Naia Trust



More-than-human Communication

Field Sensemaking

October 2026

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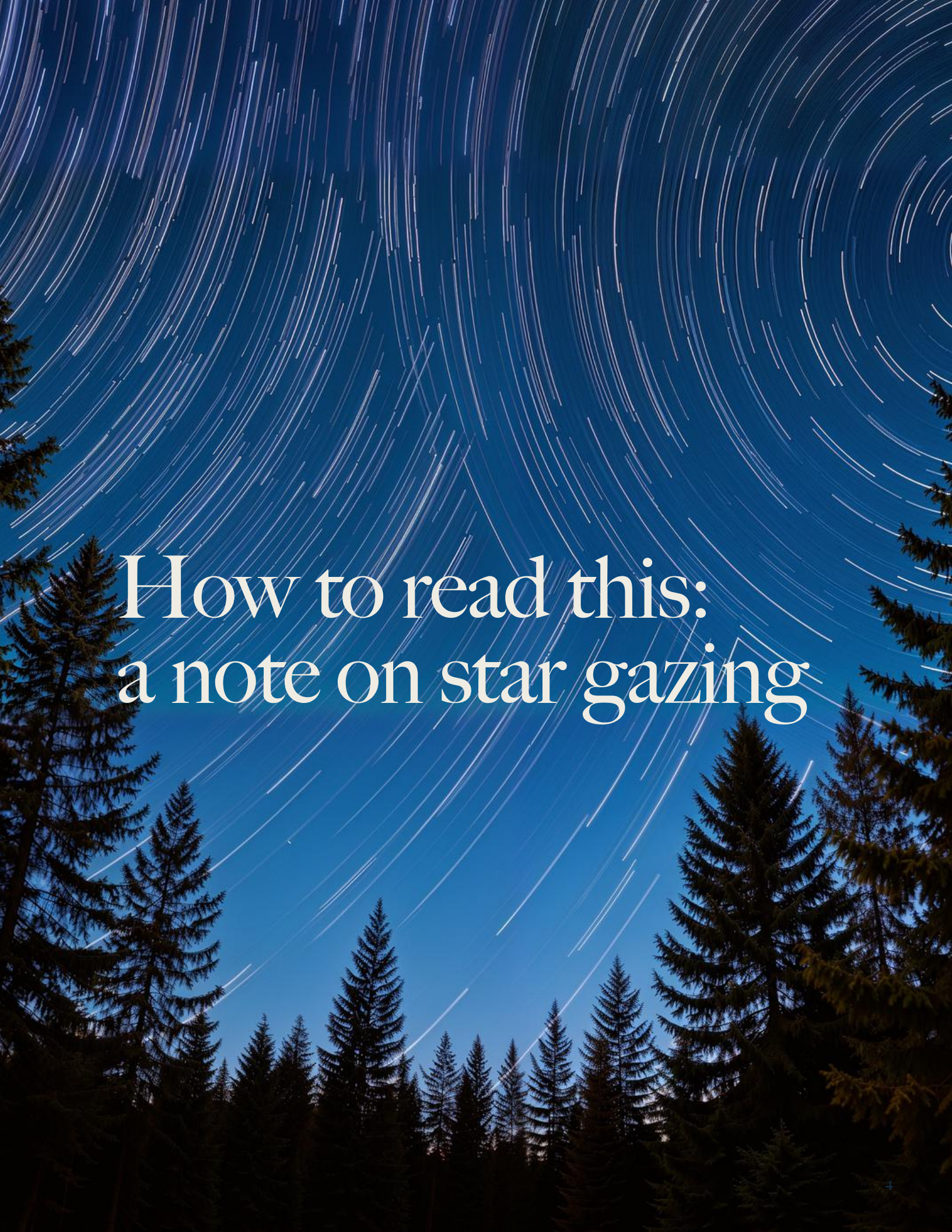
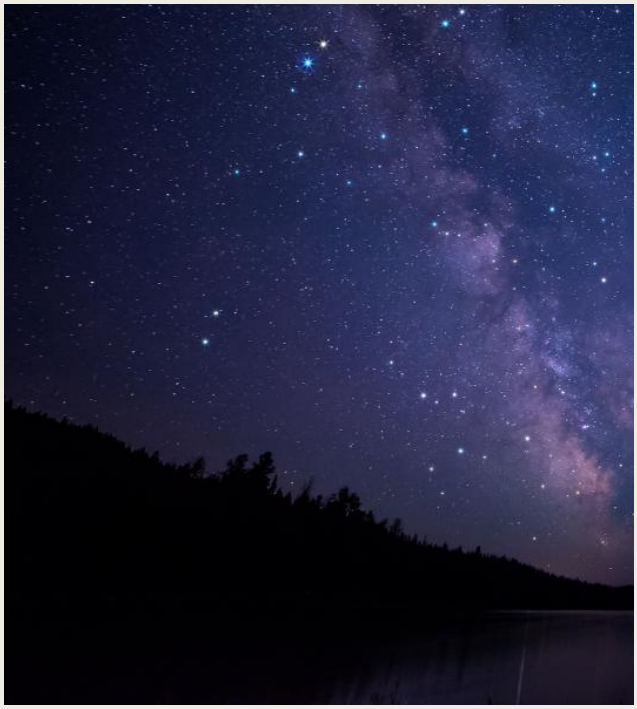


How to read this: a note on star gazing

You know that feeling of looking up at an endless sky full of stars? Only the closest ones seem bright, yet you know, for every one you can see, there are multitudes around it.

You identify the ones you recognise: they connect to make patterns known across cultures – depending on where you are, there's The Plough or the Great Bear, or Běidǒu, or Sapta Rishi (Seven Sages). Draw a line between any of them, in any direction, and some new formation becomes possible.





We know there are galaxies within every field we seek to explore. We, by comparison, are apprentice astronomers, so human with our instruments and questions… As though one could ever 'sensemake' the stars.

We offer the thoughts shared here in that spirit, with all the humility that the vast, unknowable cloak of the universe invokes in our human hearts. This 'sensemaking' is an attempt to navigate by the light of those we've met along the way.

So, how to read this:



With an open heart! This is the number one thing all those who communicate with the more-than-human world emphasise as necessary in order to converse well, coming from a place of love. We figure it can't hurt human-to-human too!



Fireside conversation, not presentation. This is not an academic research report, it is an expression of our genuine curiosity in this field and an invitation to further exploration. Think late night conversations around the fire together, more than a defensible thesis!



New to all this? We hope this signposts to some of the main actors in this space and areas for potential collaboration whether you're an artist, scientist, funder, academic, conservationist or anyone else: you are very welcome here. We are learning too!



Seasoned (dare we say, weather beaten) pro? We know you will find plenty of stars – colleagues, projects, papers, ideas, and challenges – that are inevitably missing here. That's okay! This is meant to be indicative and serve as a constellation starter. We hope that some of our conversations provide fresh insights and mirror familiar territory in interesting ways, as well as pointing to prospective and unlikely partnerships.



What did we miss? Please read with your best star gazing eyes and let us know where you see gaps and opportunities here that are not yet captured. This will be an ongoing conversation for us and we'd love you to be a part of it.



Take a break from AI. The words, ideas, and sensemaking here are our own. Please read these words knowing every em-dash is ours, every smooth or clunky phrase crafted by real human beings. Equally, the design is all human – created by Shanley Mitchell, with many of the images coming from our team's own adventures.

Relationship to land across cultures



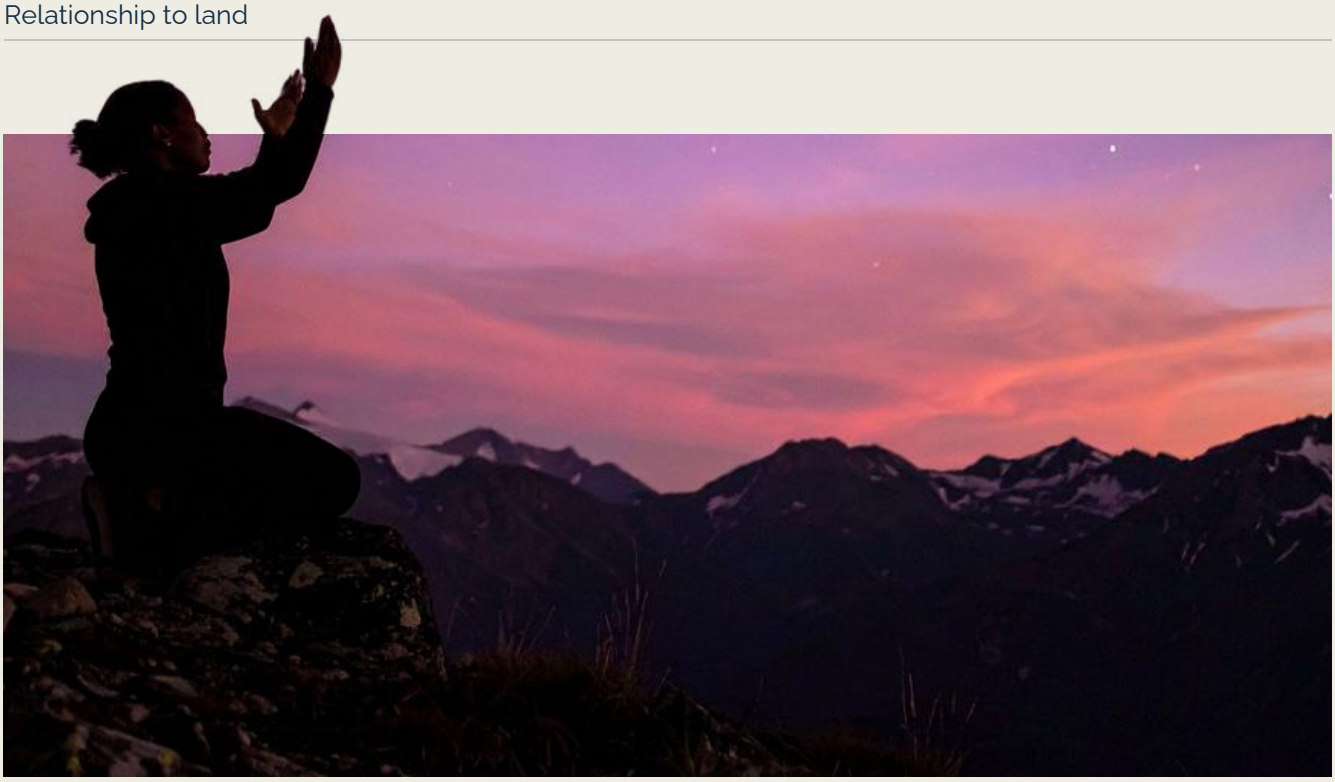
The comparison of this sensemaking process to star gazing and searching for new constellations in an endless sky carries well to acknowledge a central tension in this inquiry around more-than-human communication.

For the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people in Australia for example, the stars are not always what make the constellations, sometimes its the dark spaces between them. The Emu in the Sky – comprised of the dark dust lines of the Milky Way – is experienced as 'empty space' in Western astronomy, yet not only does the Emu appear in the sky, it shifts and changes throughout the year specifically signalling the activity of Emu to the ones on the earth who can read it (Fuller et al., 2014). In other words, in writing this, **we feel the limits of our own knowledge, and the tools of conversational enquiry, field mapping and sensemaking available to us through a dominant Western scientific lens** which defaults to reading the bright points and treating the rest as empty space.



Perhaps the most glaring gap in the dominant paradigm is the notion that humans are somehow separate from the rest of nature. **"For 98% of human history, over 10,000 generations, our ancestors lived, breathed, and interacted with a world that they saw and felt to be animate,"** says teacher of myth and cosmology, Joshua Schrei (2020), whose often quoted phrase **"animism is normative consciousness"** goes some way in describing our proper orientation as a human species.

It is stupefying to imagine that the accrued wisdom of so many generations across cultures, connected to a deep cyclical time in keeping with the seasons and cycles of life, could be replaced in a few hundred years by a worldview that privileges linearity and disconnection from place. Many cultures still recognise the presence of humans or "holy earth surface walkers" as Woman Stands Shining Pat McCabe reminds us (2026), as a gift with an important role and responsibility to all living things. We presence here just a few of the many ways in which human beings are still directly connected to and communicating with the more-than-human world across cultures.



Cosmology

Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe

Vanessa Watts (2013) shares in **Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmology** that "communication" between humans and nonhumans isn't the right frame at all, because it presumes two separate parties exchanging signals across a gap. **Her concept of Place-Thought is that land and thought were never separated in the first place,** so there's no gap to bridge. She points out that Sky Woman, as part of the creation of the world, doesn't communicate with the turtle and the birds in the sense of transmitting information between distinct minds, she becomes territory, agency, and treaty, and society emerges from that, not from a channel of communication opened between separate beings.

Vanessa **compares this to the biblical story of Eve interacting with the snake where "humans resolved that communication with nature held disastrous effects...** and so interspecies communication became quite limited if not profane." Perhaps this is the central misunderstanding we now have to recover from as a species.



Sarayaku, Ecuador

Kawsak Sacha, the Living Forest

In 2018, the Kichwa people of Sarayaku formally declared their territory as Kawsak Sacha, the Living Forest, a living, conscious being and rightful subject of law, "constituted by all the beings of the Jungle, from the most infinitesimal to the greatest" (Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku, 2018). The declaration describes an ongoing, reciprocal relationship in which **the forest's beings communicate directly with the Sarayaku Runa (people) through daily life, dreams and visions,** and in which it is understood as the duty of both humans and the forest's own protector beings to maintain this relationship of respect and balance.





Sápmi, Northern Europe

You yoik the mountain

Across the ocean, the Sámi have one of Europe's oldest surviving vocal traditions, yoiking – used to honour people, animals and landscapes and to carry memory across generations. The grammar of their language is consistent with many connected cultures in that **a yoik of a mountain or a herd of reindeer is understood to carry the essence of that place or being directly into song - you can't yoik *about* a mountain, you yoik the mountain.** There is no separation.



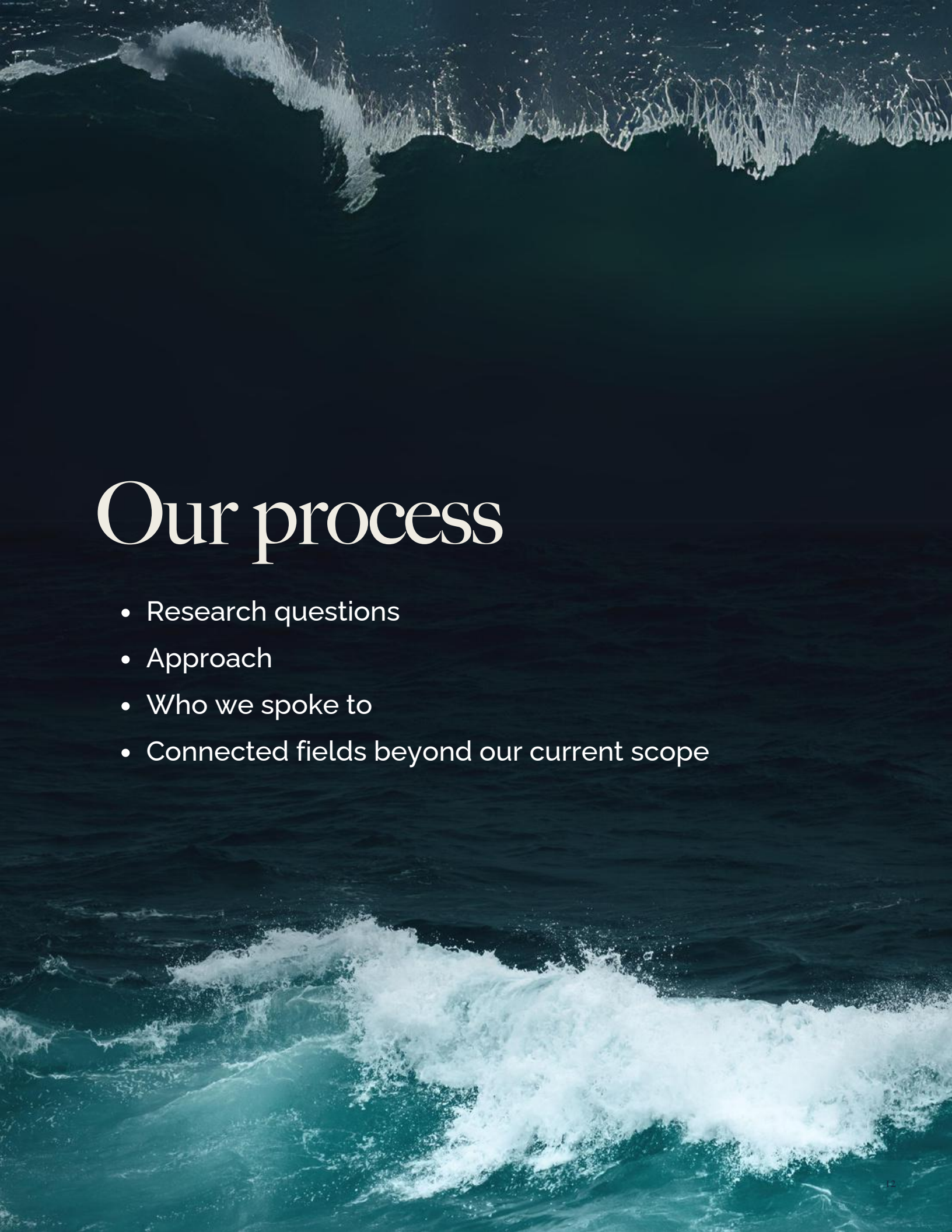
All over the world, people are greeting the Sun, making offerings to the land, and talking to their gardens.

This is not a capacity unique to Indigenous people or their cultures - although they are often the ones closest to protecting, practising, and stewarding these ways of being from a history and context in which this knowledge has been continuously and generationally suppressed and undermined. **Deep exchange with the more-than-human world is a birthright for every human on this planet.**

Our exploration into this field feels like a necessary step for those who have become disconnected to restore a direct relationship with the greater web of life, and a starting place for those who live in cultures no longer connected in this fundamental way. Depth psychologist Bill Plotkin notes that **widespread disconnection in dominant culture necessitates different responses, rituals, and practices than those who still have access to and practice their ancestral lineages and traditions.**

We are intentionally using the frame of 'more-than-human communication' because it's in the zeitgeist and we recognise the value in moving with the momentum that's here, but we also recognise that this concept, and even the notion of 'animism', doesn't necessarily translate across cultures and cosmologies because the distinction between 'us' humans and 'them' more-than-humans simply doesn't exist.

In other words, the "return path" – to use Sophie Banks' phrase (2026) – to bring us back towards a healthy human culture, might involve trying some new ideas on for size, dusting off the best of our childhood imaginations, and opening to the possibility that yes indeed, that silver birch did just wink at you.

