UPROOTING ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:
RECOVERING AND AMPLIFYING MARGINALIZED NARRATIVES

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Land Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge that the Missoula Valley was inhabited historically and to this day by the Salish (Séliš), Kootenai (Ktunaxa/Ksanka), and Kalispel (Qlispé) tribes (also known as the Pend d'Oreille) as well as many other tribes including the Blackfeet (Niitsitapi), Shoshone (Shoshone-Bannock), Crow (Apsaalooke), Nez Perce (Niimíipuu) and Kiowa (Ka'igwu) that frequently passed through this area. This project recounts and gives space to the genocide and ethnic cleansing that Indigenous people and people of color endured at the hands of colonizers and colonization. This project is informed by Indigenous perspectives and their relationships to the land and is a small contribution towards education, recognition, and recovery of those stories and relationships. I acknowledge that as a cis white woman with research in Environmental Justice and ecofeminism, my perspective is limited with many of these narratives constrained by the discourse and hierarchy of whiteness, privilege, and academia that which I have learned about them. I hope that this space and the information shared are encouraged by respect, honor, and reciprocity towards the people that inform these topics and created the narratives shared, but, more importantly, that we all have a renewed perspective in the environments that we inhabit, recreate in, use, and relate to as well as for the people that cared for them, and continue to care and advocate for them, despite the lack of recognition and reparations.

Introduction

There is a need for collaborative and invested advocacy and work to be done to address the climate crisis, and it is already happening. The causes, effects, and solutions are far from individual. The construction of the book Johnson and Wilkinson's text *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis* mirrors the new structure of a connected ecofeminist, care oriented ethic to address the climate crisis we are in. Scholars and texts like Johnson and Wilkinson's demonstrate how different and inclusive our approach has to be to adequately touch all of the places and people that are in our environment. I am especially interested in the role place plays in those relationships—the ways that people interact with the land is cultural and social which changes with geographical location—and the narratives that weave the relationships, people, and places together. There has to be change in perspective with the natural environment, but there seems to be a disconnect between ideology and practice.

For my Civic Engagement Project, I interview different women, non-binary, and people of color that are working in the environmental field in the Missoula area about their relationships to their surroundings, how they interact with it, what their perceptions of it are, etc. From these previously suppressed narratives and experiences, because of their identities, positionalities, and the value attributed to them, what ideas and concepts can contribute to a refocusing of environmental ethics? Can listening to and researching those voices move society in a direction that more accurately represents the environment, people, and the relationship between the two? Recovering and listening to voices as a way to interrupt the normative discourse of environmental ethics can change the social perception and relationship that people have to the environment. Though the perception of what is nature, and what is natural, can be conflated and constructed to fit a particular understanding of someone's surroundings, the general perception

of who has access to and who the environment, broadly, is for, remains the core oppressive principle of the current environmental ethic. Then, what are the themes that can inform a new practical environmental ethic that adequately reflects the people using that ethic?

By interviewing women, non-binary individuals, and people of color in the environmental field about their jobs, relationships with the environment, experiences in their field, and their perceptions of the environment and environmental movement, there is space for a new environmental ethic in our community. Historically, environmental ethics has tended to be centered on intrinsic value and the binary that sets people in opposition to the environment: civilization/wilderness, people/nature, civilized/primitive, master/slave, male/female, hetero/queer, and self/other. These dichotomies suggest a discourse that perpetuates the domination of nature where the left side is the norm and in power which subordinates the right side of those binaries. This ethic is still utilized and will no longer work because of the growing knowledge of linked oppressions and how relationships to the environment are more complex and intersectional than these binaries. A new ethic, informed by scholars like Robert D. Bullard and Beverly Hendrix Wright, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Kyle Whyte, Ayanna Elizabeth Johnson, Chris Cuomo, Greta Gaard and others, forms an intersectional, feminist, and anti-racist ethic that connects to the environment. Conversations about the local environmental community build on the improved intersectional foundation, or a basis for the ideological understanding of the environment as a space to relate to and use, to form a symbiotic relationship with. A better foundation allows for fluctuation and change in one community or space to best fit and address the needs in each place. By listening to voices that are living in that environmental space in some capacity, is it possible to inform and build a different environmental ethic? Listening and

researching those voices can disassemble the constructed binary between people and the environment. The goal of my project is to begin formulating and building that ethic.

This kind of project is integral to a growing environmental philosophy—academically and socially. To interrogate ideas and build on them in ways that shift how environmental philosophy informs the relationships that we have with ourselves and how we live our lives, and how we relate to and learn from others, is an integral project to a new kind of environmentalism. The culmination of the interviews and project findings will be presented at the YWCA Missoula, where I work with the GUTS! program, facilitate action groups with youth in the community, and develop programming, to the staff followed by a discussion to then inform their own narratives and environmentalisms. This presentation is useful to that organization as one of the larger non-profits and service based organizations in Missoula, and the integrated outdoor oriented programming of GUTS! is a direct response to local and systemic inequities regarding people's relationship with the environment. The main target of the project is to formulate a few core foundational aspects of the new ethic together included on the last page of this document.

In this project using contemporary voices and their relation to place within an ecofeminist and Environmental Justice oriented ethic, there is space to explore the integral relationships that people have with the environment, and the opportunities that those relationships can bring about to center community, and social and cultural awareness and advocacy, around nature and place.

Background & Context

Environmental ethics and philosophy are in a shifting era. Previously, the field was dominated with ideas of intrinsic value perpetuating why and how humans ought to interact with and use the environment. Value was placed within a dualism that positions humans in opposition to nature. Humans then were the opposite, separate from, their environments. The structure of value in a dichotomy presents the opposition as necessary for one to exist against the other: the more wild or natural a space was, the more pristine and farther away it was from humanity's influence. Nature becomes valuable in its non-humanness.

