



little  
**forests**  
kingston

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Little Forests Kingston is rooted in the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. The Land where the city of Kingston is situated was wounded by the “Crawford purchase” of 1783, where the British colonists claimed to have made an agreement with the Mississauga peoples located here for purchase of the Land. The Land was intended to be given to the Haudenosaunee allies of Britain who wanted to leave the United States of America. Despite claims of this purchase occurring, there is no deed or formal land treaty to confirm this; additionally, some of the Land that the British thought to be the territory of the Mississauga was in reality Algonquin territory. The government has prevented the Algonquin from asserting their right to this Land.

As descendants of this legacy of colonisation, we at Little Forests Kingston recognise the vital relationships which the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island hold with the Land, and the damage that colonisation has inflicted, and continues to inflict, upon them. We commit to fighting colonisation in all of its forms, both in society and within ourselves. As an organisation which works on the Land, we dedicate ourselves to decolonising the Land, too, by restoring native plant life and encouraging the revitalisation of all forms of native biodiversity.

We must all commit to being better descendants than the settlers who came before us, and to becoming the best ancestors we can to the many generations who will follow us.

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# INTRODUCTION

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2023 has been an incredible year for our organisation, with almost 2,700 trees planted in Little Forests or Pocket Forests across the city. We've been hard at work to help create a sustainable, biodiverse future for our home, and we're getting closer to making Kingston the city in a forest it needs to be for us, and you, and our whole ecosystem to thrive.

In 2021, when Little Forests Kingston was founded, we thought that many of the things we are doing today would be out of reach for a long time, but thanks to overwhelming support from people like you, and from many organisations and volunteers across the city, we've got things moving in new and exciting directions! In just this past year, our community has planted five Little Forests, launched the Pocket Forest initiative, worked alongside city staff to promote more ecologically-conscious regulations, and reached hundreds of students of all ages with our projects.

Seeing what we thought to be near-impossible achieved before us has made us even more eager to try new things and move towards even bigger, crazier changes for our beloved city. But we don't know where to start yet. In the coming months, we're going to embark on a journey of imagination, dreaming up what we want our future to look like, not just for us, but for our human and non-human neighbours, communities, and for everyone around the world. This is known as "imagination activism", and we hope you'll come along on this exploration with us in 2024!