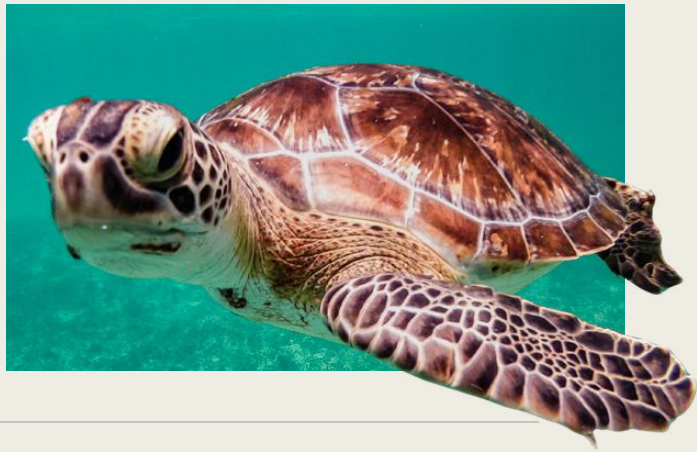


Our process

- Research questions
- Approach
- Who we spoke to
- Connected fields beyond our current scope

Research questions

The questions that began our exploration:



01 What is meant by communication?

02 How does more-than-human communication address the metacrisis and this moment in time?

03 What are the main efforts underway that are strengthening and enlivening a shift in mainstream perceptions of the more-than-human world and our ability to converse and communicate?

04 Who, if anyone, is hosting the academics, scientists, artists, and practitioners, coming together around this topic?

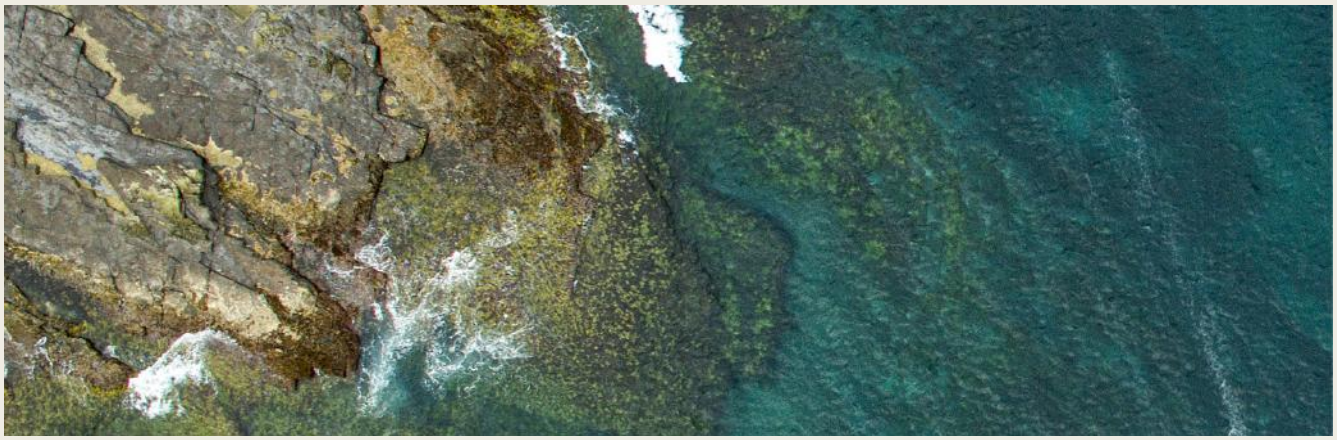
05 How coherent or fragmented is this field? Is calling it a field even the right approach?

06 What are the main barriers to widespread societal acceptance of interspecies communication becoming the norm?

07 What makes most sense for us, and other interested funders, to focus on?

Approach

We entered a process of organic constellating of the main actors in the space. Our goal was not to speak to everyone (impossible!) but to indicate what's out there. We did this through a combination of **unstructured informal interviews** with experts – ranging from lawyers, biologists, animal communicators, scientists and more – **combined with desk research** including books, articles, podcasts, websites, songs, and academic papers.



This process was also supplemented by:

- **Courses in more-than-human communication** including Patrick MacManaway & Bríd Walsh (Subtle Energies of the Land with Animate Earth), Saskia von Diest (Ecofluency), Cultivating the Diviner with Colin Campbell (Animate Earth)

- **Research and interviews** we've conducted over the years **on our Lifeworlds podcast,** notably the late Karen Bakker (The Sounds of Life), Carl Safina (Beyond words: what animals think and feel), Giuliana Furci (mycologist), Lyla June Johnston (Indigenous scholar and teacher), David Gruber (marine biologist, Project CETI), César Gavavito-Rodriguez (field lawyer, MOTH, NYU), Dylan McGarry (artist and scholar, Empatheatre), Jon Young (teacher and tracker, What the Robin Knows), John Borrows (lawyer), and Martin Wikelski (ICARUS).

- We've also **attended and hosted convenings** including Listening to the Land (Real Farming Trust), MOTH Festival of Ideas, and MOTH course. This has been supplemented by **field visits** – time on the land in Botswana and Peru, meeting with partners whose cosmologies, lores and governance systems are as old as the land herself.

Who we spoke to

Special thanks to those 20+ people we had conversations and field visits with in order to better understand this space. Many of the insights here belong to those we spoke with and researched, and would not be possible without their years of dedication.

Although we have not quoted people we spoke to directly to maintain confidentiality, we honour each of them here. Inclusion here does not imply endorsement by interviewees of this report's wider synthesis, conclusions, or of the other individuals, organisations, practices or claims represented within it.

Visited

- Colin & Niall Campbell, Diviner & Sangoma, Animate Earth (Botswana field visit)
- Parque de la Papa (Potato Park), Asociación ANDES (Peru field visit)

Spoke to

- Monica Gagliano, author and evolutionary ecologist
- Rachel Fleming, College of Contemporary Animism (Animate Earth)
- Francesca Price, Listening to the Land (Real Farming Trust)
- Beau Austin, Full Circle Foundation
- Jennifer Menke, Sacred Contracts & Regenerative Earth
- Emma Fitchett, Plant Consciousness & School of Natural Esoterics
- Jane Lawton & Laura Hay, Earth Species Project
- Emma Crowe, MOTH, NYU
- Nathaniel Hughs, School of Intuitive Herbalism
- Julian Norris, Wolf Willow Institute
- Bradley Smith, One Small Planet
- Saskia von Diest, Ecofluency & Nature's Council
- Wynter Worsthorne, AnimalTalk Africa & Nature's Council
- Anna Breytenbach, Animal Spirit
- MJ Barrett, School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan
- Kate Armstrong, Interspecies Internet
- Bríd Walsh, Energy Practitioner
- Patrick MacManaway, Quantum Leap Subtle Energies
- Julia Wright, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), Coventry University

Connected fields beyond our current scope

The relevant areas connected to more-than-human communication are endless, and in the interest of our own capacity, are currently beyond the scope of our inquiry here. Yet we want to acknowledge that there are deep applications and connections to many faiths and religions – Shinto, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism to name but a few – and also many fields including:

Ethnobiology (the relationship between people and the living world, including plants, animals and ecosystems), **Early Childhood Development** (how children's innate connection to nature develops and can be nurtured or lost), **Psychical Studies** (paranormal or parapsychological phenomena, including telepathy and mediumship), **Neurodivergence** (variation in human brain function and cognition, e.g. autism, ADHD, often associated with different modes of perceiving and relating to the world); **Biomimicry** (imitating nature's forms, processes and systems), **Geobiology** (interactions between the Earth's physical systems and the biosphere), **Rights of Nature** (recognising ecosystems and natural entities as holding rights of their own), **Quantum Science** (matter and energy of the cosmos expressing astounding qualities of interconnectedness and relationality); **Digital Twins of Nature / Nature Tech Platforms / MRV** (virtual models of sensing, monitoring, reporting and verification tools to track environmental data), **Ethology** (animal behaviour); **Permaculture** (agriculture and living modelled on natural ecosystems), **Plant Medicines, Psychedelics and Shamanic Practice** (traditional and contemporary practices using plant-based substances for healing, ritual and altered states of consciousness).





We have also steered away from the current discussions on what constitutes intelligence vs consciousness vs sentience (in the more-than-human realm or otherwise), acknowledging this is a rich and dynamic field of enquiry that goes beyond the scope of our own expertise, and is an ongoing, debated and perhaps unresolvable definitional space. When we speak of consciousness and the natural world, we are engaging with the prevalent belief systems across cultures that there are multiple forms of intelligences on Earth, and as humans, we constitute part of this intelligence and are able to dialogue across species 'barriers' as a result.

We celebrate advances in all these fields, including ongoing research into consciousness and quantum science, while recognising that any direct connection between these areas and more-than-human communication remains speculative, we do hope to see new shoots of connection between these fields in years to come.



What is more-than-human communication?

“Two or three times a week I walk through my farm with a notebook. And while I don't hear voices, the plants, the animals and the soil do in fact tell me what they need. And I mean that very directly. From those walks results a very clear list of the projects and needs of the week.”

Michael Ableman, Farmer

Unsurprisingly, this question is not straightforward! Even the notion of "more-than-human" sits uneasily with some interviewees who worry it cages us in our own humanness even as we seek to reach beyond it. We use it here acknowledging the limits of language itself.



There is also the question of **communication between who?** Human animal to nonhuman animal (hereafter 'human' and 'animal' for ease of reference)? Animal to animal? Human to ecosystem? While there is research being done into all of these areas, particularly in the fields of behavioural ecology, comparative cognition, and zoosemiotics (a new word for us - the study specifically of animal communication systems and signalling between each other) **our exploration is concerned with direct communication between humans and the rest of the natural world**, primarily though not limited to, plants and animals. We recognise many people also connect with deities, ancestors, guardians and protectors of place and subtle energies in the land that are also available to communicate with.

Ask different parts of this field what more-than-human communication is and how to do it, and you'll get as many different answers. However **two main schools of thought** did appear in our research; those who understand more-than-human communication in terms of **Intuitive Interspecies Communication (IIC)**, and then those holding a more **technologically-enabled frame of communication.**



Intuitive Interspecies Communication

As a definition from the IIC space, Saskia von Diest offers that it is: **"the ability to fluidly and accurately converse with more-than-human nature using the expanded spectrum of human sensory awareness"** (von Diest, 2019) which includes speaking with animals, mountains, rivers, microbes, entire ecosystems and even non-physical phenomena. M.J. Barrett and colleagues focus on how IIC is experienced by those who engage in it, defining it as "a detailed, non-verbal and non-physical form of communication between humans and other animals," experienced through "the mutual exchange of visceral feelings, emotions, mental impressions and thoughts, embodied sensations of touch, smell, taste, sound, as well as visuals in the mind's eye" (Barrett et al., 2021). This exchange can occur with or without physical proximity to the animal in question.

Technologically-enabled communication

From the technologically-enabled side of the field, using **Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies (NACTs),** communication means something closer, though not limited to, decoding; **“tools and systems that use artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced robotics to record, analyze, and potentially translate animal communications”** according to the More-Than-Human-Life (MOTH) Program at NYU Law School (2025).



The efforts of which are being used primarily, though by no means exclusively, for conservation and protection purposes.

An interesting observation from us here, is to consider that the technologically enabled communication includes a ‘third’ actor – the technology itself – whose translation includes layers of decisionmaking both from human actors and the self-learning algorithms themselves. Therefore one could say it is a more ‘mediated’ interaction… Unless we take the perspective that technology is built from Earth materials and metals - and therefore we are also ‘listening’ to them.

A further question emerges: What does it mean for us to be listening to machines?





Outside of these two approaches above lies a **multiplicity of ways to experience communication.** One interviewee reframed communication as “embodied listening” rather than exchange, describing the plants in their garden as having "a tangible feeling," saying "they sort of glow at me," while remaining cautious about attributing this to any deliberate signal sent their way by the plants: "all we can know is our experience of the thing happening."

Practice varies even within similar modalities: intuitive herbalists describe experiencing plant communication differently to plant spirit healers for example, and while many IIC practitioners speak with rocks, rivers, trees, ancestors and other spirits, this isn't universal and some work solely with animals. A further nuance emerged in one conversation: speaking to a plant or animal is often not an exchange with a single individual at all, but with the collective consciousness of "oak" or "baboon."

Across the board we heard humility in acknowledging there is so much that is still completely unknown about communication, how it works and what it means, even as research and technology advances. Therefore maintaining a sense of wonder and open-heartedness is paramount across this field.

Why care about more-than-human communication?



“How monotonous our speaking becomes when we speak only to ourselves! And how insulting to the other beings – to foraging black bears and twisted old cypresses – that no longer sense us talking to them, but only about them, as though they were not present in our world...Small wonder that rivers and forests no longer compel our focus or our fierce devotion. For we talk about such entities only behind their backs, as though they were not participant in our lives. Yet if we no longer call out to the moon slipping between the clouds, or whisper to the spider setting the silken struts of her web, well, then the numerous powers of this world will no longer address us – and if they still try, we will not likely hear them.”

David Abram, Becoming Animal

Why care about more-than-human communication?

We pose this question bluntly on purpose. This field of work may indeed seem fanciful or tangential during a time of ecological breakdown and geopolitical conflict. One could argue that we haven't even learned how to communicate or relate well within our own species, let alone extending that out to other forms of life! So shouldn't we sort ourselves out before trying to talk to others?

We've reflected on this and see that practicing direct communication addresses several of the root causes of the crises we are in. In simplistic terms, at the heart of the metacrisis lies a fundamental inability to feel that we are connected to the whole and are the whole. This leads to many negative impacts such as an aching sense of loneliness and disconnection, hyper individualism, tribalism, the meaning crisis, etc, to name just a few.

So what if, quite apart from being a distraction or a superfluous preoccupation from humanity's greatest challenges, acknowledging and practising our human capacities to be in deep reciprocity and communication with the rest of life, can be a direct route to repairing our connection with it?

We see a couple of ways in which remembering this birthright could lead to repair at both an individual and collective level...



At the individual level: Restoring a mind that sees and perceives the whole

Consider what it might mean to restore balance in how our brains perceive and operate. It's well documented (McGilchrist, 2009) that current Western society has increasingly favored the left hemisphere's mode of thinking, which tends towards abstract, analytical, linear, and mechanistic modes of thought. This has its many uses, however, left to its own devices and not balanced with the right hemisphere mind, it physiologically leads to a more fragmented and less integrated experience of the world, creating feelings of disconnection and separation. In contrast, the right hemisphere of the brain has been shown to be more holistic, intuitive, contextual and connected.

Many of the skills of direct communication, such as stilling the mind and extra-sensory perception, require a healthy engagement of the right hemisphere. At an individual level then, our sense of what's possible literally stretches, expanding our ability to integrate greater levels of understanding.

As we restore a mind that is able to see and perceive the whole, we see that the world around us is alive and communicative, we begin to dissolve the existential sense of separation, loneliness and disconnection that lies at the centre of modern culture. Think of the positive measurable effects of 'forest bathing' or healing nature deficit disorder. We see that communication with the more-than-human world can foster these restorative impacts and move us towards the most profound sense of joy and belonging that lies within many spiritual lineages, that which Thích Nhất Hạnh termed "interbeing" (1988).

Interbeing

Our cup of tea holds the rain that came from the clouds.

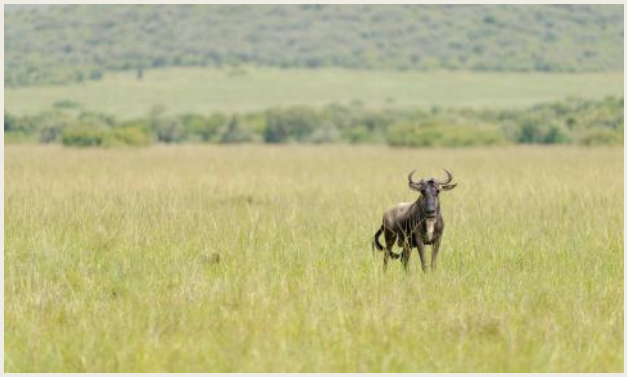


At the collective level: Listening to the whole, we act more intelligently

If we as humans cultivate our capacity to listen from a place of integrated wholeness - engaging both the left and right hemispheres - what might that do for the ways we conduct research, practice science, draft laws and make conservation plans?



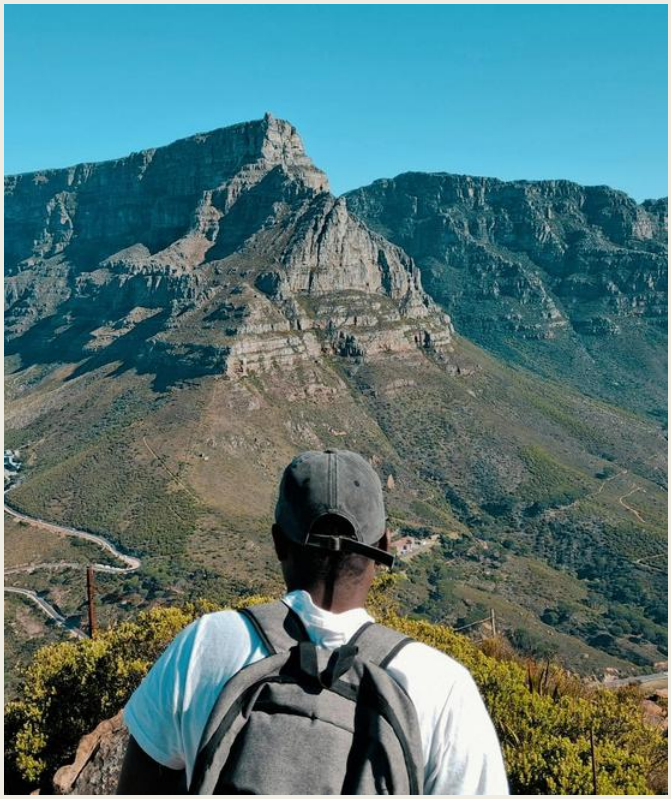
It is especially important to integrate the holistic, sensing aspect of our minds when we work with natural systems, and the human systems nested within them, because this maps directly onto how our planetary ecology actually functions. Western science is only just beginning to grasp the complexity of how the Earth functions as a living, symbiotic being, catching up with those who have lived and known this interrelationship all along. As Gregory Cajete puts it in Native Science (2000), to our sensing bodies, all things are active.

