**What were the two most interesting ideas you learned on the field trip, and why were they so interesting to you? Please think deeply but keep your answers concise.**

1. The first thing I found particularly interesting during this trip was the soil in the field where we planted the artichokes. It was super cool to see the almost ripple-like layers of light and dark soil. This was interesting to me because the whole group of us wondered why this phenomenon was occurring. We came together to hypothesize why the soil looked that way which was fun and very applicable this active learning style trip. I am especially interested in our idea that by **looking at soils, including these layered soils, we could potentially predict the amount of earthworm presence!**
2. The second thing that was most interesting to me was the approach Titia used when farming. I respected how she **lets the land decide what will be planted**. Titia was very adamant about only planting crops and purchasing animals that will help restore the land while also gaining an interest. This approach showed us that farming can be totally sustainable if you just “**go with the grain instead of against it**”. Everything she does is meticulously planned and although some crops fail and the pigs may not be of the greatest economic value, she is still sustainably making a living.
3. **You must work with the strengths of the soil and land, not against it**. This motto that Titia explained to be her starting point, struck a chord in me. Many people choose a profession to gain something, whereas she works non-stop all day to work for something other than herself. She has created an environment where the land has been able to replenish itself and has done so with the motive to restore, not to gain. **Why** do we do the things we do? And, **should we re-evaluate what we want to gain from the work we spend our lives doing?**
4. All her animals seemed happy, healthy, and strong. When we compare this to all other video footage we’ve seen as a class it is truly remarkable. **Her chickens could jump, her dogs were running free, and her goats and pigs had room to thrive. This to me seems as though Titia has put thought, love, and care into all aspects of her farm.** In her garden, every plant was benefitting one another, and earlier deleterious plants eventually had a positive impact as well. Everything has a purpose, and all was done for the betterment of the land and eventually society.
5. Titia mentioned that she **started organic farming before it was “fashionable”** by beginning to do so in 1981. She also said that most of the information organic farmers have to use is from small-scale research and anecdotal information. I found these to be interesting statements because organic farming was truly the only way to farm for hundreds of years before conventional farming became the norm. However, **what she said makes more sense when you realize the value of research to organic farmers now that they have the struggle of competing with conventional farming for economic viability and produce yields**.
6. Titia’s outlook on the best way to farm was very interesting because of **her focus on helping the farm become the ecosystem that the land on which it resides was made to support**. She brought up ideas of how ecosystems wish to increase fertility indefinitely and how the soils that exist in an area should dictate what is grown there rather than just what is most economically beneficial. Her ideas on long-term agriculture and soil health are such positive and effective ideas, which were nice to hear as a change from the typical destructive practices of conventional farming.
7. One interesting point that came up for me was hearing yet another highly eco-centric view on modern agriculture, where similar to Chris, Titia believed **investing into the environment will compound the rewards for the future, in terms of soil fertility. However, Titia seemed to take this further, in the sense that her goal was to eventually live *only* off the ‘interest’, thereby putting the health of the ecosystem at peak priority, and leaving her business to be simply one of the many benefactors of that revived ecosystem.** Her goal was very clearly more focused on the environment than on profit, and that world view is very rare to see in life.
8. Another interesting idea that surprised me was Titia’s **synergistic use of animals and plants to co-facilitate an environment with optimal biodynamic conditions**. Even going so far as including weeds for calcium dispersion, each decision she made was **insightful of exactly how the biology of each organism on her land could do the work that other farmers would look to pesticides or chemical methods for.** At first glance the methods seemed inefficient, but after talking with her I was astounded to see just how efficient this system actually was. Overall, this experience was quite a jump different from the others, and I found it valuable seeing that there are indeed people putting eco-centric initiatives to good work.
9. I was fascinated by Titia’s **focus on ‘natural’ solutions via trophic interactions**. The use of self-sustaining ecosystem cooperation at all trophic levels showed an amazing knowledge of the land. **While before I may have understood specific qualities of organisms, this trip made me think bigger and highlighted the value of ecosystem-level knowledge**.
