Introduction: Transcript of Editors' Video Conversation

Jenn Cole and Melissa Poll

Jenn Cole:
Should we introduce ourselves and say who we are?

Melissa Poll:
Yes, you go first, please.

Jenn:
Okay. Aanii, boozhoo, nice to see you, Melissa. I'm Jenn Cole and I'm mixed ancestry Algonquin from Kiji Sibi territory, which is a big, big territory of the Ottawa River watershed. My grandparents are, well, I'm not sure exactly where they're from, but at least my grandparents and my great-grandparents settled around Mattawa and Bissetts Creek. Before that, I think we might've been more mobile. And that's something I'm interested in learning more about . . . our migration routes and our camps here. I would imagine that they had sugar camps and fish camps and stuff like that. So yeah. What else to say? I'm in Michi Saagiig territory. You can hear traffic. Some of those folks might be Michi Saagiig. I don't know. Where I'm situated right now actually is like right between the River Otonabee, which is the river that bubbles like a beating heart, and the Canal Otonabee where she's been shunted off for the Trent Severn lift lock system. So, it's like being held between two aspects of her body in a way. And in Michi Saagiig territory, there's lots of cedar, some cedar over there and yeah, and it smells like a death fungus, and I've never met that relative before. I don't know how I feel about them, but I accidentally grew something in one of my child's toys. That's enough about me for now.

Melissa:
I'm Melissa Poll (pronounced Paul). I sometimes wish it was "Poll" so we could be Cole and Poll but it's Poll (pronounced Paul). I'm a settler and I'm currently on the land that historically was inhabited by the Kaw, the Osage, and the Pawnee. And now it's home to the Iowa, Kickapoo, Prairie Band Potawatomi, and the Sac and Fox Nations. I was born in the country colonially named Canada and grew up on Treaty 1 territory. I am here now because my partner works at Kansas State University which is a land grant university or what is known in other circles as a "land grab" university. So, it's a university that lives off stolen Indigenous land. I'm negotiating all of that. What it means to be here, what it means to respect this land, to support this land, to live, you know, in a sustainable fashion.

You've made me think a lot about the water here. I'm learning about the water. And, as a woman, what does it mean to live in relation to the water? I'm not a keeper of water, but I keep thinking of

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myself in relation to the water. As we talked about, Dylan Robinson says that land acknowledgment is all about situatedness and relationality. So that's what I'm working through right now, and that's kind of how we came together to these questions about land acknowledgment and how sometimes, especially when delivered by settlers, they can feel a bit perfunctory. What does it mean to live beyond the land acknowledgments that are spoken at the beginning of gatherings, and what does it mean to live in relation to the land and develop your relationship with the land? I walk on this land every day. I try to get my kids out, walking on this land. We look at everything. We're learning about the animals that are Indigenous to Kansas, the plants. I haven't done that work before and I want to do it for my kids because they were born here. What does that mean to be responsible to these nations and to be living off the theft of their land?

Jenn:
Yeah. I'm thinking about responsibility to the lands and where we are. I think about responsibility to all the relationships that have come before that are part of the story of the place and then all the relationships that are the ones to come. And then of course there are people who hold those stories, and I'm just learning some of them mostly because we have a lot of really cool, great storytellers and communicators come out of Michi Saagiig territory. There are so many beautiful artists here. Kerry Beebe and Olivia Whetung and William Kingfisher from Rama First Nation. I already talk about some of this in the podcast, but I think it's just good to name some of the people who carry out and communicate intellectual traditions and artistic traditions of the place since we're working in performance scholarship. So, Leanne Simpson, for sure. Such a big influential and magnificent writer . . . we'll just let that siren go by Main Street on the other side of the hedges there. We're thinking about land and place and all of the relationships that make up place.

Melissa:
And thinking about, like for me, just learning the history, knowing that Kansas was a place that a lot of people were moved through as part of the Indian Removal Act. Just the kind of the sadness around that, people being moved to Oklahoma. Kansas was the hunting ground for lots of different nations. There is this profound sadness around this thinking of it as part of the Removal Act. But, I have some friends that are Osage and I have yet to go to Oklahoma, but there are some strong Osage people there and here too that I'd like to get to know better and learn more about. A lot of the Indigenous people that I know and work with here are from all over, which has been really enriching, learning about their traditions. But it's humbling yourself. Right? And being a person who's pursued higher education, it's great to be in a position where you don't know anything and you need to be humble and gracious and, as a settler, listen, you know?

Jenn:
Yeah. Maybe that's something worth noting in our editorial, in our co-editing relationship . . . that you're really enacting settler allyship, I think, and support.

Melissa:
I'm stumbling through it.

Jenn:
Yeah. I'm Indigenous and I'm mixed, so I have settler ancestry as well. And that means when I'm learning my own cultural histories, sometimes they're in conflict. I would say it's my responsibility as an Indigenous woman to listen. That's like one of the teachings. Well, you can learn from so many.

Melissa:
I think it's been a theme in this work. When did we record the podcast in 2020? Did we start talking about it in 2018 or 19? And just going, well, not going through it, I didn't live it personally, but you know, George Floyd, COVID, and putting this journal issue together and having . . . almost losing some contributors, and I watched you listen and respond and be gracious with people and that there's sort of a gentleness that has defined our approach during this time that we've talked about before. Why couldn't it be this way all the time, where we're just a little bit more gentle and we listen to what people have to say about their kids or how their kids feel about masking and every conversation has that element of connection and listening? I'm really glad that we were able to keep everyone on board.

Jenn:
Yeah. Me too, and nourish up their work. And yeah, I've been thinking about . . . I want to go in two directions. I want to say that I think the first time I met you, Melissa, was when we were doing the Canadian Association for Theatre Research practices for being in territory, part of the conference, thinking about how we often arrive as uninvited guests and my status is really problematic, and of course we've lost lots of nation-to-nation protocols and our own cultures too. But I had been part of some walks where I had more connection to place but we were in Musqueam territory, which is far from home. So not my nations, not my protocols. It was so weird to host that walk, which we had done with Jordan Wilson and his house posts. Because I was like, I can't lead the tour. I can't even offer welcome. It's not culturally appropriate to do that. Quelemia Sparrow was present. She offered welcome, which was so generous and not really necessary. But she extended that for us. But I think I met you taking turns walking your baby stroller. I was thinking about COVID and how we'd been walking for a while and then you were nursing and every time I nursed my baby, I was so thirsty. I needed to be drinking in one hand and then holding with other. And so, I offered you some water from my water bottle and you took it . . . remember when we used to share?

