On Healing: Understanding People-Plant Relationships through Ecopoetry and Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings

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An Interdisciplinary Senior Individualized Project

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Preface

Peace is only promised if you slow down. In more ways than one, this phrase has helped me understand exactly why this project was so important to me, and why it should be important to you. As more time passes, and as I grow up, I realize that the moments when I was at my most content are when I decided to savor what is right in front of me. So, when writing my SIP and choosing what to research I knew I needed to do it about something that slowed me down, or rather, something that I love. By choosing something I love to research I felt I was able to encapsulate what I’ve learned over the past four years. Especially as I view these past four years as the time that I have grown to understand more of what I want to learn from life. Researching something that I love I not only found solace (peace) during such a stressful time like graduating college but gained the ability to understand another way of existing and thinking. Much like how my college process has been– learning how to generate my own perspective and learning from others’ perspectives. When this project was finally complete, I finally felt like I created something that reflects so much more of my four-year experience than any degree could.

This project focuses on two areas of study that have little to deal with my course of study here at Kalamazoo College. When I first took on this project, I was terrified because I did not want to misinform anyone with my writing. I did not want to look like a fool writing about things I do not know. As I wrote and researched this SIP, I started to understand that these topics of interest are things I have always thought about, but never had the time to formally research and learn about. That is the beauty of learning and participating in projects such as this. I am a firm believer that you do not learn if you are
comfortable. It is in our discomfort that we develop new ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Though I am not a CES major, my appreciation for the subject comes from the Anthropology/Sociology classes that I have taken here at Kalamazoo College in fulfillment of my minor. I realize that these two subjects are different in their approaches to viewing the study of people. If it were possible, I would have minored in CES instead due to the approach that researchers take to decolonize information in research. Yet, through the field of Anthropology, I realized the beauty there is in discomfort—seeing the world through another lens. I first learned this lesson in my sophomore year in my Theory in an Action anthropology class. In this class, we mainly discussed the topics present in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. I find myself continuously referencing this book in my everyday life. The perspective of viewing un-comfortability as a lesson more than an annoyance or hindrance has helped me time and time again in my learning process.

When I first came to Kalamazoo College, I believed that I wanted to change the world. I thought that I would either become a doctor or a politician. Though both avenues have their own merit, the more I learned the more I realized that that is not how I wanted to leave my footprint in this world. It was through my experiences at Kalamazoo College that I was able to explore topics of interest that actually brought me joy, such as plants and poetry. Up until my time studying abroad in Costa Rica, I thought that I would end up somewhere in the medical field. Yet, when I went down for the medical program in Costa Rica, I realized that the most interesting medical fact I learned was when we went to the Botanical Garden. Here is where everything clicked for me. I realized that I could combine my interests, such as my love of the plant world and healing/helping people.
When it came time to choose what to do for my SIP, it was a no-brainer. I knew that I wanted to incorporate poetry into my SIP. It has always been a passion/hobby of mine. That’s why when I came back for my spring trimester at Kalamazoo College, I decided to take the creative writing class to build my poetry knowledge so I could write a SIP such as this one. In this class, I was introduced to the work of Mary Oliver. The way she writes about the natural world inspired me and influenced my own writing. Just as her poetry looked at the world for answers to her own questions about the human condition, I decided to ask my own questions about nature. Such as, how can we connect back to nature. What knowledge can we gain from listening to the natural world around us? What parts of life am I missing in my disconnect from nature? It was here that I realized the correlation between both plants and poetry, they both make me slow down and question the world around me.

After about a month or so of trying to figure out how to exactly execute my plan of writing poetry about medicinal plants as a non-English major, I finally found myself in Professor García-Weyandt’s office. It was here where my love of medical plants and poetry found a common place to exist. In the spring term, she was teaching her Plant Community and Kinship Class, where they were exploring the ways in which Indigenous groups, such as the Anishinaabe care for and thrive from plants. It was a perfect coincidence that I stumbled upon her and this class. She let me sit in on one of her labs and provided me with readings that started to synthesize my interests into potential research project ideas. For the first time, I was given readings that put general ideas that I have considered into concise literature and digestible knowledge. One of my biggest inspirations for this project was Mary Siip Geniusz’s book *Plants Have So Much to Give*
Us All We Have to Do Is Ask. When I read the chapters that Professor García-Weyandt provided I felt instantly drawn to that way of viewing the plant world (plants as beings with their own agency). Just as the title states, plants truly give us so much. To realize this, it is a matter of slowing down and acknowledging them as beings who provide for us. Then in turn realize we are beings who provide for them.

I am proud of this project. I had to leave my comfort zone to research the things I love. I am a biology and Spanish major with a minor in anthropology/sociology, but I never had formal teaching in how to execute this project. It was an accumulation of the different classes and experiences that I have had that led me to find a topic of interest that I am extremely passionate about. I am proud that I didn’t shy away from being uncomfortable when researching topics so outside of my formal education. This project combines two areas of study that I think should be paired more often, plants, and poetry.

There are not many resources that directly correlate the two in the way I chose to. During my research process, I did find an online Journal called Plants and Poetry operated by Jamie Nix. She graciously decided to speak with me on this subject. Her story and love of plants and poetry made me realize that there are people out there who share my same interests. I was again inspired to continue writing about the things I love. Love of the plant world should be shared because those are the beings who again provide so much for us. Poetry allows people to share ideas and thoughts in a way that can generate emotionality and empathy. It is through these qualities of the human condition that I firmly believe we can change the world. It is through our emotions, artistic expression, and knowledge sharing that inspire new thought patterns or in this case work with different thought patterns to convey a message. My message is to respect those that give
your life, and they will respect you. This idea stems from Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings. I am grateful to have been given the resources to learn from these teachings and to understand the world in another way outside of the traditional western view of the plant world. It is through my poetry that I hope to convey what I have learned from the plants I wrote about and what I researched about them.

Overall, this project aims to explore the healing properties of the connection we have to plants while acknowledging them as medicinal in more ways than one (physical and nonphysical). I hope to continue more research like this in my future career. From this research, I found the field of ethnobotany a good place to start understanding the human connection to the botanical world. I don’t think I could go into the field of ethnobotany in the way that I want if I did not at first acknowledge plants as beings with their own story to tell alongside their human counterparts. Poetry is how I process the world and how I can say things in ways that I may not be able to say in any other context. By researching the ecopoetry mentioned in this project, I realized that the conversation of plants as beings with their own agency is being discussed in the literary world as well as the Critical Ethnic Studies worlds. Any poet observing the natural world around them will see life teaming everywhere. Poetry observes and notes the things that the poet experiences. For me as a poet, the natural world beckoned to be observed. Through this observance, I found it healing parts of me I did not know needed to be healed. Though this observance is how I came to understand the phrase; peace is only promised if you slow down.
Acknowledgements

Of all my research experiences thus far, this one has been the most rewarding. I want to thank Dr. Cyndy Garcia-Weyandt for agreeing to see me through this project. As well as the author of the readings she provided who made it possible to research Anishinaabe Botanical teachings and theories. I want to also thank all the external resources I reached out to such as Jamie Nix, operator of the online journal *Plants and Poetry*. Who inspired me to continue with this project, even when I did not exactly how to execute it. Further, I would also like to thank all my friends and family who have supported me through this process, along with those willing to discuss and edit my poetry. I am grateful to the land that I walk and the natural spaces that became my creative inspiration. And most of all I would like to thank my plants, who as always, keep me grounded.
Abstract

The following is an investigation of the unique and often misunderstood relationship between humans and plants. Today, there is an obvious disconnect between people and the natural world. Settler colonialism has fostered this separation, leading to our drastically worsening global climate crisis. Often exacerbated by those who decide that making a profit is more beneficial than the longevity of our Earth. Human actions cause consequences for all beings on our planet. The age of the Anthropocene shows that now more than ever the politics of humans affects nonhuman beings. I would argue that western through patterns such as settler colonialism and plant blindness not only divide humans and the natural world but humans from themselves. With this, I have often wondered how it is that we are to connect with the Earth if we cannot connect with ourselves. This ties into the same concept: "if you can’t love yourself, how will you love anyone else?" If you cannot heal yourself and acknowledge that healing is not only physical but a mental and spiritual process, how are you to participate in the health of our planet? How do we heal our physical and nonphysical bodies? How do we heal our relationship with the Earth and the other beings that we inhabit her with? With a focus on medicinal plants, (found in the Midwest Region– native and house plant) ecopoetry will be used to explain and understand the connections humans have to the plant world. This research will refer to Anishinaabe teachings and theories to demonstrate a view of plants outside of the individualistic western view and challenge ways of thinking put in place by settler colonialism.
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Introduction

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“And you too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
With light, and to shine.”

– When I am Among the Trees by Mary Oliver

Mary Oliver’s When I am Among the Trees is my favorite poem. This past year I stumbled upon Mary Oliver’s work and fell in love with the way she was able to articulate her love for the natural world. When it comes to my own poetry writing, I often draw upon the beauty of nature. When I feel “big” emotions, I must write, and nature always touches my heart. Over the past four years here at Kalamazoo college, I have explored many different avenues of knowledge. When I first came here, I thought I was going to be a doctor, and now I plan to be an ethnobotonist. This is subject to change, but the few things that have always stuck with me are my love for nature, my want to help other people, and my poetry. To me, poetry is the one mode of expression that will always make sense to me. Even if I do not have the words for my own emotions, some poet somewhere has written them out for me to find. Poetry has always been the way I
heal and grow. It made perfect sense to me that I would take my love of poetry and write about the world that I love for this project. This poem by Mary Oliver signifies our constant communication with the natural world and how it is here to heal us. For the poet the trees are a refuge, a place where she does not have to be anything but a being basking in the sun. I aim to explore the interconnectedness we all have with the natural world.