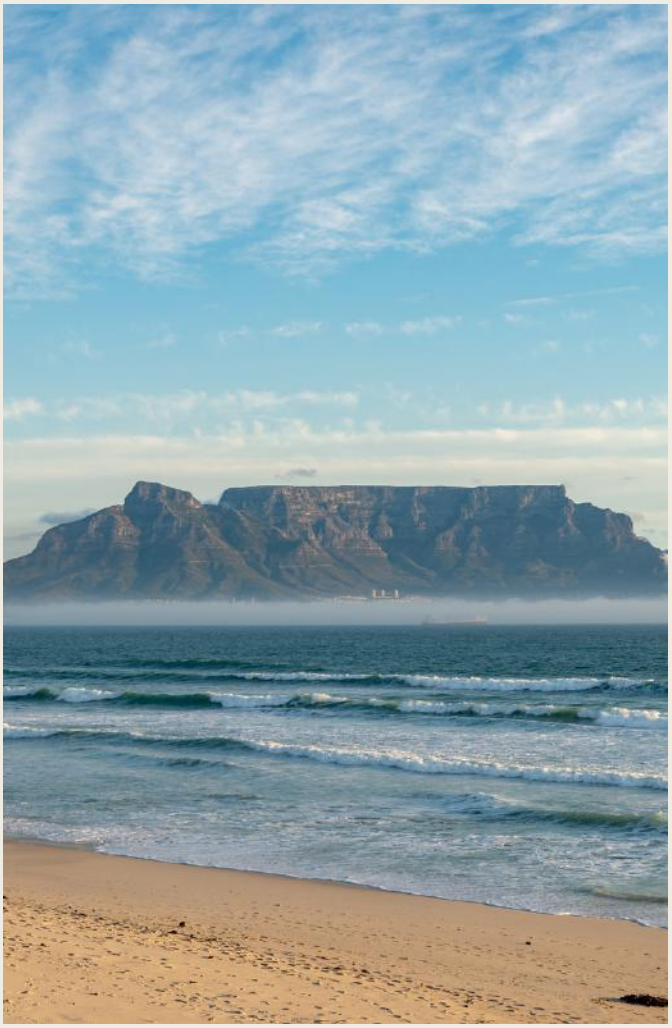


Recognising how much harm has been created by single-point solutions that optimise for a narrow set of indicators to the effects of climate change, ecological degradation, species decline and more, might listening to a wider set of inputs that come from the very systems we're seeking to create interventions in, be a wise approach? How much more intelligently might we be able to act if we literally put our ears to the ground and asked what was needed before jumping to a solution?

Humans alone hold a partial view.

Consulting the more-than-human world could significantly expand our capacities in many domains. For example, John Borrows, who founded the world's first dual law degree in Indigenous and customary law in B.C., brings his students out into the campus of nature so that they start to see the archive of law that is literally written on the earth. He teaches, as in his culture, that it is beings like trees or plants that are the true professors of law (Lifeworlds 2022).





In South Africa, the Wild Law Institute consults with IIC practitioners and indigenous wisdom carriers to include direct perspectives from landscapes for whom they are seeking recognition of legal rights, such as Table Mountain and Antarctica. We are also seeing scientific research methods for example, being developed and designed in collaboration with the plants themselves. See next section on Monica Gagliano.



So what's the dream? When culture moves, imagination moves

We know for some people, more-than-human communication may feel far-fetched. Humans have often imagined and rehearsed the future in their books, music and films before getting there. As Rob Hopkins shares later, think how many times we'd been to the moon in our popular culture before we actually landed on it.

Collective behaviour change ripples out through direct encounters with more-than-human life. In 1970, biologist Roger Payne released *Songs of the Humpback Whale*, the first public recording of a humpback song. It sold hundreds of thousands of copies, was carried into space on the Voyager Golden Record, and is widely credited with helping catalyse the modern whale conservation movement, including passage of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972 and the International Whaling Commission's 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling. The facts about whaling were public for decades. **What led to culture change was the felt and visceral sense of awe and relationality that hearing their song inspired.**

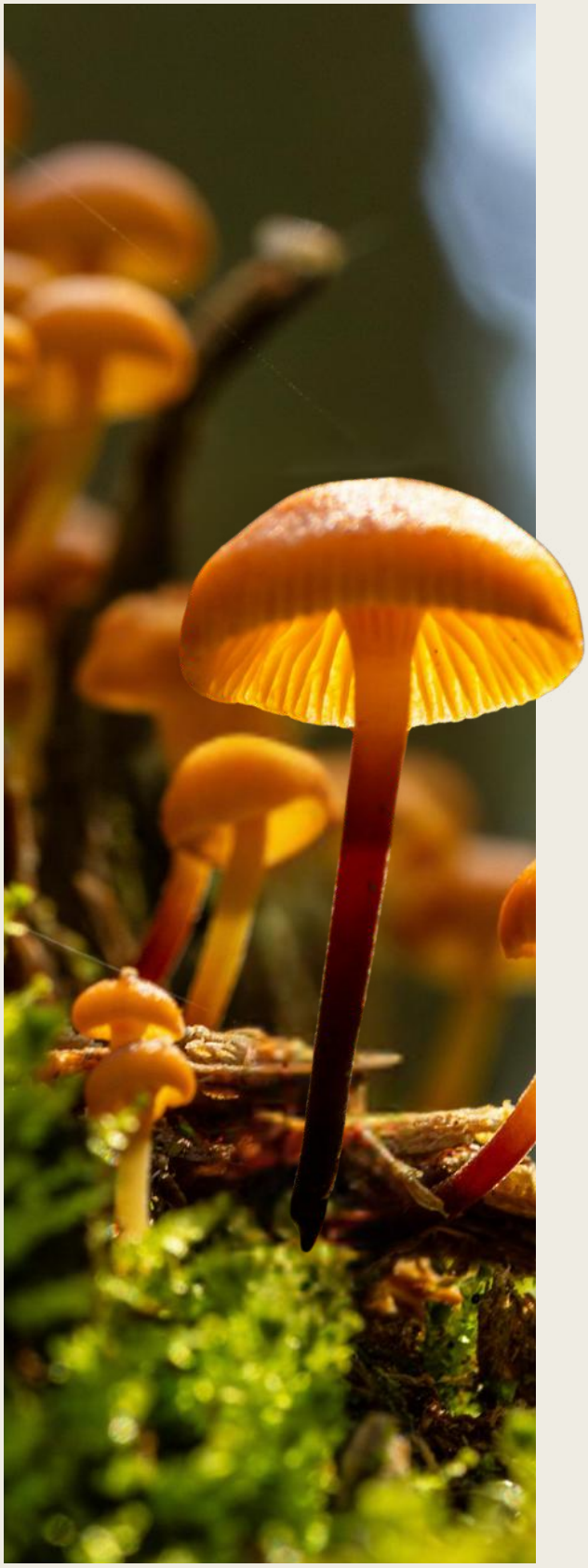


Making visible ways of being that are absent from the Western canon - namely that plants, animals and the rest of nature are complex beings with lores, agency, cultures, thoughts and emotions of their own - may be among some of the most potent avenues for a significant step change in mainstream public compassion and active care for our planetary ecologies, and each other.



What does more-than-human communication look like in practice?

What is actually happening when people communicate with the more-than-human world? How do they do it? And what are some examples of how this extraordinary capacity is being practiced in the world?



Guiliana Furci, intuitive (nearly improbable!) fungal discoveries

In his 2025 book *Is A River Alive?* Robert Macfarlane recounts the story of Chilean mycologist Guiliana Furci's **extrasensory abilities to find mushrooms** which "drastically exceeds conventional empiricism". **She describes hearing a kind of "fuzz in the matrix,"** or picking up a particular vibration and tone in the surrounding energy field, distinct from the different signals she says plants give off. Crucially, she is clear this is not one-directional sensing on her part alone: "they know I'm there," she tells Robert. On this particular expedition, tramping through dense green forest, she felt the presence of a mushroom, walked off some fifteen yards around a corner, and returned with a sample entirely new to science!

In a 2022 interview on Lifeworlds she said "You need to tune into the intuition of a place, and then there will be a compulsion to go in a certain direction - and you find something astonishing!"

Monica Gagliano, developing participatory research methodologies with plants

Evolutionary ecologist Monica Gagliano has explored how scientific questions and experimental approaches can emerge through direct relationship with plants. In *Thus Spoke the Plant*, she describes **experiences of communication with plants that informed testable scientific questions and experimental designs.** One example is her work with Ayahuma, from which elements of an associative-learning experiment with pea seedlings emerged; the resulting experiment was then developed and tested using conventional scientific methods and published through peer review.

More recently, her work has moved toward developing **approaches in which plants can participate as collaborators** in the research process itself.



As Monica shared in conversation, the relationship is not about idolising plants or positioning them simply as teachers, but about learning how to work with them as collaborators and friends.



Patrick MacManaway, land whispering: practical applications of subtle energies in agriculture

Patrick describes his land whispering practice as **direct, telepathic and dowsing-based communication with the vibrational intelligence he understands to be present in land, water, plants and animals** (dowsing is a practice using tools such as a pendulum or rods to detect energy, water, or information guided by subtle physical responses in the practitioner's own body). **Working with farmers,** the following cases share his firsthand experiences: Called to a Scottish dairy farm plagued by mastitis, he dowsed and found seven underground streams running beneath the barn; inserting steel rods upstream to disperse what he identified as geopathic stress produced a **60% drop in mastitis within ten days.** On another property, a woodland spring that had run dry was, as he put it, still present as a "vibrational presence" despite the absence of water… Through telepathic communication and dowsing, he and a colleague understood that the spring was willing to restore itself, but wanted to be sung to! So they sang!

Within 48 hours the spring was flowing again, an experience he's repeated on multiple later occasions. In a more urgent case, called to a field of alfalfa where cattle had developed sudden, life-threatening bloat, he describes entering meditative communication with "the spirit or intelligence of the farm, the field, the soil, the plants, the devic or fairy community, the collective intelligence of the cattle," reaching what he experienced as a resolved, harmonious understanding between the parties; the cattle were returned to graze twelve hours later without further incident. He describes the process as closer to a lucid dream or an interactive video game than ordinary thought where **perceptions arrive as images, sensations, and ideas**, once attention is aligned to the "wavelength" of the intelligence in question (MacManaway, 2022).



Parque de la Papa (Potato Park), Indigenous food sovereignty

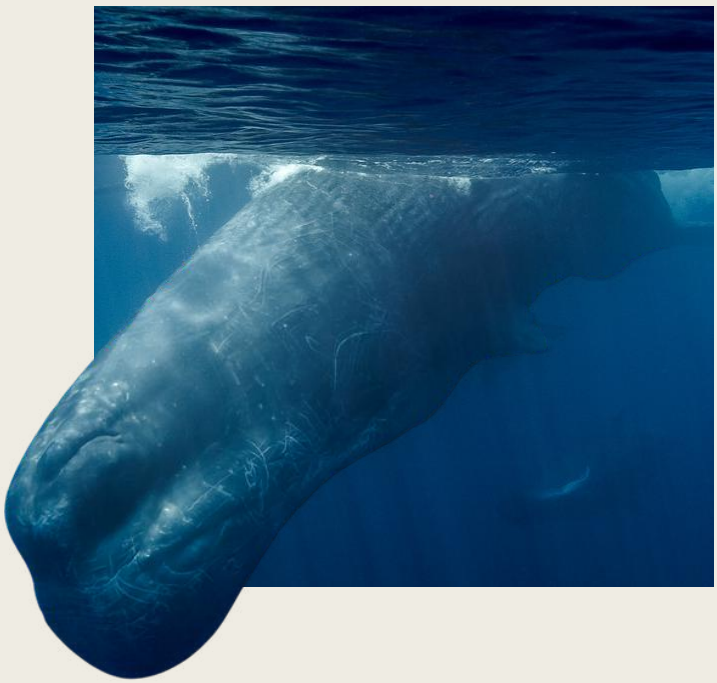
The Potato Park is a 9,600-hectare Indigenous biocultural territory in Peru's Sacred Valley, governed by six Quechua communities under **Sumaq Kawsay, the Andean concept of harmonious existence.** Sumaq Kawsay is structured around balance between three interconnected ayllus, or realms: Runa Ayllu, humans and their domesticated crops and animals; Sallqa Ayllu, wild species and spaces; and Auki Ayllu, the sacred, including mountains, sacred sites and customary law. Communication with the potato is entirely real within this system and enacted through Papa Watay, "the tying of the potato," a ceremony performed at points in the agricultural calendar to secure a good harvest, in which the spirit of the potato is bound in relationship with Pachamama, Mother Earth.

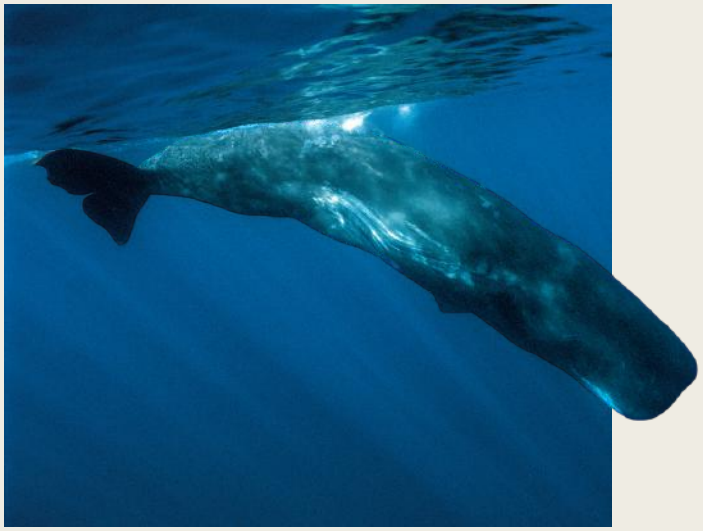
Asociación ANDES, the organisation supporting the park, describes **this practice as what keeps the communities in living communion with both their land and the extraordinary genetic diversity they steward,** now standing at over 1,300 traditional potato varieties! (Our Naia team have visited their seed stores and it's impressive!) The same approach of a single "charismatic species" anchoring a community's spiritual, agricultural and governance relationship with land, is now being extended to new territories including maize in Lares, alpaca and llama in Haquira, cacao in the Putumayo, and, in the Upper Xingu of Brazil, cassava (Asociación ANDES, n.d.).



Project CETI, decoding whale language and culture with technology

Project CETI, founded by marine biologist David Gruber in 2020, is the **largest interdisciplinary interspecies communication effort in history**, drawing on experts across eight disciplines including **linguistics, robotics, cryptography and machine learning.** They are working alongside the Dominica Sperm Whale Project, which has tracked around 30 families of sperm whales for over a decade. The methodology combines non-invasive "gentle robotics," including suction-cup recording tags deployed by drone and a robotic fish (SoFi) built to move alongside whales without disturbing them, with deep machine learning trained on the resulting audio.





Sperm whales communicate through patterned click sequences called codas (kind of like an aquatic Morse code!) and CETI's AI models are trained to identify individual clicks within background noise, categorise coda types, and recognise dialect variation between whale families. Having analysed thousands of codas, **the team has identified what they describe as a sperm whale "alphabet,"** that click patterns shift depending on conversational context, and confirmed that codas carry social meaning and vary by dialect between pods in ways as distinct as regional human accents (Sharma et al., 2024). David describes the process as a mountain climb, each finding offering a new foothold rather than one big breakthrough, and **points to the usefulness of these findings in strengthening legal and conservation protections for whales.**



You yourself, reading this now!

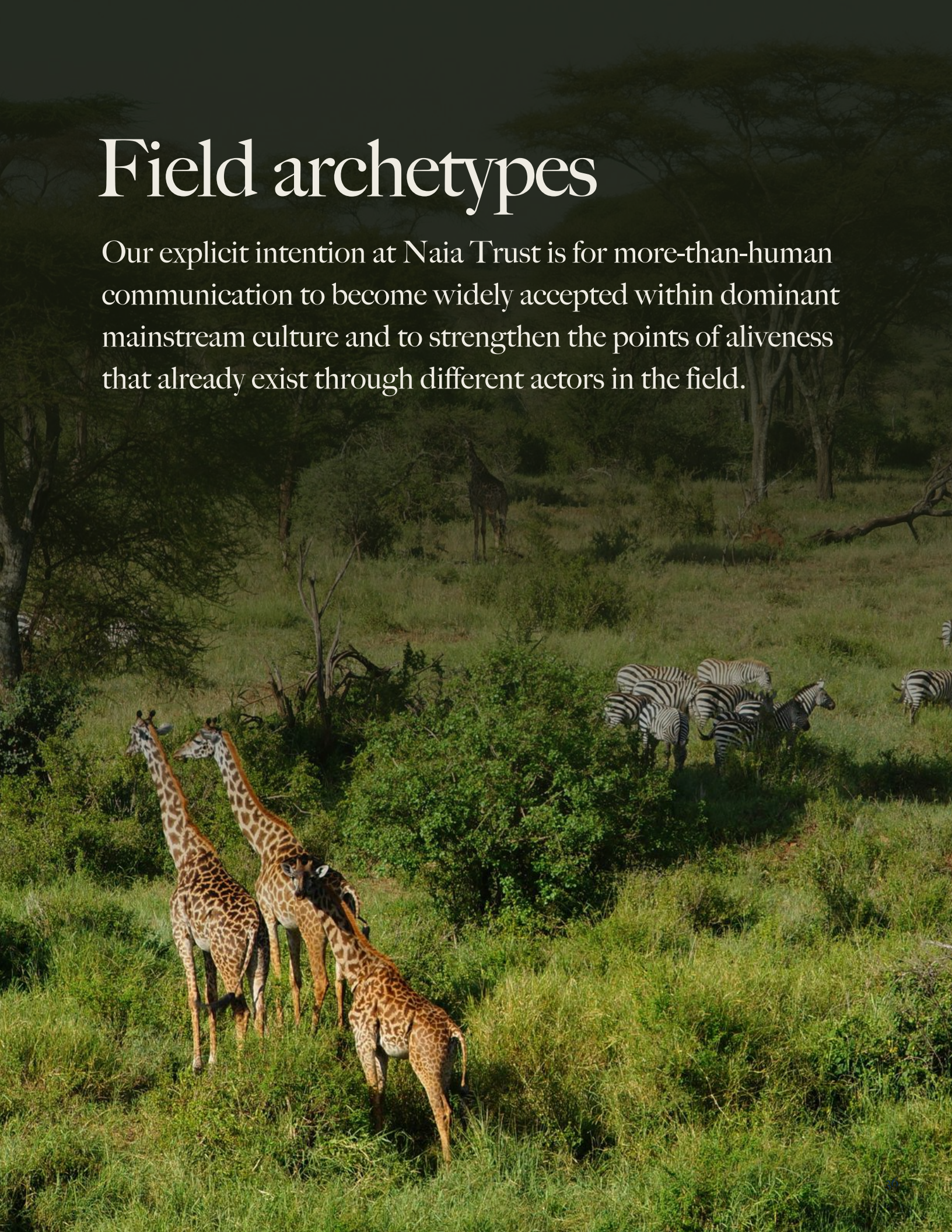
Here's the wonderful thing: **Most people are already participating in interspecies communication**, without necessarily calling it that. Perhaps you have experienced "knowing" something before it happens, intuiting the thought or feeling of another, or sensing a forest leaning in to meet you! **Every person with a dog, every farmer, gardener, beekeeper, and scientist, is in an ongoing conversation with the more-than-human world.**

Recognising more-than-human communication with its many applications is simply about being more intentional with what's already there, and producing more attentiveness, slowness, and humility in the presence of other beings.