2023

IN

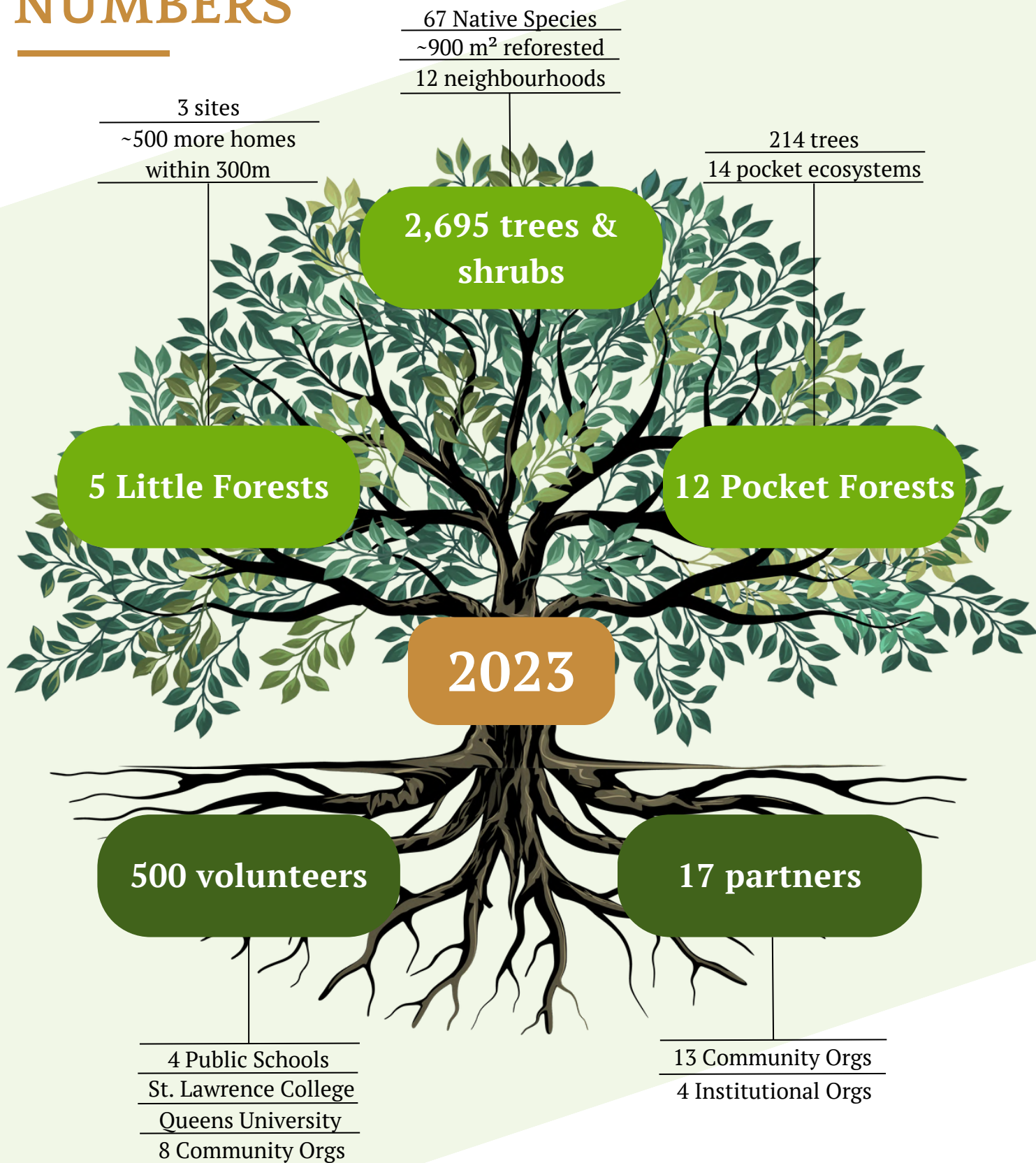
REVIEW



little  
**forests**  
kingston



# BY THE NUMBERS



# WHERE TO FIND A LITTLE FOREST

**Legend**

- Planted in 2021
- Planted in 2022
- Planted in 2023
- Little Forest
- Pocket Forest (all 2023)
- Forest Resurgence



Icons courtesy of Freepik



# LITTLE FORESTS

## Portsmouth Community

The Portsmouth Community Little Forests were definitely our biggest planting highlight of 2023, with over 1,500 trees planted in three different forests: a walking forest, a Great Lakes mixed forest, and a bird forest. It was great to collaborate with the Seniors Association, which is so important in our community. We had a few challenges with this project, and it ended up being the first one where we overturned the soil prior to planting. However, it was a success in the end! Thank you to those of you who came to help with it.



## Grenville Park

The Grenville Park Little Forest is an effort to reforest a small, underutilised parcel of Land that previously only held turfgrass. The forest we are planting here will have paths and space for an outdoor classroom among the trees. We've been very grateful for the many students from Madeleine-de-Roybon and Mille-Îles that have come to help with the work in Grenville park. This year we planted 390 trees and shrubs, but in the coming years we hope that this number will reach around 3,000!



# Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden

In 2023, we planted another 714 trees and shrubs at the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden, one of our original sites, bringing the total number since 2021 to over 1,600! As seen in the photo to the right, the original trees we planted in 2021 are thriving. We were lucky to have a large group of students from King's Town School come out and join us in planting the saplings. We're excited to watch this site flourish in the years to come.



## Funding

Thank you to Green Communities Canada and Trees for Life, who funded our projects at the Seniors Centre and the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden, and to the Community of Grenville Park, and all the supporters from our community on GoFundMe who helped fund the Grenville Park Little Forest.

## POCKET FORESTS

2023 was the first year that we've planted Pocket Forests! We're super glad to see that so many of you were interested in them and by the end of the summer we had planted 214 trees in 12 forests!

### What is a Pocket Forest?

A Pocket Forest is a planting kit which includes a number of native tree, understory, and shrub species which are specifically selected to be planted together. Pocket Forests are meant to be small versions of Little Forests that could be planted in smaller areas, such as in your backyard.