Melissa:
Yeah. Wasn't that just lovely? I mean, that's my first memory of you.

Jenn:
Yeah, that's a really a really beautiful foundation for a relationship.

Melissa:
And for me, I have spent ten years of my life on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh land. I'd gone off to the UK, done my graduate work and came back, and UBC had totally changed place names. They were in the Indigenous languages. I should have known all of that and I was learning it from you, which I think is kind of heartbreaking but beautiful that you were the one who hosted that walk. That was a place I did consider one of my homes. That's kind of the memory of it now, I think, and an issue that keeps coming up in the journal is people are talking about what does it mean to unsettle colonial notions of what a place is? Then for me, Vancouver is now always walking around the UBC campus when I was thirty-eight years old, twenty years after the first time I walked onto that campus. And that's what my first walk onto that campus should have been: learning those words, knowing the place names, looking at the house posts.

Jenn:
I think we know this because of colonialism, cultural loss, colonization of narrative which comes up in the issue a lot. Even those of us who are Indigenous to place don't always get to know the stories of those places. Like my high school sat on top of the burned out remains of an Algonquin family. I only found that out two years ago.

Melissa:
Oh my gosh.

Jenn:
Yeah. By meeting the grandson of a woman who used to peel potatoes with her uncle in that house telling stories. Wow. So that's weird, right? Like, it's weird to be a child and go every day to a place that has this untold but present story, like a living story. But that's been really held under erasure. I think that comes through in the issue . . . a lot people looking for new relationships to places that preexist them. To tap into and attune to the relationships that preexist them.

Melissa:
What it has meant, in the last few months, I'm not going to say revelations about unmarked graves, because I think for lots of people it was not at all a surprise. I can't say that I was surprised, but what does it mean to people who have occupied that land or been near that land to know that and negotiate it? I remember getting the text from you two days before we were supposed to meet for CATR 2021 and you just saying we can't, we can't do this. Marrie was going to acknowledge the land, and how could we ask her or anyone else at that time to do it? Yeah. I saved that text. I still have that text. And you wrote something like "Melissa, 700+ babies. Can we do this?" It was shattering.

Jenn:
Yeah, it did feel like to carry on with business as usual, it didn't feel like the right moment to do that. There are so many different embodied responses that are called upon by different moments in time and places. I mean, you're still going right now. It's still going. So, we do have to carry on, I guess, at some point and take care of one another.

Melissa:
Absolutely.

Jenn:
Yeah. Also, the stories of places are so full of so many bits, the hard bits and also the beautiful living bits. I think one thing that our circle of contributors has offered is a celebration of Indigenous presence and a reckoning with Indigenous self-determination and nation specific sovereignties, and that is a conversation I'm so happy to be having. I feel really lucky to be able to curate and nurture it.

Melissa:
Yeah.

Jenn:
I've been thinking . . . I'm going to segue, unless you don't want to. I think I've been thinking about the issue as a collection of all these people who are entering into relationships with the places they inhabit or their own ancestral lands and/or the places that they're visiting, and they're trying to build more responsible connections and really thoughtful connections. And then they show us that thinking, which is a really big gift. I think it's important for us to say chi-miigwech and thank you to all of the contributors. I've been thinking of us as a circle. In the Anishinaabe protocol of the circle, everyone is there because they have something to offer upon which each of us depends. So, you bring your giftings as co-editor and I bring my giftings, and the authors and performers bring their giftings, and we need each other. And I'm so happy that this isn't like talking heads offering best practices for how to enter into responsible relationship with territory, like universally, all responsible relationships to territory will work like blank.

Melissa:
It's not a "How to."

Jenn:
Yeah. And that doesn't even make sense because everyone's contacts are so distinctive. I think that's something really beautiful that's come out of the writing for me is all these models and modes, offerings for stuff people try.

Melissa:
Things I've never dreamed of.

Jenn:
And their practices, the people they work with, the thinkers they work with, the knowledge holders they lean on. We get all those folks in the room.

Melissa:
Yeah. And they keep coming back. You know, there are certain people that just keep coming back. Dylan (Robinson) is one. Leanne (Simpson) is another. Jill (Carter) speaks on our podcasts, but her voice comes in a lot. And I do have to say how grateful I am to Peter (Dickinson) for affording us this opportunity. Because you know, Peter was my postdoc supervisor when I was just beginning to explore some of this stuff. I never dreamed that someone would trust me to go forward, and I would never have done it on my own. Doing it with you has meant the world. When I was thinking about what our relationship is and you, all I could write was, well, Jenn is my partner. And you'll always be my partner. It's, it's just how it is. It is such a partnership. I'm glad that he's trusted us with this, and everyone else has too. I'm sure we'll make mistakes, and we certainly aren't trying to say we want to replace land acknowledgments or anything like that, but I think we're looking at how do you live in acknowledgment of the land in your daily life? And, like you said, the wealth of responses that we got to that question . . . should we talk about some of them?

Jenn:
We should. Is this the part where we just say our favourite things?

Melissa:
Yeah. That's what I've got.

Jenn:
So, we had this practice, for those who are listening, of noting two things that we felt that each piece offered up, but probably that's like four things about each piece and that might take us hours. I think we can just feel free to see how the conversation goes and maybe the authors and the readership can know that there's more great stuff.

Melissa:
Yeah. Well, I think they have to begin with you talking about Cara Mumford's short film "Sing Them Home," which she writes about because you're featured in it. Yeah?

Jenn:
I think it's something so special that Cara has. She has this way of living and a way of thinking and a way of creating that just honours the future. She has faith in the future possibility and works that way. For me, that's like magic. It's so beautiful. It's like she asks us to imagine that the film is prayer for Salmon Nation to return to the Michi Saagiig watershed. And that was certainly our practice. I think I was calling it salmon-road-trip-prayer-dance or something.

She shows us her thinking around that way of working. For me, that's hugely valuable. It's like native people are in the past and now we're moving on. This story is so common, and I'm so tired. But not just we're here and we survived and we're living and present and enjoying ourselves and making stuff and doing stuff and reclaiming our ancestral practices, but also we have more stuff to do. I really loved that being present. I think it's a really good way to begin.

