

TEIA DAS 5 CURAS

*Weaving 5 dimensions
of healing*



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INTRODUCTION



Teia das 5 Curas (T5C)* is an education and research network that involves educators and knowledge keepers from Indigenous communities in Brazil, Canada and Peru; the art and research collective *Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures* (GTDF¹); and *The University of British Columbia* (UBC). From 2017 until 2022, the project was funded by the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council* (SSHRC) as well as the *Musagetes Foundation* and *Terra Adentro* project.

The goal of the network T5C, created within a context of the collapse of the modern colonial system, is to prepare for the rapid deterioration of this system while learning to nurture other possibilities of (co)existence.

This version of the book, aimed for non Indigenous audiences interested in Indigenous teachings, offers an overview of the collaborations developed during five years between the Indigenous communities that are part of the T5C and GTDF collective, that focus on the complicated colonial interfaces between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of being, knowing, learning, desiring and living.

*Teia das 5 Curas resists a full translation. Throughout the text, we will refer to it simply as T5C. In literal terms, it could be rendered as “The Web of the 5 Healings.” An editorial choice was made here to keep the name in Portuguese. When needed, a companion phrase in English may appear alongside it: “Weaving 5 Dimensions of Healing.”

¹ GTDF is a collective that creates artistic, pedagogical, cartographic, and relational experiments that aim to identify and deactivate colonial habits of being, and to gesture towards the possibility of decolonial futures.



ABOUT THIS RESEARCH



The research upon which this book is based started in 2017, with the aim of inquiring deeper into a decolonial orientation towards social innovation, with focus on the expansion of references and commitments with global justice. For this project, the decolonial orientation was defined as fundamentally concerned with challenging narrow ideas of common good, rethinking traditional flows of knowledge production, resisting paternalistic notions of progress and development, and cultivating an appreciation for ecologies of knowledge while (holding) honoring the gifts and limits of multiple onto-epistemic traditions.

The research agenda and network were consolidated at a gathering in May of 2019 at the Pitaguary people's Monguba village, in the city of Pacatuba, Ceara, north-east of the territory known as Brazil, titled "Un-tying the knot of the illusionary separation between human and nature: unravelling the chain of responsibility".

Teia das 5 Curas: Weaving Dimensions of Healing (T5C) received this name through an Indigenous lens from the participants in the gathering, where they ascribe the current global poly-crisis to a series of diseases caused by violent relationships between human and non-humans, and with the Earth Metabolism, the entity we are all part of, referred to as a generous mother, Mother Earth (*Mãe-Terra*).

Following the initial gathering, two subsequent meetings/ceremonies with the whole network took place in October 2019 and March 2020. Besides those, T5C researchers participated in many other opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences between each other and broader audiences. Examples of those include participation by Brazilian Indigenous people in events at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and the participation of people from the network at the ceremony of Muricy and Batiputa, which takes place yearly at Aldeia São Jose, from the Tremembé da Barra do Mundaú people. Because of Covid-19 pandemic, many other activities took place online and important parts of this research were



synthesized through exchange of extensive telephone audios between the participants of the network.

T5C reunited again in person during the struggle against a court case in Brazil that would represent a major downturn for Indigenous people rights towards their lands, called Marco Temporal (which is still a threat at the time of publication of this booklet).

Furthermore, this book also credits ancestral knowledge and its ability to resist many forms of violence and continue to be transmitted through the relationship with the land, chants, prayers, ceremonies, elders and through listening to non-humans such as plants, rivers, dunes, forest and animals.

This research project has been funded by, and is partly directed to non-Indigenous audiences and institutions, including universities, who operate under hegemonic ways of knowing and being. Amongst the paradoxes that we hold through this booklet is the amount that is lost through the cultural translation in order to make the content intelligible within a colonial grammar. With this we refer specifically to the significant gap between what the terms ‘ceremony’, ‘medicine’, ‘chants’, ‘ancestors’, and ‘relational work’ might mean to the Indigenous researchers and the intended readers.

Beyond pointing out some pathways to re-calibrate our relationship with the Earth metabolism, this booklet brings a critical perspective towards modernity’s hegemonic ways of being and its pernicious impacts on most human and non-human lives. With this goal in mind, we aim here to establish a dialogue between the wisdom shared by T5C knowledge keepers with pedagogical tools developed by GTDF collective. Therefore, each chapter starts with a social cartography whose goal is to avoid (or minimize) common traps of the encounter between different ways of knowing with distinct ethical and relational principles, positioned differently within the colonial matrix of power.

They can support readers to map, articulate and establish a different relationship with modernity’s “disease”, but do not propose any “healing”, nor any universal, large-scale treatment.

Finally, it is important to point out that the healing processes shared here by the Indigenous communities that are part of T5C network demands a constant practice of attunement with the land, and with visible and invisible beings (the enchanted ones). They are not to be approached as something to be done once, consumed and then discarded. This is a reminder that the way we relate to these wisdoms is always at risk of reproducing violent modern patterns of behavior, and it is our responsibility to avoid repeating those mistakes.

One tool that can support us in identifying these patterns is called “HEADS UP”, that maps seven patterns of harmful engagement with different knowledge. These are:

- Hegemonic practices (reinforcing and justifying the status quo);
- Ethnocentric projections (presenting one view as universal and superior);
- Ahistorical thinking (forgetting the role of historical legacies and complicities in shaping current problems);
- Depoliticized orientations (disregarding the impacts of power inequalities and delegitimizing dissent);
- Self-serving motivations (invested in self-congratulatory heroism);
- Un-complicated solutions (offering ‘feel-good’ quick fixes that do not address root causes of problems);
- Paternalistic investments (seeking a ‘thank you’ from those who have been ‘helped’)

If you are reading this text and are not part of groups that are/have been historically and systematically oppressed, having their rights and territories violated, we recommend that you revisit this acronym constantly and check if/when those patterns emerge in your practice². When this happens, be extra careful with your thoughts, reflections and actions. At the end of the next section, we offer another tool that can support you in this process.

However, If you are willing to deeply engage with the violent patterns that arise from modernity and our own complicity in this violence, GTDF collective also offers through the University of Victoria a six weeks program called Facing Human Wrongs³. The program aims to support people in processing responses, moving away from guilt and shame, and cultivating a compass of sobriety, maturity, discernment, and responsibility. It provides a pedagogy that offers tools to gradually expand the capacity to confront difficult and painful issues without demanding quick fixes or feeling overwhelmed and immobilized. It also aims to support people in navigating complexity and holding space for uncertainty, ambivalence and paradox. It is an invitation to “dig deeper and relate wider” in a life-long and life-wide inquiry

² This and other GTDF tools can be found on the GTDF website, eg. <https://decolonialfutures.net/headsup/>

³ At the time of publication, this course can be found at <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/teaching-learning-and-development/courses/facing-human-wrongs-2-0-climate-complexity-and-relational-accountability/>. Alternatively, interested readers can search “facing human wrongs” amongst university of victoria’s continuing studies department’s courses offerings.

about how we can show up to each other and to the planet differently in these challenging times. Facing Human Wrongs course outcomes are also driven by the Earth Care framework developed by T5C network and outlined in this book.

Offering those tools and Facing Human Wrong program is an invitation to all of us to be more accountable for our actions and our way of relating to/with the world, other human beings and the non-human world; in the end, it is each reader's decision how to respond to this invitation. (For now, we welcome you to reading the rest of this book.)

LIVING IN DISEASE

Humanity's individualism, greed and arrogance are causing biodiversity loss, soil exhaustion, water and air poisoning, drastic changes in the climate and the extinction of plants and animals, which is leading to our own extinction. We need to wake up to the fact that our planet is sick, that we are part of the disease and that it is our responsibility to commit to the possibility of an ongoing recovery in order to heal.

This is a difficult and painful process, but without it, we will not be able to understand why this way of living, this "house" built by colonialism, is collapsing now. If we do not face this uncomfortable learning process now, our dreams, hopes and desires will keep reproducing the same fantasies that have led us to this moment, and we will continue to produce violence towards the living web of relations we are a part of.

Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers from all over the world have been warning us for generations that there will be a time when Earth will respond to the way we are treating her. The earth is a living metabolism with consciousness, and we are part of this organism. She is not a property or a resource. Earth is our mother, and we are an extended, complex and often abusive family, composed of human and non-human relatives.

Many Indigenous people still carry those teachings, but these are not concepts to be written in books and automatically absorbed by our consciousness. These teachings are a way of living that goes beyond our cognitive understanding. To live in direct respectful relation with the land and the future generations is not just a beautiful statement to be uttered. It needs to be accompanied by and inspire practices, actions and affective commitments that promote sobriety, maturity, discernment and responsibility. These practices, that we call SMDR, could potentially (without guarantees) lead us to a path other than our path to our own extinction, a path stimulated by individualism, greed and arrogance.



We need an education for healing humanity, but facing the disease we are collectively denying is the precondition for any healing to take place. Therefore, an education for healing starts with a confrontation with the disease, before opening up the possibility for something new and healthier to emerge. This involves a process of disillusionment with fantasies of progress, development and conceptualization of what ‘civilization’ is. These delusions can be hard and painful to break, because they sustain our sense of comfort that’s made possible by a profound numbness to the permanent state of violence against humans and non-humans. Without this first step, it is very unlikely that we will be able to commit to an honest process of collective healing.

Earth herself and the global challenges of the present are good teachers to start us off on this task. We can choose to begin this education now, or wait for things to get worse and start later, once we are truly out of options. In order to do this, we will need a lot of courage, compassion, humility and patience. We will need to reactivate a form of love that has been numbed but is still latent inside us all.

In this context, the T5F network centers the living land metabolism (as opposed to anthropocentrically centering ‘humanity’, be it by changing hearts and minds or advocating political action). From this central land relationship, our approach maps out practices and processes aimed at healing and transforming our systems and patterns of thinking, feeling, relating, economic transaction and engaging with the cycles of the wider metabolism of the planet that we are part of. These practices are based on those maintained by the Indigenous community members of the T5C network.

The ethical encounter of modernity/coloniality with other knowledge systems demands an active renunciation of certain elements that structure the western paradigm. Specifically, these include the desires for epistemic authority, for unrestricted autonomy, certainty, progress and control. When engaging with this material, then, we invite readers to observe their own reactions and impulses, and to learn to notice when those are connected to these colonial/modern desires, in order to start unpacking them. One of the tools that we use to do this work in GTDF collective that may support you is called 7 steps back/ 7 steps forward:

7 STEPS FORWARD/BACKWARDS⁴

The following list of invitations for “steps back” and “steps forward” is designed to assist individuals and groups, especially in the Global North, in addressing the intricate challenges of bringing people together to respond to contemporary issues. These invitations draw from experiences navigating racial and colonial dynamics in group processes, as well as navigating conflicting analyses or diagnoses of problems and theories of change. They aim to challenge the ways mainstream problem-solving approaches set up a false dichotomy between positivity, action, hopefulness, and solutions versus negativity, complaining, hopelessness, and inaction. This dichotomy is limiting and fails to provide a holistic perspective on complex issues.

This tool has been developed from working with another of the limitations of mainstream approaches to problem solving, namely, the idealizations that have emerged that serve to make challenges seem more manageable and positive, while ignoring their inherent limitations, harm, and costs. If we can identify and step back from these idealizations, we might expand our capacity to embrace the full spectrum of reality. This is essential when addressing complex challenges and coordinating efforts in a mature, accountable, and ecologically responsible manner. This involves acknowledging both the pleasant and the uncomfortable, the difficult and the self-serving aspects of the situation, as well as the known and unknown factors. Building resilience to handle discomfort, uncertainty, complexity, and complicity in systemic harm is seen as crucial for effective problem-solving and collaboration in this complex world.

7 STEPS BACK

Step back from your self-image: What are your real investments, fears, hopes and intentions and where do they come from? What emotions, insecurities, unexamined desires or unprocessed traumas could be driving your decision making? What emotional states are you actively avoiding and at what cost? What does your ego feel entitled and justified to do? To what extent do these entitlements and justifications limit your capacity to face and address the challenges at hand?

Step back from your generational cohort: How are the associated challenges perceived and experienced by other generations? How are different generations interpreting reality differently, experiencing it differently and expecting different things from it and how come? How fast are these changes happening? What is your generation being called out on? To what extent are the interests of incoming

⁴ <https://decolonialfutures.net/7-steps-back-forward-aside/>

generations represented in your usual problem posing, problem solving, and coordination and accountability approaches?

Step back from the universalization of your social/cultural/economic parameters of normality: What does the privilege you carry prevent you from seeing and experiencing? How is your privilege also a loss? What are you projecting as true, real, normal and desirable for everyone and how does that reflect your own background? How can these projections become harmful to others and/or limit possibilities for relationship building and/or coordination? Who could refuse to work with you on legitimate grounds?

Step back from your immediate context and time: How do the challenges in your immediate context reflect wider patterns of change in society across different timescales? What historical, systemic and/or structural forces are at work? What is your perspective of the larger picture? What are the boundaries of this perspective (how is it limited)? How is our limited view of our context impacting our capacity for accountability and responsibility?

Step back from familiar patterns of relationship building and problem solving that you have been socialized into: To what extent has your approach to the problem been conditioned and limited by the culture it emerged from? What alternative ways of seeing, doing, relating and being are already viable, but are currently unimaginable to you and those around you? What are you missing out on? Who/what are you accountable to and how come? What accountabilities are you denying, rejecting and/or neglecting? What are you indifferent to and how come?

Step back from the normalized pattern of elevating humanity above the rest of nature: To what extent and how is what is unfolding a consequence of the perceived separation between “man and nature” and/or the rendering of “nature” as property? How would you approach the problem differently if other species and entities (e.g. rivers, coral reefs, mountains) had legal personhood (if you could be liable for damages, negligence, injury and ecocide) and if they were accorded independent and inalienable rights to exist and to flourish (i.e. rights of nature)? To what extent are the interests of other species represented in your problem posing, problem solving, accountability and coordination approaches?

Step back from the impulse to find quick fixes and expand your capacity not to be immobilized by uncertainty, complicity and complexity: In what ways is your approach to the problem part of the problem? To what extent are you being driven by desires for innocence, benevolence and hopefulness (e.g. a savior complex) and how can these desires be harmful and/or detrimental to the task at hand? How



can you leverage the recognition of complicity in systemic harm towards deeper and more enduring forms of responsibility and accountability? To what extent are you equipped to repair and weave relationships grounded on trust, respect, consent, reciprocity and accountability?

7 STEPS FORWARD (AND/OR ASIDE)

Step forward with honesty and courage to see what you don't want to see: commit to expanding your capacity to sit with what is real, difficult and painful: the good, the bad, the ugly and the brokenness of humanity within and around you. In what ways are your projections, idealizations, expectations, hopes, fears and fragilities preventing you from approaching the aspects of the problem that are unpleasant for you and/or that challenge your sense of reality and/or self-image? What aspects of the challenge at hand are you not willing or ready to see and how does this impair your ability to address the challenge itself?

Step forward with humility to find strength in openness and vulnerability : commit to shedding your conditioned arrogance and sense of merit, status and self-importance in order to decenter yourself and center the challenge you are trying to address. In what ways are you reproducing patterns that center your desire for recognition, validation, prestige or protagonism (e.g. the savior complex)? How can these desires limit your capacity to build relationships and to mobilize the coordination that is necessary for the challenge at hand?

Step forward with self-reflexivity so that you can read yourself and learn to read the room: commit to tracing where your cognitive, affective and relational patterns of engaging with reality are coming from, where they are at, where they are going, their limitations and the ways they impact others and are part of the problem; learn to step back from yourself in order to read (the room) and to read how you (and what you are doing consciously and unconsciously) are being read in the room: learn to see yourself from other peoples' perspectives, especially the unflattering parts, and learn to be ok with that (you won't be able to control it anyway).

