

Stories for a Non- anthropocentric World

Workbook

Reconnecting
with a More Than
Human World

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TERMINOLOGY

'More-than-human' or 'non-human' refers to any plant, animal, insect, fungi, ocean, river etc. A more than human or non-human **'actor'** is any one of these things.

The Anthropocene is our suggested current geological epoch (geological time period), that describes unprecedented scale of crises we now face from the effects of human impact and dominance over the earth and its resources.

A **non-anthropocentric** view moves beyond thinking of our world solely from a human-centric perspective and instead looks to the importance and urgency of thinking as a multi-species world.

In **'becoming with'** we understand that in being human, one is always tied to the more than human. And that 'to be one is always to become with many.' It captures the knowledge of the entangled, interdependent relations of both human and non-human (Haraway, 2008).

INTRODUCTION

In western ideologies we continue to view ourselves (humans) as separate from the natural world. We fail to recognise the realities of our bound up nature and we remain largely disconnected from the agencies that exist in and around us. The importance of these more than human worlds and our entanglements with them is something we have grown apart from, something forgotten along the way. We now find ourselves within a new suggested geological epoch, known as the Anthropocene, which describes the unprecedented scale of crisis we now face from the impact of human dominance over the earth and its resources. Situated at the tipping point of the collapse of ecological and climatic stability, we need to radically re-evaluate our current relationships with our more than human worlds.

We will need to find alternate ways of viewing that challenge our perspectives of these relationships and how we understand our position within the world as humans. Here we seek to understand things of this world, both human and non-human, not as separate entities, but as bound and inseparable. It is necessary that we develop new ways of relating to and experiencing the world around us.

And it is crucial that we find ways of reconnecting with the importance of the agencies beyond the human.

For this journey we will aim to find ways of *becoming with* our more than human worlds. We will explore ways of reconnecting by moving through our environments and gathering knowledge along the way. We will use mapping as a way of understanding the *meshworked* nature of our more than human environments and actors, where we will map out the relationships, connections and points of interaction that make up our complex interwoven environments. We will challenge our own understandings of the world and form new meanings and names for our more than humans, drawing from indigenous ways of knowing such as the Koyukons of Alaska. Through these names, we will tell their stories. Each of these stories will be situated within a meshwork of relations. We aim to find points of connection that will help us in forming new relationships and understandings of our more than human worlds, with which we are entangled.

“Without context there can be no knowledge, or knowing, and hence knowledge exists only when belief practices develop..”

Simpson.

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mindset....

We are Materia

Tools for thinking with.....

How we know, colours our world.

Vibrant Is

How might we, as humans, begin to reposition our dominant human-centered mind-set? We may start by looking to alternate ways of thinking that can challenge our perspectives of how we view the things of this world and how we can view ourselves.

In thinking with Jane Bennets *Vibrant Matter*, we might view everything, both human and non-human, subject or object, as being composed of the same ‘vibrant materials.’ With each vibrant material of this world containing a *Thing Power*, a force or agency that is vibrant and active in everything. These complex vibrant materials in both inanimate matter (things) and animated life (us) are in constant action and interaction with one another and each have the ability to affect and be affected. If we are all composed of the same vibrant materials, that can affect and be affected, in this sense, all things can be seen to exist on a level of shared materiality.

To become attentive to this shared vibrancy within everything, we may begin to understand the life of ourselves and the lifeworld around us not as separate but “inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations” (Bennet).

To understand our world in this way not only repositions our understanding of ourselves as humans, but binds us deeply within the world around us. This attentiveness to our shared materiality, Bennet suggests, is the very idea upon which our survival depends. For nothing of this world exists in and of itself. We are all bound up, enmeshed, made up of the same vibrant stuff.

We might view ourselves instead as;

**“walking,
talking
minerals”**

It is the complex assembling of these many vibrant bodies and forces, that our world becomes what it is.

OUR MESH

Here we will continue exploring thinking tools that can challenge our perspective of our more than human worlds and of ourselves.

