



PUBLIC LECTURE

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Monday, May 7th | 4:10-6:00pm
Andrews Conference Room
2203 Social Sciences and Humanities Building

Rooting into the Planthroposcene: Unsettling Restoration Ecology in an Ancient and Urban Oak Savannah

This talk explores ways of unsettling colonial conceptions of land in ecological restoration projects. High Park, a 400-acre pleasure park in downtown Toronto, encloses a number of remnants of an ancient and rare black oak savannah. Oak savannahs are nature cultures, par excellence. Their widely spaced oak trees, tall prairie grasses and wildflowers are not just the effects of natural forces: these fire-dependent ecologies rely on people with the knowledge and skill to use fire to keep the grasslands open and the oaks thriving. In this sense, oak savannahs are coextensive with the deep cultural history of Indigenous life on these lands. Today the care of these lands is in the hands of the City's Urban Forestry staff who conduct controlled

burns and remove invasive species. This talk asks: What precisely do they seek to restore? What natures and what cultures are in-the-making as the City attempts to save the oak savannahs? And how does the scientific management of these lands perpetuate colonial erasure of Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures? This ongoing fieldwork is part of a larger project that examines ways that people stage relations with plants in sites like gardens and parks. *Rooting into the Planthroposcene* pushes past the alienating, anthropocentric logics of the Anthropocene to explore ways that people are "conspiring" (Choy 2016) with plants to grow livable worlds.

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