



2023 IA National Gathering

Radical Reckoning: Invoking the Elements for Collective Change

[Call for Participation](#)

Providence, Rhode Island | Friday, October 20 – Sunday, October 22, 2023

In partnership with College Unbound, AS220, the City of Providence, and a diverse local Steering Committee, Imagining America (IA) invites participants to gather in Providence, Rhode Island for the in-person 2023 IA National Gathering. Invoking the cleansing work of fire, the changing form of water, the steadiness of the earth, and the ethereal nature of air, **the 2023 IA National Gathering conjures the elements to guide the radical work of reckoning with the past to create a future of collective liberation.**

Reckoning is the practice of taking full account. It requires digging down to the roots—to be radical. While radical reckoning may unearth uncomfortable truths, past harms, and the origins of ongoing injustices, it also reveals the foundations of enduring cultural heritage, creative ecological adaptation, and the sources of physical and spiritual sustenance.

Taking full account is necessary to bring about lasting change in ourselves, our communities, and our institutions. The work of reckoning requires a shared commitment to listen and care for each other, constant reflection in our practices, and a (re)connection to the land and places that we inhabit. Sitting with “what is” through a process of reckoning is the first step towards imagining and then creating collective change that is radically grounded.

The 2023 IA National Gathering invokes the elements of fire, water, earth, and air to inspire collaboration, offer new lessons and approaches, and demonstrate how reckoning is both reflective and active. **Fire** shows that sometimes things have to burn to make new growth possible. **Water** reflects not only the birthing of new beings but also new ways of being. **Earth** provides a material connection to deep time and the origins of all life. **Air** brings us closer to our ancestors and the spirit world so that we can manifest that which is yet to be imagined. Together the elements teach us about regenerative and intergenerational cycles of life.

We invite you to submit a proposal to the 2023 IA National Gathering that deepens our understanding of the practices of radical reckoning, explores how the elements inspire creative and generative approaches to this work, and imagines the collective change required for a shared, liberatory future.

About the Organizers

Imagining America (IA) is a national consortium that brings together scholars, artists, designers, humanists, and organizers to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. Efforts are currently underway to reckon with legacies of racial injustice in Rhode Island and enact a new cultural plan for the City of Providence. Through this unique collaboration with **College Unbound**, **AS220**, and the **City of Providence**, the IA National Gathering invites participants to reckon with past harms and draw upon the power of intergenerational arts and education for collective change. AS220 teaches us that art making is community building; the City of Providence models how to collectively imagine a process and practice of reparations and cultural transformation; and College Unbound, a school for adults who have been harmed by traditional educational systems, reimagines the radical potential of higher education.

The 2023 IA National Gathering will explore such questions as:

- What can we learn from fire, water, earth, or air, either metaphorically or literally, as it applies to cultural organizing, public scholarship, or institutional change work?
 - How might a process of slow, controlled burning create conditions for new possibilities?
 - What does the shapeshifting and placemaking power of water teach us about navigating the present?
 - How does the earth remind us to be grounded through upheaval and practice patience in long-haul social change?
 - How can air inspire lightness, joy, and play in collective work?
- How can the elements address practices of power redistribution, space reclamation, or inspire creative reckonings in climate justice?
- What kind of collective reckoning is needed from social movements, cultural workers, artists, community members, and educators?
- What does it mean to reckon with the legacies of enslavement, colonialism, and imperialism as they manifest in our communities and within institutions of higher learning? What might a cycle of change look like?
- What projects and people are already reckoning with the past and present towards collective change? How do we uplift and support them?
- What unique approaches can the arts, humanities, design, and other creative practices bring to the work of reckoning and the imagination of new futures?

- How can we center multigenerational care and connection in creating a future of collective transformation and liberation?
- How can we create collective energy, a fire in our belly, to address the radical roots of ecological and societal crises?
- By questioning what is elemental and essential, how might we reimagine ways of learning, working, creating, and being together?

Preparing Your Proposal

When preparing your proposal, the [2023 IA National Gathering](#) organizers invite you to propose an interactive session in one of the following formats:

1. **Lightning Talk, 7 minutes.** A single speaker will share current or past work, creative outputs, media, artistic practice, or community projects. Five lightning talks are scheduled in each 60 minute session, grouped by the IA National Gathering organizers. Each speaker has seven minutes to present, and the opportunity to integrate shared concepts of their talks into the following group discussion. Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to share in this format as it relates to the 2023 theme. Speakers may choose to use a visual guide (i.e. poster, powerpoint presentation, video or audio clip), but it is not required.
2. **Projects & Practices, 20 minutes.** Groups or individuals will share compelling outcomes, lessons learned, methods, or collective change that emerged from community-based projects centering the arts, performance, design, cultural organizing, and humanities practices. When submitting your proposal, you must pre-select two themes that best apply: 1) publicly engaged design, 2) storytelling, 3) creative and community arts, 4) cultural organizing, 5) research for justice, 6) practices of reckoning, 7) invoking the elements. In each 90 minute session organized by theme, three presenting groups will give 20 minute presentations with 30 minutes remaining for shared discussion.
3. **Dialogue & Discussion, 60 minutes.** Designed to facilitate interactive dialogue around a pressing issue or action, these sessions feature multiple perspectives/parties on a specific topic. Session participants may begin with short statements or actions in response to questions distributed by the organizer and all attendees have the opportunity to discuss and engage with the topic in the 60 minute session.
4. **Participatory Workshop, 90 minutes.** Facilitators set an agenda and organize participant activities over 90 minutes. The session can focus on specific skill development, artistic or creative practice, participatory performance and movement, or guided collective activity. Workshops must be highly interactive, collaborative, and provide opportunities for group co-creation.

5. **Fire / Water / Earth / Air Activities.** A collective art-making activity centered on one of the four elements that will be available to all participants throughout the IA National Gathering. These activities are ongoing (not limited to a single session) and will be set up in an accessible space with self-directed instructions for participants.
6. **Creative Works.** Media, visual, and/or material work to be shared outside of a scheduled session time. We welcome your creative proposals for this submission format. If selected for inclusion in the IA National Gathering, IA staff will reach out for specific installation or exhibition needs.

How to Submit Your Proposal

The submission deadline is Wednesday, May 31, 2023 at 11:59 PM PT. Please [submit your proposal via this form](#).

Each proposal requires the following information:

1. Session Organizer Information
2. Session Format
3. Session Title
4. Session Description (350 words)

If your proposal format is Projects & Practices, Dialogue & Discussion, or Participatory Workshop, you will also need to submit:

5. Session Contribution to IA and the IA National Gathering Theme (200 words)
6. Session Goals (200 words)

Questions?

Learn more about submitting a proposal by attending a virtual information session:

- **Thursday, April 20** (10-11am PST / 1-2pm EST) [Register Here](#)
- **Monday, May 8** (12-1pm PST / 3-4pm EST) [Register Here](#)

Email us at gathering@imaginingamerica.org or call (530) 297-4640.

By dreaming and building together in public, Imagining America creates the conditions to shift culture and transform inequitable institutional and societal structures. The IA National Gathering is an annual convening of more than 500 public scholars, artists, designers, teachers, students, and cultural organizers who are addressing the most pressing issues of our time. Gatherings offer participants a three-day immersive experience in which to connect, dialogue, learn, and strategize on the ways in which the arts, humanities, and design are and may be leveraged locally, regionally, and nationally towards transformative action.