ENTANGLED LANDSCAPES
Healing as a path to sustaining food futures

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Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the ways in which oppression, and the trauma it creates, impacts both our inner and outer landscapes. We see healing this trauma, both individually and collectively, as a pathway toward resilient, prosperous futures. We contextualize this exploration in the realm of food systems—as something tangible, fulfilling, and universally essential to human peoples—a thread that weaves together the inner and outer landscapes of body, community, and earth. Our intention is to illuminate these broader patterns as well as their fractal nature using a systems perspective and to propose that sustainability is relational healing.

We bring to this exploration our lenses as female, able-bodied, cisgender, middle-class farmers, researchers, mothers, food systems activists, and eaters (identities we share) and our distinct perspectives as a recent immigrant from India (Chaiti) and a white settler of Jewish descent (Sarah) in Mi’kma’ki. Both of us are grateful for our connection to and grappling with our responsibilities towards the unceded, unsurrendered, and ancestral territory of the Mi’kmaq that we currently live, play, grow, parent, and work in. Chaiti is an educator, privileged to learn from and work in communities in various parts of India and in Nova Scotia. Sarah does individual and group counselling in Canada. The perspectives we share here are part of our cross-cultural, cross-racial friendship and work collaboration, an ongoing dialogue and relational exploration that spans the breadth and depth of our inner and outer worlds.

We are beginning from the premise that we are already in constant relationship—with different parts of ourselves, other human and more-than-human beings, and the earth. These are nested systems. Human beings are complex, embodied systems of interrelated parts (our inner landscapes or body systems) and we are embedded within social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological systems (our outer landscapes), with reciprocal movements between these worlds. There are two distinct, but not separate, ways to relate to our body systems that are useful in mapping and working with our inner landscapes. One is to consider its constituents: affect, sensations, images, cognition (thoughts, memories, dreams, etc.),
behaviours (micro and macro), (Levine, 2015), and spirit. Another is to consider various parts, or voices, within us—as in, “a part of me feels excited, while another part of me feels nervous about this possibility”—which is a systems approach to understanding our complex inner dynamics (Schwartz, 2019).

We invite you to consider sustainability as compassionately attending to the quality and reciprocity of these mutual relationships. In this context, oppression is the disruption of relationships that manifests as violence or lack of awareness. In our food systems, we see these disrupted relationships in destructive industrial agricultural practices such as the use of toxic herbicides and pesticides, collapse of pollinator populations, food apartheid (Penniman, 2018) especially prevalent in racialized and/or lower-income communities, lack of safe drinking water in Indigenous communities (Bradford et al., 2016), dramatic increases in food intolerances (Haeusermann, 2015), and eating disorders (Galmiche et al., 2019). Patterns of oppression impact, play out in, and are held in our inner landscapes, intertwined in our bodies, hearts, and minds (Menakem, 2017). Since trauma is embedded in these oppressive systems, we see and reframe sustainability as a healing process, one which requires particular qualities of intention, care, attention, slowing down, compassion, and humility. Tending to relationships in these ways can support us in recognizing, staying with the pain and discomfort of, and working to heal the wounds of disrupted relationship. It can help move us towards relationships that are generative, resilient, and rich; relationships that are easy, even enticing, to sustain.

Oppressive systems and patterns, the trauma they cause, and relational healing of this trauma as a pathway toward sustainable futures could be explored in many contexts. We are drawn to this exploration in the realm of food and food systems. Food systems—the ways in which our food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed—are complex networks of relationships that bridge our inner and outer landscapes. They weave together the realms of our bodies, communities, and earth in universally relatable and everyday ways. The industrialized food systems that currently feed most in the Global North, and increasingly in the Global South, embody and replicate multiple oppressions, particularly those of race, gender, class, species, and ability, that are causing harm to human health and well-being (Allen, 2010; Food Secure Canada, 2011; McMichael et al., 2007; Niebylski et al., 2014), to our more-than-human communities, and to the earth (Fraňková et al., 2017; Garnett, 2011).

The challenge of building sustainable food futures is recognizing, acknowledging, and working to heal the disrupted relationships and address the oppressive systems that are causing them. It is an underlying shift in our ways of relating—to parts of ourselves, to others, to more-than-human beings, and to earth—that requires our worldviews to adapt and transform; what O’Brien (2018) distinguishes as an adaptive challenge required in addressing climate change, rather than a technical problem to be solved. What does healing and being in relationship with our food and food systems look like in practice? Indigenous scholar and scientist, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) reminds us that the paths are many:

One of our responsibilities as human people is to find ways to enter into reciprocity with the more-than-human world. We can do it through gratitude, through ceremony, through land stewardship, science, art, and in everyday acts of practical reverence.