Interrelatedness is a concept outside of the colonized thought practices of the west. Which focuses on the individual rather than the whole. Practices and thought patterns that place humans at the forefront of most conversations without consideration for our natural world, especially the plant world. To think outside of western thought patterns about the natural world I researched Anishinaabe practices and theories about plants. The land that I am on (Mid-west Region), like all of America, has been taken from the Indigenous peoples. Specifically, in the location that this research took place groups of the Anishinaabe peoples inhabited/continue to inhabit the land. It is important to understand the practices of the Indigenous people from this land as they were the original caretakers of it. The land that I currently inhabit is occupied Native land, like most land across the United States. I chose this subset of Indigenous groups to focus on because they are from the Midwest region, where my research on plants takes. Given that the Anishinaabe have been stewards of this land long before the onset of colonization, they know much more about the plants in this area. I wanted to be able to understand the plants and the land to the best of my ability, and by researching the practices of the indigenous group in this area I felt closer to the plants themselves. The Anishinaabe also have a substantial amount of literature published about their connection to the plant world, which was useful in terms of my research.
I would also like to note my positionality when grappling with this indigenous knowledge. I am a senior at Kalamazoo College, who has spent my time studying Biology, Spanish, and Anthropology/Sociology. I am also a queer Afro-Latina who has spent most of her/their life growing up in predominantly white institutions and occupying Native land due to settler colonial processes in my history. When it comes to critical ethnic studies, I have never taken an official class, but for this project, I have done extensive readings of indigenous literature and other literature to concisely put together my thoughts. I have no connection to the Anishinaabe culture, therefore when it comes to writing about these theories/practices I do not claim them as my own. The knowledge I have obtained about these theories has come from the past six months of reading I have done for this project. Another point I would like to make with this is that I did not get a chance to interview people from any of the culturally related groups of the Anishinaabe, so the information presented is solely from reading. My main reason for including these theories is not to take from the knowledge, but to demonstrate what I have learned from it and how it has impacted the way I view the world since I have begun research. Through this project I aim to start the process of decolonizing my own research practices. When engaging with indigenous knowledge it is important to include the voices of those who actively partake in said practices. As well as acknowledging them as those who care and guard the land that they occupy and have always occupied. I like to think of this project as a steppingstone to more medicinal ethnobotanical research in the future. I have always loved nature, but it has been the past several months of learning about these theories and practices which have opened my eyes to a more connected world.
Somewhere along the way, humans have lost touch with non-human beings\(^1\), I argue that this is a result of settler colonialism and the eraser of our interrelatedness by western thought patterns and practices (Whyte, 2018). Using ecopoetry\(^2\) we can come back to the connection between humans and the natural world, much like how the Anishinaabe peoples have always interacted with non-human beings and entities. The purpose of this project aims to explore the damaged relationship between humans and nonhumans. Along with how this relationship can be revitalized by reimagining our connections to the plant world. Ecopoetry can be used as a tool to empathize with non-human beings i.e., medicinal plants by means of understanding the benefits we gain from mutual respect. As well as underlining how healing ourselves through means, such as poetry and connection to the natural world, we can in turn heal our planet by recognizing natural spaces as living beings through the empathy fostered by engaging in this creative conversation with plants. In the time of the Anthropocene, we cannot ignore the impact that humans have on the world around them. In turn, we cannot ignore the impact that the non-human beings of this world have on us, and how without the natural world, we lose a vital piece of who we are\(^3\). The loss of species in our world due to human activity is a warning sign for people and what will occur to humans if we continue down the path of

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\(^1\) Non-human beings, this term understands that the beings who deserve their own agencies in this world does not solely define human beings, but all beings i.e., plants and animals (Kohn, 2015).

\(^2\) Ecopoetics, a new concept in the face of the worsening global climate, is poetry written that recognizes the “radical novelty of anthropogenic climate change as it emerges from twinned traditions in culture and nonhuman nature” (Griffiths, 2013, p.94).

\(^3\) In his article *The Sixth Extinction: The Place of D.H Lawrence’s “Snake” and Mountain Lion” in the Poetry of Specioide* Patrick Pearson analyzes poetry and how it brings attention to our dying planet and the species who indicate we ourselves are dying, “The loss of wild species is indeed staggering, with extinction rates between a thousand to ten thousand times more rapid than what has been the norm for millions of years. The world presently loses literally dozens of species of animals and plants every day (Chivian 18), so that by 2050, thirty to fifty percent of all species currently on earth may be made extinct (Thomas et al, “Extinction risk from climate change” 145-148)” (Pearson, 2018, p.129).
destruction (of planet and of self). Modern literature and modern poets are gaining a better sense of the loss of self through the destruction of our natural world.

A subset of ecopoetry called “poetry of extinction”⁴, points out this direct correlation between environmental destruction and destruction of self (and/or humans’ beings as whole). It is through poetry that I aim to form a better connection with the natural world, while acknowledging the non-human beings as beings with their own agency, and their own story to tell.

⁴ Poetry of extinction is characterized more than anything else by an overwhelming sense of emptiness and irreversible loss, global in scope, at humans’ annihilation of wild nature, and it tends to view each species being eradicated as equally important to a multi-species Earth as the human species itself (Pearson, 2018, p.130).
Literature Review

Anthropocene

Human and non-human beings share a communal problem, our worsening global climate. This change and the intermingling of both human and non-human worlds become increasingly prevalent. The gap between human and non-human problems closes as we learn more about the age of the Anthropocene or the current 6th mass extinction. The difference between this extinction, as opposed to others that have happened, is the influence of human activity—expediting the process. This extinction is driven by unsustainable human activity. Humans affect the world around them, affecting all non-human beings who encounter them. Scientists and researchers have now coined the term the Anthropocene, pertaining to this geological age where humans have enough “power” to make significant impacts on the environment (Kohn, 2015). I argue that this geological age comes from the popularization of western thought, such as capitalism, and a focus on individual interests rather than the interests of all the interconnected lives that live on this planet. This “western thought” is prevalent everywhere, even in my own life. Therefore, the active participation in learning new thought patterns, especially when removing the mind from what has previously learned, is an important aspect of recognizing the Anthropocene. To engage with thought patterns outside of the west, I aim to examine the relationship between human and non-human beings through my understanding of Anishinaabe theories (as rudimentary as my understanding might be) to examine the

5 Western (thought paradigms, etc.) is categorized and defined as the thought practices put in place by settler colonialism and activity practiced today within areas such as the United States. Thought patterns such as recognizing humans as the only important living thing on the Earth. And thought patterns such as ones perpetuated by capitalism and individualized mindsets (Kohn 2015 and Whyte 2018).
world as interconnected rather than individualized. The Anthropocene is a prime example of the entanglement of human and non-human beings. Though there has always been a relationship between human and non-human beings, the Anthropocene demonstrates the drastic effect that humans have on the environment and the other beings around them. In Kohn’s (2015) journal article *Anthropology of Ontologies*, he analyzes the work of Philippe Descola, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Bruno Latour to demonstrate how in the age of the Anthropocene the field of sociocultural anthropology can no longer fully “grapple with the kinds of problems we are now confronted with” and how we must attend to these issues using “new conceptual tools” such as how we understand what *being* means.

All three of the authors that Kohn investigates to understand anthropology’s place in the age of the Anthropocene focus on animism and how it contributes to the way that “beings” are perceived. Kohn explains the concept of animism through Descola’s definition.

By comparison to oneself, another can be understood to have similar interiorities and dissimilar exteriorities. This orients what Descola terms "animism," which as an ideal type is visible among many Indigenous societies in the Amazon and in the boreal regions of North America. The animist holds that all beings are persons (animals and spirits have a kind of interiority or selfhood that is comparable with that of human persons), but these beings are differentiated by their exteriorities—the bodies that these various kinds inhabit. (Kohn, 2015, p.317).

This goes against what is taught in the west, often placing humans at center stage as the beings who react to the world around them (other beings such as plants and animals) as a backdrop. Animism observes non-human beings as persons to interact with rather than
simply react with. Kohn adds Viveiros de Castro’s idea of *perspectivism* to this discussion to further understand how every being the has their own perspective when interacting with the world. He outlines how typically in western thought humans view humans and humans, animals and animals, and plants as plants (Kohn, 2015). Yet he explains further that, “predatory beings such as jaguars and spirits will see humans as prey, and prey animals (such as wild pigs) will see humans as predators. Furthermore, all beings, whether human, animal, or spirit, will see themselves as persons. From an "I" perspective, then, a jaguar will see himself as a human person”, challenging once again the western thought placing humans at the center-stage of all interactions (Kohn, 2015, p.318). This sets the stage for understanding how non-human beings their own right as living beings that deserve respect for, they themselves have their own perspective and way of being in the world. Both animism and cannibal metaphysic acknowledge that sense of self is not directly linked to human beings.

Eduardo Kohn then ties these concepts into Latour’s Modes of Existence. Which as Kohn denotes as “the most forceful articulations of the stakes for the ontological turn” due to the current ecological crisis as an ethical and political problem that now places humans as their own “force of nature” which then in turn redefines what it means to be a human and a non-human being (Kohn, 2015, p.321). Humans as a force of nature and non-human beings as persons directly contradict the way that the west views the natural world around them. Kohn uses Latour’s Modes of Existence to denote why modern anthropology “whether in the guise of capitalism, human exceptionalism, or progress—

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6 A term used to attempt to explain how many different Indigenous groups, especially in the Americas, view the different perspectives human and non-human beings (Kohn, 2015).
have become a force that threatens to destroy the plurality of modes of being” (Kohn, 2015, p.322). Once we consider the interconnectedness of all lives, we can start to empathize with non-human beings as persons to interact with rather than react to. The importance of removal from the western thought pattern only grows in the age of the Anthropocene as humans can no longer disconnect themselves from the ever-worsening global climate. But how do we empathize with these other beings? In what ways can we bring them to the forefront of our minds while we discuss ways to revitalize sustainability and acknowledgement of the natural world?

