

## *Symbols for conversation*

*Our starting symbol* is a tree. The roots are fractal, from individual people and creatures to families and ecologies through thickening roots of Aboriginal, religious and aesthetic traditions, natural and social science and the dedication of ordinary people. Conversations converge in the trunk and branch out into new directions. The roots of this riverside tree shelter a salmon—ancient symbol of wisdom in Aboriginal and Irish tradition. As a verb, tree embodies belonging and relationship in ways that ‘ecosystem’ and ‘social-ecological system’ cannot.

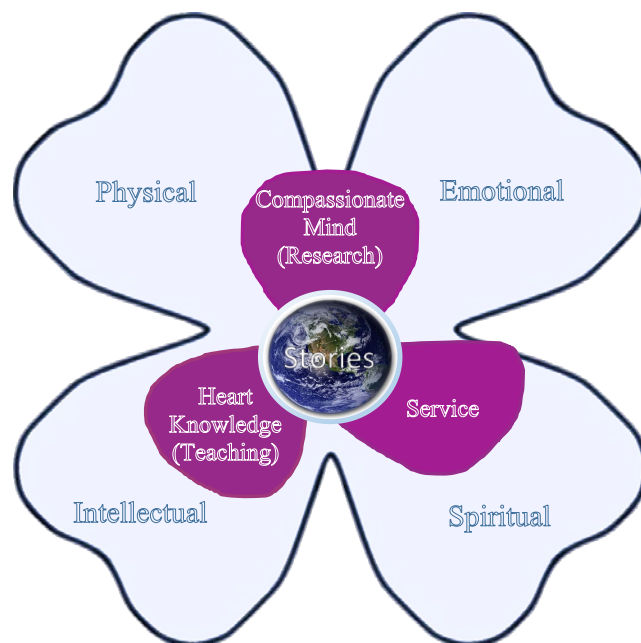


**Figure 1:** Tree symbol. Pencil drawing by Emily Haggan

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The tree calls to mind five ways of perceiving the world—the things or beings which punctuate our environment; the connections modelled by economists, ecologists and climate scientists; the spaces where unseen and 'unofficial' inhabitants such as urban coyotes flourish; the flows of air, water and nutrients which enable, but resist notions of agency; and the resonant voices of wind, wavers, wildlife, song and music. The tree and the salmon thus create a “third space of encounter”, which we will explore with intergenerational panels and symbols of transformation between lands, waters, plants, animals, people and spirit.

Our *structure* for events and products interweaves the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of wisdom recognized by Aboriginal people as "necessary for a fully-embodied way of being in the world" (Simpson 2011:94) and in the scientific concept of *biophilia* or love of nature (Kellert 2005) (Figure 2). An Indigenous concept of good heart or good or compassionate mind combines physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual learning with humility, truth and love (Lightning 1992). A "good person" is someone who has intellectual *and* heart knowledge (Holmes 2002:46; Archibald 2008:47), which is relevant and put to use in their community. 'Good mind' resembles the classic university mandate of research, teaching and service, but differs in that learning is reciprocal and intellectual knowledge has no special privilege.



**Figure 1**