



KAPWA NILALANG

(BECOMING GOOD KIN)

**RECOVERING OUR EARTH-HONORING
TRADITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY**

Center for Babaylan Studies
2024 Symposium Program Brochure
Maryville Retreat Center, Holly, Michigan
August 23-25, 2024

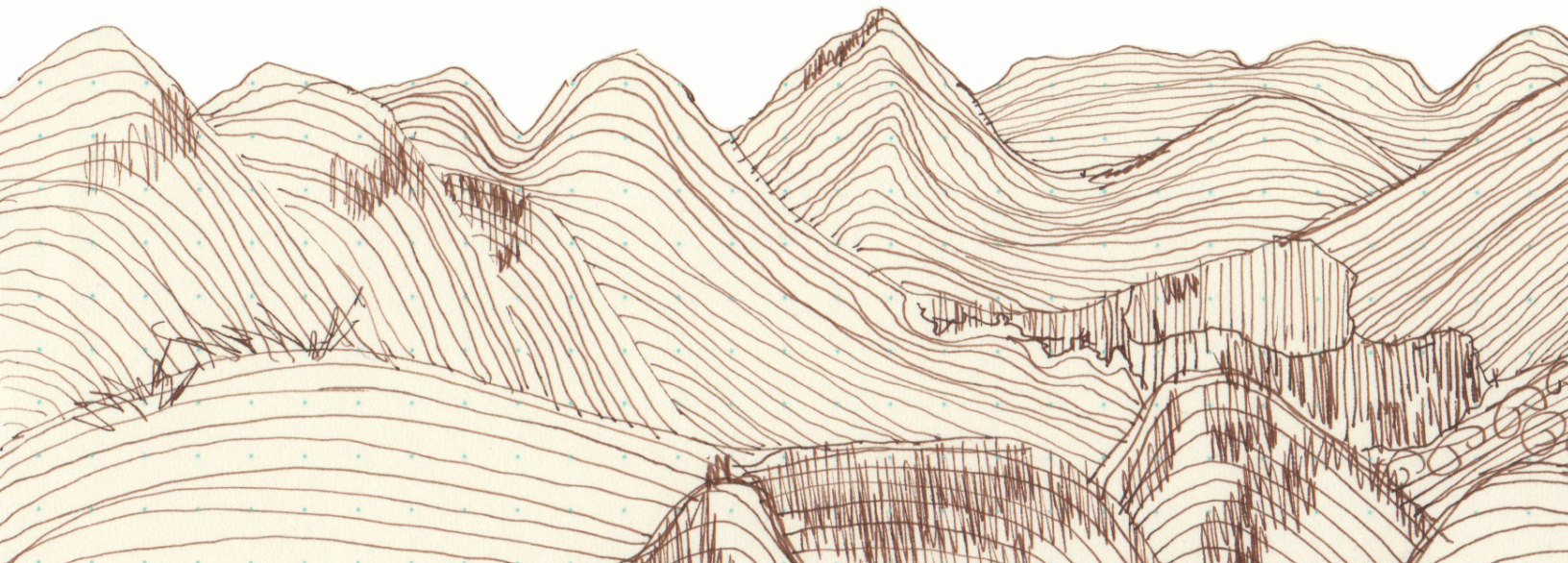


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	<u>3</u>
About CfBS	<u>5</u>
Land Acknowledgement	<u>6</u>
Our Venue	<u>7</u>
Kapwa: Our Community Ethic	<u>8</u>
Symposium Format and Theme	<u>8</u>
Keynote Speakers	<u>10</u>
Logistics	<u>13</u>
COVID Safety	<u>13</u>
Programming Reminders	<u>13</u>
Program Schedule	<u>15</u>
CfBS Core Team	<u>21</u>



WELCOME





Mahal na Kapwa,

We are so happy that you have committed to join us at our 2024 Kapwa Nilalang Symposium!

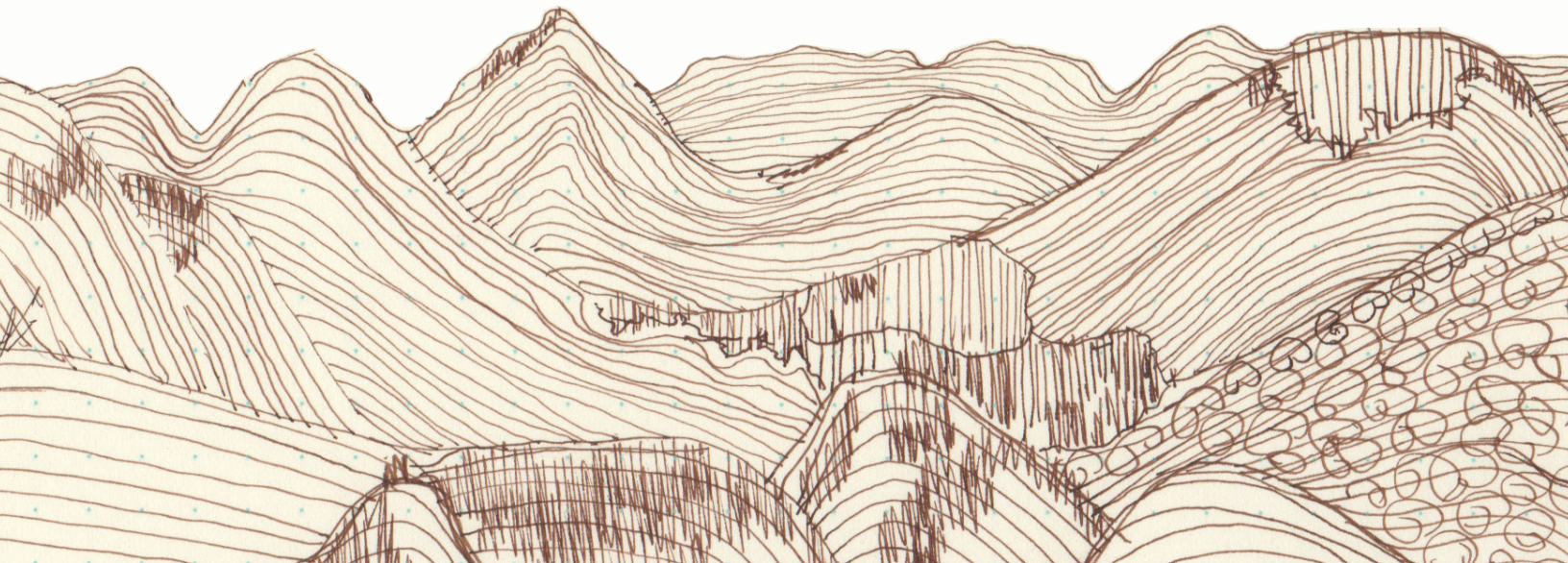
As we noted at our pre-symposium orientation meeting, we count this gathering as momentous for two reasons: one, it is our first in-person CfBS gathering since the pandemic, and two, it is the first in-person event that our all-new volunteer Core Team is organizing (so make sure to give them plenty of love and support). They are a wonderful bunch and truly a delight to work with—Maileen, Cisa, Justine, Alixa, Danielle, Kurt, Eric, and Drew—generously giving of their time and energy on top of tending to their own respective full-time vocations elsewhere.

