

Taylor-Massey Creek
Jennifer Alicia

In this moment, be still
Take a deep breath
In
And out
I challenge you to be present
To release the tensions you might have experienced earlier today from your body
To forget about any lingering stress or anxieties
Allow this sound wave to enter your ears, travel through your body and settle in your core
I want them to live there
Feel the concrete underneath your feet
The wooden bench that supports you
Imagine the surrounding bushes and trees embracing you, like a warm hug
Look up at the sky and give thanks
Doesn't this feel serene?
An escape from the everyday hustle and bustle
For this moment, it might even feel like you have traveled to an oasis in the city
Like many other people, I come here to move my body
A place to allow my feet to carry me along the trail, to gain clarity surrounded by nature
Sometimes I like to take a break and lay in a field, stare up at the sky, look for images in the clouds
I live with anxiety and being here always makes me feel so calm
How many of these moments do we get in between traveling to our jobs, to then travel back home, maybe to a second job, make dinner, do chores, tend to family, responsibilities, maybe sleep- and then repeat.
society pushes us to keep going
Show up even when we are exhausted
We operate on autopilot
Coasting through, each movement programmed into our tired vessels
There are no sick days when bills need to be paid
But who shows up for us?
How are you showing up for yourself?
Your body?
Your spirit?
The land?
Place your eyes on the trees in front of you
Branches swaying gently from side to side
An invitation to dance, to let the land move you
Do you hear the sweet melodies of chickadees
The water flowing in the distance
Taylor Massey Creek
That's what it's called today.
Named after two prominent families- the Taylor's and the Massey's
They settled here in these wetlands
Created a new life through a paper mill and a farm

This is what is known.
This is the legacy left behind, in every pamphlet, map, and sign.
But what was here before?
The Wendat,
The Mississaugas,
The Haudenosaunee,
They were all here.
Before disruption of their tranquility
Before land was stolen,
Before this concrete trail connecting neighborhoods of houses and buildings
people walking, and biking and running and rollerblading
This was their grounding.
We now enjoy this place and this moment as our escape
We take in all of its glory, but there is disruption even in beauty
Hints of interruption found in the visuals of garbage and recycling bins sitting across from you on
the other side of the trail
The buildings peeking above the treeline
Sounds of airplanes flying above and cars on Dawes Road
Maybe you can even smell it
The wastewater and stormwater overflow running into the creek making it unlivable for creatures
and animals
It's shameful
It is said water is life, but what does it mean when the water is inhabitable?
The stench, a reminder of the ongoing violence on the land
The creek itself, struggling to stay connected to the Don River due to our recklessness
A person-made wall of big rocks to prevent the creek from disappearing
Like the many other waterways buried underneath Tkaronto
But even rock can crumble sometimes and it is beginning to fall
A metaphor for our inability to protect the land
It can no longer sustain the weight of our negligence
The soil pushing and shifting, telling us she can no longer support us
She has given enough
She has had enough
We keep developing and building assuming the land will always provide
But what happens when we have taken all there is to take?
What happens when we fail to take care of the land that has provided for us?
When we forget about A Dish With One Spoon?
She is getting angry
Sometimes, I like to imagine roots of sugar maple bursting through her outer layer, shattering
remnants of our irresponsibility
Roots expanding, covering the surrounding houses and buildings
An beautiful explosive resurgence
The land uprising and taking herself back
I dream about the creek cleansed from the toxins, now a welcoming place for salmon to return

Fields of luscious grass, and native plants like cattails and milkweed for the butterflies and bees
Herds of deer running freely
It's nice to dream of futurities
But what are our current responsibilities?
We do have a responsibility
To be accountable to this land
To only take what we need
To leave some for everyone else
To keep it clean
Are you aware of treaty obligations?
The governance of this land?
Yes, this space is beautiful and enjoyable
Many people find themselves here to exercise, meet with friends and family, and just be in nature, away from the cold concrete streets
I am glad we have shared this moment to honour Taylor Massey Creek
And I hope you were able to experience serenity during your visit
I hope you were able to be present and briefly forget about what waits for you after this
I hope these words have been absorbed into your body so they can motivate you into action.
I hope these words have lit a fire in your belly- I call it love and rage
Rage is often misunderstood by many, but I use it as a healthy motivator
My rage comes from a place of love- love for myself, my family, my community, the land
When I witness or become aware of injustices towards the people and things I love, I become filled with a lava
I translate my rage onto the page, use my words to educate and motivate
As artists, we have a responsibility to tell stories of truth
Now that you know the truth, what stories will you tell after this?



The entrance to the park is wheelchair accessible, as is the bridge leading to the bench.