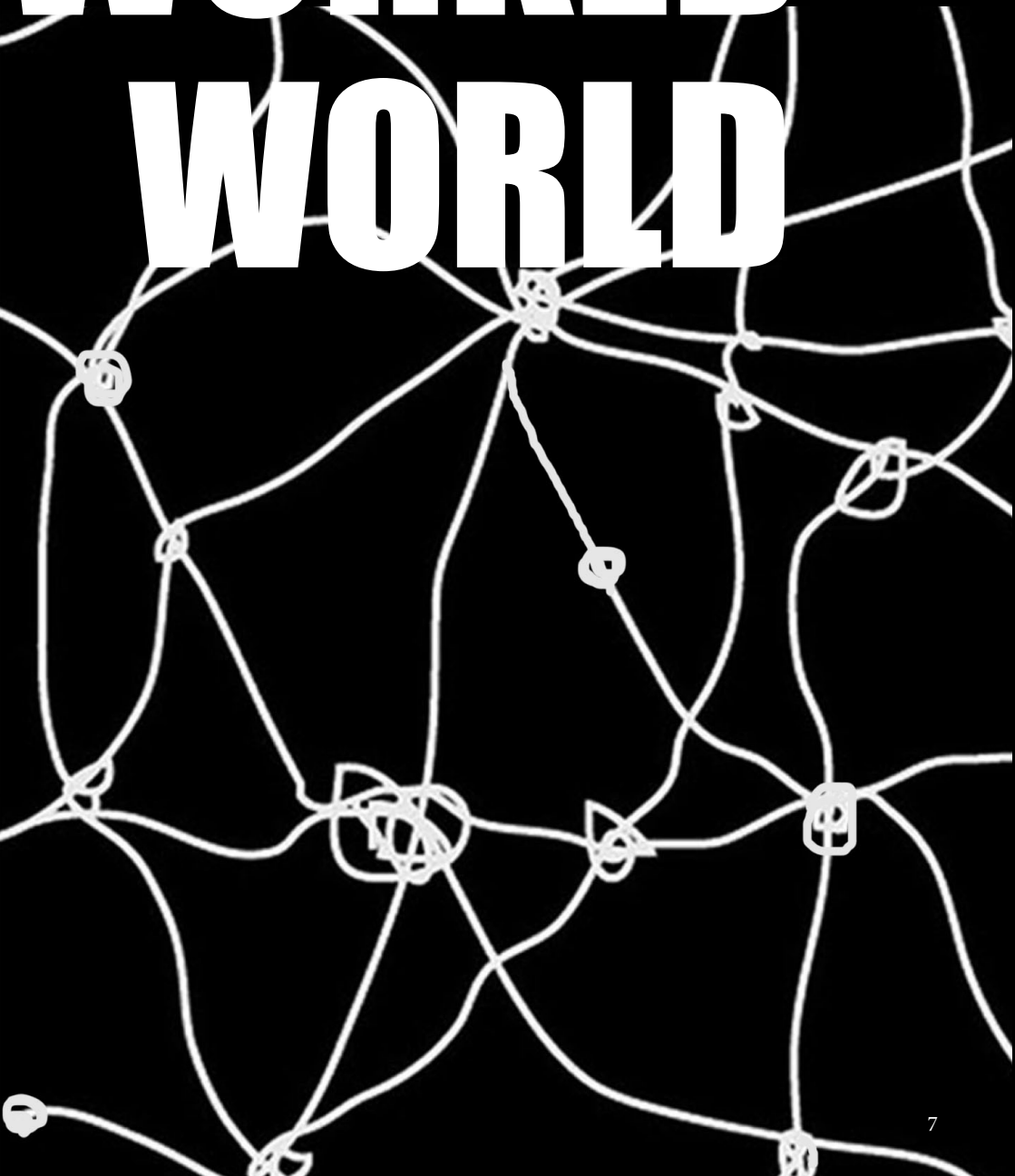
In thinking with Tim Ingolds *Meshworks* we may see our world as made up of an endless interaction of entities (both human and non-human). Each entity or organism is not to be understood as a separate entity but as entangled with its environment (Ingold). The pathways we create as we move through the environment form the complexly tangled interwoven strands of our meshworked world.

It is in the movement through these pathways and at the points of interaction that knowledge is gathered. The knowledge gathered along ones journey can be seen as *storied knowledge* (Ingold). For each interaction carries knowledge of where it is coming from to where it is going. Here, we are not understood as things in a world “but of things becoming things, and of the world becoming a world” (Ingold).

