

EAR | WAVE | EVENT

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Listening to Nonhumans
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This was developed thinking alongside the work of the Initiative for Indigenous Futures, Leroy Little bear, Leanne Simpson, Dylan Robinson, Raven Chacon, Zoe Todd, AM Kanngieser, Florian Malzacher, Jonas Staal; and Fondazione Sandretto.

Score for groups up to 10.

Knowledge and ethics emerge from the hyperlocal contexts modeled by nonhumans and this training focuses on a handful of frameworks Indigenous to North America.

In Lakota ontology and epistemology, that which is knowable is different from that which is unknowable, also known as wakhan or sacred. According to David Posthumus, knowable qualities of interiority are emotions, will, power, intellect. Unknowable qualities are spirits, soul, ghost, guardian spirit, the Spirit World, qualities of our nonhuman kin both seen and unseen.

Begin by imagining the first sound wave in the universe. Is it possible that a sound wave is infinite? Is it possible that a sound wave Beyond our human ability to perceive all forms of waves in time and space, beyond the edge of knowability is the slow massive wave of time emanating into the knowable, into our understanding, emanating into the future infinitely.

Listening to the sounds of decay: the vibration/frequency at the end of a sonic event.

In a society that faces rapid change, and mass extinction – when will the decay of sound be final?

During this training there will be two halves, listening to nonhumans in the physical world and listening to nonhumans in the nonphysical world. First we will walk in silence with a score for listening in our groups, guided by paper scores, and second we will come back into the gallery and come to get comfortable, to rest and dream together.

Please choose a conductor in your group to read and keep time.

Walk without speaking.

1. As you walk, for the next 5 minutes, clear your thoughts and pay attention to the sound as they enter your ears, first the left ear, then the right ear, back to both ears. Pay attention to the sounds around you as they change while you move through time & space
2. For the next 5 minutes, tune to the space by recognizing that by you being there, you are affecting the space and that you are in collaboration with non humans around you, seen and unseen, heard & unheard. Do you hear your breath, your footsteps, clothing, heartbeat?
3. For the next 5 minutes, Do you have permission to listen? Can you remember how to hear the unheard sounds of nonhumans? Do you know how far you can you listen? Listen to end of street, edge of the city, base of the mountains, to the horizon, base of the mountains, edge of the city, end of the street. Repeat.
4. For the next 5 minutes, pick a single sound and listen for its decay. Listen to what is heard then what is unheard follow it's wave for as far as you can.
5. For the next 5 minutes, Listen to the people you are walking with, their footsteps, their clothing, their breathing, then your footsteps, your clothing, your breathing, then back to theirs. Listen to the sound of the group as a whole, listen to distance between each other, the air that fills the space between the community you have formed with one another.
6. Approach where you started, Remembering what decays and acknowledging what sustains, finish your group's walk and reenter the gallery.

Settling into the most comfortable state you can find at this time. Do you need anything before you can come to rest? Any tools you need to dream: paper, a pen, cushion? Do you have space within yourself to let go of judgment on your ability to dream and allow 30 minutes for us as participants to dream the future we want for ourselves, our communities, and our extended relations (human & nonhuman)?

Darkness

Okay, let's come to rest, any way you feel comfortable.

Listening towards one sound in the room, the vibration, the frequency, the wave, and the end of the sonic event, the sounds' decay. Beyond the edge of knowability, listening towards the unknowable qualities of our nonhuman kin, both seen and unseen. Let's return to the first sound wave in the universe.

I want to tell you the creation story adapted from the telling by elder Duane Hollow Horn Bear.

We talk about an entity, an entity we refer to as Inyan (which means stone) was a power, a massive power, very, very powerful, very powerful that nothing else could exist except for Inyan at a point, took a part of itself and began to form this orb and squeezing and squeezing tighter and tighter and tighter and tighter until what oozed out of it looked like it's blue blood leaving a half hard, brittle body.

And they called it Maka earth. Maka existed in total darkness, questioning Inyan. What's my purpose. What's my reason for being here. Why am I here? Is there anything else? Inyan took other parts of itself and created the sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies, the universe, and put everything in correlation with itself. And time went on time, went on, but at a point, Maka complained when the sun it becomes very hot, uncomfortable, or the moon, it becomes dark and it gets cold. Could you give me a covering something to protect myself inyan and counseled with the other entities of itself told Maka. If we give you a covering, you must promise to bring forth life and to nourish it. Maka promised. And so life went on. Life, went on for time a very long time, but at a point, life became ugly, very corrupt, senseless destruction, killing. This is not the way that life is intended to be upon me. I must cleanse. (Lakota cleanse spiritually often, during sweatlodge). Now try to imagine all of these catastrophes happening all at the same time.

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, hundreds of them, hundreds of tornadoes Maka this one half land mass shaking and shaking and shaking, shaking so hard that the one half land mass broke apart, broke apart, separating the peoples into the different continents and life went on. But at a point again, eons of time later, life again became very corrupt, very corrupt. Maka said, I must cleanse again, those of you that are keeping the ways of life as intended to be come deep down inside me, where I may protect you again, these catastrophes, and it came in the form of the ice age, changing the surface of the world.

When the ice melted back, leaving lakes, bodies of water, everywhere, small lakes, rivers in this beautiful area today known as the black Hills.