(p. 190)
Entangled landscapes

A deep dive into sustainable diets

We’re exploring sustainable food systems through a deep dive into both our inner and outer landscapes, seeing these as deeply entangled. In our experience of working with our inner landscapes, we’ve found that the deeper we go, the more honest we are, the more complex and nuanced our understanding, the more clearly we see and define the work required in our outer landscapes. This, in turn, provides feedback that informs our inner systems. This interconnectedness and reciprocal influence of our inner and outer worlds means that the work is cyclical (as, correspondingly, is the structure of this chapter).

Extensive research, scholarship, and community practice have made it abundantly clear what shifts are required to move toward a more sustainable food system (Fraňková et al., 2017; Garnett, 2011; Penniman, 2018; Shiva, 2015; Vermeulen et al., 2012). An important question for us in the beginning of this inquiry was: what is keeping us from making these changes? In his work on epistemologies of crisis, Kyle Whyte (2020) beautifully illuminates patterns of urgency in western approaches to sustainability. This urgency is a common pattern we’ve encountered in our work, both externally, in sustainable food, food justice, and climate crisis movements, and within ourselves, where we are internally already on the move as soon as the conversation begins—oriented toward changing things, setting goals, stretching our minds to imagine and leap ahead. For the parts of us ignited by coloniality (Machado de Oliviera, 2021), there’s a push, an oomph, behind this leap that is urgency, embodied. As a part of these systems, we know and feel suffering, we sense brokenness in relationships, we imagine painful futures, and we want to get somewhere else quickly. We’re proposing that this urgency is part of the pattern that requires attending to, as illustrated in Box 19.1.

One of our curiosities about our relationships with food is where we draw the boundaries. What if we think of food as everything we ingest, all that we need to nourish, soothe, and protect ourselves? Food could then extend to include substances beyond three meals and snacks: physical substances like alcohol, caffeine, supplements, recreational drugs, and prescription medications; not to mention what we ingest mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and culturally about our bodies, our sense of belonging, nourishment, and connection. These substances form an important part of our daily diet and its context: they have an essential role in regulating our body systems. In this slow exploration, we approach these parts of our diet with no judgement, but an appreciation of the ways in which they offer something that we need.

BOX 19.1: Sarah speaking

If we were together in a counselling session, we’d slow right down at this point. Yes, that would mean staying with that urge to leap ahead long enough for it to soften; staying with the discomfort long enough to notice it, allow it, feel it, make space for it to live in us. Our urgency may return—perhaps as distractedness, rational arguments, or an inability to settle—and that’s okay too: that’s a way that our body systems attempt to protect their equilibrium. We can offer the urgent part of ourselves (and whatever other parts are arising with their various trauma responses) our gratitude and gently, with a solid dose of self-compassion, bring our attention back to our relationships to food and food systems as they currently are without changing anything just yet. What if we become curious about how things already are, deeply, and with appreciation of the ways in which they offer something that we need?
What if we consider our diet as already whole, already in balance; what if our outer and inner landscapes are already in equilibrium? Before we begin to make changes to our food systems, could we ask what is being held in our body systems that requires these substances and patterns to remain in balance? What are the outer forces that have created and are holding us in these patterns? Then we might address our inner landscapes with curiosity, wondering what needs to heal so that other choices become more possible.

This is a radically different approach than attempting to shift our diets through discipline, prescriptions, coercion, expensive consultants, or advice from self-help books without tending to our inner landscapes. Our inner worlds and transformations have been identified as an important and under-researched dimension of sustainability (Ives et al., 2020; Wamsler & Brink, 2018; Woiwode et al., 2021). We’re curious about slowing down enough to ask what within us is creating the need for soothing, comfort, or distraction that is being met externally through our diets. This dynamic is echoed at multiple nested scales. Is there a traumatic response to white and thin body supremacy that manifests as restrictive diets and obsessive exercise regimes? Is there an internalized addiction to modernity with its promises of choice and convenience (Machado de Oliviera, 2021) that fuels the need for the products of industrialized agriculture? Are the industrialized systems by which we grow, process, transport, and consume food so violent and lacking in reciprocal relationship with the lives we are taking (Kimmerer, 2013) that they create an internal sense of loss of relationship and accompanying grief?

