

# *in a good way*

(Re)grounding Contextual Narratives on Turtle Island

by  
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## ***author's declaration***

*I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.*

*I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.*

## *content warning*

This thesis refers to multiple forms of colonial violence including the Indian Residential School system, the Ontario Industrial Training School system, violence towards the land, and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+<sup>1</sup> individuals. The following resources are available for support (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and free of charge): The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line 1-866-925-4419;<sup>2</sup> The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Support Line 1-844-413-6649.<sup>3</sup>

## *abstract*

Canada is a settler-colonial nation built on Indigenous lands. Architecture in this context is not a neutral practice. Together with urban planning, it has played a key role in the genocidal dispossession, displacement, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples by imposing private property, Euro-Western settlement, and exploitative land development. The architectural industry across Turtle Island (North America) unfolds within discriminatory, imperialist, and capitalist power structures. It remains complicit in ongoing colonial violence towards Indigenous peoples, and the land upon which we all depend.

This thesis documents the process of unsettling and (re)grounding the contextual narratives that frame my work as a Métis-Irish-Vietnamese designer in Southern Ontario on the ancestral lands of the Chonnonton (Neutral/Attawandaron), the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe/Mississaugas), and the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations/Iroquois) peoples. Within this work I broaden the concept of an architectural “site analysis” to include a deeper context of settler colonialism, Indigenous resistance, and the experiences I carry with me as a designer and a human being.

How do we, as architects, reconcile our practice within a settler-colonial context violently inscribed onto Indigenous lands? How do we confront our complicity in Indigenous erasure and honour the treaties and kinship networks that underlie our presence on this ground? Amid an escalating climate crisis, and acknowledging architecture as a land-based practice, how do we mend our relationships with the land, water, plants, and animals?

Through reflections, essays, photographs, and illustrations, I map the journey of recalibrating my own relationships to place, in search of what it means to design and build *in a good way*.

Figure 1: *Illustration: The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen (Thanksgiving Address)*  
To the interconnected forces of creation that sustain us all.



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## *chronology*

- 1000, *circa* Norseman Leif Erikson lands on Turtle Island, in a place now called L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland.
- 1096-1271 The Crusades.
- 1200, *circa* The red cedar tree used for Master Carver 7idansuu Jim Hart's Reconciliation Pole first takes root on the west coast of Turtle Island.
- 1414 The Council of Constance justifies "holy war" within the Catholic world.
- 1436 Pope Eugenius IV issues the first *Romanus Pontifex* papal bull granting Portugal the authority to claim a range of non-European lands in their expanding explorations.
- 1452 Pope Nicholas V issues the papal bull *Dum Diversas*, justifying the subjugation of non-Christians into "perpetual servitude."
- 1492, *Oct* Christopher Columbus lands in the Caribbean (in what is believed to be the present day Bahamas) and claims it on behalf of the King and Queen of Spain.
- 1493, *May* Pope Alexander VI issues the papal bull *Inter Caetera* sanctioning the Spanish Crown's claim to lands west of the Atlantic Ocean.
- 1497 Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) arrives in "newfound land" equipped with a charter of conquest from King Henry VII of England.

- 1500-25* The Neutral (Attawondaron/Chonnonton) establish a village site near present-day London, Ontario, now called the Lawson Archaeological Site.
- 1600s* Colonizers begin to enslave Indigenous and Black peoples on Turtle Island.
- 1610, circa* The beginning of the colonial era and a suggested start date, or “golden spike,” of the Anthropocene epoch.
- 1613* The Kaswentha (the Two Row Wampum) treaty is established between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in present day New York state to ensure a life of peaceful co-existence for both nations.
- 1664* The British enter into a nation-to-nation relationship with the Haudenosaunee, replacing the Dutch, and promise to honour the principles of the Kaswentha.
- 1665* Jacques Viau (dit Lespérance) leaves France for New France as part of the Carignan-Salières Regiment to reinforce the settlement against the Haudenosaunee.
- 1668* Jacques Viau settles in New France after a peace treaty is established between the Haudenosaunee and the French and later marries Madeleine Plouard, a Fille du Roi, in Montréal.
- 1670s* The Covenant Chain treaty is established between the Haudenosaunee and the British Crown.
- 1756-1763* The Seven Years’ War.

- 1761 Ojibway Chief Minavavana, at Michilimackinac declares: “Englishman, although you have conquered the French you have not yet conquered us!”
- 1763, Feb The Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Years’ War and France cedes its claim to territory on Turtle Island to Britain.
- 1763, Oct The British Crown issues the Royal Proclamation.
- 1764 Approximately two thousand chiefs representing more than twenty-four nations gathered for the Treaty of Niagara to affirm the 1763 Royal Proclamation.
- 1775-1783 The American Revolutionary War.
- 1784, Oct Sir Frederick Haldimand issues The Haldimand Proclamation, granting a tract of land to the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations/Iroquois) that includes 10 km on each side of the Grand River for their alliance with British during the American Revolution.
- 1787 The disputed Toronto Purchase transfers lands from the Mississaugas of the Credit to the British Crown.
- 1796 Andre Harkness is born to William Harkness and Marguerite Leblanc.
- 1809, circa Sara Stevenson is born to Jack Stevenson and Mary “of the Maskegonne” at Pike River, North-Western Territory.
- 1812-1815 The War of 1812. Andre Harkness fights in the Canadian Voltigeurs Regiment of Light Infantry.

- 1815* John Lalor is born Patrick “Honest Patt” Lalor and Anne Dillon in County Laois, Ireland.
- 1821* The Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company merge.
- 1823 - 1832* The Black War is fought in lutruwita (Tasmania/Van Diemen’s Land) between the Indigenous peoples of lutruwita and British colonists.
- 1830s* The railways first arrive on Turtle Island.
- 1831* The Mohawk Institute (Mush Hole) in what is now Brantford, Ontario began operations as an Indian Residential School.
- 1833* Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.
- 1838* Andre Harkness and Sara Stevenson marry at Norway House.
- 1841* Abraham St. Mars is born to Abraham Viau dit St. Mars and Julie Messier in Longueuil, Québec.
- 1841* Dryden Smith, Ella Smith’s grandfather, arrives in Aylmer, Québec from England.
- 1843, circa* Emelie Harkness is born to Andre Harkness and Sara Stevenson.
- 1848* The lifeways of the Mississaugas of the Credit are disrupted by settlement and urbanization and they relocate to the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve

- 1861* Abraham St. Mars relocates from Québec to the Red River Settlement to work as a carpenter on the St. Boniface Cathedral.
- 1863* Abraham St. Mars and Emelie Harkness marry at the Red River Settlement.
- 1867, Jul 1* Canadian Confederation.
- 1868* Construction begins on the Dawson Road between Thunder Bay and the Red River Settlement.
- 1868-1869* The Dominion of Canada purchases Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company without Indigenous consultation or consent.
- 1869-70* Louis Riel leads the Métis in the Red River Resistance.
- 1870* The Red River Expedition transports 1200 soldiers along the Dawson Road to confront Louis Riel's provisional government at the Red River Settlement.
- 1870* The province of Manitoba forms out of negotiations between the Canadian Government and the Métis.
- 1871* British Columbia joins Canadian confederation contingent on the construction of a transcontinental railway.
- 1871* Negotiations of the Numbered Treaties begin.
- 1872* The Dominion's Land Act receives royal assent and the Dominion Land Survey begins.

- 1876* The Canadian Government passes the Indian Act.
- 1881* The Canadian Pacific Railway company incorporates, and transcontinental railway construction begins.
- 1881* Ella Smith is born in Ottawa, ON, to Thomas Smith and Mary Anne Hawkins.
- 1881* Joseph (Jos) St. Mars is born to Emelie Harkness and Abraham St. Mars in St. Vital, MB.
- 1884* The remaining exposed section of the river Ziibiing on the University of Toronto campus is buried and integrated into the city sewer system. This area later becomes the Philosopher’s Walk.
- 1884, circa* Jos St. Mars watches Louis Riel cross the Red River towards St. Vital at the St. Mars river lot.
- 1885* Louis Riel leads the Métis and other Indigenous nations in the North-West Resistance.
- 1885, Jul* Canada implements a “head tax” on Chinese immigrants.
- 1885, Nov* The transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway is substantially completed. The “last spike” is driven at Craigellachie, BC.
- 1885, Nov* Louis Riel is executed in Regina on the charge of treason.
- 1888* Patrick Lalor, grandson of John Lalor, is born in London, England.

- 1899* Le Jardin D’Agronomie Tropicale is established as a research centre for tropical agriculture in Paris, France.
- 1900* The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire is founded.
- 1901* The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire erect the Queen Alexandra Gateway at Queen’s Park in Toronto, ON to commemorate the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York.
- 1907* Le Jardin D’Agronomie Tropicale becomes the site of the Exposition Coloniale, now recognized as a “human zoo.”
- 1907* The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire erect The Pioneer Pergola in Galt (Cambridge), ON.
- 1910* Patrick Lalor travels by ship from England to Brisbane, Australia.
- 1910* Joseph St. Mars and Ella Smith marry in Winnipeg.
- 1914* Patrick Lalor arrives in Victoria, BC from Australia.
- 1916* A large aqueduct is built through the ancestral lands of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation to provide drinking water to the city of Winnipeg, cutting off land access to the community.
- 1933* Grandview Training School for Girls is established in Galt, ON.

- 1950s to 1980s*    The Sixties Scoop
- 1954*                Communist forces led by Hồ Chí Minh take control of North Việt Nam following the Geneva Conference. Bà Ngoại, Ông Ngoại, and Cô Thiện and their families flee to Sài Gòn in southern Việt Nam.
- 1960, circa*        The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire funds a series of “community halls” at Frobisher Bay, Tuktoyaktuk, and Baker Lake to help assimilate Inuit peoples.
- 1962*                The Queen Alexandra Gateway is relocated to the north entrance of Philosopher’s Walk.
- 1969*                Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau proposes the “White Paper.”
- 1970*                The Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford, ON closes its doors.
- 1975, Apr 30*        Sài Gòn is captured by the communist forces, marking the end of the Vietnam War.
- 1976*                Grandview Training School for Girls closes due to allegations of abuse.
- 1979*                Ông Ngoại leaves Việt Nam and settles in London, ON.
- 1980*                Thanh-Binh and her brother escape as “boat people” to a refugee camp in Malaysia.
- 1981*                Thanh-Binh and her brother are reunited with their father in London, ON.

- 1983 Bà Ngoại and the rest of my mom's immediate family arrive in London, ON.
- 1984 Cô Thiện arrives in London, ON.
- 1989 The Chinese Railroad Workers Memorial is erected in downtown Toronto, ON.
- 1994 Survivors of abuse at the Grandview Training School for Girls reach a settlement with the Province of Ontario.
- 1995 Disney releases the film Pochahontas.
- 1996 My family and I visit the Lawson Archaeological Site near London, Ontario.
- 1998, Summer ***the manitoba maple***. Markham, ON.
- 2004 The University of Waterloo School of Architecture moves from Waterloo to Galt (Cambridge), ON.
- 2006 My family confirms that we are Métis.
- 2007 The United Nations (UN) adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- 2008 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) is established.
- 2011, Jan-Apr Co-op term in Yellowknife, NT.
- 2011, Jan ***frame lake***. Yellowknife, NT.
- 2011, Jan ***dreamcatcher***. Yellowknife, NT.

- 2011, *May-Aug* Twelve Architectures course at Waterloo Architecture with William (Bill) Woodworth.
- 2011, *Nov* ***thunder bay***. Thunder Bay, ON.
- 2011, *Dec* Prince Arthur's Landing, including the Spirit Garden and the Celebration Circle, in Thunder Bay, opens to the public.
- 2012, *Aug* Visit to L'Anse Aux Meadows, NL.
- 2012, *Dec* The Idle No More movement begins.
- 2013, *Aug* ***le jardin d'agronomie tropicale***. Bois de Vincennes, Paris, France.
- 2015, *Jun* Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada release their Final Report and 94 Calls to Action.
- 2016, *Apr-Jun* Cross-Canada Train Trip
- 2016, *Apr* ***red sands***. Tea Hill Beach, PEI.
- 2016, *May* ***a pause***. South of Prince George, BC.
- 2016, *May* ***the churchill line***. Northern MB.
- 2016, *May* ***the reconciliation pole***. Haida Gwaii.
- 2017, *Apr* The Reconciliation Pole by Master Carver 7idansuu Jim Hart is raised on the University of British Columbia campus, Vancouver, BC.

- 2017, *Jun*      ***remembering the skeena river***. Cambridge, ON + Northern BC.
- 2017, *Sep-Oct*      One House Many Nations prototype is displayed at the Expo for Design, Innovation, and Technology (EDIT) in Tkaronto, ON.
- 2018, *Jan-Apr*      “Introduction to Kanien’kéha” course taught by Nicole Bilodeau at the University of Waterloo.
- 2018, *May-Nov*      UNCEDED Exhibition at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale in Venice, Italy.
- 2018, *Jun*      “After Canada 150: Restoring Indigenous Knowledge and Building Community Connections” conference hosted by the Centre for Indigegogy at Wilfred Laurier University.
- 2018, *Jun*      ***the fire circle & the food garden***. Cambridge, ON.
- 2018, *Jul*      ***the humber river***. Tkaronto, ON.
- 2018, *Aug*      ***st. mars on the red river***. Winnipeg, MB.
- 2018, *Sep*      ***lido di venezia***. Lido, Venice, Italy.
- 2018, *Nov*      ***red ribbons***. Selkirk, MB.
- 2018, *Dec*      Work on Nokom’s House begins.
- 2018, *Dec*      ***swampy cree territory***. Opaskwayak Cree Nation, MB.

- 2019, *Jan* The RCMP raids unceded Wet'suwet'en territory in northern BC and arrests Wet'suwet'en land defenders to clear the path for a Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline.
- 2019, *Jan* ***commitments***. Cambridge, ON.
- 2019, *Mar* ***red squirrel***. Near Fergus, ON.
- 2019, *Jun* Freedom Road is completed and reconnects Shoal Lake 40 to the mainland.
- 2019, *Jun* ***killdeer***. Minjimendan Garden, Cambridge, ON.
- 2019, *Jul* Grandmothers, Elders, Indigenous community members, and allies gathered for the first Nokom's House design workshop.
- 2019, *Aug* ***crickets***. Cambridge, ON.
- 2019, *Oct* ***grandview school for girls***. Cambridge, ON.
- 2019, *Nov* ***around the kitchen table***. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON.
- 2020, *Feb* The RCMP arrests Wet'suwet'en land defenders mid-ceremony on their unceded ancestral territories. Land defenders gather across Turtle Island, voicing their support for the Wet'suwet'en.
- 2020, *Mar* ***the sugar bush***. Kitchener, ON.
- 2020, *Apr* ***the red rivers***



## *preface*

This work documents part of an ongoing journey to reconcile my place as a human being of mixed settler, Indigenous, and refugee descent,<sup>4</sup> practicing architectural design on Indigenous lands that have and continue to experience the violent disruption of colonization.

“In a good way” is a phrase used often in Indigenous circles and speaks to a method of doing or creating that feeds cultural principles of “living a good life” or “living beautifully”<sup>5</sup>— *mino bimaadiziwin* in Anishnaabemowin, and similarly *mino pimatisiwin* in Cree. *Mino bimaadiziwin* can be interpreted as a “continuous rebirth,” which means; to live a good life is to “promote more life.”<sup>6</sup> *Mino pimatisiwin* tells us that “we are responsible to live in conscious connection with the land and living things in a way that creates and sustains balance.”<sup>7</sup> I began using the phrase as a guiding ethos in the early months of my work, and at my supervisor’s suggestion, it became a placeholder title. I was hesitant, however, to use such a phrase to label the work I was doing, cognizant that it might proclaim that I have *accomplished* the work “in a good way.” Rather, acting and creating in a good way, and being in good relation, by Cree and Anishinaabe definitions, is something to which I have *aspired*. I eventually accepted the placeholder as a reminder of the search for what it means to design and build well with the land. I use this phrase not as the description of an achievement, but as a guiding principle for an ongoing journey.

“(Re)grounding Contextual Narratives” indicates a shift in our understanding of the contexts that inform spatial design and practice in Canada and, by extension, North America. The fact is we operate within a predominantly settler-colonial society that occupies Indigenous lands; however, dominant narratives obscure this reality. A “(re)grounding” calls both for a re-evaluation of the founding narratives of our built environment as well as a recalibration of our relationships with the land, waters, plants, and animals. Since beginning this work, the importance of land, our place in relation to it, how it cares for us, and how we in turn care for it, has been an ever-present theme. Within this work, I use the word “land” to

mean our natural environment: the earth, the air, the waters, the plants, the animals, and everything in between. I focus mostly on the practice of architectural design within this work; however, the contexts I refer to are relevant to all forms of spatial design inquiry and practice.

## INTENTIONS

My intention with this thesis is to provide an accessible opening into understanding that architectural practice in Canada is complicit in a network of colonial systems that continue to harm people and land. I share episodic and interconnecting stories of invasion and occupation as well as the Indigenous presence and relationships with land that have continued to thrive, despite attempted and ongoing genocide. I believe these narratives are more relevant now than ever as the earth is experiencing ecological collapse at the hands of (neo)colonialist and capitalist ideologies. There is an urgent need to reconcile our relationship with the land that sustains us. To varying degrees of detail, I explore Indigenous and colonial narratives tied to land in what is currently Canada and begin to explore what it could mean to decolonize architectural practice.

I have struggled with how to compile and weave the following content together into this book, as all the pieces are interconnected in different ways. I decided to structure the work by loosely organizing my reflections chronologically, grounding this work in my own experiences, and providing historical and theoretical context where it felt relevant or appropriate. The reflections and photographs cycle through approximately four earthly rotations around the sun, starting in 2016, with some reflections that jump back to childhood experiences and my undergraduate studies.

An important part of this journey has involved a reconnection with the stories and cultures of my Métis and Swampy Cree ancestors. I am a mixed Métis, Euro-Canadian, and Vietnamese person who, for the most part, did not grow up knowing I was Métis. I have felt insecure at times about claiming this part of my identity, but I have come to learn that this experience is not unique among the Métis. Knowledge of our Métis

culture was not explicitly passed down through the generations because of overbearing colonial and racist forces, and perhaps to continue to accept its erasure, knowing what I know now, is to resign to colonization. For me, learning about and (re)claiming my Métis identity has been a vital part of loosening the binds of the dominant settler-colonial culture, finding firmer footing (in myself and on the land), and resisting, as my ancestors have always done.

As an Indigenous person, I can only speak from my own experiences of being a mixed Métis individual coming into my ancestral culture, and I do not speak for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Similarly, I do not speak for all Euro-Canadian or Vietnamese peoples.

This work is not comprehensive, and I am not, nor will I likely ever be, an expert in most of the vast areas of study of which I only graze the surface. I gather the studies of Indigenous and ally scholars, bringing their work into the fold of my learning experience. I have done my best to present the information herein as truthfully as I currently know how. Any mistakes or shortcomings are mine and mine alone.

It is important to note that this book is only one part of a much larger journey, which is necessarily incomplete. Even in the last stages of this work I learned things that shifted my understandings. Many of the references that have guided this work have been published in the time I have been enrolled as a Master's student; the scholarship is constantly growing and evolving, and the amount of learning and unlearning within this subject area is colossal. Already, I can think of ways I would rewrite parts of this book, and I am sure that as time cycles on I will find fault and naiveté in my understandings.

In this iteration of the work, I have limited references to the many ways in which Black and other people of colour, 2SLGBTQQIA+,<sup>8</sup> disabled, and other marginalized and oppressed communities also bear the brunt of colonial violence and discrimination, past and present. These intersecting systems of oppression and resistance occupy my continuing lines of inquiry.

## TERMINOLOGY<sup>9</sup>

Consistent with the Canadian definition, I use the term Indigenous throughout this work to refer to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Some authors referenced within this text use the terms Aboriginal or Native depending on their own preferences or the timeframe in which they write. “Indian” is the legal term for First Nations in Canada as per the Indian Act; however, it has derogatory and deeply racist connotations and I use it only if quoting another source or when describing harmful Indigenous stereotypes.

## APPROACH

I think of the research and experiences captured within this book as preparation for future work within the areas of study that I only begin to address here. Through personal reflections, photographs, illustrations, and essays that draw on secondary source materials, I weave together a relational narrative that reframes our spatial context by de-centring dominant Eurocentric, settler-colonial assumptions. I am fortunate to have already had opportunities to participate in community-engaged and land-based work with other Indigenous and ally scholars; understanding our spatial and land-based context in what is currently Canada has been crucial in informing this work.

Storytelling is at the heart of Indigenous epistemologies, and its merits have long been recognized for effectively conveying relationality and important lessons and information across nations, cultures, and worldviews.<sup>10</sup> Stories also have the power to disrupt colonial spatial orders by relocating Indigenous presence and narratives of relationality.<sup>11</sup> As a novice storyteller, I attempt to engage this method of knowledge transfer, production, and disruption as best I can.

I have incorporated hand-drawn and scanned illustrations into the work as a way of meditating on select narratives through a visual medium. I have composed the drawings as base drafts for future bead and embroidery

artworks, some of which I will gift to those who have had a significant influence on this work.

## ORGANIZATION

I have clustered the body of this work into four parts, nestled between an opening and a closing. Part One outlines my arrival at this thesis, centred on a cross-Canada train trip. Part Two is focused on unearthing personal and national histories that form the basis for understanding Indigenous and settler relationships to land. Part Three follows a thread of erasure and settler-colonial violence and marks the beginning of my own land-based engagement. Part Four emphasizes decolonial approaches and a (re)grounding in the land.

## A PERSONAL PROCESS

Finally, this work is very personal, because the work of truth, reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenous resurgence is personal.<sup>12</sup> Most of us living here on Turtle Island participate in settler-colonial systems in some form. We are part of the oppressive colonial system, and it is part of us. To disengage from the racism, discrimination, and disrespect that colonial cultures maintain towards both people and land requires us to excavate beliefs, assumptions, and understandings that we carry deep within us. Undertaking this difficult and ongoing process myself, I have tried to write with an open heart to expose and honour the personal and emotional engagement necessary for this work.



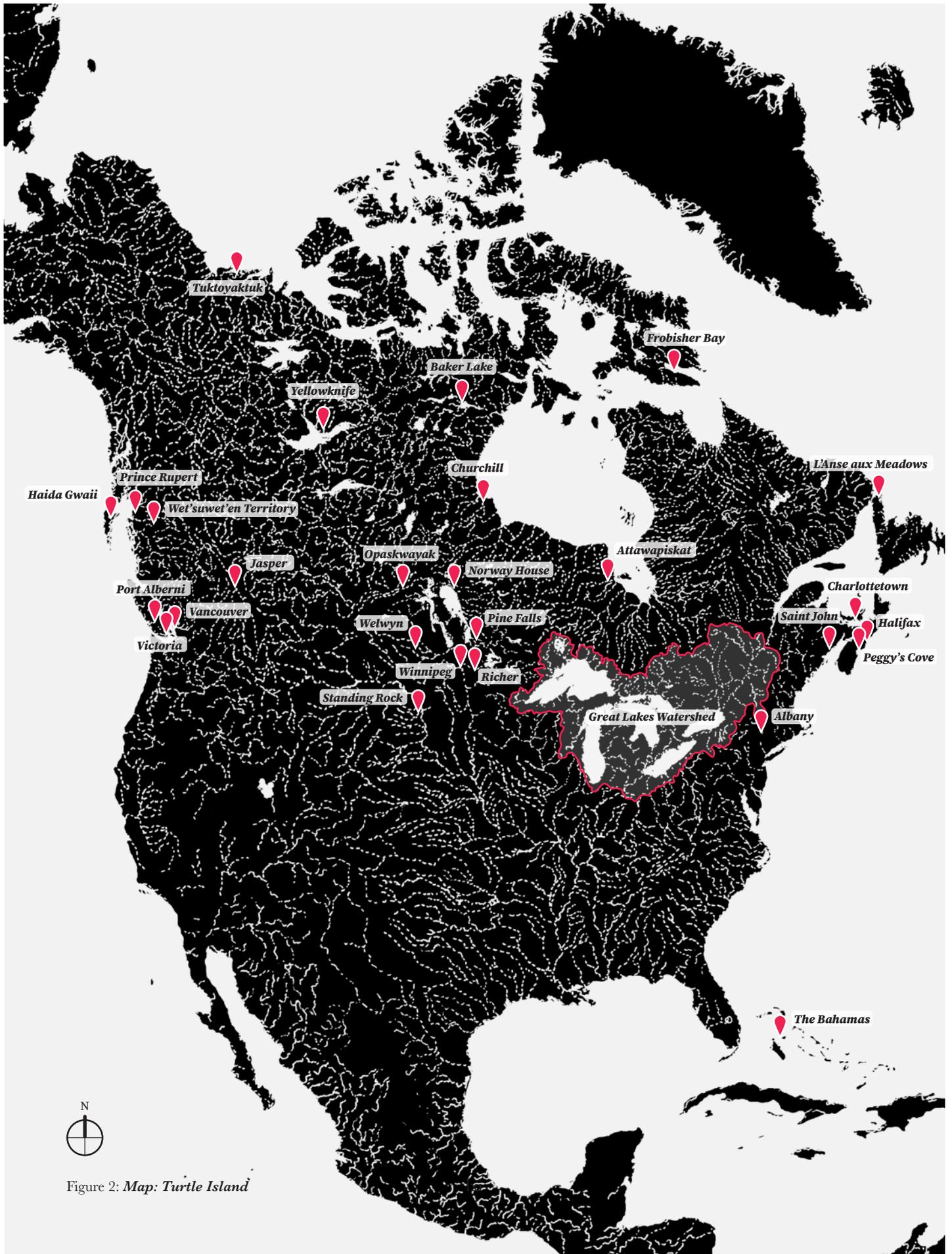
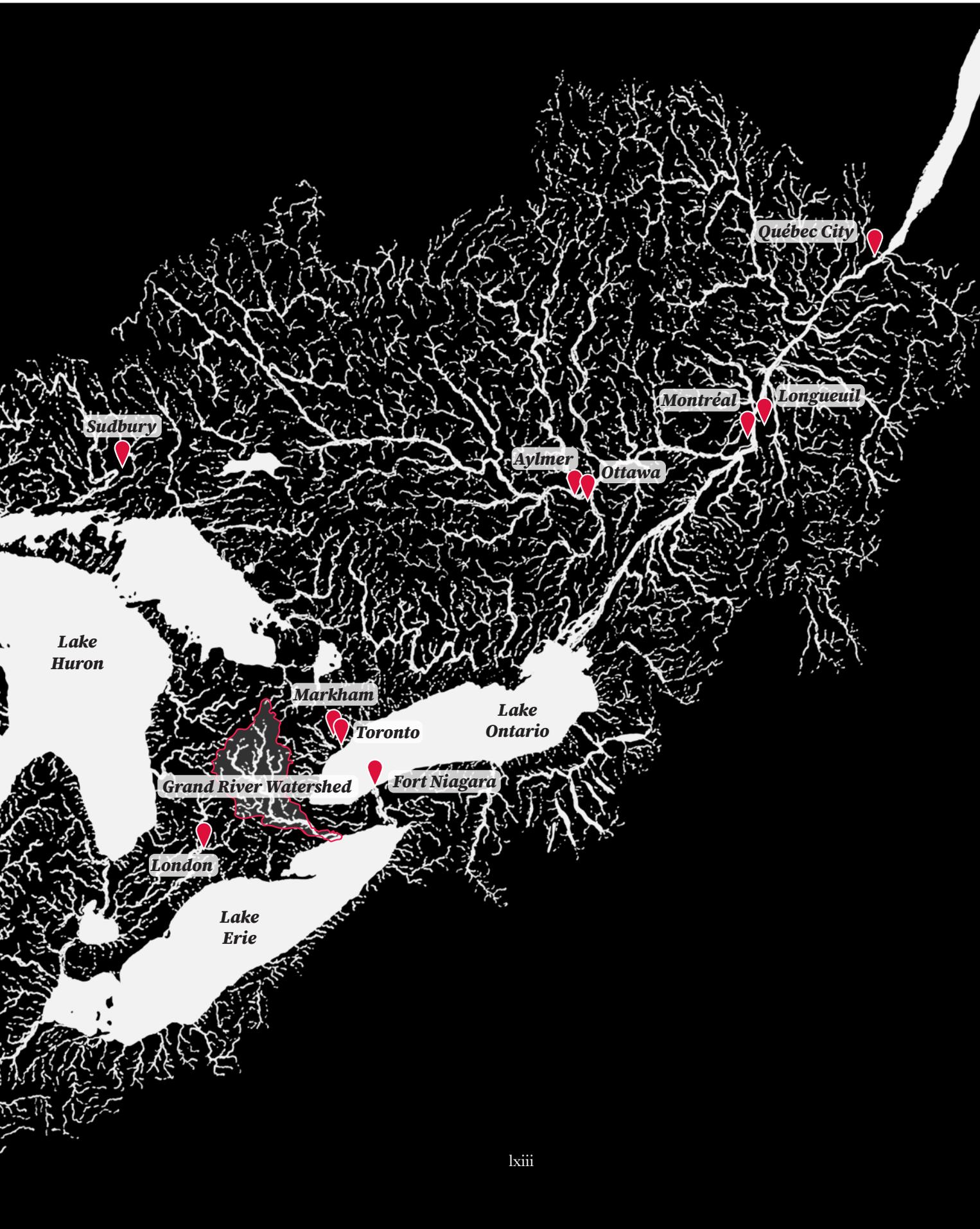


Figure 2: *Map: Turtle Island*



Figure 3: *Map: The Great Lakes Watershed*



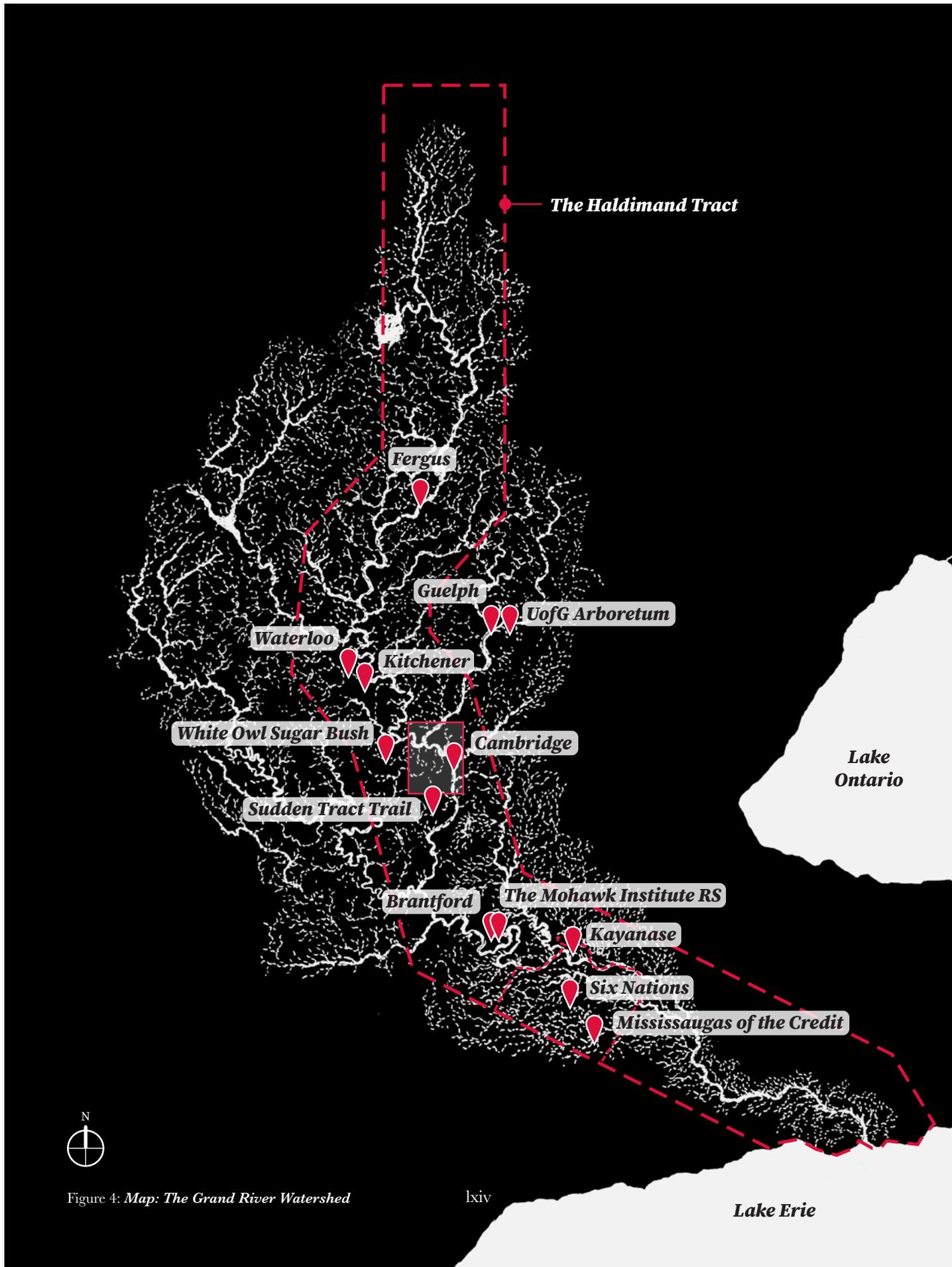


Figure 4: *Map: The Grand River Watershed*

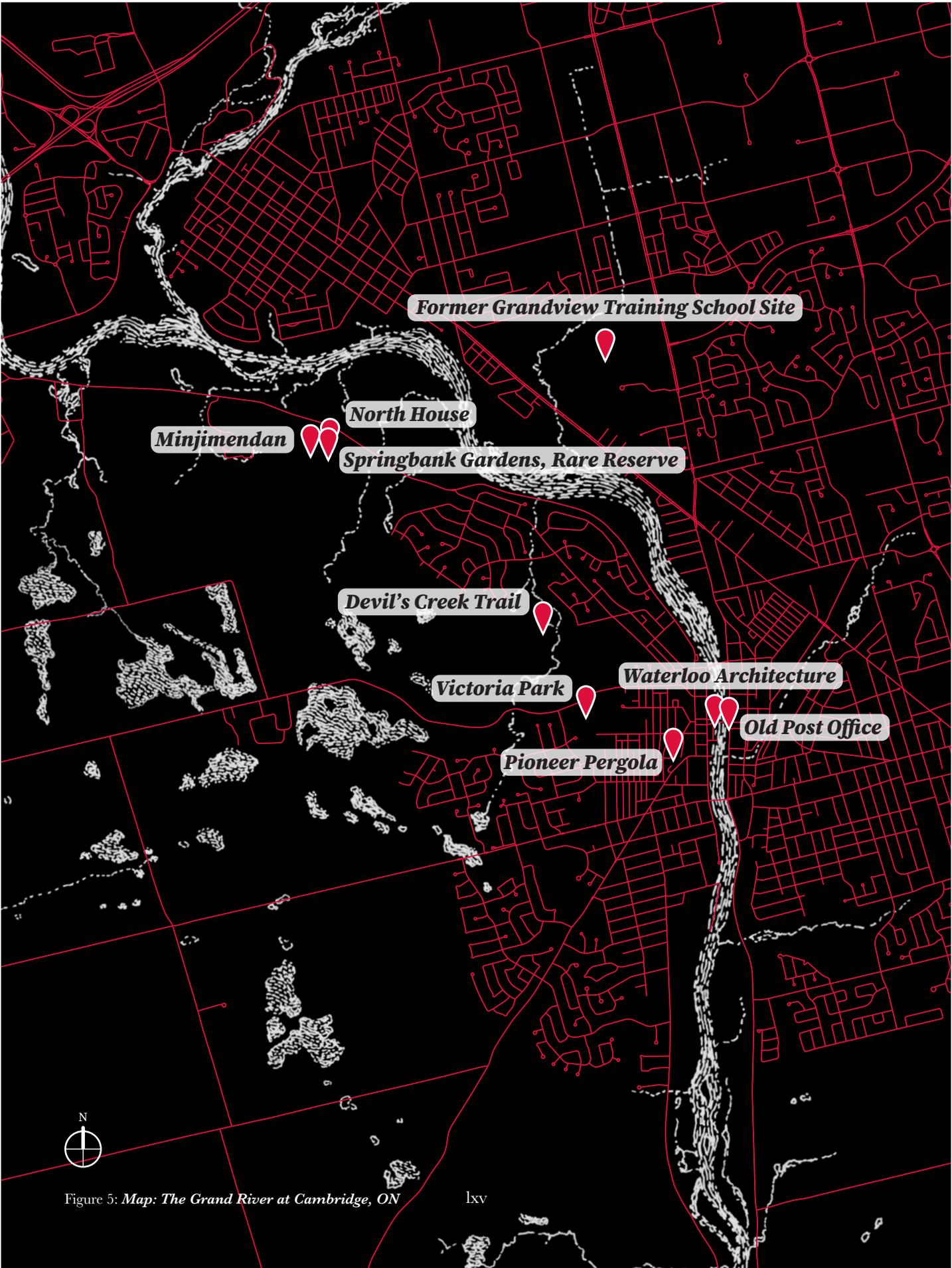


Figure 5: *Map: The Grand River at Cambridge, ON*



*opening*





Figure 6: *My grandmother, Eileen Lalor (née St. Mars), as a young woman standing on the frozen Red River. Winnipeg, MB.*



## *turtle island*

I first heard the term “Turtle Island” in the summer of 2011. I was in my second year of architecture school and I enrolled in an elective course taught by Haudenosaunee architect William (Bill) Woodworth. For the first time in my formal education, Bill’s course exposed me to Indigenous history and culture in relation to architecture and design.

By then, my family and I knew that we were Métis. My paternal grandmother Eileen was Métis, but like many Métis people of her time, she never admitted it outright. However, she often recounted stories from “out West,” and my dad had long understood that we had some Indigenous roots without any specific details. It was only after my grandmother died in 2006 that our family confirmed that we had Métis ancestry. I was fifteen. We received our Métis Nation of Ontario citizenship cards the following year.

At first, I did not know what to make of this newly affirmed part of my identity, freshly typed out next to a picture of my face on a piece of laminated paper. You could say I grew up navigating a hyphenated existence, which, until then, I understood to be Vietnamese-Irish-French-Canadian. My mom’s family came to Canada as refugees from Vietnam in the early eighties. My dad’s family, at least on the surface, was Euro-Canadian. I was used to occupying a space in-between, where I was rarely sure of which ethnic category might best “define” me. Adding “-Métis” didn’t seem like a big deal. It was just something else to throw into the mix the next time someone asked, “—but, what’s your background? Where are you *really* from?”

Over time, this “new” part of my identity began to shift my perspectives. Learning about being Métis opened a narrative that the dominant society had long tried to suppress. Since my grandma Eileen’s death in 2006, my dad has journeyed down the deep rabbit hole of uncovering the stories of our ancestors. Digging into archives and genealogical records has been his way of reconciling a significant omission that spanned most of his life. His goal has been to unravel a history that my grandmother, under the racist and colonial pressures of her time, never had

*in a good way*

the liberty of celebrating. His goal has been to honour my grandmother and the stories she carried but could not share.