It is a world in perpetual movement, action and change. In a constant state of emergence and becoming. Each a part of an interwoven storied world. Each bound up with a story of another. We are the culmination and embodiment of all that we have encountered. Through our processes of coming and going, we become more than what we are in our interactions. We are bound up and embedded, intertwined within a meshwork of relations. It is the things of this world that are creating the world itself. It is a world unfolding.

tools for thinking with.....

WORKED WORLD

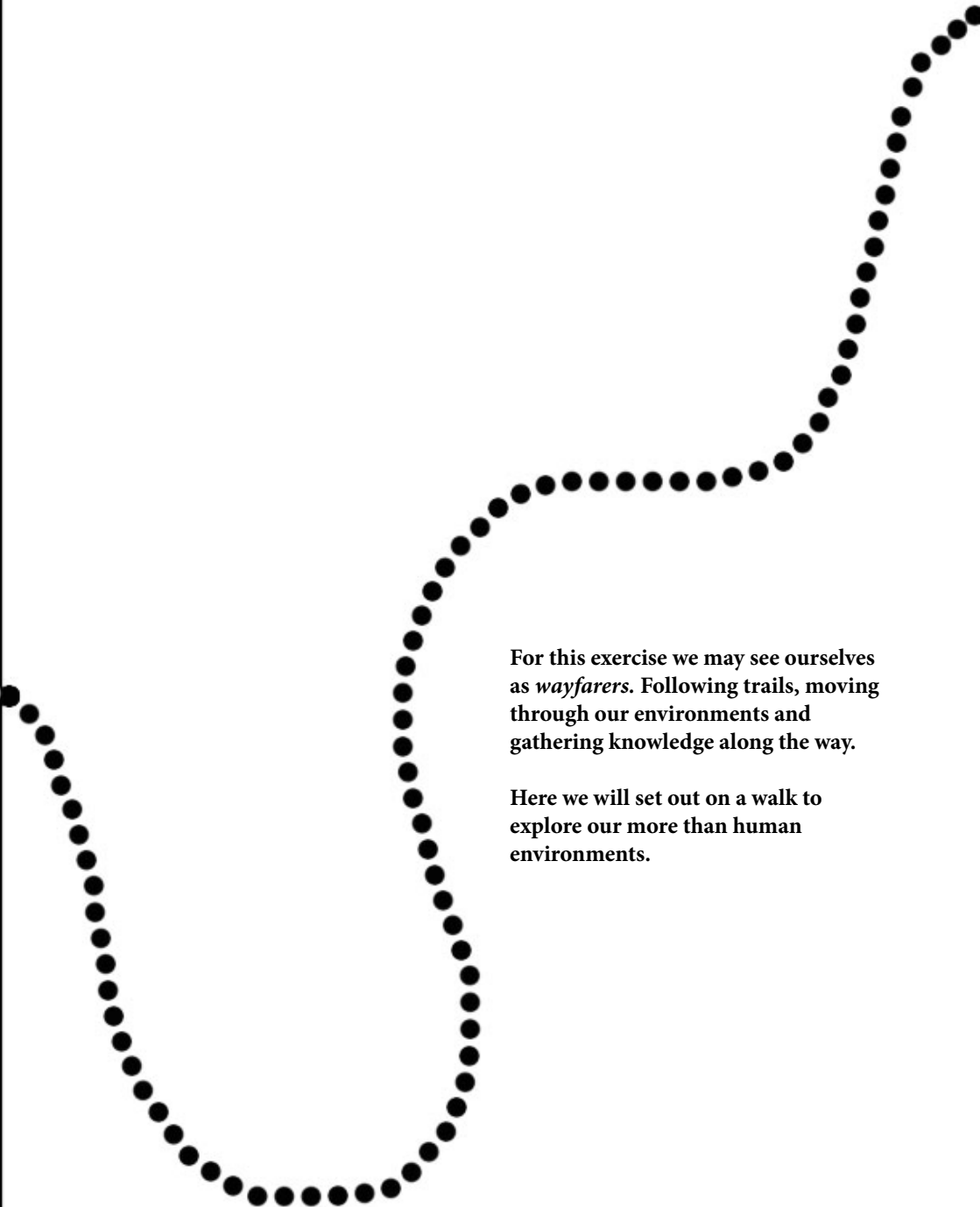


WAYFARING

Everything comes into being as “an enfoldment of the experience of the places they have inhabited, and of the journeys between them” (Ingold). Each journey that we embark on, we gather knowledge along the way and find new ways of becoming. This knowledge is gathered by an ongoing engagement, perception and action within the environment. It is integrated by the goings around and along the paths that we move through. It is a complex process of unfolding. It is a practice of being in the world. This journeying through is what we will call ‘wayfaring’. A wayfarer is one who travels through their environment by foot.