### Is there anything special about your initiative?

Glad that you asked! The thing that makes our initiative so unique is that we use a gift economy model where we provide the resources for the Pocket Forest and help plant it, and you choose how best to repay this, whether it be to us, to your neighbours, or to your ecosystem.



# IMPACTS OF OUR 2023 PLANTINGS



2,695  
trees



~175,000 L of  
stormwater managed  
annually



~450 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>e  
absorbed annually



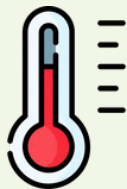
Reduction in **stress**  
and **anxiety**



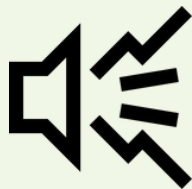
18x more  
biodiversity



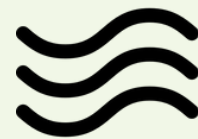
Opportunity to  
**reconnect**



>2°C reduction  
in temperature



Up to 10 dB of  
noise absorbed



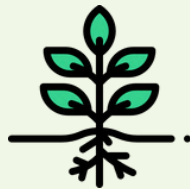
15% filtration of  
PM2.5 from air

# IMPACTS OF OUR 2023 PLANTINGS

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Safer, stronger  
homes



Resilient  
ecosystems



Better  
overwintering



More nutritious  
food



More human  
companions



More hiding  
places

## Did you know?

Trees communicate and share resources such as water and carbon with each other through an underground web of fungi called the **mycorrhizal network**. That's why it's so important to **plant trees in communities**.

Icons courtesy of Freepik



# COLLABORATION

## Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation

Some of you may already have heard about our plans to collaborate with the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC). They provide affordable housing to our community, and we were very excited to find that they are interested in working with us to plant Little Forests at several of their locations around the city. We had to delay a project we were planning for this year at 111 Van Order Drive to collaborate with a nearby condo building's owners; however, we are expecting that project to happen this year, along with two other projects with the KFHC!



111 Van Order Drive

## Queens University

We're very grateful for how keen the wonderful people at Queens University have been to collaborate with us in all sorts of ways, even in our fledgling years. In 2023, we collaborated on:

- The Queens Global Summer Program (QGSP), where students explore a variety of sustainability issues in-depth and search for solutions in our modern world
- A soil core project from a professor at Queens, which will be monitoring the soil at the Portsmouth Community Little Forest over the years to observe how the microbial community changes, as well as how the properties of the soil respond to the trees.

We'd also like to mention that one of the students who participated in the QGSP in 2022 has now founded Little Forests Queens. Exciting to see the seeds of change germinating at the university!

## Rotarians of Kingston

The Rotarians of Kingston have been a wonderful partner, and we've been fortunate to collaborate with them on the Seniors Centre Little Forest, as well as on a number of other outreach initiatives to root ourselves even more firmly in communities around Kingston. Their knowledge of the Kingston area has been instrumental in helping to connect us to others across the city.

# Local Schools

We continue to work with local schools and teachers to bring the benefits of Little Forests to their students. Students from Calvin Park, Madeleine-de-Roybon, Mille-Îles and King’s Town School planted hundreds of trees at our October Little Forest plantings. Those same Calvin Park students helped prepare the forest floor for our 2024 planting of a Little Forest right beside their school at 111 Van Order Drive, a KFHC property. Their teachers have brought the Little Forests concept into their classrooms embracing the idea of “two-eyed seeing”, using both a Western science and Indigenous science perspective to redefine our relationship with with the more-than-human. They are excited at the prospect of the Little Forest next door to their school and plan to use it as an outdoor classroom.

At Kingston Secondary School, a biology teacher brought his students to the AMHS Little Forest that they helped plant in 2022 to introduce them to biology sampling techniques as they measured the growth of the Little Forest.



Farther afield, we continue to work with the Stewart School in Perth where plans are in the works to plant a Little Forest at their school. We visited them in the spring to introduce the primary grades to Little Forests, mycelial networks and relationships.

The QUILLS (Queens University Indigenous Land-Based Learning) Project was published this year and we had an opportunity to present to teachers at its launch. Little Forests are in this document as one of the suggested actions that schools can take. We invite more teachers and schools to become involved in Little Forest planting and learning in the future. To support them, we continue to compile and create lesson plans and educational resources.