If you were to consider it now, what more-than-human communication example would you share from your own life experience?

Field archetypes

Our explicit intention at Naia Trust is for more-than-human communication to become widely accepted within dominant mainstream culture and to strengthen the points of aliveness that already exist through different actors in the field.

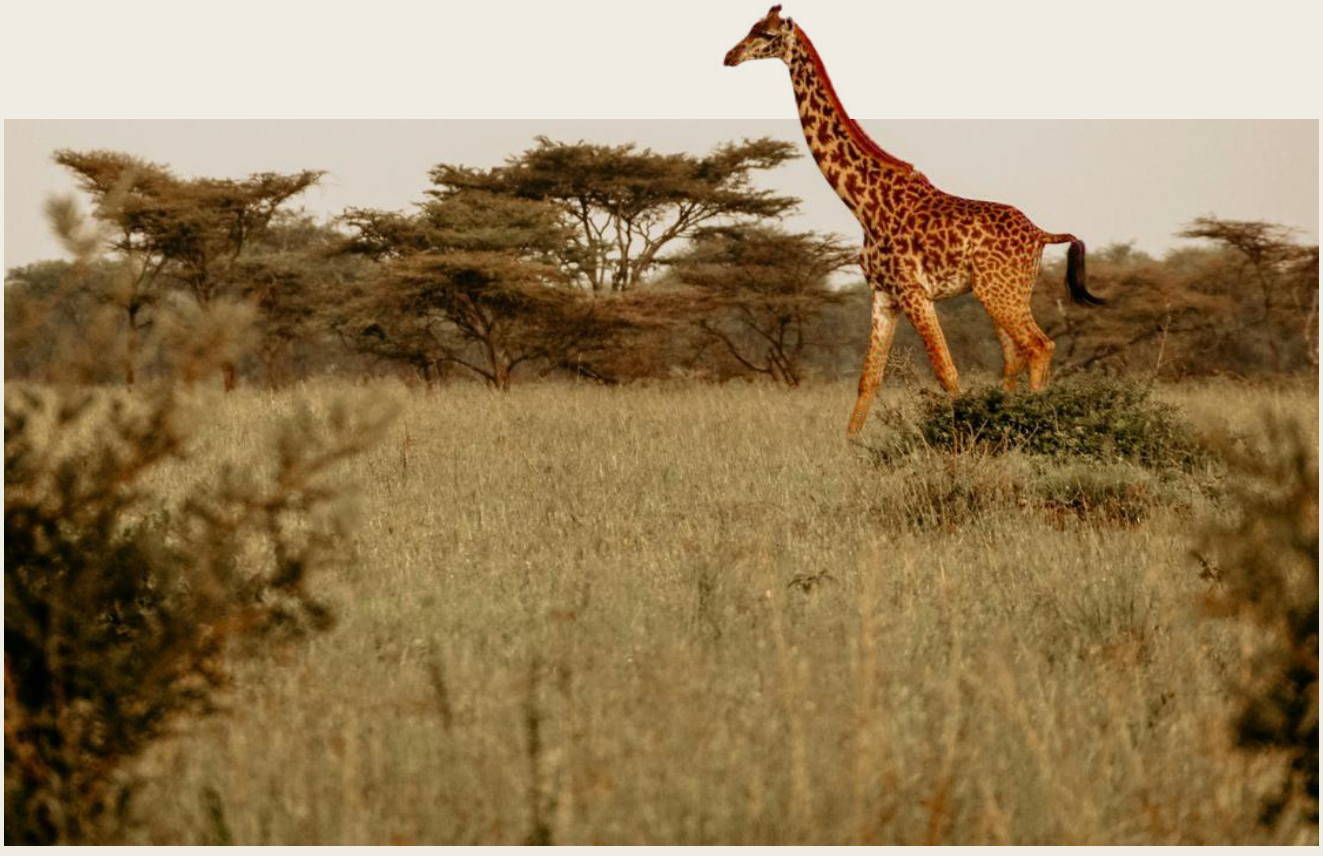


Different actors in the field are more or less visible depending on where they're situated. All play a crucial role and feed one another. Many people we spoke with move between these worlds, acting as **mainstream representatives** or holding important roles as **bridging figures** while being **deep practitioners** themselves.

Mainstream representatives

Those who carry scientific or institutional recognition and create accessible entry points for more skeptical and mainstream audiences – organisations like CETI who carry the prestige of hard science, Interspecies Internet who are uniting bioacoustics, AI, cognitive science, conservation, ethics and design under one roof, or MOTH setting a legal precedent for the rights of nature.

Slightly more under the radar yet no less important in providing new entry points for mainstream engagement is the groundwork being laid by IIC researchers and academics in fields as diverse as health, biology, neuroscience, and cultural anthropology, with the development of new research and multispecies methods, for example through the European Research Council funded project, ANICOM.



Bridging figures and spaces

These are the 'translators' with a foot in both worlds – Robin Wall Kimmerer, Robert Macfarlane, Susanne Simard, Monica Gagliano, Merlin Sheldrake, David Abram, Marshmallow Laser Feast, to name a few – writers, artists and researchers whose work creates points of contact between mainstream audiences and relational, ecological and more-than-human ways of knowing. Their approaches and relationships to these different domains vary considerably.

Here we also find the 'watering holes': spaces like MOTH Festival of Ideas or Listening to the Land at the Oxford Real Farming Conference, where policy makers, artists, scientists, farmers, practitioners and academics meet. There are also many 'schools of learning' – where the courses and curriculum for this field are being developed, tried and tested in collaboration with the deep practitioners e.g. College of Contemporary Animism in collaboration with Exeter University, or Ubiquity University's graduate degree in Intuitive Interspecies Communication.

Deep practitioners

Often (but not always), less visible. The depth of practice, research, lived experience, and knowledge of their craft make them the grounding force of a field that could otherwise spin out into sensationalism and tokenism. Without the codes of ethics and reverence for life represented by this group – the Indigenous elders, ethologists, intuitive herbalists, animal communicators, and plant spirit healers – there would be no field at all.

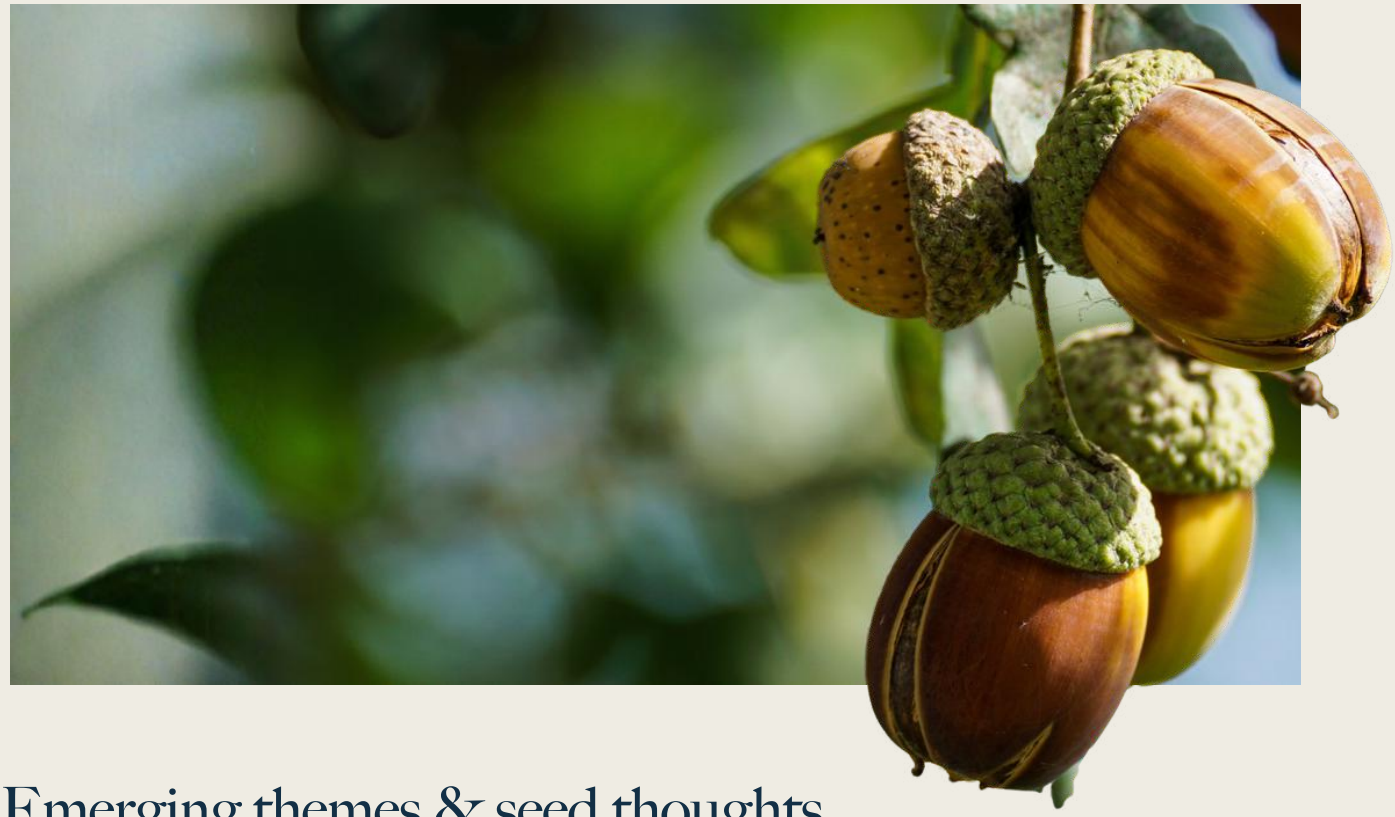
While these deep practitioners often work alone, collectives like Nature's Council, an advisory body of IIC practitioners supporting organisations such as conservation NGOs, signal an exciting development in the field.



For a more detailed breakdown, please see 'Full list of organisations we researched' in the appendix. We do not necessarily endorse all those listed, rather we captured a snapshot of the field as a way to orient and understand this work. We hope the list will help you find new connections amongst each other too.

Emerging themes & seed thoughts





Emerging themes & seed thoughts

The more-than-human communication space is so diverse it doesn't present as a coherent field. As one practitioner reflected on seeing our early mapping of the space;

> "The different groups feel like someone walking around different conferences talking to lots of individual people. Not quite sure what the core is yet. Maybe the core is the invisible web between everyone."

We agree. We see vastly different understandings of what more-than-human communication is and how it's practiced, but tied together by a seemingly invisible desire to recognise the sentience of all living beings and act in respectful relationship with them, as well as a desire for wider recognition of the possibility of communication universally.

Here are the main themes we picked up on during our research, accompanied by some 'seed thoughts' that we could explore further together.

Challenges, Risks & Cautions in a rapidly growing field

We asked our interviewees about the risks associated with more-than-human communication and what cautions or advice they had for a field that is likely to grow rapidly in the coming years. It is important to hold these in mind as you read the ideas that follow.

- **Privacy and respect:** Many forms of more-than-human communication happen within ceremonial, ritual, or other private contexts where the associated knowledge, stories, songs, and practices hold deeply sacred and spiritual significance and may not be appropriate to share publicly. In these instances, the role of the field should be to honour and protect these lineages and those who apprentice to them, while respecting the mystery of tradition.

- **More-than-human agency:** Who gets to choose when communication takes place? While animals do reach out to humans who are sensitive enough to hear them, mostly humans choose when to engage an interspecies communicator, practice listening or decode a whale song. Where it's humans reaching out, questions of consenting participation arise, although in IIC, animals and other beings can simply choose not to respond.

- **Distressing situations:** How might animals and other beings respond when we hear their challenges, and either cannot support or outright ignore their requests or advice? “Often help isn't coming," said one IIC practitioner we interviewed, “and animals communicate that their conditions aren't good.” Being able to communicate doesn't mean we can solve or help, and holding this awareness matters, since experiencing the pain of an animal or ecosystem directly can itself be genuinely painful.

- **Sensationalising or misrepresenting:** This field is vulnerable to overclaiming, whether through headlines that flatten nuance into "scientists translate what dogs are really saying," or practitioners overstating what current research can actually show. Well-grounded, transparent research, honest about its own limitations, remains the field's best defence against this risk.

- **Control disguised as dialogue:** Even well-intentioned uses, like steering an animal away from danger or "correcting" its communication to sound more coherent to humans, still override their agency instead of genuinely engaging. If the primary use of decoded communication becomes issuing instructions for the management of animals, then it's no longer a dialogue and rather a sophisticated way of imposing human will.

- **Direct exploitation using NACTs:** The same technology built to enable understanding could just as easily be used by industries such as factory farming or commercial fishing to increase yield while ignoring welfare, or to actively lure animals toward harm, through nets, hunting, or poaching.

- **The values NACTs build in:** Several leading efforts in this space have been founded by people from mainstream tech backgrounds. AI models have already been shown to carry bias against farm animals in particular (Jotautaitė et al., 2026), raising the question of what assumptions are embedded in the technology before anyone even has the chance to misuse it.

- **Designing for agency, context and rigor:** While academic research into IIC can support deeper investigation of the field, care is needed not to design studies that require animals to "perform" communication on demand, or assume that living beings will always respond in identical ways across contexts (Hinz & Barrett, 2026). The methodological challenge is to develop rigorous approaches that can account for agency, refusal, relationship and context without abandoning questions of reliability.

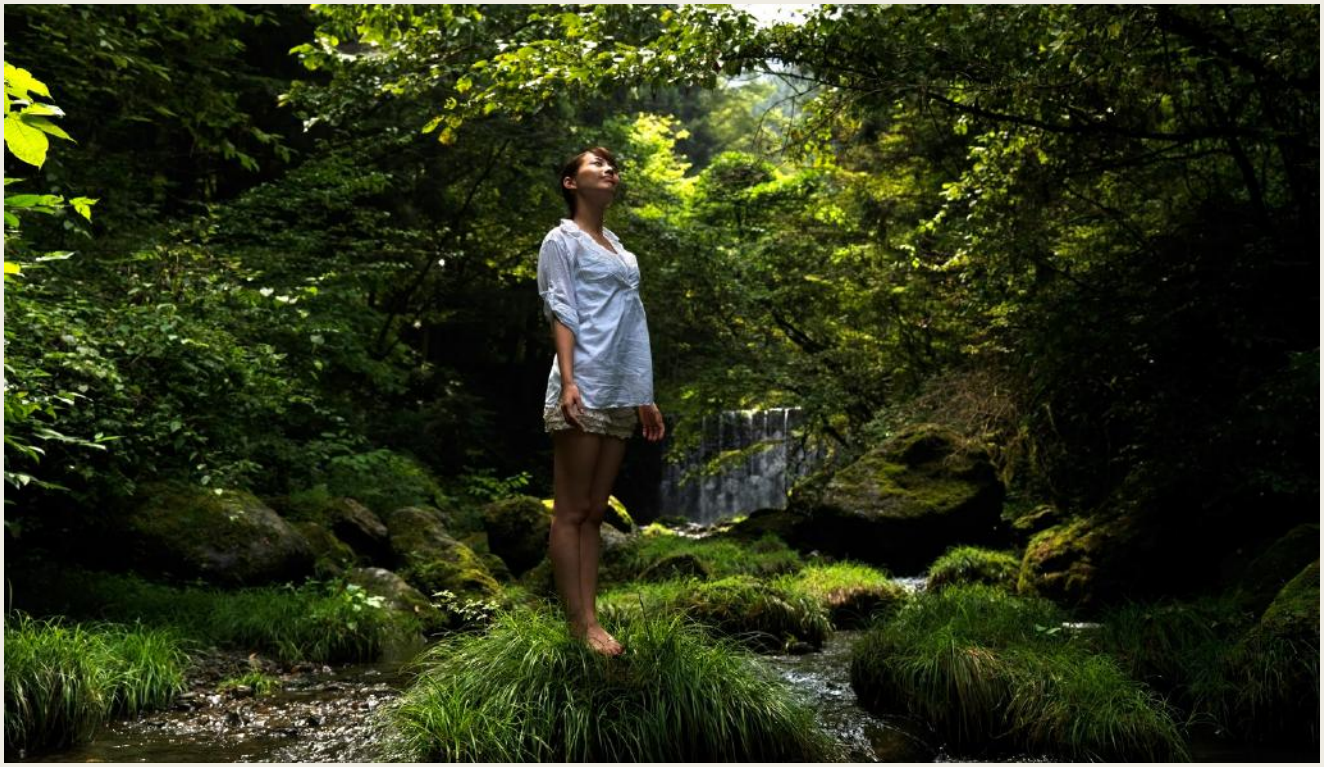
- **The "anyone can do this" tension in IIC:** There's a real tension in the widespread view within IIC that this capacity is available to anyone, and the need to encourage beginners to trust and develop their intuition, while recognising that confidence does not necessarily equate to accuracy. Even highly experienced practitioners remain human and fallible. Like any skill, discernment develops through practice, training and reflection.



Seed thought: Where NACTs are concerned, best practice looks like multidisciplinary, multicultural oversight with animal welfare experts, ethicists, data governance specialists, and explicitly, Indigenous communities who carry traditional wisdom about respectful, non-extractive relationships with animals and land.



Seed thought: In the case of IIC, best practice we're hearing this looks like establishing clear protocols, codes of ethics, training and certification as well as apprenticeship opportunities, alongside encouraging academics doing the research into IIC to have firsthand experiences of direct more-than-human relationship and communication themselves so that the methods accurately reflect their partners.



Listening and inner work

One of the most significant and global themes to come out of the interviews is the need for humans to develop the capacity to listen as a first step before attempting to communicate either through technology or directly. Becoming more porous to the more-than-human world is really about cultivating one's own ability to connect with oneself, to enter a peaceful and loving internal state.



Seed thought: What if there were more explicit bridges and partnership opportunities between the organisations we already work, with focused on grief tending, rites of passage, and centres for education, and more-than-human practitioners to help develop the capacities around ecological grief, shadows etc that are so important for communicating well?