Step forward with self-discipline to do the work on yourself so that you don't become work for other people: commit to identifying and interrupting compulsions and impulses grounded on socially sanctioned and conditioned harmful patterns such as greed, vanity, arrogance, indifference, indulgence, extraction and consumption (of time, labour or energy of others). To what extent are you aware of your own compulsions and unhealthy reality-coping mechanisms? How do you justify the continuity of these patterns to yourself?



Step forward with maturity to do what is needed rather than what you want to do: commit to the long term project of becoming a good elder and ancestor for all relations. Taking into account that mainstream culture encourages and rewards self-infantilization and the denial of responsibility, how can you reorient yourself towards eldership and generational accountability? To what extent are you aware of the complexity of your own thoughts, emotions, investments and patterns of relationship building (the internal conversations that are happening within you)? What stories that you are telling yourself need to be further examined? What learning/unlearning have you been avoiding? Why and at what cost (for yourself and/or others)?

Step forward with expanding discernment and attention: commit to expanding your capacity for discernment in proportion to the increase in complexity, this includes your capacity to read across time and across different layers of reality, and to hold paradoxes, tensions and uncertainties in view. What do you need to learn or unlearn cognitively, affectively and relationally in order not to be immobilized and/or overwhelmed by complexity, ambiguity, plurality and unknowability?

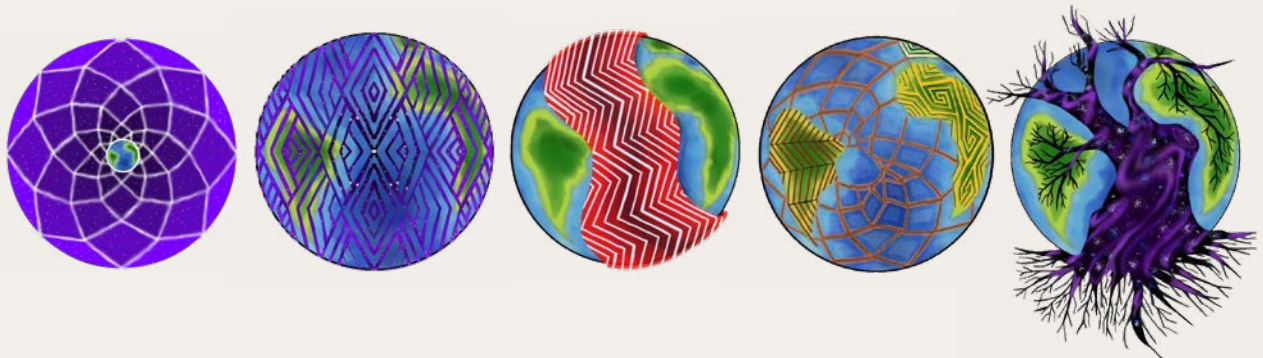
Step forward with adaptability, flexibility, stamina and resilience for the long haul: move for the sake of learning to coordinate and be transformed by the process rather than arrive somewhere: be prepared to fall, to fail, to have your plans shattered, to be stretched, to have your heart broken (open, not apart), to change course and to find joy in the struggle itself rather than in the imagined prize at the end. To what extent are your desires and calculations to arrive at a predetermined destination preventing you from engaging in the experiments and experimentations whose failures will provide the “data” for new directions to take and better places we may aspire to go, that we cannot imagine from the outset?

Each of these steps (both steps back and steps forward) require unlearning what we have been cognitively, affectively and relationally conditioned to think, feel, relate, hope and imagine in modern/colonial systems (including systems of formal education). This is very different from self-actualization because it is not about “mastery” (filling a cup), but about “depth” (emptying that cup, shattering it and allowing the pieces to rebuild themselves into something you cannot imagine from the outset). The unlearning required for each step will likely be life-long.





DIMENSIONS OF HEALING





1

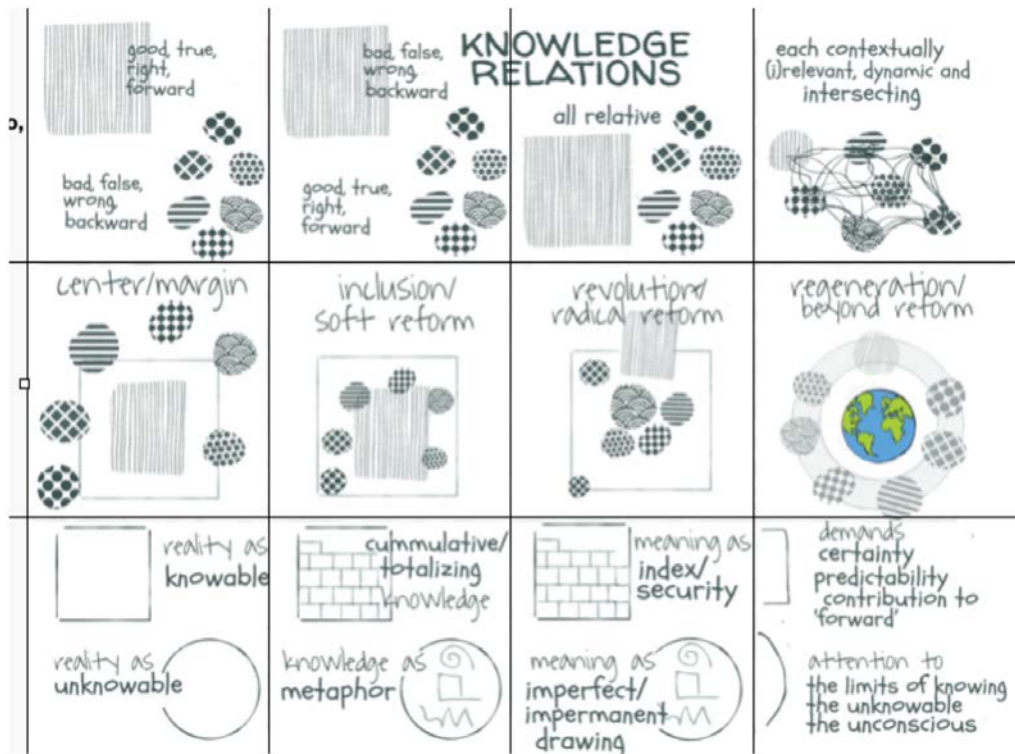


HEALING AND
TRANSFORMING OUR
PATTERNS OF
THINKING



GTDF INVITATION

CARTOGRAPHY - KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS



The above cartography, titled “Knowledge Relations,” invites critical reflection on various approaches to the encounter between diverse knowledge systems and existences. It does so by exploring concepts of certainty and truth, center and margin, and the known and the unknown.

In the first line, where we emphasize the connections between concepts of right and wrong, and true and false, we can see in the 1st column the dominance of a particular knowledge system (such as that of modernity/coloniality), which is regarded as virtuous, correct, and truthful, while other knowledge systems are dismissed and labeled as incorrect, undesirable, and outdated. One potential response linked to the 1st column can be located in the 2nd column, an approach that simply reverses these positions, considering all hegemonic knowledge to be negative, violent, flawed, and regressive, and all other knowledge traditions to be liberatory, infallibly wise, positive, accurate, and genuine. Another effort to readjust these relationships is shown in the third quadrant, where value judgments are stripped away, and there is an attempt to appreciate each form of knowledge within its specific context, while supposedly eliminating hierarchies.



This approach is characteristic, for example, of the postmodern movement in the human sciences, whose formulation is a (timid and insufficient) attempt by academia to redeem itself from its role in validating and affirming colonial regimes. The last column proposes an approach in which these forms of knowledge interact more dynamically, aware of their relevance and irrelevance according to each historical, political, and metabolic context and moment.

The second line reflects on the relationships between center and margin, and the attempts to modify these relationships through what we call soft reforms, in which the margins are drawn closer to the practices and institutions of the hegemonic center; through radical reform, where the margins attempt to occupy and dethrone the hegemonic center; and beyond reform, where the central focus is the Earth's metabolism, and these forms of knowledge engage in dialogues and exchanges in service to this metabolism.

The third and final column contrasts “Brick” and “Thread” sensibilities in the context of knowledge construction and its relationship with the known and the unknown. It uses the analogy of knowledge constructed with Brick sensibilities, akin to modernity (Cartesian rationalism and empiricism), and knowledge woven with Thread sensibilities, inspired by Indigenous peoples with more holistic and integrated relationships with the Earth metabolism.

In the Brick sensibilities, there's the belief that reality can be fully known and captured through bricks, forming a solid and inviolable wall of knowledge. This knowledge aims to provide predictability, control, and certainty, effectively indexing and, to some extent, imprisoning reality to create a sense of security. Conversely, Thread sensibilities acknowledge reality as both unknown and unknowable. Metaphorical knowledge, rather than attempting to grasp reality, seeks to interact with it, remaining unstable, impermanent, and continuously evolving. Thread sensibilities focus on the threshold and the boundaries of knowledge and consciousness.

These distinct sensibilities, rooted in different metaphysical foundations, carry profound implications. Bricks emphasize individuality, fixed form, linear time, and knowledge accumulation, while Threads prioritize inter-wovenness, flexibility, sensory experiences, collective wellbeing, intrinsic value, and relationality. Communication styles differ, with Bricks relying on normative, reason-based thick scripts, and Threads using thin-scripted modes like self-effacement, metaphor, and introspection. However, Thread sensibilities often face suppression in modern institutions, requiring those with such perspectives to translate their messages into Brick sensibility for broader recognition.

Next, we propose a few questions that can support individuals socialized in Brick sensibilities to become more aware of potential mistakes and biases when relating to Thread sensibilities, fostering more generative interactions:

- Are you valuing certainty and predictability in knowledge more than embracing the unknown and ever-changing aspects of reality?
- Are you open to ambiguity and multiple perspectives, or do you tend to seek clear-cut, fixed answers to complex questions?
- When engaging with Thread sensibilities, do you actively listen without immediately judging or dismissing ideas that may differ from your own?
- Have you examined your own biases and assumptions regarding Thread-based knowledge, and are you actively working to overcome them?
- Can you accept that some aspects of reality may be unknowable and resist the urge to seek absolute knowledge in all areas?
- Have you considered how power dynamics and hierarchies may influence your interactions with those who hold Thread sensibilities, and are you working to mitigate these effects?

T5C TEACHINGS

*Who tied this knot didn't know how to tie
Who tied this knot didn't know how to tie
This knot is tied, but I'll untie it now
This knot is tied, but I'll untie it now
Oh, unravel this chain, let the Indigenous do their work
Oh, unravel this chain, let the Indigenous do their work⁵*

Literal translation of a chant of resistance, sung by some Indigenous communities in Brazil, such as the Pitaguary people

⁵ (below the original lyric in Portuguese, that refers to the constraints colonization tried to impose on Indigenous knowledge systems, traditions and spirituality).

Quem deu esse nó não soube dar
Quem deu esse nó não soube dar
Esse nó está atado e eu desato já
Esse nó está atado e eu desato já
Ô desenrola essa corrente deixa o Índio trabalhar
Ô desenrola essa corrente deixa o Índio trabalhar



Indigenous scholar Cash Ahenakew (Ahenakew,2019,p.21), when elaborating the differences between Indigenous and non Indigenous ways of being, proposes a different postulate for the cartesian logic I think therefore I am: “I land (i.e. come from the land), therefore I land (i.e. return to the land).” In this perspective, thought expands the modern/western function of making sense towards different capacities and relationships.

For the Fulni-ô people, thought has a physical existence in the same way as our arms, legs or organs, and it is the place where the strength of the human body dwells. It is the core of spirituality, the connection with the sacred and the bridge through which we surrender to the invisible beings.

Thought’s materiality is also reinforced by Pitaguary people. Their healing processes involve active thinking, especially on sacred locations such as the cashew tree shrine. In their rituals, thoughts can be elevated through the use of fire, herbs and smudge. Healing relations can also be established between the Pajé thought and those that are sick, allowing healing to happen beyond spatial limitations.

The capacity of thought to travel through the spirit of the wind is also acknowledged by Huni Kui people. Furthermore, they emphasize that thought can travel through time, reaching both past ancestries and future generations. It is through these capacities that the elders of the people affirm that it was possible to communicate with different times and to understand requests from animals and other non-human beings.

For the Tremembé from Barra do Mundaú people, chants and prayers are used as a way to root your thoughts and receive orientations from the ancestors. Being people from the sea, their chants are always in relation with water, and they are in itself the journey of enchanted beings.

I travel seven leagues, through the sunbeam.

I travel seven leagues, through the sunbeam.

On the top of that hill, you find “lençol” beach.

On the top of that hill, a sunbeam shone.

On the top of that hill, an Indigenous person called me.

For someone socialized in the institutions of modernity, such as the school system, those kinds of relationship with thought can be seen with suspicion, skepticism, or completely invalidated. That is why within GTDF collective, one of our pedagogical invitations when meeting alterity and other knowledge systems is to intentionally renounce an arrogance cultivated for centuries by modernity/coloniality and to encounter other ways of knowing with humility and openness.



Ubiraci Pataxó, from the Pataxó people, claims a thought decolonization through which learning and knowledge can happen beyond academic spaces, in many different forms. For him, a diverse ecology of knowledge is what allows for a diverse way of tackling the many issues we face as Earth beings in the present time. He claims it is also what can divert us from the body-machine, polluted by the excess of standard and normalized instructions desired by hegemonic institutions of modernity/coloniality.

Just like the rest of the body, thoughts also need to be cleansed regularly to get rid of dirt and noise that affect a more refined perception of the multiple layers of reality, according to Mateus Tremembé.

He also explains that to prepare the cleanse, it is necessary to rest the herbs that are going to be used in water during the night. That practice invites the mystery and the unknown to dwell in our thoughts, an exercise that teaches us to face with humility the limits of our knowledge.

The Pataxó people also suggest that before one speaks, it is important to develop the capacity to invite the heart to analyze and feel that thought, and cleanse it whenever it is possible. A thought that is connected with the heart and intuition is one that has the ability to challenge the stiffness of modernity and enter in the wild entangled world.

A wild thought, proposes Rosa Pitaguary, is one that is not selfish but rather collective, attentive to the well being of all beings and Earth's metabolism itself. For the Pitaguary people, it is not possible to heal a mind that is focused only on the self, because that is the opposite of Mother Earth's thought, that is, one in service of all beings. This is the way the wind, the sun, the rain and the fertile ground, through which seeds flourish, all think.

SOME GESTURES TOWARDS HEALING AND TRANSFORMING OUR PATTERNS OF THINKING

- **Deepening analyses of historical and systemic forms of violence**
- **Critically examining assumptions, desires and complicities in harm**
- **Thinking in multiple layers acknowledging tensions and paradoxes at the intersection of different histories, contexts and worldviews**
- **Responding in generative ways to teachings that challenge one's self image**



- **Making space for and relating generatively to the unknown and the unknowable**
- **Disinvesting in arrogance and desires for totalizing knowledge, superiority, certainty and control.**

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

To accompany the healing and transforming our patterns of thinking session, we invite you to a practice regarding the limitations of your own thinking and to explore knowledge not *about* but *with* the world, also drawing from exiled sensitivities and capacities. Part of this practice needs to be done in pairs, so try to invite someone (preferably, but not necessarily, someone who is also engaging with this guide). With your partner, go to a place with a diversity of non-human beings, such as a square, a park, a yard, a forest, or another space with these characteristics. Bring something to write with and on, as well as a handkerchief for blindfolding. Upon reaching this space, we invite you to go through four movements.