10. The economics of the farm were very interesting, but perhaps not unexpected. Titia mentioned that **she effectively loses money from the livestock, and their main purpose is as nutrient cyclers. Based on the Food Inc. film, I wonder how competitive her meat prices would be without the large government subsidies.** Omitting the influence of international trade, if subsidies were lifted off meat and dairy production how would this affect organic farms like Titia’s?
11. At Ravenswood farms it was incredible to listen to Titia discuss her process of **working with her land to better the soil and environment that was destroyed by earlier settlers**. I was so impressed by her vast knowledge of the chemistry of the land she lives on. The fact that she knows exactly what each component of her farm does for the specific soil composition of her environment was essential for the process she has accomplished in restoring the land. Specifically hearing her discuss that **she does not work against the land by farming what she WANTS but instead works with the land and farms what it NEEDS was particularly impactful for me**.
12. One thing that I did notice while on our trip was **however educated Titia was about her land she seemed limited by many of her resources**. It was impressive to listen about her approach to research on the choice of plants to grow being that she told us she obtained a lot of her information from literature in books. It seems she was limited partially from her older methods of research and the fact that she does not seem to have any help from others on her farm. Although she is successful on her own, Titia might be able to more efficiently run her farm or even be able to expand upon it if she adopted new practices.
13. I found the field trip to Ravensfield Farm on Sunday to be an exceptional experience overall. The small-scale, diversified farm run by Titia was inspiring in many different ways including from an ecological perspective, sustainable living, and passion. One thing that I found to be the **most interesting was the animals such as goats, chickens, and pigs freely roaming around the farm as it was quite different from what we had observed in our previous field trip** **to Charlie Forman’s farm, and even Chris Wooding’s farm.** This was interesting to me because it led me to think about the **importance of letting all the different relationships found in an ecosystem do their own thing rather than humans controlling all of the aspects**.
14. By spending the day on Titia’s farm and seeing how plants and animals interact with each other, I felt the importance of interconnectedness between plants and animals and allowing the ecosystem to do its own thing. Also, I found Titia saying, **“plants eat animals and animals eat plants”** to be very interesting as I had never really thought about the importance of animals to plants in terms of consumption of essential nutrients.
15. The **role animals play in bioremediation can be extremely helpful due to their role in processing various nutrients and minerals**. With pigs being used specifically for iron, other domestic animals could be used to target deficiencies in the local ecosystem provided they are managed correctly. The purpose of the animal feces can be varied too as some are used for nutrient cycling while others can be used specifically due to the volume of feces produced.
16. **Taking advantage of naturally present plant species and dedicating a portion of the land space towards them to fulfill a purpose or increase biodiversity. One of the plant species mentioned had deep roots and was seemingly not useful in terms of farming but had use for calcium mobilization throughout the soil.** Similar plant cover can be implemented where having plants that promote vertical mobilization of various nutrients from the soil layers can be very useful, especially in inert, non-dynamic ecosystems.
17. I was intrigued by Titia’s deep knowledge and understanding of the land she has lovingly cared for over the years that she has lived there. **Her belief that we learn from the land and must follow what it wants to do was very relevant to what we have been learning in class and showed an application of that learning in an interesting way. It felt like Titia had become a part of the land around her, which was very profound and heartening to see someone care so deeply about the exact workings of her surroundings.**
18. I was also very interested by **the methods Titia used to maximise yield while reusing resources, as in the case of the artichoke stems being used to improve the potato crop**. **Her deep understanding of the needs of her crops allows her to use organic means to aid her yield without creating waste and in fact returning what she has grown to the earth.** In comparison to the two farms we visited previously, I **noticed a rich, earthy smell at Titia’s farm**, which sounds obvious but this smell was not present at the other two farms which I found interesting.
19. One thing that really had me in awe about Ravensfield Farm was the way each component of the farm had been so well thought out and no one piece could stand alone as being the most important. For example, when Titia explained that even though she didn’t want to be a pig farmer she needed to **incorporate pigs as they have the ability to remobilize iron which was a limiting nutrient in the soils of the area. Similarly, her use of plants to act as herbicides, such as squash to grow and shade weeds so they can no longer survive making her fields free of weeds for the next crop to grow**. **Each component came together to make a sustainable farm**.
