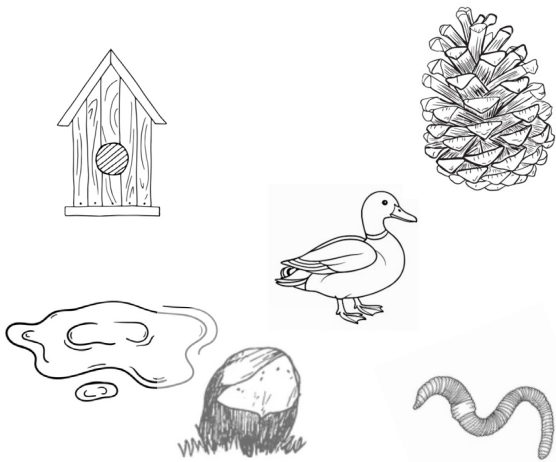
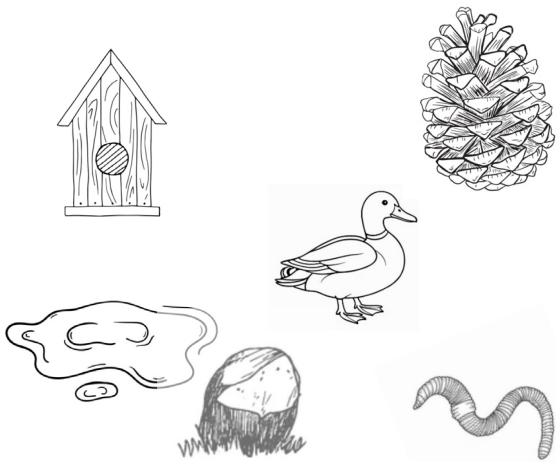


This deck was produced by **Pond People*** on the unceded territories of the syilx people. It is designed to be used in relation to the Old Pond on UBC Okanagan campus, but we welcome its experimental adaptation in relation to the lands and waters that surround you, wherever you are.



***Pond People** = Jared Adams, Soha Aftab, Hamid Al Mahri, Tesi Altman, Ryah Ayyobi, Jeronimo Bahamon, Kajah Berrie, Mozelle Bertelsen, Jennifer Blake, Olivia Bromley, Mathias Carter, Nimrat Dhaliwal, Grae Englund, Khaliun Gantsogt, Noah Gordon, Laighton Graeme-McMullan, Ewan Gratton, Luca Grossi, Maaike Houtstra, Issy Jackson, Jett Jardaleza-Toole, Ria Kaeley, Vraj Khatri, Tamsyn King, Ian Klumpen, Maddy Krestanowich, Lily Liang, Jordan Lovell, Gabrielle Luedke-Nichols, Lola Macherey, Kaylah Majerech, Samuel Mitchell, Alyx O'Neill, Sarah Rasmussen, Jordyn Sanche, Ally Shorter, Zoe Sibthorp, Liv Utigard, Jaren Vicaretti, Maggy Woelfing, Jake Yule.

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ALL HANDS ON DECK FOR POND

SUIT DESCRIPTIONS

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SUIT DESCRIPTIONS

Birds

As we prepare these cards, the female magpies collect mud in their beaks to create the centre of their nest, the redwinged black birds are mating and building nests for their young, and the redhead duck comes home to find another's eggs in her nest. The goal of this suit is to reconceptualize the pond through the perspectives of birds that frequent the area. The birds' experiences serve as a proxy for how we understand this space. Each bird occupies a niche and interacts with Pond's landscape according to their needs. The deck explores these dynamics through reflection questions, which challenge players to position themselves as humans, then step into a new perceptual dimension.