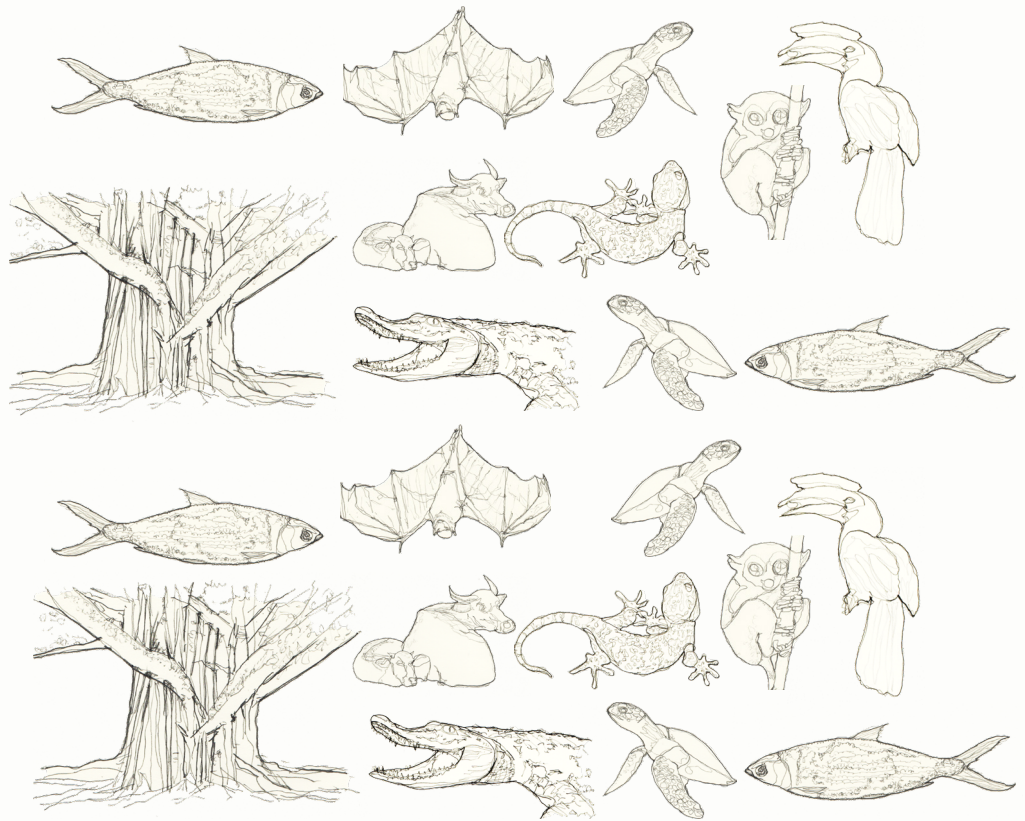
Our desire is that whatever else—magic, puzzlement, questionings—catalyzes during our time together, we all, at the end of it, may come away astonished, hearts held in thrall to a new vision of what could be, and motivated to become feeders of Life and nurturers of others and of our Kapwa Nilalang. And always, always, to remember this is only the beginning—even as we also know that we have so many others who have gone before us in this sacred work.

Let's together co-create something beautiful and worthy of praise that can seed a life-giving culture for a time beyond our own.

Nagmamahal,

Ate Lily and the Core Team: Maileen, Justine, Cisa, Danielle, Kurt, Eric, Alixa, and Drew





ABOUT CFBS

The Center for Babaylan Studies was created to continue the exploration and illumination of Babaylan indigenous wisdom and spirit as part of our ongoing process of decolonization and indigenization – towards Pagbabalikloob (Turning Towards Home) and interrogating our understanding of our shared history of Being “Filipino.” We have come to understand the limits (and pitfalls!) of merely nationalist rallying around “Filipino-ness” for our spiritual grounding even while recognizing the utmost importance of acknowledging our shared history of colonial oppression that has brought us into one national polity called the Philippines. Even more fundamental than a focus on national identity has been the continued trek into our varied indigenous traditions of ancestral wisdom pre-contact when the archipelago hosted more than one hundred sovereign communities interlinked in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural mutuality of trade and respect. This year’s Kapwa Nilalang Symposium sharpens that turn.

The Center for Babaylan Studies is a nonprofit public charity exempt from federal income tax under Section 501[c](3) of the International Revenue Code.

Visit: <https://www.centerforbabaylanstudies.org/mission> for more information.

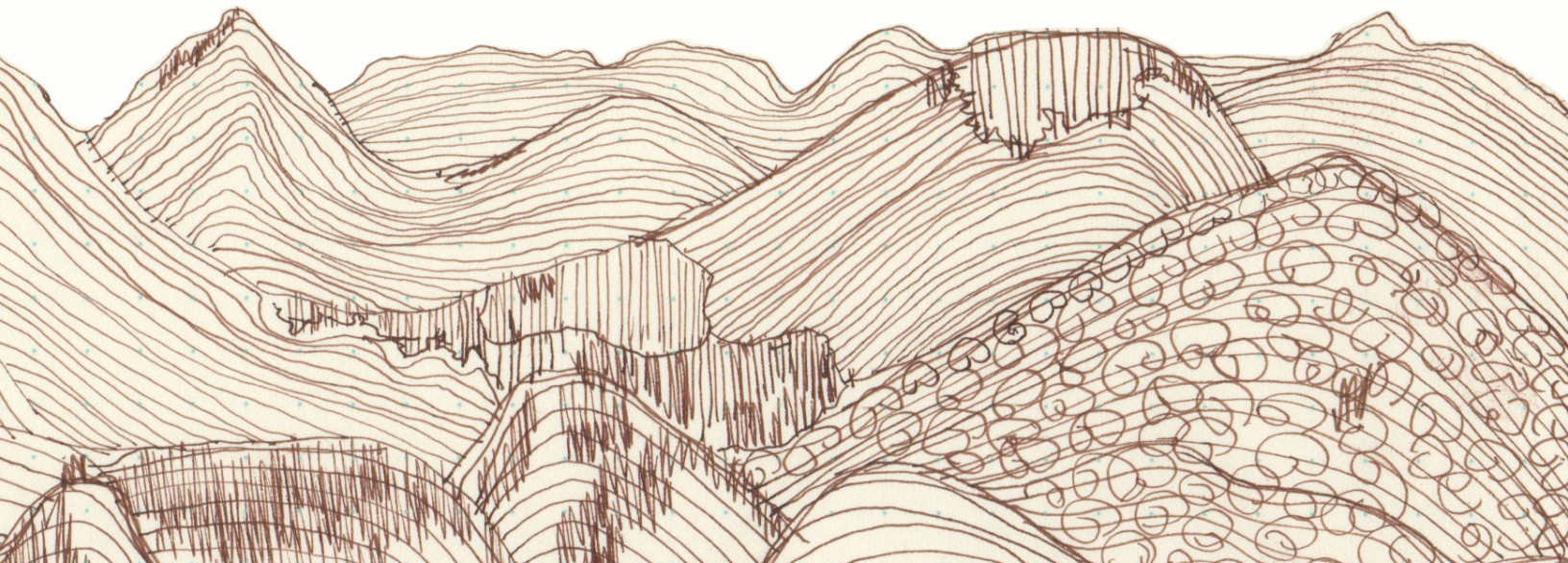
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Maryville is on land that has been—and continues to be—stewarded by multiple nations and peoples. These are the Peoria, Sauk, Mississauga, and Wyandot Nations and the Anishinaabe Peoples (also known as the Niswi-mishkodewin, the Council of Three Fires, made up of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi).