20. Another aspect of the field trip that I found very interesting was how **this farmland was developed and improved using a form of remediation that is usually used on soils that have significant damage due to a contaminant. Through implementations of strategic composting and crop growth she was able to reintroduce and stimulate healthy soil production.** I found it **particularly interesting that her practice of farming in respect of the soils and, in a way, in response to the soils resulted in a healthy and sustainable farm.** I wonder, if this farming practice was implemented in farms across Ontario if there would be enough time to create sustainable agricultural fields with healthy soils before the impending collapse of our agricultural practices.
21. One of the most interesting things I found during our trip to Ravenfield Farms was **the actual layout of the farm and how untraditional it looks even compared to how Chris’s fields** were. **It did not look like a farm at all due to all the plant matter growing within the garden however, it was interesting to see the yield of crops on such a small plot.** When comparing to an industrial farm, I think that this is the most viable form of farming as the practice of farming done is minimally damaging to the soils and supports bioremediation.
22. The second thing I found interesting was how **Titia’s plan for the land is to restore it as much as possible whereas on Foreman Farm’s, Charlie was looking to use the land for what the soil was worth (about 30 years) and move onto other fertile lands.** It was very interesting to see the **different perspectives in how economy builds the driving force** behind one farm while sustainability as form of economy is the driving force for Titia. **Visiting all three farms has completely changed my thoughts on farming and sustainability.**
23. One interesting idea from the trip was how **Titia has this mentality of doing what the soil tells her to do – as in the soil makes her decisions**. The choices she made for the farm are driven by the needs of the soil. **It was fascinating to see how she chose specific animals in order to put certain nutrients back into the soil through manure fertilization and composting.** Similarly, the plants that she planted were specifically chosen, as she used beans for nitrogen-fixation. **It was clear she did her research in choosing specific components of her farm to help the soil.**
24. The second interesting idea I learned was **how she organized her farm, particularly with the placement of the compost and crops. She would push the soil to create a hill in the center of each section, and place compost there. Then she would place the crops beside the compost hills and cover with the soil from its other side.** It was organized differently from other farms, as it was much smaller and in a patched shape rather than the typical rectangular pieces of land. It was nice because it gave a cozy and unique atmosphere.
25. Titia makes **most of her agricultural production from 1 acre of land**. An idea I found interesting was that there **was an additional 199 acres** necessary to contribute and sustain this level of productivity on that one acre. **With the additional land, there were other factors that went into remediating the 1 acre such as the animal farming factor.** It exemplifies that there is no one answer or easy way out to bringing our soils back to their healthiest state, and that there is a deeply interconnected network of factors that bring nutritionally valuable food to the table.
26. Another thing I found interesting was **how this farm went beyond just being sustainable/organic, but had an emphasis on remediating the land back from its historical trauma. Knowing and using the historical background of the land gave Titia a more in-depth knowledge as to what exactly happened there and why the land works and produces in the way it does.** Having that perspective helped her to make the changes necessary to not only produce the quality of food that she does, but also promote biodiversity on the once burnt and barren land.
27. I found one of the most fascinating philosophies that Titia had was **the way she works with strengths and weaknesses of the farm, allowing the land to recover the way it would naturally yet accelerating that process through growing certain crops and housing certain organisms**. **This is really interesting when paired with what we know about the state factors** of an ecosystem, as she is able to manipulate and work around these factors like topography, parent material, and biodiversity by introducing organisms that work well in those conditions or can help better them.
28. Another thing I found very interesting was the information that Titia provided regarding quality versus quantity in food. **She claimed that the reason we are eating so much and gaining weight is because of the diminishing nutritional values in our foods due to increasingly modern and efficient practices.** An example she gave was to gain the nutritional value of one apple in the 1930s, you would have to eat over 30 modern day apples, due to our selective breeding and GMOs. **This connects back to one of the biggest challenges we face in feeding the world in 2050, as we need to balance quality and quantity of food.**