WHAT YOU KNOW YOU KNOW:

Sit in proximity to some other living being (it could be an animal, a plant, a place with wind, water, or sun). Think about everything you know—or think you know—about this being. Write this down as free write for 5 minutes.

WHAT YOU KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW:

Now write a list of the things about this being you wish you knew but you don't. Make sure to also include the unknowable parts. If you feel like shifting from words to sketches or free poetry, allow that to come through.

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW YOU KNOW:

One of you will blindfold themselves and the other will be the guide. The blindfolded person should keep their eyes covered for the entirety of the exercise.

1. The guide will move the blindfolded person through the space making turns and changes of direction to disrupt the spatial orientation of the person being guided.
2. The guide will slowly take their partner towards another being who is present in the square, park or forest where you are, this can be a tree, a rock, or a small ecosystem of plants that stands out (avoid guiding your partner towards animals or poisonous plants).



3. The person being guided should seek permission to interact with this being using all their senses except their vision, taking the time to genuinely get to know this being as best as they can.
4. The guide will take their partner to the starting point, making turns and changes of direction. Once they have arrived at the starting point, remove the blindfold and invite them to identify and approach the being with whom they interacted.
5. Once the person has found this being, they are invited to find a way to thank that being for their interaction.
6. Repeat this exercise switching roles between the person leading and the one being led.

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW:

Sitting with the mystery is one of the senses that have been exiled through modernity mostly because the cognitive overload of verbal language (which can often be self-referential, fixing, and enclosing) obscures other possibilities of relating. Here is an example of what this implies:

Try to remember the song of one of the local birds from your hometown at sunrise.

Take the time to find it in your memory and listen to it.

One way to approach this sound is by asking the following questions: who's the singer? What is the name given to this bird by scientists? What are their migration patterns, their diets, and their taxonomy? What is their singing for? Is it to find a mate? Is it to warn their fellow birds about potential danger? Is it for joy?

These questions are about explaining, categorizing and understanding through meaning; they tap into the cognitive layer of relating. There is nothing inherently wrong about this type of engagement, as long as it doesn't position itself as the only or most appropriate way to connect to sound. It is a limited yet valid way of relating.

Another possible way to relate to this song [and there are many more] is feeling it as touch:

The birdsong makes its way to your window, enters your room and comes in contact with your clothes and skin. It continues to resonate through your flesh, reaching your bones, making them vibrate and resonate this sound "back": This is called bone conduction and it happens when your bones mimic and carry the resonance through the



body. In some ways, your bones are the song for a moment⁶. Then the vibration ceases and what is left is the departing resonant-silence. This encounter happens beyond meaning, interpretation, or legibility. It happens in the affective and relational realm.

Now you are invited to experience this not through sound, but through breath and rhythm:

Sit next to another non-human being. Focus on your bodily-sensations and feel the rhythm of your breath. Try to synchronize your breath with a rhythm present in this being and establish a dialogue through that rhythm. Don't worry about doing this exercise "correctly" as it is more about what is present where you are, as opposed to "getting it right". See if this rhythm can teach you something you don't know about this being.

Reflect on the exercise by considering the following questions when it is complete:

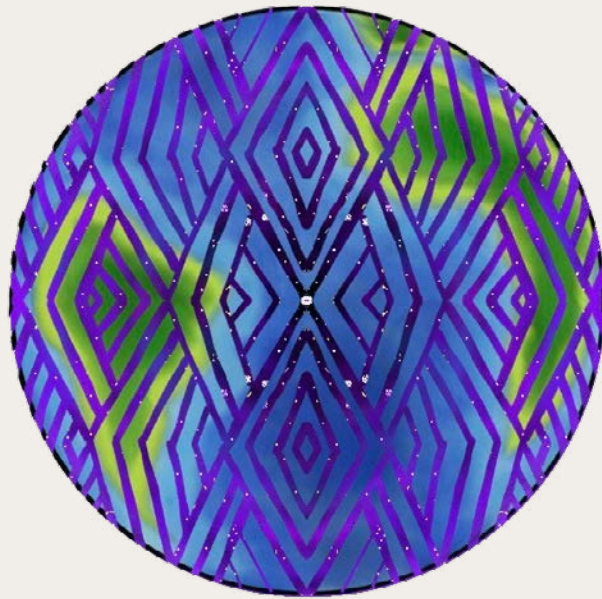
- How did this exercise make you feel about the ability of trying to understand the world through cognitive thought and verbal language?
- What were the moments that you felt more at home? Dive deeper into this feeling, and reflect about the sensations that accompany it.
- Were there awkward moments in this exercise? Can you reflect about why they made you feel awkward and whether it opened some space in your being?
- Did relating with what you didn't realize that you didn't know about other being made you feel different about yourself? why?

⁶ This is known as Entrainment. In physics, entrainment often refers to the synchronization of oscillating systems. In music, entrainment refers to the synchronization of rhythmic patterns. Through entrainment and bone conduction, the listener can hear and feel the sound, but also synchronize to the song's frequencies in the bones, tissues and organs of the body.





2



HEALING AND
TRANSFORMING OUR
PATTERNS OF
FEELING

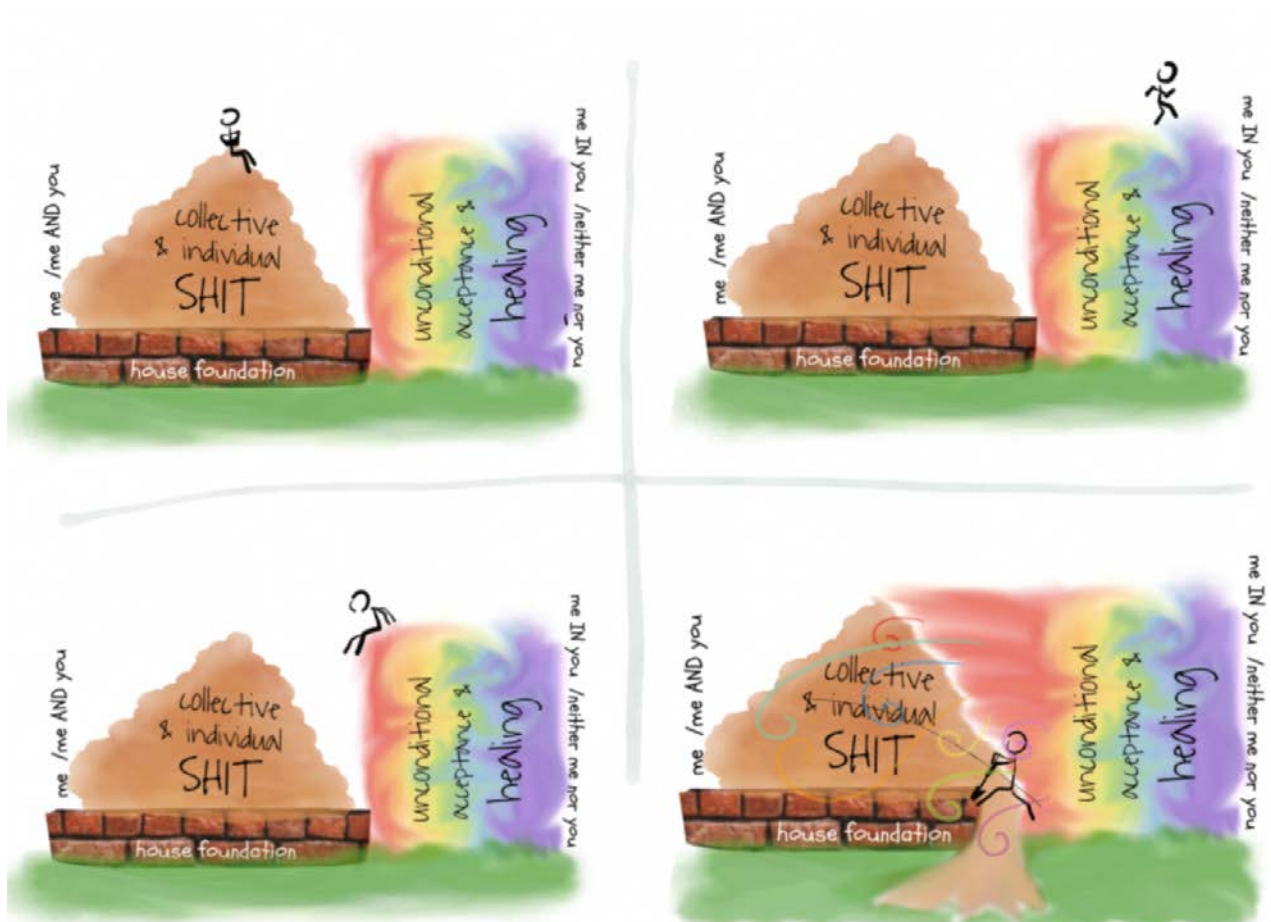
GTDF INVITATION

The metaphor of “shit” is a recurrent one in GTDF collective work. Through this metaphor, we encourage reflection on the effects of what we return to the environment before being digested and how this affects both other human beings and non-human entities.

When in direct relationship with the Earth, shit becomes something that can be composted and transformed into nutrients to enhance soil fertility. However, within the context of modernity, which is based on the separation from metabolism, concrete and bricks prevent the composting of these excrements.

Unprocessed shit left in the environment, often hidden, can lead to a range of problems and diseases. The following cartography and exercise provide a means to confront our own shit potentially learn how to compost it.

SHIT AND RAINBOW CARTOGRAPHY



In the context of the “Cartography of the Shit and the Rainbow”, the “shit” is not simply physical but also psychic and relational: it represents not only external injustices but also our own complicity in perpetuating harm, as well as the ways we psychologically avoid facing that complicity, often by seeking an idealized “rainbow” that bypasses or ignores the complexities and systemic violence of colonialism.

This perspective encourages individuals and societies to confront their own roles in perpetuating oppressive structures, acknowledging their complicity, and taking responsibility for dismantling these systems. It emphasizes the importance of self-reflection to address the deep-seated issues that underlie colonial legacies and other forms of social injustice.

In essence, the “Cartography of the Shit and the Rainbow” challenges us to recognize that pursuing a utopian “rainbow” without addressing our own complicity in harm and without confronting the current realities of colonial violence can trap us into repeating the same harmful mistakes while imagining that we are gesturing towards something different. Therefore, it calls for a more honest and self-aware engagement with the complexities of power, oppression, and justice.

Each one of the four frames present in the cartography propose a different relation towards the shit and the rainbow, and in what follows we will share a few characteristics that help us identify when we are reproducing patterns of each one of these frames. It is important to remember that these are not fixed categories, but rather a way to help us navigate a ‘wickedly’ complex world. The frames on the top are named frames 1 (left) and 2 (right) while the frames on the bottom are named frames 3 (left) and 4 (right).

Signs of Frames 1 and 2 include: a fixation with meaning; an attachment to making choices; a demand for validation and security; a strong desire for consensus, certainty, coherence, and control; the tendency to objectify and consume opportunities and relationships; pretending to know what to do and an obsession with methodology; fear of missing out; fear of the unknowable; awareness of inauthenticity or superficiality leading to anxiety; and the delusion of self-transparency (“I am already there”). These signs are indicative of a mindset that is focused on seeking meaning, control, and validation, often at the expense of genuine authenticity and openness to uncertainty.



Signs of Frames 3 and 4, on the other hand, reflect a shift in perspective. In these frames, a crafted self-image may start to seem unimportant or even pathetic. The individual may no longer feel the need for recognition or the desire to impress or please others. Utility-maximization becomes less relevant, and the idea of pretending to oneself and others appears wasteful in terms of energy and time. The individual’s “bullshit radar” becomes highly sensitive, distinguishing between fake and genuine humility. Generosity and compassion arise naturally, without the need for justifications or a desire to be seen as virtuous. Additionally, there is an unconditional acceptance of everyone’s learning pace and process, along with an open heart that can embrace both pain and joy.



In order to support movement from frames 1 and 2 to frames 3 and 4, we are offering another exercise that can help us identify a few actions that may denote avoiding looking at or running away from our own shit. We mapped 101 as a way to gesture towards infinite, contextual and identitarian possibilities of avoidance and lack of self awareness. (Here we are bringing only 29, but you can find all 101 on the GTDF Website⁷). Finally, it is also important to say that none of these activities are in itself an avoidance to deal with shit, but that the list is a support to develop an internal perception if and when we use them as such.

⁷ <https://decolonialfutures.net/portfolio/101-ways-to-avoid-dealing-with-shit/>

101 WAYS TO AVOID DEALING WITH SHIT

We can no longer...

1. deny it
2. run away from it
3. defer responsibility for it
4. critique our way out of it
1. hug our way out of it
2. meditate our way out of it
3. read our way out of it
4. write our way out of it
5. wish our way out of it
6. moralize our way out of it
7. policy-make our way out of it
8. green our way out of it
9. dream our way out of it
10. fantasize our way out of it
11. self-actualize our way out of it
12. climb our way out of it
13. donate our way out of it
14. sanitize our way out of it
15. permaculture our way out of it
16. non-violently communicate our way out of it
17. tweet our way out of it
18. engineer our way out of it
19. love and care our way out of it
20. fuck our way out of it
21. trip our way out of it
22. celebrate our way out of it
23. fight our way out of it
24. enema our way out of it
25. be one with flowers, forests and whales out of it

Before you begin reading the next healing, we invite you to create your own list of at least 20 ways you avoid dealing with your own mess.



T5C TEACHINGS

The healing of feelings urges us to make room for individual and collective, historical and systemic traumas to be healed, in a way that stops obstructing our connection with Mother Earth and the sense of belonging to the whole. For the Pitaguary people, the traumas we carry affect not only ourselves and how we live, but also how we relate to other people.

Some of the paths drawn by T5C to investigate this healing include: processes of inner cleansing of collective bodies and with the Earth, as well as practices for releasing sorrows, anxieties, weaknesses, attachments, and projections, and the weaving of collective resilience and joy.

As shared by the Fulni-ô elders, the burdens of the anxieties and sorrows we bear are weights far too immense for any individual to carry in solitude. Amidst the diverse communities within the T5C, grounding oneself in the embrace of the Earth consistently emerges as the initial step towards emotional restoration. To surrender to the Earth's nurturing embrace is to grant it the power to mend us, particularly when it comes to the deepest-seated traumas. This journey involves attuning our senses to the whispers of the woods, allowing ourselves to be educated by non-human kin such as trees, branches, leaves, and the whispers of the wind. It extends to the heartfelt bonds and connections cultivated with fellow creatures of the Earth.

This grounding is not solely connected to the non-human realm but also to one's own lineage, encompassing even the ancestors we haven't met in physical form on Earth. Throughout the journey of this research, Grandmother Joana Pitaguary was summoned many times into the conversation with the Pitaguarys, drawing from her wisdom as a midwife and herbalist. Her chants, prayers, and herbal remedies for healing continue to be upheld by the Shaman and the healers of the community.

The Huni Kui community views this interconnection akin to an unbreakable umbilical cord, safeguarding the wisdom and essence of their people across successive generations. This umbilical link extends to the Earth's expansive heart – the very core of humanity's existence. Any fracture in these connections gives rise to afflictions and disharmony. Within this heart-centered perspective, we possess an innate capacity, often overshadowed by the conventions of modern society and institutions, to attune ourselves to the Earth's energy, the spirit of the samaúma tree, and the healing properties of medicinal plants. This heightened sensitivity propels individuals to engage, perceive, and acquire knowledge in profound ways. As our hearts align with the Earth's heartbeat, our minds articulate emotions with precision in response to the sights, textures, and sounds that surround us.