We acknowledge the violent history of genocide, dispossession, and forced removal and relocation of the land's original peoples to make way for European settlement and occupation of native lands. Having come from homelands taken from us multiple times by foreign powers, most notably, Spain and the US, this is a history we share—one whose cultural logic of genocide and apartheid has tried to destroy the peoples of this land and ours and one that continues today in the ongoing genocide and apartheid in Palestine.

At the same time, as diasporic Filipinos, there is a need for us to acknowledge that we also come as settlers on stolen land. In the words of one Mohawk scholar, "It doesn't matter if your people were brought here through historic colonization, as far as Native peoples are concerned, you are still settlers." Given such, we commit to taking steps to learn all we can about the Native history underneath our feet anywhere we go on Turtle Island as part of unlearning our settler privilege and work to remedy the injustice in all the ways we can in our respective places.

May our presence on this land—even only for the weekend—hallow the ground and serve as a small gesture of remembrance toward healing and repair.



OUR VENUE

Our chosen venue for our gathering, Maryville Retreat Center, is sponsored and managed by the Felician Sisters of North America who describe themselves as “a joy-filled congregation of religious women inspired by the spiritual ideals of their Foundress, [Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska](#) and [St. Francis of Assisi](#).”

We are aware that many of us have been harmed and traumatized by the colonial imposition of the Christian religion upon our people and it is not without cognizance of this history that we have gone ahead and chosen Maryville as our venue. This we did after researching on what the Felician Sisters stood for and learning of their commitment to Franciscan Spirituality that, auspiciously, appears to share compatibility with that of our own, namely, the commitment to “simplicity, humility, service, and reverence for all God’s creation.” That we were welcomed warmly by the Maryville staff upon hearing of our purpose was something we felt good about, remembering that Christianity itself began as a movement of escaped slaves and was an outlaw religion inside the Roman Empire before Emperor Constantine adopted it as the official state religion and began using it as a tool of domination and conquest.

We also take inspiration from some of our Indigenous kapwa whose way is not so much exorcism and the search for purity, but “composting” and “metabolizing”—in many cases, allowing Jesus to take his place among the pantheon of other ancestor spirits (and nature deities) as healer and friend of the poor and marginalized.

And like all land in North America—as in most places around the globe—the land Maryville sits on is Native land. While we do not elide the bloody history that enabled European privatization of Native land all across North America and elsewhere, our hope is that our presence may help hallow and re-sacralize this host place (along with all her beings), even only for the weekend.

KAPWA: OUR COMMUNITY ETHIC

We anticipate that being in a group space for a weekend with so many other bodies in close proximity is both an occasion for joyful communion—as well as challenge.

As a decolonizing and indigenizing community, we are enjoined to embody *pakikipagkapwa*—a gracious way of “being-with” others (who are not really others, but part of oneself also). One of the hardest to overcome in our modern cultural formation is the individualistic sense of entitlement (*me first, my needs, my comfort, etc.*). But within a more indigenous understanding, we find that Life is not about us, but about the whole Community of Life of which we are but a part. We hope you’ll see the weekend as a good opportunity to learn the courtesy of approach, of asking permission, and of simply being a good Kin to others.

The Maryville Staff in particular have been very gracious to us, accommodating our needs and requests every which way they can. I hope the way we conduct ourselves over the weekend may serve as a worthy witness to the kind of kin we seek to become (as a people of Philippine descent) especially to those outside our community that we might get to interact with—the cooks, the staff, other guests who might be passing through. How might we serve as a blessing to all the beings in the place that experience our presence?

SYMPOSIUM FORMAT AND THEME

Over the years, CfBS has alternated between two formats in its in-person educational offerings, namely, the relatively smaller, more focused, *symposium* format and the larger, more participatory *conference* format.

In the symposium format, we do not issue a Call for Proposals (CFP); rather, we identify key thematics that we want to explore in-depth with Elders, practitioners, and other wisdom-keepers within our community (both in the diaspora and in the homeland) who can specifically speak to us on those thematics.

The conference, on the other hand, although similarly structured around a given thematic, relies on vetted proposals/presentations coming from the wealth of resources within our Kapwa community. The programming in this latter format often entails several concurrent sessions at any given time slot where participants get to choose which sessions to attend and participate in. CfBS conferences are often held in partnership with a host community that 1) has had some form of relationship with CfBS over the years, 2) shares the same vision