Melissa:
Well, what I wanted to ask you about, because you were in the film, she talks in her piece about how dances enact survivance, Gerald Vizenor's idea of this combination of survival and resistance. I just love that. Was there a feeling of that when you approached the adventures of the different waters and the conversations you were having with the water? It was fascinating to me how certain sites were . . . I don't know if resistance is what you would say, but it was, there were . . . I love the part where she talks about rushing to a site before the sunset. You have these beautiful images at dusk.

Jenn:
I do live out of a gratitude for dancing and for being able to dance after our dancing practices were held under erasure, like we could be killed or go to jail or lose our kids for doing that. So, for sure, there's something beautiful about just being able to move my body in a self-determining and sovereign way. I love that, but mostly when we were going out, I was just thinking we get to do the poem, we get to do Leanne Simpson's poem, and we get to start at Chi'nibiish where Salmon Nation enters into the watershed and then we just got to follow with them. I was just wanting to see in the way that I can, as my human self, with very limited relationship to Salmon Nation, because they're not here and they aren't from the home territory, we have more eel and stuff. I wanted to see what it was like for them, just to imagine with them for a little while and to feel what it will feel like when they're back, that feels really powerful to be able to do that. Yeah. Miigwech for asking that question.

Melissa:
Elan (Marchinko). I love this idea of what it might mean, I'm quoting her, "to refuse to settle into my new home." She's talking about being in Bellingham, and "with Bellingham's Whatcom Falls

Park as my performance space, I present a score for unsettling into the Pacific Northwest." That jumped out at me. Also, she talks about Bethany Hughes's proposal of settlers engaging in a mindful practice of guesting on land, built on these relationships of humility, reciprocity, and nurturing. That really jumped out at me, and her work exploring that space when she was almost transient during COVID and moving around different places.

Jenn:
Yeah, I think Elan offers this open-ended score for moving and body relating and guesting in relation to place. I didn't know guesting and hosting were leaving such an impression on me. But then, when I was teaching yesterday, I found that language just coming out, and it was really helpful. I love that she suggests that we can be hosted by lichen. I mean, what does it mean to be hosted by lichen? I loved that, and it just offers the sense that we're asking not just permission of land-owning nations, which is problematic, like all of that anyway but asking permission to be in place and saying hello to all the relations who are there. I really appreciate that.

Melissa:
Well, there's a section about an oak tree. She says something about worlding with an oak tree. That's just beautiful and her consideration of those things.

Jenn:
And so many of the prompts for our own movement are offered as questions. Questions about our relationships. The openness and the invitation of that is really generous. And she's "stumbling towards decolonization." I appreciate when no one thinks they've done it all perfectly, there's more to do.

Melissa:
Well, the images that she's chosen to feature, she's not in those images, and that's a choice that she made. I think there's a real responsibility reflected in that. Leah (Decter).

Jenn:
Leah's so good at sticking it to the nation states. Such good work.

Melissa:
Yeah. She just had me thinking a lot about monuments and the narratives they put out there and what it means to do the work, to embed a different narrative. And these pictures of her out in Manitoba, in the winter, doing this performance work. It's so moving. This tiny figure in this parka. The work she does, there's a hugeness to it and to her heart.

Jenn:
Her work is also connecting to her own ancestors, and that's a response to so many calls that I've heard from Indigenous scholars working on settler colonialism and settler Indigenous relationships to say, think about where you come from and where your ancestral lands are and who your ancestors are and what your teachings and cultural practices are. I think Leah does that in a very beautiful way. And you have several pieces in the issue from diasporic communities or people from diasporic communities then thinking through what it means to be on stolen lands and welcomed into the nation state. I wasn't thinking so much about monuments in Leah's piece, but I think it's because I go to this provincial park and I harvest medicine, and I'm drinking some tea from that

place right now. And then I steal the medicines. I think it's in my home territory. I make offerings. I asked them, the plants, that they're okay to come. But then I hide them in my winter jacket, or I hide them in my backpack, and then I hope that doesn't get me in trouble or make me give it back. You know, it's a way of connecting to my ancestors who were chased out of parks for sure. But I was there on the long weekend and there were all these people, all these people, it's not really what I go for, but they were saying like, oh, this is Canadian wilderness. Like, this is Canadian. It's so weird to eavesdrop on that, but I also love how Leah writes about that, the insidious affirmation of Canadianness and Canadian sovereignty that is connected to those places.

Melissa:
Well, I'm talking about her grandfather; he's a presence in the essay because her work is sort of inspired by him. He's very present in the piece.

Jenn:
That's right. Yeah. I think also I wanted to mention one thing that I got excited about Leah's work. I really appreciate her call to practise remembering otherwise. And then I was thinking, oh, people Indigenous to that territory do that anyway. We remember other stuff already; we're already doing it. Remembering otherwise is a project that we're all involved with, but I think we're differently involved with.

Melissa:
Oh, definitely. Yeah, no, that's something I had highlighted . . . a process for remembering otherwise and rejecting colonial narratives.

We want to talk about Nazli (Akhtari).

Jenn:
Oh yeah. This walking practice, walking is commonplace. And being something shared between human and nonhuman beings, it is this ideal site for disruption. I think this is a really exciting idea. Walking out, walking off, walking backwards against dominant narratives of colonial progress, giving yourself space. There are so many complex and nuanced investments in what appears on the surface to be simple.

Melissa:
Yeah. I took away from it this idea of walking as lessons in unlearning what she calls Canada's pedagogies of citizenships and modalities of settlement. And where she talks about the guide she had to read about citizenship and her indoctrination and walking out of . . . or backing out of the citizenship ceremony, just a kind of a refusal of that very closed packaging of a narrative. There's some inclusion of Indigenous people, but settler colonialism certainly isn't part of the conversation, it's ongoing, you know? Yeah, how unsettling that whole process was for her.

Jenn:
It's such a strong perspective to have. Oh yeah. Okay. Here's where it happens for me, where Nazli says "to embody diasporic experiences and conditions on Indigenous lands invites a reterritorialization of our imaginations." There's so much destabilization about easy relationships to place.

Melissa:
And Jimena (Ortuzar).

Jenn:
Another landed immigrant story. I can't stop thinking about this practice about Jimena returning to her childhood home in Toronto, where she arrived, via St John's and Mexico and Argentina. I've worked with Jimena, we were in the same PhD cohort, so I worked with her since 2011. She always knows what to do. She just knows what to do in performance so that all of the elements are there. And often it's not simple, but it's not too complicated, just like on the surface, the mechanics of the thing seemed to really address the thing. I love both of the practices that she offers in this work, so walking on edges and trying to remain unsettled, and that comes out of all of this hemispheric thinking and cartography and disruption of cartographic processes, which are so colonial and classist, and keeping that all in mind by walking the edges of things a little bit precariously. I want to do it, you know? I just want to engage in the practice and see where it sits for me with my own situations and contexts.