Similar to the way my dad may have felt when he began to discover the truth about his mother's family, the more I learned about Indigenous peoples, their cultures, histories, and colonization in Canada (including the stories of my ancestors) the more I felt betrayed by my education. I could hardly comprehend that it took twenty years living on this continent before, sitting in Bill's class, I learned that North America went by another name before it was "discovered" by Europeans: Turtle Island.

The name Turtle Island is derived from the creation stories of this particular land. Several distinct nations on this continent refer to a turtle in their creation stories. The one I am most familiar with is told by the Haudenosaunee. The story follows a pregnant woman who falls from the sky towards a world of water. With the help of the water birds, mammals, and a bit of bravely scavenged mud from the ocean's depths, she cooperatively creates a home of fertile earth on the turtle's back. If you aren't already familiar with the story, I invite you to seek it out and give it read or listen. <sup>13</sup> I'll be here when you come back.

Bill recounted this creation story, setting a foundation for the course. He went on to teach us about the history of Turtle Island, and about our place at the architecture school in Cambridge, Ontario, along the Grand River. He lectured on the history of colonization, genocide, dispossession, and assimilation. Many of us were hearing these histories for the first time. He talked about the commonalities between First Nations from across Turtle Island, over-viewing social structures, systems of law, and relationships with the land. We talked about the nations, past and present, whose territories we occupied in those very moments, namely the Chonnonton (Neutral/Attawandaron), the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe/Mississaugas), and the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations/Iroquois) peoples. We learned about the Haldimand Tract, a large area of land that the British Crown promised to the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) in 1784 that included ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River, from its source to its mouth at Lake

Erie. This was part of our context, and yet after a year and a half of post-secondary classes overlooking the Grand River, this was my first time learning about it.

Architecture school taught us to analyze the context within which we design. Site analyses included our physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environments. In particular, our curriculum emphasized the importance of cultural contexts. The Waterloo Architecture program continues to have a series of mandatory courses devoted to cultural history. The first cultural history course I encountered, with Robert Jan van Pelt, addressed the Holocaust and one of the worst crimes ever committed by an architect: the design of the gas chambers. As intended, this course was foundational for me. The inclusion of a context so powerful, but not immediately obvious, moved me. This context clearly informed our responsibility as architects. Over four academic years, the cultural history stream educated us on Greek and Roman antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and Modernism, all the way through to contemporary times. That history started in Europe and, maintaining continuity, crossed over the Atlantic Ocean to North America alongside colonization and the discovery of the “new world.” In those compulsory cultural history courses, we did not talk about the civilizations that were here before “Canada,” or their cultures, their laws, and their architecture. Nor did we talk about the implications of practicing architecture in a place with thousands of years of history and habitation before the disruption of imperial expansion. We did not talk about the Indian Residential School that sits less than thirty kilometers south of Waterloo Architecture, in Brantford. The Mohawk Institute — known as the “Mush Hole” by its survivors — was one of over 130 buildings across Canada that were built for the purpose of separating Indigenous children from their families, culture, and lands to help “get rid of the Indian problem.”<sup>14</sup> We did not talk about the complex reciprocal relationships with land that Indigenous peoples practiced and are still practicing on their territories today. We did not talk about how this informs our relationship to the land, or how we build on the land, here in this place.

*in a good way*

I found many of these missing pieces in Bill's course. But as an elective course, only a handful of students were exposed to these discussions, and the majority of my classmates continued their studies with no reference to Indigenous contexts. Fortunately, in the near decade since I took Bill's course, the academic landscape has begun to change. But we still have a long way to go.

Here in Canada, we all occupy Indigenous lands that have been profoundly disrupted by European colonization. This is the reality of our physical presence on these lands. History here is complicated and often fraught, but we cannot deny the history of violent colonization and settlement. Architects on Turtle Island operate within a physical realm that has and continues to be shaped by colonization.





*part one*



## *a pause*

May, 2016 | South of Prince George, BC

*The train stopped to give the Canadian National (CN) cars the right of way. This was common. The CN Railway owns the majority of the Via Rail tracks. I sat at the window looking across a meadow towards a dense forest. A tall shrub grew at the edge of the meadow, a few feet away from the train window. As I gazed into the landscape, lost in thought, a small blur of rusty orange caught my focus. It landed at the top of the shrub, pausing just long enough for me to recognize what it was before it flew away. A hummingbird.*



## *the turtle's back*

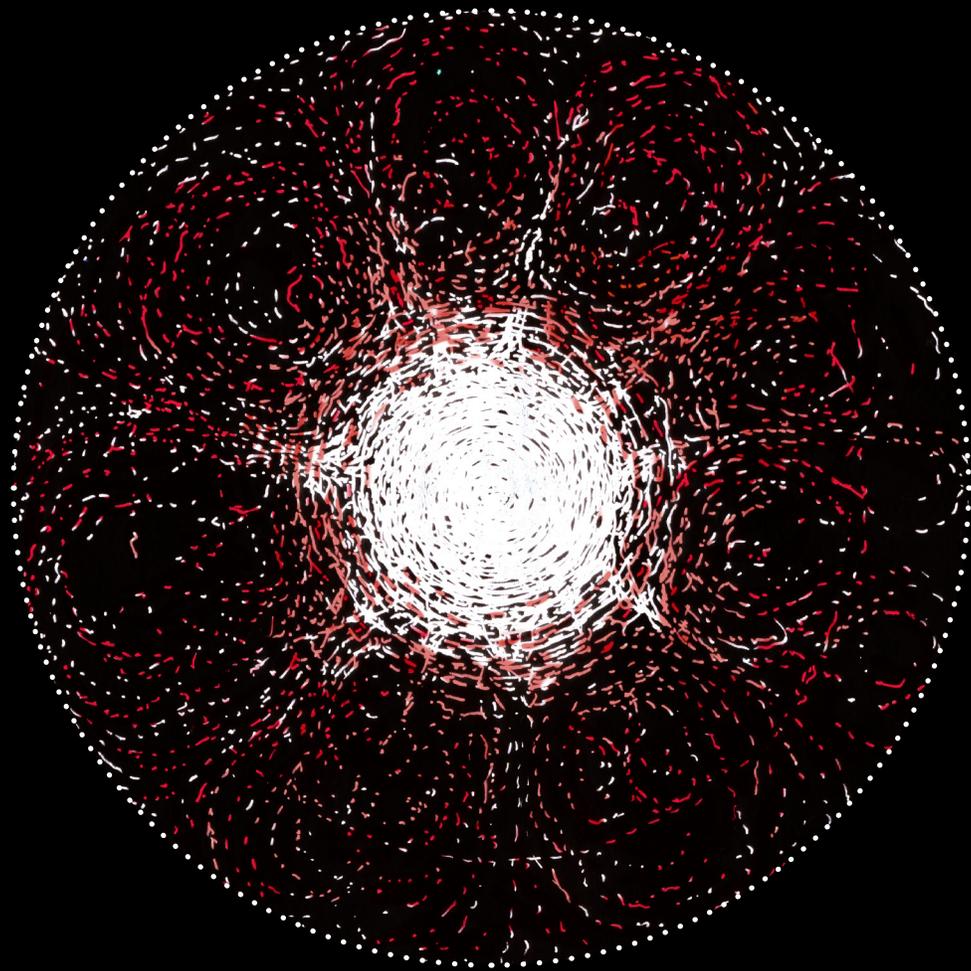
In April 2016, I left my job and set off on a two-month train trip across Canada. I planned to return to Waterloo Architecture for my masters in the fall and had accumulated some modest savings since completing my undergraduate degree. Still young enough to qualify for a Via Rail Youth Pass, it seemed as good a time as any to condense my life into a back-pack and leave all responsibilities behind. I purchased a sixty-day rail pass and left Toronto on a Saturday.

With plans to visit scattered friends and family along the way, my travel itinerary looked something like this:

Toronto, ON → Québec City, QC → Halifax, NS → Peggy's Cove, NS → Saint John, NB → Charlottetown, PEI → Ottawa, ON → Toronto, ON → Winnipeg, MB → Churchill, MB → Winnipeg, MB → Jasper, AB → Prince Rupert, BC → Haida Gwaii, BC → Port Alberni,<sup>15</sup> Vancouver Island, BC → Vancouver, BC → Toronto, ON

Where the rails could not take me, I booked buses or ferries and the occasional rental car. By the end of my trip, I covered over 6000 km crossing the continent east to west, from coast to coast to coast, all within this country we call "Canada." I followed an arc that makes up approximately 15% of the earth's circumference. 54 degrees out of 360.<sup>16</sup> I travelled the curve of the Turtle's back.

Figure 7: *Illustration: Cross-Section of the Earth*



*in a good way*

## *from sea (to sea) to sea*

By the time I boarded that first train from Toronto, I had already decided that my architectural thesis would address Indigenous contexts in some way. I was becoming more aware of Indigenous voices in mainstream media: Idle No More shook the status quo in 2012, I had recently read Thomas King's "The Inconvenient Indian," the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and calls to action were published at the end of 2015,<sup>17</sup> and I was learning more about my Métis ancestors as my dad continued his research. I planned my train trip with the intention of getting to know "Canada" a little better. I wanted to see the land and waters that fell within its borders. I wanted to see the Rocky Mountains emerge over the expansive prairie horizon. I wanted to visit Manitoba, where my paternal grandparents grew up.

"Canada" is the country I was born to. It is the country that claims me, even though I have long been less confident about claiming it in return. It is the country whose coat of arms adorns the cover of my passport. "*A mari usque ad mare*" reads the motto. "From sea to sea." Crossing the country's colonial vertebrae — as I would later perceive it — from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, seemed an appropriate way to experience "Canada."<sup>18</sup>



Figure 8: *The view of the Château Frontenac, constructed by the CPR as one of Canada's Grand Railway Hotels in 1893, as seen from across the St. Lawrence River in Lévis, QC. April, 2016.*

Figure 9: *By the shore of the St. Lawrence River, a turkey vulture glides low. Lévis, QC. April, 2016.*

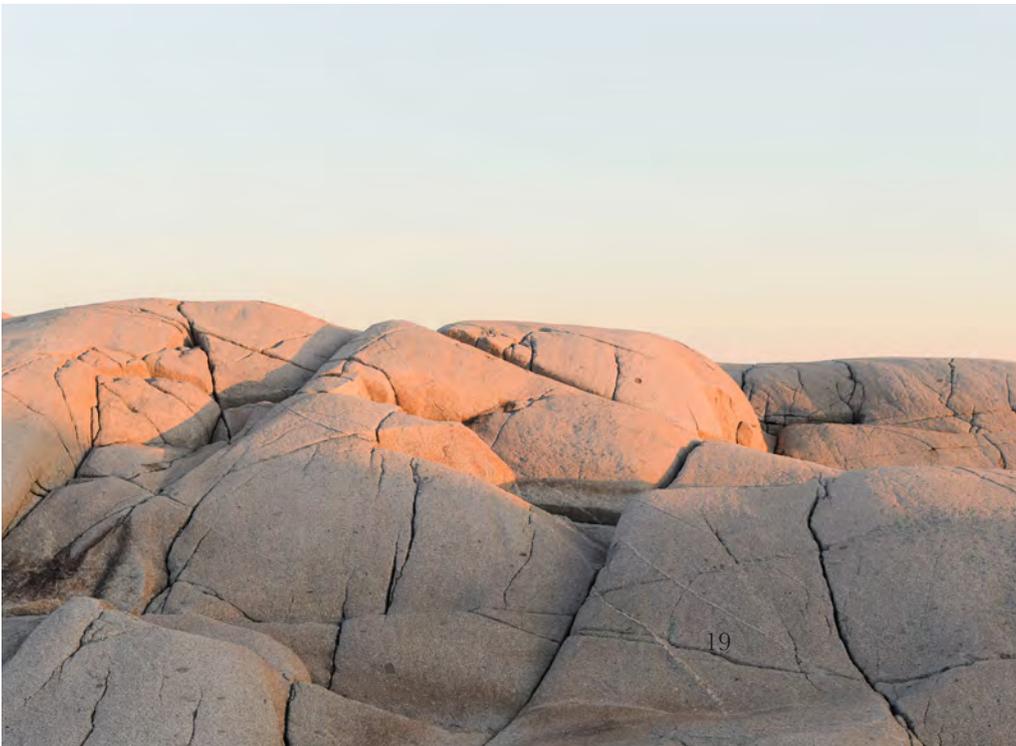
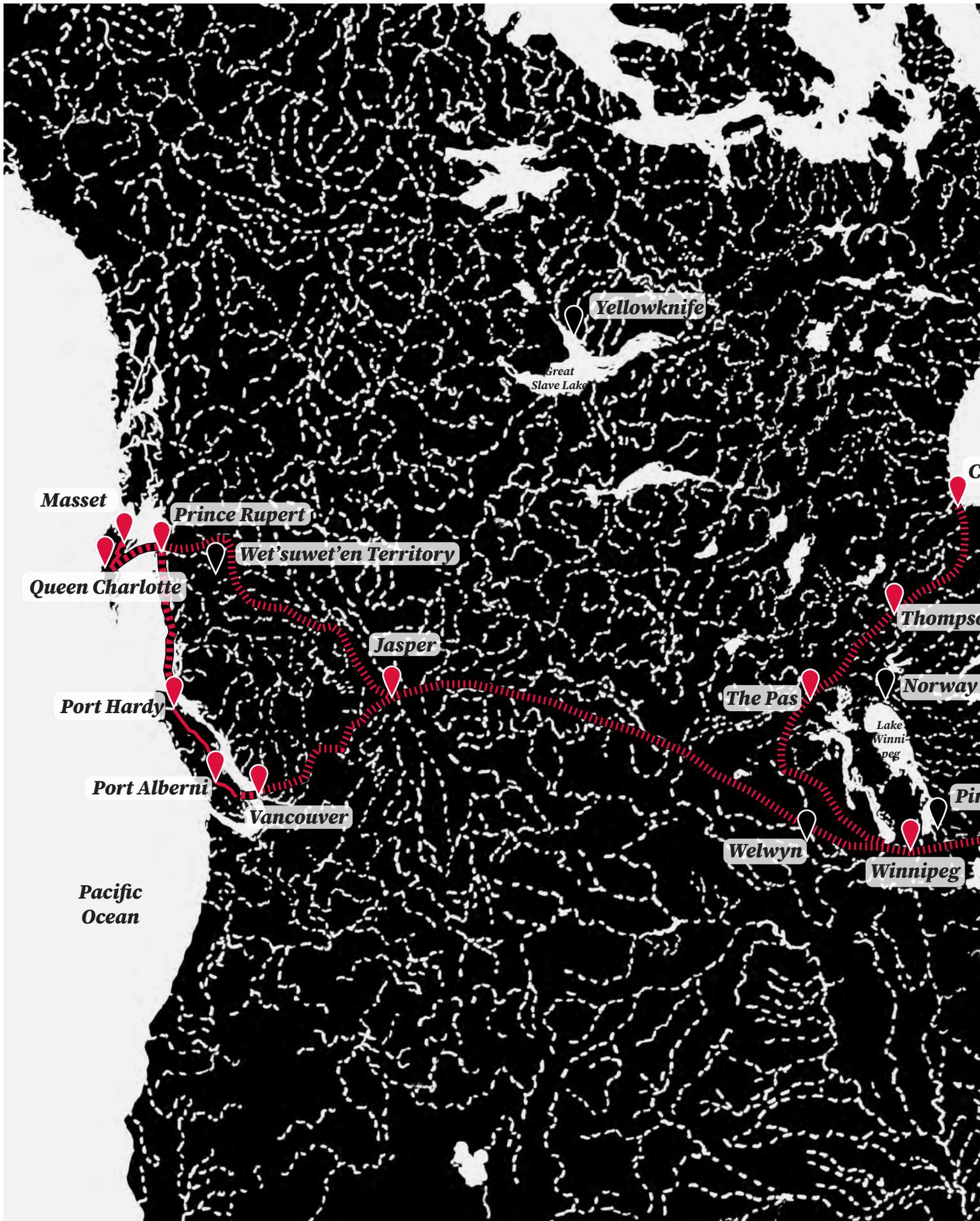


Figure 10: *Evening sunlight washes over rock. Peggy's Cove, NS. April, 2016.*



**Yellowknife**

Great Slave Lake

**Masset**

**Prince Rupert**

**Queen Charlotte**

**Wet'suwet'en Territory**

**Jasper**

**Port Hardy**

**The Pas**

**Thompson**

**Norway**

**Port Alberni**

**Vancouver**

Lake Winnipeg

**Pirbright**

**Pacific Ocean**

**Welwyn**

**Winnipeg**



Figure 11: Map: Cross-Turtle Island train trip. April to June 2016.



Figure 12: *Bellevue Cove, PEI. April, 2016.*



Figure 13: *Blue mussel shells. Tea Hill Beach, PEI. April, 2016.*



Figure 14: *The Library of Parliament, completed in 1876 by architects Thomas Fuller and Chilion Jones, overlooks the water where the Rideau Canal and the Ottawa River meet on unceded Algonquin territory. Ottawa, ON. April, 2016.*

## *red sands*

April, 2016 | Tea Hill Beach, PEI

*Straying from the Via Rail path, I spent two days on Prince Edward Island. Without a car, I walked from Charlottetown to the nearest beach at Tea Hill Park. I spent hours watching the tide and collecting seashells. Bare feet on warm red sand. Immersed in a landscape made familiar to me by the words of Lucy Maud Montgomery, a thought dawned on me: in all the time I spent with Anne as a child, I never paused to think about where the Indigenous peoples had gone.*



Figure 15: *An arctic hare  
on the Hudson's Bay coast.  
Churchill, MB. April, 2016.*



Figure 16: *A view over the frozen Hudson's Bay. Churchill, MB. April, 2016.*



Figure 17: *Detail at the water's edge. Churchill, MB. April, 2016.*

Figure 18: *Stone details. Churchill, MB. April, 2016.*

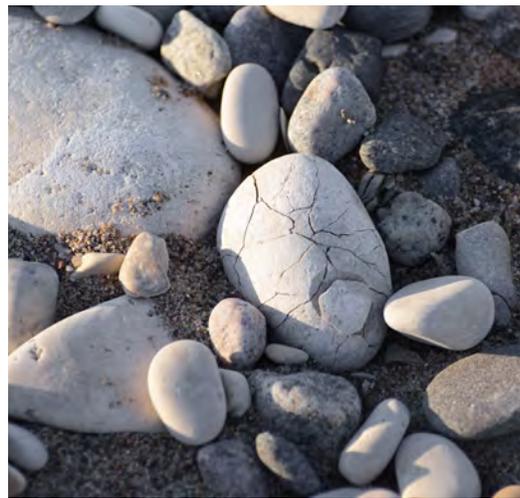




Figure 19: *The Train Station.*  
*Churchill, MB. April, 2016.*

Figure 20: *A Churchill local*  
*described these wetland conifers as*  
*“poodle tails.” MB. April, 2016.*



Figure 21: *Sunset from the*  
*train. MB, May, 2016.*

## *the churchill line*

April, 2016 | Northern MB

*The voice of Rosanna Deerchild accompanied me through the northern bogs of Manitoba. Along with other podcasts, audiobooks, and music, before my trip, I saved dozens of episodes of CBC's Unreserved onto my phone to listen to offline. Rosanna, with her cheerful cadence, was a welcome friend as I stared across the landscape in solitude. Other times, I sat listening only to the rhythmic drone of train wheels bumping over steel tracks, the murmur of nearby conversations, stop announcements, and the occasional blasting whistle. The train gave me space and time to listen, something I typically struggled to fit into my working schedule.*

*The journey from Winnipeg to Churchill took three days and two nights. Travelling through swamp and bog, moving parallel to the flow of water from the Red River north into Hudson's Bay, I thought about my great-great-grandmother Emelie Harkness. Emelie was my grandma Eileen's paternal grandmother, born at Norway House in 1843 before she moved with her family down to the Red River Settlement, now Winnipeg. Between Thompson and The Pas we passed relatively close to Norway House. I wondered if any distant relatives still lived in those parts.*

*Tourists did not typically travel to Churchill in April. It was too early in the year to see the beluga whales, and the polar bears would not be around until the sea ice retreated in autumn.*

*Some travelled to Churchill to glimpse the northern lights, but my budget did not account for excursions, and without a car, seeing them would be difficult. I decided to go to Churchill anyway. If nothing else, I would get to see the great Hudson's Bay.*

*Passing through small remote communities, I got a glimpse of the "Canada" I had previously only seen on the news. The material poverty experienced by small northern communities, the degeneration of buildings designed for a climate somewhere else. I felt naïve and humbled sitting next to locals who relied on the train to get from point "a" to point "b." I was a privileged tourist who thought it might be interesting to take the train to the railway's extremities. I knew enough about colonial history then to know that reserve conditions were the result of deliberate dispossession perpetrated by the Canadian government. Yet, back in Winnipeg, when someone suggested in conversation that all First Nations peoples on reserve be paid a lump sum to get on with their lives like all other Canadians, my chest flared with frustration, but I struggled to give a clear argument for why that wouldn't work. There was still so much context that I did not understand.*

*in a good way*

*On the second and final night on board the train heading back to Winnipeg from Churchill, because I was the only passenger in the economy car, the attendant kindly offered me an empty sleeper compartment. I gladly accepted, although I wondered if the same courtesy would have been offered to a local woman who was also travelling alone. I had trouble sleeping that night, but without the glare and reflections from the aisle lights in the main passenger car, I had a clear view into the dark sky. A faint glimmer of the aurora borealis swayed over the horizon.*



Figure 22: *A tyndall stone fossil in the facade of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, MB. April, 2016.*



Figure 23: *Prairie views from the train. SK, May, 2016.*



Figure 24: *The HBC Store at Portage Ave and Memorial Blvd constructed in 1925. Winnipeg, MB. May, 2016.*

Figure 25: *Illustration: Northern Lights*

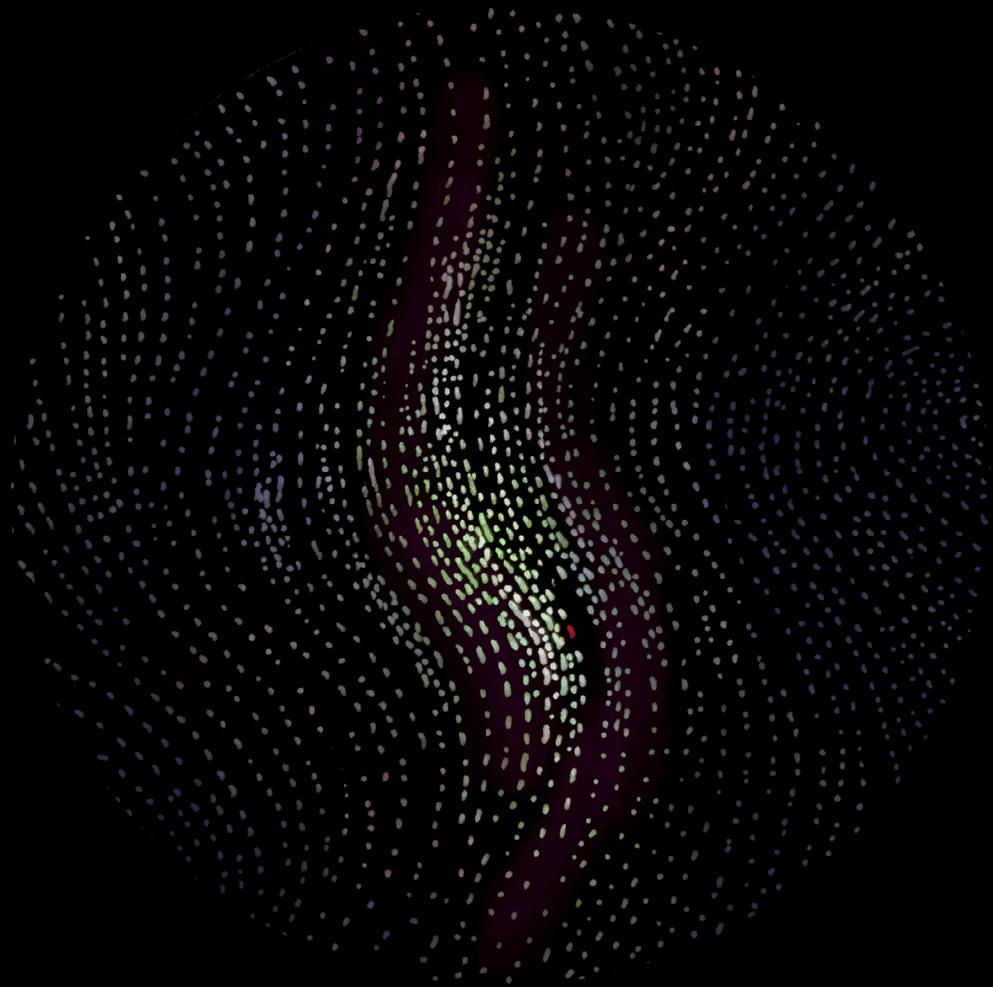


Figure 26: *A display of The REDress Project, by Métis Artist Jaime Black, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR). Winnipeg, MB. May, 2016.*



Figure 27: *A map displaying the locations of Indian Residential Schools across Canada. CMHR, Winnipeg, MB. May, 2016.*

Figure 28: *“trace” by Rebecca Belmore on display at the CMHR, Winnipeg, MB. May, 2016.*



## *the iron road*

The railways first came to Turtle Island in the 1830s. By the mid-1800s, the fur trade began to decline as fashion trends changed overseas and settler economies shifted towards agriculture, lumber, and mineral extraction.<sup>19</sup> Following the development of the steam-powered locomotive on the other side of the Atlantic, railways began to thread their way through the colonies.<sup>20</sup> Private investment funded the first railways, but eventually, railway construction became a government-led project.<sup>21</sup> Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Upper and Lower Canada (predecessors to Ontario and Québec respectively), were looking to improve intercommunication, the transportation of resources, and capacity for military defence.<sup>22</sup> In 1867, the promise of construction of an intercolonial railway became a condition of the British North America Act that united Ontario, Québec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick in confederation to form the Dominion of Canada.<sup>23</sup> British Columbia later joined Confederation in 1871 contingent on Canada's promise to build a new a transcontinental railway extending to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after Confederation, in 1868-69, the new Dominion of Canada purchased Rupert's Land — a territory that included all of the lands within the Hudson's Bay drainage basin — from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).<sup>25</sup> The almost four million square kilometre land transfer entitled Canadian expansion through the centre of the continent and occurred without Indigenous consultation or consent, disregarding extensive Indigenous involvement in HBC trade operations and existing Indigenous territorial sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> On the ground, Canadian land surveyors began mapping and parceling the newly "acquired" territories for development and railway construction and inevitably faced First Nations and Métis opposition. At the Red River settlement, government surveyors were famously confronted by the Métis, marking the beginning of the Red River Resistance.<sup>27</sup> West of the Red River Settlement, the Ojibwa and the Saukteaux resisted the influx of surveyors and settlers and demanded that they establish Treaty agreements, thus beginning negotiations of Numbered Treaties.<sup>28</sup> First Nations understood the treaties as agreements to share their lands rather than sell them;<sup>29</sup> however, the Crown included a

*in a good way*

“land surrender” clause in each of the written numbered treaty documents and considered itself the new rightful owner of the territories in question.<sup>30</sup> This perceived land transfer allowed the expansion of the railways through the prairies.

To construct the railways across thousands of kilometres in a compressed time frame, Andrew Onderdonk, supervisor of the BC section of railway construction, enlisted the labour of Euro-Canadian settlers, First Nations peoples, and approximately 15,000 Chinese immigrants.<sup>31</sup> The Chinese railway workers were met with harsh racism, paid extremely low wages, and faced dangerous working conditions.<sup>32</sup> Four thousand Chinese workers are estimated to have died during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railways (CPR).<sup>33</sup> The sea-to-sea “iron road” was substantially completed by 1885.<sup>34</sup>

With the railway tracks complete, the CPR became deeply involved in orchestrating land settlement and sales for agricultural development. Populating the West was critical to railway profits, so the CPR recruited settlers by advertising cheap farmland parcelled from their government land grants and implemented bare-bones “colonist cars” to accommodate new settlers at an affordable price.<sup>35</sup> With the help of CPR settlement campaigns, over 3 million immigrants came to Canada between the 1890s and 1910s.<sup>36</sup>

The construction of the railways also served as a powerful vector for infectious disease.<sup>37</sup> The influx of settlers to northwestern Canada brought the measles and influenza (among other diseases) that soon plagued First Nations communities already struggling with widespread tuberculosis.<sup>38</sup> The fresh onslaught of disease in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century brought Indigenous populations in Canada to an all-time low.<sup>39</sup>

There is no question that the construction of the railway was instrumental in establishing the nation we know today. The railway companies served multiple facets of colonization: they promoted and facilitated a dramatic influx of settlers into western Canada, primarily from eastern settlements

and Europe; they significantly increased access to natural resources and material movement; they supported transcontinental communications and military transportation; and finally, they invested in the development of the Canadian tourism industry. By accelerating Indigenous dispossession and with depopulation already underway, the railways increased access across the continent and buttressed a shift in power that favoured the settler colonial state.<sup>40</sup>

Figure 29: *Smoke from BC forest fires cloud the prairie horizon. SK. May, 2016.*



Figure 30: *Big Horned Sheep in view of the train. Jasper National Park, AB. May, 2016.*



Figure 31: *The train passes through Jasper National Park, AB. May, 2016.*

Figure 32: *Venus slipper orchids*.  
*Valley of the Five Lakes Trail,*  
*Jasper, AB. May, 2019.*



Figure 33: *White-tailed Deer*.  
*Valley of the Five Lakes Trail, Jasper,*  
*AB. May, 2019.*





Figure 34: *Two Brothers*  
Totem Pole by Haida Carvers  
Jaalen and Gwaai Edenshaw.  
Jasper, AB, May, 2016

Figure 35: *A logging landscape visible from the train. BC. May, 2016.*



Figure 36: *A black bear visible from the train. BC. May, 2016.*

Figure 37: *Evening light along the Skeena River. BC. May, 2016.*

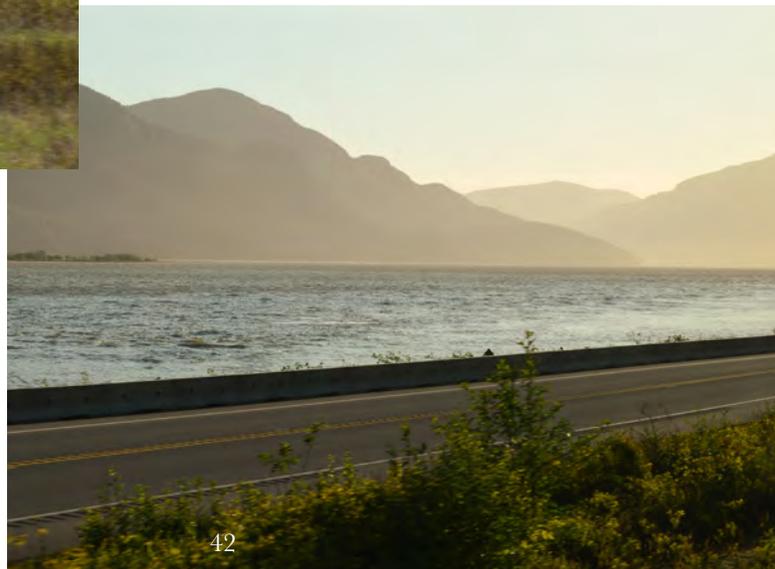


Figure 38: *Salmonberry flowers. Prince Rupert, BC. May, 2016.*



Figure 39: *A walking trail along an defunct rail line. Prince Rupert, BC. May, 2016.*

Figure 40: *Bald eagles overlooking the Pesuta shipwreck in Naikoon Provincial Park, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*





Figure 41: *Approaching Prince Rupert, BC along the Skeena River. May, 2016.*



Figure 42: *Crossing the Hecate Strait and approaching the archipelago of Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*

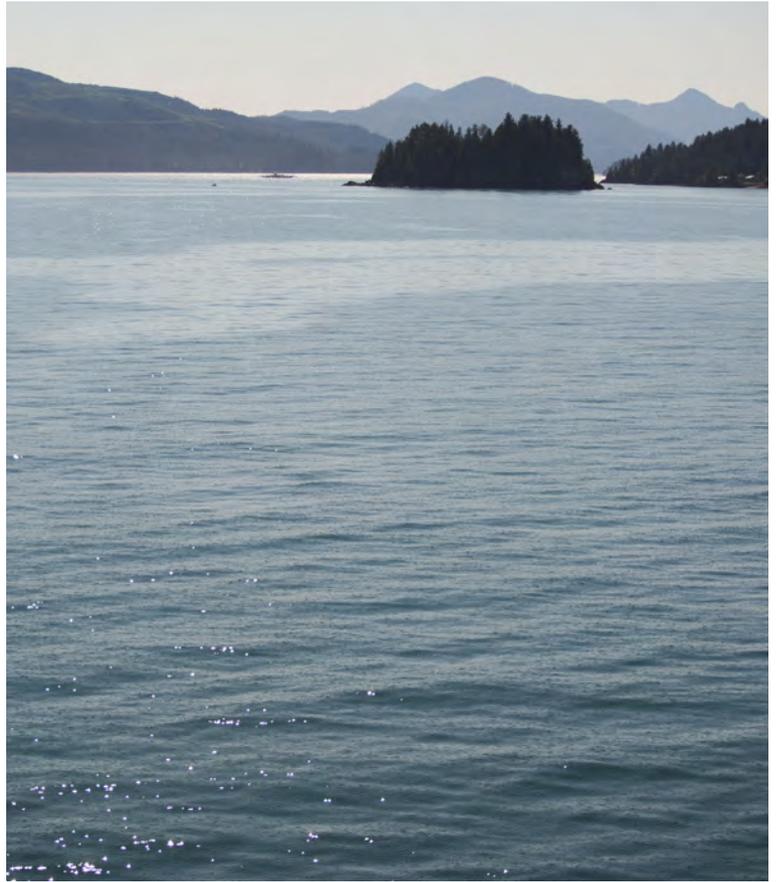


Figure 43: *Ancient trees along the Golden Spruce Trail. Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*

Figure 44: *The Reconciliation Pole in progress* by Master Carver 7idansuu (Edenshaw), James Hart. Old Masset, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.



Figure 45: *A bald eagle.* Haida Gwaii, BC. May 14, 2016.

Figure 46: *Ancient cedars stand along the Spirit Lake Trail,* Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.



