

Tending the Roots Postcard Activity Kit

Project Background

Tending the Roots is a national program that fosters connection and support between professionals serving 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and families.

Tending the Roots aims to pool resources and knowledge to support necessary changes inside families and across communities.

Tending the Roots also provides online opportunities for knowledge sharing, peer mentorship, co-learning, and cross-sector advocacy.

Postcard Practice

Postcard creation is central to the Tending the Roots Postcard Activity Kit.

Supplies:

- Postcards (blank on one side, a graphic of roots on the other side)
- Pencil crayons and a pencil sharpener

How to:

- Imagine that a new member is joining Tending the Roots and the Community of Practice, and you have the opportunity to create a postcard that holds space for and welcomes them.
- What would you say to a future participant? What is your wish for the Tending the Roots Community of Practice? Your postcard can include a written and/or recorded message or an image.
- Not sure where to begin? Think about moments when you've felt welcomed, recognized or connected. What words or images embody those moments?
- Consider creating a second postcard for yourself that nourishes you.

How to Use This Activity Kit

This project will create connections between us through the postcards you will make and share with colleagues coast to coast!

The next five activities are designed to provide diverse practices that facilitate your creative process with postcard creation. You're free to use any of the creative work from these practices in your postcard(s).

Activity One: Reflection: The Connections Beneath Our Feet

Consider what lies below soil, leaves and moss. Underneath the forest floor, intertwined with the roots of the trees, is a microscopic mycorrhizal network of fungus. This underground network connects individual plants together.

In healthy forests, each tree is connected to others through this network, enabling trees to share water and nutrients. For saplings growing in the shade of large trees, there isn't enough sunlight reaching their leaves to perform adequate photosynthesis. For survival, the sapling relies on nutrients from older, taller trees sent through the mycorrhizal network.

A cornerstone in the tree-fungi networks are hub trees, which are the older trees in a forest. Hub trees have the most fungal connections. Their roots are established in deeper soil, and can reach deeper sources of water to pass on to younger saplings. Through the mycorrhizal network, hub trees detect the ill health of their neighbours from distress signals and send them needed nutrients.

Trees have developed complex symbiotic relationships for mutual benefit. The mycorrhizal network is an integral part of this connectivity, with fungi facilitating health and survival of all trees. Next time you're in a forest, take a moment to think about the complex exchanges happening underneath your feet. The mycorrhizal network is critical to supplying life-giving nutrients that keep forests healthy.

- How is Tending the Roots and the Community of Practice like a mycorrhizal network?
- What life-giving nutrients can we nurture and share within Tending the Roots and the Community of Practice?
- What sustainable futures can we co-create together?

**Adapted from a [National Forest Foundation blogpost](#) written by Britt Holewinski*

Activity Two: Reflection: Touching Ground

- Imagine that you are a tree. What kind of tree are you?
- Where do you live? Can you describe it?
- Who do you provide support to (through shade, shelter, nutrients)? This could be a person, a community, a place, or a project.
- What do you and your communities need to thrive?

You can simply reflect on the prompts in this and the previous practice to help ground your work with this kit, or you can write, draw or record an audio or video message that can take any form (letter, poem, stream-of-consciousness ramble).

Activity Three: "Poetry is Not a Luxury Practice"

Supplies:

- An envelope filled with words
- Glue stick
- Pencil crayons and a pencil sharpener

How to:

In your kit, you'll find a small envelope that contains single words on slips of paper.

The words reflect the themes of the Tending the Roots. Words like: roots, seed, rhizome, network, river, lake, soil, deep, interdependence, nutrients, pollen, shrub, moss, fruit, threads, plants, fungus, web, alive, life, connection, resources, community, support, action, exchange, sapling, life-giving, forest, mycelium, underground, communication, etc.

Spread all the words out. Experiment with their arrangement. What possibilities or worlds do they inspire?

Create one or more short poems by arranging the words in a way that pleases you. Use some or all of the words provided. Feel free to also add your own words.

"... poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives." — Audre Lorde

If you prefer more structure, try this:

Select one word from the envelope as an inspiration or prompt word. Select other words and arrange them accordingly:

- 2 words in the first line
- 3 words in the second line

5 words in the third line

This 2+3=5 poem is a single verse 3-line poem or “word gem.”

Here’s an example:

2 warm soil +
3 in my hand =
5 reminds me of growing connections

Activity Four: I Carry Practice

With single words, phrases, or sentences, fill in the blanks to create lists.

Supplies:

- Pencil crayons
- Pencil sharpener

How to:

3 things I carry in my pockets, knapsack, or satchel:

3 things I carry in my heart:

3 things I carry in my mind:

3 things I carry from my ancestors:

3 things I carry for my communities:

3 things I carry that I'd like to let go of:

3 things I carry into the future:

After you've created your lists, create a 5 – 8 line poem by mixing, combining or distilling words or phrases from your lists above.