A big step in shifting away from dominant ideologies on human-nature relationships is decolonizing Pond. Understanding the bird species and the pond through the oral traditions or *capitkw*l of the Syilx Okanagan Peoples introduces new perceptions and relationships. The Syilx water declaration states: “*kscsux*stm i?_siwtkw̓̓ ̓̓a?̓̓á?̓̓ knaqs ck̓̓isk̓̓w̓̓sts y̓̓ʕat a?_cx̓̓w̓̓lx̓̓w̓̓alt̓̓*”, or “Recognize water as a sacred entity and relative that connects all life” (Syilx Okanagan Nation, 2014, line 6). Water is the heart of the pond and what connects us to non-human beings. Understanding these connections and the significance of water in building relationships is critical in getting to know Pond. Further, we explore the significance of language within decolonial practices. Gonet (2024) shares that, in decolonizing research, they choose to refer to land, animals, and plants as “non-human people” because using the word “people” introduces a social term that describes beings we interact with, form complex relationships with, and learn from.

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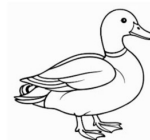
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This choice of language encapsulates a holistic worldview of human-nature relationships, aligning more closely with Indigenous ideologies. Our deck also uses language as a tool for decolonization by including the nsyilxcen names for the birds to remind players of the traditional language spoken on the land they are engaging with.

Access and inclusion in our deck stems from Plumwood (2008)'s question: "What (more?) Do we need to add to place awareness/encounter/attachment projects or discourses about sense of place to have them converge with ecological awareness or environmental justice projects?" (p.3). These points are explored through the reflection questions, which challenge players to reconfigure the temporal and spatial scale in which they understand place. By recognizing oneself while attuning to the pond, the player is put in a position to think critically about what their body may or may not understand about Pond in comparison to other non-human people.

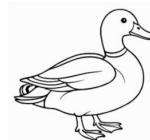
For example, we may see the EME building behind the pond as an environment that allows us to escape the cold, but we do not know Pond beneath its water, in the cavities of ponderosa pines, or from a circling aerial view. Through reconceptualizing Pond, players are encouraged to re-imagine accessibility through the lens of non-human people, question how it could be more accessible for non-human people, and what our responsibilities are in improving accessibility.



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Rocks

How can we centre our relationships with place, here specifically with Pond? While discussing the role that researchers have to “deepen their connection with places of study...by meaningfully building relationships with social-ecological contexts” (Beaty, 2024), we realised that our most immediate relationship to Pond was our physical presence on the land. We believed that the ground beneath our feet connected us to Pond.

After considering the stakeholders we had relationships with on the ground who were still connected to Pond, we gravitated towards Rock/s. Not only were these Rock/s more present at Pond than we had initially realised, but these Rock/s also allowed us to map the reach of Pond spatially. While we walked around Pond, we were able to spot different varieties of Rock/s at different places—a rock wall, rock path, rock with lichen on it, etc. By choosing Rock/s as a way to form stronger relationships with Pond, we were able to connect with them through a ‘more-than-object’ framework, as presented by the animated short film, *An Object at Rest*. It challenged an anthropocentric view of the environment and gave agency to Rocks by following the life cycle of a rock.

While taking on this journey of forming relationships to Rock/s at Pond, we also want to acknowledge the inequitable dynamics of mobility our cards may be complicit in. Our cards ask deck-users to locate specific

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Our cards also aim to address issues of access and inclusion. First, we made the cards as easy to read as possible by using a yellow backdrop and blue writing, as contrasting colours are easiest for people with colour blindness to read (Sajek et al., 2025). Secondly, we included adaptable activities, as well as alternate activities, with the intent of giving all users a comfortable experience. In the case that our cards are illegible to anyone, a link to audio recordings and zoomable versions of each of our cards is available on request.

While our suit is limited in its capabilities of being truly “decolonial” by Tuck & Yang’s definition, meaning “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life,” our ʔáʔtlaʔxw (groundwater) card encourages users to “repatriate” Syilx land ideologically.

Moreover, we aim to rightfully credit, and center, Syilx perspectives throughout our cards with an anticolonial approach. To do this, we have thoughtfully incorporated Indigenous perspectives by framing siwʔk as our user’s “Ancestor, Teacher, and Knowledge Holder.” This provides our users with pathways to learn about Pond’s water, to learn from Pond’s water, and to form a respectful relationship with Pond’s water (IndigenousClimateHub, 2025).