## *the reconciliation pole*

May, 2016 | Haida Gwaii

*I arrived in Prince Rupert — where the northern railway branches meet the Pacific Ocean — in the second week of May 2016. From there, I took a ferry to the archipelago of Haida Gwaii. The islands layered on the horizon as we approached. Haida longhouses and carved poles were visible along the shore, composing the structures of the Haida Heritage Centre. Haida Gwaii was perhaps the first and only place along my train trip where an Indigenous culture was at the forefront of visitor narratives.*

*Travelling with three new friends, we visited a number of sites across Kiis Gwaay (Graham Island), from Queen Charlotte City and Skidegate in the south, to Massett, Naikoon Provincial Park, and Tow Hill on the northern coast. I was struck by the variety in the landscapes as we crossed the island: steep mountains that brushed the clouds; stark beaches and sand bars with *G̱uud ts'una* (bald eagles) soaring above; and dense mossy forests with centuries-old *ts'uu* (cedars) and the hauntingly beautiful, almost celestial, whistle of the *t'in* (varied thrush).<sup>41</sup> In Massett, at the north end of the island, we visited a small art gallery where we met a Haida woman named Elsie. She welcomed us with friendly conversation and we told her about the places we had been so far. She shared stories about herself, the gallery, Haida culture, and the land. She remarked how plentiful and generous the lands were in Haida Gwaii, describing the small shoots of sea asparagus, salmonberries, spruce tips, sea weed, eulachon,*

*and other locally harvested foods. Laughing, she told us that if she left the comfort of her home and lived only on the land she would be plump from all the foods available. We spent more than two hours visiting with Elsie before continuing on our way with full hearts.<sup>42</sup>*

*Travelling alone after my friends and I parted ways, I revisited the grounds of Master Carver Tidansuu Jim Hart's workshop in Old Massett or Gaw in Xaad kil, at the mouth of Massett Sound. In a clearing between road and shore, a large pole lay across the ground surrounded by woodchips and the overwhelming aroma of fresh-cut cedar. Two carvers stood over the pole, chisels and gauges in hand, chipping away with precision. Assisting Jim Hart with the piece, carvers Jaalen Edenshaw and Tyler York explained that the pole was called the Reconciliation Pole and was set to be raised at the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus in Vancouver upon completion. They walked me through the imagery that was finding form in the grain of the ancient cedar before I left them to continue their work without disruption, pondering the meaning of reconciliation.*

*The pole depicts a story centered on the Indian Residential School System (IRS), a network of state and church-run schools implemented by the Canadian government to forcibly "civilize" and assimilate Indigenous children.<sup>43</sup> Read from the base upwards, the Reconciliation Pole story begins in a time predating the IRS through the imagery of salmon, sGaaga (Shaman), Bear*

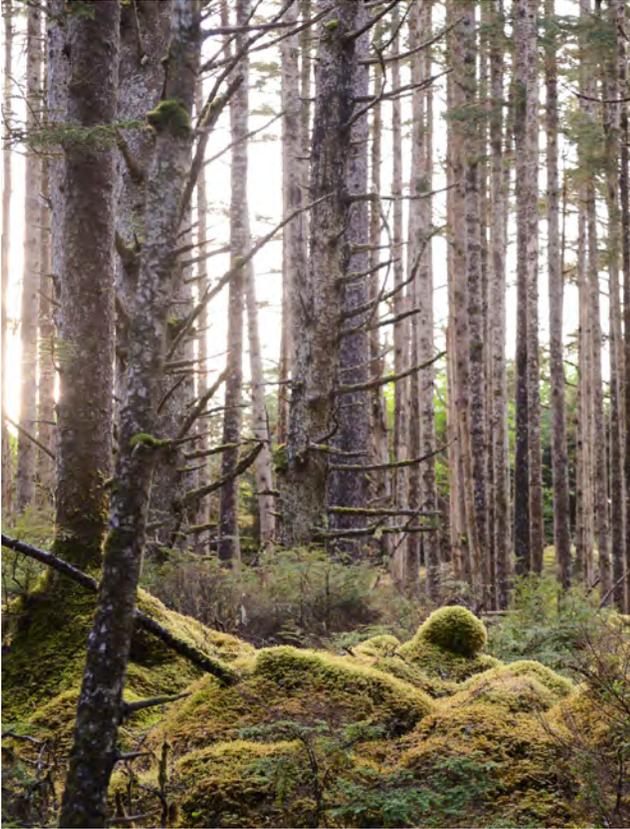


Figure 47: *Moss formations near Tow Hill Road, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*

Figure 48: *Haida Heritage Centre, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*



*Mother and her twins, and Raven, all important figures in Haida culture.<sup>44</sup> The midpoint of the pole reveals a detailed representation of the residential school attended by Jim Hart's grandfather, symbolizing the collective Indian Residential School System, adorned with copper nails in remembrance of the thousands of children who died in residential schools at the hands of neglect, abuse, and experimentation. Each nail was hammered in place by a survivor of the IRS.<sup>45</sup> Above the carved school, children from different nations hold hands in a circle around the pole, an expression of strength through unthinkable hardship. The top section of the pole speaks to a return to Indigenous sovereignty and a new relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadians.<sup>46</sup> A canoe and a longboat are depicted side by side, travelling forward together on parallel trajectories, each respecting the autonomous path of the other — a reconciliatory path. At the top of the pole, an eagle “represents power, togetherness, determination, and speaks to a sustainable direction forward.”<sup>47</sup> The pole was raised in ceremony at UBC on April 1, 2017.*

*The pole itself, I learned, is an 800-year-old red cedar log.<sup>48</sup> The tree that gave its life for this artwork lived well before settler colonialism began its spread across Turtle Island, well before the first residential school was built. A witness to multiple generations of Indigenous lives and a partner in the sustained artistic practice of Haida carvers, the Reconciliation Pole carries the story of Indigenous resilience not only on its surface, but in its rings of growth, in its every cell.*

Figure 49: *Illustration: Embodied Memory*

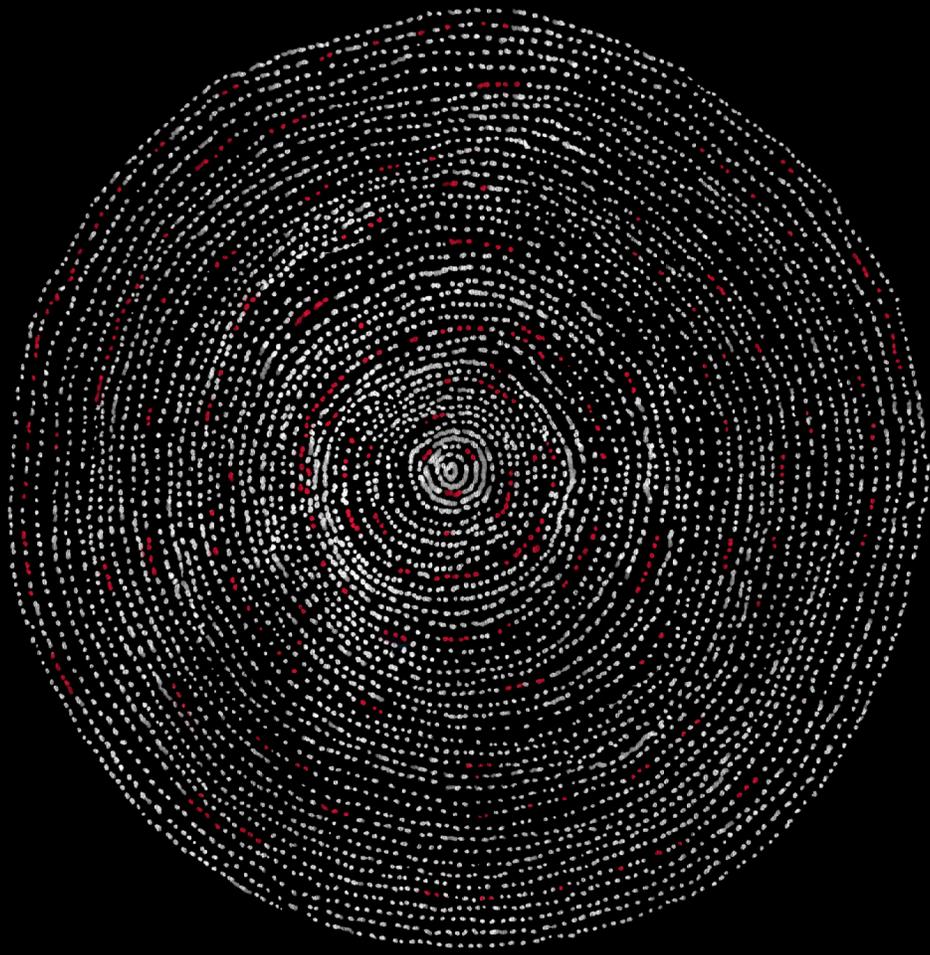




Figure 50: *An injured bald eagle, stoicly drying its wings at Spirit Lake, Haida Gwaii, BC. May, 2016.*



Figure 51: *A spring spruce tip used locally for cooking and tea. Queen Charlotte City, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*



Figure 52: *Ripe salmonberries. Queen Charlotte City, Haida Gwaii. May, 2016.*





Figure 53: *A family of mergansers, Massett Inlet, Haida Gwaii, BC. May, 2016.*

Figure 54: *A whale tail along the coast, BC. May, 2016.*





Figure 55: *An almost-full-moon rising at sunset, seen from the "Inside Passage" ferry between Prince Rupert and Port Hardy, BC. May, 2016.*

Figure 56: *The Lion's Gate Bridge, Vancouver, BC. June, 2016.*



Figure 57: *A heron watches over the sea wall, Slhxi7lsh Rock, Stanley Park, Vancouver, BC. June, 2016.*



## *“canada”*

The last leg of my train trip involved a continuous four-day journey from Vancouver to Toronto. With no shortage of time for reflection, I felt immense gratitude coming home. Gratitude for the impending privilege of a comfortable mattress and hot showers for the foreseeable future, and of course, for the trip itself. I felt humbled to have visited so many uniquely beautiful places. I met many kind and generous people, some of whom became friends. The trip gave me time to breathe, to slow down. I took the time to pay attention to the trees, the plants, the rocks, the waters, and the animals that are always with us, if we only pause to notice. I also had the chance to set foot on some of the lands that my ancestors called home. I came back nourished, but also unsettled.

With so much beauty and bounty, it is no wonder Europeans wished to claim this land as their own. Along with places of pristine beauty and seemingly untouched nature, the train offered a window into the physical manifestations of colonization: dense urban centres, remote and underserved First Nations communities, and sites of industry and resource extraction. I was reminded of the privilege of having such sites out of sight and out of mind.

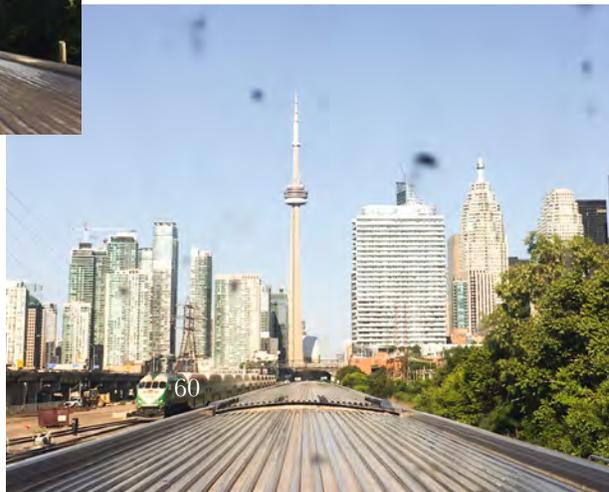
All of the places I visited across the country were astonishingly unique. Thinking about all of those places as “Canada” washes over the differences, making it easy to forget the variety of peoples and landscapes that span this section of the Turtle’s back. I returned home with the realization that perhaps what most unifies Canadians within these boundaries is a common narrative of settler colonialism.

Figure 58: *Sunset and my last night on the train, ON. June, 2016.*



Figure 59: *Passing through the Don River Valley, under the Bloor Street Viaduct, Toronto, ON. June, 2016.*

Figure 60: *The Canadian National (CN) Tower and a bit of bug splatter. Toronto, ON. June, 2016.*



## *a step back*

I entered my master's degree with a commitment to explore what it meant to engage in reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples in architectural practice. With that in mind, I submitted a proposal to research and develop architectural building strategies for and with Indigenous communities in Canada. It seemed like a clear path to bring together narratives of reconciliation and architectural practice. Although I was already building an awareness of colonial systems and felt somewhat informed about Indigenous issues in Canada, it did not take long before I started to feel that I needed to take a step back. The more I learned about Indigenous methodologies, decolonization, settler colonialism, and the expansive history of displacement, dispossession, assimilation, dependency, and genocide, the clearer it became that I would be ill-prepared to propose design solutions relevant to any community. Despite taking Bill's course and maintaining a general awareness of Indigenous discourse in the years leading up to my master's degree, there was so much that I had never been taught, so much that I still did not know. It became apparent that within this context, a proper "site analysis" called for a complete shift in perspective.

## *returning to oneself*

Early on in my studies I came across an Anishinaabe concept called *biskaabiyang*. I first found it among the words of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.<sup>49</sup> She in turn traced it back to the writing of Wendy Makoons Geniusz. Within the context of academic research, the word *biskaabiyang* means to “return to oneself.” The concept was developed by scholars at the Seven Generations Education Institute in Northern Ontario as a process specifically for Anishinaabe students conducting decolonizing research. The process implores students to identify how colonization has personally affected their lives. The researchers are then in a position to unload the “emotional and psychological baggage they carry from this process, and then return to their ancestral traditions.”<sup>50</sup>

Scholar Margaret Kovach also writes about the process of research preparation: “miskasowin is a Cree word that means to go to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging.”<sup>51</sup> She goes on to state that “from the oral teachings and writings of Indigenous peoples of different nations, the message seems consistent – all we can know for sure is our own experience.”<sup>52</sup> The intention is that this process of self-reflection occur throughout the research work, helping one to locate themselves in relation to the work. This is also a process that helps one to understand their ingrained perspectives and inherent biases.

Guided by these concepts, I began to think of this process of self-reflection as part of a contextual analysis. As designers, we carry our experiences, perspectives, and biases with us to every project — they compose a context that we cannot escape. It is our responsibility to grow and transform them. The process of self-reflection, unlearning, and relearning became an integral part of this work.





*part two*



Figure 61: *Me and my brother at the Lawson Archaeological Site, London, ON. 1996.*



Figure 62: *In the palisade, Lawson Archaeological Site, London, ON. 1996.*



Figure 63: *An arrowhead display, Lawson Archaeological Site, London, ON. 1996.*



Figure 64: *Meeko and Flit decals on my childhood bedroom window.*



Figure 65: *Pocahontas, Meeko, and Flit decals on my childhood bedroom window.*

## ***settler colonialism***

Settler colonialism, similar to other forms of colonialism, is initiated when a territory is invaded by a foreign nation which then develops a colony (or colonies) to assert political and economic domination over the original territory's lands and peoples. The colonizing nation does this to expand their dominion and exploit materials and labour to increase the wealth of their home nation or empire. In most instances of colonialism, the colonizers eventually retreat, leaving the peoples and lands that experienced colonization in a "postcolonial" state. However, within *settler* colonialism, the settlers "come to stay" and settler colonialism is a structure rather than an event.<sup>53</sup> The colonizing power invades the new territory to create a new homeland, reproducing the spatial, social, economic, and political orders of its home country.<sup>54</sup>

In settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples stand between colonizers and the most important element of the settler colonial project, "access to territory."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, to succeed, imperialist agendas rely on the elimination or erasure of Indigenous societies, rendering land an ongoing site of dispute.<sup>56</sup> In their influential article "Decolonization is not a metaphor," education scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang expand on the crux of settler colonialism.

Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation.<sup>57</sup>

In Canada, the settler-colonial government enacted policies and practices to legally label Indigenous peoples as "Indians," remove them from their lands, and aggressively assimilate those who survived the barrage of disease, war, and starvation, thereby attempting to eradicate Indigenous peoples' unique identities and claim to territory. This violent acquisition of land was justified in the eyes of the colonizer because they believed

Indigenous peoples were under-evolved and racially inferior. As such, Indigenous peoples were subjugated as well as displaced.

Settler colonialism relied on chattel slave labour to extract wealth from the land. While Indigenous peoples composed the majority of enslaved peoples in what is currently Canada, both Indigenous and Black peoples were enslaved from the 1600s until the 1830s when slavery was formally abolished in the British Empire.<sup>58</sup> In what is currently Canada, Indigenous and Black peoples were enslaved primarily as domestic servants but were also used to support agricultural production and manufacturing.<sup>59</sup> Settler colonialism reduced both land and people to property.

Paired with physical attempts at Indigenous removal to create access to land for exploitation and “civilization,” the colonizers also extracted Indigenous knowledges and cultures, attempting to claim them as their own. The late settler-colonial scholar Patrick Wolfe asserts that the colonizer “sought to recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference—and, accordingly, its independence—from the mother country.”<sup>60</sup> The colonizing population appropriates cultural representations and practices of the territory’s original peoples and attempts to claim a form of “indigeneity” to the territory.<sup>61</sup> This is why every Canadian souvenir shop carries dreamcatchers and moccasins stamped with the Canadian flag, while at the same time, kids across Canada sing praise to “our home and native land” at the beginning of every school day. This appropriation and attempt to claim “Indigeneity” are crucial in settler attempts to redefine their relationship to the land as rightful inhabitants rather than foreign invaders.<sup>62</sup>

A physical decolonization has never occurred in settler-colonial states like Canada, the United States, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand. The colonizers never left. Settler colonialism never ended. Because the settler-colonial system has been designed for Indigenous dispossession, as long as the settler-colonial systems persist, Indigenous dispossession persists. Importantly, however, the settler-colonial project is not complete.<sup>63</sup> Although the colonizers have inflicted profound damage to both peoples and lands, they failed to achieve their goal of Indigenous elimination. In

*in a good way*

the face of unending violence, Indigenous peoples have always resisted and refused erasure. We are still here.

...

I took the concept of *biskaabyang* to heart and began my work by reflecting on my own experiences of colonialism and Indigeneity. I thought back to my early exposures to Indigenous peoples and culture. In grade school history class, I recalled learning about settlements in the “New World,” and the colonists and fur traders that occupied them. I learned that Indigenous peoples taught newcomers how to survive the harsh winters and how to prevent scurvy. My grade eight history teacher assigned us a debate on whether Louis Riel was a traitor or a hero. I specifically remember a small paragraph about residential schools, unsure now to what degree the textbook identified their horrors. As our lessons chugged forward in time, our teachers and textbooks taught us about how trade expanded, the railroads were built, and settlements grew, and mentions of Indigenous peoples dwindled. Most portrayals were situated firmly in the past. I imagine this was the rough extent of government-mandated exposure experienced by many students of my generation.

Outside of class I was exposed to Disney’s Pocahontas, The Indian in the Cupboard, Dances with Wolves, Disney’s Peter Pan, Clint Eastwood westerns, and the Lone Ranger, all depicting stereotypical or caricatured Indians.<sup>64</sup> The wise and noble Indian, the savage Indian, the dying Indian. Pocahontas certainly dominated my perception of Indigenous peoples in the mid to late 1990s. My cousins and I had matching Pocahontas Barbie dolls, and Meeko and Flit, Pocahontas’s raccoon and hummingbird sidekicks, were beloved in my circles. I identified with Pocahontas’s close connections to nature, but I was unaware of the reductive practices within these stories. Outside of highly caricatured portrayals, Indigenous peoples were more or less absent from the popular media I consumed.

One summer when my brother and I were kids, my parents took us to visit the historic Lawson Archaeological Site near London, Ontario. The

Neutral had established a village on the site circa 1500-25.<sup>65</sup> We sifted through trays of soil for arrowheads and ran through the reconstructed palisades. In the gift shop, my parents bought me a bald eagle feather (which I was excited to add to my feather collection) and a small deerskin pouch containing a grain of corn and a pebble each of what looked like turquoise and quartz. I treasured those souvenirs. For me, they were a reminder of what I thought were days long past.

Many years later, after uncovering that we were Métis, I began to learn more about Indigenous peoples, but my everyday exposure still came through popular news outlets: stories mostly of poverty, addiction, and delinquency. I did not realize then that settler colonialism was at the root of that despair and the way it was presented in the media. I did not realize that it was also the reason that I rarely, if ever, heard of contemporary Indigenous peoples in any other context. I had never tied settler colonialism to the reason my grandma was taught to conceal her Métis identity. I did not realize that if not for settler colonialism, as a person of mixed settler-refugee-Indigenous descent, I would not have come to be in this place at all.

*in a good way*

## *yellowknife*

At nineteen, I traveled to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories for my first co-op term. I had never before ventured so far north, not to mention in the winter. It was also my first time living in a place far away from everyone I knew. Before I left, my friends joked, “don’t get eaten by a polar bear!” and “stay warm in the igloos.” I knew there were no polar bears in the region, nor would I be staying in an igloo. But otherwise, I knew very little about Yellowknife.

I quickly found a warmth in Yellowknife that I had never experienced in any other place. On my first day of work, my colleague Zina, invited me over for a welcome dinner. She made a fabulous meal for a small group of us, and it was the first time I tasted her amazing apple pie. I have attempted many times to replicate Zina’s pie since leaving Yellowknife. I have never made it nearly as well as she does. I got to know my coworkers, alongside the cold temperatures, the frozen lakes, the fluffy ptarmigans, and the language of the ravens. Among new friends in this new environment, I felt at home, even if it was only temporary.



Figure 66: *Ptarmigan nestled and camouflaged in the snow. Yellowknife, NT. February, 2011.*



Figure 67: *Ptarmigan are feathered perfectly to insulate from frigid temperatures. Feathers even warm their feet. Yellowknife, NT. January, 2011.*

Figure 68: *The view of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories that led me to the centre of Frame Lake. Yellowknife, NT. January, 2011.*



## *frame lake*

January, 2011 | Yellowknife, NT

*A couple of weeks into my work term, my manager enlisted me to take a photograph of the Northwest Territories (NWT) Legislative Building for an upcoming display at an NWT Association of Architects event. The intent was to capture a view of the building from Frame Lake, so that the dome of the building would be seen nestled among the trees that surrounded it. I set out one morning with my camera and a tripod, and I found a path onto the lake. I walked for several minutes in the wind-blown snow before I found the angle I was looking for. I set up my tripod and took the photographs I needed. It was here that I first met the silence of a frozen lake.*

*I remember the precise moment when I became attuned to the silence. The wind had softened, and I just stood there next to my tripod, absorbing the absence of noise. I suddenly became acutely aware of how small I was there on that lake. My only witnesses were the vast bed of snow and ice under my feet, and the gentle wind that parted around me.*

Figure 69: *Illustration: Frame Lake*

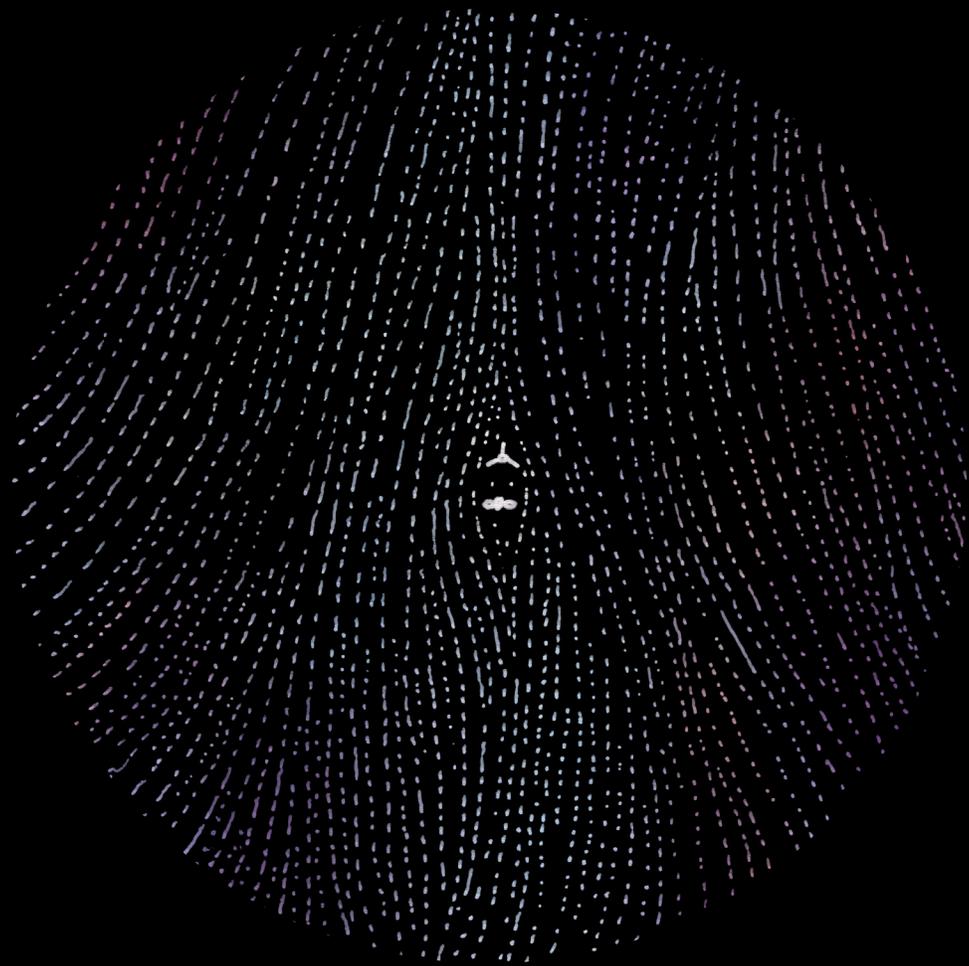


Figure 70: *Fine snow  
shaped by wind.  
Yellowknife, NT.  
February, 2011.*

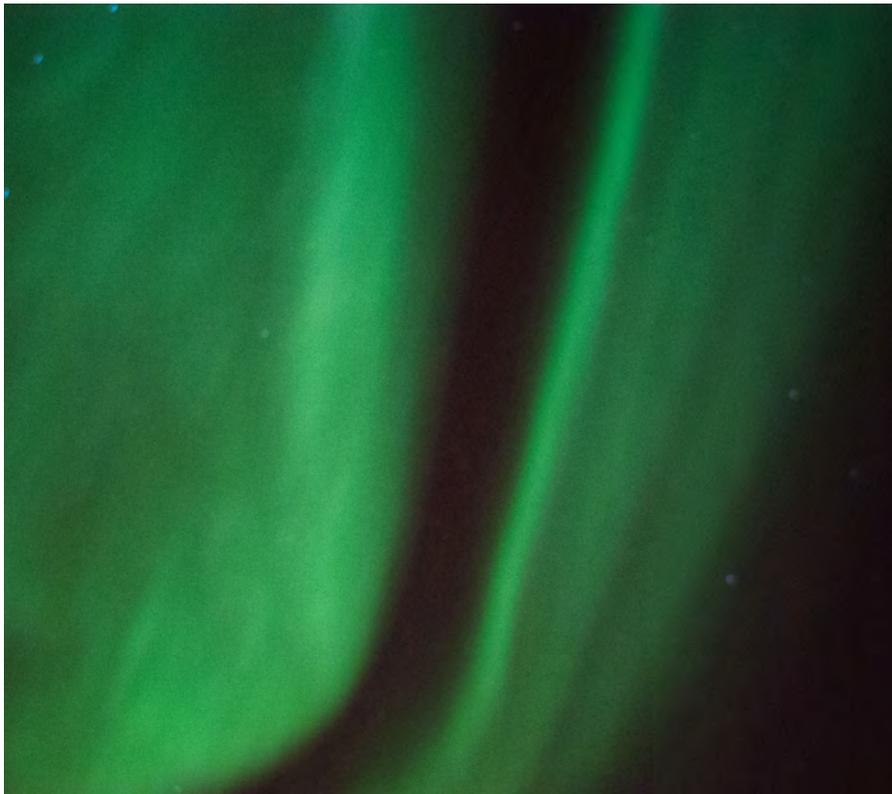


Figure 71: *A blurry attempt  
at photographing an  
amazing display of the  
northern lights. Yellowknife,  
NT. March, 2011.*

## *complacency*

In the four months of my co-op term, I grew attached to the northern city. At home in Yellowknife, CBC radio became a constant companion. I gained a new perspective of Canada, one that was not centred in Southern Ontario, one that included more Indigenous voices. With limited internet bandwidth at home, I spent almost every weekend outdoors exploring with my camera. I explored New and Old Town and walked the trails around Niven and Frame Lake. I got to know the movements of the aurora borealis and grew to love the crisp cold. But the truth is, in those four months, I learned very little about the Indigenous Nations whose territory I occupied — the Yellowknives Dene and the North Slave Métis.

In the city of almost 20,000 people, most of the folks I got to know came from elsewhere, many from southern regions of Canada, traveling to the city for employment opportunities. I was surprised to find out Yellowknife was also home to a small Vietnamese community.

A Vietnamese family owned a corner store not far from where I lived. I dropped by one afternoon and ended up chatting with them over hot chocolate. They were kind, but the conversation evolved into adamant paternal advice for how I should practice my Vietnamese so that I could marry a nice Vietnamese boy and impress his mother. I laughed, thankful for the familiarity that a shared background could encourage, but, reluctant to endure unsolicited relationship advice, I exited the conversation and never returned to that store. I chuckle, even now, thinking back to that conversation. Securing a Vietnamese man in matrimony aside, I see the value of knowing the languages of my ancestors now more than ever.

*in a good way*

Much of the architectural work at my firm was located within First Nations and Inuit communities across northern regions, I helped mostly with presentation drawings and was not at all involved in client or community discussions. I became aware of the extractive industry that founded the city and the most recent diamond mines. I also visited the Indigenous shops and galleries in town. Otherwise, I spent most of my spare time enjoying the moment with friends and coworkers or walking the streets and trails. I created my own narratives and relationships with place, which, albeit unintentional, mostly excluded Indigenous peoples and perspectives. This is the nature of complacent settler-colonial culture.

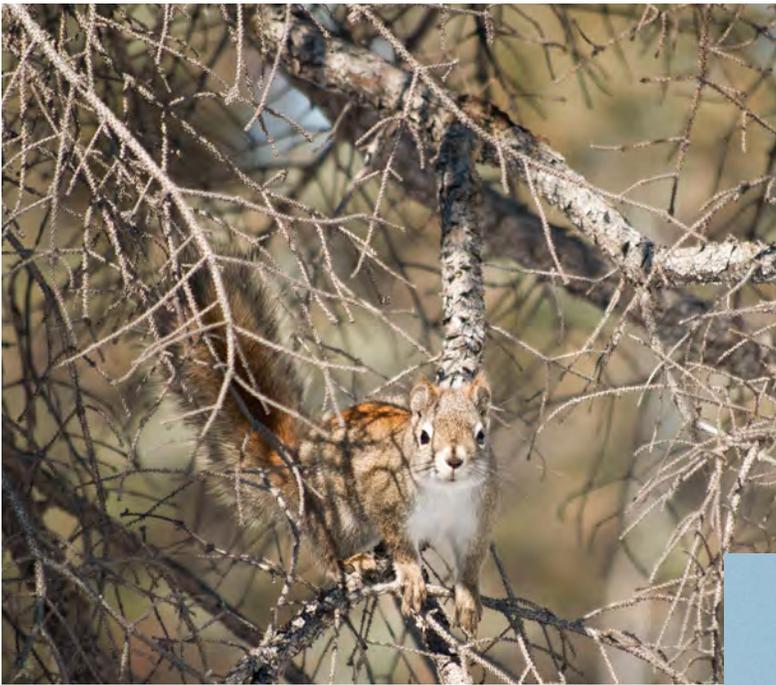


Figure 72: *A red squirrel. Yellowknife, NT. April, 2011.*

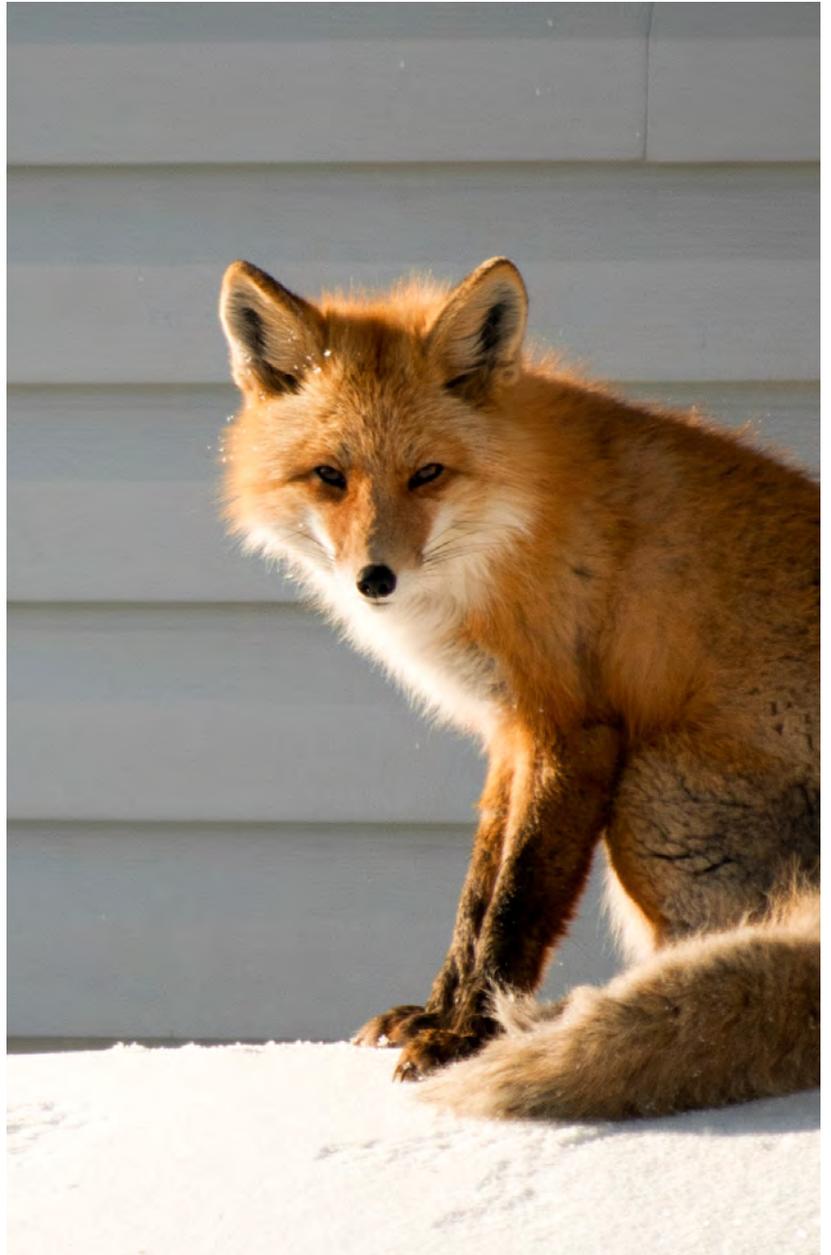


Figure 73: *A bald eagle circling high above near Jackfish Lake. My first bald eagle sighting. Yellowknife, NT. April, 2011.*

Figure 74: *A snowshoe hare, Yellowknife, NT. April, 2011.*



Figure 75: *The neighbourhood red fox. Yellowknife, NT. April, 2011.*



## *dreamcatcher*

January, 2011 | Old Town, Yellowknife, NT

*On a weekend walk, I went into a store in Old Town that sold artwork, mostly by Indigenous artists from across northern territories. A couple of ptarmigan guarded the front steps of the shop. Inside, I browsed slowly, and I found a dreamcatcher hanging out of place. It consisted of just the ring, about three inches in diameter, with a sinew web woven within it. It didn't have anything hanging off of the ring, like others I was accustomed to seeing. I wondered if this was a different kind of dreamcatcher, one I had never come across before. I liked it, in its simplicity. I went to find the store clerk to ask if there were any more dreamcatchers like it; the one I found seemed to be in the wrong place. The clerk informed me that the dreamcatcher with the ring alone was incomplete. They explained to me that conceptually, the dreamcatchers are meant to filter your dreams, capturing any bad dream in the web and allowing good dreams to flow back down into your mind through the components that hang from the bottom of the ring, often feathers or strands of deer hide. I felt humbled and a little embarrassed. There I stood, intending to purchase a dreamcatcher without really understanding its meaning. Ignorant, I was drawn to the incomplete dreamcatcher because I found it aesthetically pleasing. The clerk showed me where the rest of the dreamcatchers hung. I purchased a similar dreamcatcher made by the same artist, this one complete.*



Figure 76: *The neighbourhood red fox. Yellowknife, NT. April, 2011.*



Figure 77: *An osprey over the  
Grand River, Cambridge,  
ON. August, 2011.*



Figure 78: *A diving muskrat, the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. August, 2011.*

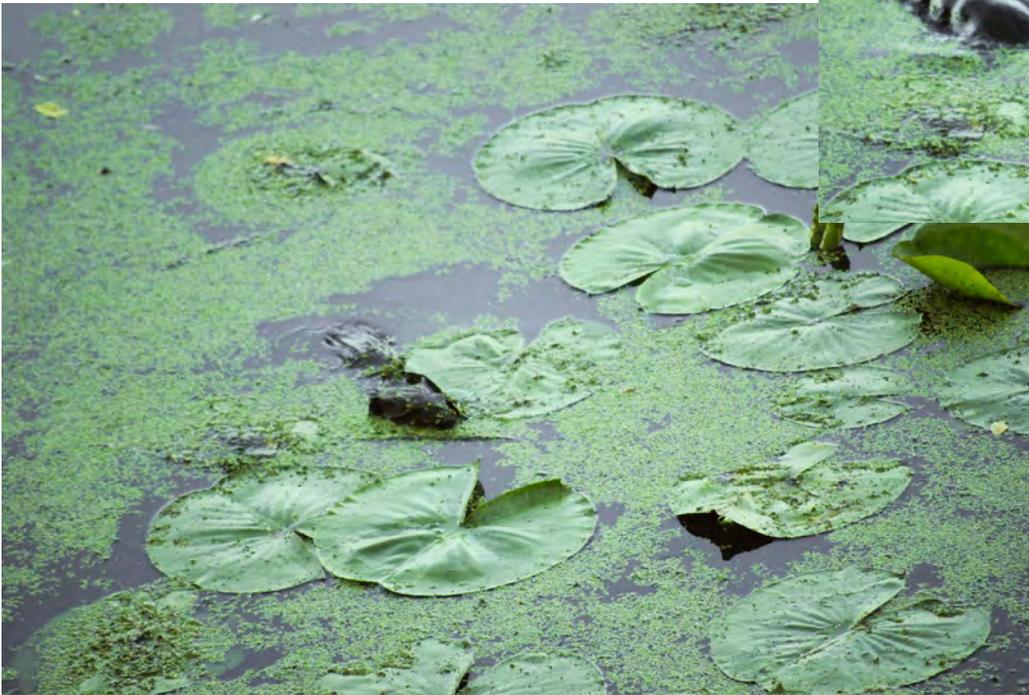


Figure 79: *A muskrat, the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. August, 2011.*

Figure 80: *A waxing moon, Cambridge, ON. August, 2011.*





Figure 81: *A red squirrel resting in the forest on a field trip during Bill Woodworth's Course. Crawford Lake, ON. June 2011.*





Figure 82: *Map: Ancestral Migrations*



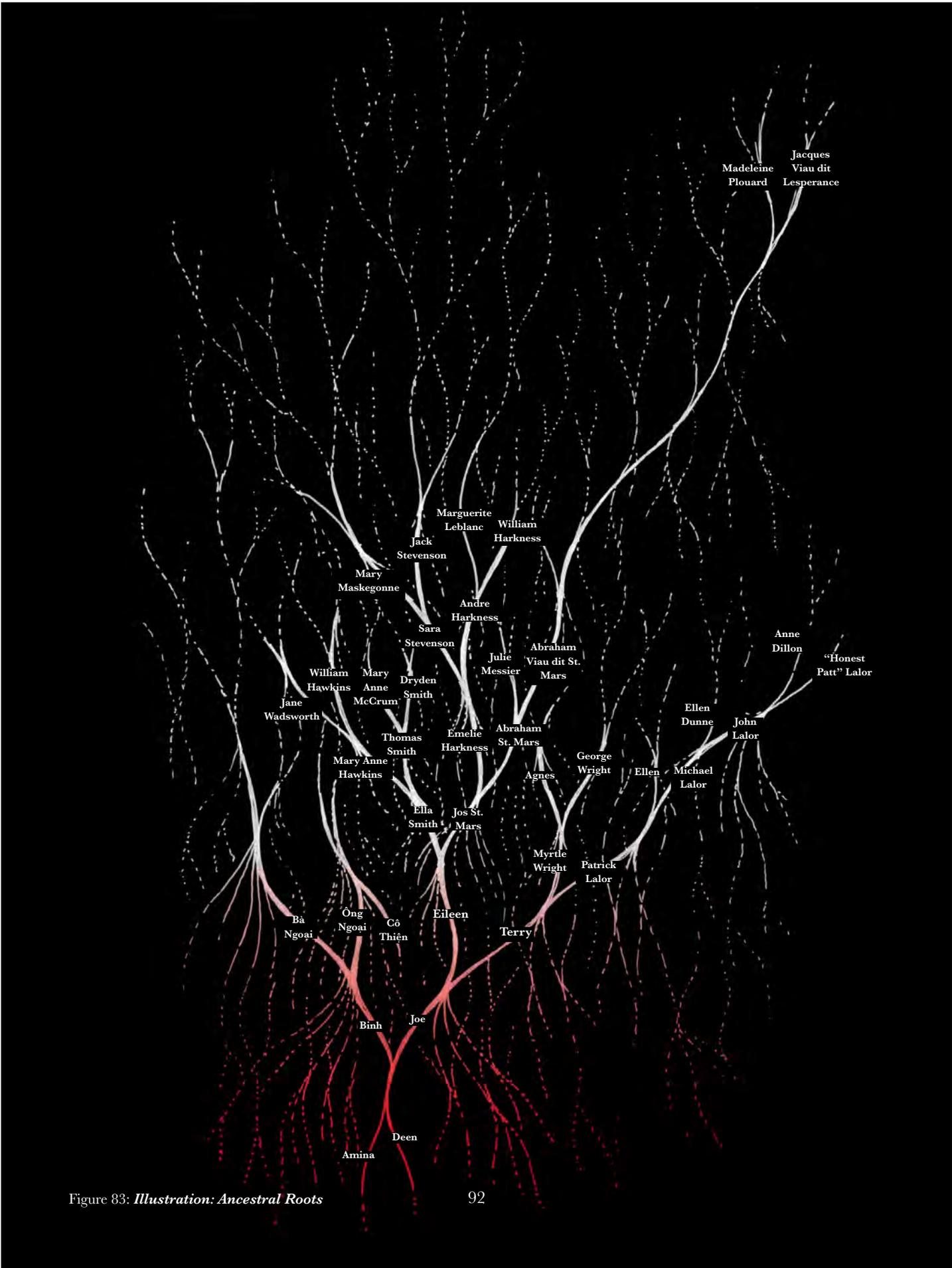


Figure 83: *Illustration: Ancestral Roots*

## *ancestral migrations*

I arrived home from Yellowknife in April 2011 and immediately returned to Cambridge to begin the second term of my second year, the same term I enrolled in Bill Woodworth's elective course. As an assignment early in his course, Bill prompted us to reflect on our ancestral migrations. This exercise helped us explore our relationship and Indigeneity to lands elsewhere, and how we came to live on Turtle Island. I spent hours with my dad sifting through old pictures and archival documents, tracing back to Manitoba and immigrations from Ireland and France. I visited with my mom, my grandma Bà Ngoại, and my grand-aunt Cô Thiện (my grandfather's sister) to trace their journeys to Canada as refugees from Vietnam. I was amazed by the movement of people, circumstances, and relationships, without which I would not be here.

...