“Knowing is relating to the world around you, and the better you know, the greater the clarity and depth of your perception.”

Ingold.



For this exercise we may see ourselves as *wayfarers*. Following trails, moving through our environments and gathering knowledge along the way.

Here we will set out on a walk to explore our more than human environments.



ALONG YOUR JOURNEY

**Reconnect and observe.
Choose a more than human actor
to focus on.**

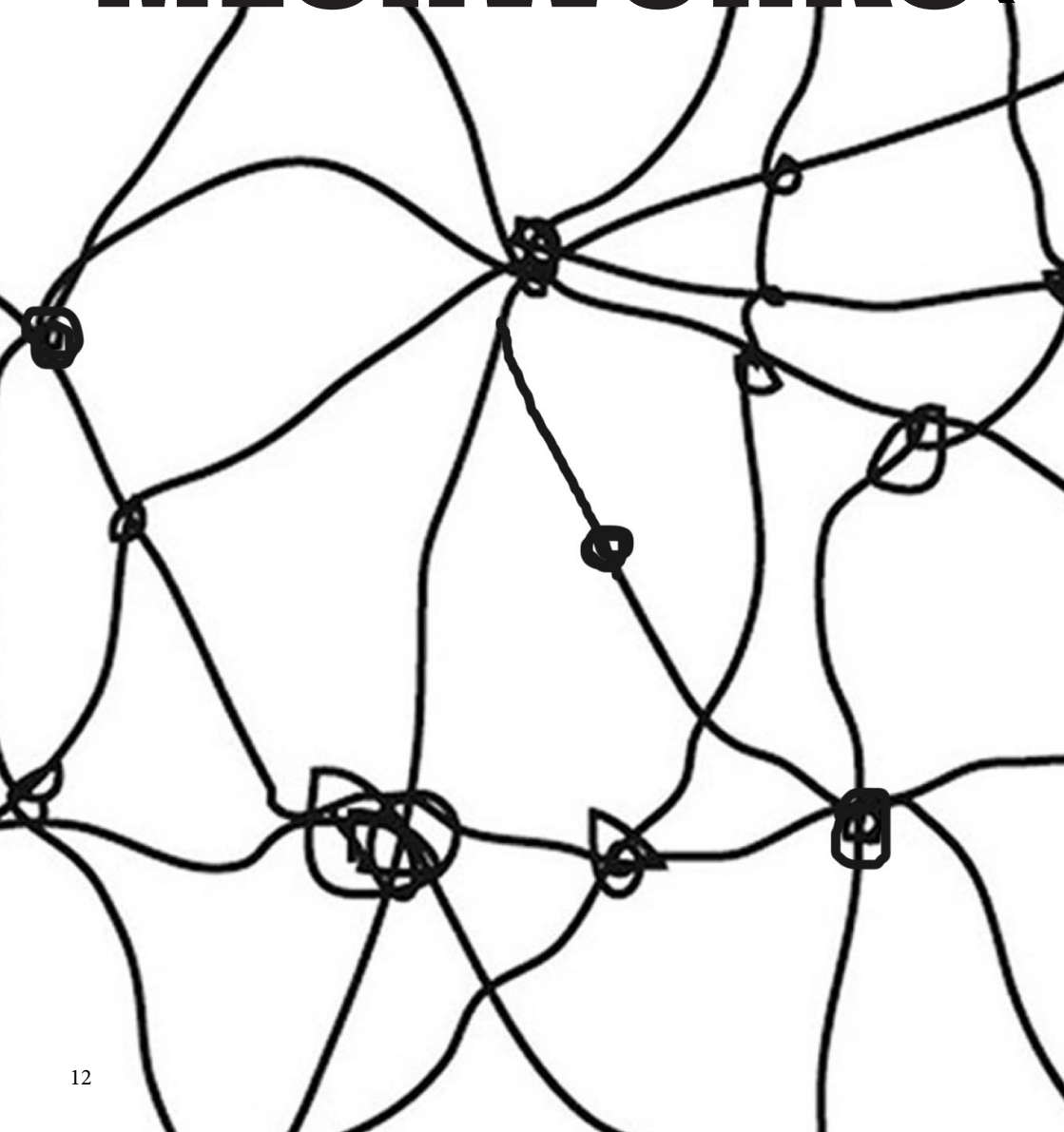
**What knowledge can you gather
about it?**