To paraphrase one practitioner – this calls for humans to do the important work of addressing their own shadows, fears, and beliefs. It also asks for support along the way… for the disorientation of having what you were taught genuinely challenged, for the energy it takes to work against the grain, and for the new skills it demands, working with spiritual guidance, collaborating across worldviews where understanding simply takes time, and of course the ordinary discipline of self-care throughout.

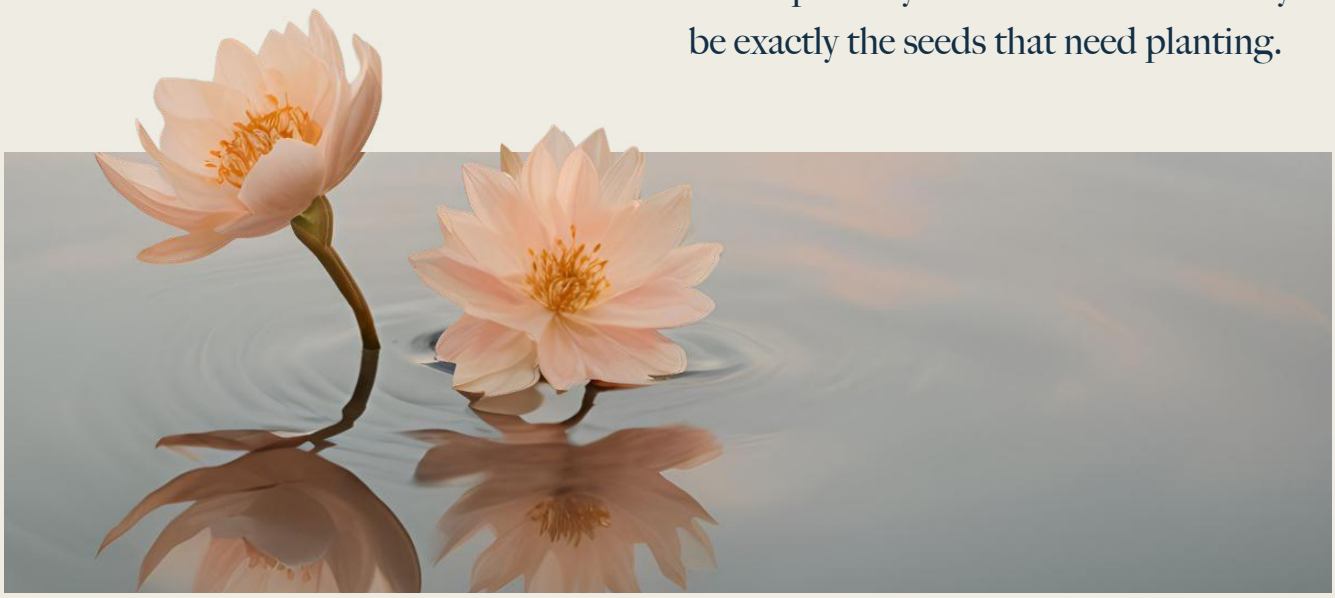
All of this coupled with a willingness to hear what the more-than-human might have to say, especially given it won't all be rainbows and sunshine!

Depth vs breadth in an instant era

As with any skill, **mastering more-than-human communication takes time.** Most of the IIC practitioners and plant spirit healers we spoke to have been practising for well over a decade and often more. They have undertaken long apprenticeships with the land, plants, ancestors and teachers to study their craft. An apprenticeship in intuitive herbalism, for example, can take up to seven years, while Sangomas (traditional healers and diviners) can take sometimes well over a decade.

A recurring theme in our conversations was the **tension between the amount of time it takes to train someone properly in a path vs the pace of our modern era** where doing an online qualification in a month alongside hundreds of other students is common practice.

In an instant age, we are noticing those whose practice runs deep and may only be able to take on a handful of apprentices at a time, yet the quality of and depth they are able to cultivate may be exactly the seeds that need planting.

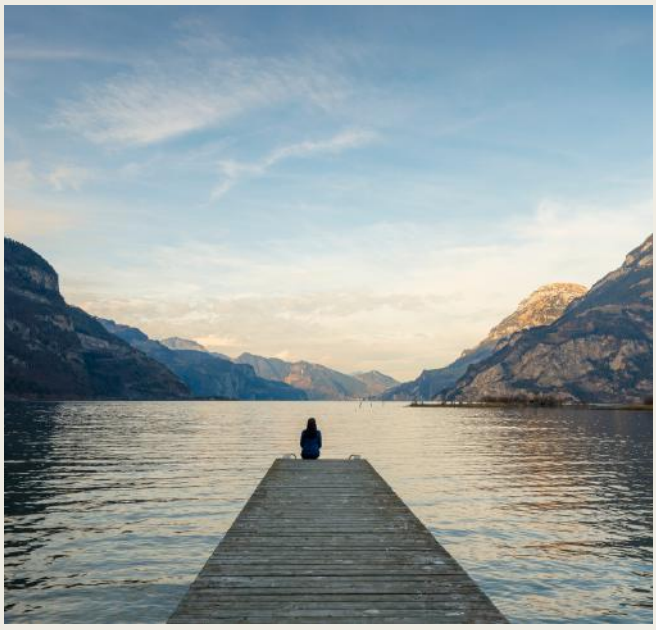




Seed thought: Within many traditions the art of apprenticeship is dying out as it becomes increasingly difficult to create lasting relationships between teacher and student. In many cases the sacred sites and places for connecting with the more-than-human are under threat or sold off to development. How then might this field cultivate an awareness and principle of honouring those practitioners who focus on depth over breadth? What does that look like in practice?

Courses and curriculum

Many of the **deep practitioners** we spoke to, whether IICs, ACs, Indigenous practitioners, intuitive herbalists, or plant spirit healers, **run their own courses and trainings.** Almost all operate as individuals or small teams, and many are looking to build, or already have, an online platform and community. Several mentioned wanting to bridge to mainstream audiences through technology / platforms that would allow them to present their work in a way that meets modernity without losing the integrity of the teachings.



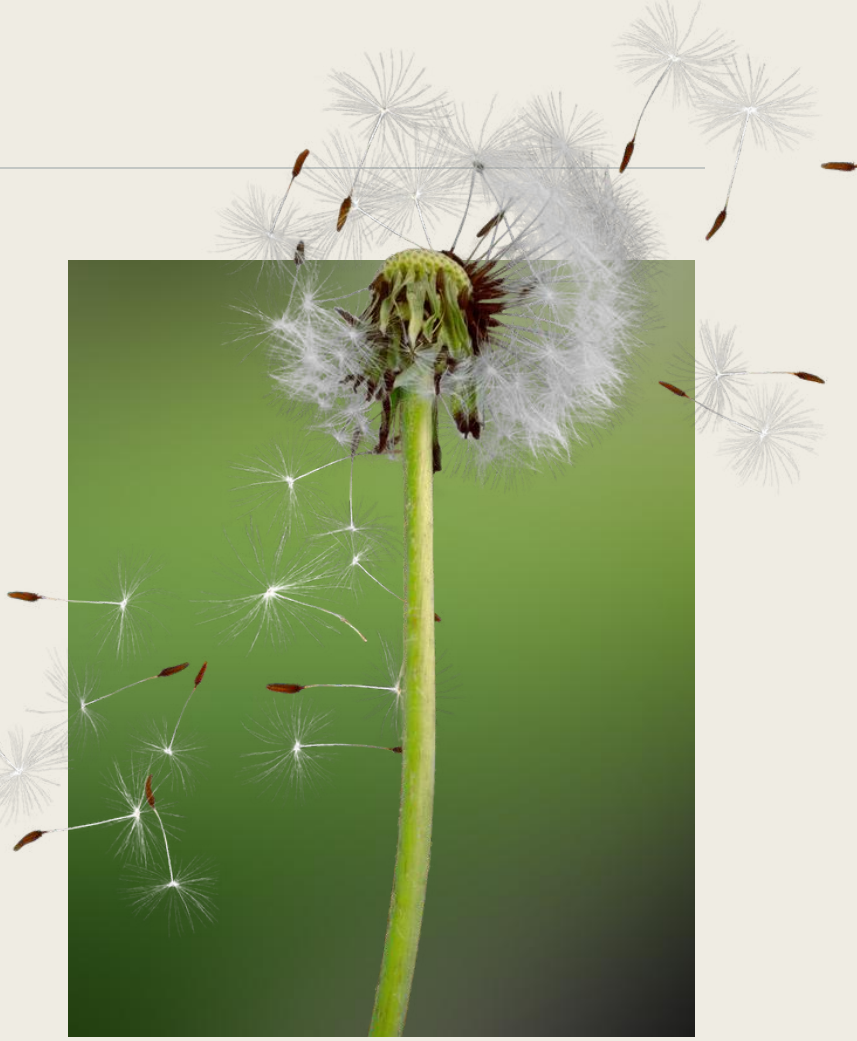


While there are plenty of individual courses on IIC and equivalent modalities, there isn't (yet) a recognised institute of learning dedicated solely to more-than-human communication. **The IIC space lacks reputable institutional representation capable of world class training and setting standards and ethics.** The Assisi International Animal Institute, founded on the values of compassion and reverence for all life, and new and old physics, was a notable example, training and testing well-known animal communicators such as Anna Breytenbach. Sadly it closed when its founder died, leaving a gap that has not yet been filled.

The closest equivalent is the College of Contemporary Animism, in partnership with Exeter University, which will run certified courses and an MA in the philosophy, psychology, research methods and practical applications of animism. Initiatives like this, while still in their infancy, have the potential to grow into meaningful interdisciplinary clusters, acting as both a watering hole and a home for academics, natural scientists and deep practitioners alike.

In a similar vein, connecting established educational institutes such as universities with IIC practitioners enhances capacity and reach. This is already happening in small pockets, for example Ubiquity University offering the world's first degree course in IIC in partnership with AnimalTalk Africa.

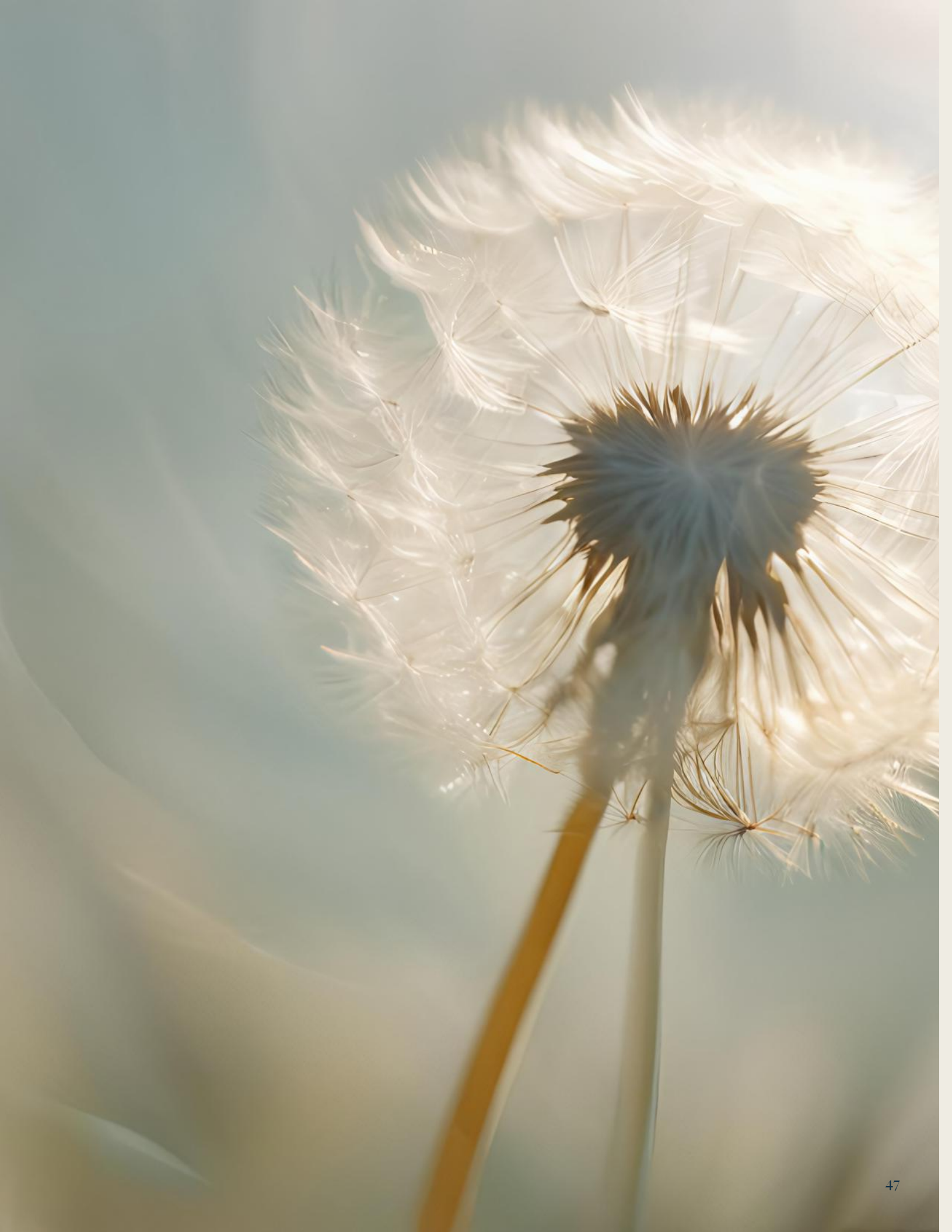
Throughout our conversations there was also a need to 'train the trainers' with elders in the field dwindling. Several practitioners felt that while elders are still alive, they should form a council to support and mentor the next wave of practitioners.



We recognise certifications and curriculum development as conceived of here are Western concepts that may not apply in all settings where more-than-human communication is practiced. In some instances, crafts, song, stories etc may be the modes through which these practices are carried and through oral tradition, mentorship or apprenticeship approaches which we spoke to above.



Seed thought: What if we supported partnerships on curriculum between IIC practitioners, natural scientists, and academics, disseminating content through established platforms such as Harvard Divinity School or CIIS? Or would trying to 'package' this potentially water down and co-opt the depth and integrity of this knowledge?

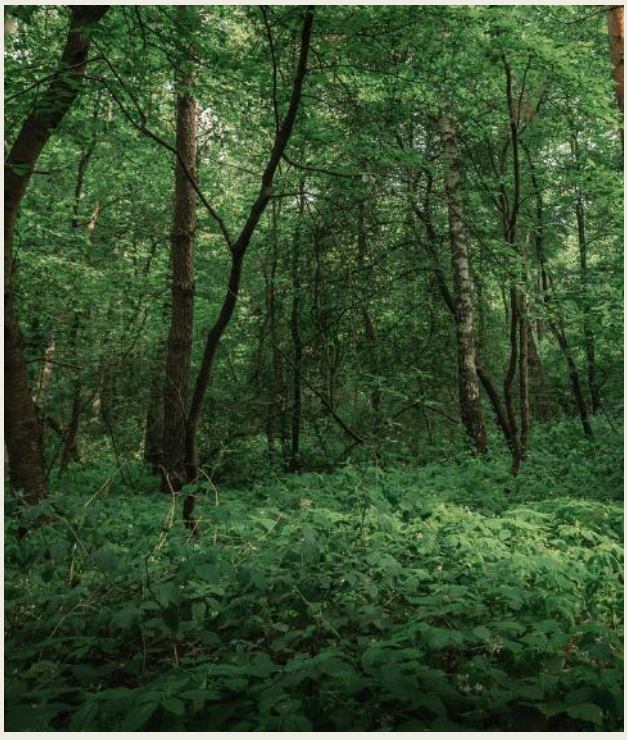


The need to develop best practice

Across the board, best practice standards in this field are poor to non-existent. By best practice we mean the shared infrastructure most established fields rely on to protect both practitioners and the people (and beings) they work with such as agreed codes of conduct, recognised training or certification pathways, and accountability when things go wrong.

Within the IIC space, while some shared practices are recognisable, such as Penelope Smith's Code of Ethics which many still reference from the 1990s, there are no international standards of practice, no internationally recognised certifications, and **no protections for the practice of IIC itself. This creates real credibility challenges for the field as a whole, with quality of practice varying widely between practitioners.**





Recent groundwork by an international steering committee of ACs **identified the need for a world-wide professional association,** with the stated goal "to unite and support professional Animal Communicators worldwide, establish and uphold the highest industry standards, and advance the field of Animal Communication" (Hinz & Barrett, 2026). The low visible rate of published ethical codes, combined with two failed prior attempts our interviews revealed to build field-wide standards, suggests both an unmet need for ethics infrastructure in this space and a difficulty building it collectively.

The technology-assisted animal communication space is almost completely unregulated too, although there have been more coordinated efforts to build guidelines and standards, most notably **MOTH's PEPP Framework.** The power and speed of AI-driven communication technologies have outpaced any corresponding ethical or legal infrastructure, creating a regulatory vacuum, one that needs to be addressed before these tools scale further. **Ethical risks in this space include: physical and mental harm to animals, disruption of their social structures, and ecological damage as well as "cyber-poaching,"** where location data could be weaponised by bad actors. One of the PEPP principles is **non-coerced participation** – actually attending to whether the animals are willing to engage. What does consent, or something like it, look like in the ocean with a sperm whale? The PEPP framework makes attempts to shift the default in the technological space from permissionless experimentation towards active accountability, a standard the wider field currently lacks.



Finally, best practice on engagement with Indigenous people and lands also seems a weak point, particularly in the technology sphere where issues of consent and data sovereignty were acknowledged but largely missing real teeth.



Seed thought: What if there were a recognised international academy or association of IIC, responsible for the training, certification, and research of best-in-class practice in the field? Such a body could lead the way in academic research and methodology, while strengthening the number of qualified, reliable practitioners globally. It would have to account for a plurality of worldviews and approaches, akin to an interfaith organisation navigating very different protocols and principles - doable, and of course, complex.



Seed thought: What if it was common practice for technologically oriented more-than-human communication projects to create a code of ethics co-designed with IPLCS (Indigenous and local peoples) – where relevant – and the beings they work with that honours Indigenous and local knowledge and science? This is part of a wider conversation around nature 'data' and MOTH has done something similar in collaboration with the people of Sarayaku and several others forming SACI – a demonstration project designed explicitly to support Indigenous data sovereignty in partnership with Western science.

Academic and cultural 'footholds'

Alongside codes of ethics and certification, academic research can provide important points of engagement between different approaches to more-than-human communication and wider scientific and public conversations.

In the same way climbers search for the next crack or ledge to pull themselves up, the research currently being done into IIC is providing the necessary "footholds" for other researchers in the natural sciences, and even the broader public, to be able to engage intelligibly with this field.