I carry _____, and _____

I carry _____

I carry _____, _____, and _____

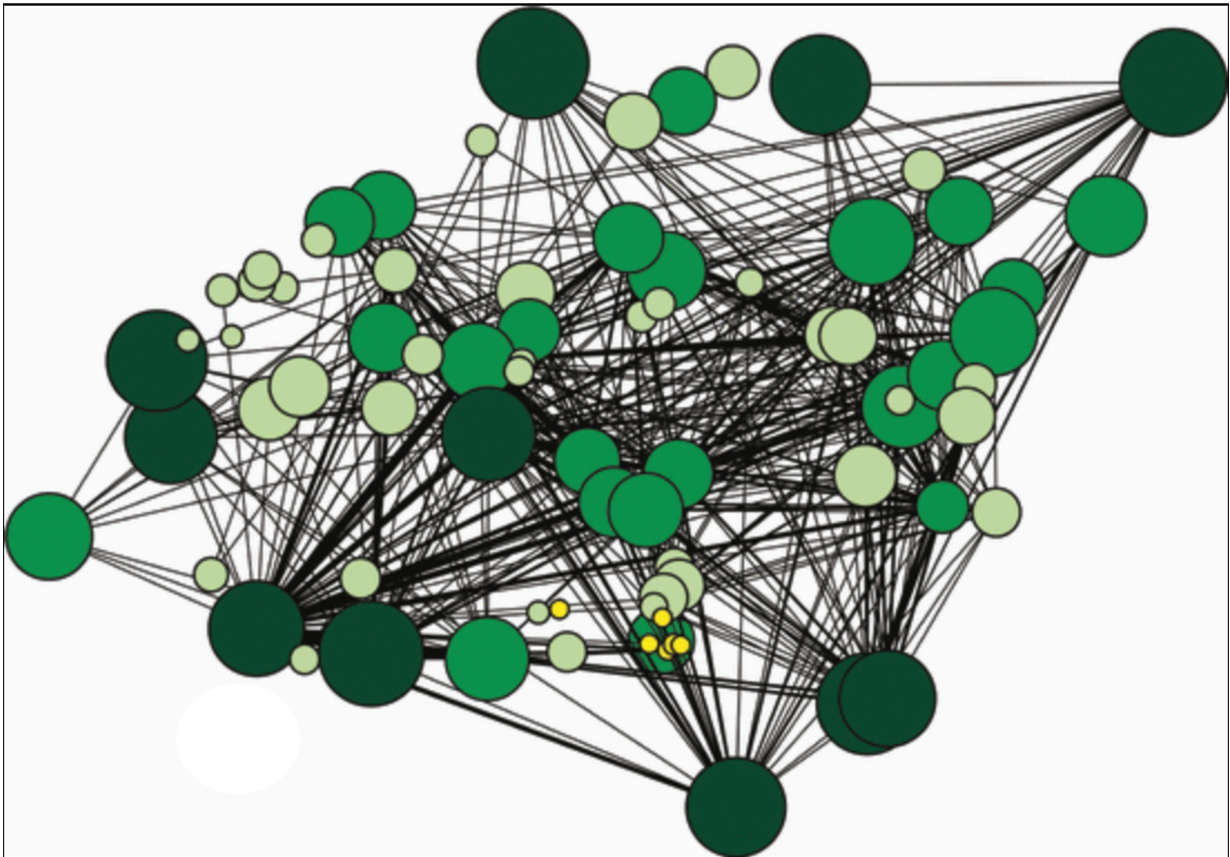
I carry _____ and _____

I carry _____

I carry _____ and _____ and _____

I carry _____.

Activity Five: Weaving Practice



Beiler et al, 2009.

This diagram shows the connections between older and more connected trees (dark green) and young trees just establishing themselves to the network (light green).

Supplies:

- Tapestry needle
- A variety of yarns/twine/cord
- A postcard and/or find a Y shaped branch (maximum 6 inches long)

Weaving Terms:

The words "warp" and "weft" refer to the direction of the woven threads. Lengthwise yarns are called warp; crosswise yarns are called weft, or filling.

