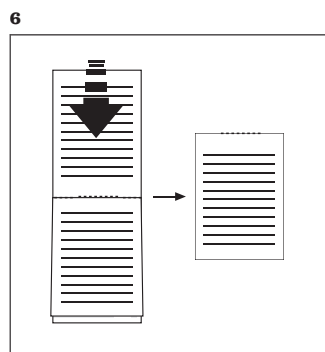
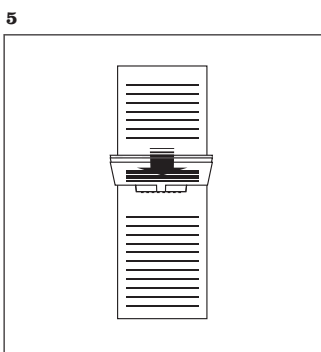
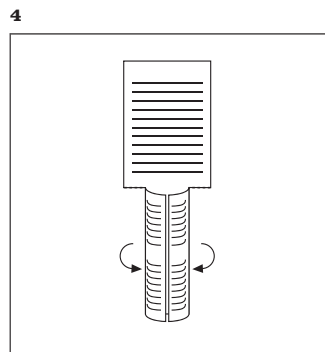
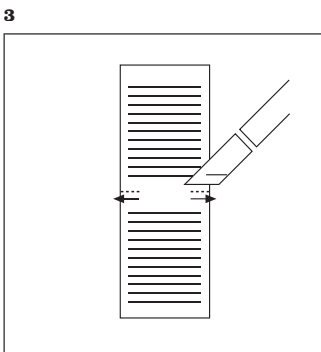
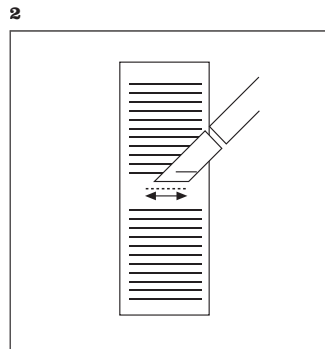
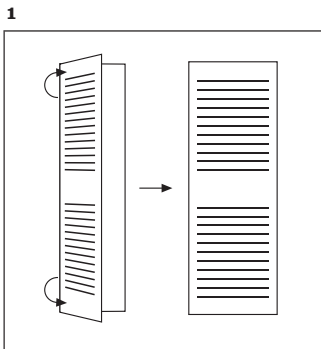


DIFFUSION



Construction

1 First, fold each A4 sheet in half along the vertical axis.

2 Using a craft knife or scalpel, cut a horizontal slot along the centre dotted line of the first A4 sheet. (pages 1/2/13/14)

3 Then cut along the dotted lines on all the other sheets. Make sure to cut to the very edges of the paper.

4 Stack the folded sheets in ascending order with the even numbers at the top. Curl the bottom half of the second A4 page (pages 3/4/23/24).

5 Thread the curled page through the centre slot of the first A4 page. Repeat this process with the third (pages 5/6/21/22), fourth (pages 7/8/19/20), fifth (pages 9/10/17/18), and sixth A4 sheet (pages 11/12/15/16) with the even pages in ascending order.

6 When all the pages have been threaded through, check the pagination. Finally, fold the booklets in half along the horizontal axis.

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white snowscape of the arctic, where the language of the Inavialut embeds them in their oikos, their home, there lies a similar parallel ontology of white space. Nothingness, no-thing-ness.

**through seven heavens
a shaman's journey
into boundless hues of opacity
towards the luminous core
lost
in the centre of existence**

It's not just the Inavialut culture that is lost for words. While we have been busy evolving our post-modern languages to communicate the onslaught of technology and the giddy ecstasy of our own apparent cleverness, we have missed the Language has its limits, just like the human beings that use it. When we reach these limits, the words run out. Now that we are experiencing the unsettling symptoms of global climate change and of the Earth's finite capacity to support us, should it be any surprise to find ourselves speechless?

Where the words finish and the white page is left, where the blizzard-filled sky meets the pure white of a snowy horizon: At this edge we can choose either to enter a dead end of desolation and nihilism, or a space filled with infinite possibility – the 'potential space' for creating a new form of consciousness altogether.²

Words become inadequate at the boundary of new experience. So often they are the first and most obvious companion for a journey to the edge of Being, but sometimes they fail us. To run out of words is to stand at the edge of the unknown, at the cusp of The Mystery. There is something both frightening and exhilarating about this: The excitement of an impending adventure, the fear of formlessness.

"On Banks Island, in the Canadian Arctic, environmental shifts are happening so fast that the Inavialut inhabitants do not have the words to describe what they now see around them."¹

No Words

David Key

fact that the world we have learned to describe – the world we have apparently evolved to live so well in – is increasingly a virtual world created by seductive marketing and the haphazard structural violence of our post-industrial culture. A language unhitched from the simple ecological realities of life.

English has been abused, it has been moulded to fit an arrogant, abstract, disconnected, technocratic, dominating and violent culture. It is less now a language from the land, more a trade-marked and branded servant of industrialism. From text to txt.

We are left unable to articulate the complex ecological danger we are in – a bewildering experience for our seemingly sophisticated species. Our intellectual separation of mind from matter and of body from spirit, has led to a chasm between our contemporary description of selfhood and the blood and soil of our own Earthly existence.