One of the few empirical studies to directly test claims made by IIC practitioners is Dušan Janák's 2025 study in Society and Animals, which compared over 8,600 pieces of information given by advanced animal communicators, beginners, laypersons, and veterinary experts, all working from photographs alone (of a horse, a snail etc). **Advanced ACs were found to give information that was significantly more likely to be valid** from the animal owner's own perspective, nondeducible from the image itself, and specific, than any of the three comparison groups.

This kind of study offers one useful point of engagement: a peer-reviewed, quantitative, comparative design published in an established journal that treats the experiences of IIC practitioners seriously while also making its methodological limitations visible.

At the same time, Dušan's own findings highlight a challenge for this space: the information advanced ACs produced, while more often valid, nondeducible and specific, was also unsystematic, fragmented and discontinuous rather than following a reliable, repeatable pattern. This tension is a realistic and useful starting point for further academic exploration.



We are also cautious about treating academic research as the source of legitimacy for the IIC space. Academic studies can create useful points of engagement with wider scientific and public audiences without becoming the measure by which other knowledge systems or practices are deemed valid. For example, research by Suzanne Simard and colleagues on forest networks has offered scientific descriptions of forms of interconnection that resonate with knowledge long held within many Indigenous traditions, while arising from very different epistemologies and methods.



Our hope is that there is an alchemy in these different worlds coming together to help create new avenues for a skeptical public to engage with these ideas while also normalising the mysterious and sacred nature of more-than-human practices that transcend definition and methodological study.



We have noticed the widespread popularity, uptake (and inevitable pushback) of the Telepathy Tapes podcast in normalising some of the capabilities that are also present in IIC and we wonder what equivalent culturally prescient offerings might capture and ignite public imagination and dialogue around more-than-human communication.



Seed thought: What if academics researching more-than-human communication were supported to convene and identify the most strategically significant research experiments and papers that would help advance the field as a whole?



Seed thought: What cultural 'footholds' are there that go beyond the academic fields, but could also reach out and bridge to it? What does a breadcrumb trail for a skeptical public look like in this space? What conversation starters and artistic interventions could ignite wider conversation?

Convening the field

There are currently few genuine "watering holes" for this field, and several that have existed in the past, including the Multi-species Methods Research Symposium. What convening does happen is not straightforward, since the field has many parts that mostly aren't speaking to each other. Many scientists working on AI and more-than-human communication have never heard of IIC, and the reverse is equally true, (although there were some encouraging and notable exceptions in our interviews). Artists, too, tend not to be well connected to academics and practitioners in this space.

Individual events such as the MOTH Festival of Ideas or Listening to the Land (Real Farming Trust), offer some meeting ground across the field, but none of these are specifically organised around more-than-human communication itself.



There are also institutional and credibility-related barriers. Academics can struggle to host conferences within their own institutions when the edge-leading aspects of their research tackle unconventional topics that are still being 'proved'. An external convener would make it easier, particularly for those affiliated with institutions, to safely experiment outside their usual bounds. In the technology space, some commented that limited funding for research projects has created its own scarcity and competition, which has implications for convening.

A couple of relevant convenings on the horizon, although are few and far between! Lancaster University is running **Natures in Translation:** AI, Ethics and Environmental Conservation, and Vanessa Wijngaarden's European Research Council funded project **ANICOM**, which explores intuitive interspecies communication across cultures and contexts, is planning a conference on animal communication for late 2028 or early 2029.



Things to consider about convening

- **Honing clarity of intention and purpose** is obviously key and was emphasised in several of the conversations we had. Although there may indeed be differing 'agendas' and desired outcomes.

- There is some minor hesitation around fear of judgement in bringing together the natural scientists and IIC practitioners. Emphasis on **convening those who are open-hearted and open-minded** and willing to engage meaningfully in worldviews and methods outside their own would remedy this.

- **Shared values, more than shared method,** may be the firmer ground to convene on: several practitioners and scientists noted that everyone across IIC and the more traditional scientific space shares a love of nature, a value increasingly visible in transdisciplinary spaces.

- **The meaningful partnership, consultation and inclusion of Indigenous people** and those who have a direct relationship with the territories connected to the plants and animals being researched is paramount and needs to be navigated with great care and mutualism.

- **The many challenges of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research need to be considered** (e.g. research norms, assumptions about what counts as evidence, the challenges of developing shared understanding of key terms, etc.)

- Given how much of this is new territory still to be explored, smaller, discrete convenings alongside a larger one seem advisable, to **build relationships** within certain parts of the field as well as between them.

- Many questions about **how to engage animals and other beings directly in such events** remain.



Seed thought: What if we convened the deep practitioners, bridging figures and spaces with those representing the mainstream through the natural sciences, AI-driven animal communication research, animal communicators, and IIC practitioners, alongside artists, thought leaders, authors and other interested groups? In other words, get everyone together and help the field see itself and cohere? Possibly creating a shared manifesto on the places where there is alignment e.g. around values, might be a good start.

Strengthening and amplifying storytelling capacities

As we can see, there are successful experiments and work underway, but notably most **academics, scientists, and practitioners lack the time, resources, and/or skills to translate their work for mainstream audiences** (if they wish for it to become mainstream!) so it remains niche, misunderstood, and siloed. Additionally, **in the technology space, mainstream media's often sensational and superficial coverage of more-than-human communication is misleading,** creating a false impression that the goal is solely to talk to animals when much of the work is often focussed on protections and wider ecosystem health.

Based on the research papers already emerging, there is an opportunity for knowledge mobilisation: initiatives and strategies that accompany academic research out into the world, translating and applying it to different contexts so it reaches a wider audience.



Seed thought: What if the scientists, academics and practitioners were connected not only to each other but to the narrative/comms/branding/campaigns people in our network (possibly at the same convening mentioned above) to amplify and uplift their work?

Seed thought: What if select IIC research papers were supported to create "press kits" for different audiences, so the insights from the research could be picked up and applied more easily in a range of real-world contexts?

Art at the heart

A comment from an interview we did with Rob Hopkins for our research project on imagination is worth revisiting here:

"When we went to the moon, it wasn't JFK's idea. Jules Verne had written a book 100 years before imagining going to the moon. And then scientists read that, and then they did more science, then comic books, and jazz records, and trashy B movies all started talking about going to the moon and by the time we got there we'd already been there so many times. Like we'd rehearsed it."



As one interviewee noted, **it's possible the arts sector may do something science can't, feeling its way into public imagination rather than "proving" communication through hard science.** The two likely work best in tandem, and are potentially **more powerful still when arts, science and Indigenous worldviews move together.** The shift in American attitudes toward wolves, from vermin to be exterminated to a keystone species worth protecting, draws an interesting, if imperfect, case worth noting: ecological science established wolves' role in sustaining healthy ecosystems, while Farley Mowat's 1963 book *Never Cry Wolf*, and the books, films and stories that followed it, did something the science alone couldn't, changing how people felt about wolves before they'd ever seen one. Indigenous scholars and communities, meanwhile, offered (and continue to offer) a wholly different starting point, understanding wolves as kin, not a resource to be managed. This perspective is now being invited more directly into conservation practice through initiatives like the Wolf CLAN Initiative, and there are equivalent initiatives currently underway in the UK for beavers and across the world for rewilding species into landscapes.



What then, is today's equivalent for bringing these different worlds together in service to uplifting public perception of more-than-human communication?



Seed thought: What if Indigenous peoples and artists – musicians, filmmakers, writers, designers – were situated at the heart of discussions around more-than-human communication instead of the periphery? What new imaginaries could be unlocked?



Plants & animals as collaborators, not subjects

And what if we went one step further, and placed more-than-humans themselves at the heart of things? **What if we viewed plants and animals as co-producers or co-authors of experiments, papers, art and more?** As in the case of *Song of the Cedars*, where Cosmo Sheldrake, and Robert Macfarlane wrote a song with the Los Cedros cloud forest and are seeking, along with MOTH, to have the forest recognised as a co-author.

There's also an emerging and natural case for this kind of collaboration in the conservation space. Nature's Council, a collective of nine academic and professional IIC practitioners with backgrounds spanning marine biology, plant pathology, social sciences and more, are already working with international conservation NGOs who wish to consult the species and habitats they are supporting to understand how well they are doing in meeting these needs.

Seed thought: What if we consulted and included plants and animals in the design of our daily lives and ecological activities more broadly? E.g. Asking affected animals before creating conservation plans. Conferring with underground rivers before drilling a well, or with land before building a house. Farmers communicating with the soil before planting crops. This will need to be a genuine conversation in which there is space for the more-than-human to respond, make requests and guide the process from the outset - and we need to be prepared to hear what the responses might be.

Private belief, public caution

There is a notable gap, especially in the academic and technologically-enabled areas, between what people say publicly and their personal views and practices of more-than-human communication. In private, we note in our experience of this field that people are relatively comfortable with the magic, mystery, awe and sense of sacredness evoked through experiences of more-than-human communication, including not having a 'plausible' or scientific explanation for their experiences. Whereas publicly and professionally, many of these same people are understandably careful in their language and explanations for these capacities.





IIC practitioners we spoke with shared that some academics, scientists and conservationists have sought their services in relation to study design, hypothesis development, or engagement with more-than-human subjects or partners, sometimes without acknowledging this publicly. These accounts are anecdotal and we have not attempted to assess how widespread this practice is. Practitioners also pointed to the professional scrutiny, scepticism, or reputational risks that researchers working openly with unconventional or more-than-human-informed approaches can sometimes face.



Seed thought: What if funders can play a unique role in providing safe spaces – physically by convening and also through funding – that further legitimise conversations and research questions that may otherwise not be possible within formal institutional settings?

Protecting early childhood intuition

A theme emerged around **normalising children's existing capacity to connect intuitively and deeply with nature**. A number of practitioners pointed to this age group as a logical place for focused attention, if the broader question of how to mainstream a shift toward earth-centred consciousness is followed through to its roots. Some suggested working with parents and teachers as the natural starting point, rather than children directly.

While none of the people we spoke with were specialists in this particular field, this sentiment is echoed in the 2025 research from Tucker and Blenkinsop's on relational intuition in education. **The intervention point may not be instruction at all, but the protection of a capacity children already have,** which points toward professional development for the adults around them (teachers, parents) in addition to curriculum designed for the children themselves.

This pairs with a second, complementary idea: **children may retain a natural relational capacity for more-than-human communication** (Tucker & Blenkinsop, 2025), but that capacity likely requires embodied time in real, textured, non-manicured landscape to develop and not atrophy (Nabhan and Trimble, 1994).

A funding strategy focused only on curriculum, without addressing the broader loss of free-range outdoor childhood, would be treating only half the problem. Tucker and Blenkinsop's paper functions as an emerging academic anchor point for this idea, not yet (as they themselves acknowledge), a robust evidence of impact or scale, suggesting further research in this area could be genuinely valuable to the field.

This territory connects to work already underway elsewhere. Richard Louv's (2005) concepts of nature-deficit disorder and human-animal connection acknowledge the negative mental and physical costs of human alienation from the natural world, inspiring global efforts like the Children & Nature Network. It also connects naturally to Naia Trust's existing funding focus supporting the growth of the rites of passage movement, for youth and adults alike.





Seed thought: What if we looked for opportunities, through developmental psychologists, teachers, early years specialists, parental influencers, curriculum designers and others, to foster the animist capacities already inherent in every child?

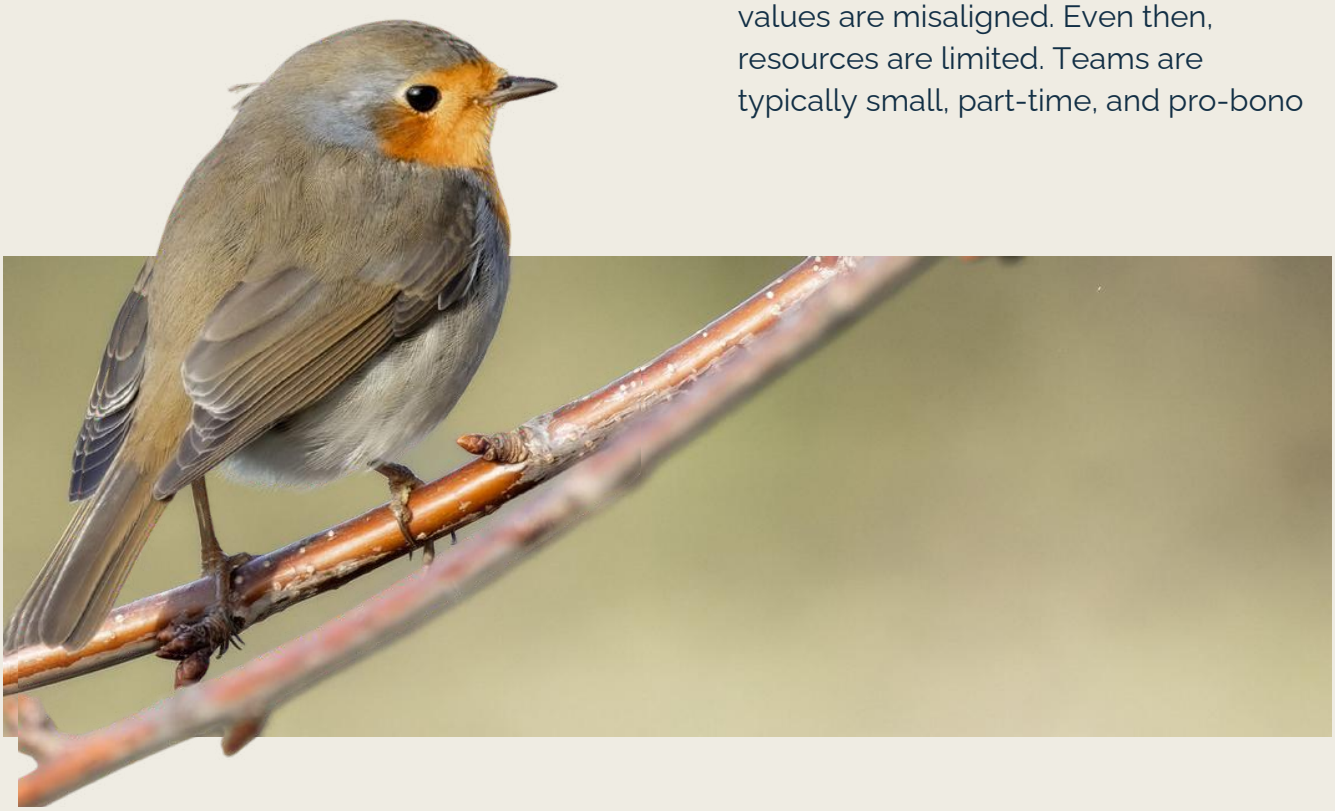
Funding landscape for more-than-human communication

- **IIC practitioners** in the conservation space in particular are often **working pro-bono** with little to no funding support

- **Deep practitioners** of all kinds – IIC, plant spirit healers, intuitive herbalists etc – often **work solo,** they have **little resource**, and have few or no systems for managing the interest they receive in their work; comms and marketing support could be an **opportunity for visibility and strategic work**

- **Funding in academic realms is often piecemeal,** coming from diverse fields - health, biology, social sciences and humanities. Interviewees described scraping together research grants from different sources with few to no recognisable bodies directly funding more-than-human communication directly

- **NACT grants are sometimes influenced by donor interests**, which has caused challenges for integrity of projects where values are misaligned. Even then, resources are limited. Teams are typically small, part-time, and pro-bono



Seed thought: What if we convened a group of interested funders following the release of this sensemaking overview to have a conversation about the findings here and coordinate an initial approach to seed funding some of the most strategically important ways this field could become more mainstream?



Closing thoughts



It has been a challenge to write this. You may notice **we chose not to privilege one approach to more-than-human communication over another** in recognition that it will take diverse efforts to seed the ideas shared here into dominant mainstream culture. We realise this may feel frustrating for some who are already fully steeped in the view that animism is indeed normative consciousness! **It's a creative tension we're holding** in our desire to support a tent large enough to honour the many traditions, lineages, and technologies that humans have employed to converse with the rest of life.

More-than-human communication touches on something more sacred, innate, and personal to each person who encounters it than we are able to fully express here.

Added to this, we recognise as we shared at the start, that even the way we went about writing this – by doing research, reading papers and interviewing practitioners – is an incredibly narrow way to arrive at our conclusions.

We asked several of the practitioners we spoke to **what the plant and animal nations would say about why it was important to communicate with the more-than-human world.** "Well I can just ask them now" replied one practitioner, who then paused and closed her eyes. After a few moments of silence she said

"The plants say: because our hearts need healing."

Our first thought was that this felt a bit cheesy and simple. But of course, they're not wrong! Looking at the state of global affairs, the erosion of trust alongside the desecration of the biodiverse majesty of this planet, and then closer to home at the hearts and lives of our loved ones, it's easy to see how our hearts as humans sure do need healing.



We love the encouragement of Lyla June Johnston for humans to see ourselves as a gift and keystone species with something valuable to offer the world, not simply a disease plaguing the planet. **That our rightful role as a human species is as "gardeners of abundance, where the real transformation lives less in hard infrastructure and more in the architecture of the heart."** We know this intuitively, instinctively. It feels right in our bones when we hear it. So the question becomes how do we hone our listening? How do we become gardeners of abundance?

What would have changed, if we'd conducted this entire inquiry by interviewing the plants and animals themselves? What other conclusions might be drawn about the needs and themes emerging in this field if we enrolled them as true collaborators as many practitioners we spoke to are already doing?

We're not done here. This is just the beginning. This is our first step in attempting to understand what role we as Naia Trust might play in supporting the extraordinary actors in this field.

We sincerely hope that you will join us on this journey. If there are aspects of this document that you appreciated or feel are missing, we'd love to hear from you. Please note, we do not take unsolicited proposals or requests for funding and any feedback is encouraged in the spirit of shared enquiry. info@naiatrust.com.