Dating back between ten and twelve generations, based on available records, I have approximately one hundred ancestors that made the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from France to "New France" in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup> Jacques Viau dit Lespérance, came to the "New World" in 1665 as part of the Carignan-Salières Regiment, sent to reinforce the fledgling settlement against Iroquois (Mohawk, Haudenosaunee) attacks.<sup>67</sup> The regiment set out on two campaigns into Mohawk territory. The first was considered "unsuccessful." During the second campaign, the French troops found the Mohawk village deserted and burned the buildings and the surrounding corn fields.<sup>68</sup> In 1667, weakened by disease and food shortages, the Haudenosaunee came to a peace treaty with the French.<sup>69</sup> Over half of the Carignan-Salières Regiment returned to France in 1668; however, around 400 men, including Jacques, settled in New France.<sup>70</sup> Jacques later married Madeleine Plouard, who came to New France as a Filles du Roi, a group of women sent to New France by the King to populate the new colony.

Six generations after Jacques Viau, Abraham St. Mars was born in 1841 to Abraham Viau dit St. Mars (Cinq Mars) and Julie Messier in Longueuil,

*in a good way*

Québec. At twenty, Abraham left his home near Montréal for the Red River Settlement to work as a carpenter and joiner to rebuild the St. Boniface Cathedral that had recently been destroyed by fire. There he met Emelie Harkness and they married in 1863.

William Harkness, a Scottish merchant of L'Assomption (near Montreal), and Marguerite Leblanc, also of the region, had a son (fils naturel) that they named Andre, born in approximately 1796. Marguerite's origins are unknown, although her son Andre is described as a "half-breed" in his eldest son James' Manitoba Half-Breed Scrip Affidavit. Andre fought in the War of 1812 with the Canadian Voltigeurs Regiment of Light Infantry, participating in the Battle of Chateauguay among others. After the war, Andre became a voyageur working for the North West Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company, after the two companies merged in 1821. He married Sara (Saly) Stevenson at Norway House in 1838.

Sara was the daughter of Jack Stephenson, a "homeguard" Cree-Métis, and Mary "of the Maskegonne." Jack likely also had Scottish (possibly Orkney), or British roots. Andre and Sara had a daughter, Emelie Harkness, around 1843, before they all migrated south from Norway House to live in the Red River Settlement, what would later become Winnipeg. It was on the banks of the Red River that Emelie met and married Abraham St. Mars. Abraham and Emelie settled on a river lot in St. Vital, and raised seven children: Julie, Sarah, Louis, Delphis, Josephine, Joseph, and Celina. Joseph (Jos, pronounced Joe) St. Mars met Ella Smith in Winnipeg, and they married in 1910.

Ella Smith was born in Ottawa to Mary Anne Hawkins and Thomas Matthew Smith, both born in the Ottawa River region. Ella moved with her family to Thunder Bay, before eventually meeting and establishing a life with Jos in Winnipeg.

Mary Anne Hawkins was the daughter of William Hawkins and Jane Wadsworth, both of whom immigrated to the Ottawa area from Ireland in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Thomas Matthew Smith was the son of Dryden Smith, who came to Aylmer from England in 1841,<sup>71</sup> and Mary Anne McCrum, believed to be of Irish descent.

John Lalor, son of Patrick “Honest Patt” Lalor and Anne Dillon, was born in Tenakill House, County Laois, Ireland in 1815. His siblings included revolutionary politicians James Fintan Lalor, Peter Lalor and MP Richard Lalor. John later moved to England with his wife Ellen Dunne. John’s grandson Patrick Michael Lalor, born in 1888, decided to set sail for Australia from London and arrived in Brisbane in 1910. There he worked on the railroads and sheep farms until 1914, when he set sail for Canada. He first arrived in Victoria and was said to have worked on the construction of the Lion’s Gate Bridge in Vancouver. He eventually made his way east across Turtle Island, following the Buffalo Trails to Welwyn, Saskatchewan. He worked in Welwyn as a ranch hand on George and Agnes Wright’s pony farm where he met and married their adopted daughter Myrtle Edna Wright. My grandfather, Terence Patrick (Terry) Lalor was born in Welwyn, but the family eventually moved to Pine Falls, Manitoba where his dad Patrick worked at the Abitibi Paper Mill. Terry went to medical school in Winnipeg, where he met his future wife Eileen St. Mars.

Ella and Jos St. Mars had three sons and a daughter, Eileen, my grandmother. Eileen fell in love with my grandfather Terence Patrick Lalor on the shores of the Red River. They married and moved to the greater Toronto area in Ontario, where they raised four children.

My dad, Joe, was the oldest of Terry and Eileen’s children. He met my mom, Thanh-Binh, while they attended the same college in Toronto.

...

Both of my mother’s parents were from northern Việt Nam (Vietnam). After communist forces, led by Hồ Chí Minh, took control of North Việt Nam following the 1954 Geneva Conference, my Bà Ngoại (maternal

*in a good way*

grandmother), Khổng Thị Phương, travelled with her family from their village, Thái Bình, to the city of Hanoi, leaving everything behind. Eventually deciding that the North was unsafe, they fled to Hải Phòng where the United States and French Navies were operating a migration program to South Việt Nam. They escaped to Sài Gòn (Saigon), the southern capital of Việt Nam by steam ship.

My Ông Ngoại (maternal grandfather), Phạm Kim Thư, and his siblings, including Phạm Thị Mỹ (Cô Thiện), grew up in the Hải Hậu district of Nam Định. They, too, decided to travel south and unlike my Bà Ngoại's family, managed to catch a flight from Hanoi to Sài Gòn before the communist government sealed the border along the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.

In Sài Gòn, Ông Ngoại and Bà Ngoại each lived with their families only three houses apart. They married out of high school and shortly after had my mom, the eldest of six children.

After the communist government took over South Việt Nam on April 30, 1975, marking the end of the Vietnam War, my grandparents decided that they had no choice but to escape the country. Ông Ngoại, who had been sent to re-education camps, managed to leave first to Canada with a Chinese family for whom he had been teaching English and working as a translator. In 1979, he settled and worked as a settlement counsellor in London, Ontario. From there he was eventually able to sponsor the rest of his family. In December 1980, my mom set off with her brother to escape Việt Nam by boat. Known as “boat people,” they hid in a small fishing boat to travel to a small island where a larger ship would pick them up to take them to a refugee camp in Malaysia. The larger ship was so crowded that people barely had enough room to lie down, packed like sardines in a can. Fortunately, they made safe passage to the Pulau Bidong refugee camp in Malaysia, avoiding interception by Thai pirates, a violent occurrence that was common among the vessels transporting refugees. After four months, my mother and her brother were accepted as refugees in Canada and flew to London, Ontario in April 1981. The rest of my mom's immediate family managed to relocate in 1983. Cô Thiện arrived in 1984.

My parents married and lived for a few years on Indian Road near High Park in Toronto before moving to a suburban neighbourhood just north of the city where they raised me and my older brother. Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện lived with us for many years.

...

Tracing my ancestral roots has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances that shaped my relationship with Turtle Island. Many of my ancestors were the early colonizers of this continent, their stories often framed as a search for a better life in a new and abundant land. Others sought to escape from turmoil in their own homelands. Where the written records end — with Mary, Jack, and Marguerite — and with oral histories lost, I am left to imagine the stories of the countless generations who lived on Turtle Island before Europeans (including my ancestors) changed the course of their descendants' lives.

My ancestral relations connect me to settlement and activity on Turtle Island spanning millennia, from time immemorial through to settler-colonial occupation. Engaging in processes of “reconciliation” or “decolonization,” I am tied to a complex web of ancestral experiences that challenge me to simultaneously account for my ancestral roles in colonization, settler complacency, and Indigenous resistance.

I continue to trace the lives of those who came before, whose relationships with each other and with the land led to my existence. I stitch myself to the land through their stories.



Figure 84: *Salmon in the Don River, Toronto, ON. October, 2011.*



Figure 85: *Waxing moon, Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



Figure 86: *A beaver (or maybe a muskrat). Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*

## *thunder bay*

November, 2011 | Thunder Bay, ON

*That same summer of 2011, concurrent with Bill's course, I tried to incorporate Indigenous principles into my design work. Our studio that term required us to design a zoo. I understood the potential value in the exercise, but ultimately, I couldn't bring myself to design animal enclosures. Considering themes of multigenerational thinking and questioning what it meant to respect the earth, I proposed a park that incorporated the remediation of an industrial wasteland into a habitat for native plant and animal species. My instructors allowed the reinterpretation but told me that I did not have enough "Architecture" in my project. They were probably right, and I certainly had not designed a masterpiece, but I struggled with the lack of support to develop the concepts that sought to prioritize. I finished the term feeling disheartened, questioning my place in the architectural profession.*

*During the co-op term that followed, I worked at the Toronto-based multi-disciplinary design firm Brook McIlroy. I started in time to meet the tail end of a major urban design, architecture, landscape, and planning project at Prince Arthur's Landing, a waterfront area in Thunder Bay. The city of Thunder Bay, where the Kaministiquia River meets Lake Superior, carries a deep history of Indigenous habitation dating back 10,000 years.<sup>72</sup> Following the American Revolution, it became a significant node in the fur trade for its strategic position north of the new American border, connecting the Great Lakes waterways*

*in a good way*

*to territories further west.<sup>73</sup> The site, known then as Fort William, was a thriving North West Company post from 1803 until the Hudson's Bay Company merger in 1821, during which time it hosted a yearly "Great Rendezvous," a large gathering of First Nations, Métis, and European traders and voyageurs. The trade route through Fort William eventually faced decline, and the site later gained significance as the starting point of the Dawson Trail, a road commissioned by the new Canadian Government as a connection to the Red River Settlement, before the Canadian Pacific Railway made the road near obsolete. Notably, the Dawson Road was used by the Red River Expedition military force in 1870, transporting 1,200 soldiers to confront Louis Riel's provisional government at the Red River Settlement.<sup>74</sup>*

*Considering the site's complex history and the transcendent nature of its location on the world's largest inland waterbody, Brook McIlroy and the City of Thunder Bay were committed to honouring the site through thoughtful placemaking. The designers incorporated a Spirit Garden as well as a gathering space called the Celebration Circle designed by Anishinaabe architect Ryan Gorrie. Early in my co-op term, Calvin Brook enlisted me to help prepare AutoCAD files for a series of artworks to be cut from weathering steel and installed encircling the base of the Celebration Circle structure. The artworks were created by Anishinaabe artists Randy and Roy Thomas depicting stories significant to Anishinaabe culture.<sup>75</sup>*

Figure 87: *The Celebration Circle*,  
*Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder*  
*Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



Figure 88: *The Celebration Circle*,  
*Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder*  
*Bay, ON. November, 2011.*

Figure 89: *Artwork encircling the*  
*base of the Celebration Circle,*  
*“Turtle Island” by Randy Thomas*  
*(left), “Lifegivers” by Roy Thomas*  
*interpreted by Louise Thomas*  
*(centre), and “Life Spirits” by*  
*Randy Thomas (right). Prince*  
*Arthur's Landing, Thunder*  
*Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



*in a good way*

*Two months into the term I was given the opportunity to travel to Thunder Bay. The trip included only one night in the city, but the morning before we left, before sunrise, we visited the near-complete Prince Arthur's Landing. The groundcover lay under a thin film of glistening frost. The sky glowed a vibrant orange, fading into pink. Across the open water lay Nanabijou, or the Sleeping Giant, an outcrop shaped like a human figure, sleeping with their arms folded on their chest. Nanabijou is a hero in many Anishinaabeg stories; a plaque at the water's edge tells the story of how the sleeping Nanabijou came to be:*

*"Nanabijou tells the chief of the Ojibwe of Isle Royale, an island just off the shoreline, about a secret entrance to a rich silver mine. The location is an island that had been known since the 1800s at Silver Islet. He warns the chief that if the secret gets out to the [European] traders, the Ojibwe will perish and he, Nanabijou, will be turned to stone. All goes well until a Sioux spy steals the secret and spills it to the traders. That night there's a great storm and in the morning, the sleeping giant is lying at the mouth of the bay."*

*Sun beams soon cleared the the sleeping body of Nanabijou and cast golden light on the latticed bentwood structure of the Celebration Circle. For a few moments that morning, on Lake Superior's golden shores, I forgot my disheartenment.*



Figure 91: *Nanabijou. Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*

Figure 92: *The Celebration Circle, Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



Figure 90: *A merganser. Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



Figure 93: *Nanabijou, the Sleeping Giant, with the Celebration Circle in the foreground. Thunder Bay, ON. November, 2011.*



## *le jardin d'agronomie tropicale*

August, 2013 | Bois de Vincennes, Paris, France

*In the Waterloo Architecture undergraduate program, the entire fourth year class has the opportunity to spend a full term as a class in Rome, Italy. I was fortunate to attend this term in the fall of 2013. Before moving to Rome that September, I arranged to travel to Paris, France with four of my cousins. We spent two weeks visiting places we had always dreamed of seeing. Towards the end of the trip, all but my cousin Vi returned to Canada. We had one last day to explore the city before flying to our next stop in Italy and we agreed to squeeze in a visit to an unusual place, called Le Jardin d'Agonomie Tropicale, recommended to me by a former co-worker from Yellowknife.*

*Located in the 12<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, Le Jardin d'Agonomie Tropicale (The Garden of Tropical Agriculture) is tucked away in the east corner of the Bois de Vincennes, an expansive urban park. We rented bikes and found our way to the garden entrance marked by a grand Chinese Gate. The garden, though certainly not on most tourist "must-see" lists, is a place with deep historical significance. It embodies the dark history of France's colonial empire.*

*The site began as a research centre for tropical agriculture in 1899, a place to cultivate plant species, including "coffee, cocoa, vanilla, nutmeg, and banana" for use as cash crops in African plantations.<sup>76</sup> In 1907, it became the site of a*

Figure 94: *A monument commemorating Cambodian and Laotian soldiers who died in WWI for France. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*

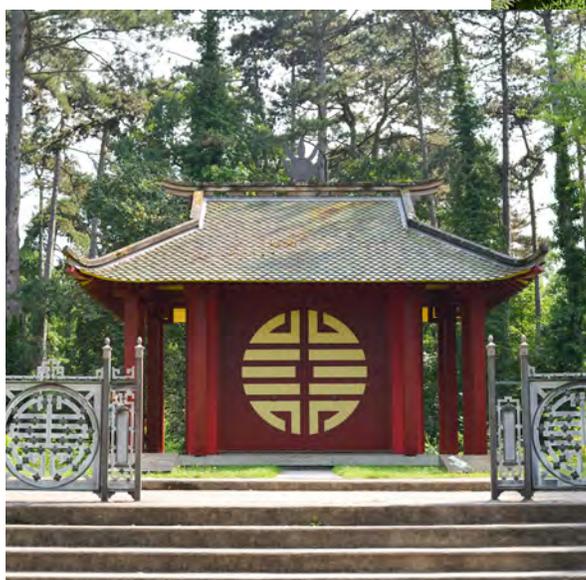


Figure 95: *The Cochinchinoise Red Pagoda, built in 1992 to replace a former Indochinese Pavilion. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 96: *The Porte Chinoise or Chinese Gate marking the entrance to Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Bois de Vincennes, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



*in a good way*

*colonial exhibition. The exhibition showcased the peoples, animals, and products of France's colonies at the time with reconstructions of colonial villages from Madagascar, the French Congo, the Tuareg lands in North Africa, and Indochina, encompassing Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.<sup>77</sup> Indigenous peoples were shipped from the colonies to populate the reconstructed villages. They were there to perform and feed the orientalist fascinations of the over two million visitors that passed through the exhibition.<sup>78</sup> The exhibition "was all about showing the splendor of France's overseas possessions."<sup>79</sup> Today, such exhibitions are known as human zoos.*

*Vi and I dismounted our bikes and began to wander through the ruins of the park. We explored the strange and eerie garden with a sense of wonder, like we would other tourist attractions, taking photographs of the damaged and forgotten structures. It was interesting to see elements of our Vietnamese culture in this obscure place and to know that Vietnamese villagers, people who could have been our ancestors or their relations, had stood on that soil over a hundred years before.*

*At the time, I had yet to be weighed down by a deeper knowledge of colonial practices. Today, revisiting the sombre gardens through photographs, I feel a tightness in my gut.*

Figure 97: *A bronze copy of an Imperial Vietnamese Funerary Urn. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 98: *The Indochinese Pavilion. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 99: *The Indochinese Pavilion. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 100: *The ruins of the Congolese Pavilion. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 101: *A sculpture by Johann le Guillerm in the windows of the Tunisian Pavilion Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*



Figure 102: *The Tunisian Pavilion. Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale, Paris, France. August, 2013.*

## *the fiction of discovery*

Le Jardin D'Agronomie Tropicale offers an important reminder of a not-so-distant aspect of French colonial history that has generally fallen from Euro-Western consciousness. Its condition of neglect and disrepair stands in stark contrast to other historical sites in Paris.<sup>80</sup> French historian Pascal Blanchard remarks that the state of the gardens “are a clear sign of our collective amnesia, and it’s here you can see our memory decaying in front of our eyes.”<sup>81</sup>

Reflecting back on this colonial site in the early months of this work prompted me to explore larger questions around the colonialism that made Empire a reality. The Colonial Exhibition of 1907 was just one of many colonial exhibitions of the imperial era.<sup>82</sup>

Britain at this time held a similarly vast collection of “overseas possessions” including, of course, the Dominion of Canada. To understand how the British claimed “possession” of Indigenous lands — colonizing and settling Canada to form its current settler-colonial state — we have to step back a few hundred years to when Europeans first “discovered” Turtle Island.

Despite the now widely acknowledged presence of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island prior to European contact, the language of “discovery” is still commonly used in North American origin stories. Tied to narratives of discovery are explorers like Christopher Columbus, landing on a beach in the Caribbean in 1492, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) arriving on the shores of a “newfound land” in 1497, or Norseman Leif Erikson whom historians believe touched down on the northern coast of Newfoundland five hundred years earlier, in a location known today as L’Anse aux Meadows.

A question non-Indigenous Canadians often take for granted is: how could Europeans “discover” and claim sovereignty over a place that was already inhabited? This question, at least in “legal” terms, usually comes down to a collection of imperialist international legal assumptions called the “Doctrine of Discovery.”<sup>83</sup> The Doctrine of Discovery was, in essence,

an early form of European international law developed by the Roman Catholic Church to grant authority to Christian European nations to claim ownership over newly “discovered” non-European, non-Christian territories. Such territorial claims and invasions were justified by the church’s responsibility to “enforce the Church’s vision of truth on all peoples.”<sup>84</sup>

Early iterations of the Doctrine included papal justification of “holy war” during the 1096 to 1271 Crusades and the 1414 Council of Constance, which established that:

. . . future crusades, discoveries of new lands, and conquests of heathens were supposed to proceed under the legal rule that pagans had natural rights, but that they had to comply with European concepts of natural law or else they risked a European ‘just war’ or conquest and subjugation.<sup>85</sup>

In 1436, Pope Eugenius IV issued the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex*, the first of several iterations that granted Portugal the authority to claim a range of non-European lands in their expanding explorations.<sup>86</sup> A later 1452 bull, *Dum Diversas*, issued by Pope Nicholas V gave Portugal the “full and free permission to invade, search out, capture, and subjugate the Saracens and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of Christ wherever they may be . . . and to reduce their persons into perpetual servitude.”<sup>87</sup> This assertion justified systems of subjugation that eventually developed into the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>88</sup>

The Doctrine of Discovery was first applied explicitly to Atlantic lands in a two-part papal bull called *Inter Caetera* issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493.<sup>89</sup> Columbus had recently returned to Spain after his voyage and “discovery” in the Caribbean, sponsored by the Spanish Crown. In direct competition with Portugal at the time, the King and Queen of Spain, hoped to secure papal validation of their claim over what would become the Americas, and the Pope complied.<sup>90</sup> The papal bull stipulated that Spain would have title to all lands discovered west of a fictional boundary drawn longitudinally in the Atlantic Ocean, west of the Azores

archipelago.<sup>91</sup> This established Spain's claim to the "New World." At this time, France and England were also eager to compete with Spain and Portugal in the acquisition of new territories, and so, as to not violate the bulls and risk excommunication, they developed reinterpretations of the Doctrine that ultimately justified their claims to the New World. As Shawnee scholar Robert J. Miller outlines:

England and France developed and relied on two new Discovery factors: first, land was available for their claims if other European countries were not in actual occupancy and possession when English or French explorers arrived, and second, land was available for taking from Indigenous peoples even if they were currently occupying the land if it was considered legally vacant, empty, or *terra nullius*.<sup>92</sup>

Land was defined as being *terra nullius* (empty land) if "the lands were not occupied by any person or nation, or which were actually occupied but not being used in a manner that European legal systems approved."<sup>93</sup> This assertion assumed Indigenous peoples were not using the land "properly" and declared Indigenous relationships to land as inferior.<sup>94</sup> Following England's reinterpretation of the Doctrine, shortly after Columbus's claims to the "New World," King Henry VII entrusted Giovanni Caboto with a Charter of Conquest in 1497, prior to his arrival in Newfoundland, to "occupy and possess all such towns, cities, castles, and lands' belonging to heathen and infidel persons."<sup>95</sup>

Throughout the various iterations and interpretations of the Doctrine of Discovery, the underlying premise remained the same: Christian European nations had the right to dominion over "discovered" lands, under the God-given authority of the papacy, so long as the existing inhabitants were considered lawless infidels or heathens.<sup>96</sup> In other words, the denial of Indigenous title over their own land stemmed from European notions of blatant religious, racial, and cultural superiority. European legal orders or "natural laws" were thought to preside over any form of governance

Figure 103: *The view over the reconstructed Norse settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, NL. August, 2012.*



Figure 104: *The view over the reconstructed Norse sod building at L'Anse aux Meadows, NL. August, 2012.*

Figure 105: *Mounds marking the archeological remains of a Norse settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, NL. August, 2012.*



that Indigenous peoples may have practiced, thus justifying the territorial dispossession and disregard for Indigenous sovereignty.<sup>97</sup>

In practice, the degree to which Indigenous sovereignty was denied or recognized by imperial colonizers depended partly on the competition present between European powers.<sup>98</sup> For example, in Australia, where the British had virtually no competition from other colonizing nations, the idea of *terra nullius* reigned and Indigenous peoples' sovereignty over land went grossly unrecognized.<sup>99</sup> On Turtle Island, however, where several European nations fought for dominion, competing nations formed treaties and alliances with First Nations to strengthen their positions against competing empires.<sup>100</sup> Despite assumptions of European superiority, nation-to-nation relationships between settlers and First Peoples in the early days of North American colonization became a necessity for settler survival.<sup>101</sup>

Imperial competition between France and Britain escalated in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century leading to the Seven Years' War where the French and British fought for control of overseas colonies, including territories claimed on Turtle Island.<sup>102</sup> Except for the Haudenosaunee who allied with the British, many of the First Nations in the Great Lakes region allied with the French in the seven-year conflict.<sup>103</sup> The war ended in February 1763 with the Treaty of Paris and France ceded its claim to Canadian territory to Britain. Despite the French loss, First Nations allied with France did not agree to cede their sovereignty to Britain.<sup>104</sup> After the war ended on Turtle Island in 1760,<sup>105</sup> Minavavana, an Ojibway Chief at Michilimackinac allied with the French declared:

Englishman, although you have conquered the French you have not yet conquered us! We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains, were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance; and we will part with them to none. Your nation supposes that we, like the white people, cannot live without bread, and pork and beef! But, you ought to know, that He, the Great Spirit and Master of Life, has provided food for us, in these spacious lakes, and on

these woody mountains.

Englishman, your king has never sent us any presents, nor entered into any treaty with us, wherefore he and we are still at war; and until he does these things, we must consider that we have no other father or friend among the white man, than the kind of France. . . . You have ventured your life among us, in the expectation that we should not molest you. You do not come armed, with an intention to make way, you come in peace, to trade with us, to supply us with necessities, of which we are in much want. We shall regard you therefore as a brother; and you may sleep tranquilly, without fear of the Chipeways [Ojibway]. As a token of our friendship we present you with this pipe, to smoke.<sup>106</sup>

As Anishinaabe (Ojibway) legal scholar John Borrows describes, this declaration reinforced that the Ojibway did not consider their rights to be extinguished, and “[t]hey considered their allegiance as being to the Great Spirit, and not to any European power.”<sup>107</sup> Their relationship to their ancestral lands, lands that had sustained them for millennia, would not be surrendered. The statement further indicated that “the Ojibway regarded themselves and the English as being reliant on one another for trade and peace, and therefore their power relationship was regarded as being parallel.”<sup>108</sup> First Nations still held military and political advantage in their territories, and Borrows posits that the British realized “that the non-interference with First Nations’ territory and jurisdiction was the best way for the colonies to benefit from the strong influence that First Nations could still exercise over colonial affairs.”<sup>109</sup> The British ultimately recognized First Nations sovereignty and their right to remain in their territories in a series of “Articles of Capitulation” issued by the Crown.<sup>110</sup> Conflict between First Nations and settlers, however, continued as European settlement increased significantly along the eastern shores of Turtle Island.<sup>111</sup>

As part of an attempt to subdue the growing unrest and establish governance of their territories in North America, the British Crown issued the 1763 Royal Proclamation.<sup>112</sup> The British intended for the Royal Proclamation to assure First Nations of their right to land, and implied

that their territories would not be seized without their consent.<sup>113</sup> However, the British simultaneously included claims to sovereignty over First Nations territories.<sup>114</sup> “In placing these divergent notions within the Proclamation the British were trying to convince Native people that there was nothing to fear from the colonists, while at the same time trying to increase political and economic power relative to First Nations and other European powers.”<sup>115</sup> Contradiction was built into the proclamation. Borrows further explains:

[Aboriginal] rights and their potential removal were affirmed by three principles and procedures: (1) colonial governments were forbidden to survey or grant any unceded lands; (2) colonial governments were forbidden to allow British subjects to settle on Indian lands or to allow private individuals to purchase them, and (3) there was an official system of public purchases developed in order to extinguish the Indian title.<sup>116</sup>

These principles concurrently affirmed First Nations rights to their territories while also establishing the means by which the British would later dispossess First Nations of their lands, setting forth the groundwork for future treaty negotiations.

Evidenced by the nation-to-nation agreements that formed on the ground, the authority of the Doctrine of Discovery held little water in the legal foundation of Canada. Regardless, attitudes of imperial entitlement, and the racial and religious superiority embodied by the Doctrine, have persisted.

## *imperial traces*

Once I became more attuned to imperial and colonial founding narratives, I began to notice the explicit traces of imperialism in my day-to-day life.

In November 2016, I was walking to school when I noticed an unusual sign on someone's front lawn advertising "IODE Jolly Holly Festive Tour."<sup>117</sup> Curious, I looked it up. The Jolly Holly Festive Tour was an annual fundraising event, offering tours of local homes decorated extravagantly for the Christmas holidays.<sup>118</sup> The event was organized by the Preston chapter of the IODE — the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire.

The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire is a Canadian organization of women founded in 1900, originally devoted to advancing British Imperial values and agendas. With chapters across the country, they were dedicated to promoting "education, patriotism, and charity"<sup>119</sup> under the motto "one flag, one throne, one empire" calling for the erasure of difference, promoting assimilation and unity under the hegemonic British Empire.<sup>120</sup> They provided services during both World War I and II, and in peacetime offered funds and services in support of healthcare and education.<sup>121</sup> "Philanthropic" service extended into Northern regions to help secure Canada's hold on the resource-rich North and provide "education" to the Inuit as "the frontiers of civilisation [were] pushing farther and farther northward, confronting the Eskimo with a new way of life."<sup>122</sup> The IODE were thus instrumental in providing buildings for colonial advancement on Inuit Nunangat (land). Around the year 1960, the IODE funded the construction of three "community halls" at Frobisher Bay, Tuktoyaktuk, and Baker Lake. These halls were built to help assimilate Inuit into a "Canadian" way of being, at sedentary sites considered to be "transitional housing centre[s] for Eskimo families who were entering waged employment."<sup>123</sup> Historian Katie Pickles, in a study on the IODE's work in the Canadian North, asserts that:

The three halls were visible and symbolic schemes of Canadian community and togetherness. In building them, the IODE attempted to influence the culture of the Inuit, encouraging a

sense of community that would promote a sense of belonging to Canada.<sup>124</sup>

The IODE engaged in construction projects for “education” in the south as well. The Earl Grey IODE chapter, located closer to home in Grey County, “adopted” the Cape Croker School and Mattagami Indian Day School and provided construction materials and school supplies.<sup>125</sup>

Today, imperial and patriotic rhetoric is significantly less prominent among the IODE and they continue to operate as a charitable organization “dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals through education support, community service, and citizenship programs.”<sup>126</sup>

Months after first learning about the IODE, I took a closer look at a site I had walked by countless times before. In St. Andrew’s Park, only a few minutes from Waterloo Architecture on foot, a pergola commemorates the early Euro-Canadian settlers of Galt on the former site of St. Andrew’s Church. The headstones of 207 of Galt’s earliest settlers are cast into the concrete walls and floor of the pergola.<sup>127</sup> Imprinted into the same concrete pad are the words “Erected by the Daughters of the Empire, Galt 1907.”



Figure 106: *The Pioneer Pergola, St. Andrew's Park, Cambridge, ON.*

## *land acknowledgements*

In recent years, many institutions have adopted the “reconciliatory” protocol of reciting territorial (land) acknowledgements at the beginning of events and gatherings across Canada. This is the formal territorial acknowledgement currently in use at the University of Waterloo:

The University of Waterloo (including the Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge campuses) is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land that was promised to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and is within the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples.<sup>128</sup>

Acknowledgements vary from place to place depending on Indigenous territories, treaty lands, and the author of the acknowledgement. They are now commonly spoken at the beginning of lectures, included on the end of email signatures, or even recited at the beginning of hockey games. Students in the Toronto District School Board system hear the acknowledgement before singing “O Canada” at the start of each day.

Drawing from Indigenous protocols, and intending to engage in “Indigenization” and reconciliation, territorial acknowledgements have become commonplace, especially since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action in 2015. The words are meant to recognize the Indigenous nations whose lands are currently occupied by Canada. Still, without actions to back them, the words — often recited mechanically and with stumbling mispronunciations — can feel empty. In an interview with Rosanna Deerchild of CBC’s *Unreserved*, Anishinaabe author and educator Hayden King explained his concerns with the practice of the territorial acknowledgement:

For me, personally, I think I started to see how the territorial acknowledgement could become very superficial and also how [reciting them] sort of fetishizes these actual tangible, concrete treaties. They’re not metaphors — they’re real institutions,

*in a good way*

and for us to write and recite a territorial acknowledgement that sort of obscures that fact, I think we do a disservice to that treaty and to those nations.<sup>129</sup>

King went on to explain that for the land acknowledgements to be meaningful, there must also be a commitment to act.

Despite their often-tokenistic nature, land acknowledgements hold power by creating an opening to question our relationship with land. Whether delivered thoughtfully or thoughtlessly, if we take care to listen, the acknowledgement has the opportunity to reveal the dissonance between acknowledging Indigenous territory and continuing on with business as usual.<sup>130</sup> The words unsettle the settler-colonial status quo and prompt us to think about the land underfoot. To quote author Stephen Marche's 2017 article "Canada's Impossible Acknowledgement" in the *New Yorker*, "[t]he acknowledgment forces individuals and institutions to ask a basic, nightmarish question: Whose land are we on?"<sup>131</sup>

## *treaty relationships*

Treaties have a long history on Turtle Island prior to European contact. Treaties were negotiated between nations (both human and other-than-human) to manage intersecting and overlapping relationships with land as well as with animal and plant nations. Cree/Saulteaux political scholar, Gina Starblanket outlines that Indigenous peoples have always understood “treaty-based frameworks for relating” to “represent diplomatic processes for negotiating relations of nonviolent and generative co-existence between living beings in shared geographies.”<sup>132</sup> Fundamentally, treaties were also held as living agreements that required continuous care and renewal. In her article entitled “Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes that:

[Precolonial] “treaty processes” were grounded in the worldviews, language, knowledge systems, and political cultures of the nations involved, and they were governed by the common Indigenous ethics of justice, peace, respect, reciprocity, and accountability. Indigenous peoples understood these agreements in terms of relationship, and renewal processes were paramount in maintaining these international agreements.<sup>133</sup>

Treaties followed Indigenous laws and land ethics and adhered to a tradition of maintaining good relationships such that all our relations would benefit. Some of the most important treaty negotiations were with the very beings that sustained Indigenous life. Simpson writes about the Nishinaabeg treaty relationships with the fish nations:

Fish were a staple in our traditional foodway. Our relationship with the fish nations meant that we had to be accountable for how we used this “resource.” Nishnaabeg people only fished at particular times of the year in certain locations. They only took as much as they needed and never wasted. They shared with other members of their families and communities,

*in a good way*

and they performed the appropriate ceremonies and rituals before beginning. To do otherwise would be to ignore their responsibilities to the fish nations and to jeopardize the health and wellness of the people.<sup>134</sup>

Such agreements similarly extended to the four-legged beings.

According to Nishnaabeg traditions, our relationship with the moose nation, the deer nation and the caribou nation is a treaty relationship like any other and all the parties involved have both rights and responsibilities in terms of maintaining that agreement. The treaty outlines a relationship that, when practiced continually and in perpetuity, maintains peaceful coexistence, respect and mutual benefit.<sup>135</sup>

Treaties between the Anishinaabeg and the animals demonstrate the commitment to harvesting honourably to ensure the health of the land for many generations to come. The same principles lay at the heart of the treaties between human nations.

In the Great Lakes region, “the Dish with One Spoon” principle governed the sharing of territory among the Haudenosaunee Confederacy members and later extended to relations between the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe and European nations. The principle indicated that those entering into the agreement would share from a single dish, feeding from a single spoon. Haudenosaunee historian Susan Hill writes that “[u]nder [the law of the Dish with One Spoon], the bounty of the shared hunting grounds is meant to be enjoyed by all; land and the benefits of land belong to everyone.”<sup>136</sup> Further, “[a]ll had a right to share in that harvest and none had the right to take more than nature could sustain.”<sup>137</sup> In Anishinaabemowin, the agreement is known as the Gdoo-naagininaa.<sup>138</sup> Simpson writes that “Gdoo-naagininaa was established between the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee, acknowledging they gathered sustenance from the same “dish” and that both nations were responsible for caring for the dish.”<sup>139</sup> The commitment to share the gifts of the land,

in “peaceful co-existence,” and with respect for all our relations, remained the same, regardless of which nations entered into the agreement.

When Europeans arrived on Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples, under various circumstances, invited the newcomers into treaty agreements governed by Indigenous laws. In Cree territory, treaty relationships with Europeans were seen as a form of adoption ceremony “where the Cree adopted the settlers as family and took them in as relatives, inviting them to live in Kiciwamanawak and live by the laws of the Cree.”<sup>140</sup>

Susan Hill explains that treaties between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans “created a framework for respectful relations that both sides agreed would exist for perpetuity.”<sup>141</sup> Hill goes on to describe that “the colonial period witnessed major offenses to the treaties, but the treaty relations still exist,”<sup>142</sup> speaking to the living and ongoing nature of such agreements.

Two significant treaty principles established between First Nations and Europeans in the early days of colonization include The Two Row Wampum and the Covenant Chain. The Two Row Wampum, or Kaswentha (pronounced Guswentah) in Mohawk, was a treaty established in 1613 between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch at their settlement of Fort Orange, near present-day Albany, New York. “[T]he Dutch were seeking a formalized alliance for trading furs but the Haudenosaunee decided that the only way a healthy relationship would exist was to become family with the Dutch traders, as the Peacemaker had taught them.”<sup>143</sup> And thus the Kaswentha represented an agreement to ensure a life of peaceful co-existence for both nations. The wampum belt depicts two parallel rows of purple quahog shells, representing the two nations surrounded by rows of white quahog shells representing the river of life. Hill details the nature of the agreement from within the Haudenosaunee record:

[T]he relationship was to be as two vessels travelling down a river—the river of life—side by side, never crossing paths, never interfering in the other’s internal matters. However,



Figure 107: *Looking north along the Grand River toward downtown Galt, Cambridge, ON. December 2016.*



Figure 108: *Devil's Creek Trail, Cambridge, ON. February 2017.*

the path between them, symbolized by three rows of white wampum beads in the treaty belt, was to be a constant of respect, trust, and friendship. Some might say this is what kept the two vessels apart, but in fact, it is what kept them connected to each other. Without those three principles, the two vessels could drift apart and potentially be washed onto the bank (or crash into rocks). This agreement was meant to provide security for both sides.<sup>144</sup>

The British later replaced the Dutch in 1664 and promised to honour principles similar to those in the *Kaswentha*.<sup>145</sup> This non-interference between co-existing nations embodied in the *Kaswentha* continues to serve as a model for relationships between the Haudensaunee and other nations to this day.<sup>146</sup>

The Covenant Chain later developed among relations between the Haudensaunee and the British Crown in the 1670s.<sup>147</sup> The Covenant Chain treaty principle linked distinct nations together along a silver chain that represented “peace and friendship forever.”<sup>148</sup> To maintain the agreement, all parties would hold the responsibility of “polishing” the chain.

Both the *Kaswentha* and the Covenant Chain principles were later used in treaty between the British Crown and other Nations, including at the 1764 Treaty of Niagara.

Following the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Crown invited nations from across the territories stretching from the Mississippi River to the west all the way north to Hudson’s Bay, to attend a gathering at Niagara to affirm the Proclamation.<sup>149</sup> Approximately two thousand chiefs representing more than twenty-four nations attended the gathering.<sup>150</sup> John Borrows writes:

At this gathering a nation to nation relationship between settler and First Nations peoples was renewed and extended, and the Covenant Chain of Friendship, a multi-nation alliance

*in a good way*

in which no member gave up their sovereignty was affirmed. The Royal Proclamation became a treaty at Niagara because it was presented by the colonialists for affirmation, and was accepted by the First Nations.<sup>151</sup>

As part of the treaty council, William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, presented the Wampum belts and said:

I now therefore present you the great Belt [of the Covenant Chain] by which I bind all your Western Nations together with the English, and I desire that you will take fast hold of the same, and never let it slip, to which end I desire that after you have shewn to this Belt to all Nations you will fix one end of it with the Chipeweighs [Ojibway] at St. Marys [Michilimackinac] whilst the other end remains at my house, and moreover I desire that you will never listen to any news which comes to any other Quarter. If you do it, it may shake the Belt.”<sup>152</sup>

Following Johnson’s speech, First Nations representatives presented a Two Row Wampum belt to express their understanding of the Treaty.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the written claim within the Royal Proclamation of British sovereignty over Indigenous lands, the commitments to peace, friendship, and the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty verbally established at Niagara in 1764 seemed to persist in dealings between First Nations and the Crown over the next eighty years. First Nations continued to present the Royal Proclamation in Crown dealings as a reminder and renewal of the Treaty of Niagara, evidencing their ongoing commitment and expectations of the treaty.<sup>154</sup>

After the American colonies separated themselves from British rule in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), and the British, supported by many allied First Nations, successfully defended against American invasion in the War of 1812, the treaty landscape between the Crown

and Indigenous peoples began to change.<sup>155</sup> Colonial priorities began to shift away from the fur trade and military fortification, which relied on First Nations alliances, towards settlement, farming, and resource development.<sup>156</sup> Crown policy, as a result, turned towards a strategy to purchase First Nations lands through “land-surrender” treaties.<sup>157</sup> With the diminished need for First Nations as allies, recognizing Indigenous sovereignty over land was no longer beneficial to the settler-state and instead became a hindrance to national and economic development. As such, nation-to-nation relationships between the Crown and Indigenous nations began to erode. The treaties that followed, from the perspective of the British Crown, were proposed with intentions that differed significantly from earlier treaty relationships. Hundreds of land “transactions” occurred between 1815 and the 1850s.<sup>158</sup> The First Nations that entered into these agreements believed that the Crown intended to protect their lands, not parcel and sell them.