**Consider the place in which it
is found, the species it connects
with, the visible and invisible
processes that are happening in
and around it.**

**Document your findings with
notes and photographs.**

**Where possible spend time
gathering secondary research
afterwards (online, books,
journals etc.) What new
information can you gather?**

MAPPING MESHWORKS



We may see our world as;

“... teeming with multiple forms of life whose entanglements comprise an everravelling and unravelling relational meshwork” (Ingold).

It is a world suspended in movement, action and interaction. The movement and interaction is not bound up of any one thing. It is situated in a network of relations in a constant state of becoming and unfolding. The lives and stories of those are interwoven within the fabric of the meshwork.

“Where things meet, occurrences intertwine, as each becomes bound up in the other’s story” (Ingold).

Here we will map the meshworked world of our more than human. Through this we may find connections and relationships that may not always be visible to us. We may form a deeper understanding of the interconnections and relations that exist within and between our more than human worlds.

Starting in the center of the map, write down the name or draw a picture of your more than human actor of choice.

Each branching line connects to a piece of knowledge gathered about your actor. Build up your meshworked map by detailing in the information you have gathered.

Each line represents a path that tells a story.

Analyse your map. Can you find further relationships between the different stories? Link these connections by drawing in connecting lines.

Questions to consider;

What other species does it interact with?

What are the relationships between them?

What places is it found?

What does it impact, what impacts upon it?

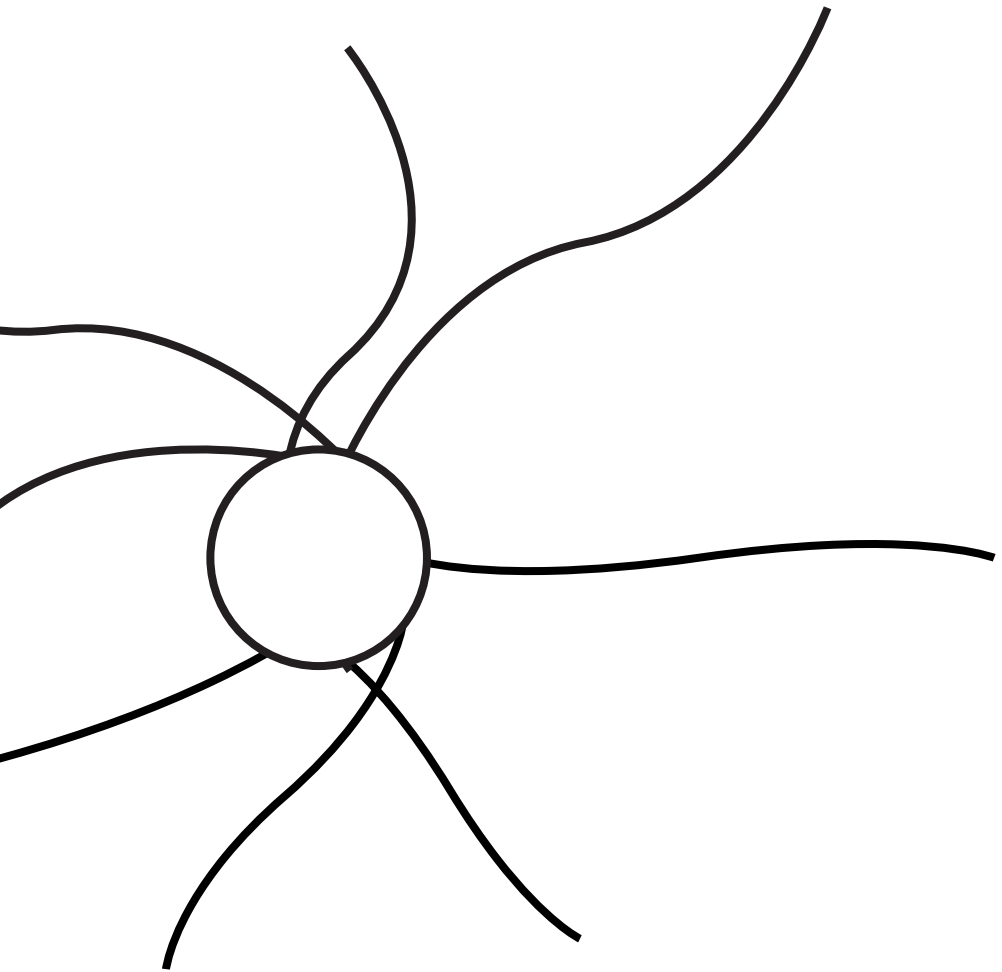
What is its role and value in the ecosystem?