In kinship,
The Naia Trust Team

Glossary

Animal Communicator (AC)

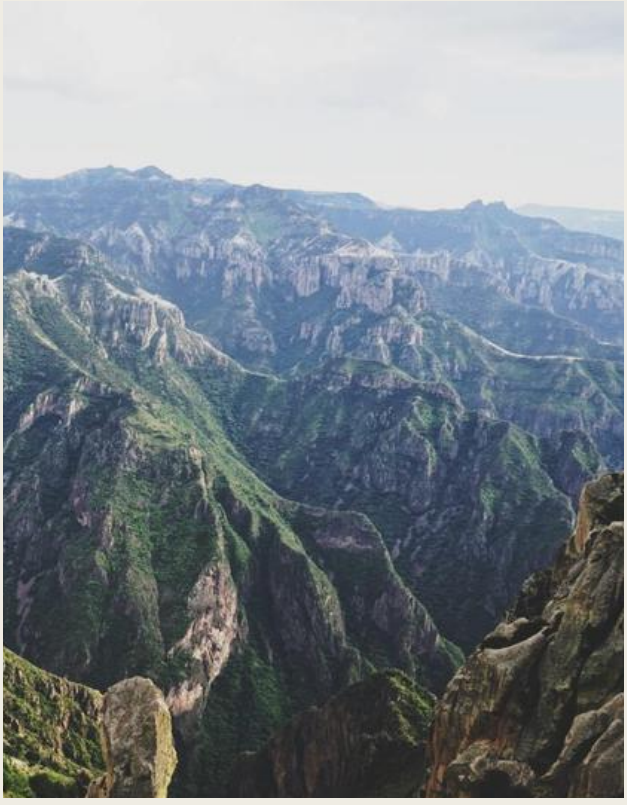
A practitioner of Intuitive Interspecies Communication, who works directly with individual animals or species to receive and relay communication between human and non-human animals.

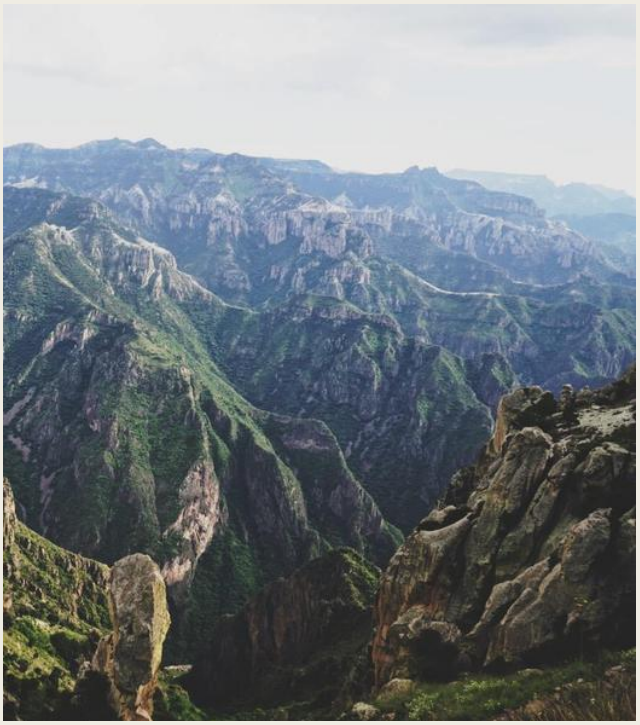
Animism

A worldview or set of beliefs that all things, including animals, plants, rivers, mountains, and other elements of the natural world, possess a spirit, consciousness, or life force of their own.

Behavioural ecology

The study of how behaviour, including social interaction, is shaped by ecological pressures and natural selection, covering areas such as foraging, mating systems, cooperation, and competition.





Comparative cognition (or comparative psychology)

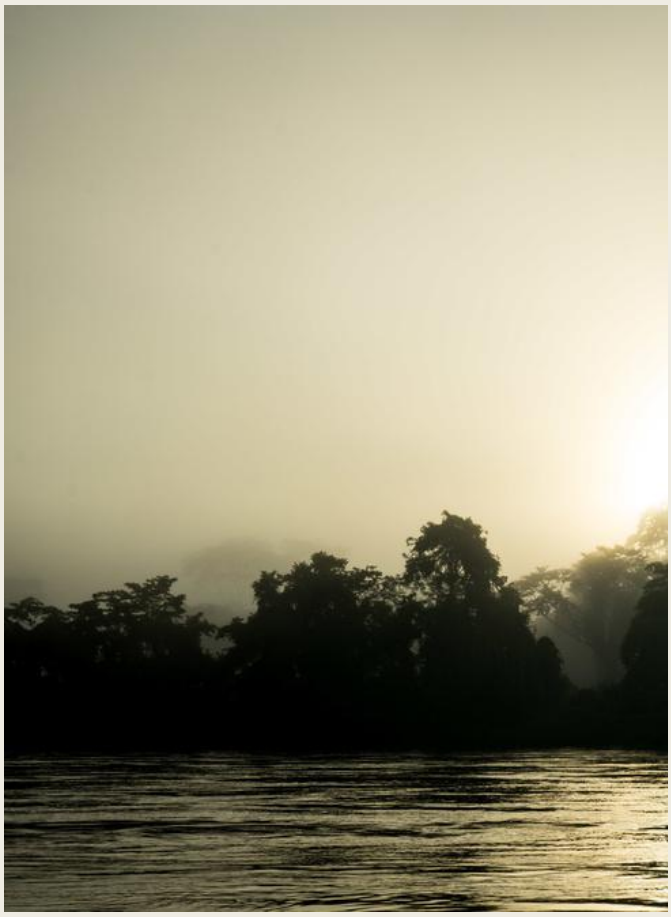
A field focused on animal minds and cognitive capacities, including social cognition, rather than on behaviour or communication per se. Often what is actually being referenced when people speak more loosely of "the science of animal communication."

Cosmology

A society or culture's account of the origin, structure, and fundamental nature of the universe, including the relationship between humans, other beings, and the wider world. Distinct cosmologies can carry entirely different underlying assumptions about concepts such as separateness, agency, and communication.

Earth Centred Consciousness

A term we use at Naia Trust to describe the awareness human beings hold of being part of the Earth's living system and therefore connected to the wider web of life with the result being that thought, actions, and culture are then manifestations of this consciousness centred on Earth.



Interbeing

A term coined by the Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, describing the understanding that nothing exists separately from everything else. Our cup of tea holds the rain that came from the clouds.

Intuitive Interspecies Communication (IIC)

A form of communication between humans and other animals, understood to be non-verbal and non-physical, drawing on the mutual exchange of visceral feelings, emotions, mental impressions, thoughts, and embodied sensations (touch, smell, taste, sound, and visuals in the mind's eye). Can occur with or without physical proximity to the animal in question.

More-than-human

A term used to describe the community of life beyond the human, including animals, plants, and other beings and elements of the natural world. Used here for lack of a better shared alternative, while acknowledging that some find it uneasy, since it still defines everything else by what it is not (not human), rather than by what it is.

Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies (NACTs)

AI-driven technologies, including machine learning and large language models, developed to translate animal vocalisation, gesture, or bioacoustic pattern into information legible to humans, or, in more experimental applications, to enable two-way exchange between humans and animals.

Zoosemiotics

The study of animal communication systems and signalling between animals, coined by Thomas Sebeok. Concerned specifically with the exchange of signals between animals.



Full list of organisations we researched



Please note that the following people and organisations listed here are not necessarily endorsed by Naia Trust - although many of our partners are also here. Rather they represent a snapshot of the field from which to orient.

Indigenous Practice & Scholarship

The elders, scientists, scholars, practitioners and knowledge-holders for whom more-than-human relationship has been carried across generations. Spanning cosmologies from Diné, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Tewa, Cree, Maskoke, Andean and Southern African traditions (and many many more not listed here!), this is the deepest root system of the whole field, and should be afforded reciprocity and care in how they are engaged with. These practitioners touch on most other clusters but it felt right to also name them here as a distinct and primary source of knowledge within this field.

Vina Brown – Haíłzaqv (Heiltsuk) and Nuučaaʔuł scholar and artist whose research and writing explore the ancient, reciprocal covenant between the Heiltsuk and salmon and herring, central to the nation's identity, food sovereignty and seasonal cycle.

Colin Campbell – Practitioner of traditional African medicine, initiated as a healer and sangoma in southeastern Botswana as a child; co-runs a training school for traditional doctors, and facilitates work on natural law, animistic cosmology and cross-cultural relationship with the land.

Seasonal ʻAha & Hālau ʻŌhiʻa: Hawaiʻi Ecological Kinship Training – Hawaiian training programme in ecological kinship, guiding participants into relationship with place through seasonal ceremony (ʻaha).

Lyla June Johnston – Diné, Tsétsêhéstâhese and European scholar, musician and community organiser whose work reframes humans as a keystone species and gift to the Earth, rather than only a threat to it.

Gregory Cajete – Tewa scholar from Santa Clara Pueblo, Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies at the University of New Mexico, author of Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence, leading the integration of Indigenous knowledge into Western science education.

Vanessa Watts – Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee scholar at Queen's University, whose concept of "Place-Thought" argues land and thought were never separated in Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmology.

Land & People's Relationship (Copper Joe Jack) – Elder and natural resource management leader advocating for the "no voice" perspective, giving the more-than-human a seat at the table in land governance.

Pat McCabe (Woman Stands Shining) – Diné mother, artist and ceremonial leader, adopted into Lakota spiritual life, whose teaching on humans as "Holy Earth Surface Walkers" frames human purpose as a responsibility to speak on behalf of life.

Grandmother Láné Sáan Moonwalker – Oracle, healer and environmental guardian of Yoeme (Yaqui) and Apache Moonwalker lineage, teaching with the Wellbeing Project and Seven Generations Lab.

Earthrise Collective (Pooven Moodly) – Their work is grounded in the Akan Twi and Fante Peoples' idea of Sankofa: they draw from the wisdom of ancestors as they chart their journey towards the future. Their activism embraces prayer and ritual, and holds all of life sacred.

Herman Michell – Cree scholar and Assistant Professor at First Nations University of Canada, author on Woodlands Cree worldview, epistemology and relationships with the natural world; also writes on decolonising science curriculum.

Ekvn-Yefolecv – Maskoke (Muscogee) Indigenous ecovillage founded by Marcus Briggs-Cloud, focused on land return, language revitalisation and ecological restoration.

Potato Park – Indigenous biocultural heritage territory in Cusco, Peru, governed by six Quechua communities under Sumaq Kawsay, home to over 1,300 traditional potato varieties.

Robin Wall Kimmerer – Citizen Potawatomi botanist and Distinguished Teaching Professor at SUNY ESF, author of Braiding Sweetgrass, integrating Indigenous knowledge and Western science in ecological restoration.

Plant Spirit Healers & Herbalists

Practitioners who work with plants not primarily for their physical or pharmacological properties, but as conscious beings with their own intelligence, capable of offering guidance, teaching and healing directly to a person who enters into a relationship with them. The practice typically draws on shamanism, ceremony and initiation, sometimes with formal plant "diets," extended periods of fasting and isolation with a specific plant.

Emma Fitchett MSc Is a plant spirit healer, shamanic teacher, herbalist and author, holding plant initiations with common native plants and trees as well as plant spirit healer training courses through the School of Natural Esoterics.

Nathaniel Hughes – School of Intuitive Herbalism – Founder of a 3–7 year professional training in Insight Herbalism, blending animist, experiential and somatic approaches to working with plants.

Perelandra Centre for Nature Research (Machaelle Wright) – Long-running US research centre developing methods for direct co-creative partnership and communication with nature intelligence.

Carole Guyett – Medical herbalist, shamanic practitioner and Celtic priestess, founder of the Derrynagittah School of Sacred Plant Medicine, author of Sacred Plant Initiations, working with ceremonial plant dieting.

Pam Montgomery (medical herbalist) – Founder of the Organization of Nature Evolutionaries (ONE), author of Plant Spirit Healing, teaching plant initiations and co-creative partnership with nature internationally.

Eliot Cowan (1946–2022) – Author of Plant Spirit Medicine, founder of the Blue Deer Center, a Huichol-trained shaman who developed a method combining Five Element Acupuncture with plant spirit healing.

Fay Johnstone – Author and teacher combining Reiki, shamanic training and plant spirit connection, based near Edinburgh, Scotland.



Intuitive Interspecies Communication (IIC) / Animal & Land Communicators

Practitioners working in direct, intuitive communication with individual animals, land, and other beings, often on behalf of clients seeking insight into a companion animal's health, wellbeing or wishes. This has a huge practitioner community, particularly of ACs who we have not covered here. Instead we've focussed primarily on those who identify as IIC practitioners and are using their skills in service to ecological efforts such as conservation, as opposed to individuals working with pets (which is a whole other field!)

Bríd Walsh – Energy practitioner; third generation in her family to carry close communication with land and trees, working to remove blockages to energy flow in land, property and individuals.

Anna Breytenbach – Professional animal communicator based in South Africa, trained through the Assisi International Animal Institute in California. She works mostly in conservation across educational and rehabilitation programmes in South Africa, Europe and the USA, and she is the subject of the 2013 documentary The Animal Communicator.

Saskia von Diest – Ecofluency – Founder of Ecofluency; offering education, facilitation, consulting and activism in the field of Nature communication internationally; also a founding member of Nature's Council. Academic background with Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and Coventry University (UK), researching Nature communication applied in agriculture.

Jon Young – Living Connection 1st – Naturalist, tracker and author of What the Robin Knows and Coyote's Guide to Connecting to Nature; mentored by Tom Brown Jr. and Indigenous elders including Lakota elder Gilbert Walking Bull; teaches bird language and nature connection mentoring.

Wynter Worsthorne – AnimalTalk Africa – IIC Practitioner and founder of the H.E.A.R.T. method, working with the heart energy field to co-create positive transformation with Nature's guidance. She also helped develop a degree programme in animal communication with Ubiquity University and is a founding member of Nature's Council.

Ditte Young – Animal communicator, telepath and equicoach. She describes her work as "creat[ing] understanding between people and those who communicate differently."

Kara Daniels (Deep Root Connections) – Earth-based healing practice offering courses, consultations and a podcast focused on communication and connection with animals, land and nature.

Penelope Smith – Animal Talk – Widely regarded as the "grandmother" of the IIC field; She wrote the first and most extensively used code of ethics for animal communicators.

Elsa Sinclair – Professional horse trainer developing "Freedom Based Training," a tool-free, food-reward-free training method built on collaborative partnership with horses, notably documented in a year-long project with a wild mustang.

Interspecies Voices (Christine Noble Seller) – Bringing Nature's voice into decision-making through IIC, working with organisations, researchers and institutions in conservation, research methodology, land stewardship and governance to move from listening to genuine participation.

Interspecies Peace (Eleni Gkikakis) – Non-profit organisation focusing on reconciling human and more-than-human relations through intuitive interspecies communication, offering gatherings, workshops and guided wilderness journeys, with the aim of peaceful coexistence, collaboration, conservation and restoration.

Microanimism (Dr Siv Watkins) – Focused on microbial communication, extending intuitive communication practice to the microbial world.

Pea Horsley – Animal Thoughts – Animal communicator and co-creator of the Conversations with Nature World Summit, also a founding member of Nature's Council.

IIC-specific Academics & Researchers

The small but growing group of researchers bringing academic rigour, formal study design and institutional legitimacy to questions IIC practitioners have long worked with intuitively. Their research is beginning to build the empirical "footholds" the wider field needs to be taken seriously within conventional scientific and educational institutions. We see these efforts as an important bridge to the mainstream.

Julia Wright – Associate Professor, Coventry University, leads a research programme in Subtle Agroecologies exploring the invisible dimension of nature in agriculture, drawing on Indigenous practice, biodynamic farming, transpersonal psychology and complementary medicine.

Megan Tucker – PhD student in Educational Theory and Practice at Simon Fraser University, researching Intuitive Interspecies Communication, animals in education, and relational/embodied forms of knowing; co-author of work distinguishing "teacher-intuition" from "relational-intuition" in classroom settings.

M.J. Barrett – Adjunct Professor, School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, specialising in Multispecies Methods (IIC) and Transformative Environmental and Sustainability Education. Led a SSHRC-funded national research project examining how IIC can help bridge the human-nature divide and support more respectful interaction with animals.

Wild Pedagogies – Edited volume (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, Sitka-Sage) proposing six "touchstones" for education that listens to voices in the more-than-human world.

Vanessa Wijngaarden – ANICOM – Social anthropologist, University of Liège, principal investigator of the ERC-funded ANICOM project studying Intuitive Interspecies Communication with Indigenous people and animal communicators across four continents. Host of the Human-Animal Communication network (HAC).

Sirke Piirainen – Biologist and postdoctoral researcher on ANICOM, developing natural-scientific methods to look for physiological and behavioural indicators in animals that might correspond with intuitive communication.

Viktoria Hinz (PhD, University of Saskatchewan) – SSHRC-funded doctoral researcher, working with M.J. Barrett, studying the lived experience of Intuitive Interspecies Communication and its implications for human-animal relations and research ethics.

Susan Hafen – Professor of Communication, Weber State University. Author of "Listening with the Third Eye: A Phenomenological Ethnography of Animal Communicators" (2013), a chapter in Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication (Routledge).

Leane Makey – Marine ecologist, social-Indigenous geographer and research fellow, University of Auckland School of Environment; leads a Marsden-funded project developing a soil sovereignty framework; also a part-time sheep farmer.

Dušan Janák (Comenius University, Bratislava) – Author of a 2025 empirical study, published in Society and Animals, assessing the validity, nondeducibility and specificity of information given by animal communicators.

Samantha Hurn (University of Exeter) – Associate Professor in Anthropology and Programme Director for the MA and PhD in Anthrozoology; Director of the Exeter Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics (EASE) working group. Author of "Animal Communication and Communicating with Animals" in The International Encyclopedia of Linguistic Anthropology (2020).

Veda Austin (Water Intelligence) – Researcher and practitioner exploring water's responsiveness to human consciousness and intention. She teaches a graduate certificate and degree programme in the Art, Science and Spirituality of Water through Ubiquity University.

Scientific & Academic Bridges

Scientists and scholars working within more conventional, peer-reviewed frameworks across fields such as plant cognition, fungal networks, animal consciousness, bioacoustics etc, whose findings are expanding scientific understanding of the inner lives and communicative capacities of other beings, often without engaging with IIC directly. There may be productive points of dialogue between this work and research into IIC.

Wild Minds Lab – University of St Andrews research group studying wild primate and animal ethology, describing their approach via Tinbergen's phrase: ethology as "the process of 'interviewing' an animal in their own language."

MOTH – NYU's More-Than-Human Life Program, developing legal, ethical and technological frameworks for recognising and protecting nonhuman life, including the PEPP Framework for Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies and collaborative projects such as Song of the Cedars and the Science Across Cultures Initiative with the people of Sarayaku.

Merlin Sheldrake – Biologist and author of Entangled Life, PhD in tropical ecology from Cambridge; Chief Impact Officer at the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks (SPUN) and UK Policy Lead at the Fungi Foundation.

Monica Gagliano – Independent scientist and explorer; pioneer of research in plant bioacoustics, learning and cognition; author of Thus Spoke the Plant; Research Associate Professor in Evolutionary Ecology; Founder and Director of Resonant Earth.

New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness – Scientific declaration affirming a realistic possibility of conscious experience in a wide range of animals.