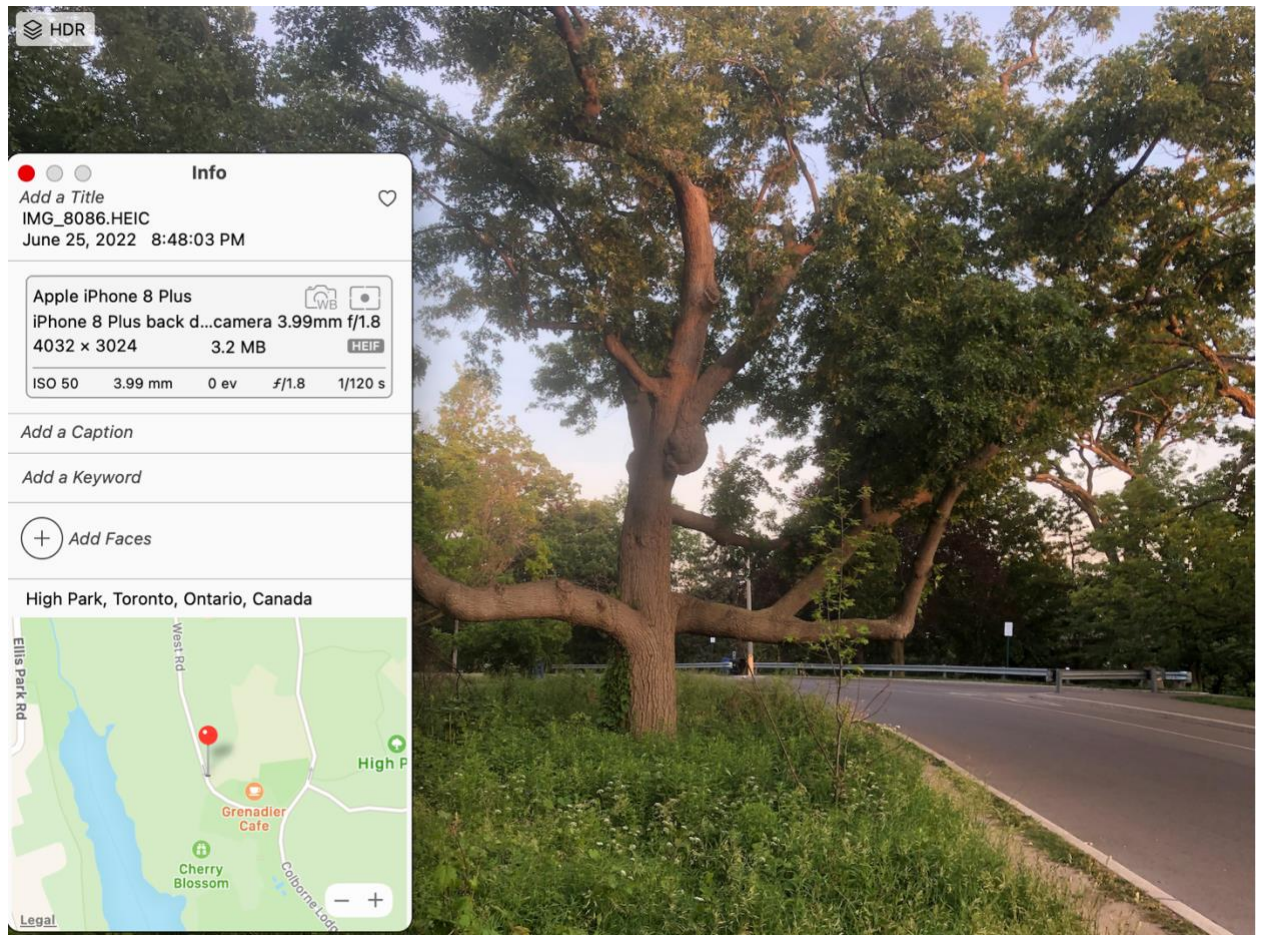




This is the first bench you will encounter as you cross the bridge and enter the park.



“Do You Know Where You Are Standing?” Jill Carter



Indigenous marker trees abound across Turtle Island. These natural bodies, subtly reconfigured by the Indigenous ancestors who stewarded these lands and travelled great distances to gather with others, to perform ceremonial obligations, to hunt and fish, or to plant and gather are earthworks that speak to us across the centuries in a language that is imperfectly remembered when it is remembered at all. Many of the descendants of those who inscribed their teachings and directives in mounded earth, on scrolls of birchbark, on painted rocks, and in the twisted boughs of the trees growing up from the soil labor to reclaim and to interpret these systems of inscription with as much vigor as they labor to revitalize the oral systems of communication that belong to their nations. In all these systems, resides a rich and vital inheritance—an encoded legacy of wisdom and lifeway painstakingly documented and preserved for this and the generations of Indigenous people to come.