Yeah. Then, as she re-walks this route from school, she walks this child path, and I'm really happy that children are a part of our special issue. I think if it's not intergenerational then it's not really making sense and not as true as it could be. I appreciate her childhood self being brought into the practice and being given a gift of new knowledge layered in about relation to place but also a kind of . . . I don't even know if it's an empathy, but like a solidarity with experiences of shame around poverty and well, that's so cool. Like myself, my grownup self, having solidarity with my childhood self and then taking her for a walk again.

Melissa:
Taking care of her.

Jenn:
Yeah.

Melissa:
In both Jimena's and Nazli's pieces, I did connect to this idea of the feeling of being uprooted and disoriented, out of place when you're somewhere new. I mean being here, sort of being force-fed the narrative of America and its discovery and what it means to resist that and to know the true story of what happened here. Feeling unsettled and uprooted when you arrive and then always knowing. Just knowing that you're living amidst this fiction . . . and what are you doing to resist it?

Jenn:
It's really, I'm thinking about this, living in the fictions, and something I love is that her own personal story is about the fictions of each of the places that she lived and how from her childhood perspective that was world-making; all of the ways that she thought things and interpreted them and created the world in which she lived. That is very helpful for us to know . . . that as grown people we're also making the story of the world that we live in, and it can be informed by all kinds of stuff. It's cautionary in a way, and it's also always already what we're doing.

Melissa:
Yeah.

Jenn:
So, yeah. How do we do that?

Melissa:
And how do we do it for our kids?

Jenn:
Yes. How do we support an honest and honest approach or . . .

Melissa:
Oh! Manifest Destiny!

Jenn:
A research practice that like helps little ones research who they are.

Melissa:
Sorry. I said Manifest Destiny because that was the expression I was thinking of when I talked about the American narrative. I'm actually glad that I couldn't remember it because that means I've been doing some good work!

Jenn:
It's not just on the tip of your tongue.

Melissa:
On the tip of my tongue!

Jenn:
Terra Nullius!

Melissa:
What do they call that big lie?

Jenn:
Very good.

Melissa:
Ken (Wilson).

Jenn:
Would you like to go first, or would you like me to jump in?

Melissa:
I met Ken at a PSi (Performance Studies international) conference and I saw him give a paper that talked about his walking practice in Saskatchewan. I can't remember if I saw him first or he saw me first and then we talked after and then went and saw each other's papers. Ken works with the idea of unsettling these notions through an embodied walking practice. What does it mean? He says, "Might embodied land acknowledgment enable settlers to come into a noncolonial and nonextractive

relationship with the land where they are walking?" He comes back to this thing that Dylan (Robinson) talks about through Sara Ahmed of the performative and the nonperformative. I really think that the walking work is a performative whereas the land acknowledgment can be so much of a nonperformative and, you know, I've said it, so I've done it, so I'm done. There's Ken on the side of the road in Saskatchewan working it out in the heat. Ken's doing work. That is exciting. And he's in it, you know, he's really in it. I think those photos that he shows, those images from the side of the road and what it is and the conversations he's having with the people he meets, but also with himself and with the land. I'm really looking forward to reading his dissertation and seeing where this journey takes him.

Jenn:
Yeah. There is something lonely about the Ken figure on the road under the sky, just continuing. I was talking to Marrie about when you're taking a drive in the rain, and everything is all lush. She was like, oh my gosh, in Saskatchewan, it took us two hours to walk to the tree. Totally different context in that Treaty 4 territory. Ken, first of all, does a bunch of work for us that we were going to do as part of our editorial, outlining histories around how land acknowledgments came up or came about in institutions and some critiques of land acknowledgments. Really valuable. I love that he doesn't know, you know, he knows he can't switch paradigms. He's like, okay, I've got this. I'm learning the paradigm from these scholars and folks that I know. And I see the paradigm, like, can I, how close can I get to that paradigm? They don't think it's even necessarily ethical for me to appropriate a cosmology or a way of being. I think that's great. I think he doesn't resolve very many of the questions that he asks about what he needs to do, the thing that he's doing, or how effective or extractive it might possibly be. I think that's great. That's the place where he is, living with the questions. Like you say, he's on this road, and he's just trying it out with a lot of dedication. Something that reminds me of is just how each contributor is entering from a different place. There are lots of roads up the mountain, and they're just showing us where they're at with the questions, and it's a big mess. Settler colonialism is like, oh man. And we're in it. So now what? And Ken's like, I'm not sure, but also this thinking about it.

Melissa:
And the honesty, I mean, there's something really bald about Ken's approach to all of it that I really appreciated when I saw him give his paper. There is a humility there that I think is, I don't know. It was one of those moments, you know what they're like when you see a paper and you go, I want to know more, and I want to follow this.

Jenn:
Yeah. The honesty, and especially thinking about acknowledgment as arising partly out of protocols of arrival and coming into someone's territory or staying on the edge and then lighting a fire and saying, I'm here and then waiting to be invited in, but like, you're not invited in, if you say, this is who I am, these are my ancestors and my family members. These are my intentions. And if you're like, well, my intention is to just come in and take everything that you have. Don't . . .

Melissa:
Think you're . . .

Jenn:
Permitted. You should go back and think about that.

Melissa:
Yeah. Well, that's something else that all of this has really made me think about. We've talked a lot about sort of exploding the scholarly framework and pushing outside of the way you're supposed to do a journal issue. I mean, that's why we're having a conversation right now, to supplement the way we were looking at the sounds of walking and now we want to see the worlds we're in and connect. But this idea that all the work should start with who you are and how you're doing it in relationship to the land you're doing it on. It almost seems nonsensical to me now not to do that, to just appear into work . . . no, it's happening somewhere. And that is informing the work and giving thanks to the land that's allowing you to work from that place.

Jenn:
Yeah. You've got to give back.

Melissa:
You do, plus it . . .

Jenn:
Feels good. It feels . . .

Melissa:
It does.

Jenn:
Yeah. I want to bring my relatives' presence, you know?

Melissa:
Yeah, yeah. Emma (Morgan-Thorp).

Jenn:
Emma.