How to:

- 1a. Find a branch:** Take a walk through a neighbourhood park, wooded area or your own backyard. Find a Y-shaped branch with a fork wide enough to fit some

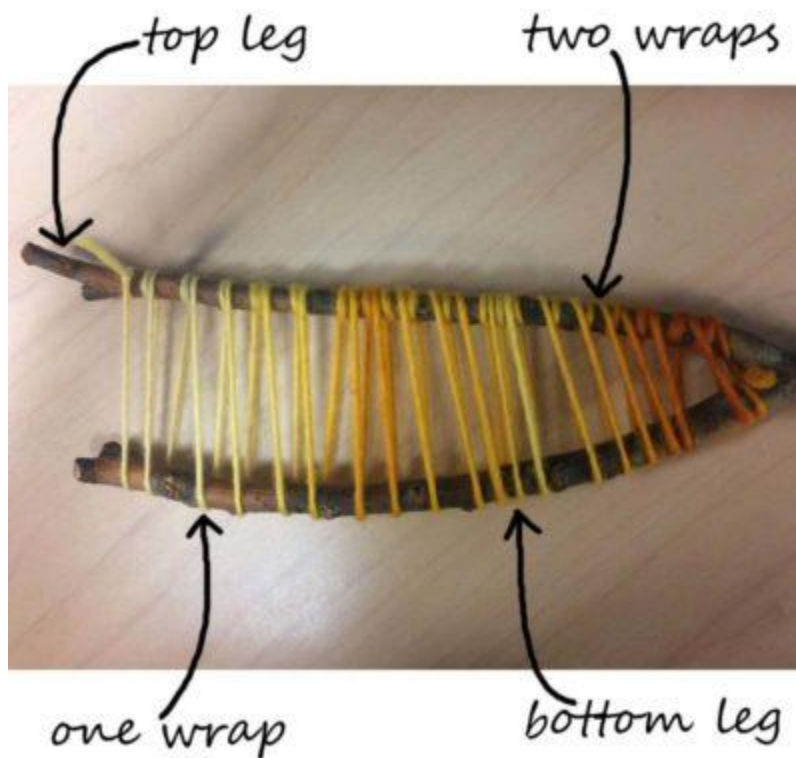
weaving between.

or

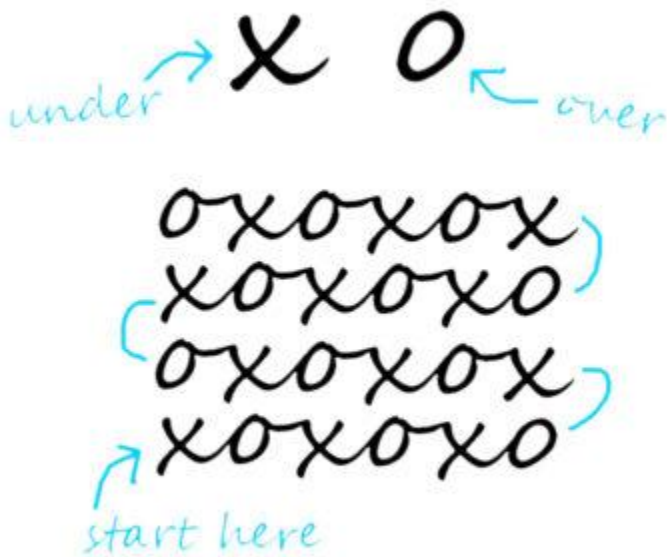
1b. Create a postcard weave: Using the blank side of the postcard, draw a branch or branching pattern. Use the tapestry needle to punch holes throughout your branch, spaced about an inch apart. Now you have a postcard loom that you can use to weave a free form pattern that jumps from point to point or that is more structured, guided by steps 2 to 5.

2. Gather your yarn: We've provided a few different strands of weaving materials. You're welcome to add in your own materials.

3. Warp your branch: First, tie your yarn onto the bottom leg of the Y. Next, wrap the yarn across the open space to the top leg. Wrap the top leg twice, then carry yarn back to the bottom leg, where you'll wrap once again. Keep going like this: always wrap once around the bottom leg and twice around the top leg. Leave spaces between each strand of yarn so you've got space to weave in weft. You will have a 2-sided warp, and you can choose to weave on one side or both.



4. **Begin weaving:** Pick the yarn color you'd like for your first row, and tie it onto the yarn strand at the open end of the warp. Weave your yarn through the warp in an over-under-over-under pattern until you're happy with the look. To finish with that color, weave to the end of the warp and then cut it, leaving a 2" tail. Secure the tail to an end strand of the warp with a knot—you'll weave that tail into the piece at the end. For now, the knot will keep your weaving from unweaving. Use a tapestry needle to press the yarn together after it's woven to avoid any open spaces.



Repeat this process as you switch yarn colours. For more intricate designs, switch up the weaving pattern.

5. **Weave in the tails:** Weave in the tails between rows of yarn just as you wove the rest of the yarn in an over-under pattern. Make sure the end of the yarn goes over the warp so the very end of the tail is only visible from the back.

**This activity was adapted from a [blogpost on Little Looms](#) and inspired by mycorrhizal networks.*

Tending the Roots: Postcards of Connection Credits

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