What happens to this internal trauma? Often, we are not even aware of its existence or its cause. When we don’t attend to this internal trauma, it is perpetuated or blown through (Menakem, 2017) dysfunctional, misplaced, and harmful actions into our outer landscapes. What does this look like? It manifests as destructive and harmful social and ecological practices: biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, inequitable and harmful living conditions for agricultural workers, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, forest fires, global heat waves and permafrost melt, increasing frequency and intensity of storms, population collapse, water and food shortages. It also manifests as polarization and echo chambers, political and religious fundamentalism, isolation, loneliness, and burnout (brown, 2017; Rabi, 2019).

These inner and outer manifestations are in direct reciprocal relationship with each other: as we traumatize our outer landscapes with destructive food production practices, soils, and waters are polluted, depleted, and less able to nourish our bodies. Increased carbon dioxide in the air from human fossil fuel use means that plants are less able to absorb minerals that support human health (Loladze, 2014); depleted soils are producing fruits and vegetables less rich in minerals and vitamins (Davis et al., 2004); chemicals such as glyphosate, now widely used in industrial agriculture enhance the “damaging effects of other food borne chemical residues and environmental toxins … [increasing the risk of] gastrointestinal disorders, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, autism, infertility, cancer and Alzheimer’s disease” (Samsel & Seneff, 2013). Chronic stress decreases our bodies’ ability to absorb nutrients and food apartheid and targeted marketing of unhealthy foods increases risk and impacts of diet-related diseases, particularly in Black, brown, and Indigenous bodies (Marya & Patel, 2021).

Food can be both nourishment and medicine. Yet, it can also undermine our health and well-being—an impact that both reflects and reproduces parallel systems of oppression. In her book, Farming While Black, Leah Penniman (2018) highlights that within the US context, About 24 million Americans live under food apartheid, in which it’s difficult to impossible to access affordable, healthy food. This trend is not race neutral. White neighbourhoods have an average of four times as many supermarkets as predominantly
Black communities … Incidences of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease are on the rise in all populations, but the greatest increases have occurred among people of colour, especially African Americans and Native Americans … over one-third of children are overweight or obese, a fourfold increase over the past 30 years.

(p. 4)

Food systems that cause trauma in our outer landscapes are also having traumatic impacts on our body systems. The work of healing, and thus sustainability, requires attending to both our inner and outer landscapes.

Next, we’ll define oppression and trauma by integrating multiple definitions that use systems approaches and help frame this inquiry. Understanding how these forces function and shape our current diets and associated food systems is central to our understanding of sustainability and what sustainable food futures might look like.

## Oppression and trauma

Power is a relational divide created when one quality is deemed superior to another. When this divide is perpetuated through cultural, social, political, and economic norms and systems, it coalesces as supremacy (Marya, 2020), a paradigm that establishes hierarchies of dominance: hierarchies of race, gender, species, sexual orientation, culture, religion, ability, cognitive style, and body shape, and their intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Oppression is the force of this power exerted, both individually and systemically, by the group centred as the “norm” over another which is marginalized (Johnson, 2007).

Oppression can create trauma; trauma, unless metabolized (Menakem, 2017), creates further trauma. Our understanding of trauma integrates a kaleidoscope of approaches. Levine (2019) characterizes trauma as the state “when the organism is strained beyond its adaptational capacity to regulate states of arousal” (p. 4). Trauma can “overwhelm a person’s ability to cope. It dysregulates and disconnects the body, the nervous system, the psyche, the spirit” (Charleson-Touche & Parsanishi, 2014, p. 3). Menakem (2017) points out that “Trauma always happens in the body. It is a spontaneous protective mechanism used by the body to stop or thwart further (or future) potential damage” (p. 7).

In the absence of healing, trauma coalesces and manifests as patterns and systems of oppression that further disrupt relationships, perpetuating trauma in generational arcs (Menakem, 2017). Trauma reconfigures constellations of relationships in our inner and outer landscapes in predictable patterns (Schwartz, 2019), making it difficult to be present in relationship. Trauma is disrupted relationship. Trauma exists in our physical, psychological, social, and ecological systems: everywhere that we are in relationship. It looks like guilt around eating or a lack of ability to take pleasure in food, like policing our own and others’ bodies through subtle and blatant judgements about body size and shape, like destructive systems of food production that attempt to squeeze more productivity out of a given piece of land at the cost of human health and the lives of many other beings (Pollan, 2006). The patterns of disruption occur in each of these nested levels, in turn affecting the others. Chemical-laced foods from industrialized agriculture are contributing to dramatically increased incidence of food intolerances (Haeusermann, 2015; Samsel & Seneff, 2013) to the point where the everyday act of eating can shift from a pleasurable, social ritual of nourishing our bodies to an anxiety-causing chore (Santos, 2019).