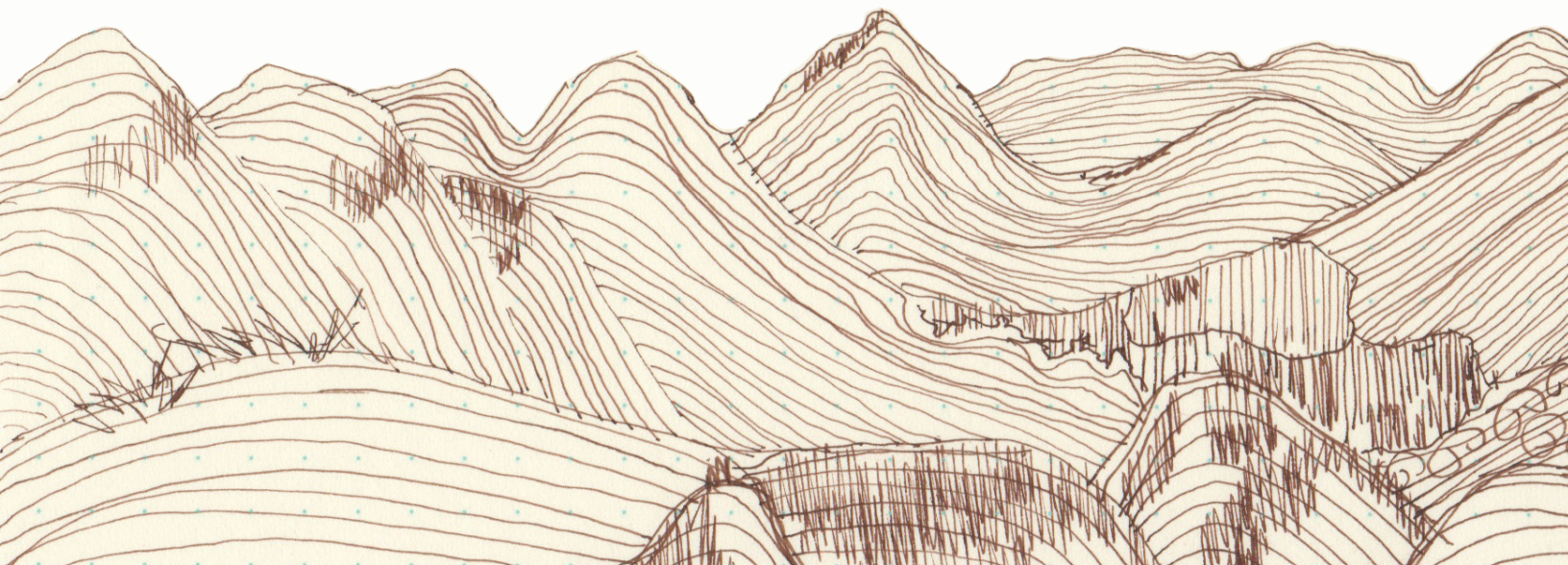
and commitment, and 3) is willing and has capacity to undertake the task of organizing on the ground, including the selection of a suitable conference venue and asking permission from the Indigenous community/ies native to that place.

Kapwa Nilalang is structured as a symposium. Our theme for this year aims to focus on recovering our Earth-honoring traditions of spirituality rooted in the more-than-human world that has shaped the way of being and identities of our Indigenous ancestors, that is, before the rupture of colonialism and the violence of civilizational takeover.

We could have addressed any number of other salient thematics (e.g., our racialization as a minoritized ethnic group within North America, the conundrums of navigating biracial, BIPOC, transgender and other intersectional identities, healing of intergenerational trauma, etc.) but we felt that the urgency of our times requires that we go down to the root and get clear on what our Ninuno, our Indigenous Ancestors, knew that we have fundamentally forgotten, our sacred relationship with the Living Earth, our Mother.

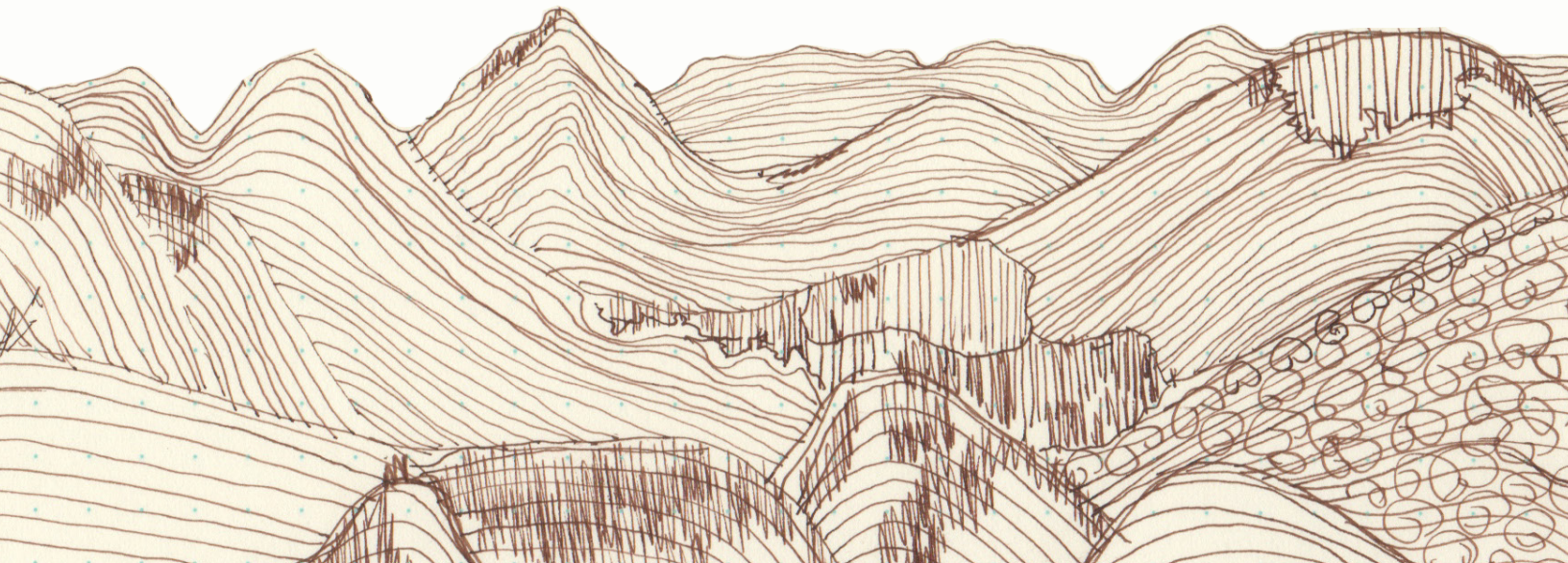
Thus, *Kapwa Nilalang* takes us back to our originary grounding—not in privatized individualism as Pinoys and Pinays seeking to “make it” in a white, hostile, settler colonial world, but as fully connected beings belonging to a wider, more vibrant community of Living Beings that are both Kin and Life Source.

Those of you already in this journey of recovering this sense of sacred connection with Living Earth are invited to an even deeper journey into wonder, mystery, and awe at the immensity of the gift we’ve been given to be alive in this time and at this juncture of our species’ history on the planet—to have the potential and opportunity to shift course, to learn a different way of being that can feed the world once more. And for those of you just taking a first step, welcome, drink deep from the well of remembrance. You are in good company!





KEYNOTE S P E A K E R S





S. LILY MENDOZA

Ate Lily is an Elder and the Executive Director of CfBS. She hails from Pampanga, the homeland of the Ayta peoples and currently resides in Waawiyatanong (aka Detroit) together with her life partner, James (Jim) Perkinson. She is Full Professor of Culture and Communication at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan and is known for her pathbreaking work on decolonization, indigeneity, and critique of the cultural logic of modernity and civilization particularly within the Philippine diasporic and homeland contexts. Together with her poet-activist-scholar partner, Jim, she has been studying with Tzutujil Mayan-trained teacher Martín Prechtel for over a decade now, growing in her sense of awe and wonder at the magnificent mystery that is the Holy in nature.