Walking southwards on the West Road in High Park, we come upon a two-centuries'-old dreamer who reminds us to remember the Black Oak Savannah of which the 395 acres of this public park comprised only a small part. Is this an Indigenous marker tree? It may well be. Those low-lying limbs stretching eastwards and westwards may well have been configured by the Michi Saagig Anishinaabe stewards of this place as a sign. A sign of what? Sadly, as an urban Anishinaabe-Ashkenazi woman, I have not yet learned this ancient language, but I am trying, and the clay shell that is my body thrums with each lesson it receives. This tree may be a boundary marker guarding Bear Mound (popularly called Hawk Hill), which lies mere metres to the north and east of this ancient messenger. Perhaps, it is something else altogether.

This is for you to decide.

As you approach, I invite you to reflect upon embodied intelligence, the communication of that intelligence as a performance enacted by the other-than-human body, and human response to that intelligence performed somatically. In my wanderings, I seek to discover how my contemporary Indigenous body reads, hears, and develops 'language' with which to respond to this encoded legacy? Similarly, it is for you to discover what your body reads and hears and to discover a language through which your body will respond.

I wish you a beautiful day as you walk in this still-beautiful place.

Respect,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line with a small loop at the top and a horizontal line extending to the right.

The tree is located just north of the Grenadier Café in High Park. The route toward it is wheelchair accessible.

Fire Pit at Trillium Park

Written and narrated by Amy Hull

Greetings, my name is Amy Hull and I am a Toronto-based dance artist, scholar, and death doula. I am Mi'kmaw and Inuk, I was born in Newfoundland, raised in Ottawa, and now call Vaughan, Ontario, my home.

Today, we are situated at Trillium Park, at the fire pit. Around us, there are paved paths for pedestrians and people on bicycles, a structure with a unique, accordion-shaped roof, a lot of trees, plants, and large rocks for sitting, as well as Lake Ontario. In the distance, there may be boats, and airplanes taking off from Billy Bishop airport. If you've come here at a time of day when there are a lot of people, you might hear chattering along with the mechanical sounds of boats and airplanes, as well as the natural sounds of birds chirping and water lapping at the shore. With the amount of stories being told by the people around you, you may begin to clue in as to how many stories are a part of this land, how many stories have occurred here in this spot, and how many more are to come.

This area, sometimes referred to as Tkaronto, has been a metropolitan area since time immemorial. Many Indigenous nations, communities, and people have cared for this land over millennia, including the Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and more recently, the Metis Nation of Ontario. Today, there are many diverse, urban Indigenous peoples and communities caring for this land.

It's important that our work here follows in the philosophy of leaving spaces the same, if not better, than how we found them. This includes ensuring we leave no material waste behind. I remember a time as a student at York University, when I'd pass by the teepee every other day to clean up beer bottles, cigarette butts, and condom wrappers left behind by others. I once met someone who admitted to my face he had contributed to that litter. I think it's one thing for me to draw the comparison of "I would not go to your church or mosque and leave this kind of litter", but another thing for me to draw the comparison here that all of the land is a space for communion with spirit. It is all a church, it is all a mosque, it is all a ceremonial space. We all have a communal responsibility to uphold its sanctity.

It's also important that our work does not disturb the local animals which call the area home and the ecosystems present. Especially with coyote warnings around the city, we must remember it is not coyotes who are encroaching on our territory, but us who encroach upon theirs. Consider whether what you may be burning in the fire pit is safe to burn, completely burnt by the time you're finished, and that the fire is completely extinguished before you leave. Consider how loud your presence is, and whether you may be disrupting the peace and or communication of the animals present. Consider where you are stepping or rolling, and whether you are potentially crushing anthills, caterpillars, or other small beings whose homes are under our feet.

Additionally, it's important that our work here considers the grief and pain within many of the Indigenous stories of this area. Is the work we are creating and presenting here gentle and caring towards the children taken off this land, towards the loved ones left behind on this land, to those facing violence for defending their humanity on this land? Is it presenting truthful narratives of the Canadian state's history, or fantasy and propaganda? What have we learned, and what more would we like to learn when creating this work?

As an Indigenous person, but a guest on this land, my approach is one which intends humility, gentleness, care, respect, and reciprocity, but which welcomes critique and dissenting opinions on the ways in which I've handled things. I reject expertizing myself, and I reject the notion that there is "enough" learned before beginning, during the work, and in hindsight.

In this beautiful spot, I am remembering my friend Kelly Fraser today, as she loved me, supported me, and championed me in my emergence as a Toronto-based dance artist.



Entrance from parking lot.

There are washrooms (wheelchair accessible) on your left.

It's about a 5 minute walk from here to the fire pit.



Follow the path beyond the “accordion” structure.



The fire pit is ahead on your left.



If you'd prefer not to sit on a rock, there are also benches immediately behind you where you can enjoy the same view.