The binary of human/nature further perpetuates systems of oppressions that correspond with the dominator in power on the left, and the suppressed and powerless on the right. Greta Gaard notes some of the following relating to environment and social constructions and relationships—culture/nature, reason/nature, mind/body, master/slave, male/female, white/black, hetero/queer, civilized/primitive, production/reproduction, reason/emotion, self/other. Colonization and patriarchal structures directly inform these binaries. Gaard goes on to say that "there are linkages within the devalued category of the other" (116). Or rather, there are linkages in oppressions. No one oppression or binary stands alone by itself. For example, white and reason on the left, and black and emotion on the right are linked through the valuation and prioritization of a masculine gender, whiteness, and intellect as superior to feminization, people of color, and emotion. The linkage between these dichotomies defines the ways in which oppressions are linked and manifold. Cassandra Johnson and J.M. Bowker in "African-American Wildland Memories" work through historical events and experiences that shape collective memories for people of color. They specifically examine physical ties to land such as slavery, instilled narratives about wildlands being dangerous (contrary to plantations with open and

viewable spaces with familiar wildlife and animals), and lynching as physical experiences that construct an understanding and ideology for people of color working on and with land severely different from the white elite men that shaped western ideals of environmental ethics. In connection to Gaard's work, people of color were "naturalized" in the binary with nature, more closely aligning them with the right, feminized, and suppressed side of the dichotomy. Rather than humans working the land, they were more closely associated with the land itself. Robert D. Bullard and Beverly Hendrix Wright in "Blacks and the Environment" discuss the environmental degradation and effects derivative of resource use and their disproportionate impacts on communities of color. Ultimately, the practices and socialized norms derivative of whiteness, the association of people of color with nature, and historical events rooted in collective memory inform the relationship that people of color have with the environment. The negative impacts of environmental destruction that Black people have to face are interconnected with the jobs they have, where they live, and the access they have to resources. While these injustices are still persistent today in different forms, there are shifts in environmental thinking today.

Presently, scholars are bending in various other directions away from dualisms and intrinsic value to address climate, resource, and justice issues core to the environmental happenings of the Anthropocene. Environmental justice (EJ) and ecofeminism are pivotal disciplines in reshaping environmental ethics and philosophy. EJ and ecofeminism question the ways in which people interact with the environment, how they use and operate within their environments, the discourses that influence those interactions, what they deem as natural or unnatural, the value they place in and around their environments, etc. They reposition who environmentalism is for and defined by. EJ and ecofeminism then can inform a new kind of environmental ethic; an ethic that more accurately and advantageously informs how we interact

with the environment, and how we ought to interact with the environment, from within a more equitable discourse that reflects the identities of the people in those environments. They can account for the various experiences and narratives that shape the relationship we have with the environment, and how we interact with it, the ways in which we value and use it, and, in turn, how we interact together in community in the environment.

Ecofeminism and EJ are integral to a new environmental ethic. However, one misstep of early environmentalism is not only the separation between humans and the environment illustrated by the dualism, but the inherent distancing between different people as a result of that dualism and, the linked and layered, oppressions that are further perpetuated by those dualisms. Ecofeminism and EJ largely suggest a more expansive environmentalism that encompasses the intersections of the environment and the people within it in an equitable way; specifically, a way that would strengthen the relationship between people and their surroundings.

The idea of relating to and strengthening the relationships that people have with their environments, and how identity shapes the experiences and perceptions that people have with the environment, grew out of an internship and AmeriCorps VISTA position I completed with the YWCA GUTS! (Girls and Gender Diverse Youth Using Their Strengths) program in Missoula, MT. We facilitated bike camps that incorporated STEM-related educational activities, mentorship, and outdoor leadership to a strengths-based program model for 5-8th graders. A goal of the GUTS! program breaking down gender binaries and roles by deconstructing the differences between gender, sex, gender identity, gender expression, and the sociological and cultural norms based on those dichotomies. One of the activities we completed at Milltown State Park was on land acknowledgements. We defined land acknowledgements and why they are necessary through the following concepts: micro- and macro-aggressions, differing perspectives,

and oppression, as well as advocacy and resiliency. Much like other gender identity activities we completed throughout camp, land acknowledgements are a start towards recognizing, naming, and working through many of the inconsistencies and suppressions that a white historical narrative of the U.S. portrays with our environment. Throughout the camps, we were able to interact with each other, each having different experience levels and backgrounds with biking, fly fishing, hiking, and more generally with the environment, as a group with the world around us. Each interaction was unique because of the various ways we all approached camp, physically with experiences, or lack of, socially, and emotionally. However, they were all jaded with the same levels of oppressions that influence how we each interact with the environment based on our identities. Many of the participants of color and/or in a lower socioeconomic class were unfamiliar and did not have access to some of the equipment or opportunities that other participants had. These levels informed different kinds of understanding and interactions with our surroundings.

Environmentalist writers and ecofeminists Greta Gaard Lori Gruen discuss some of the causes of the global presences of oppressions: “scientific explanation showing mutually reinforcing oppressions of women and nature occur” (Carolyn Merchant), religion and the “shift from matriarchy to patriarchy” that separates “women from culture and men from nature,” “metaphorical or ideological explanations” rooted in dualisms that “[look] at the way patriarchal culture describes the world in terms of self-other and other related value dualisms,” women and animals paired together, or animism and femininity, as a result of those dualisms, the internalization of gender roles (Carol Gilligan [care ethics characteristic of women] and Nancy Chodorow), and economics connected to feudalism and colonialism (Vandana Shiva, who worked with the ideas of “material poverty” and economic domination linked to gender roles)

(Gaard and Gruen 158-161). These scholars and activists mentioned and more have worked integrally with communities of women and people of color working practically and theoretically to restructure these six causes, and their detrimental effects on those communities, and more. However, the most prevalent push in ecofeminism was in the 1970s, beginning with the Chipko movement in 1974 and the Green Belt Movement (Wangari Maathai), through the 1980s and 1990s. Though there are still scholars researching and writing on this subject, it is significantly less than that initial push. This project differs because of its intersectional integration of EJ, the use of narratives, and place-baseness of the interviews and research.