LENY MENDOZA STROBEL

My [Ate Leny's] [website](#) contains links to a body of work that I am supposedly the author of. That's not true. What is true is that I have merely been the scribe of a movement that I have been blessed to be a part of. It was the voice of the historical babaylans that called out to me; it is the babaylan spirit that keeps poking me so I can stay awake. It was a Filipina elder who sternly told me: *Leny, you have a responsibility to your community. Write that book and get it published.*



LANE WILCKEN

[Lane](#) is an artisan of ancient technology, and art. He is widely recognized by the Filipino-American community as a “mambabatok,” a cultural tattoo practitioner only using ancient hand-tapped tattoo techniques. Lane Wilcken has been researching the indigenous past of the Philippines and the Pacific Islands for nearly two decades, incorporating oral traditions, written history, linguistics, and personal experience. His ancestral ties to this work continue to motivate his research.



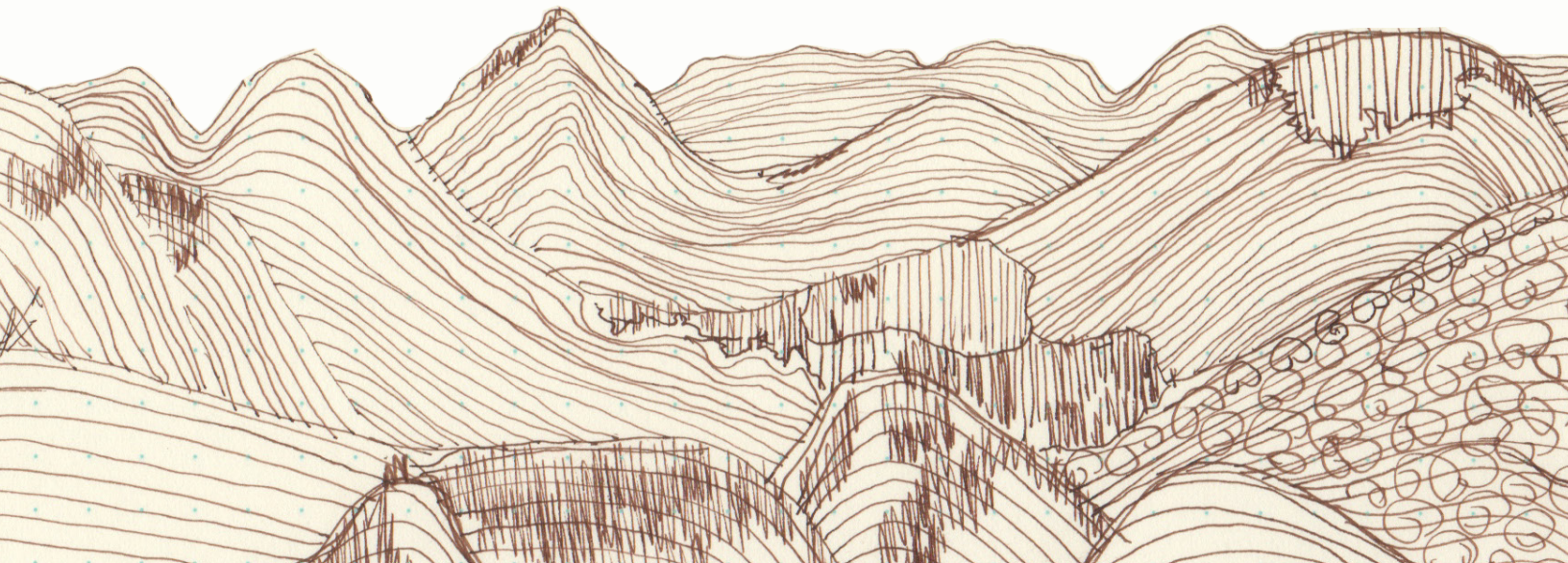
LUKAYO (LUKE) ESTRELLA

A wordslinger and healer from the Bikol diaspora, Lukayo is based on the unceded and unsundered territories of the Anishinaabe (Algonquin), in so-called Ottawa, Canada. When not daydreaming of starting a sanctuary with land defenders and nonbinary witches, Lukayo is running retreats at a land co-operative or hanging out at their home made up of gay-mers and queerdos. Check out Lukayo.com to know more.