Melissa:
VR (virtual reality). What can VR do for us? This became a really important question during COVID, you know, because yes, we could all get outside, well, depending on weather and that, but we could get out on the land that we were on, but there were lots of places no one could go or be, and what does it (VR) mean? But is VR also sort of a completing thing; when you experience something through VR, do you feel empathy, and then does it end, and do you not care about the land or the animals? I think that's a really fascinating question. I'm often asking that of performance. Dylan (Robinson) talks about settlers' tears and then do they walk away and pat themselves on the back and go, "Well, that's done now. Let's go get supper."

Jenn:
Actually, Emma's staying with this question without answering it reminded me a little bit of Ken's hesitancy to make a declaration about what that experience can be for different people to experience a forest in space or in a place, a space under threat of logging pipelines. What that can mean for different people. So, this autoethnographic approach feels really right for this piece. That's really smart. I love these moments of missing some of the sounds. That really does set apart the VR

experience as a particular experience, but not *the* experience. Yeah, I don't think it's really promising to be the experience either.

Melissa:
No.

Jenn:
There was one other thing . . . this idea that being observed in place, being witnessed in place by the many relations who are in that place is different than being a spectator. That feels very important to keep in conversation. I think being witnessed by lands and watersheds and plants and animals puts us in a different position than when we're just trying to look at them differently, you know?

Melissa:
Well, and is VR nonperformative in that, in that way? I mean because you are "doing" but you're not doing and being witnessed. Yeah. I don't have an answer.

Jenn:
I'm really happy to have this in the issue. I'm also happy to see the question of the consequences, the affect, and the affective power to see it actually tracked in progress in land protection. To see this kind of reporting and what the conflicts are and what the different bodies are doing to conserve the lands or to work with who has title, who has the right to determine what happens with that land. And then we get this kind of report at the end, which is rather positive. No conclusions drawn, but yeah. I think it's delightful to see the speculation and the artful moment, and then the kind of real-world reporting going on.

Melissa:
Yeah. It's a lovely combination and that's happening in a lot of this work. We have reflective parts of it and then different forms, and I'm really glad that we're breaking out of the prescribed ways of writing papers. And as you know, word count and things like that, we kind of threw them out the window, and I'm really happy.

Jenn:
Yeah. I guess we did do that.

Melissa:
And there were things that were said, and when you have more questions than answers and the questions are really thoughtful . . .

Jenn:
Yeah. It felt important also at this time where there are so many different stresses, which is maybe all the time, and we're just becoming more deeply aware of that. But to let authors and performers have the space to do what they felt that they could offer. I'm thinking about Ashley McAskill's relaxed conferencing videos that she offered, or maybe they offered, I'm not sure of their pronouns. But Ash offered these protocols for relaxed conferencing as part of where our podcast arose out of. And they were like, do less, do less. If you want to do more, then do more, but there's a prescription that we've adopted, but we haven't necessarily finished questioning. I liked that. I loved that we did a

podcast for that conference. I love that the podcast is part of this special issue and that we have many voices and many sounds of place.

Melissa:
Yeah. And just the way they're curated and brought together in a time when that was physically impossible for any of us. I've told people who listen to it, do so while you're walking, and they've really enjoyed that. Everyone needs an hour walk, and it's a perfect hour, 59 minutes.

Jenn:
It's lovely too, because we all would have brought the places that we were coming from into our gathering if we had gathered in Montreal on Mohawk territory. But instead, we got these deeper presencings of many territories across Turtle Island, and that was great. I liked meeting people in connection to the relationships they have with other beings.

Melissa:
I really liked it because oftentimes I feel like being down here, I should be extricating myself from the conversations in Canada. But no. We're all on Turtle Island. It was nice not to make rules about who's allowed in, and who's not because of settler-imposed borders.

Jenn:
Great. Yeah. Completely. We have one last contributor to talk about. Really not one, like six!

Melissa:
There's just so much great stuff in Alana's (Gerecke) piece and the work she did. There are so many artists in the piece and their thoughtfulness. I think of Lee Su-Feh writing out her land acknowledgment on a napkin and writing it thousands of times. And Alana's thinking about how place colours or changes, what it does for process and situatedness, and seeing some of the really evocative work, the art that's coming out of it is so exciting. Even the weather! Alana's podcast piece really shows that; the idea of talking about rain and the rain dancing on her body and the senses and everything.

Jenn:
Yeah. There's big presencing of dancers and movement practitioners in this piece, speaking to how their processes, their performance processes and then also their performances that they share publicly connect to their understanding of their responsibilities to place. The knowledge that comes through the body is so vividly presenced in the work, like when we move our bodies, even breathing is like a movement of the body. We understand things differently, and that helps us to know who we are more. There are so many beautiful moments in the piece, and maybe I'll just do a quick shout out to Liv Davies, who's Algonquin Anishinaabe. I got to see as part of this piece for the first time this dance that she did for the river that I belong to. That's so special seeing her in my home territory when she's been on the West Coast for so long. I think Alana did so much work foregrounding and amplifying so many voices. But she asked people who were really smart about the work that they do. I really appreciate this piece.

Melissa:
And her stewardship over the piece. I found that she was really responsible to the artists she was working with and appreciating their time and their labour in a way that is so often overlooked, especially during a time where a lot of artists were facing real financial peril.

Jenn:
Yes. That's true. We should probably say thank you to the Gatherings: Archival and Oral Histories of Performance partnership development grant/Stephen Johnson for giving us some money to help pay artists. We will keep having the conversation. Maybe that's what I want to say. This is like an offering of who was in the circle at the time and what they were bringing in that moment in a very honest way. There's so much more to be done and we'll keep doing it.

Melissa:
And it's not ever going to be complete, which is the most exciting part of it.

Jenn:
As long as the land's here and as long as we're here.

Melissa:
And our kids, I hope, I hope they're going to keep walking.

The video cuts to footage of the ancestral lands of the Kaw, Osage, and Pawnee, which Melissa currently occupies. The video closes with footage of ancestral Michi Saagiig territory, which Jenn inhabits.

Moving Together to Reclaim and Resist: Podcast Transcript

Contributors: Jenn Cole, Melissa Poll, Alana Gerecke, Elan Marchinko, Jill Carter, Julie Burelle, Kelsey Blair, Ken Wilson, Kimberly Richards, Virginie Magnat, and Selena Couture

Jenn Cole

Ambient Audio: Sounds of the city, traffic and trucks, mixed with bird song.

