



**FINDING ART, ANIMISM & ALCHEMY in the BROKEN FOREST:
LIVING with the LAND**

Prospectus and Schedule

Conference Introduction

The Conference has evolved from discussions between artists, humanities academics and environmental activists. These conversations were fed by a desire to understand more about our own relationships to the forest and to wild places and also by the conviction, among many of the artists in attendance at the gathering, that

Alchemy (defined herein as a millenia-old study of the relationships between all things and an index of all that nature has provided for pre-technological humans) may present a new way forward for Post Capitalist societies and a body of preternatural knowledge that can help us to affect positive environmental change.

The ultimate goal of the Broken Forests Project is to nurture, through art and art actions, the growth and bio-diversity of wild places and forests around the world. Finding Art and Alchemy in the Broken Forest brings together artists, writers, activists and academics who are interested in how



we all can re-connect with the land, find spiritual and physical well-being through that new relationship and help to shift our audience's "gaze" back to these "endangered" places. Through dialogue with forest caretakers, arts presenters and activists, the Conference will support holistic forest management practices, protect Old Growth forests and respect sites that the Broken Forests Group

hold to be spiritually significant. We also want to shine light on exploitative forces that are destroying the ecology and forest species to learn how we can influence our governments to be aware of these detrimental activities.

As we began to "curate" the Conference and invite interesting story-tellers, herb-gatherers, writers and alchemists, several "clusters of conversation" began to emerge.



**Four Directions for
the Conference**

Yellow...Art From Alchemy, Alchemy in Art

Curators, artists and researchers have been invited to lead discussions around the relationships between environmental activist, alchemaic and artistic processes. It is well-known that alchemists developed many of the materials, mediums and techniques used by artists (including the invention of oil paints, chemicals used in etching, and malleable metals used for sculpture and architecture). And that practising artists and fine craftspeople were often called upon (in the 14th and 15th centuries) to visualize arcane cosmologies or to create symbolic imagery that could be used to carefully illustrate and document visually both alchemaic phenomena and observations. Through these discussions we can start to determine how both a belief in natural spirits and alchemaic teachings, especially as they pertain to understanding our relationships to nature and the cosmos, have resurfaced as important to the practices of contemporary artists in Europe, South America and North America.

SPEAKERS/MODERATORS:
Virginia Eichhorn, Quest Art School and Gallery, Leszek Zuber Zebrowski, ODIN Institute, Krakow, Poland, Dr. Pavlina Radia, Nipissing University, and Alexander Angus McKay, University of Windsor.



Red...Sustainable Forest Engagement, Indigenous Forest Management

We are honoured and consider ourselves lucky to have three speakers who have dedicated their lives to the preservation and protection of our Boreal forests in Northern Ontario. These discussions will revolve around how we can develop and pass into law new laws and regulations that will ensure new levels of respect for our forests, and will help our foresters to re-awaken rich bio-diversity in these ecosystems.

SPEAKERS/MODERATORS:
Mary LaRonde, Temagami First Nation, Dean Assinowe, Indigenous Forester, Lucy Emmott, Biologist and Forest Activist.

Black...Alchemaic Science and the Broken Forest

In this section of the Conference we have brought together see-gatherers, forest advocates, and lapsed scientists who all have a passion for trees and forests and who will lead our group discussions on why “exclusive scientific methods” (as opposed to alchemaic methods) are no longer able to give us answers that will help us to re-establish a balance with nature, nor will they help us to re-connect with the land in meaningful and mutually beneficial ways. In this section we will attempt to define what may be called an “Inclusive and Holistic Scientific Method” that will connect scientific advances with those that have arisen from the rise of Indigenous and Alchemaic teachings.

SPEAKERS/

MODERATORS:, Bob Steele, Biologist, Writer, Photographer, Terre Chartrand, non-status Algonquin, Steven Svenson, Wilfred Laurier University, Sociology Department.