How does it behave, change, move?

Example of descriptive words for your paths:

impacts, interacts, connects, effects, causes.





use this template to build your map.

NAMING

Our world is currently understood through western scientific models of classifications, which orders and names things based on the presumed relationships amongst organisms.

This hierarchical system of order classifies things “on the basis of intrinsic characteristics that are given quite independently of the context in which it is encountered, and of its relations with the things that presently surround it” (Ingold). In the process, things are divided from their relations and removed from the context in which they are found.

Although this is not the reality for every culture. Looking to indigenous cultures such as The Koyukon of Alaska, we may find new perspectives of our more than human worlds through their methods of naming, or what is known as folk taxonomies. Where things of this world are not named based on hierarchical classifications but are based on their own actions, habits, movements, places they are found, personal narratives and life stories (Ingold).

They are, “identified not by fixed attributes but by their paths of movement in an unfolding field of relations” (Ingold). For the Koyukons, it is only in the action and interaction, do things become what they are. To encounter a name is to encounter and experience a story about one way of being in the world. Each name is a part of the meshworked story.

Here we will set out to create a new name for our more than human that will allow us to form new meanings. These names can offer “real information about the ecological relations in the world” (Sinclair, 97).

The name we create, may capture **‘storied knowledge’**.

**“different
words
make
different
worlds”**

Norton-Smith.

Create a new name that tells
a **miniature story** about
your more than human actor.

Consider how your name
might contain particular
knowledge of;

Its connections and relations with
other species?

The place it is found?

Its role and value in the ecosystem?

Its activity, patterns, movements,
changes?

Its unique characteristics, sounds,
smells?

Write down a few ideas.

Analyse your choices.