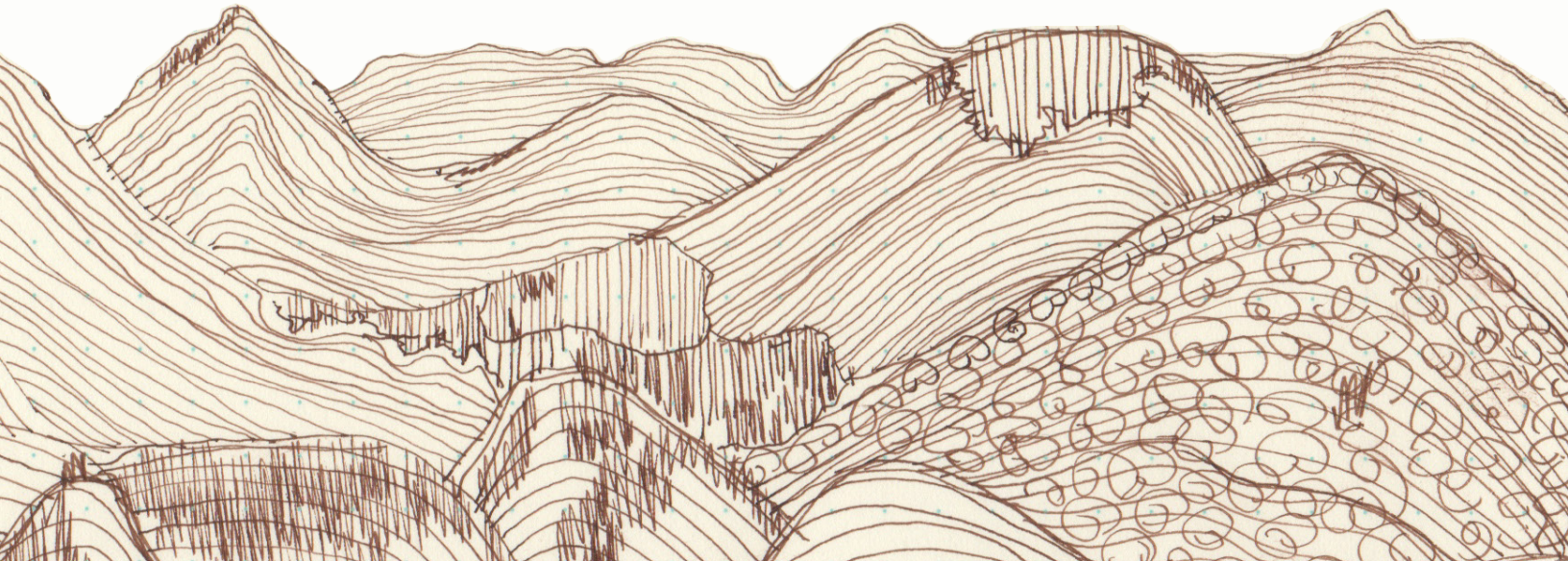
JAMES W. PERKINSON

James W. Perkinson is a white settler colonist being slow-cooked into a bit of alternative responsibility by immersion in 40-plus years of Black survival bombast in the key of communalized rhythm, 23 years of Filipino resilience and beauty in marital intimacy, and 13 years of Native Turtle-Islander challenge and schooling under tutelage to Anishinaabe/Tzutujil visionary Martín Prechtel—as indeed, a 3-year feeding-and-scolding relationship with a local red-bird pair where I live in inner city Detroit/Wawiaatanong. In addition to various activist commitments, I am an artist on the spoken-word poetry scene, have authored eight books, and currently teach as Professor of Social Ethics at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary.





LOGISTICS



Metro Detroit does not have a robust public transportation network. For folks coming from outside Michigan, we recommend utilizing Lyft or Uber with someone arriving at a similar time to allow for a more affordable ride.

Below are rideshare pickup instructions from DTW Airport:

[Rideshare To and From DTW](#)

[Uber information for DTW](#)

[Lyft information for DTW](#)

There are also options for private shuttle service for up to 6 passengers that can be secured through various organizations such as [Metro Cars](#) or the [Detroit Limo Service](#).

The address for Maryville Retreat Center is:

18307 Taylor Lake Road

Holly, Michigan 48442

If you have other questions, please reach out to Alixa Lacerna, CfBS Core Volunteer, at <mailto:alacerna@centerforbabaylanstudies.org>.

COVID SAFETY

With COVID reportedly on the rise again, we want to keep our community safe. Although masking is not mandatory, we deem it still good practice to do so in indoor spaces.

Part of our Kapwa ethic is to be mindful particularly of those among us who may have weakened or compromised immune systems and thus at greater risk for severe illness. Let's practice care and [observe sanitation and safety guidelines](#) at all times.

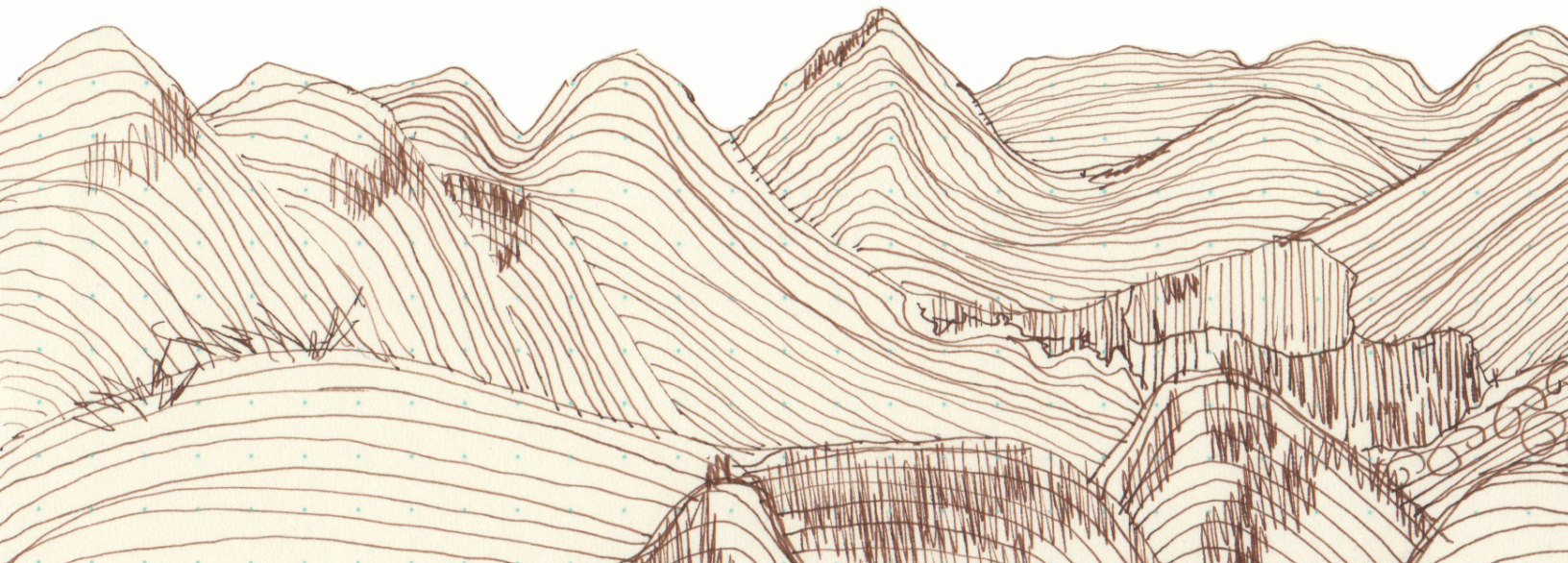
PROGRAMMING REMINDERS

The following are useful reminders for us all:

1. Feel free to practice appropriate self-care. That can mean any number of things, e.g., hydrating (bring your own water containers), finding the most optimal space for you to sit in the plenary hall, stepping away, moving your body and pacing yourself as needed (there's no judgment, provided such is done with care and thoughtfulness of kapwa). You may also approach any of the CfBS Core Team members (identified by their different color lanyard or name tag holder) for any questions/support, etc.

