

Trace

*A documentation of the Canadian Dance Assembly's Seeding Resiliency Project
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Face the canopy of trees, a tunnel to the horizon of a different future...

a sandy passage connecting us to the power and tumult of the waves. The wake from the past, a window into the present possibility of our movement.

Enter this portal.

Move forward. Acknowledge the absences—those who cannot be with us, those who we hold dear in our hearts and in our memories, those whose presence reverberates through our bodies. Invite their absence to be made present, haunting our movements, guiding our dances.

Enter this sacred space, an echo of our stories. Enter this sacred place, where we can share the lessons and the practices from our gathering...

We gather on the sand, a kaleidoscope of beige, black, and maroon shapes, pushed and pulled by the forces of the water, distorted and displaced by our footsteps.

We gather on Mnisiing, the Ojibwe word for “on the island”—a place for healing, a place of healing. What does it mean for us to seek healing on stolen land? Can we ethically heal here?

We gather to embody resilience—or rather to question what it might mean to embody resilience within the Canadian dance sector...can we ethically heal here?

What do we need from this space? How do we enact our responsibilities to this place and its caretakers and knowledge keepers? What do we need to feel valued as artists? How do we enact our responsibilities to ourselves, our dignity, our creativity, our strength? What do we need to gather? How do we enact our responsibilities to each other?

*sound of a breath in ...
sound of a breath out...*

We gather.

We gather in a circle to acknowledge the body—seeing, listening...naming the parts of the body we often take for granted...feeling into the information it is providing, being nourished by its lessons.

We gather in a circle to acknowledge the land—seeing, listening...naming our relations to the earth, the water, the sky.

We bear witness to all that roots us, watching our feet sink into the stories of the earth, we listen to the sound of our ancestors speaking through the wind. We name all that holds us in this place...feeling all that grounds us.

We gather in a circle to acknowledge the life speaking to us amid our witnessing of violence...a weedwhacker cuts into the wind's gentle whistle, a violent engine of death trying to drown out our acts of naming...

And we remain gathered in a circle to acknowledge that we are still here, trying to listen, to witness, to speak...to name resilience, and to feel its healing possibilities.

I recognize this place.

Waves roll, crash against the sand, splashing up ever closer to my toes—a sprinkling of hello...leaving damp sand to dry, an echo of its play.

I feel this is a place for healing. I recognize this place, like a turtle returning home. I recognize the sand beneath my feet, between fingers and toes, becoming stuck onto me, no longer distinguishable from me. I hear a voice calling to me as I throw off my tank top and slowly wade into the chilling sea. I dive in. It is cold, perhaps too cold...and still, I stay, I linger. I dive head first into the waves that pull me into the icy depth...I am home.

My skin dries in the air. The ice turns into a cool and soothing balm as the sun embraces my shoulders. The sand sticks to me and I am worried I cannot wash it away...I dream of it sticking to me and never leaving me again.

We mirror the elements, opening up to the being of the elements, to our being with the sand, the waves, the leaves, the trees, the grass, the ants...we mirror the elements to explore different becomings.

I mirror the water and witness the waves pushing sand over my toes, burying my feet, inviting my trunk to feel grounded in the earth. Where does the water get its power? I try to mirror the waves, but I can't keep up. The waves constantly push forward, power from distant shores...how can I notice the strength from the presences behind me? How can I honour those from the past who are supporting me, who are holding me as they push forward with me?

I mirror the stone, that holds its place, while also being open to the unsettling force of the waves.

I mirror the leaves. I join them in a disco party as we shake and shimmy in the wind. We allow our surface, our skin to shimmer in the light, reflecting the sun's energy onto each other.

I reach my arms out, trying to mirror the expanse of the horizon, trying to awaken the expanse with myself.

A footprint presses into the sand...the trace of a past dance.

How can we commit to meeting...

How can we commit to meeting on the land, treating the land as our body, our body as the land?

How can we commit to plunging into the cold water to feel rejuvenated and refreshed?

How can we commit to our breath, to rest, to speaking our names and asserting their sound?

How can we commit to curiosity and to questioning?

How can we commit to escaping and resisting the finality of rules, to refuse any policing of our being together?

How can we commit to relation?

How can we commit to participating in the ways that feel good to us, even if it may not seem like a participation that we imagined?

How can we commit to creating the time and space for participating in whatever way we need to?

How can we commit to sharing weight and pursuing balance?

How can we commit to failing generously and compassionately?

How can we commit to silences, to listening?

How can we commit to the wind, the waves, and the sand?

How can we commit to our ancestors calling us?

How can we commit to holding and being held by the container of our meeting?

How can we commit to returning?