank you for choosing to nourish your spirit today. By caring for yourself, you will bless the people in your life as well as the planet. It takes courage to do this work, but it is so valuable. Whether you are fired up, burnt out, or feeling fallow, this workbook of self-care as creation-care is for you! When we truly care for ourselves, we are caring for nature – we are part nature, and like all beings, we need rest. And of course, when we care for creation, we are caring for ourselves and for the future generations.

You may choose to start by listening to one of the accompanying prayerful meditations.

Use the circle and space below to acknowledge the land you are on, and to draw a picture or write about how you feel in your body in this moment. This could be a literal picture of your body, or an abstract depiction of how you feel today.



Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address



This Thanksgiving address is from the six nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) to open and close major gatherings or meetings. The prayer is also sometimes used individually at the beginning or end of the day. In Robin Wall Kimmerer's book "Braiding Sweetgrass," she shares that this prayer is for anyone who'd like to participate in it, and it is a gift of the Iroquois to the world. Try reading it aloud to yourself.



The People

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people.

Now our minds are one.



The Earth Mother

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our mother, we send greetings and thanks.

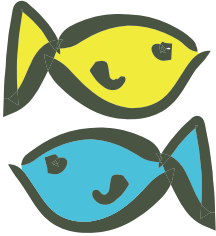
Now our minds are one.



The Waters

We give thanks to all the waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms- waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water.

Now our minds are one.



The Fish

We turn our minds to all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.



The Plants

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

Now our minds are one.



The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting of thanks.

Now our minds are one.



The Medicine Herbs



Now we turn to all the Medicine herbs of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.

Now our minds are one.

The Animals



We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are honored by them when they give up their lives so we may use their bodies as food for our people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.

Now our minds are one.

The Trees



We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

Now our minds are one.



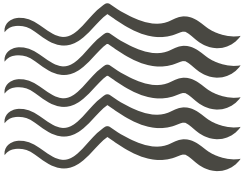
The Birds



We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds-from the smallest to the largest-we send our joyful greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Four Winds



We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.

Now our minds are one.

Closing Words



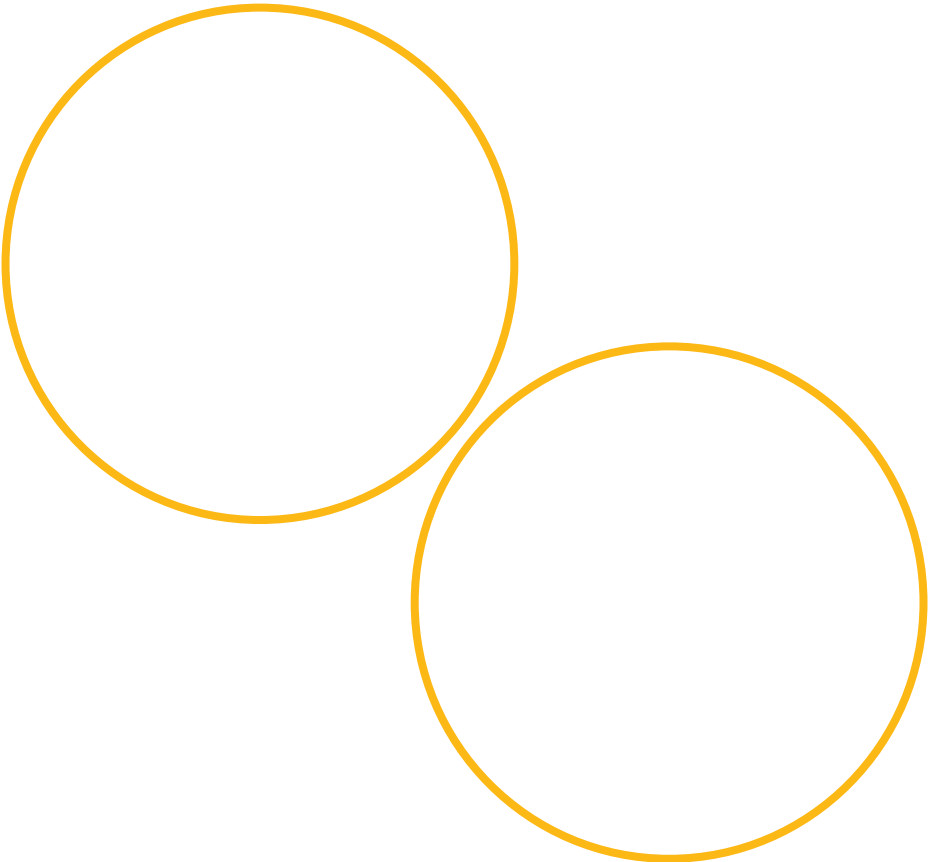
We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Now our minds are one.