Aniin, Bozhoo, Kwei Kwei, everybody. Welcome to our land acknowledgment podcast, being on the land.

Hi, I'm Jenn Cole, a mixed ancestry Algonquin, Anishinaabe from Kiji Sibi territory, which is the territory of the Ottawa River watershed. My grandparents grew up around Mattawa, in the bush around that area off-reserve.

I live right now in Michi Saagig territory, in the Nogojiwanong or Peterborough. I obviously couldn't say in one moment all my relationships to this place. They're good! Right now, I have spruce tips on the stove, making spruce tip syrup so that I can have medicine for my family in the winter and share it with my community here. Also, I just had eggs with wild leeks that are harvested from this territory.

I get to be associate artistic producer and director with Marie Mumford at Nozhem First Peoples Performance Space. Marie has really folded me into the Indigenous arts community here. I'm very thankful for that, for how much I am learning about myself as an Anishinaabe-kwe and as an Indigenous artist and as a supporter of arts and teacher here in this place. I'm also working quite a bit lately with Marie's daughter, Cara Mumford, who's a beautiful filmmaker. They're Métis, Plains Chippewa. I've been working, too, with William Kingfisher making art. He's from Rama First Nation. Making with these people according to our protocols and ways of living and being in the world is special. It's really nourishing. I am thankful to be able to enact my relationships to many beings by making work in this territory, in relationship with many beings. It's pretty cool.

Just to the west of me is the Otonabee Bay River, the river that bubbles like a beating heart. She doesn't bubble so much anymore, and Leanne Simpson writes quite a bit about this. She's Michi Saagig. The lift lock system and the establishment of the Trent Southern Waterway [and] also logging practices in this community and on these lands have really changed the movement of the river. I think that pulse of her beating heart is obviously still present, and I think sometimes audible or sensible. I've learned a lot from being in relationship with that river, and she's carried me through a lot of transformation in my life and supported me and let me make my offerings and prayers, let me engage with my sovereign birthright as a woman to care for the water and to learn about what that responsibility means here away from my home territory.

If I think about land acknowledgment as saying who we are in relation, there's a lot. Dylan Robinson says land acknowledgment is situational and relational; it changes depending on who's in the room. Jill Carter calls us to treat land acknowledgment as a possibility for reworlding, which is amazing and a tall order, an amazing possibility or potential, I think.

Of course, I can't articulate all my relationships to this place in this moment, but I wanted to share some of them with you to show how deep and long and new they are. So, I think about developing relationship to place as a really long process. I don't think the only relationship we might have to place is "I'm indigenous" or "I'm settler" or "I'm mixed" or "I'm a newcomer." I can't imagine relationships to place stopping there. And maybe one way to become more responsible in connection to being in territory that isn't one's own or that is one's own is just to devote time to that practice and that process.

I'm not sure if land acknowledgment is becoming like a dirty term. This came up when Broadleaf Theatre was here doing their show, *The Chemical Valley Project*. That show's transformed a lot over the last few years. I've seen it in process. I think the first time I saw it was at the Chippewa of the Thames fundraiser at Buddies in Bad Times and they came to the theatre on King in the Nogojiwanong as part of a conference that I was organizing to workshop the show. We had a talk-back after their most recent version was here at Market Hall, brought in by Public Energy. The show now ends with an acknowledgment of the territory where the show is taking place in the moment, and they set that up with a bunch of context. One audience member, a woman from Curve Lake First Nation, I'm pretty sure, was like, "Why do you do that? What is it for?" I've seen a lot more resistance from Indigenous communities around land acknowledgment, not just asking them to be more meaningful, but interrogating what they're actually doing.

I've taught a lot of courses where we do a land acknowledgment assignment after reading the Carter, Robinson, and Recollet reading with lots of information built in. Students spend some time on the land and try to get to know a place for a little while and think about that experience. We're doing all this cool decolonizing work and then students who identify as settlers or who are just beginning to do that often . . . get really stressed out because they're like, what does it mean to be thankful or to say, like, may we honour those teachings when we don't know what the teachings are? The whole thing feels a bit disingenuous, disingenuous or like it's a bureaucratized protocol. And also, they're embarrassed; they feel guilty about not knowing enough about where they are, and they're just arriving into this territory to go to university, a lot of them.

So, I think that's a really productive place to be, and I hope to coax them through some of those questions and to say, look, it's hard sometimes to acknowledge that we're just beginning to understand who we are in relation or we're just beginning to get to know the real . . . the Indigenous histories of these places where we're living. I think about what land acknowledgment means to them. It feels very heavy to a lot of them, and a lot of them do brilliant, thoughtful work about how to de-bureaucratize this protocol we're all living with right now.

I've also seen Indigenous students blow up that assignment, and these students are young and cumulatively fatigued by experiencing violence, experiencing colonial violence in academic spaces, and having people do a land acknowledgment first. This makes me think I need to rethink that assignment and write blowing up the land acknowledgment into the assignment guidelines.

I'm not sure what it means to not do the work but to give the land acknowledgment. When I was working with William Kingfisher on ENAWENDEWIN/RELATIONSHIPS in the community garden, he was like, don't we acknowledge the land by just being on the land?

And they're two different things for me. I think about a land acknowledgment partly in connection to the roll-out of reconciliation discourse. I think about it also just in connection to the protocol of

meeting someone and saying who you are, really honestly. And then they say who they are, honestly. And then you are on a footing where you're building your trust through being transparent, showing who you are, speaking from the heart. I think doing that is incredibly powerful, and it's a skill that we're learning. I'm learning a lot about that in my own life, about speaking from the heart and being thoughtful at the same time and showing who I am, which is really vulnerable. It's a very vulnerable thing to do. But also, it doesn't have to be so solemn or heavy-handed as it sometimes becomes, I don't think.

These are just some of my thoughts right now and thinking about moving on the land or moving in territory, creating these embodied practices of walking at this CATR conference for me, partly has to do with trying to get to understand where we are in place a little bit, especially because we do this parachuting into places, and we don't ask to be invited. We arrive with entitlements, and there's no one who's offered us welcome necessarily. I could talk about this for a very long time. It's a way of doing the work of learning where we are in place, learning where we are in connection to our relationships with the others in that place. Beginning that work and doing it through an embodied performance practice, because that's one of the ways that I and others in the CATR community relate and connect to the world. Something can happen there. I think these walks have been really different, depending on where they've happened and what our relationships to those places are.