This project is an attempt to reorient environmental ethics in a way that accurately reflects the relationships that people have with it: how are people relating to, using, and interacting with their environments? What kind of environmental work are they investing in? How do they foresee the future relationship with the changing climate and resource depletion? Do equity and social relationships influence their relationship to the environment? What would a more equitable environmentalism look like? How does place orient or inform an environmental ethic? Is there an importance for social justice in the current environmental crisis? How do differences play a role? Is community integral to the solutions, or the new environmental ethic? In order to address and discuss these questions, and others, I interview various femme, BIPOC, and queer community members that work within the environmental field—professors, non-profit organizers, youth program directors, and environmental advocates—to gather insight and inspiration for the shadowed perspectives and narratives in the Missoula, MT community. The place-based nature of the project is to encapsulate the need for varied and interrelated education and projects that have to take place to restructure, and ultimately reconceptualize, humans' relationship with nature.

The main goal of this project is to form relationships within the environmental community that draw new connections and conversations about our surroundings. From those conversations, I gain insight on what practically and in the community is missing from the current ethic, and what does the new ethic need? These relationships, with others and with the environment, then can work to inform a new and improved environmental ethic—one that will continue to change and shift with time, place, and the community involved—but one that will better represent the vast number of people and their identities in their environments. In comparison to other work and projects in this field of study, identifying and discussing the deficiencies in the current ethic and what ought to be included in a new one are new topics in academia. What makes this project different is that it integrates both the scholarly and ideological work being done directly to the Missoula community. The ideas for a new ethic are place-based in narrative and story and combined with the pre-existing and newly forming research in the EJ and ecofeminist discourses. This project itself reexamines the foundation of environmental ethics and the ways that structure reiterates oppressive frameworks related to and dependent on the environment to, in turn, restructure that ethic particularly through an ecofeminist and environmentally just lens. This is accomplished by identifying the key concepts that are theoretically and practically inequitable and inaccessible in the current ethic, and in contrast what ought to be included structurally, ideologically, and practically in the new ethic. These ideations are a culmination of the insights I gained from the conversations I had with community members and from research in EJ, ecofeminism, and Indigenous perspectives.

Theoretical Application: Environmental Philosophy

In environmental philosophy, ideas, the formulation of ideas, and how ideas are implemented are important. The ways in which an idea is constructed and replicated over time, in addition to the idea itself, is an important aspect of that idea. For nature or the environment, the idea that nature is something other than human and untouched by humans shapes the understanding of nature, our environments, and non-human animals as something other. The same is true for the idea of wilderness. Wilderness, and something being wild, is opposite to, and defined by being opposite to, civilization. Wilderness becomes an idea of untouched nature outside of human influence, which idealizes nature as something to protect from human influence. Early thinkers assumed environmental ethics rested on the construction of wilderness and intrinsic value.

The construction of wilderness is dependent on the social construction of nature, or what is deemed as natural, other than human, or within the dualized structure of civilization. William Cronon in "The Trouble with Wilderness or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" asserts that the construction of wilderness in America is predicated in two groups: first, the sublime, an aesthetic notion or response to the unknown of wonder, awe, and fear of the natural world, and second, the frontier, privatized and primitive living on wild unsettled lands (9-13). The sublime, rooted in romanticism and the idea of untouched natural landscapes, is contrasted with the beautiful, or the small, controllable, non-threatening, light and clear phenomena associated with feminine values of delicacy, vulnerability, and sociability. The sublime is the deep old growth forest or mountain top, while the beautiful is the flower in the meadow. This binary that frames environmentalism is one of the problematic constructions that my project identifies and attempts to prove problematic because of its sexist and racist connotations.

The construction of the sublime and the beautiful frames the idea of wilderness in a sexist ideology. The binary parallels and reinforces traditional gender roles—sublime/beautiful and masculine/feminine. The sublime is one way of understanding and defining the environment and the suppressive structures that mirror that same construction: the sublime is associated with masculine values of heroism, power, and autonomy. The man is out conquering the wild, unknown, and obscure, while the woman or feminine is contained in the well-known home or dainty flower. This construction is on the basis of control that the left side of the binary, the masculine and reason, are superior to the right side, the feminine and emotional. This construction sets social norms where men are controlling, powerful, filled with reason, and dominating which places them and the characteristics associated with masculinity as superior and highly valued. When something is feminized, it is devalued because of that association. The social construction of gender on a binary only exists because, as Greta Gaard notes, the master identity is dependent on the "dualized structure of otherness and negation" (116). The binary reiterates a sexist structure because of this superiority that is attributed to gendered characteristics, occupations, skills, hobbies, etc. Therefore, the sublime is superior to the beautiful, and the gendered associations place more value on the former than the latter. The construction of the dichotomy of the sublime and beautiful within the environmental ethic historicizes how people relate to and interact with the environment. In this sense, the ways in which people interact with the environment is dependent on their identity, specifically the construction of gender, and how the constructions around gender and wilderness inform and reaffirm that binary and oppressive structure of the binary.

Similar to the sublime and beautiful, the idea of the frontier, that there is a space "out there" that is untouched, untouched by white elite men, that is there for the conquering and

taking is racially problematic, and reiterates the sexist binary. The idea that the land of the frontier, of great discovery and prospect, was "untouched" is a white-washed history of North America. There were Indigenous people living and working the land in much more prosperous and respectable ways than the white elite that were there previously. Before expansion and transforming land for civilization and development in the frontier, the constructed ideas of wilderness and what defined wilderness were built on a white elite perspective. For them, and the larger field of environmental ethics, Indigenous people were more closely related to the land, or wilderness, instead of humans, or another kind of civilization. The conquering of the frontier was often likened to colonization, or the colonization of the sublime. Gaard notes that "the metaphoric 'thrust' of colonialism has been described as the rape of Indigenous people and of nature because there is a structural—not experiential—similarity between the two operations, though colonization regularly includes rape" (131). The colonial assaults on land mirrored the assaults on the groups of people closely associated to the land—women, people of color, and Indigenous people specifically.