This capacity to feel and perceive with clarity underscores the inherent spirituality and sacredness woven into the fabric of the non-human realm. It acts as a bulwark against the reduction of nature into mere commodities and resources for capital gain. Within the Huni Kui community, it's of paramount importance to counteract this alternate affliction – the tendency to view the world and all its inhabitants solely through the narrow lens of materialism and accumulation.

As the elders of the Tremembé community, known as the “old barks,” transition from this world, it is often said that they are planted on the Earth. In contrast, the youth are seen as the “shoots” of the Earth, entrusted with sowing the seeds that will shape the future. In this intricate perspective, the healing of emotional wounds finds its foundation in the reciprocity woven into their relationship with Mother Earth – a profound interconnectedness that extends to their cherished kin.

This interplay gives rise to the culinary traditions of the Tremembé people, which serve as both an act of nurturing the Earth and a repository of memories, affection, healing, and sustenance. These elements are all vital in their ongoing struggle to protect the Earth. This guardianship embodies a twofold gesture of resilience and solidarity.

The Pataxó people emphasize that we establish relationships with our emotions, as opposed to being our emotions. Our feelings, as living entities, can serve as teachers and fuel for our actions. Rooted in their warrior heritage, one of the lessons imparted by the Pataxó people regarding emotions is learning to become an ally of fear. Instead of allowing fear to paralyze, they advocate for harnessing it as a force that prompts us to pause, reevaluate, and reconsider.

For them, the journey of evolving into a warrior and reshaping their relationship with fear becomes a summons to maturity and sobriety. This call mirrors the transformation that humanity must undergo to address the myriad social and environmental crises knocking at its door, crises born from its own actions. Within the Pataxó worldview, a warrior's duty entails fighting for the well-being of their community, while also activating the thread of intergenerational and interspecies responsibility.

SOME GESTURES TOWARDS HEALING AND TRANSFORMING OUR PATTERNS OF FEELING

- Developing the capacity to be in discomfort and to accept uncertainty without feeling overwhelmed or irritated;
- Learning to access the unconscious and to sit with internal complexities, paradoxes and contradictions;



- Identifying and starting to compost individual and collective projections, attachments, traumas and insecurities;
- Learning to interrupt intellectualization in order to sense, relate and show up differently to oneself and to the world;
- Processing emotions and accessing and releasing pain without narrative framings;
- Disinvesting in desires for consumption and individualism.

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

FOREST WALK “SENSING AT THE EDGES OF OUR LIFELINES”

Making an intentional visit into a forest or space of natural flourishing with care and attention, observing both the beings around and one’s own responses, is one of the learning exercises suggested by GTDF as a means of integrating learning holistically. Here is one aimed at healing and transforming our felt sense of relationality.

- On the center of a piece of paper draw a circle that represents yourself. Take a moment to reflect on who you are and all that this circle represents.



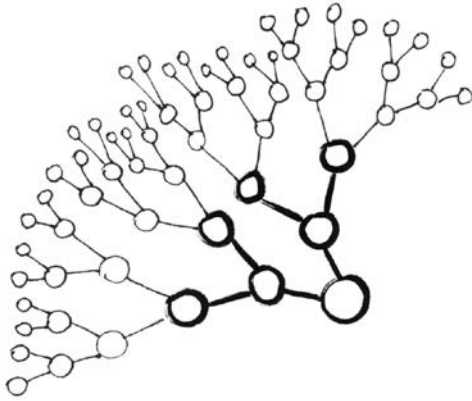
- Now, from the initial circle draw two other circles connected by a line each. These are your parents. Draw lines from your circle to theirs to represent your connection to them.



- Continue to web the lineages of your parent(s) / caregivers(s)” and “grandparent(s)” outwards. Connecting two more circles for your grandmother and grandfather. Go only as far as you can remember the names or stories of these people.



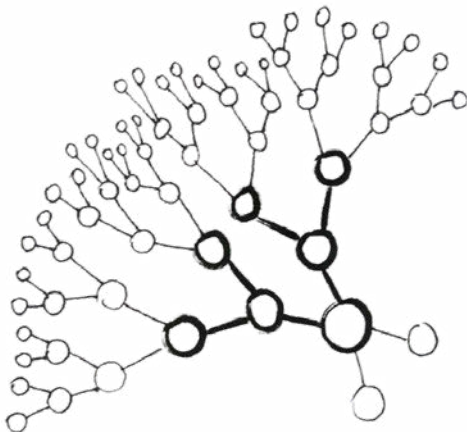
- d. When you don't know the stories anymore, stop and switch the color of your pen. Continue to grow the web, circle by circle, until you reach the end of the page. **Take your time in this process. Acutely imagining and remembering the stories of these people. Each circle is a life: with its struggles, relationships and complexities (physical, social-political, ecological and cosmological).*



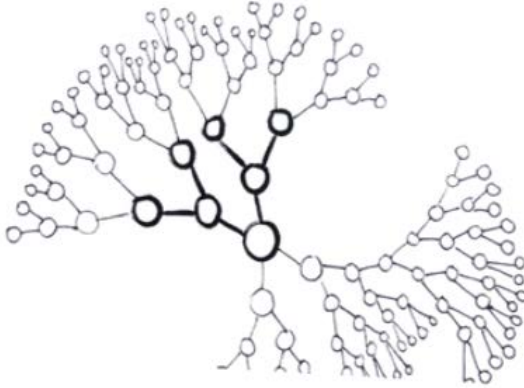
- e. While looking at this map, think-feel about all the foods, lands, peoples, wars, migrations, waters, hate and love that kept these people alive and, in turn, enabled your life. Can you sense how many thousands of generations of life you are connected to in your every breath?

Take a moment before going into the next step to sit with this sensation.

- f. Now bring the paper down again and with the same color, draw two more circles next to the circle that represents yourself—these are your future ancestors. These entities do not necessarily need to symbolize your own children, but they do represent the generations to come.



- g. Now, draw seven generations forward. Remember, they are also the next generations of waters, trees, other animals, air and foods that are inseparable to the living and survival of all species.



Sit with the following question:

How long until the harm in multispecies relationships is irreparable? Notice any emotions that may arise without investing in them.

- h. While looking at this map on the paper, sense the pull of ancestral, relational responsibility in every direction. Feel the ways in which you are never alone. All of your ancestors, past and future, human and more-than-human, are walking with you.

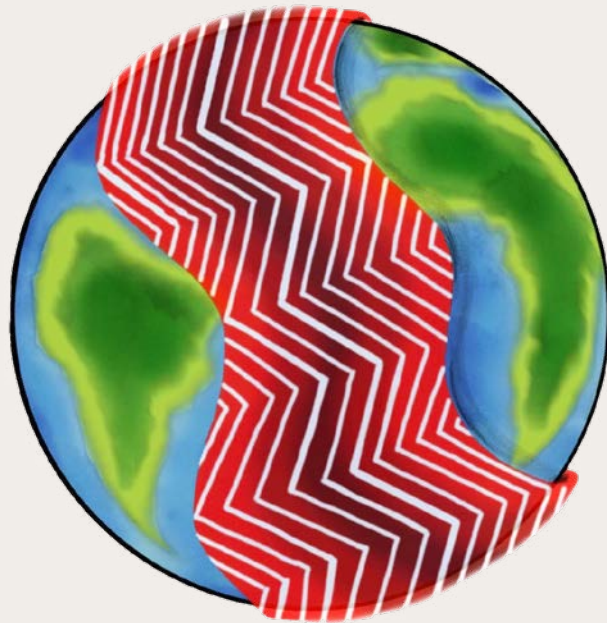
PART C: REFLECTIONS

- i. Can you locate specific teachings that have been passed through your generational line? Can you map how many generations back these teachings are from?
- j. What do you know about your affective intergenerational inheritance – the unprocessed traumas, fears and other emotions that have been passed down through generations? How might this inheritance be influencing some of the ways you show up in the world today?
- k. Which of your habits of existence would you like to see abandoned in 1 generation? In 5 generations? In 10 generations?
- l. What do you do today that you believe would be beneficial for the next generation? And for the next 7 generations?
- m. What are ways to tap into the intergenerational resilience you have also inherited from your ancestors in order to show up with more maturity, sobriety, discernment, and responsibility in the world?





3



HEALING AND
TRANSFORMING
PATTERNS OF
EXCHANGE

GTDF INVITATION

GETTING TO ZERO

Pajé Barbosa Pitaguary, from the Pitaguary Indigenous community in Brazil, says that both separability and the different hierarchies it generates within modernity produce a fundamental sense of insecurity—based on fears of worthlessness and belittlement—that is buried deep in our unconscious. These fears create a dynamic where we have only two choices: we either see ourselves as “plus one” (more than others) or “minus one” (less than others). Because we are haunted by the fear of being “minus one” (and feeling like trash), we spend much of our time seeking either external or internal validation for being “plus one” (however it is defined in our context). Pajé Barbosa emphasizes that the only way out of this dynamic is “getting to zero,” undoing the sense of separability and (human) superiority that modernity instills, experiencing existence and the world as a plenum, as Denise⁸ talks about, and fulfilling the yearning for wholeness that Jacqui⁹ describes. Getting to zero would require the end of the world as we know it, within and around us—a world founded precisely on separability.

Excerpt from Machado de Oliveira, V. (2021; p.164). Hospicing modernity: Facing humanity’s wrongs and the implications for social activism. North Atlantic Books.

Drawing from Pajé Barbosa’s practice of “getting to zero,” described in the paragraph above, we invite you to reflect on the following questions as a preparation for the chapter:

- What are the situations and encounters that put you in minus one or plus one position? What triggers those feelings and what tools do you have to try to move towards zero?
- How do you understand that the dynamics of “more” or “less” can harm economic relations? In what position do you usually find yourself in these relations? What actions of yours could lead you towards zero?
- What does reciprocity mean to you and in your life? Where and how is it practiced in your surroundings?

⁸ Denise Ferreira da Silva

⁹ Jacqui Alexander

- How do you feel about the perspective that those that benefit and/or are complicit in colonial violence have a historical debt towards populations that have been colonized? What do you think reparation and reciprocity could look like in this context?

T5C TEACHINGS

Modernity/coloniality is underpinned by a form of economy solely driven by monetary concerns, placing a strong emphasis on human-centric activities and wealth accumulation. For many individuals, particularly those entrenched in the duality of capitalism versus socialism, envisioning any alternative economic framework beyond this paradigm seems inconceivable. This limitation often confines critical endeavors to minor course corrections and propositions – many of which prove ineffectual – aimed at gradually mitigating economic inequalities and injustices.

The investigations conducted by T5C around this concept of healing take a profoundly distinct trajectory, grounded in a sense of a solidarity economy. This approach emphasizes non-accumulation, readiness to provide support, and a mode of relational reciprocity that encompasses both the present generation of humans and those to come, as well as non-human beings, particularly acknowledging the often unseen labor of the latter.

Ubiraci Pataxó challenges the very trajectory of development within so-called modern economies, dissecting the term “des-envolvimento.”¹⁰ He comprehends this concept as a gradual loss of belonging, a distancing from engagement with the Earth, and a diminishing trust in its capacity to sustain us all. The erosion of this confidence and connection, he argues, creates the necessity for stockpiling and accumulation – a stark contrast to the abundance naturally provided by Mother Earth and the safety net woven through an intricate system of nonlinear reciprocity. This safety net extends beyond material facets, encompassing psychological and spiritual processes as well. As he articulates, “For Indigenous peoples, the forest is abundant, and what it provides us is enough, even when it provides us with nothing.”

This counterintuitive perspective, which challenges notions ingrained in modern society, is also embraced by the Tremembé people of Barra do Mundaú. Mateus Tremembé underscores how having little can provide lessons in caring, supporting, and sharing. This outlook demonstrates that individual healing holds little

¹⁰ Desenvolvimento is the word in Portuguese for development. If you separate the prefix des from the rest of the word *envolvimento*, you get the meaning of lack of involvement.

value unless it is pursued collectively. It's precisely through giving and sharing that abundance is cultivated. This recurring belief, found across various Indigenous communities, perceives poverty not as a lack of material possessions, but rather as a refusal to share – introducing layers beyond the economic realm into the concepts of poverty and wealth.

Nourishment itself teaches this ethos to the community. Take the maize harvest in the community of Barra do Mundaú, for instance – the most exceptional ones aren't immediately consumed; instead, they are carefully preserved, dried, and distributed among the village families. This act ensures that in the subsequent year, 150 families can relish the finest maize from the prior harvest. This act of sharing, seen as a practice of healing, underscores the profound importance of every entity in sustaining our existence. This encompasses the basic elements such as air and water, extending to the intricate tapestry of plants and animals. By stewarding resources like water and ensuring its accessibility for generations yet to come, we extend our protective embrace to those on the horizon.

Ninawá Huni Kui perceives the reluctance to share as an ailment deeply intertwined with a sense of disconnection – not only from each other but also from nature as a whole. He views this perceived separation as an illusion, given that Mother Earth inherently provides ample sustenance for all to live in dignity. The excesses of accumulation, be it in land or wealth, result in a wound to this cyclical harmony. As an antidote to this affliction, he deems it crucial to rekindle the warmth within humanity's hearts, particularly by acknowledging the reality that, at this very moment, a brother or sister is thirsty, hungry, and facing difficulties.

Excessively commercial relationships inflict wounds even upon Indigenous communities themselves. Within the Huni Kui society, the colonial process, particularly the rubber cycle, that started at the end of the 19th century, gave rise to the “boss” figure within communities. These individuals engaged with rubber tappers and gained more work materials and freedom, but often at the expense of others. This phase generated families aiming to exert greater political dominance than others (a legacy that persists). Through collective introspection, it became evident that the labor of nature within the territory, both unseen and invaluable, had been marginalized. As a response, the act of sharing one's production with the community, akin to the Earth's own giving, was encouraged as one of the healing practices to mend these exchanges.

The Pitaguary people highlight that the tradition of food exchange serves as a foundational structure from which many other exchanges spring forth, nurturing the community and strengthening its bond with the Earth. Rosa Pitaguary recalls

instances like “farinhadas,” gatherings where the owner of the cassava processing house brought the community together to make cassava flour. During these events, people took back not only cassava flour but also stories, songs, and methods for preparing remedies exchanged among the women. Likewise, the banana harvest atop the hill or the communal clothes washing by the river were moments that bolstered the community and provided support to those in need.

Stories also take shape as intergenerational exchanges, serving as a conduit for the wisdom of the elders and the forest to reach younger generations. Nadia Pitaguary recounts the tale of the “poço dos caboclos velhos,” a place of meeting and exchange among the warrior hunters. In these spaces, they traded various ingredients – barks for creating medicines sourced from different areas – and a wealth of knowledge and connections with the forest were shared.

Exchanges with animals stand as a continual practice for the Pitaguary people, founded upon dialogues that encompass the sensitivity to perceive the signs of these creatures. This extends from the warnings provided by guarding dogs, responsible for both physical and spiritual safety, to the messages conveyed through crickets signifying luck in the woods, the sorrowful departure portended by nocturnal birds and white owls, and the outcomes of battles whistled by black hummingbirds. All these exchanges and relationships are orchestrated and sustained by Mother Earth, within her constant cycle of reciprocity and abundance. As recounted by Pajé Barbosa, seeds yield fruit, which is consumed and generates more seeds. Similarly, when a tree dies, it becomes nourishment, yet prior to this, it provides its bark as a dwelling for beetles. Within the brief present moment, amid these fruits, seeds, and generations, thrives a sacred mango tree – a sacred space for the Pitaguary people, a place where these physical and spiritual relationships find equilibrium.