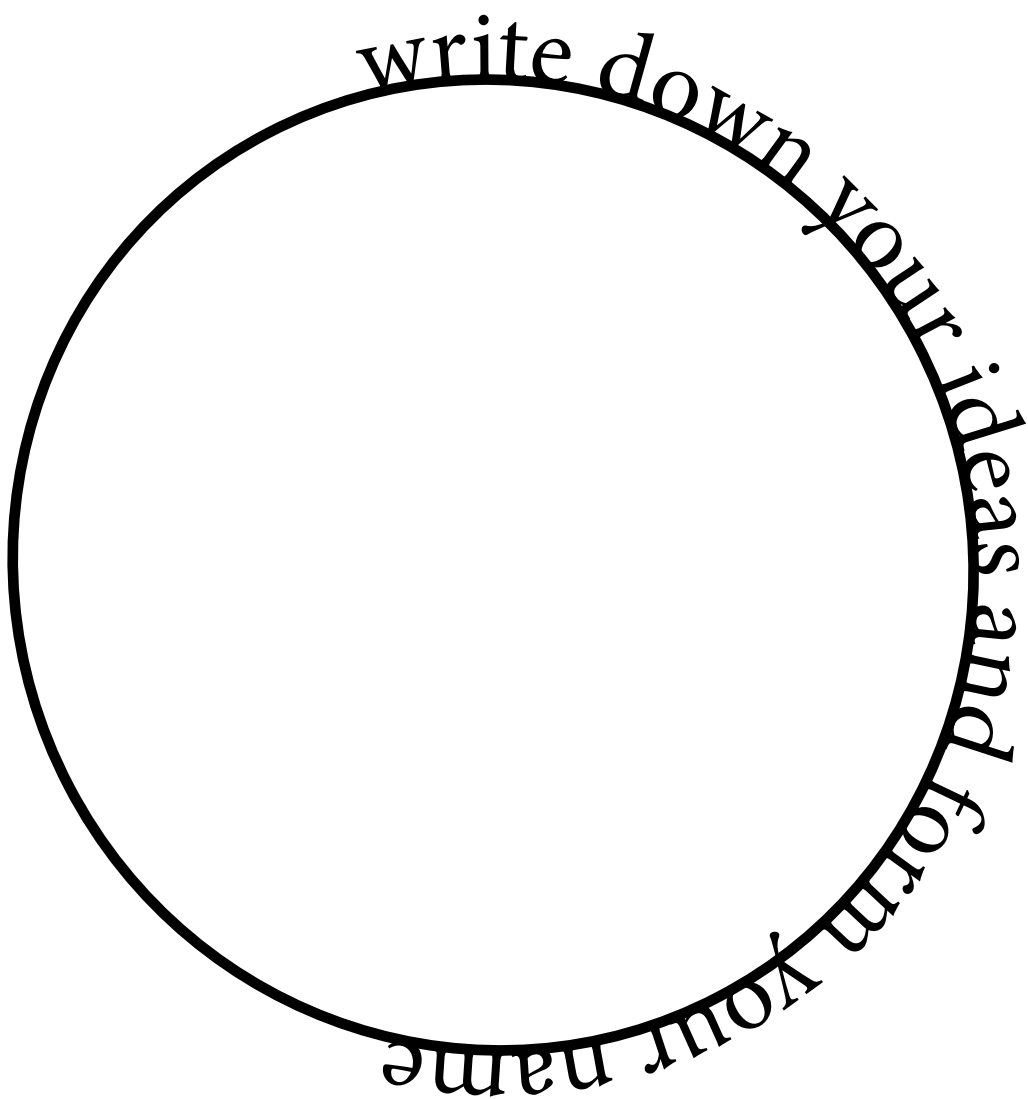
Begin forming your name.

Examples of names using
metaphors/relations:

The Koyukon people of Alaska

'comes to life' - maggot - refer-
ring to the moment when the larva
is transformed into a fly.

'flutters here and there' or
'eats clothing' - moth



STORYTELLING

“It is a world of movement and becoming, in which any thing, caught at a particular place and moment, enfolds within its constitution the history of relations that have brought it there. In such a world, we can understand the nature of things only by attending to their relations, or in other words, by telling their stories” (Ingold).

Our world is an unfolding meshwork of interrelated stories. Each story told, is an intertwinement of another. We may tell a story as a way of transmitting knowledge of our meshworked world. These stories may engage us in new perspectives and they have the power to challenge our current understandings.

“To tell, in short, is not to represent the world but to trace a path through it that others can follow” (Ingold).

Here you will work to create a short story of your more than human actor and the meshworked world around it. Begin by sketching out a story idea, bringing together all the knowledge you may have gathered about it. You may write or draw a story.

Questions to consider for your story idea;

What story should be told to others?

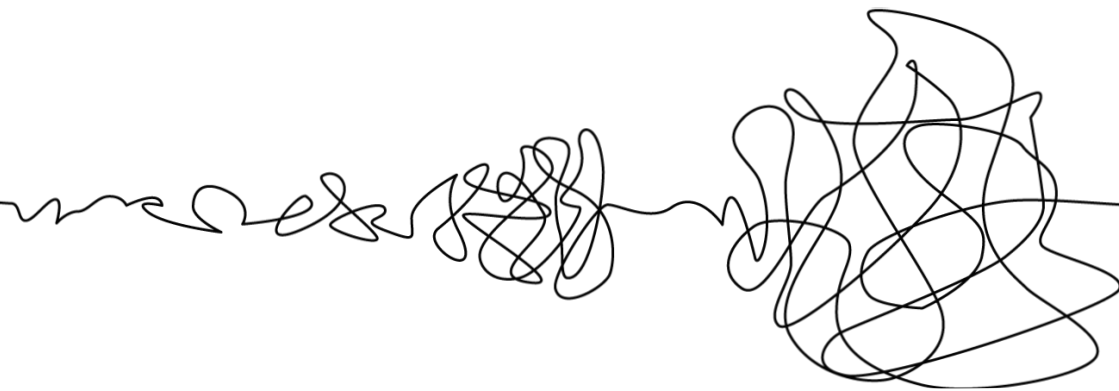
What knowledge can your story contain?