The association of people of color to the land instead of with the human side of the human/wilderness binary shows the racist structures within the environmental ethic, and the ideologies that are further shaped by that ethic. One of the strengths of ecofeminism is that it showcases the linkages between oppressions and groups of people being oppressed because of a common oppressor. For example, people of color are closely associated with the land and animals, which are all entities placed on the right side of that dualism. Within this conceptualization of the environment and wildness, Environmental Justice (EJ) was formulated within the intersection of civil rights and environmentalism recognizing the linked oppressions of African American people. EJ as a movement largely names and engages the pairing of people of

color with the land, the effects of environmental degradation that disproportionately affect people of color, and the injustices that are perpetuated through the current environmental ethic. Black people's relationship with land is shaped by collective memory and structural injustices.

The first component that influences African American people's relationship with the environment is informed by the social constructions of wilderness and how people of color were more closely associated with land and animals rather than people. Johnson and Bowker discuss collective memory in "African American Wildland Memories." They state how African American experiences are formulated by the social constructions of wilderness, but, more intuitively, how people's physical space of being in the world informs social ideologies and practices regarding their surroundings. They suggest that working with the land *is* theorizing and informing how people of color interact with nature. They state that this formulation of collective memory "involves the relaying or handing down of cultural history from generation to generation. Successive generations can be influenced by events that impact a nation, ethnic/racial group, or gender even though subsequent generations have no direct memory of such events" (59). Through African American history, we see that the wilderness idea is constructed through working with and being tied to the land. Johnson and Bowker give a few different examples that physically tie African Americans and their environmental experiences to the land. The first is slavery; slaves could not leave the plantation that they worked on without written permission from their slave owners: "Though slaves lived close to nature like other racial/ethnic groups of the period and extracted sustenance from the land (when permitted), they could not explore the wider environment. The very condition of being a slave dictated a life of extreme restrictions" (Johnson 64). They were unable to gather as communities with shared experiences or ideas of their suppression in order to limit their mobilizing movements and power. The second example

given was about the narrative that white people instilled about wildlands to African Americans. They were told that beyond the developed and worked land used for agriculture and settlements, that the surrounding woods and forests contained wild and poisonous creatures waiting to kill and eat them if they were to leave the plantation land (this was clearly false and a ploy to instill fear and reinforce power). Johnson and Bowker write that “slaves especially dreaded wild animals (poisonous snakes, panthers) and to a lesser extent other humans (both black and white), and supernatural forces believed to inhabit wildlands” (65). That narrative incited an added layer of fear and misinformation about wilderness based in the binary of the sublime, where the unknowns were for the masculine and superior to conquer, much like conquering and dominating African American slaves. Lastly, lynching generally happened in the woods, and if not there, it almost always involved a tree. These physical experiences in and with the landform collective memories for African Americans. The history surrounding the ethic that they learned about the environment is reciprocated over time. A majorly negative relationship with nature, one that is unknown and frightening, one that restricted movement and prevented them from communing, one that directly connects to violent and public death, is clearly one that restricts and suppresses their perception of the environment.

A second component of the relationship that people of color have with the environment that EJ addresses is the effects of environmental pollution and the burden that people of color face and carry in regard to environmentally degrading jobs and geographical places. Bullard and Wright in “Blacks and the Environment" describe “job blackmail” as “the tradeoffs [that] must be made between jobs and environmental regulations,” or rather, “if workers want to maintain gainful employment, they must live and work under conditions which may be hazardous to them” (177). They have to trade their health and safety for any sense of job security. Most people

in these low-skill low-pay jobs, like waste collection and disposal or rubber and tire manufacturing, are people of color. Other structures that Bullard and Wright mention are housing policies, city/neighborhood segregation, waste facility locations, and zoning which are all disproportionately affecting people of color. These disproportionate effects are directly linked to the devaluing of that group of people and their close association with the environment.

The sexist and racist construction of wilderness, and how that construction informs the relationship that people of color have with the environment, are integral motivations to my CEP. The popularized history of an environmental ethic that actively excludes groups of people based on their identities poorly represents the actual environment and the ways in which people can relate to and connect with it. In order to change these relationships that people have with the environment, and to change the construction of what the environment is and people's placement within (not opposite of) it, there is an inevitable and necessary restructuring. The restructuring is not only physical in the tangible ways that people touch and exist in the environment, the resources they use, and the consequences of using and disposing of those resources, but it is also conceptual: there must be a reconceptualization that factually calls out and amends the misconceptions and damaging iterations of the previous environmental ethic.

Throughout environmental philosophy, there is a need for an interrogation of the previous ideas, why they mattered, and how they mattered so intensely within their discourse. The idea of deconstructing the oppressive binaries between humans, all humans, and the built idea of wilderness, is an equally important and necessary interrogation. These two concepts informed a few of my interview questions that targeted the current issues in environmentalisms practically in the Missoula community and the ways that participants see these barriers in their work and recreation.

Theoretical Application: Thoreau

Narrative and story seem integral to a new environmental ethic, especially taking a form that integrates different cultural practices with land, EJ, ecofeminism, and Indigenous perspectives. The ways in which we interact with the environment can be connected to the experiences that people have had there and through the stories they have told and written about those experiences. In *Walden*, Thoreau spends time thinking, building, walking, and ruminating on his existence in nature. His privilege and positionality allow for him to spend that time unencumbered, which is derivative of the current environmental ethic based within the oppressive binary that values and prioritizes the masculine and the masculine spending time in untouched nature, yet the narrative does provide some insight and inclinations about the human perspective on the environment that can be useful. The positionality that people hold while recreating in and utilizing their environments is relevant because it informs the relationship that they can have with it, and Thoreau's experience can lend one perspective of the possible relationship with the environment that we can have. His experience also aids in understanding the depth and variations in relationships that come with diverse positionalities and perspectives which is useful for creating a new ethic.