And when Melissa asked if we could start a working group and she was thinking a lot about the walks as land acknowledgment, I realized that that had been a condition, that had been a piece of the walks, knowing the First Nations from that territory, being able to say their names or stumble through them and then being kind of caught in the limits of our knowledge, so being able to acknowledge really honestly how little we know about where we are. Or maybe sometimes what our own personal history is in that place. And sometimes, for some people, that has been deeply connected. We each bring our own experiences to the places where we are.

I was cautious, though, to have our walking practice so closely and theoretically linked to land acknowledgment because of resistance I've seen from different Indigenous folks around territory acknowledgment. And these folks will like, say, who they are when they meet other people. They're not doing that part of protocol. I've seen them do this publicly.

I think the rote acknowledgment is starting to get us down. I think it's exciting to be able to think through what it means. I don't think it's time to throw it out yet because it's such a bare minimum act. But I do wonder about it, and I am taking space to wonder about it in my academic practice. I think the thing we do when we acknowledge territory when we're hosting a group is important to do and is important to do in whatever heartfelt, honest, personally invested ways that we can.

Lisa Ravensbergen's welcome and teachings generously share teachings about being in connection with land and giving to the land and giving ourselves time for ceremony. Offering intention, what we intend to do while we're there. What gift it is that we're bringing for that place. That was powerful for me and really exciting.

Yeah, I guess I think of that thing that we do when we're hosting, we're offering welcome, and we're saying where we are. I like the opportunities that that practice creates.
I also think the real work of acknowledgment might be developing relationship to place, and relationship to the communities in that place, however we might think of communities, so that might be human and that might be non-human. And then to be changed by those relationships, to

look for where we might be being asked to step into responsibility or to develop a personal practice that comes out of intuition or out of information from our spirits about how to say thank you every day. How to become conscious about how we are connected in place. How we are supported, sustained, nourished by the places we inhabit.

Melissa Poll

Ambient audio: Bird songs, babbling brook, sounds of footsteps and snippets of conversation with my toddlers as we walk the Konza Prairie.

My name is Melissa Poll, my pronouns are she/her and I'm a settler descendant. I'm the co-convener of Moving Together to Reclaim and Resist with my wonderful collaborator Jen Cole.

I grew up in Treaty One Territory and the homeland of the Métis in the 1980s. That's where I learned to speak French, to tie a ceinture fléchée. But at that time, I couldn't have told you anything about the original inhabitants of that land. Now I spend my time between BC and Kansas, where my partner is a professor at Kansas State University.

Historically, Kansas has been home to many nations, including the Kaw, Osage, and Pawnee, as well as nations like the Delaware, who were moved through Kansas as part of the Indian Removal Act. Right now, Kansas is currently home to four federally recognized nations: the Prairie Band Potawatomi, the Kickapoo, the Iowa, and the Sac and Fox.

The audio background for this talk is me walking the Konza Prairie with my kids, who are one and three. They were born on this land, we occupy this land, and I'm still figuring out what it means to live in good relation to this territory. Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett discuss the importance of locating ourselves in our research. That's why I want to account for my positionality in this work and who I am.

One of the most impactful land acknowledgments that I've experienced happened at SFU, which is on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh), and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, but it spoke to the land in British Columbia more broadly. At the talk, after the sort of perfunctory land acknowledgment was given, a Wet'suwet'en land defender got up and talked about what was happening on the land, who had been arrested, and how they were fighting against the pipeline. It was visceral, breathless. It vibrated. And that made me think about what Jill Carter says about biotas and how we consider, you know, the health of the land. What's going on in the land that we're acknowledging.

The land that you hear on my walk is at the Konza Prairie Biological Station, which is one of two protected sites of Tallgrass prairie in Kansas. The amount of Tallgrass prairie remaining since before European settlement is estimated between 4 and 13 percent, with the majority still in the Flint Hills of Kansas.

For me, land acknowledgment is about reciprocity, how we're living in relation to the land and its people. For me, this has meant working with interested community members on trying to reimage the high school mascot. The mascot is a generic plains "Indian," and the sports teams are referred to as the Manhattan "Indians." I also give my time weekly to the Prairie Band Potawatomi, who have so graciously welcomed me and made me feel like part of a family in this new place.

For a while, I'd been bothered by preperformance land acknowledgments delivered by settlers that just feel perfunctory. They're said alongside announcements to turn off your cell phone and unwrap your candies. There is a performative nature to it. It's performative ally-ship. In my postdoc research, I'm looking at how intercultural performance and performance-making processes can acknowledge the people, nations, and territories they occur on. From what I've observed, and somewhat obviously, Indigenous artists are in positions of agency directing, designing, and making the work when these collaborations happen in a good way. But where is *their* sovereign space in these projects? For Marie Clements's chamber opera *Missing*, there was an Indigenous-only table. This brought to mind David Garneau's "Spaces of Irreconcilable Aboriginality." It was a space of sovereignty, a space of respite from settlers and our hungry questioning.

I'm also thinking on how sustainability can be built into mandates and how theatre companies can engage Indigenous artists and local nations who are interested in making the land and its history accessible to patrons. This could happen via curated walks for spectators who want to know about the land they'll be occupying when they see a production.

I know I'm a hungry settler. I know I'm greedy. I've had this hunger to, in Dylan Robinson's words, "do the right thing" or "fit the Indigenous into a multicultural mosaic." I'm working against this. My intention these days is listening, a sated listening. It's an engaged listening.

Alana Gerecke

Ambient Audio: Rain pelts against the sidewalk, umbrella, and street. It is a heavy, constant rain, cut with the occasional sound of a car engine or a passer-by.

You can't see me right now, but if you could, you would see arms moving, extending upward, reaching, catching a drop here, tracing it as it rolls down arm, armpit, left side, hip, past the knee back to the earth.

You would see me stoop, protecting my face from the rain. You would see me shuffle quickly, and you would see me surrender, tilt up, open my chest and feel those drops landing cold and fresh and nourishing on my skin. A whole-body surround sound, tingling-waking feeling here on the unceded traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples in the city colonially known as Vancouver. We get a lot of rain. I've been here for two decades. I came from away from Toronto or tkaronto, where my ancestors have been occupying land as uninvited guests for generations.

Coming into the rain helps me remember to notice the land that I am on and in and with. For me, a land acknowledgment is deeply about a physical, visceral, bone-deep sensation of the land, of this land that I am on right now, of the slope of the ground, of the texture underfoot, of the heat, of the cool of the wind, of the passers-by, the sounds around. And on many days here of the rain, as it falls, as it nourishes the plants, as it carries the water memory in cycles, the powerful drumming of the rain.