In cyclical fashion, disrupted relationships also create trauma. This means that there is responsibility at multiple levels. We cannot control the impact of oppression on our body
system. However, as Resmaa Menakem (2017) articulates so powerfully in *My Grandmother’s Hands*, we can metabolize trauma using clean pain towards healing or we can *blow trauma* through others (our bodies, other marginalized humans, other beings), perpetuating and recreating it. Responsibility also rests on us collectively, and proportionately more so when we are in positions of power (on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, species, ability, cognitive style, and more), to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression so that trauma is not inflicted repeatedly and to create room for more generative, creative, and whole futures.

When we understand that both oppressor and oppressed are bound (Krishnamurti, 1969) by the traumatic impact of oppression, we can reconceive the notion of privilege. Twentieth-century political scientist Karl Deutsch said, “Power is the ability not to have to learn” (as cited in Walker, 2014). We can ask ourselves: who is forced to learn whose language? Those in larger bodies know how to make their bodies smaller; those in bodies of colour know how to act more like white bodies; those who are neurodivergent mask to appear more neurotypical. Our more-than-human neighbours are adapting to the ways in which we are wounding the land to feed ourselves; recognizing the patterns of the land requires deep and consistent attention and listening, which is commitment humans don’t have to make. While it is true that those in power have the structural support to numb and distance themselves from the consequences of disrupted relationships in the short term, the reality of being in constant relationship means that our liberation is collective:

As any experienced trauma specialist will tell you … for anyone to genuinely address these health issues, the person needs to address the trauma that fuels them. Without that foundational healing, all other healing becomes difficult or impossible, because the body is still stuck in the trauma … white women in America suffer from high rates of cancer. Law enforcement professionals have unusually high rates of alcohol abuse, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, divorce, and domestic violence … It seems likely that some of these health and social problems are related to underlying trauma that needs to be addressed if any real change is to occur.

Menakem, 2017, p. 130

Systemic power propagates itself in the misalignment between the narrative we have of ourselves and our actions, a gap between our intellectual and embodied understanding. This leads to a (very human) bad news/good news scenario: the bad news is that we can, and often do, intellectually disagree, and feel pained by oppression and oppressive systems and still continue to (knowingly and unknowingly) participate in and reproduce them. The good news is that we are never outside of these systems, and therefore, the relational work in both our inner and outer landscapes is always accessible; we can begin to influence and embody change in any moment.

When we are in positions of power, we have the choice to not engage, and when we do, we may begin with a primarily intellectual understanding without yet having as many skills, capacity, and opportunities to access the embodied empathy that would activate our own systems and propel our bodies into action. This understanding offers guidelines for how those in positions of power can and need to engage with trauma and oppression in order to make more generative futures possible. We hold together two interconnected aspects of individual and collective healing: building our capacity to be in and work with the places we are wounded and stuck (in community with others); and, simultaneously, cultivating joy, pleasure, and celebration to honour, remember, and reconnect to our place in this web of relationships.
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Those in power often see a more just future as a time where more are able to enjoy the same privileges and access to those things by which they define quality of life. However, if healing is necessary both for the oppressor and oppressed, we recognize that a future where these relationships are centred will be emergent and remains unknown (Jimmy & Andreotti, 2019). We intend to draw attention to the less visible and more subtle ways in which trauma is manifesting in the bodies, minds, and hearts of those in power and invite you to consider that healing is required in all, by all, and for all of us—the ultimate democracy inherent in relational life.

In the same way that we may find it difficult to connect studies of climate change with our everyday experience, we may regard systemic oppression as a larger, more abstract pattern. Yet, just as climate change is impacting the lengths of our autumn and how much moisture the soil holds in the spring, systemic oppression is manifesting in the bodies we inhabit (Marya & Patel, 2021). In a North American context, we are taught, both implicitly and explicitly, that our pain, discomfort, and mental health challenges are internal, individual issues. As Dr Foor describes in a conversation with Luis Mojica (2021),

[Recognizing our relationships with other-than-human life is] a decolonizing act … culturally at least … A way of chipping at the extreme individualism that therapy can often unintentionally recreate. It’s like here are my problems. I’m going to come pay you to help me with my problems. Well, if we address the colonialism and the sexism and the racism and the classism and the bigotry and supremacy, what problems do you have left? What if all of your problems are systemic?