Throughout the text, Thoreau discusses color, depth, and reflectiveness to describe the pond's properties from his perspective. Water is used as a metaphorical tool, and the state of the water, its depth and its properties as liquid or ice, changes through the seasons much like how perceptions change through the seasons of life. From one place in looking at the pond, the color may seem permanently blue or a deep green only for it to change from a few steps forward or back, or even from the same place but a month later. These changing properties of the pond are reflective of the human experience in the environment. These descriptions allude to a larger

sense of positionality and perspective in how we see and perceive the world around us. The human perspective is based in the physical positionality of our surroundings which changes the ways we see things in our environments.

The first component of the pond that Thoreau discusses is the color. Depending on the time of day or year, "in some lights, viewed from a hill-top, [the pond] is of a vivid green next to the shore. Some have referred this to the reflection of the verdure;" or the lush green vegetation, "but it is equally green there against the railroad and sand-bank, and in the spring, before the leaves are expanded, and it may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand" (171). Here, the color of the water is dependent on proximity to the shore, to the reflection of the green vegetation or sand, or the blue of the water mixed with other surrounding colors. He goes on to say that "All our Concord waters have two colors at least, one when viewed at a distance, and another, more proper, close at hand" (171). Thoreau suggests that there are two, or more, perceptions of color based on the proximity of someone to the water.

Beyond color, the pond from a distance is within the larger landscape, the pond is in one view in its entirety, and it's possible to see how the pond situates in the landscape. Further, the pond can relate to the other components of the larger image in order to form the perception of who is looking at the pond. Closer to the pond, which Thoreau notes as more proper, there is an entirely different view. The view includes only parts of the lake, or small sections of the water and shore, rather than the entire pond in one snapshot. The pond itself is composed of smaller factions that are not visible from afar. In small portions "a single glass of water" from the pond "held up to the light is as colorless as an equal quantity of air. It is well known that a large plate of glass will have a green tint, owing, as the makers say, to its 'body,' but a small piece of the same will be colorless" (172). A large piece of the lake, frozen or liquid, is one color, but a

portion of the whole, or a fractioned piece is colorless, a completely different color, or a mixture of multiple colors depending on how the water is viewed. The pond's variety in color represents the change in perspective based on what portion of the landscape is being examined, and from what distance.

The positionality that people take to view environmental elements is important for a new environmental ethic. Because people's position and relation to the environment changes with where they are in relation to the environment, to the access they may or may not have to recreational activities and gear, and to the education and knowledge they learn about the environments around them, the ethic has to encompass those variations, and the inevitable evolutionary processes of the environment itself and of the people within it. This is directly pertinent to my project because so much of the relationship that people have with the environment is reliant on their positionality and access to different kinds of outdoor spaces, so the ethic has to be flexible enough to address those differences, as well as holding safe spaces for all people to experience and build their own relationships with the environment. Thoreau's perspectives of looking at the pond parallel this idea of variation and difference in a contemporary ethic. We all have different relationships with the pond, dependent on where we are standing, influencing what we can see because of that position. That is an important perspective transitioning into an equitable ethic.

The second component of the pond that Thoreau discusses is the depth, or rather the unknown depth to the average person looking out at the pond; Thoreau states that "some think it is bottomless" (173). He poses the following questions: "What if all ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless" (277).

The hope that the pond is bottomless as a matter of symbolic value is particularly compelling for the kind of environmentalism that Thoreau encompasses. Similar to the frontier myth and the sublime, a bottomless pond would leave some to the unknown, some properties of the pond left unseen and unknown to the regular passer-by. If the pond is bottomless, then the thoughts and interpretations of the pond can also be bottomless, endless, and constantly shifting.

The third component of the pond that is integral to its description is the likeness to an eye. Thoreau personifies the pond as a part of the landscape that is seeing and watching: the pond "is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" (180). The center point of the pond is "the color of its iris … where in the spring, the ice being warmed by the heart of the sun reflected from the bottom, and also transmitted through the earth, melts first and forms a narrow canal about the still frozen middle" (171). The pond as the earth's eye creates a passage of seeing, where people and other biotic and abiotic beings are looking in towards the earth's center, and simultaneously, the earth is looking out at all of the beings too. The perspectives are almost opposites because of their viewpoint, but they are complimentary in that the pond creates reflections. There are places that reflect the image back to the person that is looking in. The reflection, or even looking into the water past the surface, shows the person in their environment, and, more importantly, as a part of the environment in that image. Like the color of the pond from afar, the reflection of the eye puts the person into perspective as a small part of the larger environmental landscape they are a part of. There is something to be said here about the power of immersion. The ability to put oneself or embedding oneself in their own environment informs a perspective that shifts from the individual human on or affecting the landscape to an individual integrally a part of the functions of their surroundings. The narrative around then that can be

formulated, told, and passed on is much more reflective of the environment itself providing a different perspective of seeing the landscape, whether that be from up close or far away.

The idea that the pond's depth is still left to be discovered alludes to a kind of adventure that is left open to the person that is looking at, or into, the pond and the earth's eye. What they see may change with how close or how far away they are to the pond, if they are alone or with others, and at what time in their life they are looking at the pond. The perspective and positionality of the individual looking at the pond, or looking at the environment, correlates. A unique relationship specific to those contexts and factors forms. The ways in which people experience and see the environment is integral to their perception of it, and infuses the ethic that they embody and use. In the conversations I had, this idea was integral to many of their ideations for a new ethic. A new ethic has to incorporate flexibility and adaptability that reflect and represent the different positionalities and approaches that people have with their surroundings. Changing the perception, and, as a result, the relationship that people have with the environment, changes the environmental ethic individually and socially.