What are its connections and relations with other species?

What place is it found?

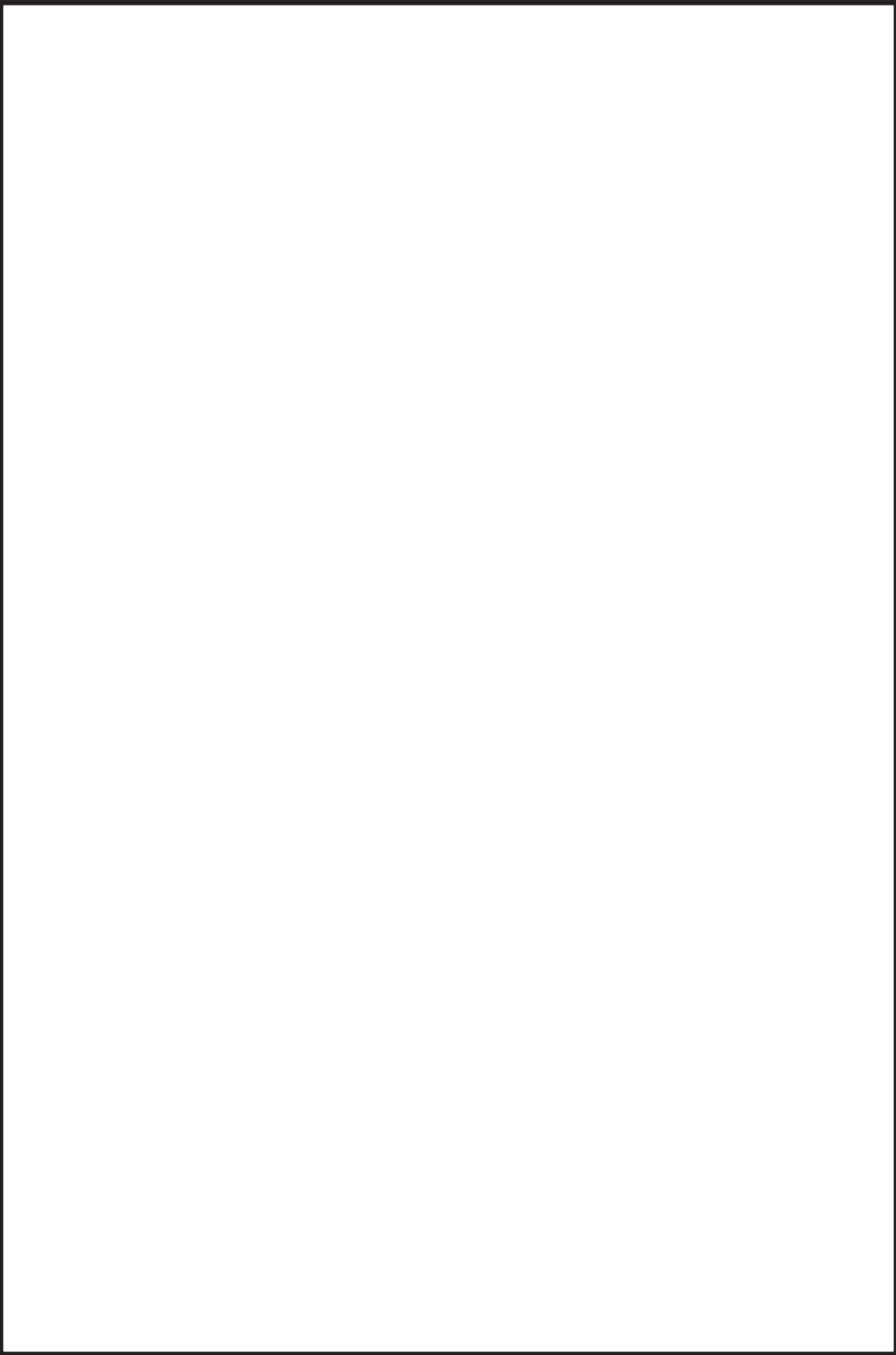
What is its role and value in the ecosystem?

How does it behave, change, move?



Sketch a story idea.

Create your story.



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