White...Stories to Feed the Spirits

The aim of alchemy is to understand exactly where we (as humans) are in the universe, to situate us and allow us to

understand what roles we play and what effects we may have in order to achieve a natural balance and harmony. If we can start to understand how we communicate these organic functions, these written recipes for holistic living, studies of the relationships we develop with all orders of organisms, how oral histories, stories and songs sustain our beliefs, then these links will help us to find personal and psychological connections to the forest. Our Jungian or archetypal symbols, stories and legends often lay at the heart of

artistic practices today. And these cultural touchstones inspire the story-teller and artist, allowing non-language-based cultures to sing their histories, tell and re-tell their “creation stories” and to base their cultures and cultural expressions (Art) on mythical, spiritual feelings.

SPEAKERS/MODERATORS: Marvyn Morrison, Temagami First Nation, Elyse Pomerantz, Cy Cywink, Wikwemikoong Unceded Territory.

Directions...An Alchemaic Pedagogy

In this section of the Conference, Educators, Curators and Artists will come together to discuss how we might start to develop a curriculum for Land-based Teaching that would include all University Faculties and encourage students make new discoveries as researchers who understand and appreciate their direct, personal relationships with the land. How can we start to achieve a new focal plane for students by understanding more about Land-based Teaching.

These discussions will be led by a team from Nipissing University that includes: Dr. Gillian McCann, Dr. Paul Monaghan and Dr. Gyllian Phillips. As well as discussing different perspectives on Land-based Teachings, this group will also be looking at Outdoor Performance (from Greek plays to Stelarc) and how these new forms of artistic expression and helping students to gain a better understanding of their relationships to the land.



Directions: Four Actions we can all TAKE!

Finding Art, Animism and Alchemy in the Broken Forest is not focusing on aspects of “artificial creation and synthesis of life-forms or metals”. These Alchemaic studies (the turning of lead into gold) obscured many of the more artful and curative aspects of these historical researches and knowledge. Some believe that Alchemy was born many millennia ago and that our deep connections with nature have been inherited from Celtic and

Vedic cultures. In these ancient cultures the lust for wealth and gold was not as important or valuable as a knowledge of forest and plant processes. Early alchemists were searching in fact, for the essence of things, for the spirit of the animal or plant. In this way Alchemists were also important to belief systems and early “animist” religions in all continents of the globe.

In this final section of the Conference, we want to come together to develop a list of Actions that we all can take to develop closer connections with nature and the natural world, how we can

become less dependent on technology and the machine world and how we start to redress the wrongs that have been perpetrated upon nature by human populations and industries.

Coinciding Activities

Emerging from the Broken Forest

The NRCC has approached ten artists whose work lends itself to the themes of the Broken Forests and reflects a lifelong commitment to their unique artistic practices. These artists are asked: to participate in an Artists' Wilderness Retreat/Residency and Symposium at Nipissing University, the NRCC and at the Canadian Ecology Centre and/or participate in the installation presentations we are planning; and to create multiple artworks and documentation records from these experiences. These pieces will comment upon or illustrate or challenge the stated objectives of our project and be of interest to Conference participants.

The successful outcome of the Art Creation and Mentorship Project will sustain the Broken Forests Artists Group for decades to come. It is through these Emerging artists that new ideas, statements and “optical shifts” will happen that will affect the forest in positive ways.



Endangered Boreal Art and the Environment Tour

Endangered Boreal 2022: a Broken Forests Exchange & Exhibition Project brings together 30 artists from across Canada (6) and from: Poland, Brazil, Taiwan, Colombia, Mexico, Italy, Spain and Germany. The Tour will start in Toronto on August 15 and travel to galleries, artistic communities and sites across

Northeastern Ontario for two weeks. As a part of their tour, the visitors will be attending the Finding Art and Alchemy in the Broken Forest Conference (August 20-23, 2022).