Theoretical Application: Issues in the Anthropocene

The use of stories and narrative paired with the idea of interconnectedness and positionality are concepts that ground a new environmental ethic. Both Robin Wall Kimmerer and Donna Haraway discuss a relational and integrated approach to the ways that people interact with the environment. Kimmerer focuses on reciprocity and restoryation, a new creation story and telling of species interacting with each other over time. Haraway focuses on situated knowledge and kinship as ways to understand and formulate relationships. The focus on narrative and retelling stories functions within the framework of situated knowledge. This structure, where positionality, discourse, and narrative are integral to the understanding of the relationships we have, bases a new environmental ethic outside of a duality or dichotomy with nature that restrains the ethic to an oppressive structure. Instead, the new ethic operates in a different discourse altogether. A factor of this discourse is the current epoch of the Anthropocene, and the conceptual understanding that humans and nature are no longer separate; they are integrated because of human impacts on natural systems, resources, and other species. The Anthropocene presupposes a new world for this ethic because the frontier and sublime have been conquered, touched, influenced, and changed because of human interventions. The separation set by the binary is ideologically problematic, as identified previously, but also now irrelevant because of the deep integration humans have with their natural environments, intentionally or not, because of the impacts they have made. The reframing informed by Kimmerer and Haraway set humans as a species among many, and one that has been integrated from the beginning. This framework, largely ideated from Indigenous practices and culture, shifts the former narrative in American culture of a creation that familiarizes the natural aspects of our environments, landscapes, ecosystems, abiotic and biotic features, and non-human animals, as other to humans to an

integrated creation with those same factions of our environments. This integration is the start of a new ethic.

Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* discusses the integration between Western science, Indigenous practices, and the use of stories and narratives. In the chapter "People of Corn, People of Light," Kimmerer describes a creation story where the gods work through the creation of different groups of people, of mud, wood and pith reed, light, and, finally, of corn (341-343). The gods took multiple tries in order to create the "ideal" group of people made from the landscapes and environmental factors but that are also integrated with those same landscapes. The people made of wood were beautiful and strong, made all kinds of creations, and populated the earth, but they were empty of compassion and love. The people of light thought they had all the power of the gods and lacked humility. Finally, the people of corn were "respectful and grateful" towards each other and their surroundings (343). Kimmerer suggested that this is because the people of the corn are beings transformed with water, air, light, and the relationship between beings (343). Obligate symbiosis and reciprocity are requirements of growing corn, and fostering the same qualities in the people, which is why the people of corn work and flourish and the others do not. How do you foster reciprocity? To grow corn, it has to be both sown and picked, requiring human cultivation. That cultivation is not only integral to the agricultural process for food and nourishment, but also integral to the creation story and the way things are and are created from the beginning. Humans are involved in their cultivation and success in every step of the way. This integration uses gratitude and reciprocity in the foundation of the environmental ethic.

Kimmerer goes on to suggest a kind of "re(story)ation" where the non-human world holds memories. Restoryation is a nonnegotiable aspect of new environmental ethics. The understanding of a handful of dominant ethics that are derived from a carefully crafted story of conquering and resource depletion are what inform most ethics. The stories that are told and retold over time are our scripts for interacting with others, others being other people and our landscapes. Narrative plays a primary role then in the ways that we interact with our environments; therefore, narrative and story ought to be a part of environmental ethics. The previous ethic uses stories, but they are stories based in the oppressive binary that normalizes othering and domination of the environmental spaces and animals around us. For Kimmerer, different from other stories about the environment, there is information sharing, telling, and reciting that mold the creation stories and their implementation like the people of the corn. The material world and the process of knowing are active components in those narratives: it is not just storytelling; it is story making. Story making is the active component of putting together the pieces of a story and verbalizing those stories together that we all partake in. There is a need to shift perspectives to shift practices, which, in turn, shifts the idea of being local to require speaking the language of those stories with all of the active participants—plants, people, animals—who all have different languages and things to say. For example, story making would entail incorporating the stories and entities of all the species in an ecosystem: the plants and animals alongside the river where fish are swimming above smoothed rocks and amongst eroded sediment that is floating alongside the group of rafters as they float down the river. Those activated participants, the fish, plants, sediment, and people rafting, are influenced by their positions and roles in their environments.

Donna Haraway largely discusses in her work the ideas of situated knowledge: how our positionality informs, physically, socially, and ideologically, our knowledge and ways of being. In her recent book, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin Chthulucene*, she deemphasizes human exceptionalism in favor of trans multi-speciesism. She is interested in non-human animals as always integrated in the species and systems around them. A few of the key terms in her text advise the kind of relationship she is pursuing with the environment. She uses symbiosis, as a making-together, rather than autopoiesis, a self-making, to illustrate this kind of integration that we have with our surroundings. Entanglement and weaving are meant to color the relationships between living things, coming to a reality together collectively, and, ultimately, entangling in a deep interconnected way that is unable to dissipate from the other connections. This intensive connectivity is rooted in situated knowledge. There is no way to separate an individual or entity from our positionalities that inform our ways of being. These concepts all operate within the idea of situated knowledge where symbiosis, entanglement, and weaving are dependent on their contexts and directly influence their ways of being and connecting.

With those connections of symbiosis, entanglement, and weaving, comes a need for response-ability. We are "to cultivate the capacity to respond" to the connections with others (Haraway 78). Haraway also suggests making kin in the Chthulucene, the term she uses to define the current epoch rather than the Anthropocene. She combines kython, chthonic, and kainos, new time, to suggest a grounding in the physicality of the earth—"Chthonic beings are beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute…they make and unmake; they are made and unmade" (Haraway 2). There is a kind of grounding yet transforming aspect to the Chthulucene that connects the members of it to the physical landscapes they are a part of and shaping, and that the landscapes are doing the same for those inhabiting and connecting to them. Haraway then is

positing for a kinship with those same factors that define the Chthulucene; that the entanglement we are within and a part of directly shapes, informs, molds, and transforms our ways of being and the pieces that make us. Those are being made and unmade, and are woven together in sympoiesis inseparable and constantly mattering to the connections around us.