Our Great Father...said: “The white people are getting thick around you and we are afraid they, or the yankees will cheat you out of your land, you had better put it into the hands of your very Great Father the King to keep for you till you want to settle. And he will appropriate it for your good and he will take care of it; and will take you under his wing, and keep you under his arm, and give you schools, and build houses for you when you want to settle.” Some of these words we thought were good; but we did not like to give up all our lands, as some were afraid that our great father would keep our land... so we said “yes,” keep our land for us. Our great father then thinking it would be best for us sold all our land to some white men. This made us very sorry for we did not wish to sell it...<sup>159</sup>

After Confederation in 1867, the Crown engaged in negotiating the Numbered Treaties with First Nations extending from northern Ontario, west to British Columbia, which eventually allowed the new Canadian nation to carry out railway expansions and grow westward. A new

*in a good way*

differentiating feature of the treaties was a “surrender” clause. The clause found in Treaty 1+ looks like this:

The Chippewa and Swampy Cree Tribes of Indians and all other the Indians inhabiting the district hereinafter described and defined do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to Her Majesty the Queen and successors forever all the lands included within the following limits...<sup>160</sup>

All of the eleven Numbered Treaties, negotiated between 1871 to 1921, include a similar clause.<sup>161</sup>

From an Indigenous perspective, the concept that their relationship to their territories could be effectively severed was completely foreign. It diametrically opposed all conceptions of land tenure and relationships within Indigenous ways of being. Drawing from the teachings of prominent Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear, Cree-Métis legal scholar Tracey Lindberg explains that,

[a]lthough Canadian law allows for the surrender of Aboriginal title to the Crown, this does not mean that it is surrenderable under Aboriginal law. . . . They received their land from the Creator, subject to certain conditions, including an obligation to share it with plants and animals. Moreover, the land belongs not just to living Aboriginal persons, but to past and future generations as well.<sup>162</sup>

First Nations have widely contested this territorial “cession.” Lindberg explains that,

[t]he Indigenous signatories to the treaties understood themselves to be entering into agreements to share the land. To the degree that there is any agreement, it was certainly not to cede, release, and surrender territoriality or responsibility for the land as such was an impossibility.<sup>163</sup>

First Nations' accounts also indicate that the oral agreements of the treaties did not align with what was written on "official" documents.<sup>164</sup> The vast number of Indigenous land claims against the Canadian government highlight the complete disregard for Treaty rights under Indigenous law and disrupt settler-colonial legitimacy.

The difference in perceptions of treaty agreements between settlers and First Nations illustrate the deep gap between European and Indigenous worldviews and relationships to land. To understand the nature of contested lands here on Turtle Island, we must understand those fundamental differences in cultural practice and perspective.

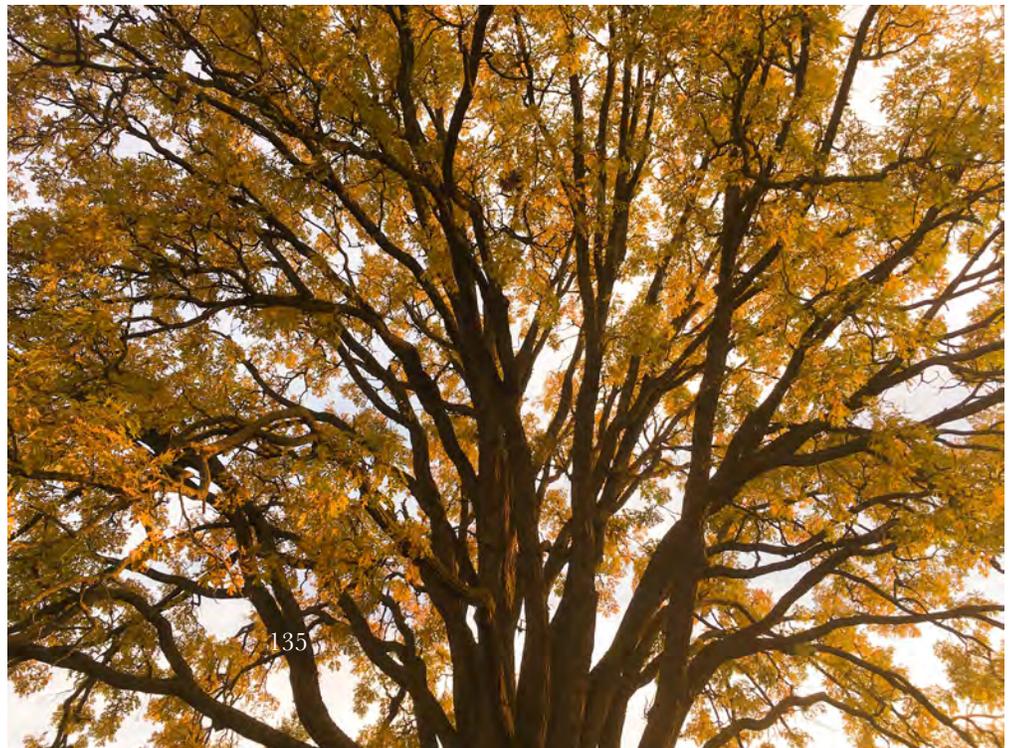
Figure 109: *The maples that shelter the parcel of land where I grew up.*





Figure 110: *A maple forest along the Oak Ridges Moraine, ON.*

Figure 111: *A 140 year-old oak tree that stands just south of the Waterloo School of Architecture on the banks of the Grand River, Cambridge, ON.*



## *the manitoba maple*

Summer, 1998 | Markham, ON

*The neighbour's house to the west had been abandoned for years. In the summer, their backyard grew wild. I would often peer curiously through the chain-link fence. Insects hopped between blades of grass, backlit by low western sunlight. Spiders spun sweeping webs. I thought that if fairies existed, like they did in the books and movies I consumed, they would call a place like this home. The winding branches of a Manitoba maple tree overhead sheltered the overgrown yard, creating a sense of enclosure to this space so full of life and wonder.*

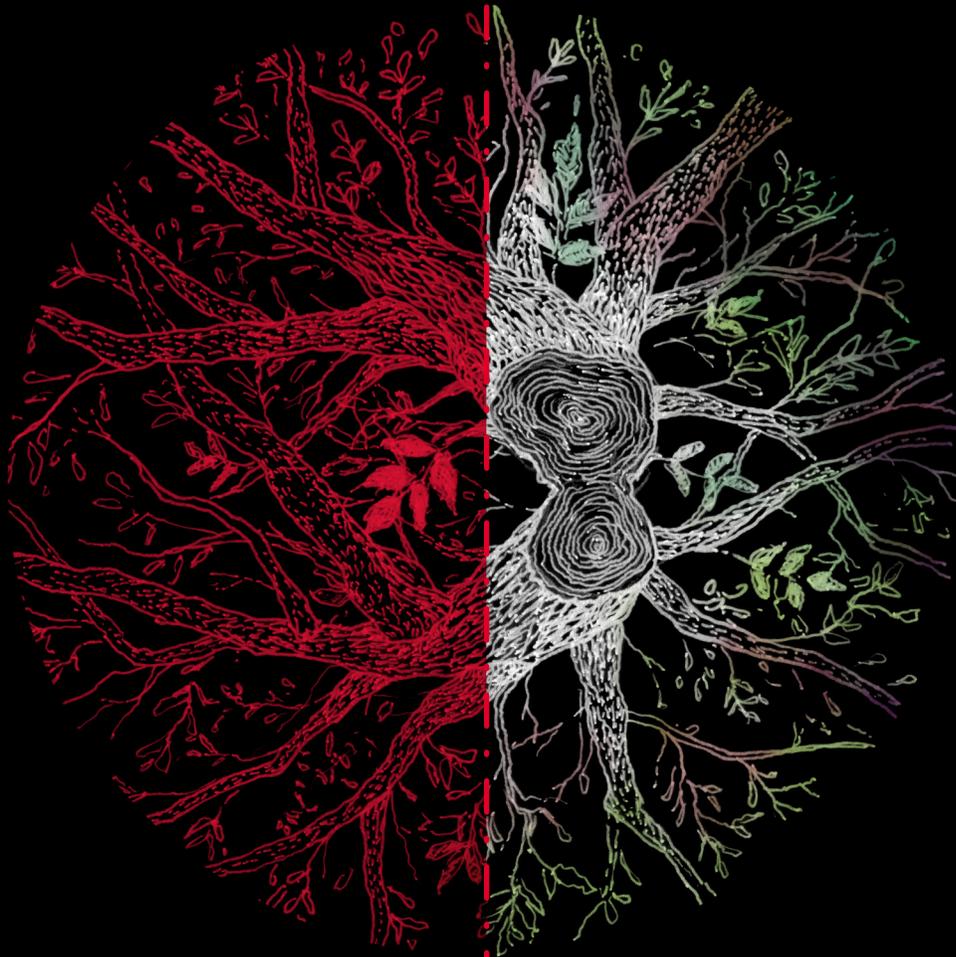
*Eventually someone purchased the property. The developer tore down the little bungalow, dug up the overgrown lawn, and proposed a two-story house that was at least twice the floor area of the previous home. They cut down all the trees on their newly acquired lot and put in a request to cut down the long-standing Manitoba maple. The trunk of the tree had grown and expanded over the years to the point where it was straddling the property line, pushing an old chain link fence askew as it went, with branches and roots extending well over and under the neighbour's back yard; there was little we could do to stop the removal. The location of the tree interfered with the city approved building footprint, and under the municipal by-laws of the time our neighbours had the right to cut down the forty-plus-year-old tree.*

*My parents didn't let me watch them take it down. I was about seven years old. I still remember the gaping hole in our lawn, the tractor tread marks pressed into the grassy mud. I remember crying. My brother and I collected wood splinters that remained, scattered over the lacerated ground, around the open wound.*

*This marked a period of tension between my family and our neighbours on the subject of trees. Although my dad has since reconciled with our neighbours, every year, even now, he trims back the trees and shrubs adjacent to the property line.*

*A few years after the tree was cut down, unaware of the previous events, my Bà Ngoai sprouted an apricot sapling from seed and planted it within two feet of that western fence, only a few feet away from where the Manitoba maple tree once grew. The apricot tree now stands over ten feet tall and the neighbours have not yet asked to cut it down. The squirrels feed on the apricots before we get the chance to harvest them.*

Figure 112: *Illustration: The Manitoba Maple*



## *lines & land*

In that suburb north of Toronto, where the Manitoba maple once stood, I grew up within the bounds of four property lines. Lines made visible by the chain-link fence to the west, the split rail fence and cedar hedge to the north, and the concrete curb that cradled the south-east edges of our corner lot. These lines were part of a seemingly infinite grid of roads, homes, schoolyards, and shopping malls. In the space enclosed by those four lines I dissected maple keys, collected forest tent caterpillars, climbed the sugar maple, and watched as the first little blue flowers emerged from the earth in the spring. I took every possible opportunity to play outside as a child; it was my favourite pastime. But other than weekend hikes and summer camping trips, “outside” for me most often included only the space within those lines. This was the nature of my suburban childhood, and I did not question it. I took the concept of “property” for granted.

...

When explorers arrived on Turtle Island, the first thing they did was map new territories. They translated, or reduced, the features of land into lines drawn on paper. New lines were conceived, overlaid onto those maps, and inscribed onto the land, forming boundaries to delineate the domain of private property within which settler-colonial life could flourish. Through these lines, developed and applied to the land through acts of spatial planning as well as through place-naming,<sup>165</sup> settler colonialism imposed the cultural concept of private property onto Indigenous lands. Settler-colonial property is produced and reproduced through these cyclical translations between land and lines, a process that architects know well. And it is within these property lines that architects and spatial designers create space and place.

As we have already begun to explore, within Indigenous laws, land could not be privately owned. In Australia, similarly to Indigenous philosophies on Turtle Island, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land is “a connection not predicated on ownership. . . but on responsibility, and born from a particular knowledge of the land. Aboriginal law does not

allow us to sell the land; we cannot sell our relative, our self, our being, or our identity”<sup>166</sup> While privately owning and selling land was inconceivable within Indigenous law, Indigenous nations held sovereignty over their lands. Indigenous territories were established through relationships and stewardship rather than ownership. Maintaining sovereignty over a territory required an ongoing renewal of relationships. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reflects on a conversation about boundaries with Haudenosaunee scholar, Roronhiakewen Dan Longboat:

What I took away from our conversation is that “boundaries,” in an Indigenous sense, are about relationships. As someone moves away from the centre of their territory — the place they have the strongest and most familiar bonds and relationships — their knowledge and relationship to the land weakens. This is a boundary, a zone of decreasing Nishnaabeg presence as you move out from the centre of the territory. This is a place where one needs to practice good relations with neighbouring nations. Presence is required to maintain those good relationships. Communication is required to jointly care-take this region, which is much wider than a line.<sup>167</sup>

Boundaries dividing national territories were not drawn in a single stroke but were instead established through the building of relationships with both people and land over time.

In complete contrast to Indigenous conceptions of territory, in the era of colonial Canadian expansions, the act of surveying and parceling land into property, completely disregarded the context of the land that it divided. After Confederation and the acquisition of Rupert’s Land, the Canadian government embarked on the Dominion Land Survey which indiscriminately laid out the world’s largest continuous grid over all of what is currently central Canada. The uniform grid is only occasionally disrupted by uneven land, dense bush, or waterways.

In colonial cities, where the grid always finds its way into the scheme of urban planning, moments of Indigenous presence occasionally

*in a good way*

disrupt the sea of right angles. In New York, Broadway marks the path of an old Lenape trail known as Wickquasgeck.<sup>168</sup> Indian Rd. and Davenport Rd. are examples of pre-colonial trails in Toronto. They are lines of Indigenous presence, remembered by the land.

...

The settler colonial government employed the practice of planning to “correct” Indigenous relationships to land and “civilize” Indigenous peoples by imposing European spatial regimes onto Indigenous lands. The reserve system is one of the most direct examples of administering planning, via the European property grid, onto the lives of Indigenous peoples.

The reserve system was first intended as a form of paternalistic “protection” from new settlers and eventually developed into a mechanism for “civilization” and assimilation.<sup>169</sup>

Since the dawn of colonization, notions of elimination, protection, civilization, and assimilation were all captured by various “Indian Policies” — conceived by settler-colonial governments — to control and interfere with Indigenous relationships to land. At Confederation, the government of Canada declared federal authority over “Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians.”<sup>170</sup> In 1876, the government passed the “Indian Act,” which consolidated and developed all prior policies to do with First Nations peoples,<sup>171</sup> managed government obligations to some treaty rights, and set out to control all aspects of First Nations life and land. Following the misogyny prevalent within European society at the time, the Indian Act also embodied all forms of gender discrimination against women. For example, at the Indian Act’s inception, an Indian was defined as “any male person of Indian blood.” Women could hold status; however, they would lose their status if they married a non-Indigenous man.<sup>172</sup>

The ultimate goal of federal Indian policy was to “get rid of the Indian problem” by “civilizing” and assimilating Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian society.<sup>173</sup> To this end, the Act developed and regulated a plethora of strategies to accomplish the goal of enfranchisement, which

meant that First Nations peoples entered Canadian society and gave up any distinct rights as status holders. The regulation of the reserve system was one such strategy.

In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the government divided the land within the boundaries of reserves into smaller parcels to force First Nations to adopt the concept of private property, a relationship to land which settlers defined to be “civilized.” In 1890, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs stated,

[t]he work of sub-dividing reserves has begun in earnest. The policy of destroying the tribal or communist system is assailed in every possible way and every effort [has been] made to implant a spirit of individual responsibility instead.<sup>174</sup>

Historian John L. Tobias states that “[t]he reserve system, which was to be the keystone of Canada’s Indian Policy, was conceived as a social laboratory, where the Indian could be “civilized” and prepared for coping with Europeans.”<sup>175</sup> In the early years after the Indian Act first came into law, First Nations were given the opportunity to own property on reserve through a “location ticket” system, in which they would be assigned a property parcel on reserve. If they passed the test of making the land productive within three years, they could be enfranchised into Canadian society and now hold private title to their lot on reserve.<sup>176</sup> Women, however, were excluded from this system.

In theory, this system would eventually render all reserve land into property, and all First Nations into Canadians. However, many First Nations were inherently opposed to enfranchisement — a process intended to sterilize them of their traditional cultures — and the strategy proved unsuccessful. Eventually, the government viewed the reserve system as a hindrance to assimilation efforts and amended the Indian Act in various ways to encourage First Nations to move off reserve.<sup>177</sup> “Assimilation was no longer regarded as a long term goal; it was one that could be attained immediately if the Indian were removed from the protective environment of the reserve.”<sup>178</sup> Reserves thus became sites of simultaneous colonial violence and resistance.

*in a good way*

In 1969, the Canadian government under Pierre Elliot Trudeau attempted to solve the “Indian problem” once and for all by proposing a policy paper known as the “White Paper.” The paper proposed the abolishment of all Indian policy and the Government’s obligations to First Nations peoples, dissolving the Indian Act and all prior Treaty agreements. This meant that under the White Paper, all First Nations peoples would be stripped of their unique rights as Treaty holders with unique title to land and would legally be fully assimilated into Canadian society. The proposed paper would have erased the nation-to-nation agreements at the foundation of Canada. The paper sparked complete outrage and only enlivened First Nations organizing around Indigenous rights.

The reserve system is incredibly layered and complex and the overview I have offered here barely scratches the surface of the impact of the system on Indigenous lives. However, it is clear that the Canadian government used the reserve system to aggressively implement Indigenous adoption of settler-colonial spatial cultures and private property. The system of severing Indigenous peoples from their lands, confining them to reserve and thus opening land for development is foundational to the urban fabric we know today.

...

Planning scholar Libby Porter asserts that the technologies and “spatial cultures” of colonization and dispossession developed to form contemporary planning practice.

Spatial cultures — the knowing, categorizing, seeing and naming of space — ... in settler colonies were shaped and articulated through the early practices of spatial ordering, or planning: surveying and selection, mapping, (re)naming, town building, and the various and widespread intricacies of land policy. The early formative activities of planning were a part of the politics of (dis)possession in colonies. And those formative activities, the moments of planning’s modern emergence,

were located in those same politics of (dis)possession. Planning is constitutively and culturally colonial.<sup>179</sup>

Architecture, an extension of the spatial order determined in planning and founded on conceptions of private property, thus embodies the same colonial cultures as planning practice. Architects operate within the spatial legacy of acts of possession and dispossession.

Property lines frame every architectural project and are often a designer's first site consideration. The editorial note that opens *Scapegoat Journal's* inaugural issue states that property...

is the literal foundation for all spatial design practices. This buried foundation must be exhumed. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design each begin with a space that is already drawn, organized, and formed by the concrete abstraction of property lines.<sup>180</sup>

Property lines are extensions of colonial ideologies, finding their place in the everyday practice of spatial designers. They are the threads that tie our work to the imposition of Euro-Western values onto the land. These lines, made concrete and visible through all types of architecture and infrastructure form our built environments, hold a lineage that can be traced directly to the act of surveying and mapping the land governed by imperial and colonial policy.



Figure 113: *A still of “The Named and the Unnamed” (2002) by Rebecca Belmore at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON. May, 2017.*

Figure 114: *A quilt on display at the Woodland Cultural Centre, located on the grounds of the former Mohawk Institute Residential School. Children hid blankets and trinkets inside the walls, only discovered after the school was closed. Brantford, ON. March, 2017.*





Figure 115: *The Museum of History during a tour with the building's architect, Douglas Cardinal. Gatineau, QC. May, 2017.*

Figure 116: *The Museum of History during a tour with the building's architect, Douglas Cardinal. Gatineau, QC. May, 2017.*



Figure 117: *A pair of mergansers on the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. May, 2017.*



*part three*

## *remembering the skeena river*

June, 2017 | Cambridge, ON + May, 2016 | Northern BC

*Over a year after my train trip, I listened to something that brought me back to the landscape of northern British Columbia.*

*The train trip from Jasper to Prince Rupert took two days, with an overnight stop in Prince George. Having left Ontario at the start of my trip in early spring before the plants resumed their work producing chlorophyll, this was the first part of the journey where the landscape was lush and green with life. The last hour on the train before we pulled into Prince Rupert was some of the most breathtaking scenery I had encountered on the trip to that point; my nose barely left the glass. The waters of the Skeena River set to the backdrop of towering mountains, all fading into the soft glowing sunset. We arrived safely in Prince Rupert just as the mountains folded over the sun. I slept that night grateful for my journey, grateful that I had the opportunity to visit such a beautiful place.*

*In 2017, CBC released a podcast called “Missing and Murdered: Who Killed Alberta Williams?” by Connie Walker. The first episode overviewed Alberta’s case, an Indigenous woman who went missing and was found murdered in 1989 along the Highway of Tears near Prince Rupert. Listening to that podcast, I put the pieces together.*

*The Highway of Tears is a stretch of Highway 16, connecting Prince George and Prince Rupert, where many Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered.*

*I had been there.*

*I was aware of the Highway of Tears, but unfamiliar with the geography of northern BC before then, I had never registered its location on a map. Free of every care in the world, I had travelled alongside that same stretch of highway, consuming the beautiful landscape that passed me by, completely ignorant of the lives that had been lost in that place, against that same backdrop.*

*Today, when I think about my experience of the landscape along the Skeena River approaching Prince Rupert, the word “breathtaking” now carries a different meaning.*



Figure 118: *The Highway of Tears, along the Skeena River, BC. May, 2016.*



Figure 119: *Illustration: The Highway of Tears*



Figure 120: *The greenhouse of native plant species at Kayanase, Ohsweken, ON. November, 2017*



Figure 121: *Light infiltrating the interior of a reconstructed 17th century Haudenosaunee longhouse, Ganohsa'oweh, on the Kayanase Grounds, Ohsweken, ON. November, 2017*



Figure 122: *Canada geese over the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. November, 2017.*



Figure 123: *Jammed ice on the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. January, 2018*



Figure 124: *Bloodroot, a medicinal plant, along the Grand River, Cambridge, ON. May, 2018.*



## *community ties*

Throughout my studies, I spent a lot of time attending community events and engaging in extra-curricular activities. This included lectures, workshops, performances, pow wows, tours, and conferences, most addressing Indigenous issues or celebrating Indigenous cultures and experiences in different ways. It was at these events that I came to know my local Indigenous community, and it is where some of the most important learning in this process took place. I found myself building lasting community ties.

In June 2018, just days after the summer solstice, I attended a conference called “After Canada 150: Restoring Indigenous Knowledge and Building Community Connections” hosted by the Centre for Indigegogy at Wilfred Laurier University.<sup>181</sup> On the first morning, I decided to sit in on a session by Métis scholar Kim Anderson and Anishinaabe scholar Lianne Leddy on Indigenous activism through performance art. Lori Campbell, the director of the University of Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre, introduced me to Kim after the session. Andrew Judge, an Anishinaabe instructor at Conestoga College specializing in Indigenous land-based work, joined us and we all sat together at the same table for lunch. Kim and I discussed our shared interests around the meaning of decolonizing land and space, and she told us about a land reclamation project that her brother Doug was involved in along the Humber River in Toronto. We agreed to reconnect for a visit to the site at a later date.

After lunch I took a quick break for some fresh air, and as I made my way around the city block I bumped into Andrew Judge again, doing the same thing. We started chatting and after I explained that I was a student at UWSA in Cambridge, he mentioned that he had just received a grant to start an Indigenous foods garden at the Rare Charitable Research Reserve, just a short drive upriver from the architecture school. He told me there was plenty of work to do and that I could come by any time if I was interested.

Little did I know, meeting both Kim and Andrew that day would later shape my next years in meaningful and unexpected ways.



Figure 125: *A great blue heron, by the Park Hill Dam, Cambridge ON. May, 2018.*



Figure 126: *A chipmunk. Cambridge, ON. May, 2018.*

Figure 127: *Elderflowers. Cambridge, ON. June, 2018*





Figure 128: *Trout lilies.*  
*Cambridge, ON. May, 2018.*

Figure 129: *Sunset over the Grand River on the summer solstice.*  
*Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.*

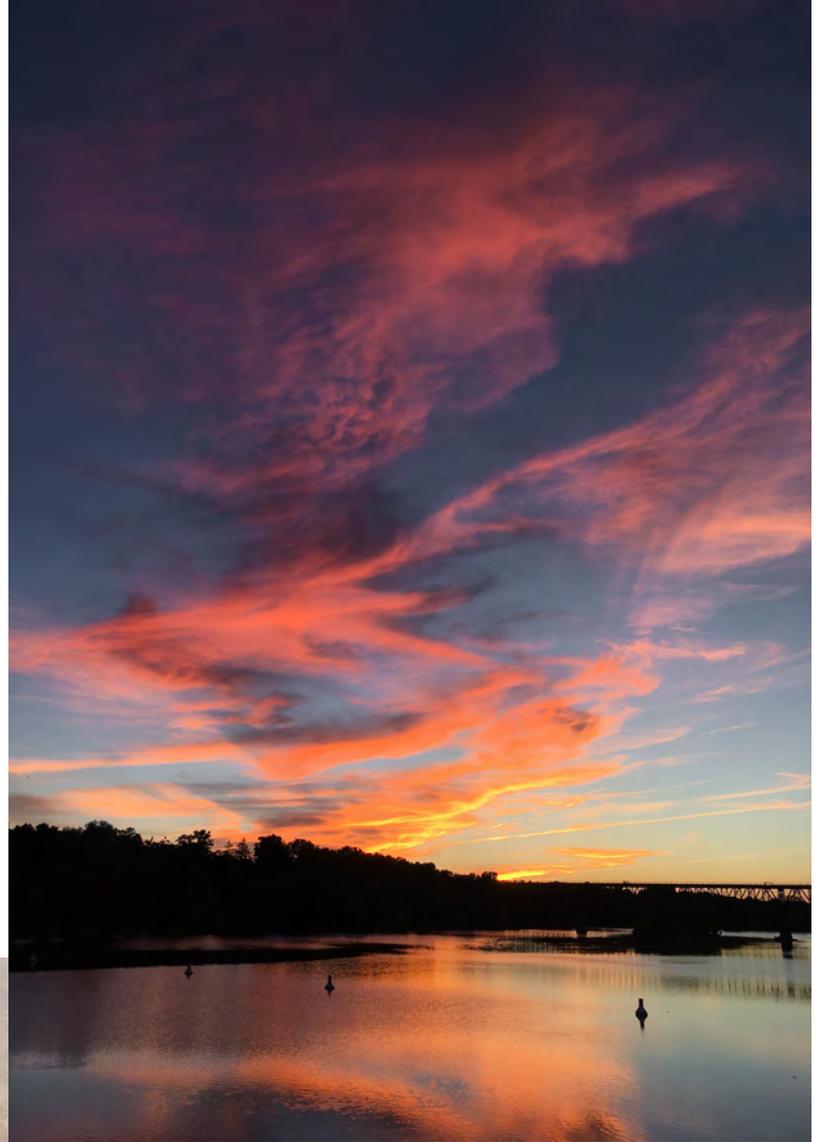


Figure 130: *A duck and her ducklings on the Grand River,*  
*Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.*

## *the fire circle & the food garden*

June, 2018 | Cambridge, ON

*In the last days of June, after meeting Andrew Judge the week before and hearing about an art installation by Acadian and Mi'kmaq artist Don Russell, I decided to visit the Rare Charitable Research Reserve.*

*I walked there along the river. I took my time, trying not to startle too many foraging chipmunks. I remembered to walk slowly and take in my surroundings, noticing which wildflowers had bloomed since I last walked the river path. When I got to the Rare offices, I asked someone which way to go to get to Don Russell's installation. I followed the kindly delivered instructions. "Go left along the road until you see a small gravel parking lot, there you will see a path. Take that path until you see the North House, and then follow the path up the hill into the gardens where you will see a cluster of tents and smoke from the fire."*

*I followed the narrow shoulder of the road and crossed into the forest path. Seconds into the walk, I startled a pair of deer. One of them snorted at me — a warning. I kept going, past the North House,<sup>182</sup> up the hill. I realized that in all my time living in Cambridge, I had never explored this section of the Rare reserve. Not far from the path, bees buzzed around a pair of constructed hives. Vines grew over old wooden archways. You could see clearly that there was a lot of affection that went into this place. As the path rounded near the crest of the gentle hill, the*

*in a good way*

*trees cleared, and the sky opened up. I found myself in a hilltop field, with an incredible view of some of the surrounding areas. The clearing was filled with community garden allotments. I spotted the tents on the other side of the clearing and made my way towards the plume of smoke.*

*Three tents and a temporary dining shelter stood along the edges of the circular mowed clearing among the field's tall greenery. A large circle traced in clay and stones lay at the center of the clearing. Large flat stones marked the four directions. The smaller fieldstones formed a circular trough. Within that trough lay six small fires, distributed along the circumference of the circle. I chatted with Don and his assistant Allan. For a week leading up to the summer solstice, they dug the circular trough in the earth, filled it with clay, and outlined it with stones. The fires were lit on the summer solstice and Don's plan was to keep the fire going for seven days. I arrived on day five.*

*Don and I sat on folding chairs in the late afternoon sun and talked for some time. Mostly about art and architecture and being disheartened by our professions and society. But we both agreed that we still carried hope. Why bother otherwise? The installation intended to bring people together. And that, it did. Later that evening, Andrew Judge came to the clearing.*

*Andrew's garden, called Minjimendan, "in a state of remembering," was situated on the north end of the site — a stone's throw from Don's installation. In the garden, myself and other*

*visitors made our presence useful by spreading mulch, placing stones, and lifting retaining logs in a combined effort. We continued to work until the sun set, at which point we returned to the circle of fire. With dusk settling in, fireflies surrounded our circular clearing; a sparse and otherworldly chorus of light. Like watching a meteor shower, you didn't know where you would glimpse the next fleeting flash. Andrew told us a series of stories that evening, centred on the theme of "new beginnings." He spoke of life experiences, dreams, chance encounters, finding his mentor, and opening oneself up to truth and wisdom. I could not do the stories justice to retell them, nor would it be my place.*

*That night I slept soundly with the smell of wood smoke in my hair. I had a dream about a hummingbird. In it, I lay on my back, moving as though in reverse on the flatbed of a truck. There was a partial greenhouse built next to me with a few plants. A bright turquoise hummingbird flitted around them. I observed it carefully as it hovered and maneuvered with unparalleled grace. I lay still, and it flew towards my face. Out of reflex, I closed my eyes. I could feel the wind from its wings as it hovered in front of me. I decided to open my eyes again to catch a closer look, but as my eyelids lifted, my eyelashes brushed against the little bird. It flew away. I woke up.*



Figure 131: *“Stone, Clay, and Fire: Making a Circle”* by Don Russel, Springbank Gardens, Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.

Figure 132: *Comfrey leaves laid into the drainage trenches to provide added nutrients to the soil.* Minjimendan, Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.



Figure 133: *Andrew Judge offering a description of the newly constructed garden beds at Minjimendan, Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.*

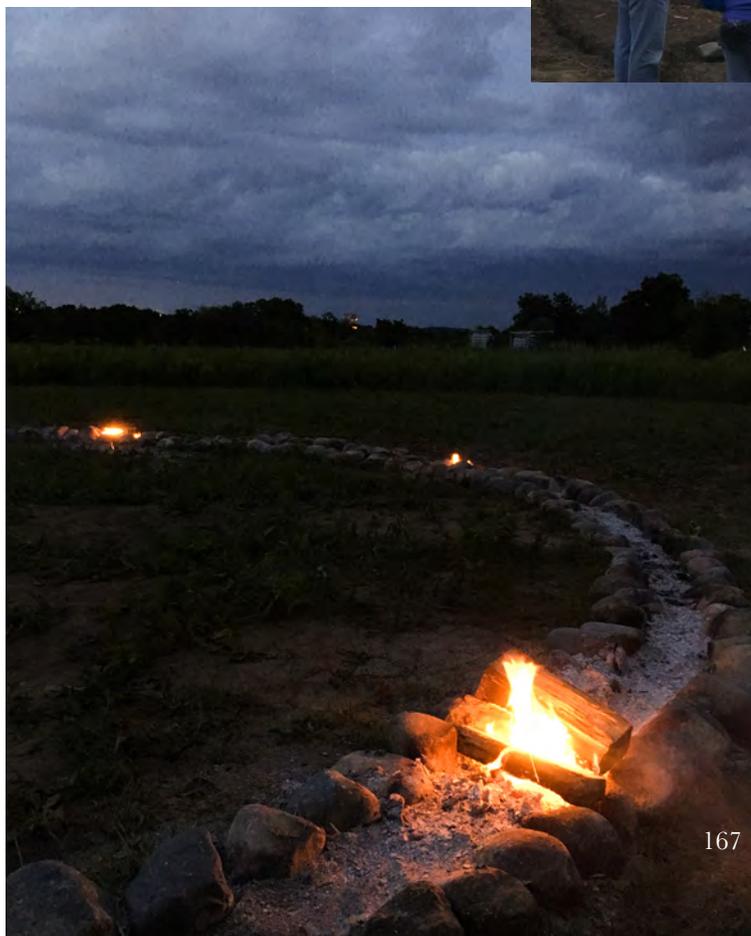


Figure 134: *“Stone, Clay, and Fire: Making a Circle” by Don Russel, Springbank Gardens, Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. June, 2018.*

## ***settler colonization & cities***

Of all the “shifts” that I have experienced throughout this process, the greatest one may be internalizing the knowledge that all urban centres (and indeed all places) on Turtle Island occupy Indigenous lands. In theory, I always knew that Indigenous peoples lived here before Europeans came to settle. But throughout most of my childhood into early adulthood, I never truly understood the circumstances under which the land was cleared. I vaguely believed that Indigenous peoples just moved elsewhere, somewhere “out there,”<sup>183</sup> outside of the places I inhabited. It was not until I took the time to understand the “discovery” of new lands; imperial expansion; Indigenous depopulation from disease, violence, and the disruption of Indigenous lifeways; the dishonouring of Treaty agreements; and the forceful dislocations of Indigenous peoples coupled with aggressive assimilation tactics, that I began to truly understand the meaning of “stolen land.”

While not always apparent, the spatial processes of colonial dispossession are interconnected, and have collectively led to the development of Canadian cities, the centres of modern North American culture and economy. Cities and their economies rely on the dislocation of Indigenous peoples onto reserve lands as well as on the natural resources sourced from remote regions in the vicinity of Indigenous communities. There are reciprocal links between the spatial production of cities and reserves. The editors of the recent book “Settler City Limits” posit that:

The mythic separation of the city from its surrounds in settler colonial discourse—which imagines the city and the reserve/reservation as completely disconnected space—renders invisible the violence upon which settler city-building relies. Settler colonial violence entails the maintenance of a false distinction between urban and non-urban space, a distinction that in turn serves to obscure linkages between urban and non-urban space through Indigenous geographies.<sup>184</sup>

The erasure of this connection serves to create an illusion of neutrality in cities.

Most of Canada's urban centres are built on significant pre-contact Indigenous sites. They have all been continuous sites of Indigenous-settler interaction and contestation since European contact.<sup>185</sup> However, this history has been strategically obscured to frame Canadian cities as lacking deep histories, thus erasing historical and ongoing Indigenous presence.<sup>186</sup> Architectural forms reinforce this erasure by replicating the built structures of the imperial homeland. Foundational design principles — such as sedentary permanence and monumental grandeur — that have shaped the built environment in Canada, were imported here through acts of colonization. Before undertaking a closer examination, I took these principles for granted and thought of cities as neutral backdrops to the practice of architecture.

Settlements, and the cities that they have developed into, have always been centres of settler-colonial expansion — “civilized” space carved out of “savage wilderness” — fueled by an economy of extraction and exploitation and maintaining the racial hierarchies and heteropatriarchy at the foundation of colonial invasion and culture.<sup>187</sup> As they continue to grow, cities exist simultaneously as the incomplete process and outcome of settler colonization.

Geographer David Hugill writes that framing cities within

settler-colonial theory is persuasive and generative because it orients our interpretative energies towards the complex persistence and centrality of the colonial relation in the urban present, not because it offers a definitive account of the social totality in places where no formal end to colonization has been achieved.<sup>188</sup>

Situating cities within the context of settler-colonial relations has the potential to reveal the ways in which architects participate in spatial injus-

tice and systems of violence and oppression, both within and without city boundaries.