I argue that through communication with the natural world and communication with ourselves, we can start to explore different modes of thinking and being outside of the ones that we already know. It is through the communication of our ideas, and the listening of other people's ideas that allow us to shift our perspectives and start anew. Kohn focuses on the importance of linguistics and how language within anthropology disconnects human beings from other nonhuman beings. Language is the way in which we can learn and express ourselves, “the best way to reconfigure anthropology’s relationship to language is through the ethnographic study of how humans communicate with a host of nonhuman beings in a world that is itself communicative but not symbolic to linguistic” (Kohn, 2015, p.314). In the west, language in society does not possess the means to engage in meaningful conversations with non-human beings without objectifying them (Kohn, 2015). His theorizing leads to the idea that we cannot imagine a better future for human beings without considering the other lives that are in jeopardy due to human activities. If those other lives are disregarded that is the same as ignoring ourselves. But how do we do this if our language does not have the means to undertake
this conversation? I argue that through the creative process, and by modifying language, such as the creative act of poetry, we can use the tool (language) given to us to respectfully engage in conversation with non-human beings and learn from them.

**Settler Colonialism**

Settler colonialism has played a pivotal role in the dismissal of non-human beings. It has even been described as “violence that disrupts the human relationship with the environment” (Whyte, 2018, p.125). Patrick Wolfe (2006) also describes it as a series of events with the main purpose of eliminating the Native and thus their philosophies and ways of relation to the Natural World. Kyle Whyte (2018) further discusses this violence in *Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice*. Settler Colonialism is the basis for many western thought patterns or paradigms about the world around us. Such as the aforementioned “guise of capitalism or human exceptionalism” which cause more damage than good to our natural world because it places humans at the forefront of the ecological discussion without consideration of the non-human beings that also reside with them (Kohn, 2015). Which threaten people’s abilities to understand other modes of being through the erasure of Indigenous knowledge of the land and the practices that come along with it. Western thought patterns which in turn disconnect humans not only from non-human beings, but themselves. Whyte’s article proved useful in understanding settler colonialism and how it contributes to the Anthropocene through ecological domination.

Ecological domination goes hand in hand with domination of Indigenous people and other marginalized groups. By this I mean that settler colonialism dominates in a way that stifles all other thought patterns and ways of being. This is like the stifling of other modes of being when it comes to non-human beings. In the broadest of terms, how can
one respect all beings on the Earth if they cannot respect their fellow human? Consider how today the domination of other people typically comes from the need to prove that one human has power over another because of miniscule differences between the two i.e., race, culture, religion etc. Settler colonialism exemplifies how humans can disconnect even from other humans and view them as beings to be used then thrown away. Therefore, I theorize that domination is the active dismissal of a beings “personhood”\(^7\). Settler colonialism then dominates Indigenous practices and peoples by “strategically undermining Indigenous collective continuance” (Whyte, 2018, p.125). Collective continuance is a term used by Whyte to connect three concepts in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions: interdependent relationships, systems of responsibilities, and migration (Whyte, 2018, p.126). The main concept within collective continuance important for this paper is “interdependent relationships”. Whyte explains how “the concept of interdependence includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment” (Whyte, 2018, p.127). In traditional Anishinaabe thought patterns humans are viewed as the caretakers of the Earth and in this care, there is a mutual respect for all beings that inhabit it (Whyte, 2018). Interdependence shows that one being affects another, be it a human or non-human being. This concept or way of thinking shows just how closely linked human and non-human beings are “for interdependence is also a means to motivate humans to exercise their caretaking responsibilities to their relatives, human and nonhuman, which helps motivate these relatives to exercise their reciprocal responsibilities to nourish and support on

\(^7\) Personhood, a term that designates a being as having agency of themselves and their environment (Whyte, 2018).
another in diverse ways" (Whyte, 2018, p.128). Domination through settler colonialism disconnects humans from both humans and non-human beings i.e., ecological domination and domination of Indigenous peoples.

**Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings**

One can understand that in healing one’s relationship with non-human beings, humans may also heal their relationship to other human beings. To understand these interdependent relationships that human and non-human beings share Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings will be utilized to understand the world around me. The relationships to be explored through these teachings are those between humans and medicinal plants (non-human beings) with a particular emphasis on the uses of medicinal plants to heal our physical and non-physical bodies. The Indigenous knowledge throughout this paper comes from Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings. For the purposes of this research when referring to Anishinaabe people/teachings I will be using the same definition that Whyte uses. As he notes, “In saying Anishinaabe peoples, I am invoking broad intellectual traditions connecting Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Mississauga and related peoples who have diverse contemporary and ancient linguistic, cultural, social, and political connections” (Whyte, 2018, p.126). He also noted that because of the diversity of Anishinaabe peoples there are some studies where it would be “inappropriate” to use a broad designator such as Anishinaabe.

When it comes to this project, the reference to Anishinaabe people’s work and intellectual practices is meant to be an example of something outside of the westernized view of the relationship between humans and non-humans. I by no means claim this information as my own or claim to be an expert in any sense. I merely love the plant
world and resonate greatly with many of their philosophical views and practices.

Therefore, the information presented within this project is not meant to contribute to cultural homogenization. When interacting with the natural world Indigenous voices are important to learn from given their long-standing tradition of respecting and acknowledging the beyond human world especially when considering thought patterns and practices outside of the western lens.

One of my biggest sources when working with the plant world and trying to distance my thought patterns from the way the west views plants was Mary Siisip Geniusz’s (2015) book *Plants have so much to give us all we have to do is ask*. Her book focuses on Anishinaabe Botanical teachings and the information that was passed down to her by Keewaydinoquay Peschel. Who in turn passed down this information from ancestors and elders. Mary Siisip Geniusz was a teaching assistant to Keewaydinoquay, otherwise known as The Woman of the Northwest Wind, during her time teaching ethnobotany of the Great Lakes Native Americans and philosophy of the Great Lakes Native Americans in Milwaukee at the University of Wisconsin (Geniusz, 2015). Her daughter Wendy Makoons Geniusz edited and helped to organize her mother’s original manuscript, but the book is entirely her mother’s work. She helped to contribute to the Ojibwe words, phrases, and plant names (Geniusz, 2015). I find this important to note so that the knowledge presented in this project is given its due credit. I again want to highlight how I am no expert in this. My knowledge when it comes to Anishinaabe teachings is limited to resources such as this one. Regarding this resource, I would love to emphasize the importance of books like these. It was written by an Indigenous woman who “demonstrates the strength and vitality of *Anishinaabe-bimaadiz-iwin*, the
Anishinaabe way of life, in her frequent references to contemporary life” (Geniusz, 2015). This book utilizes the Biskaabiiyang approach to research, which Mary Siisip Geniusz writes about in Our knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings. Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2015) explains that Biskaabiiyang means to come back to oneself. In reference to academic texts about Indigenous knowledge, one must acknowledge the source where it comes from and the methodology for writing it (Geniusz, 2009). Wendy notes in Plants Have So Much to Give Us All You Have to Do Is Ask “I watch my mother experience the Biskaabiiyang process of looking back at herself and evaluating how she had personally been affected by Keewaydinoquay and then synthesizing them into written form. She struggled when writing this book because of the effects of colonization on her own mind…” (W. Geniusz, 2015, p.xiv). These texts helped to pull my own mind from the effects of colonization, which is so deeply ingrained in everyone growing up in the west due to settler colonialism.

Another text that helped to pull my thought pattern out of the western paradigm was Braiding Sweetgrass. Written by a Potawatomi professor Robin Wall Kimmer (2013) who demonstrates Indigenous knowledge of plants and how it interacts with western scientific methodology. Her chapter called Mishkos Kennoagwen: The Teaching of Grass, illustrates the common western method of writing a paper, such as Introduction, Literature Review, Hypothesis, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, Acknowledgements, and References Cited. In this chapter Kimmer follows one of her graduate students, Laurie, process of demonstrating the interconnected relationship of people with sweetgrass through the harvest. Her research concluded that plots of sweetgrass that were left unattended by people were the ones that did the worst which her
graduate committee had dismissed the possibility of at the beginning of her research (Kimmer, 2013). The way that science and other fields of study view our world place humans outside of nature, “But the grassy meadows tell us that for sweetgrass, human beings are part of the system, a vital part. Laurie’s findings might have been surprising to academic ecologists but were consistent with the theory voiced by our ancestors. If we use a plant respectfully it will stay with us and flourish. If we ignore it, it will go away”, which displays that this idea is simply not true (Kimmer, 2013, p.163). This project itself uses the common method of literature review, methodology, discussion, etc., but this is to make the material digestible for academic work. Kimmer shows repeatedly throughout her book how some time to share your knowledge you must morph it in a way that others that may not think as you may be able to understand. She also does this with extensive stories and examples of the ways in which Indigenous peoples have interacted with non-human beings in a respectful way that acknowledges them as beings and not a backdrop to the world.

Again, this ties into the idea that humans to not react to the world around them, but constantly interact with the world around them and leave marks on all living beings in their environment. Kincentric ecology is a term used by Enrique Salmón (2000) to demonstrate the relationship that many Indigenous cultures of North America have with the natural world around them. He describes this relationship of “kincentricity” with the world as viewing humans “at an equal standing with the rest of the natural world; they are kindred relations” (Salmón, 2000). Additionally, these relationships are mutual beneficial. Salmón goes on to explain, “Indigenous people believe that the complex interactions that result from this relationship enhance and preserve the ecosystem”, which
is exhibited by human practices such as burning and pruning to promote the growth of
trees, shrubs, and grasses round them (Salmón, 200, p.1331). Indigenous voice should be
at the forefront of the discussion when working with the teachings of plants as relatives.
This practice is their way of life and is engrained in how they interact with the world
from stories they tell, to the way that they harvest plants. When interacting with plants
the Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings that I explored where pivotal in re-imaging the
natural world outside of the western lens. Throughout these teachings acknowledgement
of the kindred nature of human and non-human beings is prevalent.