Additionally, by focussing on certain parts of the Syilx water declaration, and titling our cards in nsyilxcən, we try to center Syilx perspectives specifically. Finally, our sxwuynt (ice) card highlights Myers idea of questioning “western conceptions of the separateness of humans from nature” with the aim to encourage deck users to reconsider their relationship with Pond and to consider it as interconnected and reciprocal relationship rather than separate.



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Water

Our suit, played in any order, encourages users to deepen their understanding of place by introducing new ways to learn about, learn from, and learn to be in relation with *siwłkʷ* (water) at Pond. Cards such as *npaʔt* (Pond) and *łáʔłlaʔxʷ* (groundwater) were inspired by Beaty et al. to provide avenues for our users to deepen reflection and strengthen collaboration with place. To do this our suit prompts users to consider the social-ecological context of Pond, and it provides them with avenues to expand Syilx land acknowledgments and their positionality statements.

Additionally, by referring to the pond as “Pond” we are giving *ki* personhood which “can shift power, reassert Indigenous relationships to land, and reframe governance” (Kimmerer, 2015; IndigenousClimateHub, 2025). In order to challenge and resist “the sense of entitlement to environments and peoples that whiteness is founded within,” our deck encourages “careful engagement,” with *siwłkʷ* through attunement in our *łilaʔt* (precipitation) card and our *sxʷʔulʹ* (evaporation) cards (Kangieser, 2020). To encourage critical thinking, our *tmixʷ* (everything alive), *kłiknaʔ* (runoff), and *sxʷuyłt* (ice) cards pose self reflective questions to our users. These questions ask users to critically examine the complexity of their positionality and of their relationality with Pond. Finally, because users may experience “a clash over modes of sensing, engaging and inhabiting the world,” our *sktmłamłt* (clouds) card provides our users with an avenue to learn through dissenting (Tironi, 2018).

Water

Our suit, played in any order, encourages users to deepen their understanding of place by introducing new ways to learn about, learn from, and learn to be in relation with *siwłkʷ* (water) at Pond. Cards such as *npaʔt* (Pond) and *łáʔłlaʔxʷ* (groundwater) were inspired by Beaty et al. to provide avenues for our users to deepen reflection and strengthen collaboration with place. To do this our suit prompts users to consider the social-ecological context of Pond, and it provides them with avenues to expand Syilx land acknowledgments and their positionality statements.

Additionally, by referring to the pond as “Pond” we are giving *ki* personhood which “can shift power, reassert Indigenous relationships to land, and reframe governance” (Kimmerer, 2015; IndigenousClimateHub, 2025). In order to challenge and resist “the sense of entitlement to environments and peoples that whiteness is founded within,” our deck encourages “careful engagement,” with *siwłkʷ* through attunement in our *łilaʔt* (precipitation) card and our *sxʷʔulʹ* (evaporation) cards (Kangieser, 2020). To encourage critical thinking, our *tmixʷ* (everything alive), *kłiknaʔ* (runoff), and *sxʷuyłt* (ice) cards pose self reflective questions to our users. These questions ask users to critically examine the complexity of their positionality and of their relationality with Pond. Finally, because users may experience “a clash over modes of sensing, engaging and inhabiting the world,” our *sktmłamłt* (clouds) card provides our users with an avenue to learn through dissenting (Tironi, 2018).

Rock/s at Pond, which may be difficult for those with physical disabilities. However, we want to resist “exclusionary dimensions of “nature” and “wilderness”” (Kafer, 2013, p. 130) that dictate that deeper engagement with Pond is only meant for certain bodies. Instead, we would like to encourage meaningful and reflexive engagement with the Land, Rock, and, by extension, the Old Pond, through reading and reflecting on the questions our cards pose, by focusing on the learning outcomes of the cards.

As this project guides deck-users to form relationships with Rock/s at Pond, we must acknowledge that this land belongs to the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation. We are not analysing Pond under an Indigenous perspective, but rather reiterating that this specific place is, and always will be, Indigenous land. Individuals on this land must understand that these lands were stolen from the Syilx Okanagan people through settler colonialism, in order to form respectful and reciprocal relationships with Pond. In order for deck-users to do so, our cards invite them to reconceptualise their relationship with Land, Pond and Rock/s, by meaningfully engaging with the Syilx Nation *Siwłkʷ* Declaration.