New Growth: Visual Art Reflection



1. *In words and/or imagery, use one circle to reflect to the following prompt: "This is how I feel about creation, and my current relationship with the rest of creation..."*
2. *Use the second circle to respond to this prompt "My ideal relationship with the rest of nature would be..."*
3. *Notice if any colours and imagery are similar in the two circles - are there images you'd like to overlap more? Is there a way you can connect the circles? What colours, shapes and ideas are needed to bridge the gap? Are you willing to draw them?*



Sunlight: Journal Prompts



A powerful memory I have of connecting with nature is...

I see God/Love in Creation when...

My favourite sacred text or poem about relationship with the rest of creation is...

How I feel about the climate crisis...

Nature has taught me...

Watering: Journal Prompts



I am not alone in my desire to care for the earth.
Other people I can reach out to support and be supported by are...

I feel personally called to the following actions/commitments
to better care for creation...

The practical first steps to work toward one of these goals are...

My list of self-care ideas for when I feel burned out or overwhelmed
by injustice...

Harvesting



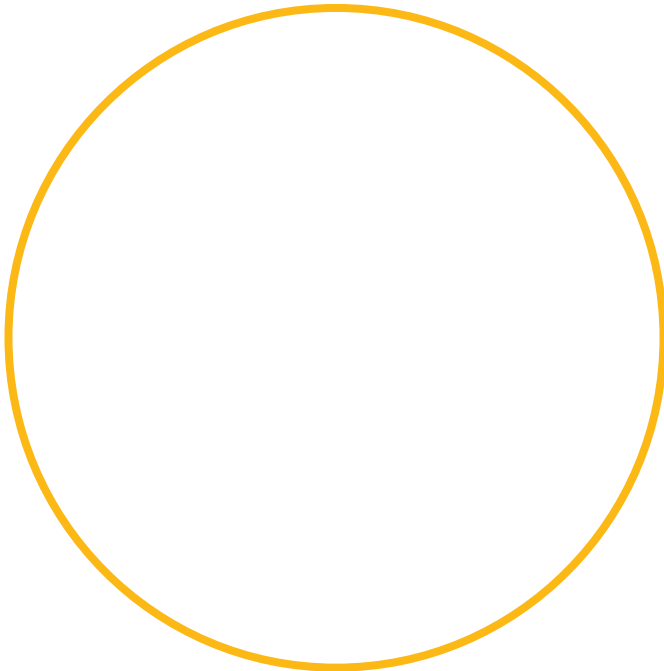
A Haiku is a short, non-rhyming poetry form. A Haiku is 3 lines long, and alternates 5, 7 and 5 syllables. Use this space to create a Haiku to reflect on your experience of this workbook and the accompanying meditations.

1st line: What was stirred in you? (5 syllables)

2nd line: What do you want to remember? (7 syllables)

3rd line: What was the lasting effect? (5 syllables)

Use this circle to draw how your body and spirit feel at the end of this workbook.



“How do you connect with nature? What gives you hope?”



Responses from the Creation Care as Self Care Gathering, April 2021

- *Taking deep breaths to ground myself and walking in the woods.*
- *I love to watch the birds that gather around my feeders. Their activity inspires me.*
- *Being able to see the stars in the night sky.*
- *Spending time in the forest, smelling the earth, and hearing all the animals scuttling about - knowing I'm a small part of it all.*
- *Large open prairie spaces that alters the constriction I feel when afraid.*
- *Resting next to running water, waterfalls or streams.*
- *Seeing the spring flowers returning after the cold winter gives me strength to keep trying to do all I can to inspire others to not give up on our beautiful planet.*
- *Watching the rising and falling of the tide, and expression of the eternal dance between the earth and its moon.*
- *The rising of perennial plants in my garden: pasqua flowers, violets, chives. As Spring follows Winter, hope rises from despair.*
- *Each day I awaken to the gift of what is and know that whether or not we have the sun shining that God is there. Watching the clouds today and the sun peaking through, feeling the raindrops during the walk I know the ground is being replenished and the leaves can continue their bursting forth. I treasure walking as a gift to be in union with God's gift of Creation.*
- *Experiencing wonder in the northern lights*
- *The stamina and commitment of all who seek to care for God's beautiful creation*
- *How a birdnest comes together with bits and pieces, appearing to be a mess at times, and in an interrelated way beauty is produced at its essence: all from mess-in-ess*



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