

# **THE READING ROOM**

(Selected Readings)

## Introduction

The body of artwork *forest!* was inspired by my aunt, Dr. Manoarma Savur, an environmental sociologist, then at the University of Bombay (now Mumbai). Dr. Savur published a two-volume book which details the fieldwork she did in the 1980s on the destruction of the bamboo forests in India.

The Reading Room, located within the *forest documents* installation, contains documents and publications that:

1. I became aware of through the research,
2. That arose as the *forest!* body of work took shape from 2016 through 2025, with research support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for the Elastic Spaces interdisciplinary working group.

The Reading Room provides places for exploration within the installation, ranging from: background on the project's process and development; oral histories; scientific papers; children's books based on primatology research in Japanese forests; to documents from the Rainforest Flying Squad's work in the Fairy Creek protests starting in 2020.

In brief, the Reading Room includes the documents and publications from people, who as the project's Technical Director Jorge Zavagno says, "we met along the way." I include the voices of Nancy Tousley and Haema Sivanesan, who have written about the *forest!* body of work, the Elastic Spaces researchers, including John Latour, and the forest ecologies researchers working with us, including Nancy Turner, Sarah Turner, Suzanne Simard, and Rita Wong.

I also chose a number of oral histories that were part of our research to give readers opportunities to explore the range and ways of moving the spoken word onto the pages of a book. Publications from Joe Martin with Alan Hoover, Ruby Peter with Helen Demers, August Jack Khahtsahlano with J.S. Matthews, and Roy Kiyooka with his mother Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka and editor Daphne Marlatt informed the approach by the Elastic Spaces Press team to Elder Bill Jones' *Chronicles of the Forest* chapbook.

I am very grateful to John Latour for this collaboration on this Reading Room.

August 2025  
Leila Sujir

This publication includes an annotated list of documents selected for THE READING ROOM which is itself part of Leila Sujir's 3D video art installation *forest documents*.

THE READING ROOM is a temporary and informal research space, an experimental site where we can pause, reflect and even immerse ourselves in a range of viewpoints regarding our evolving relationship with nature; the wonders of old-growth forests; and the forest as a source of research and collaborative storytelling.



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**Jones, William.** *Chronicles of the Forest: From the Walbran to Fairy Creek: What the Forest Needs, Our Heart Needs.* Edited by John Latour. Montreal: Elastic Spaces Press, 2025.

This collection of reflections by Pacheedaht Elder William Jones emerged from a year-long series of conversations with Leila Sujir and members of the Elastic Spaces research group (2020-2021). Divided into five thematic chapters, Elder Jones's poetic, poignant, and at times humorous statements relate a lifetime of experiences around Fairy Creek and the Walbran Forest – culminating in his involvement with grassroots protests to defend one of the last old-growth forests on Vancouver Island.

**Khahtsahlano, August Jack, and J.S. Matthews.** *Conversations with Khahtsahlano, 1932-1954.* Compiled by J.S. Matthews. 1955. Facsimile edition. Vancouver: Massy and Talon, [2022].

Chief Khahtsahlano was born around 1877 near the former Squamish village of Snauq (False Creek Reserve) of Vancouver, B.C. This publication is a recent facsimile of a compilation of conversations between Chief Khahtsahlano and archivist J.S. Matthews that took place over a twenty-two-year period. Transcripts of these conversations provide rich and detailed accounts of Indigenous life and customs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and are supplemented by photographs and other archival documents from the City of Vancouver Archives.

**Kiyooka, Roy, and Daphne Marlatt.** *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka.* Edited by Daphne Marlatt. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1997.

Canadian artist and poet Roy Kiyooka's book is based on interviews he carried out, mediated by a translator, with his Japanese-born, nonagenarian mother Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka. Kiyooka's retelling of his mother's stories eschew a chronological ordering in favour of a narrative flow of themes ranging from her life growing up in turn-of-the-century Japan, to the challenges of immigrating to Canada in 1917, and to the difficulties faced by a young Japanese-Canadian family after the Second World War.

**Martin, Joe, and Alan Hoover.** *Making a Chaputs: The Teachings and Responsibilities of a Canoe Maker.* Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2022.

This collaboration between Joe Martin, master canoe-maker of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation and Alan Hoover, former curator of the Royal BC Museum is not only a step-by-step illustrated guide to making a dugout canoe using traditional Indigenous techniques, but it also situates his practice within broader Nuu-chah-nulth social and cultural traditions. As discussed in the book, Martin made chaputs in a range of contexts and for different groups of people. For instance, Martin, his father and his brothers made canoes during the 1984 protests on Meares Island to demonstrate Indigenous cultural production at work.

**Peter, Ruby, and Helen Demers.** *What Was Said to Me: The Life of Sti'tum'atul'wut, a Cowichan Woman.* Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2021.

Ruby Peter was an important and well-respected Cowichan elder, teacher and lifelong advocate of the Hul'q'umi'num language. Part oral history, part autobiography, this publication provides her life story, in her own words, as recounted over nine discussions with anthropologist Helene Demers of Vancouver Island University.

#### **[Research file of related materials]**

This file contains numerous unpublished and published documents that relate to the defense of the old-growth forests of British Columbia with special emphasis on Fairy Creek and the Walbran Forest.

**Savur, Manorama.** *And the Bamboo Flowers in the Indian Forests: What Did the Pulp and Paper Industry Do? 2 vols.* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2003.

