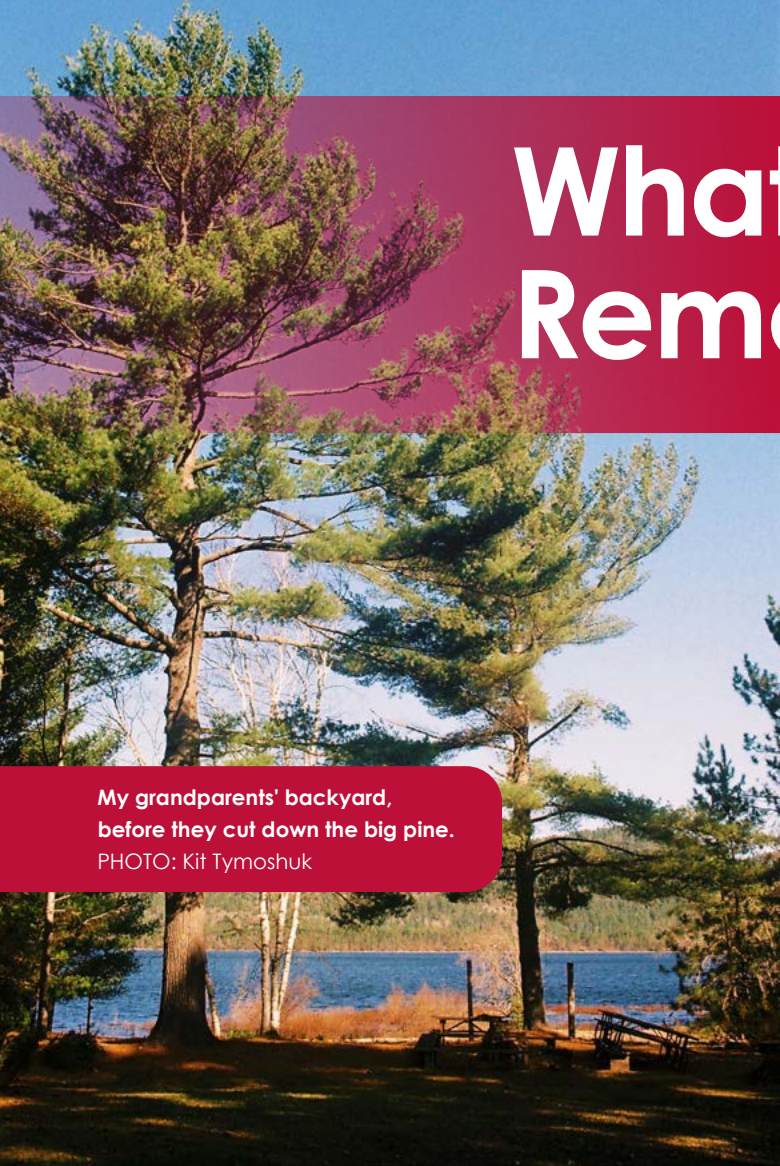


What Do We Remember?

by **KIT TYMOSHUK**
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My grandparents' backyard,
before they cut down the big pine.

PHOTO: Kit Tymoshuk

TAKE ACTION

Stand by the ocean and listen to the waves.
Walk through the forest and notice the
dappled sunlight falling through the trees. Sit in
a meadow and feel the grass brush your legs.
Remember the joy of these moments.

When I was a child, I used to make snow tunnels in my grandparents' backyard. I can't tell you how much snow there used to be. All I remember is it felt boundless, like more than anything I could understand at the time. My sister and I would spend afternoons imagining that we were snow leopards, hiding in our cave and eating snow for dinner, waiting for spring. I don't know how the snow disappeared over the years. Was there less and less until there was none? Or did it just leave one year and never come back? My memory is unreliable, which is to say, I am forgetting the past and I am scared. What happens when things change? Will I remember everything I've lost?

We have always had a deep connection to the land we live on. When I walk down to the river behind my grandparents' house, I know every spot; I've skipped rocks and captured minnows in the shallows. This sandy shore reminds me of every past version of myself, every year of growing and learning. The land remembers

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the past, too; a chronological retelling of billions of years of weathering, sedimentation and fossils, telling a clear story about the changes our planet has experienced. But there are also things the Earth cannot remember. The sound of a glacier-fed stream long dried up. The vibrant colours of a coral reef, now bleached and deserted. A child's footprints in the sand, washed away as soon as they were made.

These types of memories belong to us: sights, sounds and sensations we carry with us to connect to the world. Unlike the layers of history in Earth's crust, we can't remember everything exactly as it happened. I'll never remember exactly how the snow disappeared as I grew up. But I'll always remember the feeling of delight in crawling through a snow tunnel I could stand up in. When I look at photo albums with my Granny, there are photos of me in places that don't exist anymore. In one photo I'm sitting on a red swing hanging from the big pine tree in their backyard. That tree is gone now. My grandparents cut it down because they were afraid it would fall in a storm and hit the house. Every time I look out the back window, I forget what the landscape looked like when it was still growing. But looking at that photo, the tree is alive; I'm swinging from the big branch as my dad pushes me, screaming and laughing because this is the best moment of my life.

Climate change is collective grief. We don't know when we will lose what we have; we don't know when those memories will become all that we have left. Once something is gone, it can feel like it never existed. And it's hard not to mourn things before they end; every day I feel like I am grieving a world I still live in. But I want to love. I want to love, I want to feel, I want to live. And I might not remember the specifics, but I will remember those feelings. So, I will love and lose, again and again. And I will decide, again and again, to keep that love with me when I think about what I've lost. I will not be sitting scared, waiting around for everything to change. I will be loving my life.