Language emerges *through* humans *from* land, an expression of our connection to place. To be lost for words is a call to reconnect with home.

high in a wild blizzard undefined adrift edgeless

Liquid Geography

NO WORDS

David Key

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ABOUT LIQUID GEOGRAPHY

This publication is one of the third Liquid Geography series commissioned by Proboscis. This series was commissioned alongside the Topographies & Tales project in 2005 and 2006, which is about perceptions of place and geography, revealing small local stories against the larger picture of how our concept of space and environment is shaped by physical and aural experience. It involved a series of collaborations and includes a short film, an audio CD, a StoryBox of StoryCubes, two series of Diffusion eBooks and a Creative Lab. This series of books explores these issues with a particular emphasis on language, memory, and aural experience.

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1 ROBERT MACFARLANE: *The Burning Question*, The Guardian. London: 24 September 2005.

2 D. W. WINNICOTT: *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1971, pp. 44 - 62.

3 USHA LEE MCFARLING: *The Arctic Meltdown. Quick Thaw Alarms Natives and Scientists*, The Seattle Times, 15 April 2002.

4 JEANETTE ARMSTRONG: *Keepers of the Earth*, in, ROSZAK et al (eds): *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1995, p. 323.

5 MCFARLING, *ibid*.

6 KENNETH WHITE: *An Outline of Geopoetics*, in, KENNETH WHITE: *The Wanderer and His Charts*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004.

7 WILLIAM JAMES: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London: Penguin, 1902.

8 MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN HEIDEGGER: *Buddhism and Deep Ecology*, in CHARLES GUIGNON (ed): *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. 1993, p. 243.

**in the expansive white space
of the physical snowscape
the transcendent takes form**

gravity takes me
ski tips lift on the powdery snow
no sense of ground
flight
now lifted to nothing
now held weightless
now part of the snow
now just snow

There is less *umngbagek*, less safe ground.
We're all on thin ice.

"In Chukotka, where the natives speak
Siberian Yupik, they use new words such
as *misullijung* – rainy snow – and are less
likely to use words like *umngbagek* – ice
that is safe to walk on."⁵

In Siberia, it's a shift in emphasis that reveals the ecological change:

"The Okanagan word for 'our place' and
'our language' "is the same. The Okanagan
language is thought of as the 'language of
the land.'"⁴

Armstrong writes:
Some languages are still connected, still embedded. Jeanette
– change that is exceeding the speed of industrial evolution.
describe things that have been displaced by climate change
equivalent for in their own language, English words that
These are words in English that the Inuvialut have no

*Lighthouse/Barn Owl/Hornet/Robin/Elk/
Salmon/Wasp/Thunderstorm*³

The Inuvialut languages' short comings in describing a
rapidly changing human ecology point not to its inability
to evolve, but to the way it connects a specific place with a
specific language. When the exotic curiosities of another land
suddenly arrive, the language cannot cope.

high in a wild blizzard
undefined
adrift
edgeless

in the expansive white space
of the physical snowscape
the transcendent takes form

into white
skis straight ahead
featureless, without depth
no horizon
white time
white space
white noise

curiosity carries me
the sick twist of the unknown
draws me higher, lighter
no control
surrender
release

through seven heavens
a shaman's journey
into boundless hues of opacity
towards the luminescent core
lost
in the centre of existence

into white
skis straight ahead
featureless, without depth
no horizon
white time
white space
white noise

now lifted to nothing
now held weightless
now part of the snow
now just snow

This is the way home: *Opening* through poetry to a new consciousness. A new language of the Earth, born of the Earth.

"more than 'poetry concerned with the environment, more than literature with some sort of geographical content ... Geopoetics is concerned, fundamentally, with a relationship to the earth and with the opening of a world." 6

Many contemporary indigenous languages connect to concepts in ways that are geophysical. In modern European languages, Kenneth White calls this 'geopoetics' and suggests that poetry is the path to re-engage with land,

To transcend the numbing complexities of human existence, the philosopher Martin Heidegger would take his students skiing. The ski tip breaking track in the snow, he proposed, was the closest he could get to a description of human Being. He called the space created as the ski tip broke the snow, 'the clearing':

*"Heidegger maintained (...) that the human being is not a thing but rather a peculiar kind of nothingness: the temporal-linguistic clearing, the opening, the absencing in which things can present themselves and thus 'be'."*⁸

Poetry signs the way into the *clearing*. Entering the whiteness of the page parallels a journey into wilderness, deep into the choice between nihilism and infinite possibility.

Is the poetry of the wild then, the clearing into which the new languages of the Earth can manifest? Is our loss of words not a loss at all, but the opening of a window into a new Earth consciousness?

**curiosity carries me
the sick twist of the unknown
draws me higher, lighter
no control
surrender
release**

**gravity takes me
ski tips lift on the powdery
snow
no sense of ground
flight**

Poetry is the metaphysical edge of human language, a conduit to the mystic, a place along the continuum of expression just before the point where experience becomes ineffable. A loss of words indicates the presence of powers beyond human control, powers that *contain* human Being, along with the collective unconscious of the whole Universe. When we meet these forces in the physical realm, we are humbled – in any language. Our wordlessness is testament to this threshold and at this point the balance of power in the socially constructed dualism between humans and Nature is dissolved. We go, as indigenous Australians say, 'back in'.

In poetry, it is not so much the words themselves, but the whiteness around them, the spaces between them, where the possibility of a new language lies. It's there in The Void, in the linguistic wilderness, that form can start to take shape around the nuclei of a new ecological consciousness.

It's in the physical wilderness too that the same ecological consciousness can take root. It's fascinating that in the vast

*"Ineffability – its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others."*⁷

William James wrote in 1902 that one of the four characteristics of a mystic experience is: outpost before silence, before blank white space.

Poetry sits at the periphery of language, the last linguistic