Haraway's formulation in itself is a radically different kind of entangled kinship in a whole new framework of the Chthulucene situated in our knowledge than the typical definition. The reciprocity that Kimmerer advocates for and notes in the creation story parallels the need for more integrated and interlocking stories and narratives about creation. The culmination of my project is largely based in this idea of entanglement; that we are woven together with each other and our environments. Many people alluded to this kind of integration but adapted words like stewardship and conservation to include relational elements. Haraway and Kimmerer put language to these conceptual tools and further integrate them to inform and use in a different ethic in the Anthropocene.

Actions Taken

At the start, my project was shaped by my research interests and my internship that turned into a part-time job. Throughout the project, I was able to see my theoretical research interests and practicality of my internship combine and come into fruition through the reading, writing, conversations with community members, and connectivity of the moving components of my project. The theoretical and practical pieces of the project flourished together in unexpected ways.

During the fall of 2021, I brainstormed how to connect environmental ethics and philosophy to women's and gender studies in a practical way. One of my main goals at the start of the project was to implement something of my project within the community that would connect my work with youth at the YWCA. To begin, I discussed with Dr. Christopher Preston my ideas and goals for the project, and how I could incorporate my research interests and the Missoula community through my present position at the YWCA GUTS! program. After discussing with Dr. Preston and ruminating on the possibilities of the project, I presented the idea at colloquium that semester using three main influences to inform my project ideations. First, my AmeriCorps position and internship with the YWCA GUTS! program pushed me towards something incorporating community, and how they perceive and interact with the environment, and how environmental ethics could inform the interaction between those two things. Second, the three classes I was enrolled in for the spring semester of 2021 informed the literature and scholars that critically problematized the current ethic and began to suggest ideas for a new ethic. Those classes are as follows: 1) a literature course with Dr. Louise Economides on ecocriticism that posed questions centered on ecofeminism and queer ecology—how the environment is much more queer, diverse, and entangled than the historical environmental ethic portrays it to be; 2)

my Environmental Philosophy course where we explored the formulation of the oppressive environmental ethic that is still used today, the reiteration of that ethic, and the structures that reinforce it, as well as responses and possible alternatives for an ethic like environmental justice and Indigenous perspectives; 3) Dr. Sara Hayden's course on Feminisms and Film, where we examined the historical representation of women and women in media, and I wrote a final paper on the intersection of film, environmental ethics, and feminization in media. Third, informed by the previous two prongs, there is an inherent need for a new environmental ethic grounded in equity that adequately represents the varying places, people, and relationships with the environment. I was peppered with questions about how extensive my project seemed to be, or could be, if the time and effort was put into it, and how a new environmental ethic could be an entire book, not one project over the course of a semester. However, these questions and postulations were encouraging because they signaled an interest and recognition for the depth and need of the project.

I then began workshopping my proposal and introduction to fulfill the requirements and work within the prongs I defined above in order to make steps towards a new ethic. I decided that one of the best ways to source needs and answers to a new ethic is to engage with the community that is most often silenced by the current ethic. The most planning intensive part of the project was looking for, coordinating, and scheduling conversations with community femme, queer, BIPOC people in the Missoula environmental community.

For the conversations with the community, I formulated questions, conducted a pilot chat with a friend, drafted a possible list for people I could talk to, and made initial requests to have a meeting. I started with a list of people that I knew and met through my AmeriCorps position, the YWCA, and community partners from summer programming. I then worked to schedule initial

zoom conversations with the responses I received. I asked the same questions for each conversation I had with differing follow-up questions, asked permission for and recorded each one, took notes during and wrote a short memo after each talk, and ended the conversations by asking who else in their circles I could contact and talk with as well. This was my primary mode of reaching different circles beyond my own in Missoula, and it was inspiring to see how connected yet diverse those circles are. The people I spoke with were involved with a range of organizations and recreation activities in the area: Missoula County Parks & Rec, Climate Smart Missoula, the University of Montana, American Rivers, and others. Many of the connections I made were from suggestions of the first set of people I spoke with, and them being so generous to connect me to them either by email or text, and by searching organizations that people recommended I connect with and emailing people on their contact lists that seemed to fit the parameters of my project goals. Each meeting lasted between forty-five minutes to two hours, plus reviewing and relistening to a handful of interviews to incorporate insightful ideas into my overall project.

In general, these meetings largely exceeded my expectations. The people I spoke with each had such unique backgrounds and experiences that brought them to the work they do currently, and their jobs, outdoor recreation, and, more broadly, who they are today, are so informed by those factors. Their relationships with the environment were so varied correlating with their degrees, childhood memories, interests, occupations, volunteer commitments, and the random outdoor adventures they were dragged on because of friends or partners. Given the timeline of my project, I set a goal to talk with 10-15 community members to balance the writing I was working on simultaneously, and I completed 10 of those interviews.

The final portions of my project culminated from those conversations and course materials surrounding ecofeminism, Indigenous perspectives, queer ecology, EJ, and the general construction of wilderness and nature. I gave a presentation to the staff of the YWCA on environmental ethics, what sort of ethic was formulated and still used today, why that ethic is problematic, and suggestions towards a new ethic. I then led a discussion for the staff following that asked them to explore their own narratives with their environments and what they think as integral to a new ethic. Because I work creating, developing, and facilitating strength-based curriculum for youth in Missoula through the GUTS! program that is a part of the YWCA, and the environmental relationship formed for the youth is the focus of the summer programming, I find it particularly impactful and important to educate and open the discussion to the organization as a whole.