How do we recognize systemic trauma as disrupted relationships, not just intellectually but also as it shows up in our immediate, moment-to-moment relational experience? In her work on embodied social justice, Dr Rae Johnson (2018) describes,

the degree to which our bodies are implicated in the reproduction of social power … [this] should not be considered a replacement for working on the macrosociological level … rather, it works to support change in the relational fabric of our lives so that structural shifts correspond with authentic transformations in attitude, and where legal rights and freedoms are experienced at the core of our beings and manifested in our everyday interactions with others.

(p. 1)

Bodies in relationship

In this chapter, we are grounding our work in the body. It is the clear meeting place between the inner and outer: it is where we know and engage in relationship, what is nourished by the food we eat, and how we express care and give back to a world that nurtures us. It is where experiences of both wellness and trauma are held, where we register our experiences of safety and fear, pleasure and discomfort, and it must be included in healing trauma (Levine, 2015; Menakem, 2017; van der Kolk, 2015). Our bodies are also deeply affected by and propagate these patterns of power and oppression: “Our nonverbal communication patterns, beliefs about body norms, and feelings of connection and identification with our bodies are all deeply affected by our assigned membership in different social groups and the privileges associated with that membership” (Johnson, 2018, p. 1).
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In focusing on the body in relationship, we are expanding boundaries across space, time, and species to encompass the broader web of kinship that many cultural, spiritual, and psychological traditions around the world are rooted in. Animistic psychology defines this larger sense of connection as animism, referring to a set of values that basically says living humans are just one kind of person in a much wider field of kinship, community, and other kinds of people. Those other kinds of people include the ancestors, the plants, the animals, deities, nature spirits, planets …

Mojica, 2021

Many traditions connect a wound of separation with compulsive consumption: a collapse in the system creates an insatiable striving elsewhere; a deep hunger in one part leads to compulsive consumption in another. Hill (1992) addresses sustainability in terms of healing woundedness; Cohen and colleagues (2014) as “healing the wounds of bonding rupture and facilitating the evolution of human consciousness and development of a more mature identity” (p. 23). Alexander (2015) describes our social structures and conditions that link the experience of fragmentation to addiction and the environmental crisis. This basic pattern links our inner work with sustainability as a healing process. In Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer (2013) describes this pattern through the story of Windigo:

In terms of systems science, the Windigo is a case study of a positive feedback loop, in which a change in one entity promotes a similar change in another, connected part of the system…an increase in Windigo hunger causes an increase in Windigo eating, and that increased eating promotes only more rampant hunger in an eventual frenzy of uncontrolled consumption.

(p. 305)

Because these systems of oppression are tied to trauma, the traumatic response is one of overwhelm, force, speed, and lack of awareness. We can see this urgency on many levels: in the way people come to therapy hoping to quickly get rid of something that has been affecting them, in response to systemic racism resurfacing in the Black Lives Matter movement during the pandemic, in climate change activism, in the insatiable demand for food choice and trending diets. When we are in this crisis epistemology (Whyte, 2020), there is an urgency to fix that ignores or doesn’t see that others have been doing this work for centuries. From a clinical perspective, this urgency is part of the trauma response driven by survival energy, manifesting in our bodies.

Nourishing futures

When systemic and/or embodied trauma isn’t recognized or acknowledged, and/or when there isn’t appropriate support for its healing, systems regulate by whatever means are available to them (Kimmerer, 2013; Levine, 2015; Menakem, 2017). This regulation can manifest as addiction, mental and physical health issues, abuse, violence, and other forms of blowing the survival energy carried in traumatic responses through other human (Menakem, 2017) and more-than-human bodies (Kimmerer, 2013). Healing requires care and support of others: other parts of ourselves, friends and families, therapists and mentors, human and more-than-human communities. We do this healing work in the company of other living beings, deeply held in our web of relationships.
Again, it requires holding both our capacity to be in and work with the places we’re stuck and to cultivate connection and belonging, as described in Box 19.2.

Kyle Whyte (2020) proposes an alternative to crisis epistemologies rooted in Indigenous intellectual traditions: epistemologies of coordination are “ways of knowing the world that emphasize the importance of moral bonds—or kinship relations—for generating the (responsible) capacity to respond to constant change” (p. 53). “[These bonds] are often expressed as mutual responsibilities … Examples of kinship relationships are care, consent, reciprocity, amongst others” (p. 58).