Urban planning scholars Libby Porter and Naama Blatman-Thomas argue that “analyses of settler colonial cities that do not set out to be ‘settler colonial analyses’ often fail to make visible the underlying and prevailing relations of race, power and space and the settler colonial relations keeping them intact.”<sup>189</sup> Blatman-Thomas and Porter go on to explain that the urban condition “yields specific consequences: entrenched racial land and property regimes, ongoing dispossession of Indigenous populations, denial of Indigenous sovereignties and their continued presence in the city and preservation of settler privilege in various forms.”<sup>190</sup>

Prior to colonization, Indigenous architectural practices and spatial organizations were designed within a paradigm that differs significantly from Euro-Western worldviews. Rather than enacting violence towards the land by exploiting materials that fuel industry and centres of “civilization,” Indigenous nations generally valued harmony and balance above all else.<sup>191</sup> Indigenous architectures were perfected to prioritize adaptability to natural cycles and inflict little to no harm on the land in the process.<sup>192</sup>

Indigenous value systems were inconceivable and dismissed as “under-developed” by a European society that subscribed to the tenets of “stadial progress.”<sup>193</sup> Stadial progress is the idea that human evolution could be measured through material production. This concept divides “progress” into four stages: “the age of hunters, pastoralists, agriculture, and commerce.”<sup>194</sup> These stages are considered to be “distinct, hierarchical, and successive modes of production.” Indigenous nations — who Europeans falsely believed subsisted only on hunting and gathering without systems of land management — were relegated to what was considered to be an earlier stage of human development “akin to the state of nature, the starting point for the history of private property.”<sup>195</sup> As discussed in the context of the Doctrine of Discovery, this perceived lack of “improvement” to the land justified the initial claim to Turtle Island. Indigenous peoples were thought to be less than human because they did not exploit the land for material profit. Settler-colonial scholar Penelope Edmonds

notes that “[c]rucially, in these stadial narratives the apotheosis of commerce, progress, and civilization was the crowded New World settler city, depicted as the triumph of empire.”<sup>196</sup>

The stadial narrative, then, not only justified invasion and development on Indigenous lands, but once cities were built, ensured that Indigenous peoples were considered anachronous to the modern city until they became “civilized.”<sup>197</sup> While Indigenous peoples may often be unwelcome or excluded in the settler spaces produced in cities, “in the face of colonial invasion, Indigenous peoples have maintained and continue to maintain connections to land and community within and beyond urban spaces.”<sup>198</sup> Today, over 50% of self-identified Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) peoples live in urban centres,<sup>199</sup> and cities continue to be important sites of Indigenous resurgence and resistance.<sup>200</sup>

## *the humber river*

July, 2018 | Tkaronto, ON

*It was a hot and humid day when our group arrived on the shore of the Humber River. We followed a narrow and worn path into the brush, away from neatly manicured lawns. Keeping an eye out for the poisonous and invasive wild parsnip, we walked carefully, with intent.*

*The group of us, including Kim Anderson and Andrew Judge, came together that day to learn about the ways that the grassroots organization, Naadmaagit Kī Group (NKG), meaning “helpers of the earth,” has been tending to an area of neglected urban “wilderness” to provide a space where urban Indigenous folks, particularly youth, could access land in the city. Doug Anderson, one of the members of NKG, guided us along the riverside trails in an area that was once an important Indigenous portage route known as the Carrying Place Trail. The smell of wet earth and warm leaves filled the air as we walked through the tall plants towards an expansive stand of phragmites. Supplemental to our tour, we put our hands to good use and helped clear as much of the invasive phragmites as possible from an area by the river where NKG had previously planted wild roses and dogwood, species indigenous to the region. We created a small clearing in the vast expanse of phragmites.*

*I didn’t know phragmites by name until a couple of years ago. Now I can’t help noticing them wherever I go. Also known as the European Common Reed, the introduced strain of *Phragmites australis* often colonizes wetlands*

*and is common along the sides of highways and rivers. Where the invasive phragmites take root, they out-compete native plant species.<sup>201</sup> The roots of this fast spreading species also release toxins that prevent the growth of other plants nearby, placing indigenous biodiversity at risk.<sup>202</sup> It is believed that phragmites indigenous to Eurasia were introduced to North America in the late 1700s or early 1800s through ballast materials.<sup>203</sup> They have since spread from the Atlantic coast across Turtle Island.*

*We continued our walk along the Humber to find a great oak tree. Appearing to be at least a couple hundred years old, it was a likely remnant of the region's oak savannas that were prevalent prior to urban development.<sup>204</sup> Andrew Judge recounted the history of how Indigenous peoples used to maintain these areas and cultivate them for food by performing controlled burns. The burns would encourage the growth of fruit producing plants and clear dense brush for easy acorn harvesting. Andrew explained that acorns were a great food source, and the large-scale collection and processing of acorns used waterways like the Humber River for leaching tannins from the nuts. The great oak showed evidence of living through this time period; the base of its trunk had an evident bulge — a build-up of resistance to the heat of cyclical burns. This tree would have known the land surrounding the Humber River before European settlement; before the rails were laid and the roads paved, before the buildings grew taller than the trees. I wonder when the bark of that great oak last felt the heat of a flame.*



Figure 135: *Indigenous plant species exposed after weeding phragmites. The Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*



Figure 136: *Blue vervain, a medicinal plant. The Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*

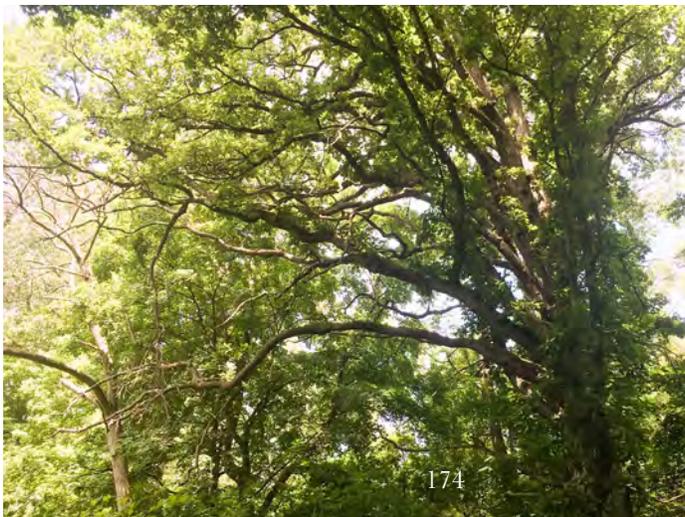


Figure 137: *A centuries-old oak tree. The Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*

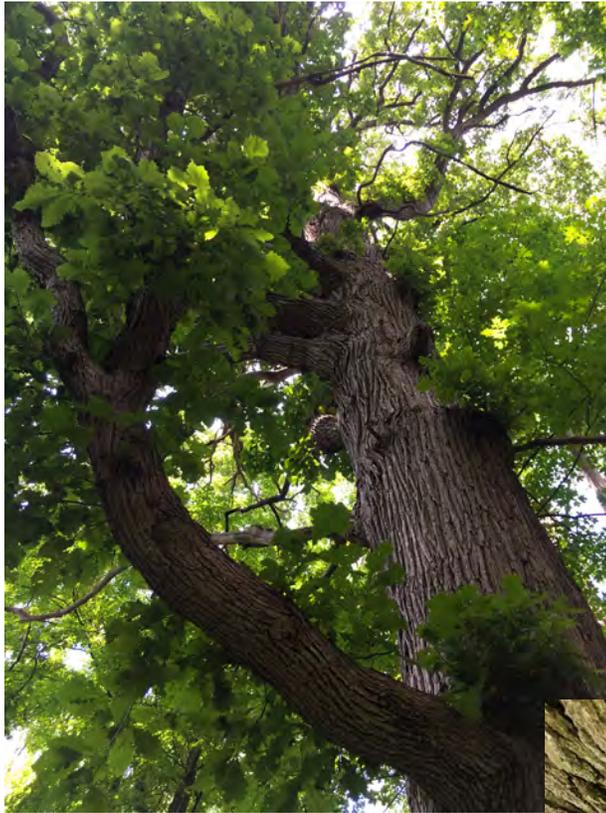


Figure 138: *A centuries-old oak tree. The Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*



Figure 139: *A bulge at the base of the oak tree, evidence of heat scarring from past controlled burns. The Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*

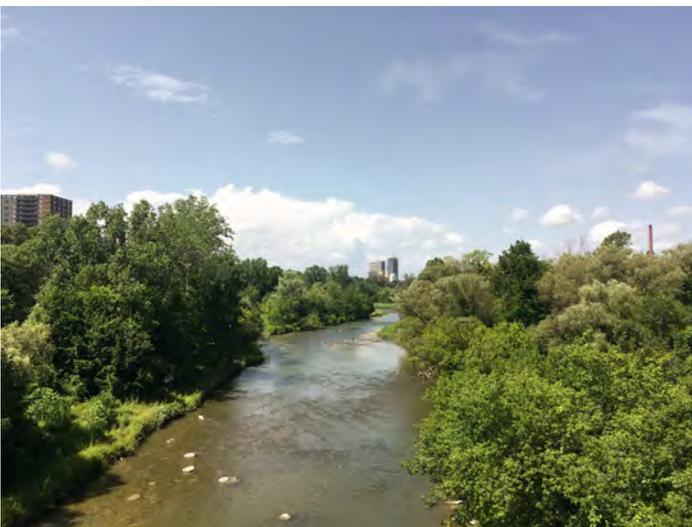


Figure 140: *Looking north along the Humber River, Toronto, ON. July, 2018.*

## *ziibiing*

John Borrows opens and closes his book “Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law” with a reflection on a place he knows well on the University of Toronto (UofT) campus:

The two houses of the University of Toronto law school are built on a ravine that was once a headwater and home to spawning salmon and trout. The school has displaced this earlier presence with the green space now known as Philosopher’s Walk. Buried far beneath it is a stream, known to the Anishinabek as Ziibiing and later to the settlers as Taddle Creek. If followed to its mouth this stream led to Wonscodonahk, where Queen’s Quay now stands, on the Lake Ontario shoreline. By covering the living reminders of a previous landscape, the systems of planning and architecture that created the law school have nearly erased the Ojibway people’s relationship with this place.<sup>205</sup>

Borrows offers a specific example of architecture, planning, and landscape architecture’s role in Indigenous erasure. The influx of United Empire Loyalists after the American Revolutionary War and the expanding Euro-Canadian settlement following the disputed “Toronto Purchase” made it near impossible for the Mississaugas to sustain their lifeways on their territories by the mid-1800s.<sup>206</sup> They had little choice but to relocate, so in 1848 they accepted an offer from Six Nations and moved to a parcel of land in the southwest corner of the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, where many continue to reside today.

Settlement continued to grow and asserted increasing control over existing waterways like Ziibiing. Sections of Ziibiing were buried underground and where the creek was still exposed on the UofT campus, a dam was built to create a picturesque pond near present-day Hart House.<sup>207</sup> Decades of disrespect for the waters and waste dumping from adjacent buildings heavily polluted the creek to the point that it was deemed a “long-standing nuisance” and civic health risk.<sup>208</sup> UofT lobbied the city to

bury the remaining section of the desecrated creek and it was integrated into the city sewer system in 1884.<sup>209</sup>

Marking the present-day northern entrance to Philosopher's Walk stands the Queen Alexandra Gateway, built by none other than the Imperial Daughters of the Empire.<sup>210</sup> Originally constructed at Bloor Street West and Queen's Park to commemorate the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901, the gate was relocated to its present site in 1962.<sup>211</sup> Spilling from the ornate iron and stone gateway, a ribbon of paving travels south along the ravine, a faint echo of the living waters that once traced the same path.

While the stream is still buried, Indigenous routines and customs that once blanketed the region are again discernable. The law school and its physical structure have not succeeded in extinguishing these previous forms. The trees, birds, and peoples that used to frequent these gentle hills can still be found here.<sup>212</sup>

Even if we can no longer see it, Ziibiing still flows.



Figure 141: *Antique Métis beadwork, held for display by the late Lawrence Barkwell. Louis Riel Institute, Winnipeg, MB. August 2018.*



## *st. mars on the red river*

August, 2018 | Winnipeg, MB

*In the summer of 2018, my parents and I decided to travel to Winnipeg to visit extended family and seek out distant relatives that still lived in the area. We went to the archives in search of Hudson Bay Company records and visited the sites where our ancestors lived. We arranged a visit with community historian Lawrence Barkwell at the Louis Riel Institute. He generously offered us a stack of printouts of information he had compiled related to our family. He also showed us some intricate pieces of antique beadwork. We visited with him again at the old Louis Riel House for their weekly fiddle concert and joined in on the spoons. On a Sunday, my uncle Kevin drove us to Pine Falls, where my great-grandpa Patrick worked at the paper mill and where grandpa Terry grew up. Seeking to identify the faces in old photos, we visited the Winnipeg Rowing Club. We didn't find any new names, but we discovered a 1907 photo of Jos St. Mars hanging on the club wall, posing with his rugby team. Visiting with distant cousins, we learned about my great-grand-uncle Delphis St. Mars, Jos's brother, and the concerts he would play with his partner Lucy Marion. Both accomplished musicians, Delphis played the fiddle and Lucy played the piano. Through conversation with our relatives, we also newly identified all of my great-grandpa Jos St. Mars's siblings in a photo with their mother Emelie, taken in Richer, Manitoba. We took a day trip to Richer. About 60 km south-east of Winnipeg, Richer is a community where many Métis*



Figure 142: *Statue of Louis Riel. Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*

Figure 143: *The view of the St. Boniface Cathedral from the Red River, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*



Figure 144: *My great-grandfather Jos St. Mars (top centre) with his rugby team in a photograph found hanging at the Winnipeg Rowing Club. Winnipeg, MB. 1907.*



Figure 145: *“The St. Mars on the Red River”* as described by my grandma Eileen. My great-grandfather Jos St. Mars is at the bottom right. Winnipeg, MB. circa 1900-1920.



Figure 146: *My grandma Eileen in Crescent Drive Park, where her father Jos grew up.* Winnipeg, MB. 1940s or 50s.

*families still live. The community is located on the Dawson Road, which once connected the Red River Settlement to Thunder Bay. In her time, Jos's sister Josephine Champagne ran a store in Richer. We visited the community church — now the Dawson Trail Museum — that sits steeples-less in the background of an old photograph of Emelie.*

*The research was tedious, and we met a few dead ends, but we began to make small discoveries that gave shape to the stories of our Métis forebears. The pieces began to come together.*

*Although she didn't speak explicitly about her Métis roots, my grandma Eileen did pass on some decidedly Métis stories to my dad when he was a young boy. She spoke about the voyageurs, Windigo, and a number of stories from "out West." Perhaps her greatest giveaway, however, was always speaking proudly of Louis Riel as a hero at a time when this was uncommon among Canadians. She would describe a memory of her father's, Jos St. Mars. Jos used to say that one of his earliest memories was of watching Louis Riel cross the Red River from the St. Mars river lot and ride south along the shore towards his family homestead (now Riel House) on horseback.<sup>213</sup> She recounted the awe and admiration that the encounter impressed on him.*

Figure 147: *My great-great-grandmother, Emelie St. Mars (née Harkness) in Thibaultville (now Richer) Manitoba, with the Enfant-Jésus church in the background. circa 1910s.*



Figure 148: *The Enfant-Jésus church as it stands today, now the site of the Dawson Trail Museum. Richer, Manitoba. August, 2018.*



Figure 149: *Emelie St. Mars (née Harkness) and her children. From left to right, Josephine Champagne, Delphis St. Mars, Emelie St Mars, Joseph St. Mars, Celina Phaneuf, Louis St Mars. Thibaultville (Richer), Manitoba. circa 1910s.*

*in a good way*

*One warm evening, my parents and I walked through Crescent Drive Park, the same grounds of what was once the St. Mars homestead. Crossing paths with a family of deer, we walked quietly along the river's edge. The earth's shadow began to fall over us, and I looked out across the river, still flowing as it did when Jos gazed across the same waters more than a century before.*

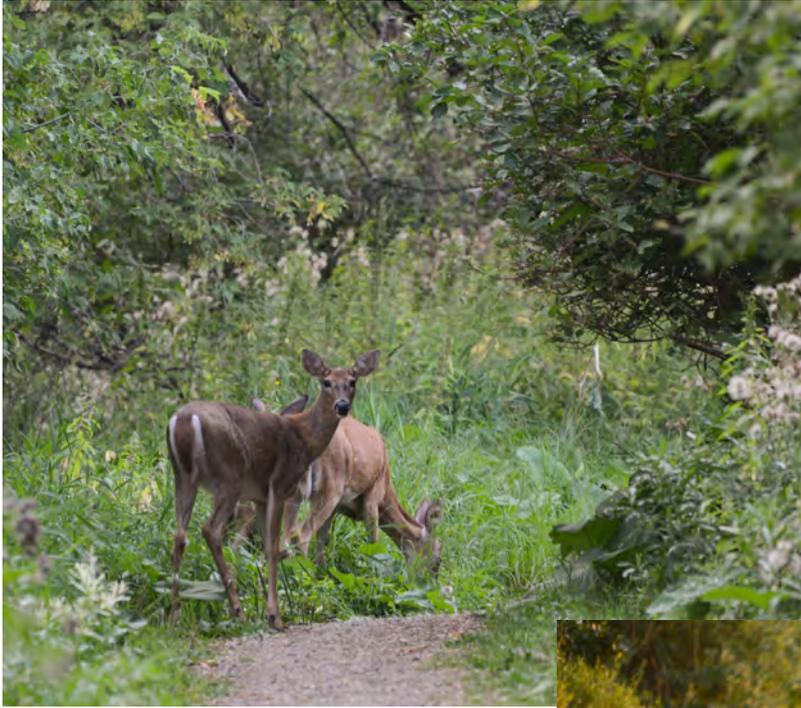


Figure 150: *White-tailed deer on the river trail. Crescent Drive Park, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*

Figure 151: *My parents on the Red River across from Crescent Drive Park, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*





Figure 152: *The Red River shore across from Crescent Drive Park, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*





Figure 153: *Stained glass inside Métis architect Étienne Gaboury's Precious Blood Church, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*

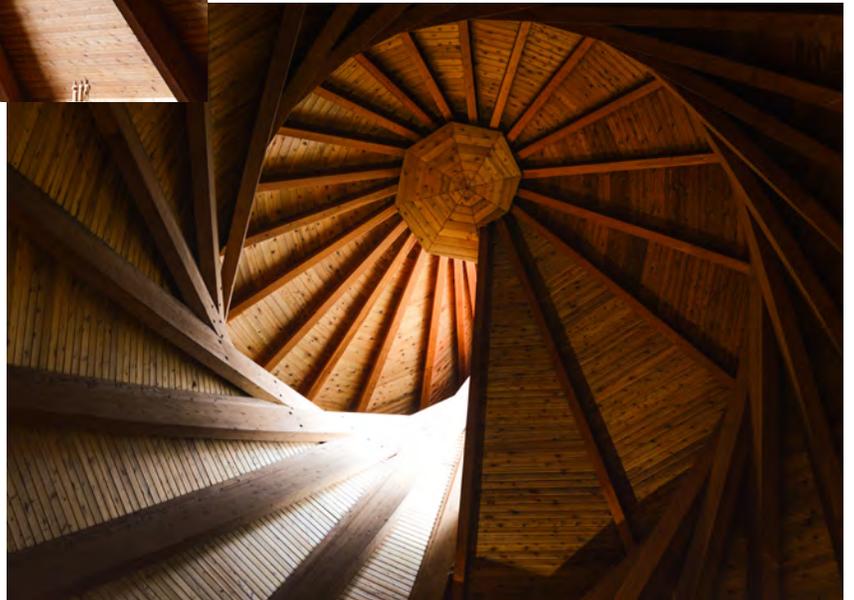


Figure 154: *Looking up inside Métis architect Étienne Gaboury's Precious Blood Church, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.*

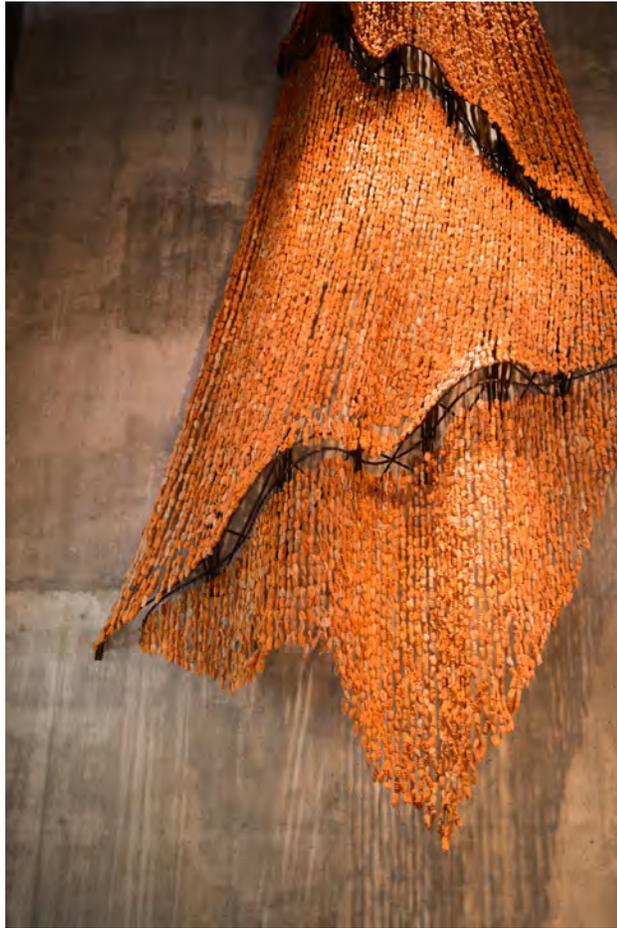


Figure 155: *Revisiting “Traces,”* by Rebecca Belmore. Human Rights Museum of Canada, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.

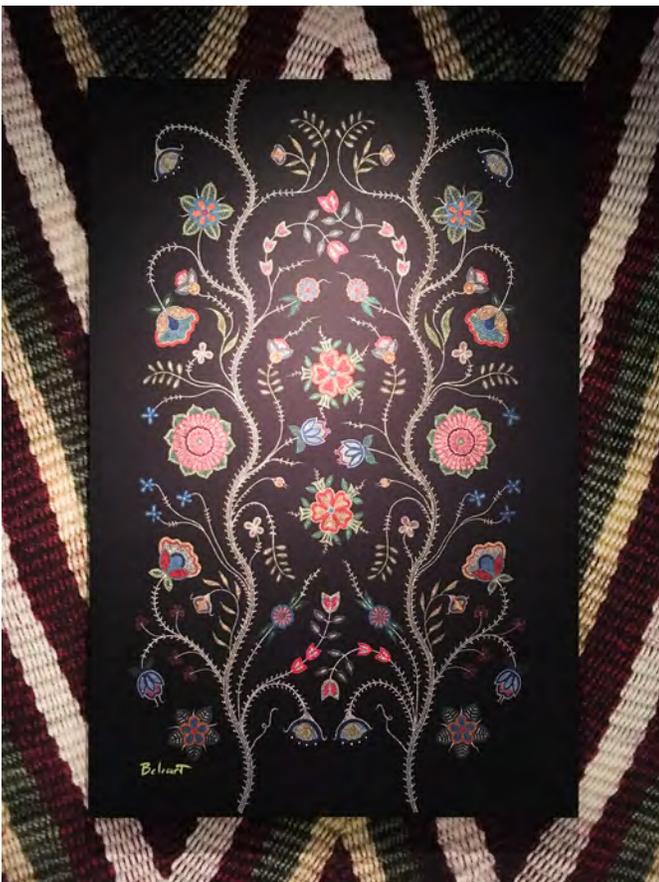


Figure 156: *“The Métis and the Two Row Wampum”* 2002 by Christi Belcourt. Human Rights Museum of Canada, Winnipeg, MB. August, 2018.

## *unceded*

In September 2018, I had the immense privilege of working as a Cultural Host at UNCEDED, Canada’s entry to the Venice Architecture Biennale. The first of its kind, the exhibition showcased the work of eighteen Indigenous architects from across Turtle Island. I spent four weeks welcoming visitors to the pavilion, eating gelato, and exploring the canals and islands of Venice, Italy.

The pavilion itself was formed by curved surfaces that meandered through the Isolotto building at the Arsenale complex, obscuring its rectangular plan. Images printed on the surface of the winding walls were combined with video projections and audio recordings throughout the space to tell the stories of the eighteen Indigenous architects from diverse Nations. The exhibition was carried out under the leadership of celebrated architect Douglas Cardinal, curated by artist Gerald McMaster and architect David Fortin, and told the stories of architects Harriet Burdett-Moulton, Jake Chakasim, Chris Cornelius, Wanda Dalla Costa, Tammy Eagle Bull, Daniel Glenn, Ryan Gorrie, Ray Gosselin, Matthew Hickey, Brian Porter, Ouri Scott, Eladia Smoke, Patrick Stewart, David Thomas, and Alfred Waugh.

The pavilion guided visitors through four “territories:” Indigeneity, Resilience, Sovereignty, and Colonization. The exhibition emphasized that enduring Indigenous values, expressed in diverse ways by the participating architects, can help inform how we might all ensure the health of the land for future generations. It told stories of resilience in the face of immense violence and asserted that “Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island never surrendered their relationship to the land. . . . We are *unceded* people on *unceded* land.”<sup>214</sup>

Parallel to my everyday exposure to the “voices of the land,” I spent my time off seeing as much of Venice as possible. I marvelled at the masses of tourists that packed the narrow *calle* (streets). In Murano, the island where glass beads would have been produced centuries before to be traded in the Americas, I scoured the stores to find unique and antique beads.



Figure 157: *A map of Indigenous language groups at the entry to the UNCEDED Exhibit, 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*

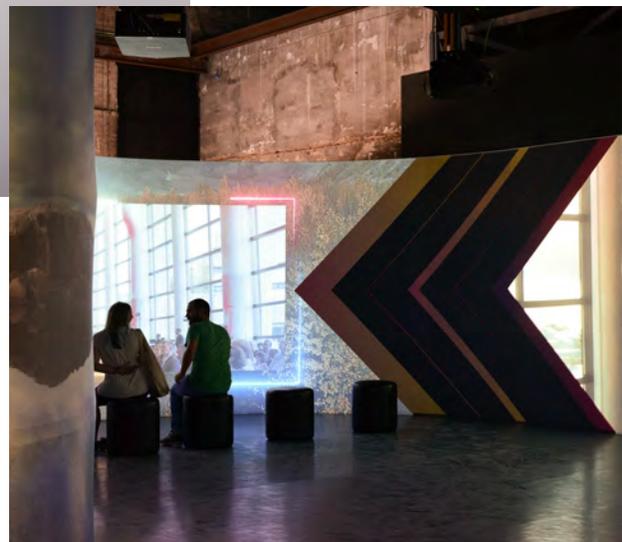


Figure 158: *The UNCEDED Exhibit, 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 159: *The UNCEDED Exhibit, 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 160: *The UNCEDED Exhibit, 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 161: *The UNCEDED Exhibit, 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*

I watched local residents perform daily acts of maintenance and taking-care. I pondered the land beneath the “ground,” which was itself a form of constructed architecture, wondering what the land and waters were like before the city took shape. Missing the abundance of trees and vegetation that I was so used to back home, I found appreciation for the “rogue” plant life that reclaimed every nook and cranny.

Surprisingly, it wasn’t until after I left Venice that I realized, for all the hours I spent at the Arsenale, I was just one bridge away from the former home of Giovanni Caboto, or John Cabot. A marble plaque commemorates his “discovery” of Newfoundland.

## *lido*<sup>216</sup>

September 2018 | Lido, Venice, Italy

*My first two weeks working at the UNCEDED Exhibit in Venice overlapped with the Venice Film Festival and I decided that I would visit Lido to see a film on my day off. I spent many days prior flipping through the festival program and managed to narrow my selection down to three films. Two of them, I soon realized, were no longer screening. The third was a film called “The Nightingale,” by Australian director Jennifer Kent.*

*“Set in 1825. Clare, a young Irish convict woman, chases a British officer through the rugged Tasmanian wilderness, bent on revenge for a terrible act of violence he committed against her family. On the way she enlists the services of an Aboriginal tracker named Billy, who is also marked by trauma from his own violence-filled past.”<sup>215</sup>*

*I was curious to see how colonial times in Tasmania would be addressed in the film. Also, director Jennifer Kent was the only woman in competition. It felt like the right choice. I bought my ticket.*

*The travel time to Lido by Vaporetto was forty minutes from Fondamenta Nove, a stop near where we lived. With several hours to spare before the late afternoon screening, I walked along Lido’s main street, appreciating the abundance of trees. The main road culminated at*



Figure 162: *The Bamboo Stalactite Pavilion* by Vietnamese architect *Võ Trọng Nghĩa* located just steps for the *UNCEDED Exhibit building* in the *Arsenale, Venice, Italy*. September, 2018.

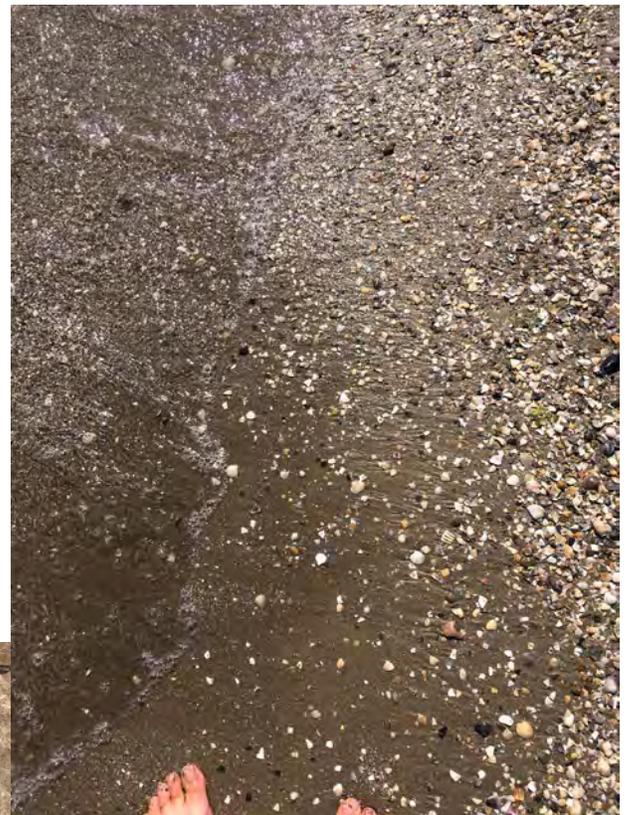


Figure 163: *Walking along Lido Beach, Venice, Italy*. September, 2018.

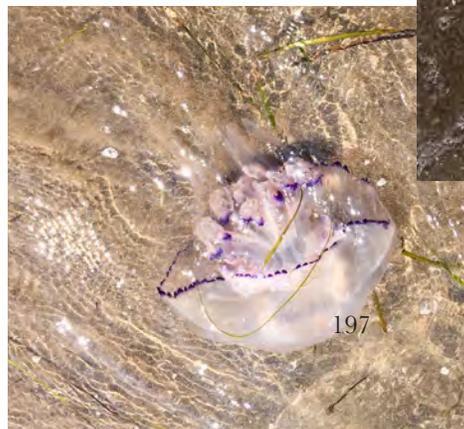


Figure 164: *A washed-up jelly fish. Lido Beach, Venice, Italy*. September, 2018.

*in a good way*

*the beach. After spending a week with primarily hard surfaces on Venice's main islands, walking barefoot along the shores of the Adriatic Sea was an unexpected relief. The free beach (where you could enjoy the shore without renting a chair) was a mosaic of towels strewn across the sand, dotted with sunbathers on this warm weekday afternoon. I strolled along the gentle threshold between land and sea for almost two hours, appreciating the warmth of the sun, soft breeze, seashells, and shallow waters. In stark contrast to several weeks of being busy with travel and work, this was a welcome moment of pause.*

*I arrived early at the Palazzo del Cinema to find that a crowd of people already surrounded the red carpet. Seeing several guests arrive in full gowns, I felt slightly under-dressed in my sandals and shorts. It hadn't occurred to me when I bought my ticket that this was the official public premiere of the film. The director and several actors would be present at the screening.*

*I entered the foyer of the Palazzo del Cinema and found myself gathered with the rest of the crowd flanking the crimson path into the theatre. I caught a glimpse of Naomi Watts, one of the festival jury members. Swept up by the energy of my fellow filmgoers, I attempted in vain to get Jennifer Kent to autograph my ticket.*

*I found my assigned seat near the front of the Sala Grande. The director and cast were introduced, and then the lights went out.*

...

*I have a hard time describing my experience watching this film. My intention here is not to write a film review, nor is this a critical analysis. But beyond all expectations, the act of watching this film became one of the most significant experiences of my time in Venice. The film was brutal in how bluntly it portrayed colonial violence towards women, towards the Indigenous peoples of Tasmania, and towards the land. It was difficult to watch. I spent about a third of the film with tears streaming down my face. Tears of shock, sadness, anger, and in some instances, joy. Halfway through the film I gave up trying to dry the lines of water from my cheeks, sensing that tears would be flowing again before long. I found relief in the small moments of beauty in the film among so much darkness.*

*Those who know me well know that I am quick to become immersed in a film and tear up during emotionally tense scenes. But this was different. This film unearthed all the emotions in me that had been intellectualized over the previous two years and laid them bare. Of course, racism and violence continue today in settler-colonial societies. But I have been lucky. My circumstances and privilege have sheltered me from the direct violence of colonialism. For too many, this is not the case. Before watching this film, I had never connected so viscerally to the experience of colonial violence that I carry through my relations.*



Figure 165: *The Palazzo del Cinema, Lido, Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 166: *An empty Lido Beach, Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*

...

*When the film ended, I had trouble maintaining my composure. As quickly as I had been transported into 1820's Van Diemen's Land, the auditorium lights turned on, and I was back to the reality of the Sala Grande, surrounded by hundreds of people. I forcefully held back my tears and joined the rest of the audience in sustaining a long standing-ovation. I left the theatre, emotionally raw, and walked straight towards the beach. The afternoon had dissolved into evening, and with the sun almost set, the wide beach was empty. A large garbage tractor drove by, collecting the day's remains. I sat for some time at the water's edge, processing what I had just experienced. Eventually, I brushed the sand from my feet and made my way home, alone along the water's edge.*



Figure 167: *Antique beads in Murano, Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*

Figure 168: *A collaborative beadwork piece at the Homo Faber Exhibition, Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 169: *A beadwork demonstration at the Homo Faber Exhibition, Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 170: *Sea lavender along a canal.*  
*Torcello, Venice, Italy.*  
*September, 2018.*



Figure 171: *The view*  
*towards Burano from*  
*Torcello over the barena*  
*(swamp). Venice, Italy.*  
*September, 2018.*



Figure 172: *Plant life (re)claiming the cracks. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*

Figure 173: *Acts of taking-care. Venice, Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 174: *Sunset in  
Pellestrina, Venice,  
Italy. September, 2018.*



Figure 175: *Critters  
in the sand in  
Sant'Erasmus, Venice,  
Italy. September, 2018.*

*in a good way*

## ***settler-colonial violence & architecture***

Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity. Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred, and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things.<sup>217</sup>

*Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation  
Commission of Canada, 2015*

The truths shared in these National Inquiry hearings tell the story – or, more accurately, thousands of stories – of acts of genocide against First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This violence amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human and Inuit, Métis and First Nations rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in Indigenous populations.<sup>218</sup>

*Executive Summary of the Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019.*

Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) explicitly implicate Canada in the act of genocide. The reports' stances on genocide have caused significant controversy among Canadians, particularly following the report on MMIWG. But many scholars agree: there is no question that the settler-state of Canada deliberately set out to remove and dissolve Indigenous peoples as both ethnic groups and sovereign nations through a set of actions that amount to genocide.<sup>219</sup>

Settler colonization, as we have discussed, relies on the erasure of Indigenous peoples. Architecture and its associated spatial design and planning practices have played a role in every aspect of the settler-colonial project: early settlement and fortification; mapping, planning, and surveying; urban and rural development or “nation-building;” and resource extraction infrastructure to serve development and trade.<sup>220</sup> Builders, craftspeople, planners, engineers, and architects were critical to establishing a colonial hold on Turtle Island. As fundamental participants in the settler-colonial project, spatial designers, including architects, have been complicit in Indigenous genocide.

In its most sinister forms, architecture was deployed by the settler-colonial state as a tool for assimilation and cultural annihilation. Canada distributed Euro-Canadian architecture to impose colonial spatial organizations on Indigenous peoples through federally-provided architecture on reserves, and the Indian Day School and the Residential School Systems.<sup>221</sup> Architectural scholar and Waterloo Architecture alumna, Magdalena Miłosz, asserts that “the government used architecture as a significant tool to enact its racist policies by constructing entire built worlds.”<sup>222</sup> Government-provided homes, schools, churches, community halls, hospitals and other buildings were forms of “‘Indian’ architecture [that were] mass produced in response to the ideological requirements of eradicating Indigenous cultures and languages.”<sup>223</sup> By reorganizing the space of the reserve, through both the subdivision of private lots (as discussed earlier) and imposing Euro-Canadian building typologies, the federal government aimed to “civilize”

Indigenous peoples by attempting to redefine their relationships to space and land. Miłosz explains that:

North American settlers imagined an inherent link between “civilization” and the reorganization of space to suit Western modes of life and thought. This so-called “infrastructure of ‘civilization’—villages with day schools, churches, European houses and ploughed fields” was indispensable in carrying out the assimilatory goals of both the religious orders and the government.<sup>224</sup>

Unlike traditional forms of domestic Indigenous architecture in the region that is currently Canada, which varied significantly depending on the nation and climatic region,<sup>225</sup> the interior spaces of the Euro-Canadian homes were heavily compartmentalized. Traditionally, many forms of Indigenous domestic architecture, such as the Haudenosaunee longhouse or the Anishinaabe wigwam, were designed for communal gatherings in a space that served multiple functions.<sup>226</sup> The reordering of domestic space restricted traditional forms of relational space. Speaking to the Métis context, David Fortin, Dani Kastelein, and Jason Surkan expand on the outcome of culturally inappropriate housing:

Not equipped to sustain contemporary and traditional Indigenous domiciliary behaviors, these homes quite literally crumble under pressure. This cannot only be viewed as a direct form of cultural discrimination but a trend which has since threatened Indigenous social sustainability.<sup>227</sup>

By entirely disregarding cultural and environmental contexts, not only have the federally-supplied homes disrupted Indigenous ways of living, but they have also impacted Indigenous health. The failure of the federal housing system continues to plague Indigenous communities today.

*in a good way*

...

Under the jurisdiction of the Indian Act, the federal Department of Indian Affairs, along with various Church organizations, consolidated the operations of existing schools and developed the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system in 1876. The aim was to separate Indigenous children from their lands and families to assimilate them into white Euro-Christian society. An estimated 150,000 Indigenous children attended residential school over the hundred-plus years that the schools were in operation.<sup>228</sup> In the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Commission is quick to clarify that the IRS was “an education system in name only for much of its existence.”<sup>229</sup> The primary intent was to remove children from their culture, considered “savage.” Government officials devised that the best way to do this would be to physically separate children from their families and homelands. Sir John A. Macdonald, addressing the House of Commons in 1883, stated the following.

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.<sup>230</sup>

The spatial separation between the schools and the children’s home communities was key to the system’s “success.”

The architecture of the schools themselves, similarly to the architecture on reserve, embodied typical Euro-Canadian spatial organizations. Describing the design of residential schools before federal standardization, historian Janet Wright states that “the design of these schools, which was firmly rooted

in white society, was clearly intended to support and reinforce the values, skills, and codes of behaviour in which the students were so rigorously indoctrinated”<sup>231</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) began to centralize the design of “Indian” architecture as the federal government’s assimilation efforts intensified. The DIA established its own architectural department for the task, and the schools that emerged were typically large multistory buildings with a symmetrical floorplan. They included “large, open dormitories on the upper floors and often a chapel or assembly hall comprising of a back wing.”<sup>232</sup> Miłosz describes that the function of the schools shifted “from assimilation based on industrial training to a program of segregation and cultural decimation,” and this shift “is reflected in both the architectural evolution of these institutions and their educational models.”<sup>233</sup> It is clear that architecture played an instrumental role in the government and church-sanctioned dislocation of children from their homes, violently separating them from their families, their languages, and lands.

First established in 2008, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada gathered together the stories of residential school survivors. In 2015, the TRC released its final report, detailing countless stories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. On record, at least 3,200 children did not make it out alive. However, chairman of the commission from 2009-2015, Justice Murray Sinclair, suspects that more than 6,000 Indigenous children died in the schools.<sup>234</sup>

Alongside the residential school system, Indigenous children were also removed from their families by the Canadian welfare system in high numbers between the 1950s and 1980s. These removals were known collectively as the Sixties Scoop. Survivors of the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, and their families continue to heal from the genocidal violence of forced assimilation. To this day, the system of removals continues in what is known as the Millennium Scoop. As of 2016 Indigenous children represent more than half of all children under fourteen in the Canadian Government’s foster care system.<sup>235</sup>

...

In addition to facilitating violence through the spatial organization and form of buildings, architects also engage in settler-colonial violence through the use of building materials, the products of extraction.

It is easy to forget our participation as architects in the large-scale movement of materials comprising the cycles of violent extraction and urbanization which continue to cause environmental degradation and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their territories, both on Turtle Island and in territories on other continents. In what is currently Canada, mainstream media has periodically covered the destruction caused by both urban development and extractive industries on the land and how they unevenly impact Indigenous peoples, particularly women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.