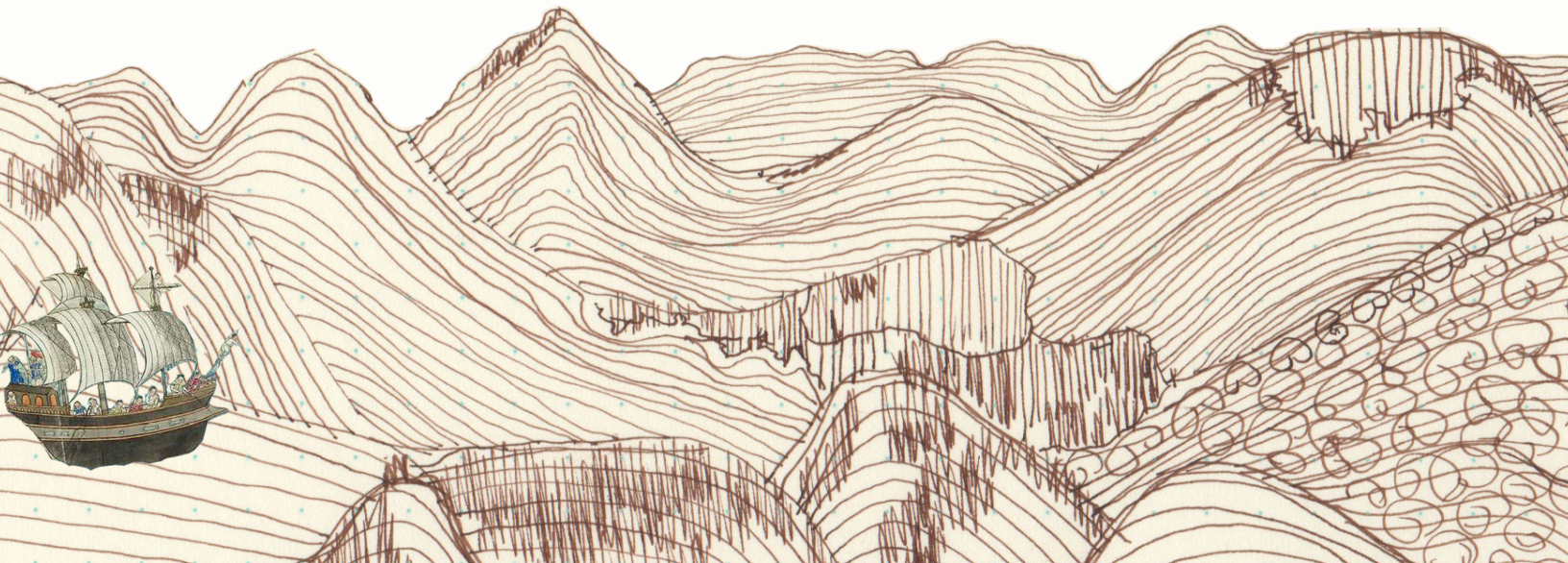
2. For our ritual ceremonies don't forget:

- Your one-sentence description of your sacred object for our collective altar.
- Tablespoonful or two of soil from your place of habitation (no worries if you're traveling internationally and can't bring any).
- From now until our meeting, dream, research, get intimately acquainted with your designated group Kapwa Nilalang (email instructions sent previously).
- Atang (food offering): Every meal time, as a way to acknowledge the beings that have had to give up their lives (whether plant, animal, or fish beings) that we may eat and live, we try to leave a tiny bit (not much) of every piece of the bodies represented on our plates onto the offering bowl at the center of every dining table. Accompany this gesture with a silent thought of "thank you" to each being before partaking of their bodies on your plate. (The collective food offering will be collected at the end of each mealtime and placed ritually into a compost bin to let it be turned into nourishment for other beings.)
- Blanket or yoga mat: Bernard Runo, one of our fellow participants, is offering a complimentary sound bath on Saturday morning to set intentions for a day of learning and building community. Weather-dependent, the 45-minute session may be done indoors or outdoors. Folks can be sitting or lying down on a yoga mat or blanket. You may bring a pillow and blanket for comfort. Learn more about Bernard's practice [here](#).





PROGRAM SCHEDULE





FRIDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 23, 2024 **ALL TIMES EASTERN**

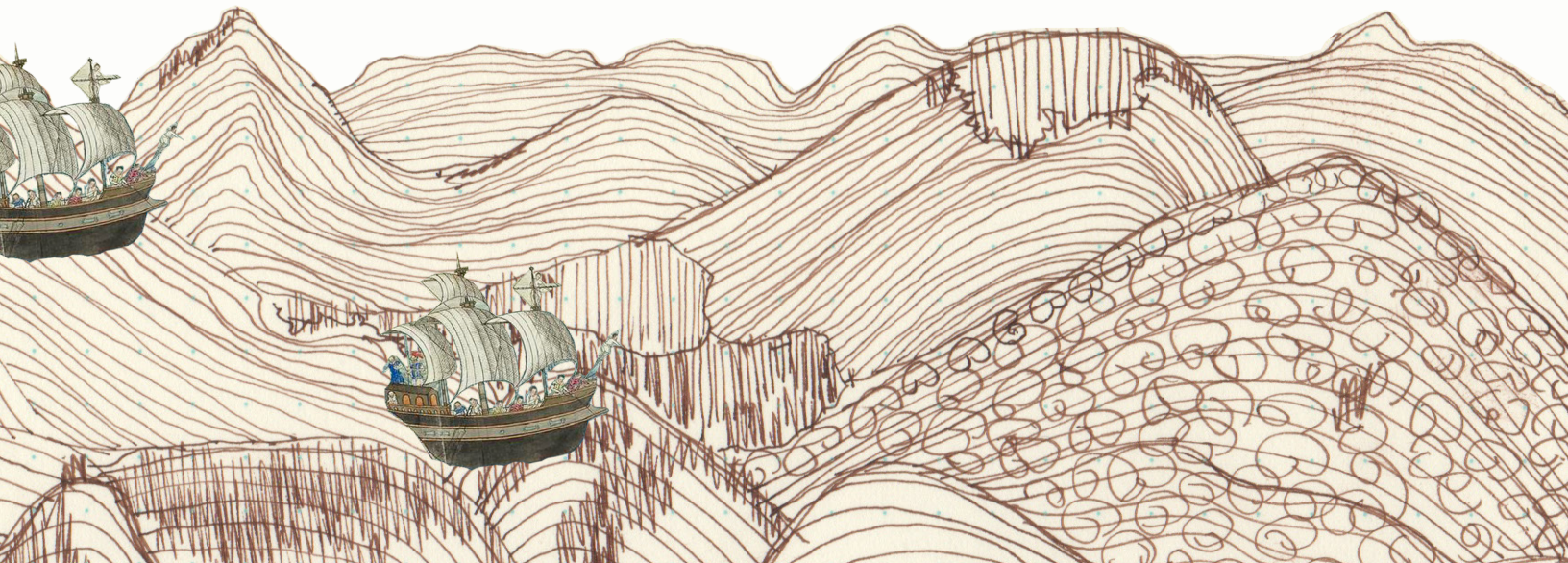
- 2:00 - 5:00 Participant Check-in and Registration
- 5:00 - 6:00 Welcome Ceremony (to be held by the waterfront)
Guest: Rosebud Bear, Anishinaabe Seed Keeper
- 6:00 - 7:00 Dinner
- 7:00 - 9:00 Opening Night (Building Our Collective Altar)
- 9:00 - 9:30 Evening Send-Off

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2024

- 7:30 - 8:15 Morning Optional Sound Bath (venue TBD)
- 8:30 - 9:30 Breakfast (Atang Reminder)