This two-volume study explores the growth and impact of the pulp and paper industry within India's tropical forests. It provides in-depth historical, scientific, political and cultural analyses of industry practices that led to the death of the naturally occurring bamboo forests. The study also critically analyzes the failed attempts by the pulp and paper industry to introduce and farm exotic plant species across the country.

**Simard, Suzanne.** *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest.* Penguin Canada, 2021.

Written in an accessible prose style, Suzanne Simard's memoir traces the paths that led to her groundbreaking, academic research on how trees communicate with each other through vast, interconnected root and fungal networks under the rainforest floor. Her findings also point to the crucial role played by "Mother Trees" – the largest and oldest of trees that not only protect life around them, but help forests to flourish.

**Sivanesan, Haema.** "Unsettling" the Forest as a Canadian Nationalist Imaginary: Consent, Consultation, and (Re)conciliation in Leila Sujir's Forest!" *Journal of Transcultural Studies*, 11, no. 2 (2020): 46-76.

<https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.jts.2020.2.24248>.

Art curator Haema Sivanesan's article provides context for artist Leila Sujir's ongoing research creation project *Forest!* that was initiated in 2016, and which takes multiple forms including (but not limited to) her 3D video *Forest Breath* (2016-2018) and experimental IMAX video *Aerial* (2018-2019). Sujir's starting point for *Forest!* was to interpret the Walbran Forest as a sentient being and a site for healing; but the project evolved as she met with various stakeholders in Fairy Creek and within the Walbran Forest itself. As we learn from Sivanesan's article, Sujir's art practice is collaborative, multidisciplinary and transcultural. She actively consults with and works closely with artists, scientists, environmentalists, city officials, loggers, and Indigenous community members – including Pacheedaht Elder William (Bill) Jones.

**"Thinking Allowed." Elastic Spaces. Last modified 2024.**

<https://www.elasticspaces.hexagram.ca>.

This in-person and virtual colloquium organized by the Elastic Spaces research group took place throughout 2023 at Concordia University and at other Montreal locations. It was a public and multidisciplinary platform for artists, curators, scientists, students, environmentalists and diverse communities to discuss their research and "to address urgent issues around social justice and the environment." We invite you to consult the Elastic Spaces website for more details about this SSHRC-supported project.

**Tousley, Nancy.** "Leila Sujir's Forest of Pixels." In *Intertwined Histories: Plants in Their Social Contexts*, edited by Jim Ellis, 112-123. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019.

In her essay, art critic, journalist and curator Nancy Tousley situates Leila Sujir's video artwork within the history of photography – including stereoscopy of the late 19th century – and in relation to the artist's own life. We learn, for instance, how a forest became a place of healing for Sujir. In addition to her insightful analyses of the artist's 3D video *Forest Breath* (2016-2018) and the in-progress IMAX video *Aerial*, Tousley makes reference to some of the key researchers with whom Sujir collaborates including Haema Sivanesan, Sarah Turner, Nancy Turner, and Suzanne Simard.

**Turner, Nancy, ed.** *Plants, People and Places: The Roles of Ethnobotany and Ethnoecology in Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights in Canada and Beyond.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.

Our understanding of regional plants, their uses, and the ecosystems around us are at the heart of this publication – itself inspired by the symposium *Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights and the Roles of Ethnoecology and Ethnobotany: Strategies for Canada's Future* (University of Victoria, 2017). This anthology of essays, edited by Nancy J. Turner, offers a diverse range of research and perspectives from academics and traditional knowledge keepers who are invested in learning from Indigenous ways of knowing.

**Turner, Sarah E.** *Ribbon's Way.* Winlaw, BC: Sono Nis Press, 2012.

Written with a young audience in mind, this photography-based, educational book is based on Sarah Turner's scientific research into Japanese macaque. It tells the heartwarming and true story of Ribbon – a macaque who was born in the Awaji Island Monkey Center with malformed feet and without hands. Despite these physical challenges, Ribbon not only found acceptance from her family and community, but she also found the determination to thrive.

**Wong, Rita. “At Fairy Creek, the Real Emergency Is the Climate Emergency.”** *The Tyee*. August 25, 2021, <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2021/08/25/Fairy-Creek-Real-Emergency-Is-Climate-Emergency/>.

Rita Wong’s article is highly critical of the RCMP’s heavy-handed responses to the peaceful Fairy Creek protests that took place over the past year. She argues that the RCMP’s protection of old-growth clearcutting practices is making an already dangerous climate crisis worse. The article contends that the RCMP’s repressive treatment of protestors is rooted in colonialism and finds the provincial government’s unwillingness to hold the RCMP accountable for their actions to be deeply troubling.

**Wong, Rita. *Current, Climate: The Poetry of Rita Wong*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2021.**

The poems that make up *Current, Climate* were originally published between 1998 and 2018. They are a representative selection of Rita Wong’s poetry and highlight her experimental use of form and language, her profound respect for nature, for land, for water, and for a sense of belonging. In addition to being a scholar and poet, Wong is also an environmentalist and defender of Indigenous lands and rights. These concerns wind and wend their way through her poems. There are, for instance, several allusions to Canadian cities, street names and geographical locations throughout this compilation – although the presence of Indigenous persons and place names in her poems remind us that the ground upon which we stand is often unceded territory.