By considering the relationships of Rock/s with water, lichen, or with man-made constructions, individuals can reconceptualise what it means to exist alongside the Land. If all elements are successfully intertwined together at Pond: *siwłkʷ* (water), *tmxʷulaxʷ* (land), and all living things are all intricately connected, what you do to one, you do to all” (Syilx Nation *Siwłkʷ* Declaration), how can our relationship as humans also add this to this complex tapestry? By enacting healthy, reciprocal engagement with Rock/s and, therefore, with Pond, seeing ourselves also as part of Land, we can move beyond extractive relationships and instead participate in holistic ones.



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Foreign Objects

Playing with this suit is best done in pairs and at Pond to best situate yourself in place. You will each choose a card, ground yourself in your foreign entity, and then use the prompts at the bottom of the card to have a conversation from the embodied perspective of your entity with your partner's entity. Do this as many times with as many different cards as you wish. If you are alone you may just draw a card, ground yourself in the entity and ponder the prompts.

In the Sylix water declaration, there is an overarching theme of respect; our (human) relationship with the other-than-human is not something that should be taken lightly (Okanagan Nation Alliance, 2014). We are asking you as users of this suit to reflect upon relationships between other entities from a place of respect; as this suit is situated on unceded Sylix territory, we suggest and recommend that users take the time to read the Sylix Water Declaration — not just because the location is a pond, or in other words, water—but because it asks us to view water as a friend, companion, and relation.

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The “Nutrients” card uses reading, interpreting, and sensing methods, centering a relational and embodied approach to understanding soil nutrients. Reading the soil acknowledges the entity as a knowledge holder, rather than information to be extracted. Encouraging players to consider how nutrients emerge from the soil's relationship to water, decay, and plants will deepen their understanding of Pond as a living system.

The Death cards include a “Decomposition” and “Organic Matter” card. The decomposition card invites the players to participate in resisting colonial ideals of expected productivity through resting. Theorized by Métis feminist Danielle Pierson, resting allows an individual to build meaningful connections with their surroundings. By following our suit, the player is automatically given time to rest and build a respectful relationship with Pond. The organic matter focuses on recognizing the importance of this process's outcome, in which life is presented as the result of death, and allows the player to enter a mindset of storytelling.

Some cards may require an accessible alteration to execute the practice. For example, the “Creatures” card requires the player to get physically close to the ground for visibility reasons, whereas “Air” requires smelling. The “Air” card does not require any accessibility changes, since most players have noses that can smell. However, when we ‘dig’ deeper, factors of exclusion can arise, such as congestion or a poor sense of smell due to a previous condition.

So, in the interest of accessibility and inclusion, many of our cards mention modifications. It is important to recognize that Pond itself is not yet an accessible or inclusive place—its natural form is not conducive for all bodies to have complete access to it. Overall, we hope to inspire users to build a relationship with Pond through its soil, the place that grounds us.



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Soil

Each card in this suit relates to three “-ing” words. “-Ing” words help participants deepen their understanding of Pond as a place.

The “Creatures” card connects to attuning because the player’s sense of sight is used to identify Pond’s visible and invisible soil creatures by specifying what kind of creatures they are. The player must attune (Kanngieser) to the Pond for a specific period. As for layering, Pond’s different soil creatures are found in distinct layers of the ground, offering rich metaphors for the player to reflect on and deepen their sense of place.

The “Roots” card centers on the concepts of listening, signaling, and connecting, highlighting the complex communication occurring beneath the Pond’s surface. Using the telephone method, the player is invited into a practice of listening with both their ears and imagination. This relates to the Syilx understanding of *tmixw*, where the land is a living relative; our thoughts are part of a shared, reciprocal exchange. Finally, the card focuses on connecting the player’s personal identity to the broader ecological and social “root systems” that support them.