We imagine futures where we give ourselves and each other permission to start practicing healing, where we begin to trust and honour the wisdom of our bodies by listening to and telling their stories. We envision turning towards and building capacity to sit with discomfort—individually and collectively—and to experience the feedback of the joy of deeper connection. This feedback can appear from parts of our selves and from our human and more-than-human communities: from the part that can revel in the sheer pleasure of eating, from farmers and fishers feeling seen, valued, and supported in their work, from soil that gets richer and more alive each year, singing with fungi and earthworms and calling carbon back into the earth. Our hope stems, in part, from the experience that this feedback occurs in real time; our observation is that those who see and experience this deeper connection and access to integrity and complex joy (Ryan-Hart & Donnelly, this volume) rarely turn back from the hard work required for healing. So, what does a future of healing our individual and collective trauma and dismantling the systems of oppression that it feeds and thrives on look like? We do not know. But from our work, and that of many others in many lineages, we can identify some of the qualities of this future as well as some of what it is not. This future is NOT utopian, smooth, static, linear, ending/final, comfortable, or prescriptive. It holds increased potential for ease, joy, capacity, resilience (not the kind that is demanded in the face of ongoing traumatization but the kind that provides a solid foundation on which to stand

BOX 19.2: Chaiti speaking

This looks like both, intentionally and with support, working towards healing the various manifestations of disease that are showing up in our bodies as well as healing our connection to soils, water, plants, fungi, animals, fish, and insects that nourish us. It looks like working with naturopaths, osteopaths, and allopathic doctors; tuning in to our bodies’ signals and responding with care and patience; experimenting with cutting out foods or with eating anything our hearts desire. It looks like the political organizing, resource leveraging, network strengthening, uplifting, and collective consciousness shifting work needed to rematriate lands and returning lands to Black farmers and farmers of colour. It looks like growing and harvesting practices that are rooted in and honour the rich traditions and cultural heritages of farmers of colour and reintegrate our ancestral knowledge and rituals. It looks like creating networks and supply chains to bring whole, nourishing foods to the communities systemically cut off from them. It looks like meals savoured quietly with our undivided attention; like heaping platters of food shared in vibrant gatherings amidst chatter, laughter, and generous hospitality; like rituals that mark the shifting of seasons with particular foods and flavours; like the irreplaceable pleasure of a ripe tomato eaten in the garden, juice—sweet and sticky—running exuberantly down your face.
interconnected in a web of strong relationships like oak trees in a forest connected by their intertwining roots and wise and communicative mycelial networks). It is multi-dimensional, creative, emergent, and it has enough space for prosperity and pleasure.

Our invitation is to orient towards the trauma, to build our individual and collective capacity to sit with it, to recognize the necessity and possibility of healing, and create bubbles of stability and support where we can do this work together. What supports and conditions do we need to enable this healing? If we can see, as Dr. Angel Acosta (2020), described in a conversation with Dr Gabor Maté, that we are “Earth walking, embodied,” we can start to sense the threads of connection between what our bodies are telling us and what the earth (the body we are part of) is telling us.

Can we approach healing and justice like toddlers learning to walk? Where every fall, slide and stumble are not a source of shame, guilt, or anger, but precious data? Where painful bumps are expressed fearlessly and tended to with care by those who are responsible and have the capacity to hold us, and where each wobbly step forward is honoured and celebrated.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we identify patterns of oppression and the trauma it creates by marginalizing parts of our selves, parts of our human and more-than-human communities, and the impact on the whole system. We imagine a movement toward an integrated way of being, one that recognizes and turns towards these patterns of disruption (which is, perhaps, the most difficult part), and takes responsibility for caring for and healing these relationships by taking action that honours and prioritizes them. Healing and growth come from doing both the difficult and joyful work of mending these relationships. Because the outcome of this healing work is emergent, rather than prescriptive, we explore the qualities of this work and road signs along the way. We imagine a future that integrates an understanding of systemic and internalized oppression and trauma into our relationship with food; one that cultivates healing our selves—our bodies, our cultures, our earth—as a pathway for transforming (food) systems.

**Note**

1 “We” and “us” in this book generally refer to the authors collectively. The authors hold the perspective that there are inner patterns and dynamics that are universal to the human community. At times, “we” is used to refer to all humans in the context of these shared patterns and dynamics.

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