Breath is the matter and energy, which Indigenous people believe moves in all
living things. Maintaining a balanced and pure human breath also ensures the
purity and health of the breath of the natural world. With the awareness that one’s
breath is shared by all surrounding life, that one’s emergence into this world was
possibly caused by some of the life-forms around one’s environment, and that one
is responsible for its mutual survival, it becomes apparent that it is related to you;
that it shares a kinship with you and with all humans, as does a family or tribe. A
reciprocal relationship has been fostered with the realization that humans affect
nature and nature affects humans. This awareness influences Indigenous
interactions with the environment. It is these interactions, these cultural practices
of living with a place, that are manifestations of kincentric ecology (Salmón,

Reciprocity and awareness of the interconnectedness of humans with the natural world is
the basis of many Indigenous practices. By viewing the nature and all beings (human or
non-human) as playing a vital role of the maintenance of the overall health of all we can
see why these teachings are important for connecting back to non-human beings,
especially in the age of the Anthropocene.
Plants

I have always had a love for the natural world, and a few years back when I was trying to explore more parts of my identity, I bought Maria Benedetti’s (2019) book *Earth and Spirit: Medical Plants and Healing Lore from Puerto Rico*. This book focuses on the medicinal plants of Puerto Rico and how people interacted with them for many years. Benedetti’s intensive ethnobotanical research in Puerto Rico focused on this traditional medicine. The book is laced with interviews of real-life accomplishments of plant medicine, though an unorthodox practice by western standards. This book inspired me to look deeper into the relationship that we have with plants, and was what inspired the beginnings of this project. There are many accounts throughout the world of the importance of botanical medicine. Often this medicine not only focuses on the physical wounds but the nonphysical wounds which worsen the physical state. From my research, one common thread that I have observed is the importance of the connection between our physical and nonphysical bodies—further, not only this connection but the relationship between ourselves and the world around us. As Benedetti notes “—using wild plants as food and medicine – is an ideal path to health maintenance, strengthening and healing. Plants are a direct connection to the life force within and surrounding us all. This life force imbues the plants (and us!) with the power to transform and thus, to heal” (Benedetti, 2019, xi). A cornerstone of traditional botanical medicine is the balance between humans and the natural world. Within the last 25-30 years or so researchers have found that our bodies can produce different psychological states to produce chemicals that help us heal (Benedetti, 2019). Showing the importance of the connection of the mind to the healing process. Before western medicine, plants were the main source of
healing that many people turned to and this often involved connecting to them on a mental/spiritual level as well.

Today, medical plants make up 70-95% of the medical care for people in developing countries as opposed to the pharmaceutical industry booming in countries like the United States (Applequist et al., 2020). These pharmaceutical companies focus more on the isolation of the compounds within the plants to create life-saving drugs (Benedetti, 2019). No matter if you are using traditional medicine or ibuprofen made by pharmaceutical companies, plants play a key role in the medicinal process, and always have. Before the creation of drugs, the main source of medicine for people around the world was plant life (Applequist et al., 2020). Both ways are effective treatments. The isolation of the compound within plants to make drugs has saved many lives, but at what cost? What do we lose when we disconnect from the other healing properties of medicinal plants? Benedetti explains further how yes, these drugs are useful, but they miss a crucial aspect of the healing process.

While this approach has yielded many life-saving drugs, it ignores the factors of nourishment (wild plants are extremely high in vitamins and minerals in a form that is optimally received and utilized by the body), the tonifying effect of plants taken over a long period of time, the often-surprising synergistic effects of combining plants substance, and the psychological-spiritual aspect of working with local plants and a trusted, loving healer (Benedetti, 2019, xv).

This is not to say pharmaceutical drugs are bad, but it is to say that we must be cognizant in how we interact with the plants we use to obtain said drugs. I argue that in only seeing plants as a resource to make drugs that we can capitalize on, we miss the very important aspect of connecting to nature.
Less and less people find themselves interacting with nature. They find their food in supermarkets, medicine in bottles, and clothes online. As demand for more products increases so does the demand for over harvesting plants. Masashi Soga and Kevin J. Gaston (2016) explore the importance of reconnecting people to nature in their journal article *Extinction of experience: the loss of human-nature interactions*. The “extinction of experience” being defined as the ever present “alienation of humans from nature” which continues the cycle of disaffection towards the natural world (Soga and Gaston, 2016, p.94). There are many relationships that humans can have with plants, ranging from food to raw materials. What this project focuses on is the use of medicinal plants to benefit humans and how working in accordance with plants increases not only people's longevity but the longevity of the plants themselves. The relationship between medical plants and humans demonstrates the disconnect today between human and non-human beings, as the benefits they give us are removed from the plants themselves.

Today in western medicine there is no respect given to plants, even though they have long served as the basis of medicine for humans. The taking from medicinal plants and solely using them for their chemicals treat them as objects rather than beings to whom we are in relation. That is why I chose medical plants so that an exploration of their healing properties can be done not based solely on the chemicals they provide, but on how we act in relation to each other in a multitude of ways. “High-value” medicinal plants also face an increased threat due to over harvesting (Applequist et al., 2020). As with many things that the west values, too much is taken of medicinal plants when their value is known. An example of this is
the herb American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius* L.) used for fatigue, hypertension, and upper respiratory infections “the demand is so great that illegal harvesting is a serious problem, and the species has declined over time in both abundance and average stature” (Applequist et al., 2020, p.11). This is a great worry of mine when researching medicinal plants and making the knowledge accessible. How do you share the wonderful properties of the plant world when this will then increase demand, then consumption/harvest of these plants leading to their extinction?

Many researchers from a wide range of disciplines can agree that there are consequences with disaffection towards nature as Soga and Gaston demonstrate.

Those who do not directly interact with nature are likely to lose substantial benefits associated with health and well-being, and less likely to perceive and value the advantages that such interactions bring and are less motivated to want to visit and protect it. As a result, the extinction of experience has increasingly been viewed both as a major public-health issue and as one of the fundamental obstacles to reversing global environmental degradation (Soga and Gaston, 2016, p.96).

From this I can argue that connection to plants can be both a physical healing process as well as a holistic healing process. There has been a recent study that around 600 plants have gone extinct within the past 250 years which has been due to not only climate change but the anthropogenic activities that perpetuate this climate change such as fragmentation (Applequist et al., 2020). An important steppingstone to solving environmental degradation is generating affection for the natural world. This can be done through the process of caring for plants and then seeing how these plants care for us in return.

Over harvesting of medicinal plants as well as the effects of climate change on them not only will the 70-95% of people who rely on these plants be without
medicine, we will lose our ability to learn more about ways to cure health problems from these plants. The changing climate does not only greatly affect the natural world but humans as well. The increased exposure to extreme temperatures, diseases, pollution, and loss of natural life has caused a significant decline in the overall health of people today (Applequist et al., 2020). How one takes from plants and engages with plants can only be done sustainably if there is an acknowledgement that what you are taking from is a living being. Robin Wall Kimmer (2013) in *Braiding Sweetgrass* describes this concept as the “Honorable Harvest” which is an Anishinaabe practice that aims to not take too much from what is provided. This practice actively interacts with the world around it and listens to the plants it takes from. The basics to the “rules” of the honorable harvest are as follows: respect the world around you, ask for permission (if the answer is no listen), give thanks, sustain the ones who sustain you etc. (Kimmer, 2013, p.183). Those who do not partake in interactions with plants often do not see plants as living beings and are blind to them and their importance.

Monica Gagliano (2013) writes in her article *Seeing Green: The Re-discovery of Plants and Nature’s Wisdom* about the concept of “plant blindness”. This article details the evolution of “plant blindness” in modern society and how a radical change in perspective is the solution to the disregard of these non-human beings. Every living organism obtains information through its senses. This is how they adapt to their surroundings to fit their biological niches. Early Greek philosophers like Empedocles (495-432 BCE), Anaxagoras (500-428 BCE), and Plato (427-347 BCE) all believed that plants sensed the world around them (Galiano, 148). Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was the
first Greek philosopher to position plants into a context outside of the “sensitive life domain”, advocating for plant insensitivity as the way to differentiate between plants and animals (Gagliano, 2013, p.148). This ultimately “fathered” the western paradigm of modern science and it took until the 17th century for experimental botanists to recognize the problem with this paradigm (Gagliano, 2013). It was the experimental botanist Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) who noticed how plants’ activity sought out the sun and grew towards it, establishing again the theory of plant sensitivity (Gagliano, 2013).

Despite there being more research into plant sensitivity today, there is still the misguided idea throughout western societies that plants are passive and insensitive. Here Gagliano argues the negative effects of this paradigm.

As pointed out by Wandersee and Schussler ‘the misguided, anthropocentric ranking of plants as inferior to animals, leading to the erroneous conclusion that they are unworthy of human consideration’ shapes a society that pays no attention to plants, whose fundamental role is to ensure continuity of life on Earth. How can any society recognize that plant conservation is one of humanity’s most crucial issues when it literally cannot ‘see’ plants? (Galiano, 2013, p.146)

She calls for a shift in perspective to regain imagination of the way in which plants interact with their world and therefore how people then in turn interact with them. The western view of plants detaches plants from humans and animals. Yet, as stated above, the fundamental role of plants is to ensure the continuity of life on Earth. They are the baseline life flowing through everything.