Grounded in the Syilx Water Declaration, the “*siwtkw*” card encourages users to develop a relationship with water through reciprocating, reflecting, and respecting. Based on Syilx knowledge that water is the lifeblood of our land and all living things, this card asks users to consider their relationship to water and reflect on how water sustains the lives and relationships of the dirt-dwelling entities of the Pond.

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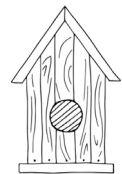
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We are asking you to view entities as sentient beings, and we can think of no better way to learn how to do that than to learn from the people who have inhabited and shared the land with other beings since time immemorial. Jeannette Armstrong (2020) makes the observation that how we understand our relationship to the land is often intertwined with our relationships with other people. It is essential, as Armstrong (2020) discusses, that we should think about how we engage with each other, and in doing so reflect upon what we depend upon so much: the land. We think this could be a useful way to understand how objects that may be foreign are also in relationship with the land upon which they reside, which in turn could help individuals take an introspective look upon their own belonging and their relationship to their surroundings.

There is increasing uncertainty about what we mean by ‘places’ and how we relate to them. Globalization leads to fragmentation and disruption of the local (Massey 1991). This is how we end up with foreign objects that were born of some tentacle of globalization. The objects we chose have a long trail of social relations involved in their composition compared to other things found at the pond that don’t have as far away shadow places (Plumwood 2008). Naming the entities in this deck as foreign aims to call out their shadow places and how they got to the pond. Foreignness in the context of this idea is a spectrum and the entities in our deck fall in various places on that spectrum.



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Trees

The Tree Suit does not begin with a question. It begins at the Old Pond, an ecosystem held within the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Peoples. Throughout the deck, we refer to it as Pond to lean into its agency rather than contain it within the grammar of possession. It is not a site to be surveyed, but a presence that acts, holds, and knows. This agency extends beyond the water's edge and outwards into every tree that drinks from Pond, shelters beside Pond, and decomposes back into Pond across each stage of its life cycle. The deck refuses the coloniality of taxonomy, which names and flattens experience before relation can take root. Drawing from Beaty et al.'s (2024) call for relational engagement with social-ecological histories of place, each card repositions the user not as a detached surveyor of Pond, but as a situated participant in its ongoing, breathing life.

Two Syilx knowledge systems ground this deck, not as borrowed frameworks, but as the living epistemic soil through which it finds its roots. The Syilx siwtk^w (Water) Declaration (Okanagan Nation Alliance, 2014) holds that water connects all life, and at Pond, this resonates not as a metaphor but as a felt materiality, sensed in the way every tree, every arriving season, and every researcher is already suspended within the same entanglement.

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The ȡiyátnx^w, the Syilx 13 Moon Calendar (Okanagan Nation Alliance, 2025), furnishes a different kind of time. Where Westernized epistemology accumulates forward toward conclusion, the ȡiyátnx^w turns cyclically. Each card leans into the season that it symbolically aligns with, drawing on the ȡiyátnx^w as arhythm to be moved by; insisting that all life, like the tree, moves cyclically within itself. This undoing of linearity opens onto the suit's methodological core that hovers at the intersections of humility, relationality, reciprocity, and attunement.

Following Kanngieser (2020), listening is understood not as passive reception but as a whole-body aperture through which the site speaks. It is this full, embodied attention that each card cultivates, moving the user away from extraction and towards encounter; asking what presence looks like when it is offered rather than imposed, and whose knowledge germinates where others have been buried. This tension between attentive arrival and honest unsettlement leads the suit towards its commitment to access and inclusion. Full-body attunement decenters vision as the primary research sense, opening the deck's practices to users across a range of sensory abilities.

Where physical presence at Pond or mobility is constrained, our alternative methods sustain the possibility of relation without requiring proximity, while still allowing for an embodied experience. Syilx words throughout the deck are accompanied by QR codes linking to audio pronunciations (First Peoples Cultural Foundation, 2026), ensuring the suit honours the importance of oral language in Syilx culture and continues to move away from the hegemony of sight. Thus, the Tree Suit does not render Pond from a safe distance; it draws the user into place, entangled with trees and time, where all are altered by the encounter.



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