

# Tree Meditation: Attention and Justice

“We English speakers are frequently at a loss for words when talking about nature. We say ‘it’ to trees, rivers, and birds, as if they were objects. But in many Indigenous languages the grammar recognizes the animacy of the world. A bay is not an ‘it,’ but a being. A maple tree is not an object, but a relative. When language teaches us to see the living world this way, our relationship with the land begins to change.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

## 1. Arrive and Notice

Sit quietly near the meditation tree. Observe carefully: leaves moving, sounds of wind or birds, textures of bark and soil, and patterns of light and shadow. Give the tree your full attention.

## 2. Animate the Language

English often refers to trees with the word ‘it.’ Try using animate or living language instead. Silently describe the tree using the word ‘being’ rather than ‘it.’ For example: ‘this being is sharing shade,’ ‘this being moves with the wind,’ or ‘this being has stood here through many seasons.’ Notice whether this shift changes how you perceive the tree.

## 3. Listening for Testimony

Imagine the tree could offer testimony about this place. What might this being know about seasons, animals, climate, or how humans treat this space? What knowledge might be overlooked when the natural world is treated only as an object?

## 4. Reflection

How does language influence whether the natural world becomes something we listen to rather than something we use? Did this shift in attention change how you felt in relation to the tree? What positive effects—calm, curiosity, connection, care—did this form of attention have on you as the observer?