SATURDAY MORNING PLENARIES: LOSSES

- 9:30 - 10:45 “What Have We Lost and How Did We Lose It?
Finding Our Way Back Home”
Ate Lily Mendoza
- 10:45 - 11:00 Merienda Time (Coffee/Tea break)
- 11:00 - 12:15 “The Big Picture and the Little Question (What the Little
People Have to Say about Where We Went Wrong)”
Jim Perkinson
- 12:15 - 12:30 Small Group Breakout/Reflection Session
- 12:30 - 1:15 Lunch





SATURDAY AFTERNOON PLENARIES: RECOVERINGS

- 1:15 - 2:15 “Nature/The Wild as Our Teacher”
Lane Wilcken
- 2:15 - 2:30 Small Group Sharing (Prompt: When, if ever, have you experienced the numinous/sacred in Nature?)
- 2:30 - 3:45 “The Ceremony of My Life, The Ceremony of CfBS: An Ethnoautobiographical Accounting”
Ate Leny Strobel
- 3:45 - 4:00 Coffee/Tea Break
- 4:00 - 5:00 “Relating to Our Tools as Animate Beings”
Lukayo (Luke) Estrella
- 5:00 - 5:30 Large Breakout Groups with Kapwa Nilalang Designations (Task: Prepare a group presentation around your designated Kapwa Nilalang - see page 20)
- 5:30 - 6:15 Dinner
- 6:15 - 7:00 Finalize Group Presentations (and if you get done early, feel free to utilize the rest of the time as you please)
- 7:00 - 9:00 Kapwa Nilalang Celebrations
- 9:00 - 9:30 Nightcap





SUNDAY MORNING AUGUST 25, 2024

- 7:00 - 8:00 Morning personal ritual
Pack, clean up room, get ready for check out
- 8:30 - 9:30 Breakfast
- 9:30 - 11:45 Closing Ceremony
Community Reflections
Closing of the Collective Altar
Pasalamat/Send off
Closing Ritual
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 pm Everyone departs Maryville Retreat Center

PAALAM, HANGGANG SA MULI! *(Tagalog)*

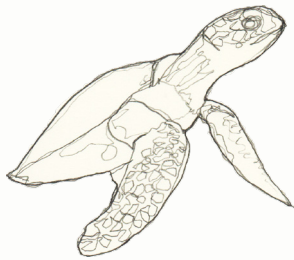
MAMUN NA KE PA. ANGA KENG PASIBAYU! *(Kapampangan)*

INGAT PO KAYO! *(Tagalog)*

AMPING UG AYO-AYO! *(Cebuano)*



KAPWA NILALANG



PAWIKAN

Several species of sea turtle



TUKO

Tokay Gecko



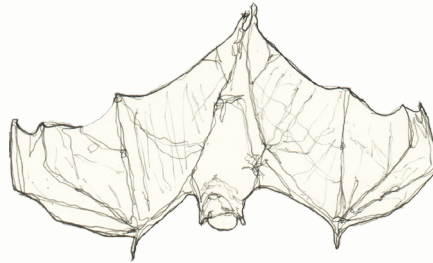
KALABAW

Carabao



MAWUNAG

Philippine Tarsier



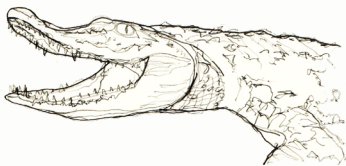
KULALAKNIT

Giant Golden-Crowned Flying Fox



TALUSI

Palawan Hornbill



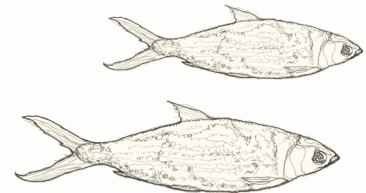
BUWAYA

Philippine Freshwater Crocodile



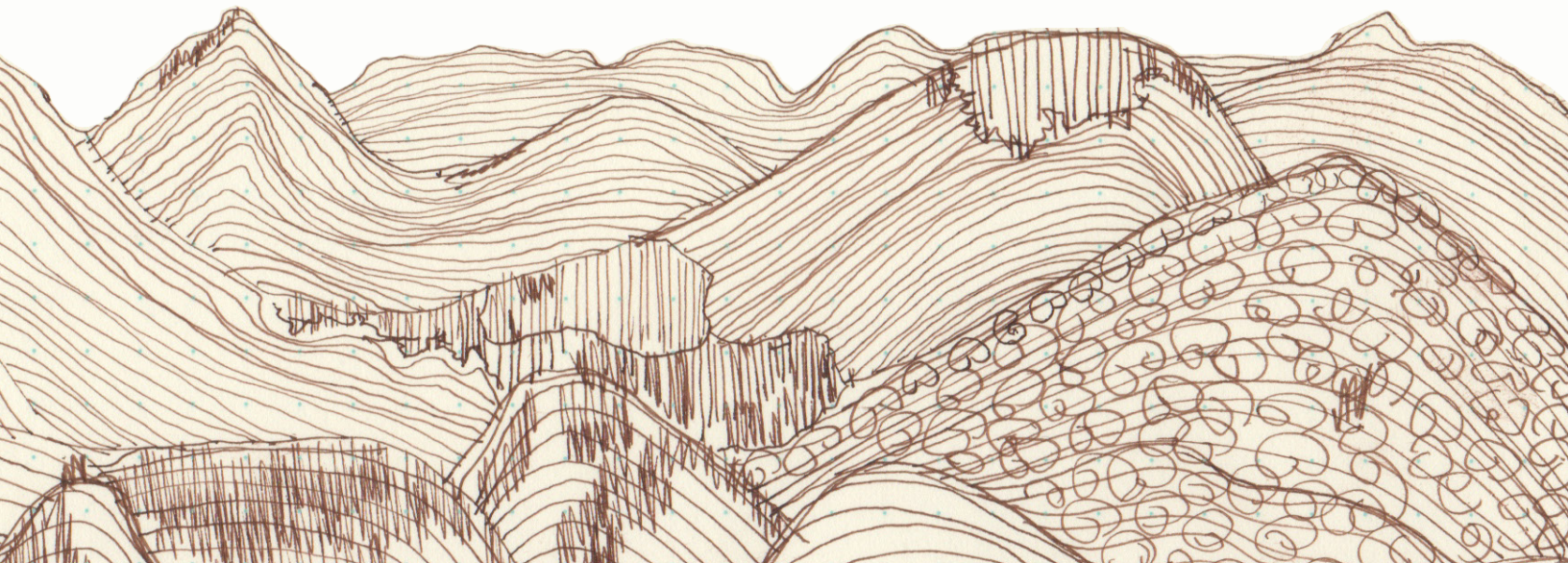
BALETE

Several species from genus *Ficus*



BANGUS

Milkfish



DAGHANG SALAMAT,
CFBS
CORE TEAM



S. Lily Mendoza
Alix Lacerna
Cisa Payuyo
Danielle Daguio
Drew Pineda
Eric Wilson
Justine Villanueva
Kurt Manuel
Maileen Hamto