Yoran Fulni-ô, contemplating balance and the mutual exchanges among beings and generations, underscores that the ability to engage holistically with the entirety of existence – encompassing both its material and spiritual planes – resides inherently within us all. It is imperative to reclaim this capacity for those who have lost it. Within the Fulni-ô community, the Great Spirit and the forest beings respond with joy upon witnessing people assisting one another and sharing knowledge, sustenance, and adornments. All these practices are intertwined with the principles of harmonious coexistence, bolstering unity and working to dissolve the sense of separation prevalent in modern times.

This principle is deeply intertwined with the people’s territory, a dry and arid region in northeastern Brazil with a short rainy season. Without this visceral sense of activated exchange and mutual support, the community’s existence would face far greater



threats. Yoran emphasizes that the mistreatment of Mother Nature has led to various scarcities, including food, in many other territories. Solidarity and bolstering these exchanges will be pivotal in strengthening existence, resilience, and rebalancing the Earth's metabolism, which, in turn, brings “joy” to the beings of nature.

GESTURES TOWARDS HEALING AND TRANSFORMING OUR EXCHANGES

- Interrupting patterns of consumption (of stuff, knowledges, experiences and relationships) as a mode of relating to the world;
- Decentering yourself and centering collective needs (doing what is needed rather than what one wants to do);
- Interrupting patterns of entitlement coming from social, economic and/or racial privilege;
- Interrupting calculations (based on self-interest or utility maximization) in order to give and receive differently;
- Learning to practice economies based on abundance, non-linear reciprocity and redistribution.

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

This practice is based on the perspective of Ubiraci Pataxó that states that “for us, nature is sufficient even when it offers us nothing.”

The aim of this practice is to place ourselves in a different sensitivity than we may be accustomed to, and temporarily abandon the position of being more or less, and invite you to engage in a way of fasting that is healthy for you.

Many different cultures fast for different reasons including recalibrating their relationship to and respect for food, water, and spirit, offering hunger as sacrifice or as a way to remember that food affordances are temporary.

Examples of variations are eating only after sunset or going anywhere from 1 to 4 days without food and/or water. It is up to your discernment to choose a length of fasting that is a healthy and safe challenge for you but we strongly recommend you consult with a health or wellness guide/expert within your community about what is a safe fasting practice for your body-type. If fasting from food is not an option for you, we invite you to fast from words; this is often called a ‘silent fast.’



When we fast, in the current and intensifying food crisis, it is also important to remember that if fasting is a choice for you, this choice most likely comes at the expense of humans and other species who do not have access to food as a result of the violent and unsustainable global food systems that operate today. Carry this with you as you engage with this practice.

PART A - *FASTING*

1. The fast will begin right after you have had your last meal. Eat this meal with as much presence as possible, don't just consume it. Try to pay attention to the sensations of eating, as well as where these foods came from. (if you are fasting from words instead of food, apply the same principle).
2. While fasting you are encouraged to keep a journal with you to reflect on what you are noticing within yourself, your cravings, your patterns and your thoughts.
3. Once you have completed your fast, you are invited to break your fast in a place with a diversity of non-human beings, such as a square, a park, a yard, a forest, or another space with similar characteristics. Bring a piece of fruit or broth with you. Only read Part B once you are in this place already.

PART B: *BREAKING*

1. Walk around this space slowly for 20 minutes and notice how your senses might be different - how are you perceiving sound, light, your own gravity, and the presence of other beings in the space?
2. Find a place where you can sit in order to break your fast. Before breaking the fast, sit with these questions:
 - a. Reflect on how 'green spaces' are often created and curated to present a version of 'nature' that is beautiful, consumable, predictable and convenient. Think about how you habitually engage with this place in instrumental and transactional ways (i.e. to 'de-stress' and relax) as opposed to encountering it in all its complexity - sitting with the pain, the life, the beauty, the historical ecocide, and the unknowability of all the life and death that is present here.
 - b. How can you engage with this place in ways that repair and weave interspecies relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and accountability?

3. As a gesture of interspecies accountability, you are invited to offer half of your fruit or broth to the soil before you take your first bite or drink. Only after the offering has been made can you break your fast.

PART C: WALK BACK

As of May 10th, 2023, scientists say we have 26 years left before we run out of food on this planet unless our current food practices and systems change dramatically. Our global food system is one of the greatest causes of deforestation, biodiversity collapse, and the waste crisis. It is also one of the main emitters of greenhouse gasses.

On your walk back, reflect on the following questions:

- To what extent are you aware of your own compulsions and your unhealthy reality-coping mechanisms? How do you justify the continuity of these patterns to yourself?
- Where are your cognitive, affective, and relational compensation patterns coming from, and in what ways could they be part of the problem?
- How do you relate to gifting and sharing with other human and non-human beings, without expecting anything in return? When was the last time you gifted something of great value to you, and you did it from a sense of visceral accountability as opposed to looking for validation, legacy or social capital?

After nourishing the Earth, express gratitude for this fast and for all the beings (human and non-human) who made this food possible. The T5C teaches us that scarcity is activated by a lack of trust in metabolism, which is capable of providing for the needs of all beings. However, within modernity this statement can be problematic, not only because there is a sense of separation that underlies our existence, but also because some peoples have been historically and systematically oppressed, and their access to the Earth's metabolism has been intentionally limited (if not entirely interrupted). Therefore, we invite you to conclude this practice by reflecting on the following layers of our use and access to resources:

- How can we heal our collective compulsion for accumulation?
- How can we cultivate the stamina to re-activate trust in the Earth's abundance when modernity/coloniality has privatized and/or polluted drinking water, climate instability affects crops, and the Earth has become treated as private property concentrated in fewer and fewer hands?



- Due to historical and systemic violence, much of the comfort and privilege we experience is the result of violence elsewhere. From this position, what kind of responsibility do you feel you have towards the metabolism of the Earth and the communities that pay (often with their lives) for these comforts?





4



HEALING AND
TRANSFORMING OUR
PATTERNS OF
RELATING

GTDF INVITATION

The GTDF collective has been writing extensively about problematic patterns of engagement of non-Indigenous people with Indigenous knowledge, particularly about the burden experienced by Indigenous people of engagements that are invested in consuming those knowledges for selfish interest, such as gaining social capital (through virtue-signaling) or self-actualization.

This work and the following cartographies are based on firsthand experience of Indigenous knowledge keepers that are part of the collective. T5C researchers also emphasize that those harmful patterns of engagement extend to the non-human world, and are deeply connected with our sense of separation from Mother Earth and the resulting sickness of the metabolism.

Indigenous scholar and member of GTDF collective, Cash Ahenakew¹¹ brings forward five fast track lessons that can be quickly learned to help us avoid repeating common mistakes. They depend however, on the will to face non-Indigenous people's own complicity in colonial violence and the stamina to repair relationships:

- 1. Tokenism backfires:** Superficial engagement with Indigenous communities, focused on optics rather than substance, leads to reputational and relational costs for organizations, as “business-as-usual” approaches are recognized and rejected;
- 2. Settler debt to Indigenous peoples:** Progress has come at the expense of Indigenous communities, creating a debt owed by settlers. When this debt is ignored, engagements framed as concessions or charity often leads to paternalism and assumptions of settler benevolence;
- 3. Diverse Indigenous perspectives:** There is no singular “Indigenous perspective,” with diversity, intergenerational conflicts, and situational factors influencing responses, making it unrealistic to expect a unified voice.
- 4. Unsustainable romanticization:** Settlers often shift from negative stereotypes to romanticizing Indigenous cultures. This unrealistic idealization hinders genuine relationship building, as supporters may become resentful when faced with the complexities of real Indigenous individuals and communities.

¹¹ <https://blogs.ubc.ca/ahenakewcrc/towards-accountable-relationships/>



- 5. Long-term commitment to Indigenous relationships:** Building sustainable relationships requires time, trust, respect, reciprocity, consent, and accountability. The process is complex, involving inevitable mistakes and lacking a one-size-fits-all formula, making a long-term commitment essential for genuine engagement.

To deeply immerse ourselves in the issue, Cash Ahenakew proposes that we engage with the cartography *Accountability +*. This cartography articulates in a matrix the intersection of the relationship with systemic, historical and ongoing colonial violence (that moves from sanctioned ignorance, to personal awareness and towards systemic accountability) with the relationship with Indigenous ways of knowing and being (that goes from sanctioned devaluation to personal appreciation and systemic accountability).

CARTOGRAPHY: ACCOUNTABILITY +

		Types of relationship to systemic, historical and ongoing colonial violence		
		sanctioned ignorance	personal awareness	systemic accountability
Types of relationship to Indigenous ways of knowing and being	sanctioned devaluation	A paternalism	B tokenism	-
	personal appreciation	C appropriation	D consumption	E redistribution
	systemic accountability	-	F idealization	G accountability+

Disposition (A) is paternalism, characterized by sanctioned ignorance toward colonial violence and deficit theorization of Indigenous knowledge systems. It assumes Indigenous Peoples need to catch up with settler society, and that colonialism represents progress and ultimately benefits Indigenous people, justifying genocidal practices and devaluing Indigenous knowledges.

Disposition (B) is tokenism: an individual or institution may have some awareness of colonial violence but still subscribe to a dominant sanctioned devaluation of Indigenous knowledge. Tokenistic gestures, like valuing Indigenous people and knowledge as long as they do not disturb business as usual or one's own agenda, illustrate this disposition.



Disposition (C) is appropriation, where individuals, unaware of their complicity in colonial harm, feel that they are supporting Indigenous people by “promoting” their culture, while they are actually using Indigenous culture for personal gain, unintentionally perpetuating colonial harms.

Disposition (D) is consumption, blending awareness of colonial violence with an idealized appreciation of Indigenous knowledges as a way to enhance one’s own personal moral virtue and social capital.

Disposition (E) is redistribution, which can involve acknowledging systemic colonial harm, appreciating Indigenous knowledges, acknowledging the need for supporting Indigenous-led initiatives but not substantially engaging with Indigenous initiatives and relationships.

Disposition (F) is idealization, involving long-term commitments without self-implication in systemic violence, risking romanticization and precarious commitment. In this disposition, the depth of relationship and lack of self-implication may be used as a way of not dealing with feelings of guilt and shame that may arise from recognizing systemic accountability.

Disposition (G) is accountability plus, combining systemic accountability with a commitment to long-term relationship building based on respect, trust, consent, reciprocity, and accountability. This disposition entails an expanded capacity to engage with the heterogeneity of communities, paradoxes, complexities, push-backs, frustrations, failures and mistakes.

In Cash’s experience, disposition A is the most harmful, while B, C, and D do more harm than good. E and F have potential for good but with risks. Disposition G holds the most potential for harm reduction and interruption of patterns of colonial violence in the long term, contingent on internalizing key lessons. The impact of each disposition depends on the context, prompting individuals to identify their own personal and contextual predominant disposition, trace its implications, and take steps toward more generative dispositions.

We invite you to read the following “cura ‘ with the “5 fast track lessons” and *Accountability + cartography* in mind, mapping what parts of the text trigger different responses in you and investigating what may be causing your reactions.

T5C TEACHINGS

The healing of relationships permeates all other forms of healing, as it emerges as an essential disposition underlying them all. To journey towards the healing of thoughts, emotions, exchanges, and the womb of Mother Earth, we must fundamentally alter how we relate within the framework of modernity. This encompasses our interactions with one another, with our own thoughts and emotions, with other communities, non-human living beings, and the fabric of existence – including spiritual entities, the enchanted ones, and ancestors. Moreover, it encompasses our connection with Mother Earth, who plays a central role in sustaining and nurturing life on our planet.

Hence, Ninawá Huni Kui often asserts that “one healing brings forth another.” In his view, the connections between human beings and nature are eroding day by day, particularly our capacity to communicate with other beings and elements – animals, plants, and stars. According to the Huni Kui, the sacredness of relationships with Dyuba, the sacred boa constrictor, or with Tani – a name that refers both to a feminine presence and a sacred plant – becomes compromised when nature is viewed solely as a resource, a material possession, merely a cog within an economic cycle. The significance of a tree, its wisdom, as well as its role in generating oxygen, fertilizers, and nutrients for Mother Earth (and for all of us) defies the metrics of value employed within the modern/western/colonial framework of society.

For Indigenous peoples, as Ninawá emphasizes, existence holds little meaning without this spiritual connection to non-human beings. Huni Kui music, intertwined with the sacred and the spiritual, is sung for the very purpose of being heard by nature. Thus, when a healer ventures into the forest singing to harvest a medicinal plant, the plant also listens to this music – an integral facet of the healing process. The healing of relationships hinges upon the preservation of these knowledges and connections. Consequently, it is imperative for the younger generation to keep this essence alive, as there is always an elder willing to impart these wisdoms to the generations to come, ensuring the unbroken umbilical cord that ties us to the Earth remains pulsating from one generation to the next. Without this knowledge, the possibility of healing remains elusive, and a tree continues to be seen solely as wood.

Mateus Tremembé learned from his elders that “those who sing, pray twice.” Songs also serve as a form of healing for the Fulni-ô people. Through songs, the community is reminded, for instance, of the role that non-human entities play in the creation and sustenance of life. For them, these entities hold authority over our journey on Earth, rather than the other way around. This perspective offers a lesson in humility, teaching the people to restrain their egos, comprehend that their presence is in service, and recognize the finite duration of their existence.



Yoran Fulni-ô perceives the inability to control time as a lesson in surrender and integration into a collective intelligence. According to Rosa Pitaguary, respecting each individual's rhythms and timings – their moments to act and moments to accept – is essential for processes of reconciliation. Developing sensitivity to these temporalities involves relating to others as they are, rather than how we might wish them to be. This perspective applies to oneself as well. Cultivating a profound relationship with oneself, understanding the patterns of retreating, returning to the womb, and then emerging anew, becomes a prerequisite for expanding one's ability to connect with the entirety of existence.

According to Nádia Pitaguary, time never ends, but rather transforms through time, as bodies and spaces shift, yet the universe endures. As we remove our shoes and place our feet on the Earth, we feel like the Earth, becoming aware of our land nature and paving the way to embody the planet and become a part of the universe. The universe and the womb intersect and mirror each other through their movements, generating life. It's imperative to perceive the vast universe and our relationship with it, but to achieve this, we must scrutinize a myriad of connections. What is our relationship with the Earth? With the winds? With the beings of the waters? With the birds? With our (many) selves?

Pajé Barbosa, from the Pitaguary people, views the Moon as a conduit for this connection with the universe – both its illuminated aspect in relation to the sun and its hidden, dark side. In the latter, there lies secrecy, meditative silence, and a link to the ancestors. Consequently, the shifts in lunar phases mark moments of pajelança¹², of making requests, and engaging with the beings of the night.

Adriana, a leader of the Tremembé people from Barra do Mundaú, regards the relationship with Mother Earth as akin to an exchange, manifested in sacred spaces, rituals, and the utilization of medicinal plants. Yet, this connection also goes beyond a mere exchange, as it encompasses care and protection. Mother Earth sustains us and offers guidance to foster our strength. To remain alive, whole, and resilient, we need to be woven within this intricate web of relationships. Mateus Tremembé underscores that this relationship hinges on continuity – it's not sufficient to seek healing once and then forsake the bond with Mother Earth. It requires a continuous nurturing of this relationship, as well as an ongoing commitment to future generations. This demands time, and often, generations are needed to reestablish and uphold these connections when they have been lost.

¹² Pajelança, in this context, means healing rituals conducted by the Paje, or the spiritual leader of the community.

Expanding these relationships also broadens our senses and capacity to engage, enabling us to discover the ancestries and spiritualities inherent in our territory. For Ubiraci Pataxó, relationships, senses, and emotions are profoundly interconnected. Emotions are what bind and hold relationships together, akin to the glue that strengthens bonds. Healing processes require encounters marked by reverence for alterities and the humility to recognize that we can be taught by both human and non-human existences. Nourishing ourselves physically and spiritually from these interactions is a vital aspect of these encounters.