A contrast to the Aristotelian paradigm or way of viewing plants can be seen in several Anishinaabe teachings and stories. Again, one can draw from the book Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask by Mary Geniusz (2015), to understand the importance of plants among all living beings. There is a Traditional
Anishinaabe Teaching that comes from the story “The Year the Roses Died” which focuses on the primacy of plants. My recounting of this story comes solely from this book, and this again is a summary of the traditional teaching. In this story, the roses were the main food for the animals in the area. Yet, one year they noticed they were not growing back. In an emergency meeting, all the animals claimed they only took a little of the roses and then blamed the others for taking too much. Until they blamed Waabooz, the rabbit because he had eaten the roots. The spirit that watched over the animals intervened and told them that it is not only one of their faults but all their faults. They noticed that the roses were dying and yet they still took their shares. The overarching lesson of this story is that you cannot forget the balance. This story shows the importance of plants in the animal community or rather in the planetary community.

Genuisz explains how there are four life orders that our planet has. The first order is the elements such as minerals, rocks, soil, and weather patterns. The second is plants that live off the first. The third is animals which again lived from the other two. The last order is humans. Those who depend on all orders to be sustained and to live. This is so outside of the western view of our planet where many believe that because people can create planes and create philosophical thought that they are in fact “lords of the Earth”. So, with this in mind why do we place plants so low in western thought? Not all can be attributed to Aristotle and his paradigm, but it is thoughts like his that lead to plant blindness as well as settler colonialism. In disregarding our vegetal life, we inherently disregard our own lives and processes. Humans and non-humans are interconnected, no matter how western paradigms try to pry a gap between the two. It is a matter of
understanding the connection to the world around us, which can in turn heal our relationship with the planet, but also the relationships we have with ourselves.

**Ecopoetics**

At the beginning of her book, her daughter Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2015) includes an epigraph of one of Keewaydinoquay’s poems:

To you I would serve cedar tea mixed with a touch of April distilled from shy green stems, the frosted perfume of spring rain along with a dollop of honey and ice

-- *Spring Tea Poem* by Keewaydinoquay Peschel

Plants and poetry sit together like lovers watching the sunset. Murmuring sweet nothings as they reminisce about how they used to love each other and how they still love one another. Throughout my research on this topic, I realized that many people in close connection to plants also enjoy poetry. While I was actively researching this topic, I stumbled upon the website “Plants and Poetry”, which is an online journal dedicated to the relationship between plants and poetry. This poem is a prime example of how nature and poetry co-create something beautiful. This is mentioned to demonstrate how plants and poetry can go hand in hand. Additionally, plants and poetry both possess the means to heal. Yes, medicinal plants can heal our physical bodies, but also connection to them and building relationships with them heals us on a deeper level. Poetry is the same way, as in connecting to poetry and experiencing it either by reading or writing can heal us as well. An opinion article call *Poetry and Medicine* located in the National Library of Medicine database, written by Rose Bromberg (2008) speakers on poetry and its curative effects on people's health, “Poetry can sharpen listening, attentiveness, observation, and
analytical skills. It can refine the artistic side of medicine: Poetry allows us to express ourselves, fosters creativity, and accepts ambiguity. It enhances empathy, self-awareness, and introspection” (Bromberg, 2008). Again, the way we communicate our lived experiences and then the absorption of others’ lived experiences is how we learn about the world around us. With poetry as a tool to sharpen our empathetic selves, we are able to build not only a means to articulate thoughts that may not fit into westernized modes of expression but understand ways of piercing the world that do not fit our own. It not only can heal us when we are sick like a plant may but continues the healing process throughout our life. Much like the healing process of communion with plants.

In contemporary poetry practices, the individual talent, as explored by T.S. Eliot is being reimagined. Matthew Griffiths’ (2013) Climate Change and the Individual Talent: Eliotic Ecopoetics challenges the idea of writing as the creation of an individual personality” through the concept of ecopoetics (Griffiths, 2013, p.83). This means that the way poets once wrote before is changing and being reimagined through their connection to the collective consciousness. In Griffiths' journal article, he aims to ecology the individual talent and shows how climate change ties directly into human history. An interview by Angela Hume with Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly, and Jonathan Skinner (2012) titled Imagining Ecopoetics prescribes to the idea that ecopoetics brings a more nuanced outlook to “nature poetry” which examines the contemporary human relationship to the nonhuman world. This interview was conducted in March of 2011 at the “Geography of Hope” conference where “participants discussed the purpose and value of environmental writing in a time of ecological emergency” (Hume, 2012, p.753). Ecopoetry leans on the idea of a collective connection. The poet in
these cases writes from a sense of self that acts as a conduit for the environment, as
Hillman in the Hume interview notes “Ecopoetics is not just about individual lives. It’s
about a collective unconscious— the coming together of all the sentences and images we
have experienced” (Hume, 2012, p.762). This can tie into earlier sentiments regarding the
connection that humans have to the nonhuman world and how they mirror each other.

Griffiths (2013) uses a similar concept to demonstrate how T.S. Eliot’s idea of
tradition “Where Eliot asks the poet to subsume tradition into his non-conscious
processes” must “assimilate, rather than topicalize environmental crisis” (Griffiths, 2013,
p.88). This means that we must acknowledge the collective contributions and
consequences of the global climate crisis in our writings. In the west as opposed to
cultures such as the Anishinaabe, the natural world has served more as a backdrop to
human affairs. As seen with the genre “nature poetry” which doesn’t consider the domino
effect of interactions between humans and the nonhuman world. It cannot be said for
certain that the emergence of ecopoetry came from the global climate crisis, but it can be
said the “moment came at which poets could no longer write “nature” as something not
entirely implicated in and by human activity” (Hume, 2012, p.758). Therefore, ecopoetry,
although still being defined, focuses on human and nonhuman interactions. These
interactions are one built on mutual respect of the space that they share. It acknowledges
that plants are beings who for all intents and purposes humans rely on for an abundance
of things i.e., medicine, food, etc.

Ecopoetry places the natural world, specifically the plant world at the forefront of
the narrative. In *It happens quietly: Plant Poetry and the Botanification of the
Imagination*, Padma V. McKertich and V. Shilpa (2016) imagine poetry “that uses plants
neither as metaphors and similes, nor as personifications of human traits, but acknowledges them instead as thinking, active and intelligent creatures” based on the concepts of ecopoetry which view plants as beings with their own agency (Mckertich and Shilpa, 2016, p.36). In engaging with poetry and the plant world the poet needs to recognize that the plant world does not understand nor see the world in the same way as themself. We all of course are living beings who actively take part in this world, but we have different bodies and different life experiences within this world. The term botanification in this article aims to show that “plant poetry exists in that liminal space which is not completely anthropocentric and not entirely plant-centric. It fluctuates between an acknowledgement of plant subjectivity and attempts to negate the self in the plant world”, which notes that the world we live in is the same, but how we experience it is different (Mckertich and Shilpa, 2016, p.46). The same as how every human being experiences the world differently, every being has a different perspective.

This again ties into Eduardo Castro Viveiros idea of perspectivism that was discussed in Kohn’s paper Anthropology of Ontologies and how it ties into the understanding that all beings understand themselves as having their own personhood (depending on that being’s interpretation of the world and how they interact with it). In other words, not solely relying on the interpretation of the world through the lens (or eyes) or human beings. Therefore, when writing ecopoetry one must acknowledge plants as beings with their own agency. Mckertich and Shilpa also discuss the importance of humility and how it aids in the botanification of poetry. This can tie back to the Anishinaabe story of “The Year the Roses Died” (2015) and the orders of the world. Today, people believe that they are superior to other beings that inhabit the Earth, yet we
are the most reliant. McKertich and Shilpa remark on how botanification requires humility in the respect that one being is no greater than the other.

— humility in the face of the non-human world is one of the features of ecopoetry that disallows any notions of human superiority, and can lead to a human-plant connection, as Levertov remarks in *A Poet in the World*, that is “indissoluble, reciprocal, and dual” because “[t]here can be no self-respect without respect for others,” and “no love and reverence for others without love and reverence for oneself (53)” (McKertich and Shilpa, 2016, p.46).

This sticks to the common theme that I have presented throughout this project. One cannot respect others if there is no self-respect. One cannot love others if there is no self-love. One cannot heal others if they themselves are not healed. Humility in the world leads to more empathy and understanding of it. That is what I tried to emulate as I wrote the following poems. There is joy in interacting and conversing with the plant world, and ecopoetry aims to do so in a manner that places neither the plant nor the poet at the forefront of the narrative. It aims, as I did in my poetry, to reimagine the world where both beings exist together respectfully.
Methodology

Research Process

An article called *People-Plant Interactions and the Ecological Self* by Matthew DelSesto (2019) emphasizes the importance of people-plant interactions. The lives of humans and plants have always been integrated with each other. Even with intense urbanization and advancements in technology, humans still rely on plants for food, materials, medicine, etc. Not only do plants provide material things, but DelSesto mentions how they can provide a transformation of self through interaction, “people-plant interactions, which may not always seem particularly productive for ‘commercial value’ or relevant in ‘the clamor of our own practical interests’, but which can ultimately lead to profound shifts in the personal or collective consciousness (DelSesto, 2019). In a society that views plants as a backdrop we cannot advocate for ecological protection and sustainable change. Therefore, a key to the transformation of ourselves and of our own society is through people-plant interaction. This fosters empathy and understanding of the world around us.

When it came to my own methodology, I followed DelSesto’s categorization of people-plant interactions to involve myself more with the natural world during my research process (Appendix A). It is through these interactions that I gained a better sense of the world outside of myself, aiding in my ability to write poetry that engaged with the plants as beings with stories to tell. In this thought process I wanted to view myself as a conduit for the plants to tell their stories to the best of my abilities. Granted I have my own perspective and way of viewing the world therefore when writing this poetry, I aimed to write it more as a collaboration with the plant than directly speaking for the
plant. With that, I took parts of the way I interact with the world and how I observed the plants to then interact with the world to meld both perspectives into the poetry. During these plant-people interactions that I engaged in for most of the time I kept a journal to document the interactions. As opposed to some of the interactions with plants that I engaged in were experiences better lived in the moment, such as repotting my plants. I felt I gained a better connection to the natural world by living the experience, rather than documenting it.

