

In Kurdistan we have a saying, “No friend but the mountains”

After decades of the kurds being deceived by governmental forces, such as Iraq and the US,

The people fled to the mountains and lived there, protected whilst loved ones sacrificed their lives and political integrity for independence.

The people sought refuge and safety from coloniality and ethnic cleansing that has been going on for hundreds of years due to geopolitical issues such as green energy and biogas extraction from the lands of Kurdistan.

The Utopia, the independence and freedom, also called ‘Azadi’ in Kurdish is inherited in the immateriality of memory through us as aboriginal and Indigenous peoples.

In my artistic practice, as well as in my daily life, through dance and choreography, I am exploring the dichotomies in my different aboriginal heritage, and recollecting bones and stories to feel as a whole human being, after a long history of dismembering.

The work that I do is deeply personal, and uncompromising.

As a part of my practice, I run a platform named Humans & Soil where I’m trying to connect Indigenous peoples in artistic and academic practice that can exchange their stories, and empower each other.

One of the choreographic methods I use is to share testimonies from the Sámi people about their relationship to soil and earth Which I will talk about in this session.

In Sápmi, In our land, the mountains has functioned as a growth from the earth made by gods, made by animals, plants and water. The lineage of species has created a land which is co-dependent on each other, living beings such as the reindeer and predators, has travelled across the land to survive and co exist with the agency that Mother Nature holds.

For decades, colonialism has determined the outcome for our lineage, as capitalism and new green energy actions is forcing species to migrate, forced to assimilation. Industrialization of the rivers and old forests is a disruption of past, present and future utopias, and a dismembering of the embodied experiences of Indigenous peoples. Earth-bound beings are co dependent on each other for a harmonious ecology of existing in this world, and by highlighting artistic practices that is built embodied Indigenous testimonies can shift the perspective toward supporting Mother Earth instead of destroying her.

The mountains are stretching out its body from the forests, that are its skin. It is multiplied and renewed by reindeer grazing lands, and organisms and plants that grow upward, downward and underneath Mother Earth.

Even one very small amount of funghi, can be a determining species for saving old forests in Sweden, that we are now trying to validate through field research and documentation in nature. Diamond Willow fungus, as an example, is one important species that are crucial evidence to convince Swedish authorities to stop continued deforestation.

One mountain, that is dependent on the old forests around it to survive is Átjek - Roavvoajvve.

She stretches her body up from the area named Gallók, a vast landscape that used to be fed by big lakes and streams of water and old forests where reindeers can feast on beard leachens. This type of food, are not one plant, but a combination of fungus and algae that benefit and co exist with each other. This area, that amongst other families such as

Jáhkågasske sameby, has been threatened by deforestation and mining for decades by Beowulf Mining, and the Sámi people with the support from Indigenous and the global majority has led an endless fight against the big cooperations that want to destroy it.

One of these Sámi freedom fighters is Tor Lennart Tuorda, grew up in the area of Átjek told me about the forest there:

“The forest on the mountain has a great, sacred significance and place where the connection to the ancestors and mothers is exceptionally present. With its roots from the ice age, the forest exists with all of its creatures preserved and intact. Everyone, is up there in the mountain landscape, endangered species in an oasis surrounded by an industrial scenery.

We can only protect the forest if we do so together. We can only stop the mining if every body keep together in good relation and strive toward the same goal. Indigenous peoples from Sweden, Latinamerica and other parts of the world, as well as all allied with us. Every body who bears knowledge, and understand. Friends with the nature. We are connected.”

In march 2022, after decades of hauling decisions, the Swedish government finally decided to grant Beowulfmining to start the process of digging, and through their own analysis, governmental and national organization determine how they can start to excavate in the most green, considerate and most efficient way possible.

In June 2022, the Sámi Jáhkågasska tjiellde, has now filed a formal legal process in the high court to stop the plans of mining in Gallók and the protests continues just as they did back in 2013.

The biggest and most extensive discourse around sustaining Sámi land, and the land for all inhabitants of the north, is around renewal energy and green energy plans such as mineral extraction for batteries, (electrical cars) instead of, for example, using unclear waste for creating renewable nano batteries (meaning, no established sustainable recycling of these materials are regulated yet by the Swedish government)

The Sámi-parliament, especially Sámi council in Norway are recently included in a bigger, sápmi - eu strategy this year. In this years Eu Sámi week in Brussels, but Sámi representative Åsa Larsson Blind expressed “Governmental mitigations are threatening us, not only the climate change itself. We are expected to give away our lands and water” Which relates to a severely integrated colonial Swedish perspective on the Sámi people being nomads. Moveable, able to move across the territories strategically just like chess pieces.

Mikael kuhmunnen, reindeer herder from jáhkåhkke said “The Sámi people are like water, we adapt ourselves always which is our greatest strength but also weakness. The government is the goose. But what happens if you pour water over the goose? Nothing.”