GESTURES TOWARDS HEALING AND TRANSFORMING OUR PATTERNS OF RELATING

- Learning to form genuine relationships without idealizations (projections, instrumentalizations and romanticizations)
- Exploring different possibilities for being and relating not grounded on shared meaning, identity or conviction
- Feeling part of a wider metabolism (planet/land) and collective body (group/community)
- Experiencing the difficulties and complexities of ethical engagements and solidarity from a space of accountability
- Learning through difficult events with humility, compassion, generosity and patience
- Going through the difficult work of mobilizing visceral responsibility

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

This practice is inspired by Adriana Tremembé's remarks that the relationship with Mother Earth resembles an exchange but it also goes beyond that in ways that are non-transactional. In other words, it entails actions for which we do not expect to receive a direct and immediate benefit. In this practice, we will experiment with feeling-thinking-imagining the dispositions necessary to point towards this quality in our relationship with various human and non-human beings.

Go to an area where non-human beings interact, such as a park, a square, or a forest near the city. Observe, without idealizing, the quality of relationships that occur there. Witness the metabolic intelligence in action, in its constant movement and exchange among beings.



Make some notes or drawings of what catches your attention. Sketch your bus and observe the passengers, thoughts, and feelings that emerge from these encounters.

When you return to the “city,” go somewhere familiar to you and observe how relationships between people and the relationships of people with places unfold. Try to map, in these spaces, a transactional relationship and another non-transactional relationship; try to engage in this process of mapping by sketching, freewriting, or any other non-discursive way to engage with these processes.

Sit with your maps and reflect on the following invitation:

Think of someone who is significant to you. It could be a relative, someone with whom you have/had a familial, professional, romantic or friendly relationship, and with whom you may be experiencing some difficulty.

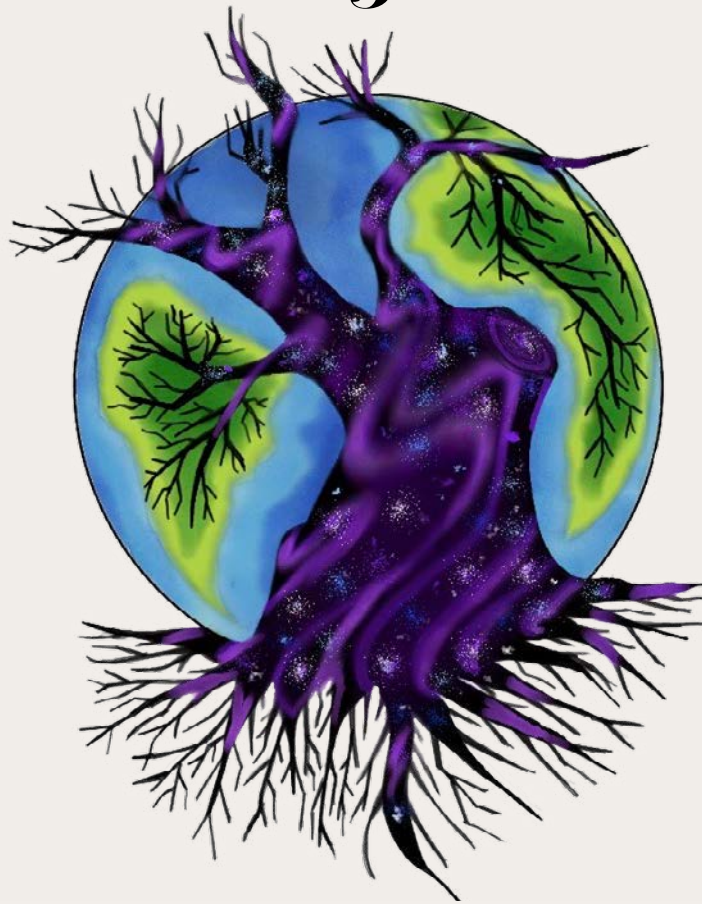
- Make a list of what would make you feel closer to this other being.
- Make a list of what would genuinely make this other being feel closer to you.
- Make a list of challenging things you would need to do for this relationship to be more generative.
- Make a list of things that hinder you from making this move.
- Make a list of possible implications and future costs (for you and others) if you fail to do things differently in this relationship.

Repeat this exercise considering your relationship with a non-human being.

Repeat this exercise considering your relationship with the Earth as a living metabolism as a whole.



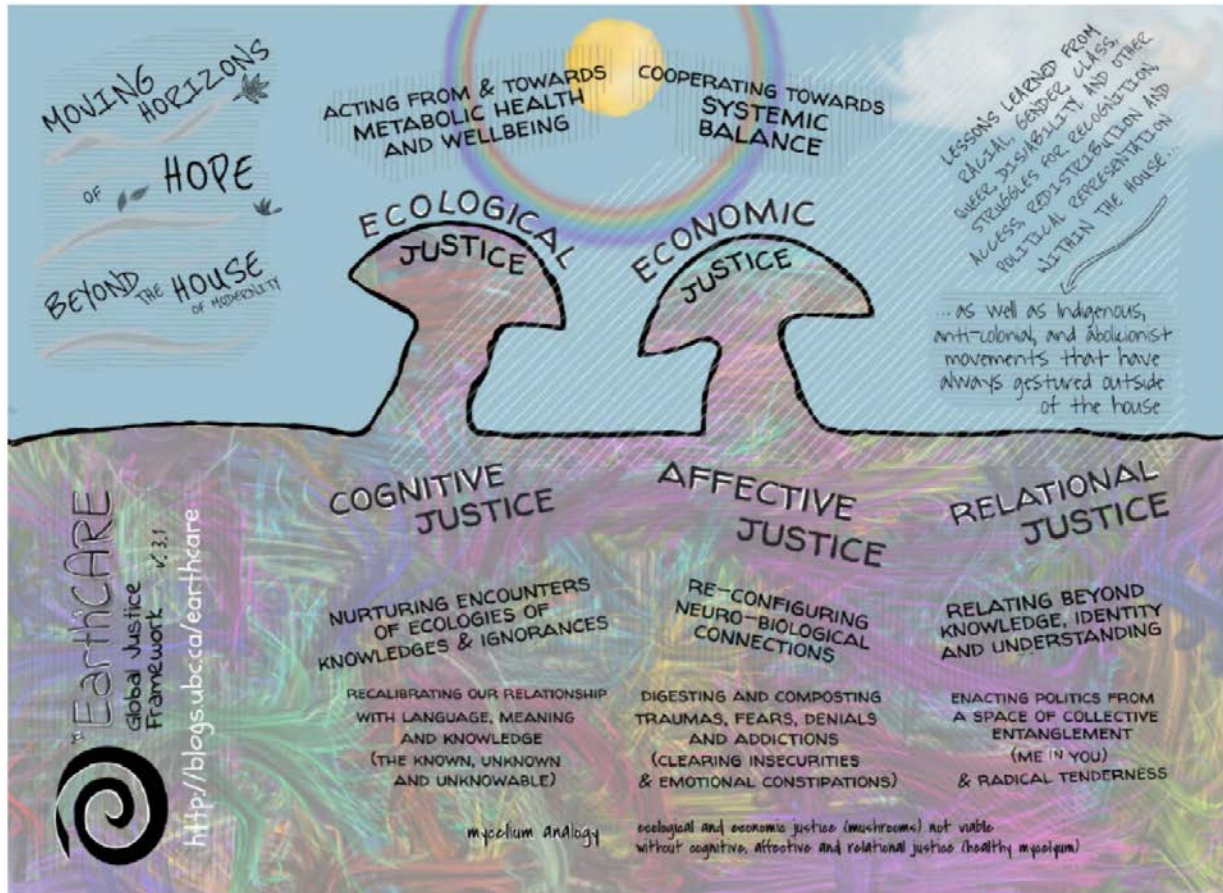
5



HEALING AND
TRANSFORMING OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH
THE CYCLES OF THE
WIDER METABOLISM
OF THE PLANET

GTDF INVITATION

CARTOGRAPHY: MYCELIUM



The T5C framework is a model constructed to pedagogically address relations and living entities. It focuses on how within modernity/coloniality, these relations and entities are becoming ill, primarily due to the breakdown and pollution of relationships between living systems and extremely violent ways of living, affecting both humans and non-humans.

This model, created through ritual conferences among the Indigenous peoples of the T5C, is based on a social cartography developed by the collective Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures called “In Earth’s Care.”

This cartography aims to shed light on the invisibilized work of the Earth’s metabolism in nurturing life in all spheres, drawing an analogy from the fungal kingdom. Above the ground, two mushrooms are observed, representing two kinds of “justice”: ecological justice and economic justice, understood as the balanced distribution of resources for the well-being of all beings. More interestingly, in this cartography, attention is drawn to the relationships beneath the earth’s surface. To bring forth these vibrant healthy



utopian mushrooms, there is a vast network of mycelium at work, responsible for decomposition, regeneration, distribution of nutrients, and communication among the forest entities. These are represented in this analogy by the processes of recalibrating relationships with knowledge (cognitive justice), with traumas, insecurities, attachments, and fears (affective justice), and with oneself, others, and the Earth (relational justice).

Although the concept of justice is problematic and loaded with meanings, the Indigenous people participating in the T5C suggested a different approach to this cartography, not due to potential semantic issues with the term but because they understood that they were discussing a completely different process: the process of healing diseased relationships. Thus, the concept of the 5 justices was replaced in this research by *healing* practices in 5 dimensions: thoughts, feelings, exchanges, relationships, and the womb of Mother Earth.

T5C TEACHINGS

*We, the Tremembé, believe
In God, who is our father Tupã
In the Earth, which is our mother
In the forest, which is our life
In the moon and the stars, which are our energies
In the sun, which is our light
In the thunder and lightning, which are our predictions
In the stones and the stars, which are our weapons
In the fire, which is our vision
And in the entire atmosphere
We live from the strength of the Earth
that gives us energy to fight and overcome our battles
That's why we are a people of struggle
That's why we are the Tremembé people
So be it.¹³*

Prayer of Tremembé da Barra do Mundaú people

¹³ Original prayer in portuguese:

Nós Tremembé acreditamos
Em deus que é nosso pai tupã
Na Terra que é nossa mãe
Na mata que é nossa vida
Na lua e nas estrelas que são nossas energias
No sol que é nossa luz
No trovão e no relâmpago que são nossas previsões
Nas pedras e nos astros que são nossas armas

No fogo que é a nossa visão
Em toda atmosfera
Vivemos da força da Terra
que nos dá energia para lutar e vencer nossas batalhas
Por isso somos povo da luta
Por isso somos povo Tremembé
Assim seja



The healing of Mother Earth's womb must first and foremost be understood as a healing of relationships. If we indeed contemplate an Earth afflicted by human actions, it is primarily our relationships, particularly our commitment to Earth and the continuity of life, that require healing. In this context, the web of protection for life and Earth must be rewoven – safeguarding lands, soil, and waters, and ensuring water and food sovereignty for the populations safeguarding Mother Earth.

This protection and recommitment to Mother Earth also holds an intangible dimension – the work of spirituality and the reciprocal relationship established with the vibrant metabolism of which we are a part, characterized by its numerous names and attempts at comprehension (and apprehension). It encompasses our connection with ancestralities and the grand umbilical cord that ties together generations, as the Huni Kui people convey, as well as the enchantments in their various forms and expressions.

Mateus Tremembé recognizes that the healing energy always emanates from Mother Earth – through sacred plants, their roots, leaves, stems, traditional medicines, and beings of light. Mother Earth provides the strength and energy not only to fight for those who currently inhabit the Earth but also for the generations to come. The way he refers to the elders as “troncos velhos” (old trunks) and the young as “brolhos da Terra” (seedlings of the Earth) highlights the Tremembé people's profound connection with the Earth and offers insights into paths of healing. As he explains, “In my village, we have a belief that the old trunks, our elders, are already like trees because they've borne fruit, and we, the young, are the seedlings of the Earth because during the process of colonization, our Indigenous populations were decimated, especially here in the Northeast of the country. They severed our roots, cut our strengths, pruned our branches, chopped our stems, but they forgot to uproot the core (from the Earth). So, they forgot to extract the essence that resided within Mother Earth.”

The imminent political significance of healing Mother Earth's womb leads Mateus to advocate for the necessity of fertilizing society in the same way a farmer fertilizes plants. He emphasizes the pivotal role of Indigenous spirituality in this process. Once again, he underscores singing as a conduit for connecting with ancestors, enchantments, and Mother Earth.

Ubiraci Pataxó emphasizes that despite our reference to Mother Earth as an entity or something external, she cannot be comprehended or touched from a stance of detachment. We can only relate to Mother Earth from within, as participants in actions and processes, never as mere observers. When contemplating from within a tree, for instance, he states that the tree's trust does not lie in its lush parts – the



branches and leaves that are easily swayed by the wind—but rather in its roots, the part that firmly anchors into the soil, the ground we walk upon. Nevertheless, achieving this requires a deep understanding of the soil we tread upon and reclaiming our relationship with the territory and the diverse beings inhabiting it. Without this connection, it's impossible to fully commit ourselves to working towards the healing of Mother Earth

Ubiraci further stresses: Mother Earth has never been and is not unwell; instead, she is profoundly generous, affording humanity the chance to correct its course. Similarly, Yoran Fulni-ô underscores the qualities of generosity and reciprocity inherent in this relationship. He highlights that giving without expecting anything in return to Feanê, the name given to Mother Earth in Yaathê, the language of the Fulni-ô people, instills a disposition of humility within all of us, aligned with the great spirit's intent when creating the Earth.

Nadia Pitaguary also perceives us as grand trees, reliant on the nourishment and stability provided by the soil. This is why the Pitaguary hold women's circles that delve into women's spirituality through the lens of their connection with the mother Tapuia, an enchanting entity that symbolizes Earth's womb. This Tapuia is revered in ceremonies dedicated to nurturing it and fostering fertility for all forms of life.

The power of feminine ancestry embodied by midwives, healers, and blessings-givers is, according to Rosa Pitaguary, nurtured through their relationships with plants, enchantments, and rituals, such as baths and ceremonies.

According to Ninawá Huni Kui, knowledge about forest medicines is paramount for any prospect of healing. Teas, baths, and smudging can aid in maintaining our well-being, as the ailments we confront are not solely tied to the physical body but also to diseased thoughts and the spiritual body. For those willing to listen and humbly accept teachings, these medicines are willing mentors, aiding in the healing process. However, the Huni Kui acknowledge that some forests also harbor harmful medicines, and that clear-cutting and wildfires in these areas spread these harmful substances, causing illness in people, the Earth, and the waters. Therefore, despite the potential for spiritual, mental, emotional, relational, and exchange-based healing, true healing will not manifest until the destruction of Mother Earth comes to a halt.

In the state of Acre, where a significant portion of the lands inhabited by the Huni Kui are located, the traditional seasons have ceased to exist. There is no longer a clear understanding of when the rivers will flood or when the dry season will come, resulting in diminishing yields from planted crops. The rivers are pollut-



ed, fish are becoming scarce, and the insecurity is not only about food but also water (in the heart of the Amazon). As an integral part of Mother Earth, humans will also experience these transformations within her. We are not different from plant families, and the felling of the mother trees also impacts their offspring. The absence of roots, ancestral connections, and relationships with our non-human relatives has incurred, and will continue to incur, a high price.