# STEWARDSHIP

## Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden

This year, we had a dedicated team of around 10 people who frequently came out on the Land to help tend the Little Forests, pulling weeds and making sure the butternut trees were doing well. Although we expected to need to water the forests sometimes during the summer, the mulch did an excellent job of retaining moisture and the soil never got dry enough to need it!



## Lakeside Little Forest

In 2023, a team of 3-4 people worked on the Little Forest, removing pasture grass and other aggressive species to ensure they weren't overcrowding the trees, who are doing well! Several trees produced their first fruits and the renowned pawpaws are thriving! We didn't need to water here either.



## AMHS Little Forest

An occupational therapist working at AMHS teamed up with some residents to weed the forest. We also held a workshop to teach people how to prune the fruit trees!



# IN THE NEWS

The Portsmouth Community Little Forest was featured by several local newspapers this year, including Kingston This Week and the Whig-Standard! It was very exciting to see all the hard work that our community has put into these projects recognised in the press!

6 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023

## 'Little Forests' project coming to fruition at Kingston Seniors Centre

MEGHAN BALOGH

Grade 7 students from Calvin Park Public School planted dozens of trees this week as part of a Little Forests Kingston project at the Seniors Centre on Francis Street.

The students spent the morning carefully installing 35 different species of trees and shrubs in a Great Lakes mixed forest, which is being established alongside a brand new Carolinian forest and bird forest on city-owned property located beside the Seniors Centre.

A total of approximately 70 native plant species are being utilized in the three forests, whose planting is being led by Little Forests Kingston with help from many volunteers.

"We're doing what's called an assisted migration forest," Nathan Nesdoly, a volunteer with Little

Forests Kingston and a project lead for the Seniors Centre project, told the Whig-Standard in reference to the little Carolinian forest that is being planted. "The Carolinian belt is the belt or a north of Lake Erie, so it goes right from Windsor to Hamilton. A lot of the trees that grow in the Hamilton area, like sassafras, for example, can grow comfortably in Kingston now in the last 30 years."

In those past 30 years Kingston has moved up two climate zones.

"The whole concept of assisted migration is that humans move the trees faster than trees can move (on their own)," Nesdoly said.

Once the trees are established, the project will provide locally-produced seed for future plantings. A food forest will also be planted at the site at a later date.

The project is one more step towards Little Forests Kingston's active "citizen-led urban afforestation" within the Kingston area, with the goal of bringing "3-30-300 tree equity" to the region: three trees visible to every child from their window, in a neighbourhood with 30 per cent quality canopy and living within 300 metres of a quality green space.

Little Forests Kingston has planted four little forests using the Miyawaki forests planting method, developed by Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist who developed principals around intensive and symbiotic planting of native species to restore and reforest landscapes.

"He developed a method of reforesting that's intense planting of native species, and we're using that



Nathan Nesdoly and Joanne Whitfield, with Little Forests Kingston, stand in the planting project area at the little forests being installed at the Seniors Centre on Francis Street in Kingston on Monday, Oct. 16, 2023. MEGHAN BALOGH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

same method here, roughly three trees per square metre," Nesdoly explained.

The Miyawaki forest combines a mixture of species including canopy trees over 30 metres tall, trees 10 to 30 metres tall, an understorey layer five to 10 metres tall and a shrub layer, interplanted.

"The planting is dense, and not all of the individuals will make it," Nesdoly said.

Little Forests Kingston's first little forests, on Highway 15 and on Wolfe Island, were the first Miyawaki forests planted in North America, Nesdoly said.

Those first forests were planted three years ago, when the organization was first started by co-founders Joyce Hostyn, Maureen Buchanan and Joanne Whitfield.

SEE FORESTS ON A8

8 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023

## 'Little Forests' project coming to fruition at Kingston Seniors Centre

FORESTS FROM A6

"It was kind of a pandemic thing, when we had time to do stuff," Whitfield said on Monday. "We started thinking about how can we get more people involved with what we like to think of as ecological gardening, where it's not about control, it's about working with nature to restore the land, asking the land who does it want to be, and then helping it be that."