In communities like Attawapiskat First Nation near James Bay, we have seen the lack of clean drinking water and harmful levels of mercury released into the Attawapiskat River due to the De Beers Victor Diamond Mine.<sup>236</sup>

Near the Manitoba-Ontario border, the construction of a large aqueduct in 1916 to provide drinking water to the growing city of Winnipeg appropriated land from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.<sup>237</sup> The project damaged their ancestral lands and created a channel that turned their community into an island.<sup>238</sup> And while the aqueduct continues to provide drinking water to Winnipeg today, Shoal Lake 40 does not have access to clean drinking water. The community once collected drinking water straight from the lake, but cottage development and boat traffic began to pollute the waters.<sup>239</sup> It was not until 2019, a century after the aqueduct first supplied water to Winnipeg taps, that the government finally built a road to restore Shoal Lake 40's access to the mainland.<sup>240</sup>

In the northern regions of Turtle Island, Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples experience the impact of the extractive practices through sites of industry as well as the amplified effects of global warming, which alter the cycles of the land and have completely changed Indigenous ways of life.<sup>241</sup>

The extraction industry is also responsible for the creation of transient industry camps on Indigenous territories, often called “man-camps” due to their predominantly male employees. Indigenous communities have identified the increased risk of violence against women in areas where transient workers, with little to no personal investment in the local communities, are prevalent.<sup>242</sup> A 2014 study suggested that:

[T]he “man-camps” that accompany oil and gas projects breed hyper-masculinity and high rates of substance use, which have been shown to be a causal factor of violence against women, and the men in the camps are underserved in terms of social and health programs. The ideology that land is solely a resource for profit enables man-camps, which then foster environments that can lead to violence against women.<sup>243</sup>

As I type these words, the construction of a natural gas pipeline by Coastal GasLink continues on unceded Wet’suwet’en First Nation territory in northern British Columbia, despite refusal from the hereditary Wet’suwet’en chiefs.<sup>244</sup> The path of the pipeline intersects with Highway 16, between Prince George and Prince Rupert, the Highway of Tears. The construction will be supported by fourteen man-camps.<sup>245</sup>

Land and water defence along the proposed path of the pipeline has spanned multiple years, with ongoing conflict between Wet’suwet’en and Canadian law. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Wet’suwet’en land defenders gathered in ceremony on their ancestral lands to honour the lives of our missing and murdered Indigenous sisters. The RCMP invaded unceded Unist’ot’en territory in the middle of the ceremony and arrested seven Indigenous land defenders, including Wet’suwet’en matriarchs, all in the name of clearing the path for a natural gas pipeline.<sup>246</sup> Red dresses hung around the ceremony site, to honour the spirits of the women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals whose lives have been taken at the hands of settler-colonial society. After the arrests, the RCMP took down the red dresses.<sup>247</sup> Indigenous peoples and allies spoke up against the invasion of unceded land across the country and used the railway, an infrastructure of colonial violence, as a site of resistance.<sup>248</sup>

*in a good way*

Violence, and often sexual violence, against Indigenous women is not a new settler-colonial phenomenon. On the subjects of Indigenous womanhood and colonization, Kim Anderson writes:

The Europeans who first arrived in Canada were shocked by the position of Aboriginal women in their respective societies. It was not long before they realized that, in order to dominate the land and the people that were occupying it, they needed to disempower the women. Indigenous systems that allocated power to women were incompatible with the kind of colonial power dynamics that would be necessary to maintain colonial power.<sup>249</sup>

Anderson demonstrates that disrupting the authority of Indigenous women was an important tool of settler colonization. Settler-colonial powers enacted this disruption through:

the imposition of heteropaternalism, which involved (among multiple practices), teaching heteropatriarchal roles in residential schools and sending “field matrons” and missionaries out to reorder Indigenous women as docile housewives in heteropatriarchal nuclear homes. Although not entirely successful or uniform, this re-ordering of the collective agency of women set up the conditions for gendered and domestic violence, one of the most significant social issues we struggle with today.<sup>250</sup>

The federally-supplied architecture on reserve facilitated the heteropaternalistic attempts to “civilize” Indigenous women by forcing them to inhabit settler spatial orders and social hierarchies.

...

By definition, settler colonialism requires access to land for the interdependent processes of settlement and extraction.<sup>251</sup> It can be said, then, that settler colonialism relies on a perpetual cycle of violence. First, violence is inflicted on Indigenous peoples, to clear land for access. Violence is then inflicted upon the land for the production of material excess. The exploitation of lands and waters disproportionately and violently impacts Indigenous peoples whose cultural practices rely on the land and who often comprise the majority demographic near sites of extraction. Further, Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ women experience the brunt of the violence sustained by settler colonial cultures of extraction.<sup>252</sup>

The cycle continues, composing a structure of violence and genocide upon which settler colonialism and capitalism rely.



Figure 176: *A garter snake  
on a Grand River trail.  
Cambridge ON. October, 2018.*





Figure 177: *“Conceptual Longhouse”* by Bill Woodworth. Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. October 2018.

Figure 178: *Sunflower at Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. October, 2018.*



Figure 179: *Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. October, 2018.*



Figure 180: *Wild ginger and horsetails, medicinal plants, along a trail in Cambridge, ON. October, 2018.*



Figure 181: *Himalayan Balsam, an invasive species sometime mistaken for it's native relative, jewelweed. Cambridge, ON. October, 2018.*



Figure 182: *The Grand River,  
Cambridge, ON. October, 2018.*



## *red ribbons*

November, 2018 | Selkirk, MB

*After only two months away, my dad and I returned to Winnipeg for a relative's funeral. Before flying back to Toronto, we took a trip to Selkirk, Manitoba to seek out the grave sites of distant relations at the St. Peter's Dynevor Anglican Church Cemetery.*

*Nearly there, we stopped by the river for a short break. Many cars sat parked along the shoulder of the road and well-worn paths descended towards the water's edge. It was clear to whom all the cars belonged once we reached the shore of the river. Even on a chilly November day, at least a dozen people lined the water's edge along a couple-mile stretch, fishing. My dad and I took a moment to appreciate the river. We could see the steeple to the north-east on the opposite shore.*

*We crossed the river at the Highway 4 bridge. A bright stream of red ribbons filled our view to the south.*

*We found the cemetery and spent over an hour meandering between head stones. The wind travelled briskly from the south, across an adjacent field, catching a wind chime dangling a few rows over. Scattered throughout the cemetery we found at least five graves marked with the name Stevenson — possible distant relatives through my great-great-great-great-grandfather, Jack Stephenson.*

*Returning towards the bridge, we pulled over on the shoulder. We walked to its centre, towards the red ribbons over the Red River, tied to honour those missing and murdered along its shores. Cars dashed by, the sound of them overcoming the constant roar of wind in our ears. A person stood fishing at the river's edge, at least three stories down. The dozens of ribbons whipped violently, making visible the erasure of too many Indigenous lives. Tied securely, their collective movements blended into a dance. Flowing in the wind, echoing the water below. They transformed the space of the bridge as they remembered and honoured the lives returned to the earth too soon.*

*The bridge, I later learned, is known locally as "the bridge to nowhere."<sup>253</sup>*

Figure 183: *Fishing by the Red River's edge. Selkirk, MB. November, 2018.*

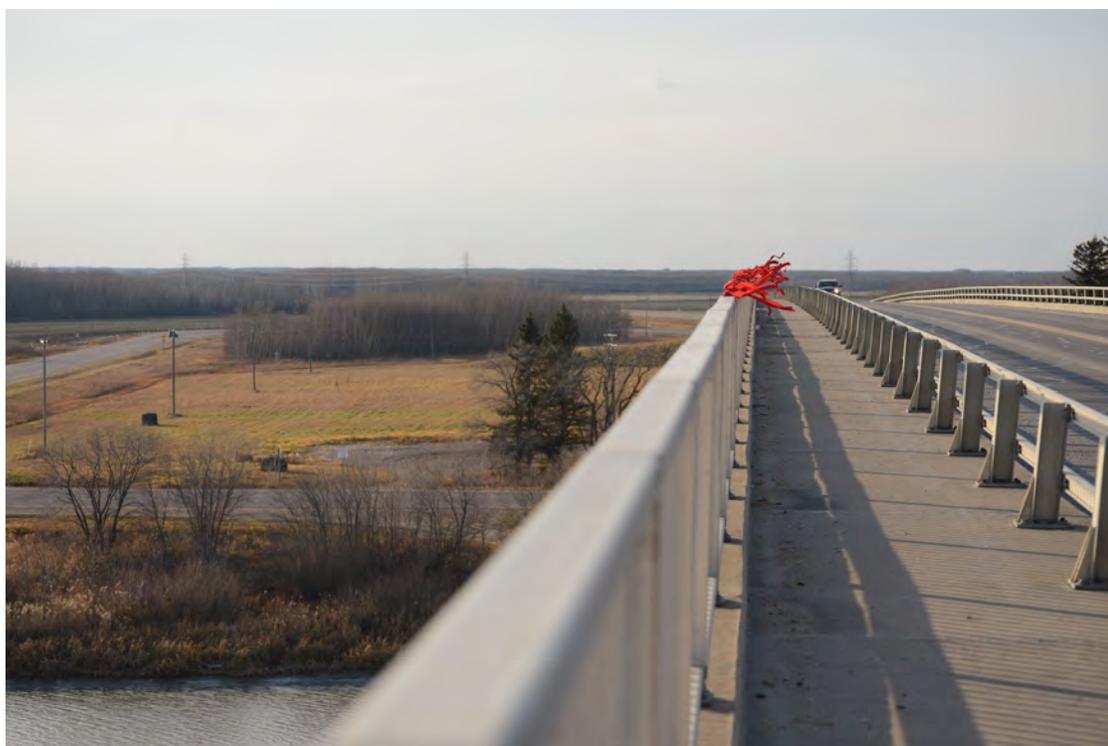


Figure 184: *Red ribbons on the Bridge to Nowhere, the Red River visible below. Selkirk, MB. November, 2018.*



Figure 185: *A red ribbon on the Bridge to Nowhere, Selkirk, MB. November, 2018.*

Figure 186: *A preening pelican on the Red River, Lockport, MB. November, 2018.*





Figure 187: *Red ribbons on the  
Bridge to Nowhere, Selkirk,  
MB. November, 2018.*



Figure 188: *Illustration: Red River*





*part four*

*in a good way*

## *nokom's house & muskrat hut*

In November 2018, I received an email from Kim Anderson that shifted the arc of this work (in a good way).

Kim proposed a meeting over coffee. We met in Cambridge and she detailed an idea — a vision — for a land-based research space at the University of Guelph (UofG) where she is an Associate Professor and holds a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Relationships. The vision came during ceremony in Saskatchewan and in conversation with Métis Elder Maria Campbell. She had a thought to recreate a kitchen-table space similar to the one at Maria's cabin, where visiting, knowledge sharing, and storytelling occurred often over tea or shared meals. Expanding on the significance of kitchen table spaces, Métis scholar Sherry Farrell Racette explains:

Eating was the least of the activities done around our kitchen table. It was primarily a creative space, a work surface, a space for meditation, and a social space... It was a female-centered space, where men, women and children worked, dreamt, and created... It was a space of action.<sup>254</sup>

Kim and I strolled around the architecture school, pausing on the back terrace to watch the river and glance at the Old Post Office. Originally built as a federal post office in 1885 by Canada's Chief Architect Thomas Fuller, the building had recently undergone extensive renovations to become a "bookless" library operated by Idea Exchange, the Cambridge public library system. Thomas Fuller was the same architect responsible for designing the buildings of Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Gazing over the water at the building of old stone and new glass, Kim and I discussed architecture's potential to reshape and subvert space, even when working with a colonial building like Fuller's post office.

By December, I was on board as Kim's research assistant to help coordinate a proposal and grant application for a "granny's cabin" in the UofG Arboretum to be called Nokom's House.<sup>255</sup>

As one of my first assignments, Kim sent me up to Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Swampy Cree Territory, in Northern Manitoba to attend a workshop on “Decolonizing Housing and Design” presented by One House Many Nations and Cree scholar Alex Wilson. The One House Many Nations Campaign began in 2015 as a project led by Idle No More to help fill the housing gap for Indigenous families in need of safe and affordable homes.<sup>256</sup> Idle No More outlines the campaign’s significance:

1. It supports Indigenous nation building by ensuring Indigenous people have continued access to their lands and resources using sustainable technology.
2. It is an exemplar of how we can reclaim resources (such as lumber) that have been taken from our lands, often without consent, to develop much needed housing and other infrastructure.
3. It is an act of restitution for ongoing government and corporate exploitation on our lands and communities.<sup>257</sup>

One House Many Nations began collaborating with the architecture firm Decentralized Design Lab to develop a system of construction for Alex Wilson’s home community, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, for which they designed a prototype that displayed at the 2017 Expo for Design, Innovation, and Technology (EDIT) in Toronto. At the Decolonizing Housing and Design workshop, a group of us — including designers, architects (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), engineers, students like myself, high school students, and community stakeholders — worked together to brainstorm a second prototype. In addition to the housing prototype, we also worked collaboratively to design a prototype for another project: *Wachusko Weesti*, or Muskrat Hut.

The Muskrat Hut is a prototype for a small and mobile utility unit, housing a washroom (complete with an incinerating toilet), storage, a small kitchen, and a sauna and shower space.<sup>258</sup> Its purpose is to support land-based activities and programming, particularly those that involve larger groups for which access to facilities is a necessity.



Figure 189: *One House  
Many Nation prototype,  
Opaskwayak Cree Nation,  
MB. December, 2018.*

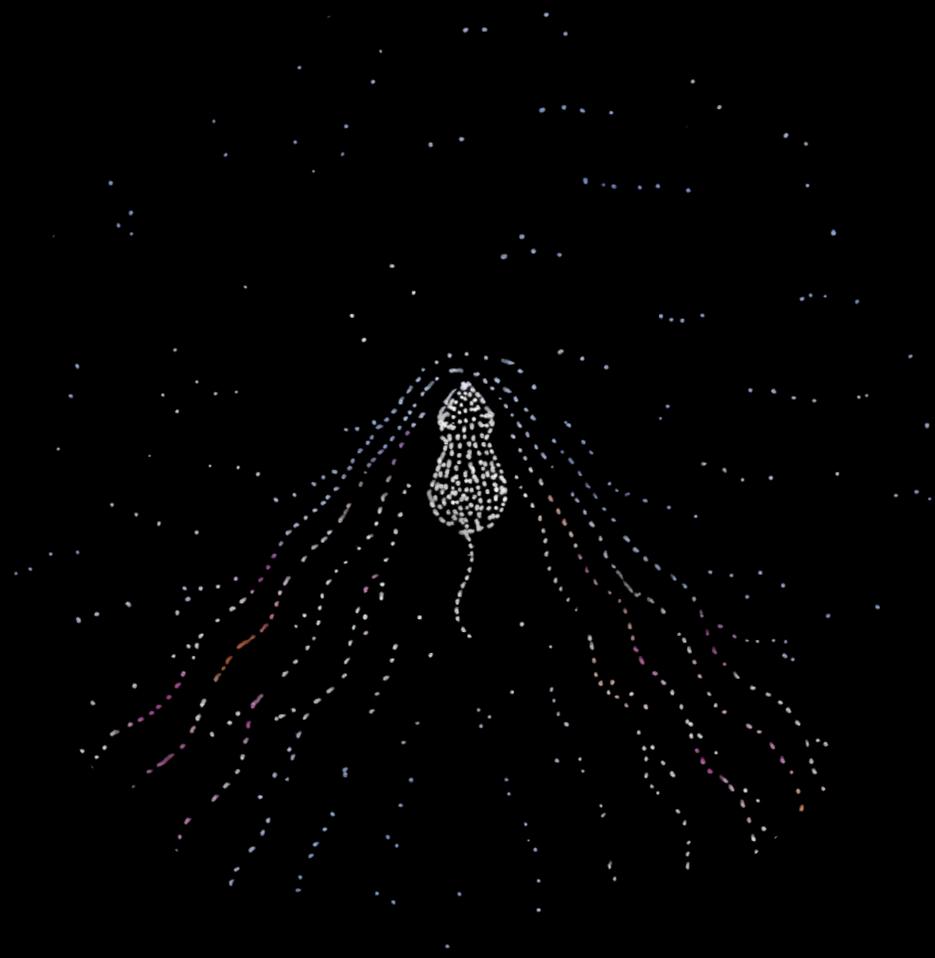
Figure 190: *A blur of red ribbons,  
crossing the Saskatchewan  
River from Opaskwayak  
Cree Nation into The Pas,  
MB. December, 2018.*



Over two days, we brainstormed ideas about what it meant to make decolonial space and architecture in these two specific instances. For the Wachusko Weesti, part of the process was imagining how we might embed the qualities and spirit of the muskrat into the project. Alex noted that the muskrat is an important agent in Cree and other Indigenous creation stories. They were also an important resource to the Cree in the region for clothing, food, and medicines.<sup>259</sup> Alex explained that the muskrats “[do] a lot of work all the time that is really important to our ecosystems and often don’t get the credit.”<sup>260</sup>

In Cree, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabeg creation stories, after a great flood, the muskrat dives deep down to the water bed to retrieve a small bit of earth in order to create a new world. The turtle offered to carry the small handful of earth on its shell, and the together, “dancing on our turtle’s back,” the animals brought a new world into being.<sup>261</sup> Drawing from the teachings of Edna Manitowabi, Leanne Simpson likens the work of Indigenous resurgence to the work of the muskrat, *Zhaashkoonh*. “[W]e each have to dive down to the bottom of the vast expanse of water and search for our own handful of earth. . . . We each need to bring that earth to the surface, to our community, with the intent of transformation.”<sup>262</sup>





## *swampy cree territory*

December, 2018 | Opaskwayak Cree Nation, MB

*With some time to spare before my evening flight, Alex Wilson invited me to join a mapping workshop that she had organized with elders from her community. My role was to record Swampy Cree place names and any stories tied to those places on chart paper. I found my seat at a round table with seven Elders, all women. They were clearly all good friends; they caught up with each other in fluent Cree as I sat listening intently. Every few seconds, they burst into a chorus of uncontrollable laughter. I could only imagine the kinds of jokes they shared. When it was time for the “official” part of the workshop to begin, the Elders spoke in English to allow me to record the names of places they knew or visited growing up in the territory, helping me to spell out and accent the Cree names. Before long, Cree would again escape from their mouths as they laughed heartily at another joke, possibly at my expense. The language danced effortlessly from their lips. I couldn’t help but smile with them. I paid attention to the distinct sounds and syllables as they filled my ears. I thought about my great-great-grandmother Emelie and her mother Sara and wondered whether or not they spoke Cree. I imagined them in the circle, speaking those same lively syllables. I imagined them laughing and I could feel the generations compress between us.*



Figure 192: *Lunar eclipse. Cambridge ON. January, 2019.*

Figure 193: *The tipi at the North House. Cambridge, ON. January, 2019.*



## *commitments*

January, 2019 | Cambridge, ON

*I stood inside the circle of a Plains tipi, put together with “character,” joked Andrew. It stood next to the North House, just down the hill from Minjimendan, and not more than a few hundred meters from the west bank of the Grand River. A ceremonial fire at the centre of our circle burned hot. The vibrant blue sky was visible through the opening above. A draft of air through the eastern doorway guided the smoke westward, occasionally finding its way into our lungs as the winds shifted. Ashes, like a gentle snowfall lit by the diffuse afternoon sunlight, swirled around inside the space of the circle, immune to the pull of gravity. They found rest in our hair and our eyelashes as our breath, visible in the cold air, blended into the smoke. Over twenty of us stood there, shoulder to shoulder, sharing the fire’s warmth.*

*We came together that weekend to collectively discuss the development of Indigenous land-based practices within the region and within programs at local institutions. I was humbled by the minds and hearts with whom I shared space, food, and conversation over those few days. Standing in the tipi on the last day of our gathering, we took turns sharing our commitments to the work. Sharing what we were willing to offer to support the work of Indigenous land-based practices in the region, the work of decolonization, and of centring Indigeneity. One by one we spoke, passing the eagle feathers clock-wise around the fire. The good energy in the space was palpable.*

*My turn came. I committed to creating space for decolonial work, to the best of my ability, within the communities that claim me.*



Figure 194: *“Private property” along a Grand River trail, Cambridge, ON. March, 2019.*



Figure 195: *White pines, Victoria Park, Cambridge, ON. March, 2019.*



Figure 196: *A killdeer. Cambridge, ON. March, 2019.*

## *ohén:ton karihwatéhkwén*

In *Kanien'kéha* (the Mohawk language), the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén* are “the words that come before all else.” The words, commonly known as the “Thanksgiving Address,” are spoken among the Haudenosaunee peoples at the beginning of group meetings. The intent is to gather the minds of everyone present in a state of gratitude.

I first learned about the Thanksgiving Address in Bill Woodworth's course, and in recent years I have witnessed it spoken at the beginning of several gatherings. In the winter of 2018, I enrolled in an Introduction to *Kanien'kéha* course taught by Nicole Bilodeau. We began every class with the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén*. A typical address offers thanks to: the people, our families, our communities; the earth, our mother; the waters; the fish and other water dwellers; the plants; the roots; the medicines; the harvested foods that sustain us — corn, beans, and squash; the fruits; the animals; the trees; the birds; the insects; the thunder beings; the four winds; our elder brother the sun; grandmother moon; the stars; and the Creator or life force behind all that sustains us. The address is often improvised; the speaker recites the words that come to them in the moment. Nicole taught us to look out at the land as a reminder. At the end of the address, in case anything was left out, the speaker asks that those present add to the Thanksgiving within their own minds. The speaker then says, “let our minds be one,” reminding the group to hold that gratitude in mind as a collective as they carry out their purpose for the day.

The *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén* teaches us to always hold our relations and the land in mind as a priority in everything that we do.



Figure 197: *Spring snowfall,  
Victoria Woods, Cambridge,  
ON, March, 2019.*



## *decolonization & land-based practice*

In recent years, and especially following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action in 2015, the term "reconciliation" has become common in mainstream dialogues involving Indigenous issues. It proposes a process of repairing relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Within my local community, many Indigenous folks have expressed that the work of reconciliation must first fall on non-Indigenous peoples. They must take responsibility for learning the truth about settler-colonialism — past and present — and reconcile with their own (perhaps unconscious) complicity in upholding systems of oppression. Indigenous peoples, and especially those who have survived Canada's systems of aggressive assimilation, are already busy continuing on their own healing journey. Addressing the topic of reconciliation, Tuck and Yang assert that "[r]econciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future."<sup>263</sup> Often, reconciliation only seeks to soothe settler guilt and does not question the ongoing structure of settler colonialism.

Many see the value in strengthening relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, particularly around treaty relationships, so that we might create new pathways towards co-existence. However, those new pathways need to acknowledge broken treaty relationships and involve action — not just discussion — around Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination over their lands. "Reconciliation rhetoric" conveniently skirts this issue.<sup>264</sup>

In response to calls for reconciliation, institutions have begun to adopt the term "Indigenization" to signal an increased inclusion of Indigenous culture and content.<sup>265</sup> Many Indigenous scholars use the term "decolonization" to describe a de-centring or dismantling of Euro-Western settler-colonial frameworks to make space for a return to Indigenous ways of being and knowing. However, without the physical decolonization of land, and return of Indigenous sovereignty over land, the term decolonization is reduced to metaphor.<sup>266</sup>

In her book “As We Have Always Done,” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reflects on her experience of settler colonialism.

I understand settler colonialism’s present structure as one that is formed and maintained by a series of *processes* for the purposes of dispossessing, that create a scaffolding within which my relationship to the state is contained. I certainly do not experience it as a historical incident that has unfortunate consequences for the present. I experience it as a gendered structure and a *series of complex and overlapping processes* that work together as a cohort to maintain the structure. The structure is one of perpetual disappearance of Indigenous bodies for perpetual territorial acquisition . . .<sup>267</sup>

In the words of Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism is a structure. Decolonization requires its deconstruction, and a transformational change in the way we relate to land. Therefore settler-colonial control over land — the settler-colonial state’s source of power — must be physically undermined for a new framework to emerge.<sup>268</sup> Following this vein, a movement for “land back” has been gaining momentum, calling for the return of land to Indigenous peoples in the name of both spatial and climate justice.<sup>269</sup> Following Indigenous land management practices that embody long-term sustainability — often planning for seven generations ahead — can offer a new pathway forward where Western approaches have fallen short.<sup>270</sup>

But Indigenous peoples are not waiting for permission from the settler state to reclaim and rebuild relationships with land. Within decolonial paradigms, many Indigenous scholars and community organizers are developing “land-based” practices and research methodologies that prioritize direct engagement the land.<sup>271</sup> Simpson writes:

Land is at the centre of Indigenous resurgence and radical decolonization. Aki, the earth, is a network of interconnected and interdependent political, social, spiritual, economic,

*in a good way*

emotional, intellectual, and physical networks including plants, animals, spiritual beings, lakes and rivers, the sun, moon, and stars, humans; and the land itself provides the context, the inspiration, and the sustenance for this resurgence.<sup>272</sup>

As spatial designers, any actions to counter the violent dispossession and ongoing environmental destruction must be centred on establishing or strengthening our relationship to the land. On relating to the land, Simpson further explains:

Within Nishnaabeg thought, the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment*. Indigenous bodies don't relate to the land by possessing or owning it or having control over it. We relate to the land through connection — generative affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear *relationship*.<sup>273</sup>

Land restitution is required to re-establish Indigenous sovereignty and wellbeing. Indigenous peoples continue to subvert settler-colonial regimes to maintain and rebuild relationships with the land, and settler-colonial foundations are unsettled by the very relationships they sought to sever.

...

At the Gathering Hearts and Minds workshop led by Andrew Judge to develop Indigenous land-based curricula, Kim Anderson said something that has stayed with me. She said that while many Indigenous folks no longer possess all of the land-based knowledge of our ancestors, it is essential to take stock of and honour the knowledge and relationships that we *do* have, however small.

I have always appreciated the sensory beauty of being in a natural landscape. My parents, and my dad especially, passed on that appreciation. However, I never really recognized landscapes in reciprocal life-sustaining terms. In my childhood I spent leisurely hours with the plants that grew

around our home. Most, I did not know by name, but I knew many of them well by their qualities: how they smelled, when they flowered, what bugs they attracted, sometimes how they tasted, the seeds they produced. I looked forward to the exploding seed pods of the impatiens that my mom planted every year — the little brown seeds splattered from their plump green vessels when burst open by a gentle squeeze. Jewelweed, an indigenous species and a relative to the impatiens, spread their seeds in a similar explosion.

While I loved spending time in nature, I had never perceived a landscape the way Elsie in Haida Gwaii looked at the land and saw the feast that it offered.<sup>274</sup> But then, I realized I *had* been taught about harvesting gifts from the land. Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện both lived with my family throughout most of my childhood and they never failed to see opportunities to harvest from the land. They had taught me by example, but perhaps I failed to listen. They both grew up in the rural landscape of northern Việt Nam, and they knew well the work of cultivating food. Wherever we would go walking, both Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện harvested dandelion leaves to cook or eat in salads. Dismissing them as weeds, I never dared to eat them. Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện would always pick raspberries along a trail or notice an apple tree. They were attuned to the gifts of the land.

Over several summers, Cô Thiện took me down the street to a house that had a mulberry tree out front. Asking permission first from the property owners, we would pick containers full of sweet mulberries. We were careful to leave plenty for the squirrels and the birds. I can still remember those days clearly, the joy of reaching up into the tree's branches to find hundreds of the purple berries and snacking on them before they made it back to our kitchen table.

I know more plants by name now compared to a few years ago. I can even identify some edible ones. But, I have realized that even in taking a walk in the woods, we engage in a form of reciprocity with every breath. I inhale the oxygen produced by the trees and plants and exhale the carbon dioxide that feeds them in return.

Figure 198: *Illustration: Mulberries & Dandelions*





Figure 199: *A mallard duck on the Sudden Tract Trail, Cambridge ON. April, 2019.*

Figure 200: *Skunk cabbage emerging from the marsh, Sudden Tract Trail, Cambridge, ON. April, 2019.*



Figure 201: *Young mayapples.*  
*Rare Charitable Research*  
*Reserve, Cambridge*  
*ON. April, 2019.*



Figure 202: *Marsh*  
*marigold.* *Rare*  
*Charitable Research*  
*Reserve, Cambridge,*  
*ON. April, 2019.*

Figure 203: *An American toad.*  
*Rare Charitable Research*  
*Reserve, Cambridge,*  
*ON. April, 2019.*



## *red squirrel*

March, 2019 | Near Fergus, Ontario

*I hit a squirrel.*

*I was driving along a rural highway with a wooded area to my left. It was a sunny day, the roads were clear, and the snow had mostly melted. A little red squirrel entered my field of vision, running quickly toward my path of travel. I had no opportunity to slow down, let alone hit the brakes. It happened too quickly. I yelled a pleading “NO!” at the same time that I felt a gentle thud from the direction of the left front wheel. I immediately looked back through the rear-view mirror. And I saw it, small and furry, lying motionless near the yellow-painted lane marker. It all happened within a fraction of a second. Angry tears started to fall down my face. Surprisingly, I had never hit anything before in my many years of driving. I knew I couldn’t blame myself. “These things happen,” I told myself. Still, I felt awful.*

*I felt terrible for directly causing the death of an animal for no good reason other than that I needed to get to where I was going, and my way of doing that was to steer a gas-powered hunk of metal and plastic on wheels. I was passing through an area that this squirrel called home, and just like that, I killed it. I couldn’t blame the squirrel for wanting to cross the road. This was one of the costs of driving.*

*I then spiraled into thinking about all the deaths that I, and we as a society, cause indirectly. Of*

*course, we don't feel the weight of those deaths because we are so removed from them. I don't often think about the squirrels and other animals whose homes are destroyed through capitalist extraction. Now, as I write this, I think about the extraction that is responsible for providing me with so many modern conveniences. The laptop beneath my fingers at this very moment; the Ikea desk that I rest my elbows on; the pounds and pounds of paper bundled into the books stacked next to me. I think about the pollution caused by the mass manufacturing of so. much. stuff. The waste that will remain after this stuff is no longer useful to me. There is a great cost to all of these possessions, these conveniences. An animal cost. A plant cost. An ecological cost. A human cost.*

*The squirrel reminded me of the series of disconnections and dissociations necessary to make life in our society conscionable.*

*I was on my way to a sweat lodge when I hit that red squirrel — my first time at a sweat. I wondered if it was a bad sign. When I arrived, I recounted my experience to a mentor and was advised to make an offering. I offered tobacco to the fire and I thanked the squirrel for its lesson.*

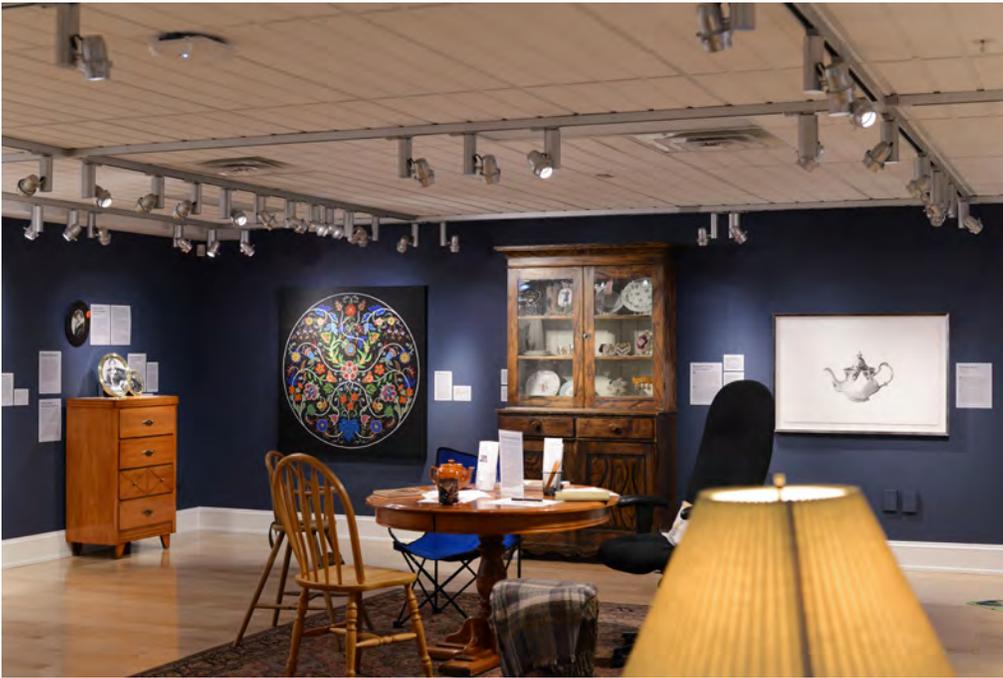


Figure 204: *The Konnón:kwe Exhibit* curated by Kim Anderson, Chelsea Brant, Brittany Luby, and Cara Wehkamp. Guelph Museums, Guelph, ON. May, 2019.

Figure 205: *Treaty of Niagara Wampum Belt, 1764. Replica wampum belt* created by Yvonne Thomas. Collection of Colinda Clyne. *Konnón:kwe Exhibit*, Guelph Museums, Guelph, ON. May, 2019.

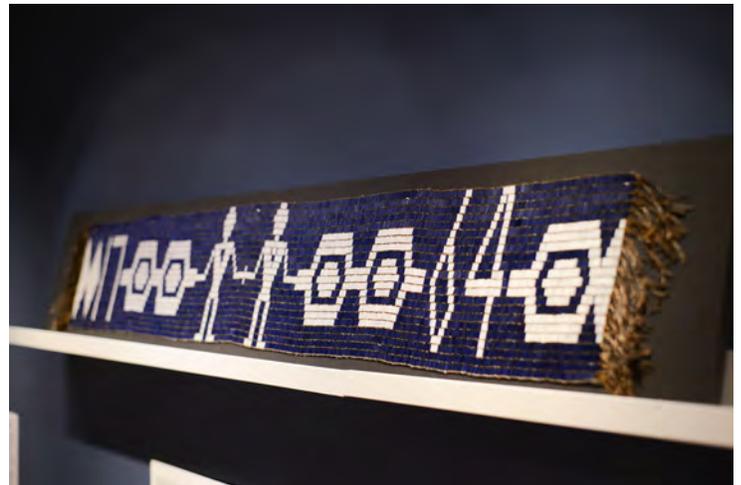


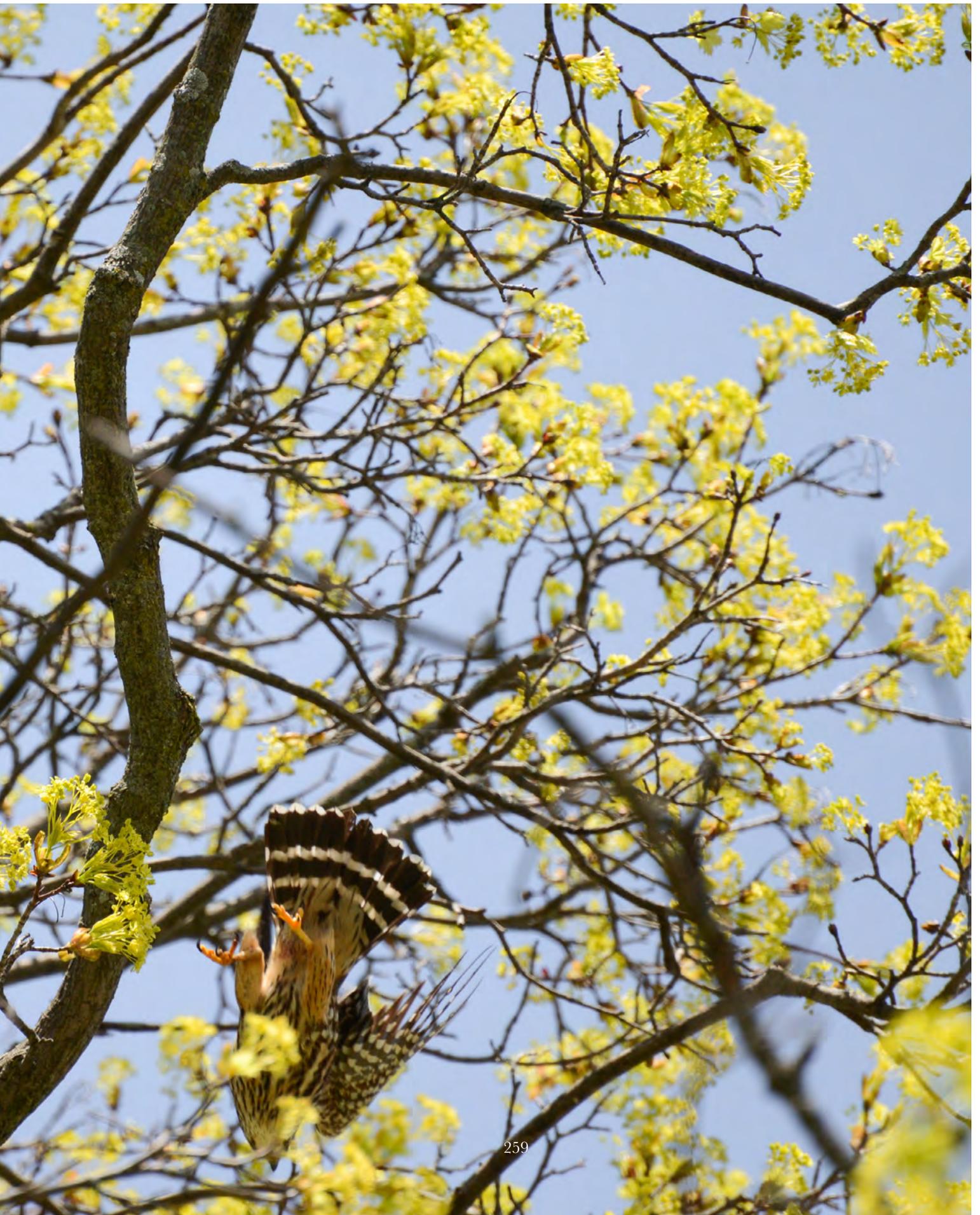
Figure 206: *The Konnón:kwe Exhibit, Guelph Museums, Guelph, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 207: *The Konnón:kwe Exhibit, Guelph Museums, Guelph, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 208: *A sharp-shinned hawk, stained from a recent meal in a maple tree outside my door. Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



*in a good way*

## *planting seeds*

At the start of the second growing season at Minjimendan, I participated in a community planting workshop led by Andrew Judge. Joined by my friend and colleague Tony, we volunteered to plant a row of sunflowers and a bed of corn and beans. One by one, we buried the seeds into the soft earth, tucking them in with a gentle pat. I volunteered to help water the garden over the next couple of months, eager to witness the seeds grow.

As spring turned to summer, we began the preliminary design phase of Nokom's House. Together with a local architecture firm, we hosted our first workshop in early July. Grandmothers, Elders, and Indigenous community members and allies all gathered with us on the land in the University of Guelph Arboretum to envision how Nokom's House might take shape. We discussed the importance of having a culturally-safe research space with access to the land and imagined the multiple ways that the space and its research might serve both the land and the community. With community voices in mind, we got to work.

My summer was busy with frequent trips to Guelph for Nokom's House and Toronto to visit with Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện. But in Cambridge, I found calm in watering the gardens at Minjimendan, seeing new life unfold.