My project largely culminates to a document that suggests a new set of integral pieces to an environmental ethic that reflects and scripts the relationship we can have with our surroundings. I aim to reconstruct a new ethic in my project starting with the ideas on this last piece of my project. Do those components get to the root of the inequities of the current environmental ethic? In a way, they succinctly identify the problematized factors of that ethic, and suggest something outside of the patriarchal suppressive ethic that is persistently present. The new ethic must be intersectional, and the construction of my project itself builds from an intersectional foundation, a concept that counters patriarchal structures.

Accomplishments & Challenges

Over the course of the semester, I conducted the conversations with community members, kept notes and transcripts of those conversations, and wrote the entirety of my portfolio. Over the course of the project, the main challenges I encountered were finding community members to talk with and scheduling times to talk with them and the timing of the project overall. I started with people that I knew through my work at the YWCA, then asked interviewees for recommendations on who else they would be willing to connect me with, or at least ask to share contact information of who they were recommending. This method was slow at first but picked up after the first few interviews (I even have a list of more people that I could connect with later on!). Operating under the assumption that everyone is at least as busy as I am, I set dates and time frames in my contact emails of when I was hoping to meet with the adage that we could work something else out if needed. This was a challenge for my own boundary setting—being flexible enough to be accommodating but not stretching myself too thin. Overall, scheduling was easier than I expected it to be. The majority of people were accommodating to the time frames I sent out, and only a couple of the interviews had to be rescheduled.

The other constraint and challenge to my project was time. Generally, the project could have been more developed if I had more time to talk to a larger set of people in the community. Writing memos and working through notes and transcriptions of the audio recordings was time consuming and tedious, yet it was integral to gaining insights from those conversations and for the presentations I conducted.

Parallel with the challenges in my project, I accomplished the goals I set at the beginning of my project and have more ideas and I built many connections in the environmental Missoula community. This was one of my hopes for the project. I thought that the connect-ability and

locality of Missoula would be a good place for a place-based project, and the group of people I spoke with, the voices and organizations they amplified, and the overall support I have received following the conversations I had have affirmed that conclusion. Derivative of being place-based, the integration of narrative with environmentalism was my favorite part of the project. Asking what role narrative plays in their own, and a more social environmentalism, opened up a path for story, memory, experience, and personal connection to the conversation in ways that previous questions may not have. Hearing the stories that tie these people, that dedicate most of their time and energy to the environment, then recount one or a few of the narratives that tie them to that work and got them there in the first place was powerful to listen to and be a part of their telling of those stories. Further, I was inspired to see the practical application of the theoretical body of knowledge that this project focuses on implemented by the people I spoke with and the integration into their respective organizations and passions. Those pockets around the state of various organizations working in the intersections and what would previously be deemed the margins of the environmental community working together and making differences in their communities in rural and more densely populated areas of Montana.

Looking forward beyond this project, I hope to find ways to connect the people and organizations in a way that still holds space for each of them, but weaves them together in a way that can upend the current environmental trajectory and embrace the new ethic that many of these people and organizations are already building towards.

A New Ethic

The central goal of my project was to identify the most important components in creating a new ethic. In the conversations that I had, one of the questions I asked was, "what is the current environmental ethic missing?," in order to, first, specify what they foresee as the impeding characteristics in the current ethic, and second, to prompt what they thought ought to be included in the new and more equitable ethic. What do we do differently? How do we become better environmentalists, or formulate a new environmental ethic? All of the following were reasons noted that are contributing to the deficiency of the current ethic: the idea of protecting or only preserving the environment as opposed to an allyship that requires listening and relationship building with our environments not simply setting parts of it aside, the narrowed perspective that people have on themselves and the scope of what environmentalism is and could be, the exploitation of Indigenous perspectives and lack of reparations and recognition for stolen land, the inappropriate relationship between people, environment, and non-human animals based in oppression and domination of non-human entities, othering the environment as outside of ourselves rather than something that we as people are within and a part of, no sense of collectivity amongst species and their surroundings, not knowing how to include non-human entities as subjects and what that looks like politically and in policy, the absence of corporation level pressure to make change, the difficulty of a negatively charged message of the current climate change crisis, and the lack of overall urgency and priority. These components that are all missing led many of the discussions to shift towards what is the most significant or necessary component of the new ethic.

These are the concepts that were noted as the most integral for a new ethic:

- More self-reflection

- Allyship with non-human species and environments
- Anti-racism
- Safety & accessibility
- Holding space for all people, and meeting them where they are at
- Reverence as an idea, thinking about it as more than its different parts; allowing spaces to shape us, who we are, and our ethics.
- Centering the discourse in Environmental Justice, Ecofeminism, & Indigenous perspectives
- Entangled kinship
- Political will and prioritization of policy changes
- Joy: recognizing joy in non-human animals and learning to love being alive with a thriving environment, non-human community, and the human community globally.
- Relationships beyond what legislation and policies require

By first identifying the issues and missing components of the current ethic ideologically, practically, and locally through academic research and coursework alongside the interviews I facilitated, I was able to begin to construct a new ethic: an equitable, reparative, woven, entangled, placed-based environmental ethic. The conversations I had with local community members and advocates guided my analysis for my project. Their experiences, insights, and narratives were foundational to the above ideas and qualifications for a new ethic. Their stories were inspirational; they highlighted the many and expansive ways that we as people are interacting with, advocating for, and learning within our environments. The impacts of our surroundings are even more interwoven with our ways of being. The narratives shared reiterate the importance of storytelling and the power of sharing the stories we make and retell with words and actions. Narratives and the retelling of those narratives transforms the framing of the environmental discourse to recover and amplify the marginalized stories, to entangle and weave them, to create something much greater than a simple understanding of the environment. Rather, we are held and encouraged by our narratives to entangle with others, weaving and kinnovating

along the way, reckoning in community with our environments, what they are and could be in the Anthropocene.

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