**Peaceful Abiding**

When it came to my own person-plant interactions, I found it beneficial to consider how these interactions were transforming me, simply by being near these plants. I then tried to implement this into my writing. On the spectrum of people-plant interactions this is regarded as *Peaceful Abiding*, “here, a mental and physical wandering or rest may be important– a stroll through the garden, sitting on a bench in front of a blooming magnolia tree, watching insects at work on a plant” (DelSesto, 2019, p.205). My main form of *peaceful abiding* was participating in sensory engagement with plants environments near me. This included sitting in areas such as my porch and yard, local green areas like the Lillian Anderson Arboretum, and botanical gardens (Appendices B-F). I generated my ideas for this SIP in the spring and then focused on sitting with plant in late summer and fall. These areas provided a great space to reflect in a natural setting near the plants I wrote about. Often in these spaces I would meditate by observing the world around me and then journal my thoughts and feelings (Appendices B-F). I would engage in conversation with the plant, in person I would talk directly to them, but the
journal entries are where I found myself writing answers and response to the questions, I was asking out loud (Appendices A-F). Often the conversations I had were with myself in my writing, but as one can see in my journal entries, I often found the answers to the questions I was asking. I believe it was my environment and my interactions with plants while I performed these journal entries which helped me gain a better connection to myself and a better understanding of how these plants then in turn heal. In many of my journal entries I started the process of writing these poems from inspiration from the plants (Appendices B, C, F). One can see the start of the poems in the journal entries. Then when I went back and went through these entries was when I was able to flush out the poetry and make my art. When I sat in their presence, I was able to acknowledge how they interacted with both their environment and me.

**Tactile Immersion**

Throughout this research process I also was tending to my own plants and maintaining my relationship to them as well. As I did more and more research about my plants, I realized that a few of them had medicinal properties. I found peace in watering and repotting my plants. This method of tactile immersion was the “tabletop gardening and working with potted plants’’ (DelSesto, 2019). This form of people-plant interaction is considered complementary to the peaceful abiding as it is the touch sensation gained from interaction with plants ``accordingly, tactile immersion is the slow and subtle movement towards relating with plants on a physical basis. Soil presents a living ecology that is beyond what the human eye can see alone, where one literally takes on traces of the environment with brown smudges on clothes and dirt under fingernails” (DelSesto, 2019, p.205). Repotting my plants brings me peace and joy that allows me to slow down.
It is an intimate process where the plant trusts me with its fragile root system as I place it into a home where it will be able to thrive (Appendix C). When I repotted my aloe plant into a new pot with fresh soil it began to thrive. My basil plant, one of my most physically communicative plants (as it would wilt and signify when it needs to be watered), and I would engage also in conversations daily where I would ask it if I could take parts of it to munch on. Interaction with these plants as beings that I was taking care of, especially while doing research for this project, enhanced my ability to empathize with their needs. Before engaging with these types of thought patterns, it was easy to forget to water my plants and let them die. After close interactions such as these I find it harder to forget about them. I noticed that when I was not doing my best was when it was easy to forget about them (Appendix E). I have noticed that when I am connected to myself and whole, I am able to care and listen to my plants better than if I am disconnected from myself.

Physical Exertion

The last form of people-plant interaction that I engaged with during the research stages of this project was physical exertion. During the time of this research, I was unfortunate enough to be recovering from a fractured tibia. Therefore, when it came to physically strenuous activities with plants, I would have liked to engage more in activities that made me sweat but given my physical condition that was not the case. Physical exertion can mean many things, “For some people, the act of bending may be physically strenuous, or for others who are recovering from surgery, regaining motion of an arm may require great physical exertion. In other cases, it may be possible to lose track of time, or experience a different sense of time, in repeated physical activities in a plant
environment” (DelSesto, 2019, p.206). The act of repotting my plants during the beginning stages of research was physical exertion as I tried to move heavy potting soil to my plants while navigating crutches. When I was able to walk again, I found myself wandering through green spaces as I strengthened up my leg. While I was beginning to walk again, I moved slowly through these green spaces and felt myself reconnect back to nature with every step I took. It was through processes such as this that allowed me to connect with nature generating inspiration for the poems.

**Writing Process**

The medicinal plants focused on this project are mainly from the Midwest Region of the United States. Not all these plants are “native” to the Midwest region, but they are still either found in this area or near me. The purpose of focusing on plants within their region and on plants near me was so that I may be able to connect/communicate with the plants in the ways I understood from the Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings. It would not have been an effective project to write about plants from some other area of the world that I could not sit down and chat with for a while. The ability to interact with the plants a I did during the research process aided in my ability to write as an ecopoet. Ecopoetics helped me to engage with the plants as beings with their own agency and to bring light to the disconnect that we have now-a-days when it comes to the natural world. It was through this form of poetry during my writing process that allowed me to not simply write about nature, but to write with nature. The similar themes between Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings (such as viewing plants and beings deserving of respect) is like the way that ecopoets write about plants (as beings deserving of our respect and conservation). This type of writing considers nature, and in this case, plants (non-human
beings) as co-authors. When writing ecopoetry, “we must bring nature and environment into the fold: once we bring the work of anthropogenic climate change, we make non-human processes and phenomena our co-authors” (Griffiths, 2013, p.90). The poetry written in this project focuses on plants as the “co-authors” of these works. Skinner, in Hume’s interview, agrees that the nonhuman can influence a poem.

When I try to ‘translate’ an encounter with hummingbirds feeding on ocotillo flowers in the desert, the translation doesn’t take a linear path– it requires something other than a unitary voice. It is a process more akin to the science of fractals. I need to make room for the poem to self-organize, in a sense, to respond to the self-organization of the hummingbird-flowers (Hume, 2012, p.761).

To start the writing process for any poem, I often must take time with myself. I have kept extensive journal entries for the entirety of the research and writing process of this project. These journal entries have kept my ever-scattered thoughts in order and through my own self-reflection, I have found it easier to articulate my thoughts through poetry (Appendix F). Along with this, in instances of my plant interactions during the research process I found that connecting with myself, I opened more to connect with the natural world around me (Appendix B). For me, every poem has a plant, and this plant in one way or another provided enough insight into its own medical properties to allow me to write about them. This came from research through Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings, and sometimes just a quick google search (Appendix D). The “self-organization” I found was through meditation. This meditation came in many different forms and depended on the headspace I was in. The process of co-authoring with a plant must come from an open-minded and open ear. The writing process for these types of poems was very fluid. Yes, it follows a “fractal” pattern of reflection, but this reflection can look like many
different processes. The most consistent form of this process was the way I viewed the poem of each plant. I liked to think of it as a conversation with the plants: what did they want to tell me and how did I want to respond to it (Appendix F)? As well as in my own connection to self through reflection, I found it easier to connect to the natural world around me, i.e., the plants around me. Not only did this method help me co-create the poems with these plants, but through writing with these plants I found my own healing. Writing is a form of healing for me and that is what inspired this project in the first place. Throughout the process of creating the idea for this project, researching, and eventually putting words to paper, I found myself listening to the lessons that these plants had to give me. This way of writing brings in the idea of the collective consciousness described by Griffiths’ ecopoetics, but it is not only the human collective consciousness that is drawn upon but the nonhuman world’s collective consciousness that helps to co-create these types of poems.

A critical aspect of ecopoetry is its effect on the world. What happens before the poem is written? What inspired this poetry? What is done after it is written? What actions are done outside of the writing process to produce change? I argue that it is not only the change that happens externally but the internal change as well. How are we able to heal those and the Earth around us if we ourselves are not healed? My argument suggests that in healing the self, one is made more aware of what one can give to others, including non-humans. From relieving stress and pain in the physical body to healing sorrow and grief in the emotional body once the room is made for empathy and awareness of those other than the self these concepts can then live in that space. When the body and mind are not screaming for help, we are then able to hear the calls of help coming from other
beings. With my poetry, the aim is to engage in a conversation of healing with nature by emphasizing how communication with these plants’ aids in connection to ourselves and connections to the world around us. By understanding and learning how to see the world through a different lens, I am trying to take a step towards the practice of separating my thoughts from colonized thought patterns in my writing. In looking outside of what was taught to me, that the world is merely a “backdrop”, I can create poems that articulate the healing power of plants, both physical and non-physical healing.
Discussion: The Poems

Anxious Bones
Passionflower Vine (*Passiflora incarnata*)

Somedays, my bones just don’t fit in my body.
A war rages in my mind,
thoughts scatter and jump with no place to go never ending always going– I am lighting
then the thunder comes– then rain,
My bones itch.

The Passionflower Vine sitting on my windowsill
knows too much, about me,
about the way things should be and the way things– are.
When I lost myself, I looked to it.
Light reflecting through the glass where its roots propagate
Green sprouting from its stem as the dirt from its new home cradles its roots
Purplish red little curls grabbing at the world around them in an exclamation of
*I am here!*
*I am alive!*
*I am growing!*
My bones itch.

Little curls beckon me to sit
To stay awhile
While my body threatens to turn inside out
Everything is screaming at me
Little curls beckon
Me to sit
To stay awhile
While my heart and my mind race
Everything is buzzing
Little curls beacon
Me
To sit
To stay awhile.

For those few moments,
My itching bones, quite
The thunderstorm raging inside– calms
Little curls tuck my thoughts into bed
They blanket me as I listen to their chuckles
When was the last time I laughed?
Little curls entrap me
Peace promised
If I slow
down

Maybe it's time to head to the forest…
To sit
To stay awhile
For peace is only promised
when you slow
down.

**Medicinal Uses/Properties** (Passionflower, 2020)
- Anxiety and Sleep Problems
- Pain Relief
- Heart Rhythm Problems
- Menopausal Symptoms
- Applied to Skin for Burns
- May help with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Respiration
Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)

I’ve started to notice a quiet cracking coming from my chest
I think it might be heartbreak,
but I’d prefer it to be physical respiratory concerns.
The sounds slipping out of my ribcage are not my heart’s gasping sobs,
but my own short breaths—choking.