The trio was inspired by their walks together through regional forests, and they began exploring the Miyawaki method.

"That's how we ended up starting it, and we really just threw it out to the world and said who wants to

help with this idea? And wonderful people...stepped in," Whitfield said.

Little Forests Kingston is hoping to get more Kingston residents involved in their mission by offering help with planting through their "pocket forests" program.

"We're encouraging people to go to our website, where they can gift themselves a pocket forest," Nesdoly said. "You can order a pocket forest and we will help them install it. It's between 12 and 14 trees in an area as small as three square metres to six square metres, one or two large trees and an understorey layer."

According to Nesdoly, planting trees is a proactive way to address climate change, to help humans



Calvin Park Public School Grade 7 students plant trees in the project area for little forests being installed at the Seniors Centre on Francis Street in Kingston on Monday, Oct. 16, 2023. MEGHAN BALOGH/POSTMEDIA

connect with the natural world, with added benefits for urban dwellers and for the wildlife who live with humans in those urban

environments.

"We really want to encourage the people of Kingston to support the planting of trees, the planting of

forests," Nesdoly said.

For more information, visit [www.littleforests.org](http://www.littleforests.org). [mbalogh@postmedia.com](mailto:mbalogh@postmedia.com)



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# FUTURE PLANS



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# PLANTING PROJECTS

## More Little Forests!

All of our Little Forest projects for 2024 are in motion already! We're going to be planting 3 Little Forests in collaboration with the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation, and continuing our reforestation efforts at Grenville park. We expect to plant around 2,700 trees and shrubs across these four sites.

## Pocket Forests and Pocket Meadows

Thanks to the amazing success of our Pocket Forest projects in 2023, we will be coming back in 2024 with even more of these, so stay tuned if you would like to plant one in your habitat.

Additionally, we will also be starting our Pocket Meadows projects, which will include native shrubs, grasses, and other low-growing plants. Meadows are especially important for supporting our native insect biodiversity, as many meadow plants are key sources of pollen, and also often provide much more protein to those insects than non-native plants.





# SYMBIOSIS

## Growing our Network

We hope to connect and grow with more local organisations in and around the city, continuing to encourage ecologically-minded practices and moving Kingston towards a city in a forest.

Thank you to all of our partners who have supported us this year, we're looking forward to continuing our collaboration!

- All My Relations Land Trust, Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden, 1000 Islands Master Gardeners, Belle Island Caretakers, Rotarians of Kingston, Sustainable Kingston, City of Kingston, QUILLS, Queen's University Biological Station - Elbow Lake, Senior's Centre, KFHC, Wintergreen, Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council, Youth Imagine the Future, Queens Backing Action on Climate Change (QBACC), Little Forests Queens, Kingston Secondary School, Calvin Park Public School, One Roof Kingston Youth Hub.

## City of Kingston

4 members of the LFK community will be taking on the role of Climate Champions with the City. Climate champions can apply for a \$2,000 grant to enact a project within their communities to help combat climate change.

We will also be joining other members of our community in collaborating with the City's Climate Change Adaptation Working Group.

We're grateful to the City, and especially Public Works, for their support and willingness to collaborate, and we're excited to continue pushing Kingston to become a city in a forest.



Hatter Street Neighbourhood Habitat Seed Garden, planted by a Climate Champion this year

# All Our Relations Land Trust

We've had an amazing year working with the All Our Relations Land Trust. Together we've helped to change the city through the introduction and development of "shovel worthy" policies.

## What is shovel worthy?

New development can be devastating for local ecosystems, when trees are clear cut, wildlife is displaced, and soil is upturned. But development is also needed to combat the housing crisis. So, rather than urge the city to end development, we want to encourage them to develop sustainably. "Shovel worthy" is a language shift from "shovel ready", a term used to describe when projects have reached a point where construction can begin. Shovel worthy policies ensure that developers perform full environmental studies and create plans to ensure that water, soil, plants, and wildlife are protected before construction. We have spent a lot of time in collaboration with the All Our Relations Land Trust and the City to determine what shovel worthy means, and in 2024, these policies are set to go into effect. We're excited to continue working with the Land Trust to help push our city in the right direction. We're also looking forward to seeing shovel worthy in practice at the new development planned adjacent to the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden.