Hence, a reeducation and a resensitization of humanity are crucial. Ninawá emphasizes the importance of cultivating this understanding within communities and individuals at large – the recognition of nature as a nurturing mother, the source of life, responsible for our existence both material and spiritual. Through this understanding, along with the connection to medicine and spirituality, people can find healing, strength, and liberation.

GESTURES TOWARDS HEALING AND TRANSFORMING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CYCLES OF THE WIDER METABOLISM OF THE PLANET THAT WE ARE PART OF

- Manifesting education from a space where humans are not separated from the land/planet
- Reflecting on the challenges of coexistence from different perspectives, including those of non-human beings
- Grappling with the complexities of addressing complicities in ecological harm
- Opening up possibilities for adjacent possibilities of thinking, relating and being
- Developing stamina and resiliency for the slow and challenging work that needs to be done in the long term.

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

Food is one of the closest ways to establish a relationship with Mother Earth and to perceive the sometimes invisibilized function of nourishing life, ensuring our existence and that of other living beings. Reimagining the possibility of food security for Indigenous peoples through access to land, and land free from contamination, is a fundamental service of reciprocity and an urgent task. Therefore, we extend some invitations to increase sensitivity to the relationship with Mother Earth in



her nurturing capacity for life. These exercises can be done together or individually, but we recommend maintaining each exercise for at least 24 hours (72 hours would be ideal) to activate what they propose to accomplish.

- a. Observe your relationship to your food cravings by maintaining a bland and simple diet and restricting your access to an excessive variety of tastes and textures. Pay close attention to your cravings when they come: these are addictions you have created over time. We don't even notice the cravings but they can have overwhelming power over us. Keep in mind that the amount of energy required for you to identify and interrupt these cravings is a tiny percentage of the amount of energy that will be required to identify and interrupt cravings for: EPIC-A¹⁴. Reflect on the following question: What are your cravings compensating for? How do you justify succumbing to them? Answer this from the most intimate to the most systemic layer of your reality.
- b. You will sprout a handful of dry chickpeas this week¹⁵. Every day, as you change the water 3 times a day, build a relationship with the chickpeas (e.g. say "good morning" or "thank you" every day) and witness their sprouting rite of passage. When the chickpeas have sprouted, eat the chickpeas with deep gratitude for their lives, for all the beings that give up their lives so that you can live and all the beings that work hard inside of you, to help you stay alive. Notice the sound of metabolising chickpeas as it leaves your body.
- c. Our food choices connect us to the intensifying demand to clear the Amazon and therefore are directly related to the bills that are being passed by the government to cancel Indigenous rights to their lands. This invitation is to look through your fridge and pantries and identify all the items that contain beef or bovine meat, soy or corn, as it is likely that these ingredients came from Brazil. For a week, sustain a diet that avoids

¹⁴ The acronym EPIC-A captures various dimensions and characteristics that critique modern/colonial paradigms. It focuses on the deeply ingrained habits of thinking, being, and relating that perpetuate harmful modern/colonial patterns, such as:

E – exceptionalism, exaltedness, expansion of entitlements, empowerment of the ego, externalization of culpability, escape from responsibility

P – progress, prosperity, purity, (heroic) protagonism, projective hope

I – idealizations, innocence, immunity, indifference, indulgence

C – certainty, control, compulsive consumption, comfort/convenience, (linear) coherence/ consensus

A – (epistemic) authority, (unrestricted) autonomy, (justice) arbitration, (guilt) absolution, (unreserved) admiration

¹⁵ In case you have never done it, sprouting chickpeas is a task that can be quickly learned through an online search



these three ingredients completely (take the time to read the ingredients in every packaged item, as most contain at least one of the three). It is also important to remember that avoiding such foods for a short period of time does not exempt us from the complicity in harm. It is rather a process of acknowledging our constant responsibility and complicity.

d. If we prioritize relationships in the way we see and relate to the world, our food carries all the relationships involved in its existence. Imagine all the toxic relationships that might have gone into your food, including harmful relationships with the earth, labor, transport, and (re)sale. Instead of measuring your food in calories or nutrients, for a week, you are invited to measure your food in relationships by holding your plate in your hands and reflecting on this for one minute in silence before eating. Observe what this practice activates in your body as you eat (an implicitly accept) these relationships.



AFTERWORD



WHAT BECOMES VISIBLE WHEN WE STAY:

GTDF's Learnings and Reflections from Accompanying the Teia das 5 Curas

This reflection is offered from within the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective, a group composed of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members who have been walking, for many years now, in partnership with the network T5C.

We speak here not on behalf of this network, but from the threshold of accompaniment: as people who have participated in shared research, creative processes, pedagogical experiments, and intercultural dialogue alongside their work. In this proximity, we have also had to reckon with the patterns that emerge—often quietly, sometimes forcefully—when those of us positioned outside of Indigenous communities attempt to “support” or “amplify” their processes.

What follows are some of the lessons and discomforts we are sitting with. We offer them not as conclusions, but as invitations to reflect on the responsibilities, paradoxes, and risks that arise in cross-cultural relationships—especially the risk of reproducing colonial patterns even while trying to be in “solidarity.” The tone of this reflection may differ from the rest of this book. It is not written from within the lived experiences of Indigenous people and communities, but from an adjacent space—of accompaniment, listening, stumbling, and learning.

Even when motivated by care, the role of accomplice can easily slip into extractive, paternalistic, or individualistic patterns—especially when not grounded in a com-



mitment to reciprocal learning, mutual transformation, and the redistribution of responsibilities, attention, and resources. These risks are amplified in institutional and activist contexts where values like urgency, visibility, coherence, and impact are prioritized. In such environments, it's much harder to center long-term relational processes, or to make space for the slow, careful work required to build trust and co-responsibility.

With this reflection, we hope to share some of the lessons that have most deeply challenged and transformed us in our attempts to walk alongside and learn with the network *Teia das 5 Curas*. Our aim is to name a set of recurring patterns—ones we have stumbled into ourselves, and have witnessed in similar contexts—where the desire to help or support ends up recentralizing non-Indigenous people, reinforcing our moral authority, our criteria for what counts as legitimate or valuable, and our unconscious hunger for recognition.

These patterns do not only emerge when people act in bad faith. In fact, they often appear most forcefully when people are sincerely trying to “do the right thing.” When these desires remain unexamined or unprocessed, they tend to generate subtle forms of violence—especially because they often go unnoticed by those who carry them. This kind of affective harm, veiled by good intentions, is one of the most difficult to recognize and one of the most important to become accountable for. Especially in long-term relationships that ask for trust, consent, and reciprocity, these unacknowledged dynamics can erode the very relational ground we hope to stand on.

RECOGNIZING ARCHETYPES OF NON-INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Through long-term observation, we have noticed certain recurring patterns in how non-Indigenous visitors engage with Indigenous communities. While often motivated by care or curiosity, these approaches frequently reflect deep relational tensions and reproduce dynamics that Indigenous communities have long named as harmful.

Rather than framing these as fixed identities, we offer them here as archetypes—habitual ways of relating that people may move through, inhabit simultaneously, or perform unconsciously. These are not accusations, but invitations to pause and reflect: Where might these tendencies live in us? How might they be shifting over time? What do they cost, relationally?

1. THE SAVIOR (*I want to save them.*)

This pattern shows up when visitors focus on perceived material poverty or social vulnerability, casting themselves as benevolent problem-solvers. The impulse is often to bring solutions, resources, or capacity-building—sometimes with urgency or emotional investment in being “of use.” Underneath this, there is often a desire to affirm one’s own purpose, efficacy, or moral standing.

▼ **When challenged:** If communities decline the help offered, or don’t perform gratitude in expected ways, they are often labeled ungrateful, resistant, or uncooperative.

2. THE ROMANTIC (*I want to be saved by them.*)

This pattern idealizes Indigenous communities as pure, harmonious, or spiritually advanced—sources of inspiration or healing. It often arises as a reaction against pathologizing narratives and seeks to flip the script. But instead of dismantling harmful dynamics, it re-inscribes them through projection and emotional over-identification.

▼ **When challenged:** When contradictions, refusal, or discomforts emerge, visitors may feel disillusioned or betrayed, blaming the community for failing to live up to the ideal. This often results in retreat or withdrawal—without reflection on the visitor’s own projected expectations.

3. THE CONSUMER (*I want to be a better person.*)

This pattern treats engagement as a personal growth opportunity—a way to acquire teachings, practices, or experiences for self-actualization. The community becomes a resource; the visit becomes a transaction. Time, attention, or financial contribution is expected to yield personal benefit.

▼ **When challenged:** If access is denied or teachings are not made available on demand, some visitors simply move on—seeking “value” elsewhere, often without recognizing the extractive logic underlying their disappointment.

4. THE INDEBTED ALLY (*I want to show I am a good person.*)

This pattern is rooted in guilt, shame, or a desire for redemption. Visitors engage with a sense of moral debt, hoping to “make things right” by offering support, amplifying voices, or deferring authority. While this can appear generous, it often centers the visitor’s emotional process rather than the relational needs of the community.



▼ **When challenged:** If communities do not validate this redemptive arc or challenge its framing, visitors may withdraw support or seek affirmation elsewhere—often without metabolizing their discomfort.

It's important to note that these patterns are not static. Visitors often move between archetypes—especially when their assumptions are challenged or discomfort arises. People may also embody multiple archetypes at once, in contradictory and paradoxical ways. Recognizing these patterns is not about judgment; it is about cultivating the awareness and stamina required to shift from performative engagement to more accountable, co-responsible relationships.

THE COMPLEXITY OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS

One of the most significant barriers to generative relationships is the persistent tendency among visitors to view Indigenous knowledge systems and communities as monolithic, coherent, or static. In reality, Indigenous cultures and knowledges—like all others—are plural, dynamic, and internally diverse. Communities are shaped by layered histories, shifting relationships, and complex internal dynamics, including tensions between colonized and colonizer influences, inter-community dynamics, and intra-community struggles around leadership, gender, and generation.

It's also important to remember that every individual—whether Indigenous or not—carries their own internal complexities and contradictions. These dimensions are often invisible to outsiders who arrive with fixed narratives or idealized expectations.

A telling example of this dynamic is the concept of pan-Indigenism: the effort to create political unity by emphasizing shared experiences and struggles across diverse Indigenous peoples. While this strategy played an important role during movements like the American Indian Movement in the 1960s–80s, especially in resisting systemic erasure, it has since been critiqued—particularly by younger generations—for its tendency to flatten differences and obscure the distinct identities, teachings, and lifeways of specific communities.

Visitors who are unaware of these nuances may misread or misjudge the tensions they encounter—especially intergenerational disagreements—as signs of dysfunction, rather than as vital, ongoing negotiations of memory, belonging, and cultural evolution.

When visitors overlook these complexities—by romanticizing Indigenous communities, simplifying their knowledges, or seeking coherence where there is rightful



divergence—they risk reinforcing colonial patterns of engagement. Such oversights can entrench extractive dynamics and prevent the emergence of reciprocal, accountable relationships rooted in humility and respect.

MATCHING ARCHETYPES: COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO VISITORS

While some Indigenous communities push back against the archetypes of engagement described earlier, in other cases, parallel or mirrored dynamics also emerge within communities themselves. These responses often reflect the impact of long-term exposure to colonial systems and globalized expectations, as well as the immediate realities of precarity and material urgency. In such contexts, even when communities recognize problematic patterns, they may choose to accommodate or tolerate them in the interest of securing resources, visibility, or support.

These mirrors are not moral failures. They are survival strategies—contextual, adaptive, and often emotionally complex. Naming them is not about assigning blame but about better understanding the relational patterns that can undermine reciprocity and resilience on all sides.

1. HUMANITARIAN LENS (*Savior Approach*):

Communities may view visitors as potential helpers, allies, or resource providers. This perspective often arises from a pragmatic recognition of the visitors' access to wealth, networks, or institutional influence. When survival or urgent needs are at stake, leveraging outside support may feel not only necessary but wise.

▼ **When challenged:** This dynamic can unintentionally reinforce savior logics on both sides. Visitors may feel affirmed in their paternalistic roles, while communities may begin to adapt their internal priorities to align with external expectations. Over time, this can erode trust, foster dependency, and weaken the capacity for autonomous, internally-driven processes of regenerations.

2. ELEVATION AND COMPETITION (*Romanticized Idealization Approach*):

Some community members may embrace visitors' idealization—welcoming attention, reverence, or admiration as long-overdue recognition. This can create a sense of validation and pride, especially in contexts where communities have been historically invisibilized.

▼ **When challenged:** As the visitors' idealization fades (often abruptly), disappointment surfaces on both sides. Visitors may feel disillusioned by the complexities they encounter, while communities may feel exhausted by the pressure to perform coherence or perfection. These dynamics can also intensify internal competition, as individuals or groups position themselves to remain legible or desirable to outsiders—reinforcing existing fractures and undermining the slow work of cultural repair.

3. TRANSACTIONAL (*Consumer Approach*):

Some communities, responding to visitors' desires for experience or knowledge, may begin to curate offerings—ceremonies, stories, crafts, or teachings—that are tailored to visitor expectations. This is often done with discernment and care, but it can slip into commodification under external pressure.

▼ **When challenged:** Over time, this dynamic can flatten the living depth of cultural practices, turning them into products. It can shift attention from internal priorities to visitor preferences, risking a slow erosion of cultural integrity and communal autonomy.

4. DEBT AND ENTITLEMENT (*Indebted Approach*):

Some communities may engage with visitors through a lens of historical and systemic debt, expecting material support, acknowledgment, or reparations in exchange for participation or access. This can be a valid and necessary response to long-standing harm.

▼ **When challenged:** If these expectations are not grounded in clear communication or relational process, they can become transactional—placing pressure on individual visitors to carry collective debts they may not fully understand or be equipped to address. Without space for shared reflection and boundary-setting, this can strain relationships and create cycles of resentment, fatigue, or disengagement on both sides.

These mirrored dynamics remind us that colonization is not a one-way imprint—it lives in the relational field, shaping expectations, desires, and responses in everyone involved. If we can meet these mirrors with honesty and care, they can become sites of learning rather than replication.

THE IMPACT OF OBJECTIFYING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The growing interest in Indigenous knowledge systems has created a competitive context, akin to a market of experiences, where practices and teachings are translated to meet external demands (see Ahenakew, 2016). This often shapes interactions in ways that commodify cultural expressions rather than upholding their sacred or communal significance. Several complex challenges arise as a result:

- 1. Competition Among Communities:** Communities may feel pressure to compete with each other for visibility, resources, platform or opportunities to engage non-Indigenous audiences. Certain communities, regions, or locations often hold more perceived value to outsiders than others due to a range of factors, including accessibility, global narratives about their traditions, or how their cultural practices are marketed. This unequal distribution of value can result in some communities becoming overburdened by external interest while others are overlooked, contributing to imbalances and tensions that can strain relationships between communities and divert energy away from priorities that are key to sustaining cooperative work and solidarity.
- 2. Exceptionalization of Individuals:** Certain Indigenous individuals may be elevated as representatives of their traditions, gaining platforms and visibility that may benefit them personally but risk overshadowing collective efforts, and undermining traditional roles and learning systems.
- 3. Shifting Focus Away from Community Resilience:** As communities and individuals engage with external audiences, their priorities can shift toward what is most intelligible or valuable to outsiders. This dynamic risks reducing attention on critical internal cultural/spiritual practices that foster resilience, such as intergenerational knowledge sharing.
- 4. Reinforcement of Extractive Dynamics:** When Indigenous knowledge is framed as a consumable commodity, it perpetuates extractive relationships that prioritize the needs and expectations of visitors over the community's own values and priorities. Over time, this dynamic can pressure communities to focus on reproducing cultural practices that better align with outsider preferences, potentially sidelining the deeper, context-specific traditions and knowledge essential to their resilience and autonomy.