We have a trickster in our culture. We call him Iktomi. Iktomi was walking around in the black Hills. He heard this heavy breathing and he came upon this opening in the ground, eventually since he loves to trick people, tricked the Lakota out from the subterranean earth. Until they were trapped on the surface. Unable to take care of ourselves, the Buffalo nation comes forward. Buffalo nation says, we are here for you. All that we are is for you. We are your food. We're your shelter, your medicine, your tools. And we became known as the Buffalo people, following the Buffalo, rely on about the Buffalo for everything. And the Buffalo nation has never let us down because as we began to adapt and adapt to living on the surface of the world, again.

Hollow Horn Bear says, we became a little overbearing, taken more than we needed taken without respect taken, without giving anything back. The four legged, the winged ones, they cut off communication with us. They said, it's because of these two leggeds that the world had to cleanse twice. Maybe this would be a better world without these two leggeds, we should get rid of them. Yes, let's do it. They sent

out all of these sicknesses, all his, these diseases and wipe 'em out.

As they were gonna proceed to do so underneath them, the plant life, the plant life said it is not up to them to decide who lives or who dies for every sickness. Every illness they sent into the two legged. We have a root, we have a medicine and herb. And so the balance was kept. And life went on. Life went on for a time again, but again, as two legged, we became overbearing.

Again, no respect, no honor for creations. What are we going to do about these two legged? Oh, Buffalo nation, Buffalo nation. You said you would be responsible. So at a point in time, they sent to us from the Buffalo nation, the white Buffalo calf woman, bringing to us the sacred pipe to remind us that there is to be a spiritual connection of what is on earth is in the stars in the universe. And what's in the stars is on earth and the spiritual connection must be kept.

Before Inyan (stone), there was a dream. The impulse of creativity, the act of creation by humans, is always a collaboration between humans and nonhumans. In Lakota culture, stones are alive, stones speak, stones want to help. My aunt Melita says, We spend our entire lives looking for a special stone, and stones are looking for us their whole lives too. Except stones are millions of years old, and we are just a split second. We are surrounded by fossils, my grandfather, who practiced medicine with stones, said to me, "I believe this about the stones; whenever one comes to you, whenever it rolls to you or whenever it's right in front of you, that it's there for a purpose. It's there to teach your spirit something so that maybe what it teaches you, you can use to help someone else or you can heal someone else".

Every moment of decision, every act of creation, every collaboration between you and the nonhumans around you, is the collaboration between stars and stones, the macro and the micro, the movement of the cosmos and Spirit World and the physical reality of earth and stones. It is no accident when our physical being intersects with a fossil or a stone, its movements over millions of years are incomprehensible, unknowable complex, therefore an

unknowable wise object. Leroy Little Bear says that the human brain is a station on the radio dial; parked in one spot, it is deaf to all the other stations, he says; the animals, rocks, trees, simultaneously broadcasting across the whole spectrum of sentience.

Nonhumans give us responsibilities: it is our duty to listen, such as every year our people have to fulfill our duties to dance the sun back into the sky. Perhaps nonhumans will call for another cleansing of the earth. What does this future sound like? Follow the sound wave, listening a million years into a future on Unci Maka where water covers the Earth.

Pulsation

Audio

<https://earwaveevent.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Listening-to-nonhumans.mp3>

Disentanglement

My grandfather said to me, "The ears are a mind thing. When you hear the spirit talk, it's not through your ears. It's through your spirit. You hear everything they say, loud and clear. Some people say, when they first start connecting like that, what happens is, they'll get pieces that are clear and then pieces that are garbled, like a different language they can't understand and then they'll get pieces that are clear again and they wonder why they can't decipher the whole thing. I know this. I say, there are some things your spirit's supposed to hear and some things it's not supposed to hear."

It is possible to hear guidance from nonhumans now to fulfill our responsibilities as humans.

Who do you hear now in the room?

Who do you hear near you in the room?

Who do you hear at the edge of the room?

Who do you hear 5 years 10 50 100 1000 10000 100000 1000000

Listen for your artistic or philosophical or blood descendant what do they sound like?

Return to the sound wave. Listening into the unknowable, returning to the edge of knowability, to what you hear in this room, in this now. What nonhuman kin have returned from the future with you, both seen and unseen. Listening towards one sound in the room, the vibration, the frequency, the wave, and the end of the sonic event, the sounds' decay. Listen to the edge of the room, to the people next to you, the air between you and others, to the entire group of beings here as a whole.

Exit towards Feasting

As you shifted listening distances, did your listening change? Did your hearing change?

Which nonhumans did you feel invited to listen to? Did you feel unwelcome by any?

What context about this physical location do you want to know more about?

What is there to learn from the physicality of a sound wave?

When thinking about the voice of nonhumans, which voices have agency, which don't?

Now go share a meal.

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Robbie Wing is a musician and sound artist born in Tulsa, OK and is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. His practice focuses on ecological sound art and listening practices, He holds an undergraduate degree in Environmental Sustainability and masters degree in Urban Design from the University of Oklahoma. His field recording composition of contaminated water wells in Miami, OK recently premiered on a multi-channel system at the Sonic Cartographies conference in Chatham, UK. He has also released a new album in 2023 *Snake on the Road* on the label Peyote Tapes. <https://robbiewingcom.wordpress.com/>