How do I come back to myself?
How does the mass of my body sink into nature?
When may I again turn green and grow flowers from my eyes?
When do forgetting and remembering go hand in hand?

In my existential spiral, hiking boots bear my meek body.
I am walking through the forest, forgetting,
and when I say walking, I mean clomping—
And when I say forgetting, I mean remembering.
The blackbirds tell me to be quiet, displeased by alien movements.

The Earth sighs, shaking her head,
watching me struggle her cheeks turn a familiar red hue
The same hue that stains my cheeks, embarrassed by my crashing
I hear her blackbirds singing to me
They show me how to hop from branch to branch
They say “sister, come back to us”
Little do they know
I do not understand chirping tunes.
Once, long ago, someone who looks like me understood,
back when the Earth prevented broken hearts.
Rather than her own heart breaking in front of me,
but now their language is lost.

My fragile body once made for trees and roots
Now trips on summer’s hot and flat cement.
Too many falls to count, and too many scars to name.
This body, deaf to the voice of nature,
Can no longer hear her sigh, as the wind blows past my ears
I know I am disconnected
A tear for what could be—slides down my cheek
Forgotten language stings more than road rash
I am trudging, not walking,
Panting, not breathing 
through the forest–
Trying to speak in a tongue I have not yet learned
I open my mouth to mimic the blackbird's call
As I focus in on the tune
unobservant of my surroundings– I
Trip
Over
My clamoring feet.

My face scrapes into the soil– wet and warm Earth presses into my nose. 
Gasping I roll over onto my back and gaze at the leaves. 
I feel something soft brush my cheek 
Nature’s sighs materialize as a soft lamb’s ear. 
I may not understand her unspoken language, 
But this sign is clear.
Her respiration kisses my sore face and I feel comfort in the damp dirt
The fuzzy leaves of the mullein plant, lying at my side, comforts me
Her soft leaves teach me how to listen
my anxious bones meld into the earth and
for the first time in days
In the thicket,  
covered in dirt, 
I smile. 
My breaking heart, forgotten, remembering nature’s song.

**Medicinal Uses/Properties** (WebMD Editorial Contributors, 2010)
  - Asthma
  - Cough
  - Common Cold
  - Bronchitis
  - Expectorant (expels mucus)
  - Demulcents (anti-inflammatory, coats the mucous membrane)
  - Antiviral
  - Antibacterial
Forgotten Green
Gingko (*Ginkgo biloba*)

Have I told you about the ginkgo leaves?
For a month or so every morning
I walked past the ginkgo tree
Leaves changing from green to yellow– but I never looked up
Head down to the concrete, rushing from one place to another
Trying to stay afloat along the timeline of responsibility
Until one morning,
A yellow leaf caught my eye…

Have I told you about the ginkgo leaves?
For a month or so I would walk past them– forgetting to look up
Until a yellow leaf flew across my foot
Yellow waves a yield sign
Slowing down I reached for the welcoming color and remembered, once,
My friend gave me a ginkgo leaf
For no particular reason besides to show me its beauty
To look at its green smile
To awe in its beauty
I pick it up, smiling back.

Have I told you about the ginkgo leaves?
For a month or so every morning
I forgot that they were there, and then I remembered.
I wonder how the ginkgo tree feels about change…
Does it leave her with a sense of dread?
Dread that sits in the pit of her trunk like mine does in my stomach.
Or does she rejoice in her leaves changing green to yellow?

Have I told you about the ginkgo leaves that I keep in my laptop?
They sit here and remind me of little drops of sunlight
So now when I walk past the ginkgo tree, I remember to look up
My eyes move towards the sky- sunlight filtering through the leaves feeling like a long-
lost memory– returning
I see the ginkgo tree shedding yellow when she was green
I wonder if forgetting is better than remembering
Remembering green…
Have I told you about the ginkgo leaves I keep in my laptop?
Medicinal Uses/Properties (WebMD Editorial Contributors, 2022)
- Dementia
- Eye problems (glaucoma)
- Intermittent claudication
- Tinnitus
- Blood pressure
- Antioxidants the remove free radicals (molecules that damage cells)
- Improved blood circulation (opening up blood vessels with terpenoids)
Connect Me Back
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

To you I have a plea,  
connect me back to what I used to be.

The raging war inside my bones,  
has left me without a comfortable home.

Blood is spilled from my broken heart.  
Can your leaves heal that part?

I forget what makes life great.  
Why was I taught to only hate?

Yarrow blooming in the field,  
your strength to me can you yield?

Medicine that can cure almost all,  
Will you help me if I fall?

To you I have just one plea,  
Connect me back to what I used to be.

Remove the greed and the guilt,  
and take away the pain this society has built.

Only in nature do I find  
a quiet place for my mind.

It aches like burns on my skin  
I don’t even know where to begin.

The world is falling down a well  
At the bottom our greed will trap us in a cell.

Disconnect from plants like you  
Will be our downfall  
and that is true.
Medicinal Uses/Properties (Mount Sinai, 2022)
- Skin wounds and minor bleeding (reduces bleeding)
- Reduce inflammation (digestive tract)
- Sedative (anxiety and insomnia)
- Fever
- Menstrual cramps
- Contains Flavonoids (chemicals that increase saliva and stomach acid- aids in digestion)
- Relaxes smooth muscles in the intestine and uterus
Free and Wild Things
Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)

Childlike joy grabs hold of me when I see your golden head turn white
I hold my breath and count to three
With my eyes closed,
I make a wish
The way I have done a thousand times
I know now, how unlikely it is for my wish to come true
But I do it out of respect for the flower that tries its best
To make magic happen
Your seeds go flying and I am in awe of your shape-shifting beauty
Like a star turned supernova
Scattering particles across the universe
In the morning I look at the gift of so many little stars in my backyard.
The night sky painted on the day’s dewy ground.
There are a thousand wishes to make a million stars to explode
What joy there is in the free and wild things!

But freedom comes with a cost—
When the world sees strength,
Especially as something as fragile as golden petals
punching through the cracks of concrete,
The world shakes with fear, scared that the little star might know its power
But you have always known your strength
For supernovas destroy planets
and flying seeds evade sedentary chemicals
You, my little star has so much to give
So why do we pepper the ground with pesticides?
So why do we cut down the yellow flowers before they burst?
So why do we destroy the childlike joy that wishes on their magic?

Medicinal Uses/Properties (Mount Sinai, 2021)
- Stimulate appetite and helps digestion
- Antioxidant properties
- Immune system
- Vitamin A, B, C, D
- Inflammation
- Skin conditions (acne and eczema)
- Liver and gallbladder treatment
Handle me (,) dear
Aloe Vera (Aloe barbadense Miller)

My beloved’s hands move my mangled roots and place me into different soil.
My stagnant body—constrained—by my old vessel
now feels a lightness where the heavy pressure of the walls used to push.
This soil here and now—identifies differently—
not the same minerals or salts.
Pieces of myself that I forgot were there start to stretch
Sunlight filters through the clouds, brighter
The water rains over my extending parts, wetter
Sinking H2O blessing my new home
Saved from the limbo of that cramped pot
I reach to kiss my dear’s hands
those beautiful, loving hands.
Never once have they taken too much,
even after a severe sunburn when her body screams for every last drop
— she listens.

Unlike those other hands, rough and mechanical
that placed my roots in to too small of a pot
To save money
while capitalizing of my shrinking body
all the while waterboarding my limp limbs
Why did they never listen?
   Didn’t they see my wilting body?
   Don’t they understand I have no new growth to give?

But for my beloved hands,
I could give a thousand parts,
They may take a piece, when I am ready,
because they
will listen.

Medicinal Uses/Properties (Griffin, 2022)
   - Psoriasis
   - Dandruff
   - Minor burns
   - Skin abrasions
   - Laxative
Conclusion

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“And you too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
With light, and to shine.”

– When I am Among the Trees by Mary Oliver

I reference this poem once again with the hopes that after reading this research
that whoever is reading this may have a better appreciation for poetry based upon the
acknowledgement of non-human beings such as plants. Mary Oliver not only finds joy in
the beauty of the trees but listens to the wisdom they must share. Again, reiterating how
plants heal us in many ways, be it through drops of wisdom or their medicinal properties.
The oak may not provide Oliver with a medicinal property, but it still saves her by
teaching her how to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine. Yes, this paper focused
on medical plants and their connection to humans, but it is not just their medicinal
properties that are the focus of this project. I would argue that is only a small part, meant
to be spoken about to relate healing to something that more people will understand. I
argue that healing first and foremost comes from within, but we cannot connect to what is
within us without connection to what is around us. Settler Colonialism fostered by the individualistic thought patterns of the west perpetuates disconnection with natural forces. Individualism, at its core, will be the downfall of humankind. Without recognition of the other beings that also inhibit this Earth, the balance of human and nonhuman interactions may always drift further apart.

The aim of this project is to explore the way that people can connect back to nature. Connection comes from empathy and association of the natural world as a living being. Settler colonialism facilitates plant blindness and the extinction of experience which disconnects humans further from nonhuman beings. Action must be taken to reverse the effect of these paradigms. Again, healing comes in a multitude of forms. The specific healing, I am talking about within this project, is healing the wounds brought on by settler colonialism. Medicinal plants heal people’s physical forms, but in connecting and cultivating with said plants, the connection fostered with the natural world that heals more than just the body. With greater connection there comes better overall health and wellness of all beings inhabiting the Earth. The Anishinaabe groups have always known this and practice it in their everyday lives. The honoring of the natural world is nothing new, it again has only been the introduction of settler colonialism that has stifled human beings' connection with nonhuman beings.

