

The ferry ride is important. That 7-minutes gets you in the head space, helps you leave the city. On most days you are welcome aboard by citizens of Snuneymuxw First Nation who work on the ferries, reminding people that Snuneymuxw are *still here*. Always try to sit at the back of the boat where the windows are lower and closer to the water, feel it on your skin.

The air is full of the call of the purple martens, who seasonally call small wooden boxes above the docks *home*. Their call is a short piercing hollowness that seems to go right through you. When you are on the docks, you can feel it like a ripple on your skin, in your mind. Where the dock is situated on the island, there is almost always a breeze that comes off the Salish Sea as it moves between the islands, joining the song of the martens in caressing your skin. The part of the island where the ferry leaves you is an open expanse of lawn, often burnt to golden brown by the summer sun and the constancy of the wind. In the summer this slope of the land crisps under your feet, just as in the winter months it crunches – each step is a sound-feeling, At one time this may have been, probably was a Garry Oak meadow that in the spring would have been a lush little ocean of blue cammas lilies, frothing in the breezes. The land here gently rises upwards from sea towards the pavilion, the colonial crown jewel of the park. But that is not what you are here for. You are here for the feeling that is much deeper than that – that is too hard to explain because it rests so deeply inside you. It moves you from the inside out. It is not to be rushed towards – you might miss it – so you move slowly, methodically, humbly. Waiting for you to recognise each other in each other.

You are here.



You move counter-clockwise because that is the direction you have been taught to move. The ocean meets the shore to your right. Some days a hush, hush of the water meeting the land gets whispered into you by the softness of the sea. Sometimes it wants to make sure you are listening and pushes into you. Under your feet is the same path that the Snuneymuxw people have walked, in their grief and healing and training. You step lightly – soft sole, soft soul - because you tread where someone else's ancestors are. As you step over the sandstone of the shore you wonder how many of them have been alive, had been animals, transformed by X'eels. Then you remember they are still alive, all of them. You feel them as "I am here, you are here, we are here." Both of you are always transforming. That is what you are here for today.

When you reach the forest, the quality of the shade is felt as more than dark, but a quiet cool against your skin and the smell of decomposition fills your nose mingled with the salt foam of the always nearby ocean. The bird song is different here, different in every part of the island. You walk northwards in the thickening dark feeling of the older trees, where sunlight is filtered in through canopies high overhead. You know to be quiet here, knowing nothing you could say would add anything to this silence. To your left there is a long scar reaching high up the trunk of a grandmother Cedar. You run your hand along the edge of the scar and give thanks to the tree, those who know how to live with a respectful heart, for the opportunity to learn here.

You journey slowly, taking more than three hours, lingering in the places that make you feel. Lingering with watching, witnessing, waiting. Listening and learning. In the spot where the eastern trail dips down into a grove, a family of woodpeckers work together to bring to light a feast, chattering away in their celebration. You move with the island and feel lucky to be surrounded and bear witness to the minutiae of economies happening around you. So many worlds bound up in this space.

You hope you are doing it right, respectfully. It's hard to know – you have stitched together pieces of teachings that are like gifts, but that are given sparsely. That's fine – you are not from here and they are not your teachings. But you also don't have your own. So you just try your best to be open, to re-

open, to make it a practice until it is a process. Until you are transformed and thinking differently isn't different anymore.