Figure 209: *Wild strawberry flowers. Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*

Figure 210: *Planting beans. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 211: *Planting corn from the previous year's harvest. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 212: *A killdeer nest claiming a Minjimendan planting bed. Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*





Figure 213: *A nesting killdeer. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*

Figure 214: *The killdeer's broken wing display. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



## *killdeer*

June, 2019 | Minjimendan Garden, Cambridge, ON

*The low sun cast golden light as I dragged the hose to the garden and watered the little sprouts — sunflowers, corn, beans, squash. I sang quietly, self-conscious even in the presence of plants, as I soaked the earth that cradled them. Well water, drawn up from the ground only to eventually return, giving life to these young plantlings along the way.*

*The killdeer nesting in one of the planting beds noticed me and began their dance of diversion — a broken wing display to lure away predators. I paused, hoping they would calm down. Hoping they would see that I wasn't a real threat.*

*"I'm not going to hurt you," I said.*

*As the phrase left my mouth, knowing they were meaningless to this little bird who would do anything to protect their young, I began to think about whether or not, in the grand scheme of things, my words were true.*



Figure 215: *A newly hatched killdeer chick and parent. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*



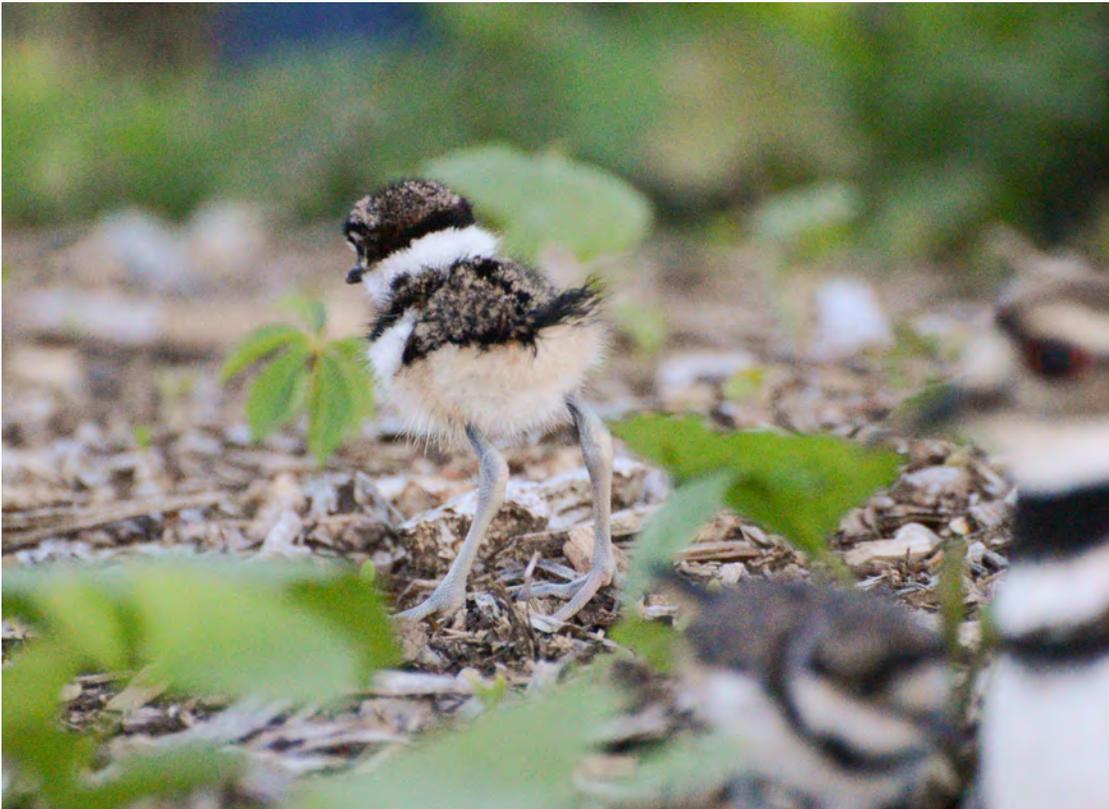


Figure 216: *A killdeer chick ventures from the nest. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 217: *A sunflower sprout. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*

Figure 218: *A waxing moon.*  
*Cambridge, ON. May, 2019.*



Figure 219: *Beans and*  
*new corn sprouts in the*  
*foreground. Minjimendan,*  
*Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*

## *(re)grounding architecture*

In the circumpolar regions of Turtle Island, the warming climate is dramatically and disproportionately altering the lifeways of the Inuit and northern First Nations. Communities in the Far North have been experiencing the tangible effects of climate change for decades. Inuit leader and activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier describes thinning and receding ice and changes in snow cover and texture, affecting the movement of people and animals on the land, as well as the ability to hunt.<sup>275</sup> Animals, observably less plentiful, have been moving further north away from communities while new species have begun to arrive from the south.<sup>276</sup> Below the surface of the ground, permafrost melt has caused buildings to shift and sink.<sup>277</sup> “More and more communities were watching their roads buckle, their airstrips heave and split, and their rail lines twist and sink.”<sup>278</sup> The ground has also become more porous; “whole lakes were disappearing into the earth and rivers were drying to a trickle.”<sup>279</sup> Climate change has impacted Indigenous relationships to land in life-shattering ways.

Considering the practice of architecture within the context of climate change and ecocide, it is important to understand that the change to our environment is the result of unbridled extractive and industrial development that is directly linked to the processes of European colonialism.<sup>280</sup>

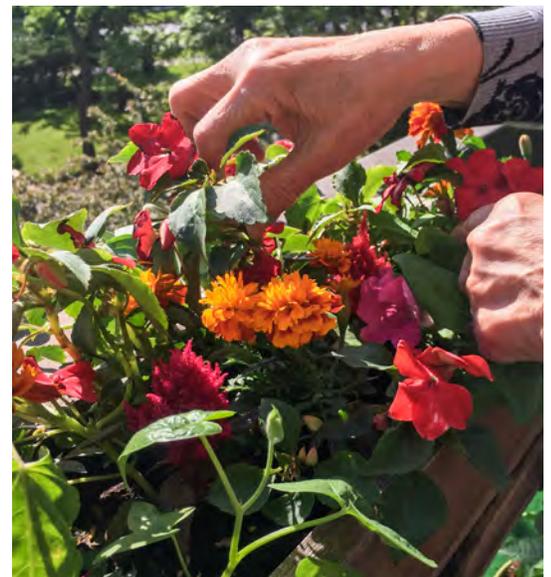
In 2016, a working group gathered to propose the adoption of the Anthropocene, or the “age of humans,” to define our current geological epoch characterized by the “detritus, movement, and actions of humans.”<sup>281</sup> Part of defining this new epoch involves determining its start date, or to use the railroad related moniker, its “golden spike.” The working group suggested a start date in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, because the changes to the land become legible in geological strata at this time. However, scholars Zoe Todd and Heather Davis propose that the golden spike be located at the beginning of the colonial era in 1610 as it “names the problem of colonialism as responsible for [the] contemporary environmental crisis.”<sup>282</sup> They assert that doing so provides the opportunity to challenge the universalizing and Eurocentric nature of the Anthropocene as a concept

Figure 220: *Climbing bean sprouts. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*



Figure 221: *Sunflowers. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*

Figure 222: *Bà Ngoai tending to her garden. Toronto, ON. June, 2019.*



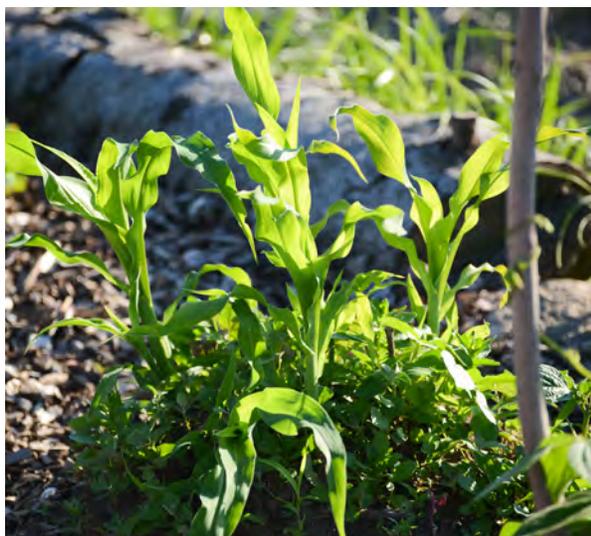


Figure 223: *Corn.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. June, 2019.*



Figure 224: *Sweetgrass.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. June, 2019.*



Figure 225: *Young tobacco.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. June, 2019.*

that currently implicates all humans evenly in ecocide and fails to address the unequal power relations at play.<sup>283</sup> Todd and Davis further argue that:

By linking the Anthropocene with colonization, it draws attention to the violence at its core, and calls for the consideration of Indigenous philosophies and processes of Indigenous self-governance as a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene.<sup>284</sup>

Todd and Davis trace the threads that run through the colonial era's exploitative logics, to "economic growth, the impacts of globalized trade, and our current reliance on fossil fuels."<sup>285</sup> It becomes clear that addressing the Anthropocene and climate crisis calls for Indigenous engagement as well as a decolonial approach. By tying the Anthropocene to colonialism in their definition, Todd and Davis offer a shift in the narrative of the Anthropocene, and in turn, a shift in our understandings and potential response.

In the realm of architecture, we have a similar opportunity to shift the narrative to re-centre its relationship to the land.

Architectural practice is inherently land-based. Buildings, typically, are sited with a direct physical connection to the earth. They are composed of materials sourced from the land, processed to varying degrees of recognition. They circulate energy generated from the combustion of earthly materials, or through the harnessing of natural forces. Streams of water flow through floors and walls, feeding our taps, and draining our waste. Snaking bundles of copper provide us with power. Buildings exist in a continuum with land.

Within decolonial and land-based frameworks we, as conductors of material movement, are accountable to the land that we build *on* and *from*. Defining architecture as a land-based practice centres our relationship

with the land in the processes of design and construction. It opens new possibilities for how we might create transformational change and build in reciprocity with the land.<sup>286</sup>

In her recent book, “Reciprocal Landscapes: Stories of Material Movements,” landscape architect and Waterloo Architecture instructor Jane Hutton illustrates the “social, political, and ecological entanglements” of materials by tracing their movements from sites of extraction to their installation in urban landscapes.<sup>287</sup> Considering the earthly origins of the materials we specify for construction, their performance in building form, as well as their eventual return to the earth, we can begin to observe their impacts on the “invisible landscapes” where they are sourced, and their participation in systems of violence.

Architects have the opportunity and — given our current climate — the *responsibility*, to refuse and advocate against the systems of extraction that continue to perpetuate genocide and ecocide. By demanding and designing for a divestment in colonial extraction and developing methods of material reduction, recycling, and reuse, we begin to engage in a form of decolonization that has a tangible impact on the ground.

Holding the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén in mind, an understanding of the land-based nature of architectural practice also provides the opportunity to grow a framework of gratitude. Potawatomi scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer muses on our awareness of material movements:

What would it be like, I wondered, to live with that heightened sensitivity to the lives given for ours? To consider the tree in the Kleenex, the algae in the toothpaste, the oaks in the floor, the grapes in the wine; to follow back the thread of life in everything and pay it respect? Once you start, it’s hard to stop, and you begin to feel yourself awash in gifts.<sup>288</sup>

Figure 226: *Red-winged blackbird. Mijimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*

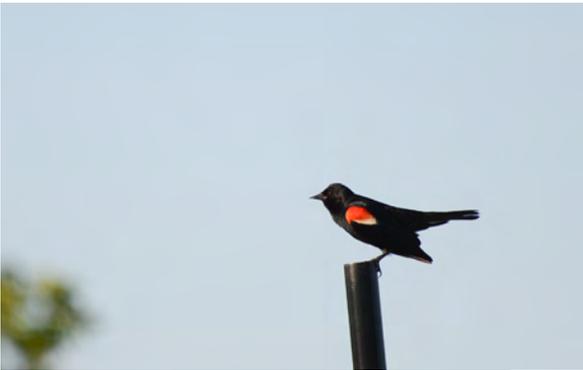


Figure 227: *Bumblebee. Mijimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*



Figure 228: *Mijimendan, Cambridge, ON. June, 2019.*



Figure 229: *A monarch caterpillar feasting on milkweed near our proposed Nokom's House site. University of Guelph (UofG) Arboretum, Guelph, ON. July, 2019.*



Figure 230: *Monarchs and milkweed. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. July, 2019.*



Figure 231: *Honeybee and milkweed. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. July, 2019.*

Figure 232: *Resting moths. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. July, 2019.*

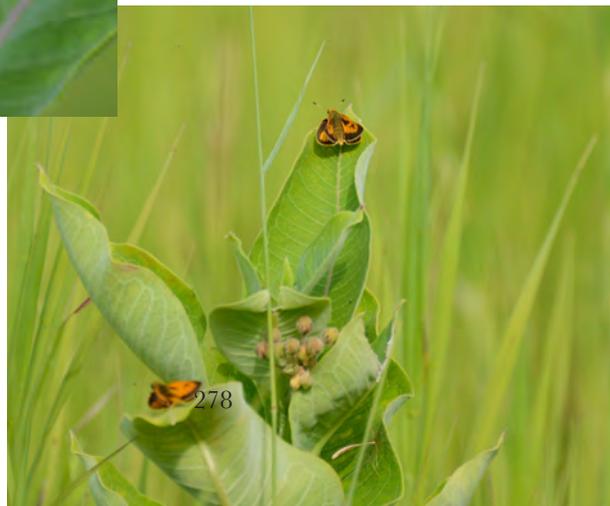




Figure 233: *Blue vervain*.  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. August, 2019.*



Figure 234: *Bean flower*  
*buds. Minjimendan,*  
*Cambridge, ON.*  
*August, 2019.*



Figure 235: *Blue corn*.  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. August, 2019.*



Figure 236: *Tobacco flower.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. August, 2019.*



## *crickets*

August, 2019 | Cambridge, ON

*I sat on the balcony of my apartment with a small bowl of ice cream: chocolate chip cookie dough and coffee mixed together. The sun was already below the trees on the horizon, creating a warm and colourful halo of light in the clear sky to the west. I watched as a teenager hurried by below on a skateboard, as cars passed, and as a neighbour walked their dog — business as usual. A family of sharp-shinned hawks had been calling across a web formed by my neighbours' trees all summer. But I didn't hear their kak-kak-kak call tonight. Maybe they've left for the season. A robin flew up to the maple canopy above me, singing a brief song as it hopped between perches. I listened. Only then did I also hear something else. I noticed the chorus of crickets that surrounded me — a whole ten minutes into my ice cream break on the porch. What time of evening did they usually start singing? Or do they sing all day? I can't honestly say that I've ever kept track. The crickets had been singing — rubbing their little wings together — the entire time, but only then was I really listening. Only then did I tune-in.*



Figure 237: *A shy bean.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. August, 2019.*



Figure 238: *A sunflower preparing*  
*to bloom. Minjimendan,*  
*Cambridge, ON. August, 2019.*



Figure 239: *A strawberry plant.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. August, 2019.*

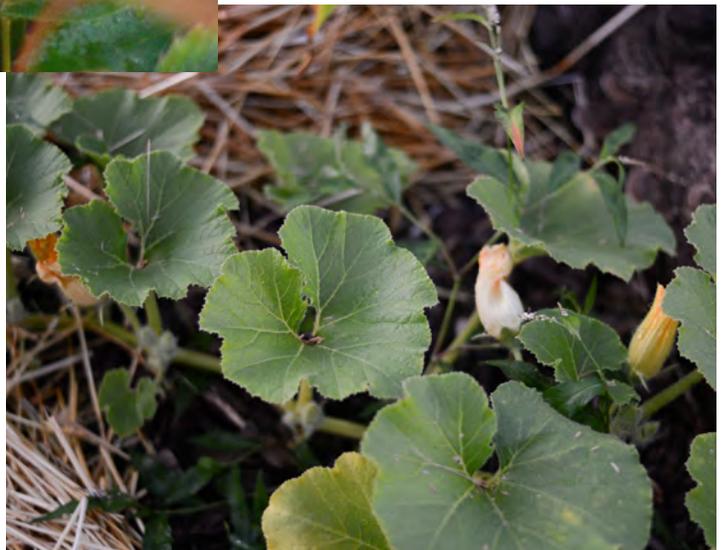


Figure 240: *Squash blossoms.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge*  
*ON. August, 2019.*



Figure 241: *A harvest ceremony as part of the Common Waters Exhibition, organized collaboratively between Waterloo Architecture's student initiative BRIDGE and Idea Exchange. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. September, 2019.*

Figure 242: *Raspberries.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge*  
*ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 243: *Potato flowers.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge*  
*ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 244: *Corn from the*  
*previous year's harvest,*  
*passed around at the Common*  
*Waters Harvest Ceremony.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. September, 2019.*

Figure 245: *Strawberry beans*  
*from the previous year's harvest.*  
*Minjimendan, Cambridge,*  
*ON. September, 2019.*





Figure 246: *Gathering in the Stone, Clay and Fire clearing at the Harvest Ceremony. Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 247: *Bill Woodworth carrying a Kaswentha (Two Row Wampum Belt) on the grounds of his Conceptual Longhouse at the Harvest Ceremony. Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Cambridge, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 248: *The Harvest Moon, low on the horizon. Cambridge, ON. September, 2019.*

Figure 249: *Illustration: Minjimendan*



## *grandview school for girls*

October, 2019 | Cambridge, ON

*When I drive between Cambridge and Toronto, I pass by the intersection of Hespeler and Isherwood. It's normal for the box-stored and strip-malled Hespeler Rd. to become a blur of parking lots and store signs. But every time I pass this particular spot, benign as it is, I come to a specific awareness of place. A police station sits at the south-west corner of the intersection. Every time I drive by, without fail, I become acutely aware of my speedometer, careful that I'm not driving too fast in case a cop happens to be pulling out of the station.*

*Just earlier this week, if you had asked me if I was familiar with the intersection, that's the thought that would have come to mind. It was the place where I become self-conscious about driving regulations. That was before I learned about the Grandview Training School for Girls.*

*The Ontario Training School for Girls - Galt, later renamed the Grandview Training School for Girls, was a "school" for girls aged 9 to 18, considered delinquent and incorrigible.<sup>289</sup> Part of a larger provincial system of Training Schools that ultimately served as jails for children,<sup>290</sup> the Galt school accepted roughly 120 girls a year and was operational between 1933 and 1976,<sup>291</sup> except for a period during World War II.<sup>292</sup> In its day, the facility was located just west of where the Waterloo Regional Police Station now stands at Hespeler and Isherwood. The grounds included*

*a central concrete square surrounded by five brick buildings on 72 acres of pastoral land.<sup>293</sup> Girls were admitted to the school and became wards of the province after they were deemed “unmanageable” under the Juvenile Delinquents Act for infractions such as running away from home, truancy, attempting suicide, petty crimes, drug use, and “sexual immorality.”<sup>294</sup> Many of the children were victims of abuse before they were admitted to the school.<sup>295</sup> The school closed in 1976 due to allegations of sexual and physical abuse perpetrated by the school’s staff.<sup>296</sup>*

*The extent of the horrors that took place at the school was not publicly known until 1991 when two women came forward with their experiences.<sup>297</sup> A group of survivors formed the Grandview Survivor’s Support Group and eventually included over 300 members that had suffered emotional, physical, and sexual abuse at the school.<sup>298</sup> The Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police began to formally investigate the abuse at the school in 1991, and the school’s survivors reached a compensation agreement with the Province of Ontario in 1994.<sup>299</sup>*

*The provincial Training School system operated within similar ideologies as the Indian Residential Schools, intending to force children considered maladjusted to conform to the expectations of “civilized” society. Indigenous girls were incarcerated at the Galt school as*

*in a good way*

*well.<sup>300</sup> The Grandview Training School was included on a list of institutions that were requested to be added to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement; the federal government rejected the request because it was “provincially operated.”<sup>301</sup>*

*The Grandview Training School building complex was eventually torn down, and a residential subdivision now sits in its place — a dark history erased from Cambridge’s consciousness.*



Figure 250: *A pandorus sphinx* moth caterpillar. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.

Figure 251: *Asters and golden rod.* UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.

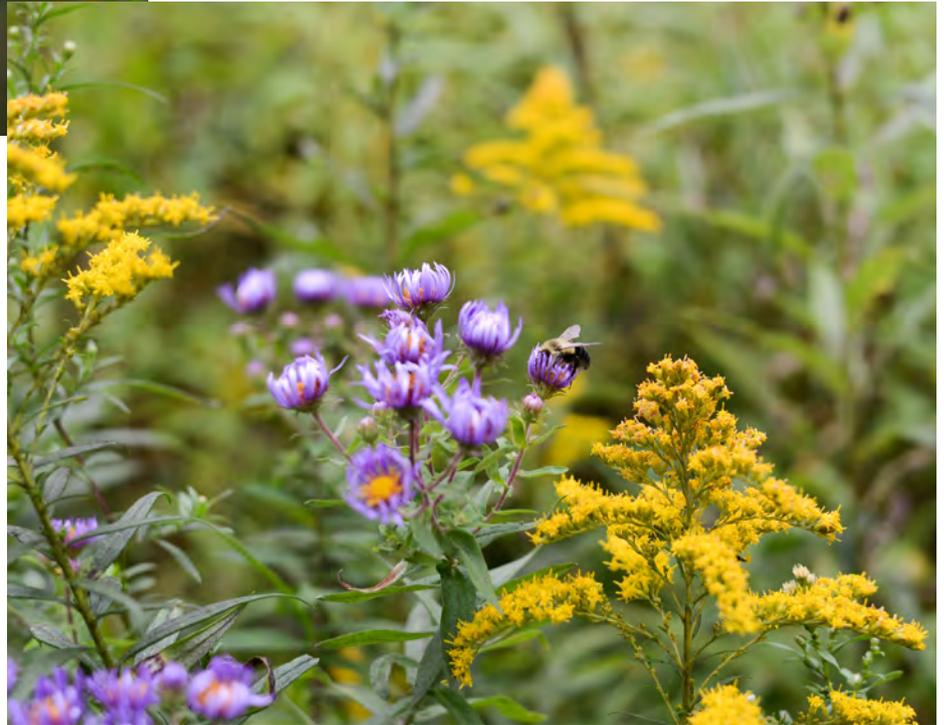


Figure 252: *Nanny berries,* edible when ripe. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.



Figure 253: *Yellow garden spider*. *UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 254: *Soft pine needles*. *UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 255: *Invasive buckthorn*. *UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*

Figure 256: *A black walnut sapling, likely planted by a squirrel. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 257: *Milkweed tussock moth caterpillar. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*



Figure 258: *A wood frog. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. September, 2019.*

*in a good way*

## *shifting narratives*

Learning about the Grandview School for Girls shifted my perceptions of Cambridge, a place I have called home for the better part of ten years. I gained a new awareness of the history of Ontario's Training School System that shared close similarities with the Indian Residential School System. Both systems relied on the work of architects.

In a similar but less shocking moment of revelation, I was recently thinking about Frame Lake in Yellowknife. Realizing that I knew very little about the history or significance of the lake, I did a quick search only to discover a sobering truth. The lake was once a fishing site for the Dene, but due to pollution from the Giant Gold Mine and subsequent urban development, the waters of Frame Lake have not supported fish life for five decades.<sup>302</sup> "Silence," as it turns out, describes its waters year-round.

Moments like this — of revelation, interconnection, and understanding — have continually shifted and recalibrated my perspectives at every stage of this work, and the journey continues.



Figure 259: *A hickory tussock moth caterpillar on a potato plant. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. October, 2019.*

Figure 260: *Tobacco seed pods. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. October, 2019.*



Figure 261: *Strawberry beans. Minjimendan, Cambridge, ON. October, 2019.*

Figure 262: *Walking towards the proposed Nokom's House site to review the schematic design plan. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. November, 2019.*

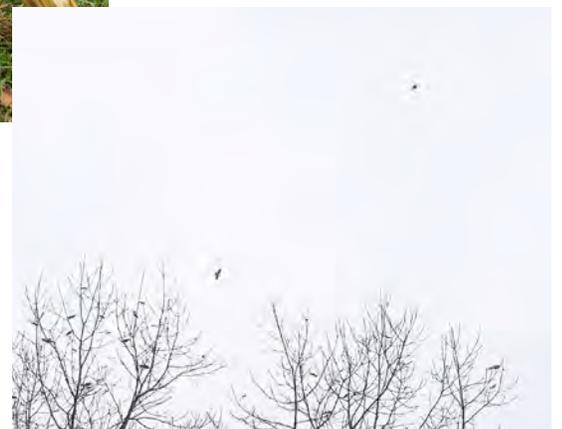


Figure 263: *Milkweed seed pods. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. November, 2019.*



Figure 264: *Gathering around the proposed future site of the Nokom's House kitchen table, marked by a circle of corn. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. November, 2019.*

Figure 265: *Red-tailed hawks flying overhead. UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON. November, 2019.*



## *around the kitchen table*

November, 2019 | UofG Arboretum, Guelph, ON

*Almost a year after I began working on Nokom's House, in collaboration with core researchers Kim Anderson, Sheri Longboat, and Brittany Luby, we gathered for a second community design workshop in the University of Guelph Arboretum. It was a cold November day, but we bundled up and together with the architects, we drew the proposed Nokom's House floorplan onto the earth with pegs and string in the clearing surrounded by oak trees. With a large kitchen planned for the heart of the space, we traced its location with a circle of corn cobs.*

*Following the lines of the building's footprint, we led our community through the eastern door. The architects walked us through their proposal, and with lawn chairs and blankets, we encircled the ring of corn. I looked around the circle at all the people who came out to join us, in spite of the cold: Elders and Grandmothers, community leaders, scholars, allies, friends. Like so many other times over the past years, I felt overcome with gratitude and love for all the learning, circumstances, and relationships that led to that precise moment, gathered together around our kitchen table.*

*Just as we concluded our conversation, three red-tailed hawks circled overhead.*

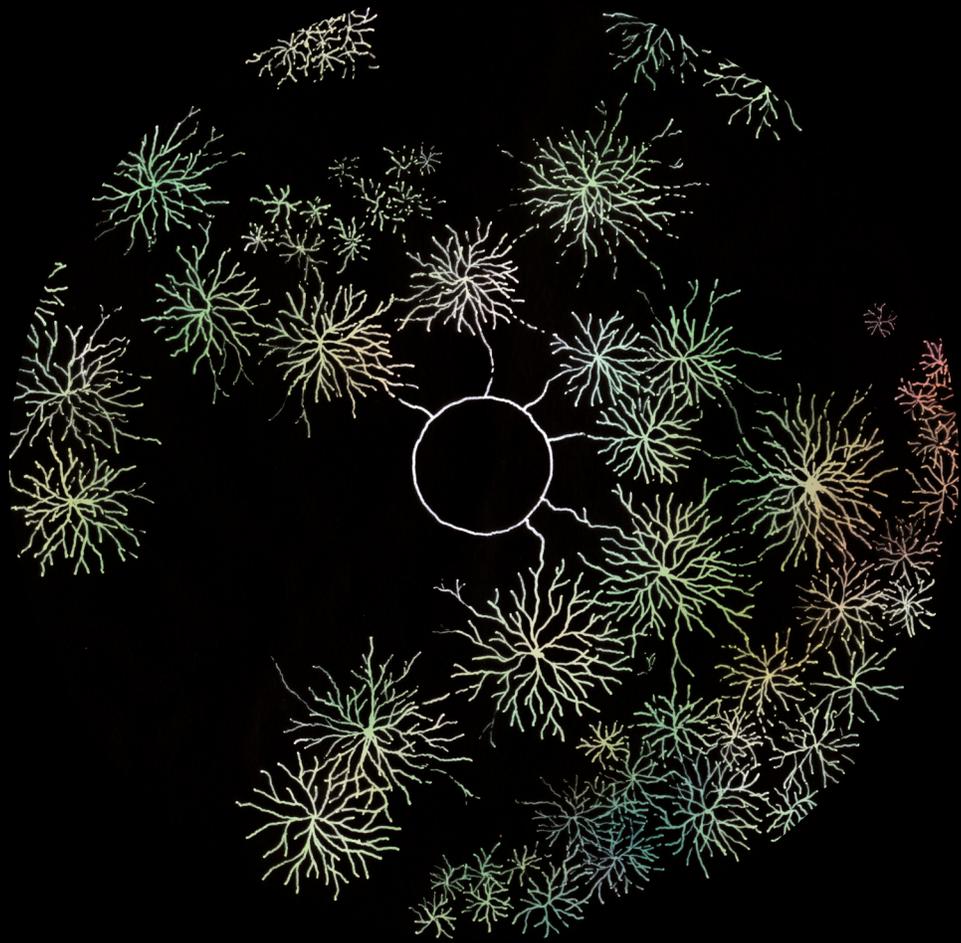


Figure 266: *Illustration of the proposed University of Guelph Nokom's House Land-Based Research Lab. Schematic building design and 3D base model by J.L.Richards and Associates Limited.*

Figure 267: *Illustration of the proposed interior of University of Guelph Nokom's House Land-Based Research Lab. Schematic building design and 3D base model by J.L.Richards and Associates Limited.*



Figure 268: *Illustration: The Kitchen Table*





*closing*



Figure 269: *Maple sap drips from a spile into a bucket. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. March, 2020.*



## *the sugar bush*

March, 2019 | Kitchener, ON

*On the Maple Sugar Moon, I drove to a local sugar bush with two fellow helpers, Tony and Wes. The sun already low in the sky, we found Dave and Garrison, two local Indigenous land-based organizers, hard at work in a small clearing at the centre of the bush. They were boiling away the maple sap in a large trough heated by a wood fire and they put us to work. Tracing a web between sugar maples, we consolidated the sap collected from each spile into a larger bucket. Having overfilled my bucket, I broke a sweat walking over the uneven and melting snow, trying not to spill as I found my footing back toward the clearing. With three of us collecting sap simultaneously, it wasn't too long before we emptied every bucket into a massive storage tank, ready for boiling. After we finished, Garrison led us on a short walk through the woods. The sugar maple trees, oaks, and a few pines towered over us across the rolling forest floor. Beech tree leaves, still clinging to their stems rustled almost imperceptibly. A running squirrel broke the silence.*

*Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that it was the squirrels that led the Potawatomi to produce maple sugar.<sup>303</sup> She explains that in early spring, after their food stores ran out, the squirrels would gnaw on sugar maple branches to sustain them until new food sources re-emerged. I never thought to thank the squirrels for the maple syrup I so often enjoy.*



Figure 270: *The White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. March, 2020.*

Figure 271: *Collecting maple sap. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. March, 2020.*





Figure 272: *Boiling sap over a wood fire. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. Maple Sugar Moon, 2020.*

Figure 273: *Reducing sap over a wood fire. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. Maple Sugar Moon, 2020.*



Figure 274: *Pouring a jar of finished maple syrup. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. Maple Sugar Moon, 2020.*

Figure 275: *The maple canopy overhead. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. Maple Sugar Moon, 2020.*



*It takes approximately forty gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup. A standard five-gallon pail of sap, gifted by a constellation of trees and lugged across the uneven ground, boils for about twelve hours over burning wood. Excess water returns to the air, wood burns to ash, and the sap reduces to the volume of an average water bottle. The process is strenuous and requires patience and care, but the reward is sweet.*

Figure 276: *Illustration: The Sugar Bush*





Figure 277: *Wild leeks and trout lilies. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*

Figure 278: *Bloodroot. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*



Figure 279: *Red trillium. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*



Figure 280: *Blue cohosh*.  
*White Owl Sugar Bush,*  
*Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*



Figure 281: *White trillium*.  
*White Owl Sugar Bush,*  
*Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*



Figure 282: *A raccoon*.  
*White Owl Sugar Bush,*  
*Kitchener, ON. April, 2020.*



Figure 283: *Trout lilies*  
*among wild leeks. White*  
*Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener,*  
*ON. April, 2020.*



By actively engaging and reflecting on the context that surrounds me — a complex web of continuous creation — I have learned and unlearned more in these past few years than I could have ever imagined.

Marsi, cảm ơn, thank you, to all my relations. And to you, the reader, for joining me.



Figure 284: *Red trillium.*  
*White Owl Sugar Bush,*  
*Kitchener, ON. May, 2020.*

Figure 285: *A listening*  
*chipmunk. White Owl*  
*Sugar Bush, Kitchener,*  
*ON. May, 2020.*



Figure 286: *Fiddle heads.*  
*White Owl Sugar Bush,*  
*Kitchener, ON. May, 2020.*

Figure 287: *Mayapples and trillium.*  
*White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON, May, 2020.*



Figure 288: *Bloodroot leaves.*  
*White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON, May, 2020.*



Figure 289: *Maple buds find sunlight. White Owl Sugar Bush, Kitchener, ON. May, 2020.*





## *the red rivers*

April, 2020

*Today I realized that the primary river that flows through the region where both Bà Ngoại and Cô Thiện grew up is called the Sông Hồng, or in English, the Red River.*

*Cô Thiện used to have me sing the folk song “Red River Valley” to her.*

*“From this valley, they say you are going.  
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,  
For they say you are taking the sunshine  
That has brightened our pathway a while.*

*Come and sit by my side if you love me,  
do not hasten to bid me adieu.  
Just remember the Red River Valley,  
and the one that has loved you so true.”*

*The song sometimes reminded me of grandma Eileen and grandpa Terry, Jos and Ella, and Emelie and Abraham. I realize now that maybe Cô Thiện held her own homeland in mind.*

*The song’s sadness took on new meaning when Cô Thiện left us last December.  
But maybe now, it will also remind me that I stand, grounded, where the Red Rivers meet.*







## notes

### FRONT MATTER

- 1 Refer to Note 8.
- 2 See <http://www.trc.ca/resources.html>
- 3 See <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/contact/>
- 4 I separate refugee from settler only to acknowledge that the refugee relationship with land is distinct from the motives of early white settlers; however, I acknowledge that all immigrants to Canada are complicit in the settler-colonial project. For more discussion, see Malissa Phung, “Are People of Colour Settlers Too?” In *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*, edited by Ashok Mathur, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, 289–98, (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011).
- 5 Alex Wilson, “Skirting the Issues,” In *Keetsahnak/Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, eds. Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt (The University of Alberta Press, 2018), 167.
- 6 Naomi Klein, “Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More’s Leanne Simpson,” *Yés! Magazine*, March 6, 2013, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2013/03/06/dancing-the-world-into-being-a-conversation-with-idle-no-more-leanne-simpson/>
- 7 Wilson, “Skirting the Issues,” 167.
- 8 This acronym stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus. I use this acronym over others as it is the one used by the Nation Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, “Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary of the Final Report” (2019), <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- 9 For a useful resource on Indigenous terminology see Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Brush Education Inc., 2018).
- 10 For more information about Indigenous Storywork as research methodology, see Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); and Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2003).
- 11 See Mishuana Goeman, “(Re)Mapping Indigenous Presence on the Land in Native Women’s Literature,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 15, 2008): 295–302. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0011>; Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- 12 See Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); and Wendy Makoons Geniusz, *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 1-12.

## OPENING

- 13 I first heard the creation story told to me orally in Bill Woodworth's class. I later listened to a version of the story again in Part I of Thomas King's 2003 Massey Lectures "The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative." The lectures can be heard online: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2003-cbc-massey-lectures-the-truth-about-stories-a-native-narrative-1.2946870> or read on paper: Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2003) 10-20. I have encountered other versions of the creation story in Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 3-10.; and Tom (Sakokweniŋkwaw) Porter, *And Grandma Said... Iroquois Teachings as Passed Down Through the Oral Tradition* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2008), 40-90.
- 14 Duncan Campbell Scott quoted in Andrew Woolford, "Ontological Destruction: Genocide and Canadian Aboriginal Peoples," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 4, no. 1 (2009): 92.

## PART ONE

- 15 For an account of colonial dispossession in what is now Port Alberni, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002) xv-xxxii.
- 16  $\sim 6000 \text{ km} / \sim 40000 \text{ km (earth's circumference)} = 0.15$ ;  $0.15 \times 360 \text{ degrees} = 54 \text{ degrees}$ .
- 17 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action* (2015), [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)
- 18 It is worth noting the Via Rail tracks do not follow the same path as the Canadian Pacific Railway; however, they are an expansion of the same colonial system.
- 19 Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, *The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company Ltd., 2017), 60.
- 20 James H. Marsh, "Railway History," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified March 25, 2009, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/railway-history>
- 21 Marsh, "Railway History."
- 22 John Boyko, "Intercolonial Railway," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified March 27, 2017, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/intercolonial-railway>
- 23 Marsh, "Railway History."
- 24 Marsh, "Railway History."
- 25 Shirlee Anne Smith, "Rupert's Land," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified October 8, 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ruperts-land>

- 26 Smith, "Rupert's Land."
- 27 For more insight on the spatial significance of this encounter see David Fortin, Jason Surkan, and Danielle Kastelein, "Métis Domestic Thresholds and the Politics of Imposed Privacy," in *Our Voices: Indigeneity and Architecture*, eds. Rebecca Kiddle, luugigyoo patrick stewart, and Kevin O'Brien (ORO Editions, 2018), 77-78.
- 28 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: The Commission, 1996), 148. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>
- 29 The Royal Commission, *Volume 1*, 148-149; Tracey Lindberg, "The Doctrine of Discovery in Canada," in *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112-113.
- 30 Chelsea Vowel, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2016) 254-255.
- 31 Omer Lavallé, "Canadian Pacific Railway," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified January 24, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-pacific-railway>
- 32 "Working Conditions," *The Ties That Bind*, accessed April 15, 2020, <http://www.mhso.ca/tiesthatbind/WorkingConditions.php#>
- 33 Erin Sylvester, "Now and Then: Chinese Railroad Workers Memorial" *Torontoist*, last modified April 28, 2016. <https://torontoist.com/2016/04/now-and-then-chinese-railroad-workers/>; The Canadian government implemented a head tax on Chinese immigrants in 1885 following the completion of the railway to discourage Chinese settlement in Canada. A law passed in 1923 — known today as the Chinese Exclusion Act — that banned practically all Chinese immigration and was not repealed until 1947 after Canada became a signatory to the United Nations Charter of Human Rights. See Arlene Chan, "Chinese Immigration Act," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified March 7, 2017, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-immigration-act>
- 34 Marsh, "Railway History."
- 35 "Immigration and Settlements," Canada Pacific Railway, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://cpconnectingcanada.ca/#immigration-settlements>
- 36 "150 years of immigration in Canada," Statistics Canada, last modified May 17, 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016006-eng.htm>
- 37 James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 164.
- 38 Daschuk, *Clearing*, 164.
- 39 Daschuk, *Clearing*, 164.
- 40 Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini eds. *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2016), 78, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315544816>
- 41 "A - English to S. Haida," Skidegate Haida Language - Xaayda Kíl, last modified January 5, 2014, <https://xaayda-kil.blogspot.com/>
- 42 Elsie now runs in Inn in Massett and hosts cultural tours <https://gwaiinaayislandhouse.com/>

- 43 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>
- 44 “Reconciliation Pole: Honouring a Time Before, During and After Canada’s Indian Residential Schools,” The University of British Columbia Indigenous Portal, accessed March 20, 2020, [https://indigenous.ubc.ca/files/2017/10/UBC\\_Plaque\\_2017-Reconciliation\\_Pole-8-1.pdf](https://indigenous.ubc.ca/files/2017/10/UBC_Plaque_2017-Reconciliation_Pole-8-1.pdf)
- 45 Leah Sandals, “A Conversation with the Artist behind UBC’s Reconciliation Pole,” *Canadian Art*, last modified April 4, 2017, <https://canadianart.ca/news/james-hart-ubc-reconciliation-pole/>
- 46 Sandals, “A Conversation.”
- 47 “Reconciliation Pole.”
- 48 “Reconciliation Pole.”
- 49 Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (ARP Books, 2011), 49-50.
- 50 Wendy Makoons Geniusz, *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 9.
- 51 Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 49.
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## **PART TWO**

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