## Queens University

We're continuing to collaborate with the many amazing people at Queens University, with several new projects coming for 2024:

- Two PhD students are looking to research how the soil quality changes at our planting sites over time
- Four professors at Queens are planning to apply to the NSERC CREATE grant to help support and fund even more research about nature and Little Forests.





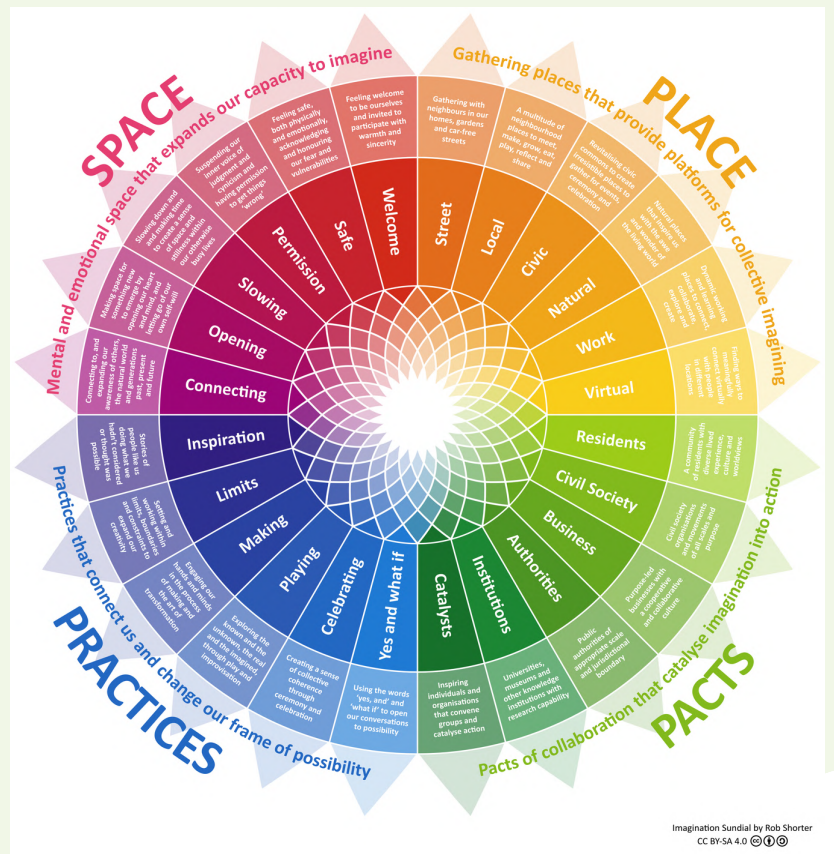
# DREAMS

## Imagination Activism

We've shown that Little Forests Kingston can achieve really great things, and help to move the city in important new directions. But as we continue further on our path to the city in a forest, we've noticed that we ask ourselves questions like, "what does a city in a forest *actually* look like". Imagination activism exists to help us answer these questions, by helping us to rebuild the muscles we need for creativity, imagination, and visualisation. Once we can develop a clear vision for the society we want to live in, then we can start figuring out what we need to do to get there. In 2024, we'll facilitate community workshops to dream a path forward together for our ecosystems, our communities, and our city, centered in the principles of imagination activism.

## Survival Ecology

Survival Ecology is another concept which we want to explore in 2024. Many environmental and nature-oriented initiatives are centered in conservation ecology - where the focus is on preserving what already exists, protecting individual species, and continuing past trends. Survival ecology is the future-oriented version of that, with a strong focus on future-proofing our ecosystems and ensuring their survival through changes to our environment. We've already started employing some of these principles in our Little Forests, with assisted migration of species native to warmer areas of the continent. We hope to employ more survival ecology principles in 2024.



The imagination sundial, developed by the Doughnut Economics Action Lab

MIIGWECH  
NIA:WEN  
MERCI  
THANK YOU

To our community for your support

To our other-than-human relatives for your  
patience and assistance with our work

To those of you who joined us this year and  
helped with our projects

To those of you who we will work with in  
2024 and beyond

Together we can achieve incredible things,  
and we're excited to share our journey into  
our ecologically just future with you :)



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