The exploration of ecopoetry in this project mirrors the thought patterns that the Anishinaabe have always practiced. By this it is meant the recognition of plant life as living beings. Both ecopoetry and the Anishinaabe understand the importance of listening to the plants around them when engaging in conversation with the natural world. As the ecopoet, one places themselves outside of the western thought pattern of individualism
and focuses on other beings' ways of existence. Through this, the poet can inspire empathy and a newfound appreciation of the natural world is cultivated for those open enough to acknowledge the poetry. Sometimes when concepts so deeply challenge the way of thinking engrained in peoples thought patterns, they find it hard to navigate and understand new notions. Therefore, it is through ecopoetry that paradigms shifts can occur to engender more empathy for the natural world. In the time of the Anthropocene humans can no longer imagine themselves as the center of the universe, but key players in fostering connections to the nonhuman beings around us.
References


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https://doi.org/10.2307/2641288


http://www.jstor.org/stable/44000969

Ginkgo has been a part, memory or brain health.


Appendices
Appendix A

The Spectrum of People-Plant Interactions

Figure 1: The Spectrum of People-Plant Interactions, located in People-Plant interactions and the Ecological Self (DelSesto, 2019, p.205).
Appendix B

Journal Entry Excerpts: August 2, 2022

The following series of pictures are scans from excerpts of journal entries I kept over the course of the research and writing processes. These journal entries encapsulate the journal process and how it aided in my research and writing process. In the headings of each journal entry, I included day, time, and place to help me remember the mental state I was experiencing while writing the journal entry. This helped the writing process when it came to finalizing my poems.

This first journal demonstrates how I wrote my second poem within the series of poems in the discussion. The text to the right of the white space on the page is the start of some poetic lines that I eventually added to my second poem in this series *Respiration*. My mental state currently was me just coming out of my fractured knee, and for the first time I was mobile and able to drive to new places. Here I am sitting at Crane Park, a green space near where I live. I ended up journaling this I was coming to terms with the dark place I was coming out of. During my healing process nature was always a comfort as this expert exhibits. I eventually added these lines to *Respiration* because they reminded me of the comfort, I felt the first time I touched the mullein leaves, and how the world beacons for us to be at peace in her green space. I remember looking up at the trees and feeling so thankful to sit there, in that peace, and remember what it felt like to be connected to something again.
Excerpts From My Journal as I wrote my SIP.

August 2, 2022 - Tuesday
3:45pm - Crane Park

I am coming back to myself. For a second time, I could feel myself losing a grip. Just waiting for time to pass. Now the time has passed. I am emerging again.

Is this what finding peace is like?

May I be alone in this thicket as I trudge through the tall grass
I feel the familiar loneliness follow behind.
I trip on the roots of a great oak tree my face plants into the soil.
Laughing I roll over onto my back and gaze at her leaves.
In that thicket, Covered in dirt I smile.

Alike means lack of another presence.
May I be alone.

You are never alone in nature.
Appendix C

Journal Entry Excerpts: August 27, 2022

This second expert demonstrates a journal entry that I would write after engaging with plants. I didn’t end up writing a poem about my lavender plant, but this section inspired the poem *Handle me (,) dear*. I repotted my aloe vera over the summer and after I did that, I watched it thrive, just as I have watched many of my plants thrive after repotting and watering them consistently.
August 27, 2022 - Saturday
12:04 am - porch

A thought from earlier while I was watering my plant's - D is recognition.

Maybe the human condition and our relationship to other things is not as complex as we believe. What if the entirety of what it means to be human is based on two simple principles.

1) To see
2) To be seen

And that is love, isn't it?

You cannot love without wanting to be seen or without wanting to see. How am I to love, if I do not understand? When does language drift from meaning?

There is a peace that comes from blindness and a wholeness from being seen.

Expression is universal.
It is how one expresses that gets lost in translation.

2:40 pm

Lavender

by your gentle hands remove my dead parts, those which give me anxiety and keep me up at night.
Appendix D

Journal Entry Excerpts: September 1, 2022

Here the journal entry exhibits how I tried to start organizing my thoughts about the plants I was writing about. Again, in nature, I felt called to consider the plants around me and how we interact with them. The notes taken about these plants come from the information provided by Mary Geniusz in *Plants Have so Much to Give Us all We have to do Is Ask*. This is when I started to truly form a plan for writing the poetry, but honestly while writing this journal entry I felt slightly disconnected from it. I think it is because I was not around the plants I was trying to write about. As one may notice I write about the dune grass present at the beach, but not a poetic line is mentioned about the plants I want to write about.
September 1, 2022 - Thursday

[12:27pm - Patience Park (Beach at South Haven)]

- The dune grass looks like it's waving at me.
- Gentle breeze meets earth.

What am I to do?

Honestly this past month is the most at peace I've been - in years.
There is a stability within myself that I am scared to disrupt, or rather, I am scared to have disrupted.

I know my plants have brought me back to myself.
They teach me how to care - for me. I learn from them daily.

I thought I would miss winter.
Part of me does - the way the world sparkles.
But I can see the same sparkle thriving in the sand.

Medicinal Plants to Explore For SED

- Dandelion
- Milkweed
- Narrow leaf Plantain
- Catnip
- Motherwort
- Yarrow
- Duck Weed
- Basil
- Lavender
- Passion Flower Vine

- Poison Ivy & Jeweweed - for every problem there is a solution.
- Yarrow - for rashes
- Blessed thistle, Smell, alyssum - for例
- Association w/ Whispers
- (C) Lysergic acid diethylamide
- Protection from fire - east coast
- (0) Amman - decrease & evil

[Balance]
- Mallein -
  - Weak & Mild
  - Likes: Disturbed ground
  - Bronchial Conditions
  - Bleeding
  - On the roadside - lend in soil

- Dandelion -
  - Antibacterial

- Plantain -
  - Good for insect stings
Up next one can see that as any writer, I started to experience writer's block. I didn’t really know where I was going with my poems and how to connect to the plants. I noticed around this time period access to the natural world was dwindling because it was becoming colder, and I was becoming busier. There is sadness here because I was disconnected. I bring in this journal entry to exhibit the struggle of the writing process, and to demonstrate how in interacting with my plants as much as I did, I felt a guilt for neglecting them. The recognition of them as beings who were being forgotten gave me great sadness. Eventually this theme of forgetting the non-human beings who help us inspired the poems such as *Forgotten Green* and *Connect Me Back* in my series of poems.
October 14, 2022 - Friday (Fall break!)
15:24pm - Sunroom (I need to move my plants inside; it's getting cold)

My plants are dying.
It is fall, the world is "dying," and I don't know if I have the energy anymore to keep my plants alive.
They are one of the few things that bring me joy, and I can't keep them alive anymore.

I have no more words to give.
They will be false - or incomplete.
What if there is something in me that can't be healed?
Journal Entry Excerpts: October 23, 2022

The last journal entry I want to show for the writing process was written while visiting the University of Michigan Matthai Botanical Garden. I choose to come here around this time to gain a little more connection to plants before they all die off and or went into hibernation for winter. This visit helped me connect back to myself, and I like to think it was because I was around so many plants while I was here. I remember sitting in the medicinal plant section at the garden next to the passion flower vine and asking her how I could start writing again. Given my connection to the passion flower vine, as it is a plant I continue to propagate and grow, I felt like she might have some answers. For the rest of the day as I roamed the botanical garden I felt myself connecting again to the reason why I wanted to write poetry.

The last section of this journal entry as I write about the gingko leaves was inspired by the Matthai Botanical Garden. This is where I learned that Ginkgo leaves help people in their old age combat alzheimers. When I went back to campus the following Monday after visiting the garden I realized I had been walking past gingko leaves on my way to class everyday and I had not realized it. It was an incredible reminder that the world around us has so much to give, we just need to pay attention to it.
October 23, 2022 - Sunday

11:15am - Matthai Botanical Garden

I feel lost. There is some kind of malfunction in my brain. I can't connect to anything these days. I want so badly to be able to write about stuff I do not know. I have forgotten. Stillness is promised by Fall. On days that mock Summer's laugh. I leave my jacket at home and laugh with them. Peace is only promised when you slow down.

Maybe I can't follow through on my life plans - maybe I can.

Do I have the will for it anymore?

I feel like I can't write anymore - so I don't. I just let myself stay on the almost edge of a breakthrough.

It's like getting up in the morning. I just have to do it and things get better. Just by putting pen to paper.

It doesn't have to be good. It just has to be.

I really want to take some of this passion flower vine home with me.

I think I should go to the library today. How do I make writing my SIP fun? -D Journal Entries.

My communion with plants happens when I am separate from others, to be with myself. To also feel what it might be like outside of the confines of my mind. Everyone expects, do I expect.
Because I asked them to leave.

Why have they left me?

When did I get these big emotions?

So how do I feel?

I don't know how to write it if I don't feel.

How do I express it?

thought processes.

It's because I know more - but also in the same way I got the less I know. And I think the older I get, the less I know. And I think I don't know what is true anymore.

That's not true.

Honestly, I don't know if I even connect with myself sometimes.

I'm spending time. I'm focusing - but they give.

No one cares about the local plants - there's no "row" fixing the problem.

According to the problem is the first step to I have left behind.
Big emotions

I love plants. They truly are one of the things that bring me joy. Sometimes, so much better than people—because they listen and still provide soft company. They ask for nothing, except respect.

Plants are love.
The physical manifestation of it and yet we disregard it everyday.
Just as one may drive past the mullein plant on the highway—checking on two from our cars. The mullein plant which can heal our respiratory concerns. Peace should be respected.

I think I could write about love until the day I die. It is the one thing that propels me forward.

To care genuinely.

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I want to sit and write.

There are three gingko leaves sitting on my keyboard. For a month, every morning I walked past the changing gingko leaves—but my head was always down. I forgot to look up. Until a yellow leaf flew across my foot. I remember my friend telling me about the beauty of the gingko tree. My eyes moved towards the sky—sunlight filtering through the leaves felt like a lost memory—returning.