- 5. Project Takeover:** Roles valued by modern/colonial systems, such as fundraising, website creation, and broader communications, often begin to redirect project priorities towards marketing and client demands. Organizers, mediators and facilitators, equipped with skills more intelligible to external audiences, often redirect the focus of initiatives towards what can be easily communicated. This dynamic can displace Indigenous communities from shaping the trajectory of their own initiatives, creating dependencies on external actors and shifting priorities away from the community's long-term resilience.

TOWARD A COMPLEXITY-GROUNDED, ADAPTIVE APPROACH

Despite the genuine desire on the part of many Indigenous communities and the non-Indigenous people visiting them to interrupt colonial patterns of relationship, these patterns are hard to shake. These patterns are often unconscious and, even when people become more consciously aware of them, can lead to the reproduction of harmful archetypes that further deepen colonial dynamics. Generative partnerships require a complexity-grounded, critically-informed, deeply self-reflexive, and adaptive approach rooted in mutual accountability *over time*. This entails:

- Continuous, evolving dialogue, reinterpretation, flexibility and adaptation that recognizes the complexities of both parties.
- Clarity about temporality and commitment.
- A willingness to navigate different perspectives, conflicts, mistakes, historical and systemic trauma and uneven power dynamics without allowing the relationship to fracture.

Such an approach demands education that expands participants' capacity (on both sides) to hold complexity, first about themselves, and then about others and the broader world. It also requires humility and an ability to remain present to historical wrongs while negotiating uneven power relations at personal, interpersonal, group and cross-cultural dimensions.

However, creating the conditions for this type of partnership is extraordinarily difficult and resource- and time-intensive. In a moment when consumerism dominates relational modes and many Indigenous communities, especially in the global south, face escalating challenges of need, achieving this level of engagement is extremely rare.



A PANDEMIC-ERA PIVOT: RETHINKING ENGAGEMENT

During the pandemic some communities recognized the precarity of focusing their energies on bringing outside visitors to their territories, and decided to decrease their reliance on colonial systems, economies, and institutions in order to focus instead on increasing their internal resilience in the face of growing social and ecological threats. Through dialogue with T5C, GTDF decided to refocus our educational efforts. Instead of expanding travel to Indigenous territories, we designed online educational experiences inspired by the T5C framework that invited learners to connect with the lands they inhabit, while also recognizing

the ways that they and these lands were connected to a wider living planet in “dis-ease.” This approach shifted the focus away from consuming Indigenous knowledge to fostering relationships with local ecosystems, and away from the common trope of “helping” Indigenous communities to deepening accountabilities to them and their territories.

The income generated from these programs and additional funds have been redistributed to Indigenous communities in the network, supporting their self-determined internal education and land protection projects, what we call the “reciprocity loop”. This included financial support for land back acquisitions and initiatives critical to the continuity of their livelihoods, such as food sovereignty, water security, community health, and climate adaptation and resilience. These redistributions were guided by the communities’ priorities, ensuring that the resources reinforced their autonomy rather than imposing external frameworks. This model honored the principles of the *Teia das 5 Curas* while adapting to the constraints we had identified and reducing the ecological and cultural impact of the visits.

ACKNOWLEDGING CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING AND ITS COSTS

As we reflect on these experiences, we recognize the immense value of cross-cultural engagements and the depth of learning and unlearning they have facilitated. Over the years, our partnerships have fostered profound relationships with both human and non-human beings, impacting us profoundly. We are deeply grateful to the communities who welcomed us into their lands and into their lives, holding space for our learning with immense patience and generosity.

We also acknowledge the costs borne by these communities. The process of hosting, teaching, and navigating the complexities of cross-cultural engagement often required significant energy and resources, sometimes at the expense of their own internal priorities. Perhaps most importantly, we have learned from those



who were unafraid to point out mistakes (aka the sh*t-stirrers)—their own and ours—showing the path toward more accountable and generative ways of relating.

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

For those seeking to bring non-Indigenous peoples to Indigenous territories to learn from Indigenous communities, these lessons raise critical questions:

- How can we prepare visitors to approach Indigenous communities with embodied (rather than performative or cosmetic) genuine humility, avoiding the common archetypes of engagement that often do more harm than good (see Ahenakew, 2020, chapter 3)?
- What practices can foster a deeper understanding of the complexities within Indigenous communities, acknowledging their heterogeneity and internal power dynamics?
- How can the process of learning in Indigenous territories be designed to support reciprocal relationships that honor both the visitors' un/learning journeys and the communities' priorities and resilience?
- What safeguards can ensure that such engagements contribute to long-term generative partnerships rather than reinforcing extractive or transactional dynamics?

Ultimately, these questions invite deeper reflection and commitment to humility, criticality, and mutual accountability. Without addressing these challenges thoughtfully, even well-intentioned efforts risk perpetuating harm.

Questions for communities:

- How can communities articulate their needs and boundaries to visitors in ways that foster mutual understanding and avoid reinforcing colonial dynamics?
- What strategies can help communities address internal power struggles that may arise in response to external engagements?
- How can communities evaluate whether external partnerships align with their long-term cultural and ecological priorities? What practices can they establish to periodically revisit and revise these evaluations as the partnerships evolve?



Questions for potential visitors/learners:

- How can visitors critically examine their motivations for engaging with Indigenous communities, particularly avoiding a consumerist self-actualization or transactional approach?
- What practices can help visitors remain accountable to the complexities and nuances of the communities they engage with, avoiding both pathologization and romanticization?
- How can visitors prepare themselves to embrace the discomfort of humility and engage in long-term, reciprocal relationships rather than seeking quick resolutions or personal growth experiences?
- In what ways can visitors contribute meaningfully to the communities' resilience without creating dependency, imposing external frameworks, or prioritizing their own validation?

Questions for pedagogical and cultural translators/mediators working with both visitors and communities:

- How can translators mediate between the expectations of visitors and the realities of Indigenous communities to foster more reciprocal and meaningful engagements?
- What strategies can be employed to problematize and disrupt the consumerist self-actualization parachute approach while still engaging visitors in transformative learning experiences?
- How can translators navigate and articulate the tensions between preserving cultural integrity and adapting to external educational frameworks?
- In what ways can translators support both communities and visitors in holding space for the discomfort and complexity inherent in these relationships?
- How can communities, visitors and mediators collaboratively determine when an engagement is no longer generative, and what strategies can be used to pause or interrupt the process in a way that preserves the possibility for future relationships?



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APPENDIX



I. ABOUT THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES THAT ARE PART OF T5C

FULNI-Ô

The Fulni-ô people are an Indigenous community residing in Águas Belas, Pernambuco, Brazil. They have a rich history that dates back centuries, marked by resilience, strength, and a deep connection with their ancestral lands. The Fulni-ô have faced numerous challenges throughout their history, including colonization, forced assimilation, and loss of their territories. However, they have managed to preserve their cultural traditions and continue to thrive as a distinct Indigenous group.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Fulni-ô culture is their traditional dances and music, such as Cafurnas, Toré and Samba de Coco. These dances play a vital role in their cultural manifestations and are considered a form of artistic expression, storytelling, and spiritual connection. The Toré is a ceremonial dance performed during important occasions and rituals. It involves rhythmic movements, traditional instruments, and powerful chanting, creating a mesmerizing and spiritual atmosphere.

In addition to their dances, the Fulni-ô have other cultural manifestations that reflect their unique way of life. They possess a vast knowledge of medicinal plants and traditional healing practices. The Fulni-ô are renowned for their expertise in herbal medicine, using plants to treat various ailments and maintain overall well-being. It is of particular importance their relationship with the sacred Jurema,



a spiritual guide that provides wisdom to the people. This traditional knowledge has been passed down through generations, ensuring the preservation of their ancestral wisdom.

Another distinctive aspect of Fulni-ô culture is their way of living. The Fulni-ô people value simplicity, harmony with nature, and spiritual connection. They lead a communal lifestyle, where collective decision-making and cooperation are highly valued.

HUNI KUI

The Huni Kui people are the most numerous Indigenous community in the state of Acre, in the western border of Brazil, where the Amazon Rainforest extends into Bolivia and Peru. The approximately 16,000 Huni Kui are spread across 116 villages, 12 territories and 5 different municipalities. Their name translates to “The True People” in their native Hatxã Kuin language.

Traditionally residing along the rivers in the Amazon rainforest, the Huni Kuin have a rich cultural heritage and deep connection with the natural world. The social and cultural fabric of the Huni Kuin is intricately linked to their environment, with a profound spiritual and philosophical system that reveres the forest as a living entity. They possess an extensive knowledge of plant medicine, which is central to their way of life. This knowledge, passed down through generations, encompasses the use of numerous plants for healing, spiritual rituals, and everyday needs. Among these, the use of Ayahuasca, a sacred brew with powerful psychoactive properties, stands out as a cornerstone of their spiritual practices, facilitating profound communal and individual experiences.

Despite their rich cultural traditions and knowledge, the Huni Kuin face significant challenges. Encroachment on their land by illegal logging, mining, and agricultural expansion poses a severe threat to their way of life and the biodiversity of their environment. The Huni Kuin have been at the forefront of indigenous movements, advocating for the rights and recognition of indigenous territories, and striving to protect their ancestral lands from degradation and exploitation. Their struggle is not only for their survival but also for the preservation of the Amazon rainforest, which is vital for global ecological balance.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the Huni Kuin’s culture and knowledge beyond their communities, particularly among those seeking alternative healing methods and deeper spiritual connections. This attention has opened new pathways for dialogue and cultural exchange, but also raises concerns about cultural appropriation and the sustainability of their traditional practices. As the



Huni Kuin navigate these opportunities and challenges, their resilience and wisdom continue to inspire a broader understanding of living in harmony with nature and the importance of preserving indigenous cultures for future generations.

PATAXÓ

The Pataxó people are the ancestral guardians of the first territory that the Portuguese arrived at when they landed in Brazil (then known as Pindorama), in the southern part of the state of Bahia, in northeastern Brazil. As such, the Pataxó people were the first Indigenous people in Brazil to have contact with the Europeans.

Since then, Pataxó warriors have dedicated themselves to ensuring their way of life and preserving all aspects of their culture, such as traditional medicines, rituals, chants, prayers, spirituality, paintings, and cuisine. These cultural practices are understood as a form of human existence and community resistance.

The Pataxó are part of the larger Pataxó Hã-Hã-Hãe ethnic group. With a population of approximately 10,000 individuals, they have managed to preserve their rich cultural heritage despite facing various challenges.

Their sacred lands span across an area of about 55,000 hectares. These lands are located within the Atlantic Forest biome, characterized by lush vegetation and a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Due to the violent effects of colonialism, the Pataxó almost lost their traditional language, Patxohã, that belongs to the Macro-Ge linguistic family, which is spoken by several Indigenous groups in Brazil. Due to resilience and a strong will, the language is in a process of revival, and is being more and more spoken at the community in daily life and in ritual songs and traditional dance, called Awê.

In recent years, the Pataxó people have faced various challenges, including land disputes, deforestation, and encroachment on their territories. Despite these challenges, they have been actively involved in advocating for their rights and preserving their cultural identity. The Pataxó people's resilience and determination to protect their lands and traditions have made them an important voice in the fight for Indigenous rights in Brazil.

PITAGUARY

The Pitaguary people, nestled in the northeastern state of Ceará, Brazil, occupy a traditional territory spanning approximately 1,728 hectares. This land, rich in natural beauty, comprises four villages positioned at the foothills of a majestic mountain range, enveloped by lush forests, bamboo groves, rivers, and water-

falls. The mountain, central to their spiritual and physical existence, stands as a testament to their profound connection with the land. This relationship is not merely of dependence but of deep spiritual significance, with the mountain often featuring in their rituals and serving as a source of inspiration for their music and cultural practices.

Their spirituality is a tapestry of the land's elements, where every aspect of nature is imbued with sacredness. The Pitaguary engage in rituals that honor the mountain, seeking its protection and guidance. These ceremonies are accompanied by distinctive music, an essential expression of their cultural identity. The rhythms and melodies, passed down through generations, are inspired by the sounds of nature surrounding them, creating a harmonious link between their spiritual beliefs and the natural world.

The music of the Pitaguary is not only a form of spiritual expression but also a means of storytelling and preserving their history and traditions. Instruments crafted from natural materials found within their territory produce sounds that echo the essence of the mountain, further strengthening their bond with the land. This unique blend of spirituality and music underscores their respect for and unity with the environment, showcasing a lifestyle that prioritizes balance and harmony.

The Pitaguary's relationship with the mountain and their territory is under constant threat from external pressures. Since the 1990s, the community has been actively fighting for land rights and recognition as Indigenous people, a struggle made more urgent by the encroachment of mining companies. These companies, driven by the desire to extract stones for construction, pose a significant threat to the Pitaguary's sacred lands, especially the residual massif that is not only a cornerstone of their physical territory but also a vital part of their spiritual heritage.

Despite being situated in the metropolitan region of Fortaleza, one of the world's most violent cities, the Pitaguary people's resilience shines through. They face challenges not only from environmental degradation and the threat of mining but also from urban violence that encroaches on their community. Yet, their unwavering commitment to protecting their land, culture, and traditions—rooted in a deep spiritual connection with the mountain—stands as a beacon of hope and resistance. This enduring bond with their environment, expressed through their spirituality, music, and daily lives, remains a critical aspect of their identity and survival amidst the pressures of the modern world.



TREMEMBÉ DA BARRA DO MUNDAÚ

The territory of the Tremembé people of Barra do Mundaú is located in the state of Ceará and includes an extensive area of forests, mangroves, dunes, and crystal-clear beaches.

The community is composed of 150 families who are fighting for their rights guaranteed by law, specifically the demarcation of their sacred territory, which was achieved in 2023 after a long struggle, as well as against “development” projects and wind farms imposed on their land.

The territory encompasses 3,580 hectares with an important stock of water resources, such as lagoons, streams, and springs, as well as mobile and fixed dunes, the reproduction of species in the mangroves, and the conservation of native plants.

From a social perspective, the Tremembé people organize themselves in the struggle to defend their territory, strengthening their culture and traditions, always seeking to transmit knowledge intergenerationally, through respect and reverence for their elders, that they call “old trunks” . There is a social organization with legal representation that coordinates actions aimed at strengthening the villages through collective projects and activities.

For the Tremembé people, all societies need to learn and transform to remain alive. But what “development” means should be decided by the community and not imposed from outside. Science and technology are allies in their struggles, but the village’s children are taught not to get lost in the lure of technology, the arrogance of science, or the fascination of money and consumerism. Western tools can be useful, but they can also make people sick, depending on their relationship with them. The strength of the people also comes from the realization that they have a different kind of wealth that is healthier than what modern society offers and needs to be protected.



II. TEIA DAS 5 CURAS RESEARCHERS

Although based on knowledge and teachings received from their own ancestries and territories, as well as through exchanges among different peoples, this project had some key researchers within each community, referenced below:

FULNI-Ô INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Yoran Fulni-ô

HUNI KUI INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Cacique Ninawá Huni Kui

PATAXÓ INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Ubiraci Pataxó

PITAGUARY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Benício Pitaguary

Nadya Pitaguary

Rosa Pitaguary

Pajé Barbosa Pitaguary

TREMEMBÉ DA BARRA DO MUNDAÚ INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Adriana Tremembé

Mateus Tremembé



This project also benefited from the efforts and collaboration of the members of the “Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective” (GDTF) in organizing the content: Vanessa Andreotti, Dino Siwek, Camilla Cardoso, Azul Carolina Duque, Sharon Stein, Dani D’Emilia, Rene Susa, among others.

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