

Welcoming Willow and Celebrating Cultural and Community Uses

Report prepared by Sarah Common, Hives for Humanity Society

April 1, 2022

Teacher: Leona Brown

Location: Beaconsfield Park/Italian Cultural Centre

This report is a continuation of our January 2022 work and February 2022 Report: “Honouring Willow and Harvesting for Cultural and Community Uses” which can be found here on our website: <https://www.hivesforhumanity.com/annual-reports>

At our first gathering we were shared uses and stories by teachers Leona Brown, Chrystal Sparrow and Sharon Kallis, and we gathered at windfallen trees at Trout Lake.

In this continuation, we share the pathways of the gifts from these trees forward.

WHY we do the work:

We do the work to honour the trees - both the life they give us and so many beings, and their own lives spanning hundreds of years and many changes - and to honour this land that is unceded land and shared territories of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh.

We do this work together to create new pathways of connection, sharing practices across cultures and through communities, to decolonise our work, our minds, and our city we live in – so that everyone may feel it is their home here, with shared responsibility and in shared practices of respect and reciprocity.

HOW we do the work:

We notice, we slow down, we listen deeply.

Leona Brown, Gitksan and Nisga’a mother and Indigenous Independent Cultural Facilitator, noticed the fallen willow trees along the edges of Trout lake, after heavy rainfalls and high winds of November 2021. In January 2022 we honoured the fallen trees, gathering with them in circle to share story and of how we may use their gifts: logs for seating, whips for weaving, chips for rooting, lichen for dye, ferns for replanting, punk wood for hide tanning.

We gathered on April 1 2022 at the Italian Cultural Centre on the edge of BEaconsfield park, where Hives for Humanity hosts a Pollinator Meadow and Therapeutic Apiary, and has been working with LEona Brown to vision the removal of invasive berries, to be replanted with Native berries, and surrounded by fireweed and native plants and



shrubs, to provide forage for all kinds of beings, medicine in plants and food, connection to land and culture. This work is being supported by Parks Board through Neighbourhood Matching Fund.



WHAT we have created with the willow we harvested:

- 1) LOGS: Seating and protection for the salal, thimbleberry, knickinick and other native plants we are bringing to the site. We identified three logs to the Parks Board staff team who transported them to site for us, placed them in an arc of seating, to make space for cultural sharing, rest, and naturalized environment to grow our meadow around. Now when we meet on site we have somewhere to sit, to dream, to rest, to share our practices in community.



- 2) WHIPS: We made fencing to protect our plantings, using techniques taught in previous years by Sharon Kallis. Making sure not to use fresh willow, as fresh willow will root and take over the beds, using up the water that our other plants much need for growth!



- 3) WHIPS: We wove tension baskets for drying herbs, and for offering as gifts in ceremony and memorial, with techniques learned through Earthand Gleaners Society. The trimmings from the weavings were soaked in water and then poured on our plantings to offer rooting hormone from the willow (a voracious rooter) to encourage them in establishing in their new homes.



- 4) PUNK-WOOD: We saved and dried the punk wood, to deliver back to Chrystal Sparrow for tanning hides.
- 5) LICORICE FERNS: We planted them in shaded areas in our Hastings Folk Garden, as we held memorial for our community. As we tend these plants we remember young ones who passed, who we remember as we practice care for these plants.
- 6) LICHEN: We are fermenting the lichen to use as plant dye later in the season.

We gathered in circle to share the stories of willow in our lives, the ways we have learned from these trees and other plants, the way they offer us healing and demonstrate resilience.

We notice that the willows are already sprouting new growth, despite having fallen in the windstorm, they are giving new life already.

We planted the native berries, we sprinkled seeds of fireweed, and we offered medicine to the plants and our prayers of welcome and healing, in gratitude for the land and all it provides.

[Listen to the sounds of the day here](#) (rain falling, spades digging, trains passing, birds calling, the wind)

[Listen to more sounds of the day here](#) (children passing, spades digging, movement, gulls, our voices gently.)



Reflections from our team:

On lichen, from Cait:

Working with lichen has long been of interest to me but I haven't yet felt there was a pathway in to collecting in a good way. While studying ethnobotany at university, I've heard lichen referred to as 'the lungs of the forest' by guest speaker T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss who is an artist, ethnobotanist, educator and activist of Skwxwú7mesh, Stó:lō, Hawaiian and Swiss descent. Learning that lichen grows mere millimeters a year has invited me to slow down my pacing and think through how I may introduce myself to its rhythm of life and the role this being holds in the forest community.

Lichen also teaches about symbiosis: the coming together of land and terrestrial beings - a fungus and an algae and/or cyanobacteria. Witnessing a relationship where the sharing of needed essential resources is central to the function of survival - food and shelter - has been a powerful metaphor. Working with Sharon Kallis to prune the fallen willow tree so that we may notice who else is here beyond the intentions of the day has been a joy. We uncovered *Phycia adscendens* and *Xanthoria parietina* - with care and attention, I collected the sticks, scraped and separated the lichens. They are currently fermenting in an ammonia bath (submerged on: 9 February, 2022) and will be brought back into community to tell the story through textile dyeing of slowing down process, noticing and ethical harvest. With gratitude to Leona Brown, Hives for Humanity, Chrystal Sparrow for the opportunity to participate in this ceremony and contribute my questions.

Cait (she/they) is of Doukhobor (Russian) and Irish descent and has an embodied research praxis called *Gentle Geographies* where she works across communities as a weaver, - both literally and metaphorically.



On touching old trees, from Horace:

It felt good to touch the old tree. It was my first time at Trout Lake – I got lost so easy – i never left the DTES in 20yrs - it's my home. It felt good to go far out and find new people who care so much about the land.

Budget:

Shovels and gloves \$200
Chairs for elders and access needs \$200
Canopy Tent in case of rain \$200
in kind Hives for Humanity

Snacks and drinks \$60

Honoraria for knowledge sharers:

- a. Leona Brown \$360
- b. Paula Cruise \$360 in kind Hives for Humanity

Transportation (Modo truck for materials) \$60

Soil x10 large bags \$110
Plants x 30 pots \$600

Honouraria for Participants x 6 - \$150
Support work – organizing, admin - \$360
Gifts for teachers - \$100

Total: \$2760