Karen Bakker – The Sounds of Life – Book on bioacoustics and the hidden world of animal and plant sound.

Suzanne Simard – Finding the Mother Tree – Professor of Forest Ecology, UBC; discovered that trees communicate underground through mycorrhizal fungal networks ("the Wood Wide Web"), leader of the Mother Tree Project.

Rupert Sheldrake – Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home – Biologist researching telepathic abilities in animals, including anticipatory behaviour in pets.

Paco Calvo – Minimal Intelligence Lab (MINT Lab) – Professor of Philosophy of Science, University of Murcia, studying minimal cognition in plants; author of Planta Sapiens.

Christine Webb – Primatologist at Harvard's Department of Human Evolutionary Biology, researching social behaviour, cognition and emotion in nonhuman primates. Author of Arrogant Ape.

Stefano Mancuso – The Roots of Plant Intelligence – Italian botanist, founder of the field of plant neurobiology, Professor at the University of Florence.

Diana Reiss – Professor of Psychology, Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center; pioneered the use of underwater keyboards with dolphins and demonstrated mirror self-recognition in bottlenose dolphins.

Lori Marino – Neuroscientist and founder of the Whale Sanctuary Project and the Kimmela Center for Animal Advocacy; co-authored, with Diana Reiss, the first study demonstrating mirror self-recognition in bottlenose dolphins.

Jonathan Birch – The Jeremy Coller Centre for Animal Sentience, LSE – Professor of Philosophy, LSE, and Director of the Jeremy Coller Centre for Animal Sentience, researching the science and ethics of animal minds.

Joyce Poole – Co-founder of ElephantVoices, pioneering researcher on elephant vocal and behavioural communication.

Sue Savage-Rumbaugh – Primatologist known for research on language and symbolic communication in bonobos.

Larger Ecosystem Application

Where more-than-human communication meets the people on the ground: farms, conservation projects, and land management practices that incorporate geomancy, subtle agroecology, dowsing, intuitive farming and direct communication with animals, plants and land into real-world stewardship decisions.

Note: many of those in the Indigenous practice and scholarship cluster fall into this cluster too but we've only listed once to save duplication.

Henk Kieft – Quantum Leaps in Agriculture – Kieft's book, with collaborators including Julia Wright and Saskia von Diest, documents farmers using intuitive and "quantum" techniques, introducing over twenty such approaches applied in farming, gardening and nature management.

Richard Gantlett (Yatesbury House Farm) – Wiltshire farmer running a 650-hectare organic and Demeter-certified biodynamic farm since 2004, treating the whole farm (soil, crops, cattle, woodland) as one living organism; a recurring line of his: "if we could listen more to nature, plants and animals, fungi and insects, how would nature tell us to farm?"

Project Biome – Bridging Indigenous knowledge and ecological restoration.

Wild Law Institute – Rights of Table Mountain & Antarctica – Legal advocacy organisation working on rights of nature cases, including the legal personhood of Table Mountain.

Centre for Ethical Land Transition – Works with dowsing and land communication as part of land transition and stewardship practice.

Subtle Agroecologies – Edited volume exploring the "hidden half" of agroecology, spanning subtle energy, consciousness and quantum-adjacent approaches to farming, published as a serious academic collection with contributions from across the intuitive and energetic farming field.

Nature's Council – A collective of nine academic and professional IIC practitioners, with backgrounds spanning marine biology, plant pathology and social sciences, working to include more-than-humans in policy-making and large-scale conservation projects, for example acting as intermediaries between the lawyers at Wild Law and Table Mountain in South Africa, on the legal personhood of the mountain.

Patrick MacManaway (Quantum Leap, Subtle Energies) – Geomancer working with the "spirit of place" as an active partner in farming, land and animal work, using instinct, intuition, telepathy, dowsing and kinesiology.

The Tree Whisperer (Jim Conroy) and Biobalia (Basia Alexander) – Practitioners and teachers working in direct communication with trees and the surrounding ecosystems to develop EcoPeace Treaties and heal ecological damage. Also working as BioBalia Institute.

Nature Constellations (Melissa Roussopoulos) – the Constellations methodology enables communication with all aspects of nature. From one-to-one relationships to large scale complex human-ecological systems, it can provide insights and practical solutions to support the thriving of all involved.

Global White Lion Protection Trust (Linda Tucker, also a founding member of Nature's Council) – Conservation organisation protecting white lions in South Africa, working from an understanding of the lions' sacred and cultural significance.

Panthera Africa (Cathrine Nyquist) – Big cat sanctuary incorporating animal communication into its care and conservation practice.

Water Bodies (Christine van Leeuwenstijn) – Practice/network working with water as a living, communicative entity.

Schools of Learning

Institutions, courses and training programmes teaching some version of more-than-human relationship, ranging from the first graduate degree in IIC, to nature connection and animist training. Collectively, this cluster represents where the field's next generation of practitioners, and scholars can study and develop their capacities. Some here are included as speculative potential platforms for further development and legitimisation of this content e.g. the divinity schools.

Note: If you are looking for more-than-human communication courses, there are many run by individual IIC practitioners and plant spirit healers which you can find listed in the relevant sections above. Many of them also run their own schools. So as not to be duplicative, we have classed 'schools' as being where there is more than one main teacher represented.

Animate Earth – Conversations, residential retreats and courses on animism, myth, divination and magic, aimed at remembering humans' connection to and place within an animate world. Launching in September 2027, the world's first accredited programme to weave together science, psychology and traditional wisdom with embodied practice and lived experience in partnership with Exeter University.

Wolf Willow Institute (Julian Norris) – Institute for complexity leaders and systems influencers, offering nature-based, transformative learning programmes combining systems thinking, contemplative practice and wilderness immersion.

Kincentric Leadership – International leadership programme, helping leaders embed "kincentric ecology," treating the more-than-human world as intelligent kin, into their organisations and decision-making, through retreats, a toolkit and peer-support programme.

Institute for Sacred Activism – Founded by Andrew Harvey, mystic and spiritual teacher who coined "Sacred Activism."

The Mythic Body – Course exploring animism and mythic consciousness, connected to Josh Schrei's Emerald Podcast.

Assisi International Animal Institute, California (closed) – Formerly training ground for well-known animal communicators including Anna Breytenbach; closed following the death of its founder.

IONS (Institute of Noetic Sciences) – Research institute studying consciousness, human potential and the frontiers of science, founded by Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell.

Centre for Ecointention – Centre working on intentional, conscious relationship-building with nature.

Kinship Project (Centre for Humans & Nature) – Initiative exploring kinship-based, relational approaches to human-nature relationships.

SHIFT Network – Online learning platform offering courses across consciousness, spirituality and personal transformation, including in animal communication.

CIIS (California Institute of Integral Studies) – Accredited graduate institution in San Francisco, offering programmes integrating psychology, spirituality and consciousness studies.

College of Psychic Studies – Long-established London-based educational charity offering courses in psychic and intuitive development.

Ubiquity University – Graduate Degrees in IIC – Offers a formal graduate degree specifically in Intuitive Interspecies Communication.

HeartMath Institute – Research and training organisation studying heart-brain coherence and its role in emotional regulation and intuition.

Harvard Divinity School – Graduate school of theology and religious studies at Harvard University, with growing interest in multispecies and ecological theology.

Yale Divinity School – Graduate school of theology and religious studies at Yale University, similarly host to emerging ecological and multispecies theology scholarship.

Watering Holes: gatherings for the field

The conferences, festivals and convenings, existing, discontinued, and upcoming, where different parts of this fragmented field occasionally meet. These spaces seem few and far between with very few actually focussed directly on more-than-human communication itself. This is a big gap in the field.

Listening to the Land (Real Farming Trust) – Exploring reciprocal relationship with nature through workshops, Indigenous foodways, and intuitive connection with plants and animals.

MOTH Festival of Ideas – NYU's annual interdisciplinary gathering on more-than-human rights, combining a closed-door academic conference with public keynotes, film screenings, book launches and performances.

ICEERS – International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research and Service, working at the intersection of traditional plant medicines, science and policy.

Multispecies Methods Workshop – Academic workshop exploring Intuitive Interspecies Communication methodology, run twice by M.J. Barrett's research network before being discontinued due to completion of grant funding; time was needed to focus on research and it had served its purpose as a catalyst.

Unearthodox – Geneva-based independent foundation (successor to the Luc Hoffmann Institute/WWF), convening conservation practitioners, academics and innovators to rethink and transform biodiversity conservation systems.

Natures in Translation Conference (Lancaster University, UK) – Conference on AI, ethics and environmental conservation, part of the "Animals in Translation" project (Christine Webb, Rebecca Franks), funded by AHRC and BRAID.

Multi-species Hackathon (Elephant Academy) – Collaborative hackathon-format gathering exploring multispecies approaches to technology and conservation.



Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies (NACTs)

Organisations and research initiatives using AI, machine learning and bioacoustic analysis to decode and, in some cases, attempt to translate animal communication technologically. This is the field's most heavily funded and fastest-moving cluster, and also the one carrying the most acute ethical risk, particularly as ambitions shift from listening toward two-way exchange.

CETI (Cetacean Translation Initiative) – Interdisciplinary project founded by marine biologist David Gruber, combining non-invasive robotics and machine learning to decode sperm whale codas, working alongside the long-running Dominica Sperm Whale Project.

Interspecies Internet – Community and initiative uniting bioacoustics, AI, cognitive science, conservation, ethics and design.

The Interspecies Index – Curated index/directory of the interspecies communication field.

Earth Species Project – Nonprofit using AI to decode animal communication across species; developed NatureLM-audio, one of the first large-scale audio-language foundation models for bioacoustics.

ICARUS (International Cooperation for Animal Research Using Space, Martin Wikelski) – Project using satellite tracking to monitor animal movement globally, sometimes referred to as building an "internet of animals."

Unspeciated™ – Kerri Lake's framework positioning AI as a bridge, rather than a translator: it maps what living beings share in how they perceive, relate to, and apply information, while honoring what no measurement can represent. Experienced through PRAcel (pracel.live/entry).

Nature Perspectives – "AI for Nature": uses AI to simulate the minds and voices of animals, plants and whole ecosystems for real-time, first-person conversation, deployed in museums, botanic gardens, nature trails and policy settings, aiming to foster connection with the natural world, give nature a voice in decision-making, and open new avenues for public engagement and research.

Google DeepMind (DolphinGemma) – Google's open AI model trained on decades of dolphin vocalisation data, developed with the Wild Dolphin Project and Georgia Tech, aimed at helping researchers study dolphin communication patterns.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology – Research institution at Cornell University, home to the Macaulay Library (the world's largest archive of animal sounds) and the Center for Conservation Bioacoustics, and developer of tools like BirdNET and Merlin for bird identification by sound.

MOTH – PEPP Framework for Ethical Engagement – NYU's More-Than-Human Life Program's proposed ethical and legal framework for Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies (NACTs), requiring those developing or deploying such technologies to actively demonstrate their benefits outweigh their risks.

Storytellers & Translators

Writers, journalists and broadcasters whose books, articles and podcasts carry more-than-human ideas into mainstream culture and consciousness, often serving as most people's first meaningful encounter with the field, well before they might talk to a tree, go on a course, or read a peer-reviewed paper.

Robert Macfarlane – British nature writer whose recent book Is a River Alive? explores rivers as living beings with legal and philosophical personhood, including his expedition into the Los Cedros cloud forest.

Carl Safina – Ecologist and author of Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel, drawing on decades of fieldwork to argue for animal emotion, culture and consciousness.

The Telepathy Tapes – Popular podcast exploring telepathic abilities in non-speaking autistic individuals, later expanding to animal and plant communication.

Ed Yong – Science journalist and author of An Immense World, an exploration of animal sensory perception (umwelt) and how differently other species experience reality.

David Abram – Philosopher and cultural ecologist, author of The Spell of the Sensuous and Becoming Animal, and founder of the Alliance for Wild Ethics.

Richard Louv – Journalist and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network, author of Our Wild Calling and Last Child in the Woods, which coined the term "nature-deficit disorder."

Tom Mustill – Filmmaker and author of How to Speak Whale, investigating AI-driven efforts to decode whale communication after his own near-fatal encounter with a breaching humpback.

Zoë Schlanger – Journalist and author of The Light Eaters, a deep dive into emerging plant intelligence research and its challenge to conventional views of plant sentience.

The Animal Communicator (documentary, 2012) – Directed by Craig Foster and Swati Thiyagarajan, the first full-length documentary on animal communication, following South African practitioner Anna Breytenbach.



Practices for More-Than-Human Representation, Rights and Ownership

Initiatives working to give our more-than-human kin direct standing whether it be legal, political or organisational, rather than remaining spoken for by humans on their behalf. Examples include nature holding its own title, sitting on boards, or being formally represented within citizens' assemblies and governance structures. This is not direct communication per se but it represents a steadily growing aspect of one part of this wider conversation.

Sacred Contract (nature holding its own title) – Initiative enabling land and ecosystems to own themselves, represented by Indigenous-led, multi-cultural guardianship councils asserting their own legal rights.

Nature on the Board – Patrick Andrews, the "Barefoot Lawyer," has worked on embedding nature's voice and rights directly into corporate and organisational governance structures.

Furtherfield – Arts collective whose Interspecies Treaty LARP invites participants to role-play as other species (beetles, squirrels) negotiating treaties with humans, building empathic pathways to nonhuman life through play.

Animals in the Room – Project co-founded by philosopher Melanie Challenger exploring how nonhuman animals could be represented in the political and policy decisions that affect them.

Anne-Marie Culhane – Artist and activist running the Assembly of River Beings, a ritual practice descended from Joanna Macy and John Seed's Council of All Beings, giving voice to more-than-human participants in shaping a rights-based river covenant.

Tidelines – Community project on the Exe Estuary in Devon combining science, art and ritual, including the Assembly of River Beings, to build a rights-based covenant for the river.

ASRA (Phil Tovey, Director of Nature-Centric Approaches) – Former government futures specialist now leading work at the Accelerator for Systemic Risk Assessment to integrate non-human sanctity, value and agency into global systemic risk analysis.

Democracy Next – Research and action institute focused on citizens' assemblies and deliberative democracy, with emerging work on extending representation beyond the human.

Bergplaas Nature Reserve (land given back to itself) – founded by Princess Irene von Lippen-Biesterfeld of the Netherlands, Nature reserve in South Africa framed around returning land to its own autonomy and stewardship, in-house and visiting facilitators also offer transformative experiences for wilderness guides and the public.

The Multispecies Constitution Project (Berggruen Institute) – Project exploring what a constitution written to include more-than-human interests might look like.

Artists Collaborating with the MTH

Musicians, filmmakers, and multi-sensory artists working with other species and ecosystems as collaborators (not subjects!), treating whales, forests, fungi and birds as genuine creative partners. As one interviewee reflected, this may be one of the field's most under-recognised engines of change, reaching public imagination in ways science alone cannot.

Multi-species Entanglements, or How We Become Rapt in Other Lives — with Dr Juniper Harrower – Lifeworlds podcast conversation exploring entangled relationships between humans and other species.

Marshmallow Laser Feast (MLF) – London-based experiential art collective creating immersive, multi-sensory installations (VR, projection, sculpture) that let audiences perceive the world from other species' points of view.

Superflux – Speculative design and experiential futures studio, founded by Anab Jain and Jon Ardern, whose work includes pioneering "more-than-human centred design."

Cosmo Sheldrake – Musician and composer who builds songs from field recordings of birds, whales, fish, frogs and fungi, treating the living world as a collaborator rather than raw material.

On Making Interspecies Songs – with David Rothenberg – Podcast conversation with musician and philosopher David Rothenberg, known for playing live music with birds, whales and insects.

Sam Lee – Song of the Nightingale / Singing with Nightingales – Folk singer whose events bring musicians into the woods at night to perform live duets with wild nightingales.

WHAIA – Known as the "Māori Sonic Weaver," Whaia is an Aotearoa musician who brings the spirituality of Māori culture into interspecies musical collaboration, guided by respect for the ocean and its beings.

Leah Barclay – Australian sound artist and researcher specialising in ecoacoustics, whose collaborative project Beeyali works with Aboriginal knowledge-holders Lyndon Davis and Tricia to visualise the calls of wildlife through Indigenous knowledge, cymatics and technology.

Sounds Right – Museum for the United Nations initiative recognising NATURE as an official recording artist on major streaming platforms, directing royalties from tracks featuring natural sound recordings toward conservation funding.

Empatheatre – Research-based theatre company (founded by Mpume Mthombeni, Neil Coppen and Dylan McGarry) creating participatory theatre from lived testimony, including work on ocean governance and environmental justice.

Extramarine –Short animated film by Patrick Tandy and Abigail Buck where a marine biologists synaesthesia becomes the missing link in deciphering interspecies communication.

ARTISTic - group of interdisciplinary interspecies artists and scholars in the UK led by Annie Morrad, University of Lincoln.

Inga Hamilton (University of Sunderland) – Autistic sculptor and practice-based PhD researcher exploring "The Things That Nonhuman Animals Make," using IIC to co-create art jewellery with nonhuman animal artisans; leads a group of artists and scholars meeting regularly on IIC and art.

Funders

Naia Trust – Working at the intersection of ecology, consciousness and community, guided by an animist philosophy, funding across two core categories: Return to Earth and Imaginal Architectures.

One Small Planet – Focused on shifting culture beyond anthropocentrism toward a worldview in which all life is recognised as kin rather than resource, funding largely Indigenous-led and frontline organisations working on water, land and cultural heritage.

VKRF (V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation) – Private family foundation, funding climate change, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity work. Their recent RFP included multi-species projects.

Burroughs Wellcome Fund – As1, Conscious Connection – New initiative in its activation phase, convening global leaders to fund transdisciplinary research advancing the science of consciousness "for people, planet, and all living systems," with its first Request for Proposals launching in 2027.

Kalliopeia Foundation – Independent private foundation supporting grantmaking, education and storytelling at the intersection of ecology, culture and spirituality, with a focus on land-based projects that regenerate "soil, soul, and community" and on Indigenous leadership.

Be The Earth – "A living lab for eco-centric economies," working across wealth redistribution, regenerative finance, transformative experiences and storytelling to help shift from an ego-centric to an eco-centric economy.

European Research Council (ERC) – Funder of the ANICOM project (see earlier IIC Academics & Researchers cluster).

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) – Canadian federal research funding agency.

Arts and Humanities Research Council and BRAID – Co-funders of the "Animals in Translation: AI, Ethics and the Future of Interspecies Dialogue" project and its associated conference, "Natures in Translation: AI, Ethics and Environmental Conservation."

Coller Foundation – Coller Dolittle Prize – Jeremy Coller Foundation and Tel Aviv University's multi-year challenge for two-way interspecies communication research.

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