The Endangered Boreal 2022 phase of the ongoing Broken Forests project includes: wilderness tours to northern Ontario Old Growth forests, sacred sites and galleries, an art and the environment conference at Nipissing University, site interventions in Kirkland Lake, a series of site-specific performances in Toronto, Manitoulin Island, Mattawa, Temagami and Kirkland Lake and the transportation of multiple artworks (and artists) to speak and perform at exhibitions in Midland, ON, Victoria B.C., North Bay, ON and Toronto, ON.

For the simultaneous 2022 Tour our curatorial group has decided to produce arts presentations in four locations in Toronto, a Gathering and storytelling circle in Wiki, a full-scale Conference entitled “Finding Art and Alchemy in the Broken Forest” at the Canadian Ecology Centre (Mattawa, ON); six guided walks in Old Growth forests and sites in Northern Ontario, a Clearcut Intervention event, and an interactive performance art event in various locations around Kirkland Lake, Ontario.

FAA&A SCHEDULE

Saturday, August 20, 2022

- 8am–12pm – Travel from Manitoulin Island for Endangered Boreal participants
- 12pm – Luncheon and Greeting – Orientation packages distributed
- 2pm – Arrival ceremonies – Smudging – Land Acknowledgement
- 3pm – An Introduction to the Boreal Forest – Backroads Bill Steer
- 5pm – Forest “Bathing” experiences and meditations - Laura Kielpinski
- 6pm – Dinner
- 7:30pm – Fireside Chat

Sunday, August 21, 2022

- 8am–10am – Mushroom and Mychorrhzal Network Walks – Lucy Emmott
- 10am – Breakfast – Orientation packages distributed
- 11am – White Gathering/Discussion - Stories to Feed the Spirits
- 1:30pm – Lunch
- 2:30pm – Black Gathering/Discussion – Alchemaic Science and the Broken Forest
- 5pm – Talk/Show #1 – For the Record
- 6pm – Dinner

Monday, August 22, 2022

- 8am–10am – Harvesting, Identifying, Seeing Walks – Terre Chartrand, Bob Steele, Don Chretien
- 10am – Breakfast – Orientation packages distributed
- 11am – Yellow Gathering/Discussion - Art From Alchemy, Alchemy in Art,
- 1:30pm – Lunch
- 2:30pm – Red Gathering/Discussion - Sustainable Forest Engagement, Indigenous Forest Management
- 5pm – Talk/Show #3 – For the Record
- 6:30pm – Travel by bus and car to Nipissing University residences.
- 7pm – Dinner in North Bay

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

- 10am – Breakfast – Orientation packages distributed
- 11am – What is an Alchemy? Land-based Learning?
- 12pm – Performance Art en plein aire, a discussion
- 1pm – Lunch
- 2pm – Sustainable Forest Engagement, Indigenous Forest Management, Alchemaic Science and the Broken Forest
ACTIONS 4 ALL
- 3pm – Art From Alchemy, Alchemy in Art
Stories FROM the Spirits
ACTIONS 4 ALL
- 5pm – Talk/Show #3 – For the Record
- 7pm – Farewell Dinner – Networking and Pen Pals

Our TEAM

Our organizing Committee for Finding Alchemy in the Broken Forest includes: Dr. Gillian McCann, Dr. Gyllian Phillips, Dr. Paul Monaghan, Dr. Pavlina Rhadia, Dermot Wilson (Novah Gallery), Virginia Eichhorn (Quest Gallery) and “forest walkers”, Lucy Emmott and Terre Chartrand. Indigenous Elders who have been helping us to organize the Gathering include: Mike Cywink, Don Chretien, Mary LaRonde and Marvyn Morrison.

Speakers for the Finding Alchemy in the Broken Forest include: Terre Chartrand (non-status Algonquin artist and forest activist), Virginia Eichhorn (Canadian curator), Mary LaRonde (Anishinabe activist and poet), Bill Steer (Backroads Bill), Mike Cywink (Wiki Elder), Dr. Gillian McCann and Dr. Gyllie Phillips. Guided tours by Lucy Emmott, Donald Chretien, Terre Chartrand and Laura Kielpinski