Elan Marchinko

Ambient Audio: The sounds and vibrations of movement and traffic at West 23rd Street and 10th Avenue, Chelsea, Manhattan, New York City.

Hi, my name is Elan Marchenko. I'm a fourth-generation Ukrainian settler-Canadian and a PhD candidate in performance studies at York University. Currently, though, I'm living in Manhattan, in New York City.

So here on the southern part of Turtle Island, I'm feeling viscerally the irony of being unable to cross the colonial border between the United States and Canada and of being welcome in neither of these settler nations, both of which are on stolen land to begin with.

I acknowledge that Manhattan, Manahatta, is the ancestral land of the Lenape Nation and home to the Rockaway and Canarsie people. I acknowledge that the borough of Manhattan continues to be home to many Indigenous nations, such as the Mohawk Ironworkers who built the skyline. I acknowledge that the Lenape named the Hudson River Mahicannituck because the river flows both ways but that they were evicted from their land under the guise of purchase and exchange. I acknowledge that the wall built to keep the Lenape out and the buttonwood tree under which stocks and bonds were exchanged is now known as what we call Wall Street.

I acknowledge that the Lenape, through forced migration, came to live in places such as New Jersey and Oklahoma, where they are known as the Delaware. And so Manahatta persists in multiple spaces. I acknowledge that for many, this land over which concrete is poured is never smooth but deadly. I acknowledge that after voices crack at exhaustion from saying their names that the land holds space for the memories of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Elijah McClain and too many others who die by the police and white supremacy. I acknowledge solidarity as we gather in an assemblage of bodies, breath and smudge across Manhattan, Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.

I acknowledge kindness is tired organizers passing around hand sanitizer, orange slices and water.

I acknowledge the hauntology of viral, racial, and xenophobic contagion. I acknowledge that these unprecedented times are also precedented and sedimented.

We've been here before.

I acknowledge that this land, Manahatta, remembers this.

Jill Carter

Ambient Audio:
It must have been a good day!
Bineshiinyag nagamotaagdiwag.
The birds are singing to each other.

Someone's quite irritated this evening!
Ajidamoo nishkaadizi. The squirrel is angry!
Me and my big feet! I must have woken him up!

It is the 3rd of June, ode'imin-giizis, the moon of strawberries, and I am walking in tkaronto, Toronto, the place where the trees grow out of the water. I am walking into midnight, southwards along a ribbon of concrete that was once part of an ancient trail. As I walk, the moon hangs low in

the sky, dibik-giizis. Always hovering just ahead of me, beckoning me on and forward. Over my left shoulder rides Venus and behind me, now fading into the indigo sky, is Odjig, the Fisher Constellation, Ursa Major, the Big Bear, the Big Dipper. As I walk along this trail just west of Young Street, I search for marker trees, those foot traffic signals that still remain that have been left to us, the children who remain, by the Indigenous ancestors who walked these trails before us: the Erie, the Petun, the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabek and peoples, perhaps, of many, many nations, whose names I have not yet learned. These marker trees speak a language that I am only now beginning to recognize, although I cannot say that I have any fluency in this language or any understanding of the messages they relate. For now, it's enough. To seek, to find, to map, to search for patterns with the hope that one day I will understand some of that language.

Julie Burelle

Ambient audio: Wind on the bluffs, distant ocean waves.

I am standing here on the bluffs of what is now known as La Jolla in Southern California on the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay people. As Mike Conolly Miskwish, member of the Campo Kumeyaay Nation and teacher at San Diego State University, writes, "This land carries the footstep of millennia of Kumeyaay people." They are a people whose traditional lifeways intertwined with a worldview of earth and sky in a community of living beings. This land is part of a relationship that has nourished, healed, protected, and embraced the Kumeyaay people to the present day. From the bluff today, I see these life forces at play. I see the earth and the sky. The ocean's dance is both visible and audible. I am surrounded by rare and resilient Torrey pines, a tree that grows here and in only a handful of other places on earth. The air is crisp. It is a truly magnificent place, and it has a lot to teach if one is willing to stop and listen. This is a process I'm deeply committed to.

I am not from here. I grew up on unceded Algonquin territory near what is now known as Gatineau. But I have called San Diego home for more than a decade now. In that time, I have learned from and have found inspiration in the long line of Kumeyaay artists, students, educators, storytellers, leaders, researchers, friends, and family members that stem from and are in relation to this land. I am a guest here, and this land acknowledgment is an expression of my deep gratitude. It is also a renewed commitment to being part of meaningful and tangible ways of the decolonizing project led by the Kumeyaay people and other Indigenous people around the world. To name what is with honesty, to listen and to allow oneself to be deeply unsettled as a settler is only the beginning of this relationship.

Kelsey Blair

Ambient audio: Footsteps in nature.

I'm walking on the traditional territories of the sc̓əwaθən məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen First Nations) in the suburban town currently known as Ladner, British Columbia. My mother, Joan, was born here. When she tells childhood stories, they are filled with first and second generation southeastern European immigrants living in the mid-twentieth-century fishing and farming town. When my mom was a teenager, the Tsawwassen Nation longhouse was torn down by the provincial government as part of the BC ferry terminal construction.

Joan's father, Louis, was born in Croatia. He arrived on this territory on a fish boat but refused to make the return trip home. Joan's mother, Eda, was also born here in Ladner. Around the year of

Eda's birth, Tsawwassen Chief Harry Joe submitted a petition for more land to the McKenna-McBride Commission. It was denied. Eda's mother—Joan's grandmother—Catherine came to this territory from Italy. She arrived at approximately the same time as Indigenous peoples were excluded from commercial fishing by the Canadian government.

I have gone on a walk every single day since arriving on this territory. After crunching the math, I would guess that I have walked at least 750,000 steps, approximately 625 kilometres, in the last two months. This is coincidentally, but not insignificantly, the distance from the traditional territories of the Tsawwassen Nation to the traditional territories of the Kootenay Nation. My father, James, was born in the city currently known as Quesnel, in the traditional territories of the Kootenay Nation. Robert and Dorothy, James's parents, were both born near Quesnel. Robert's father, Hugh, my father's grandfather, came to this territory from Belfast, Ireland. At the same time, St. Joseph's Mission, which would eventually become a residential school, was opened just outside of what is currently known as Williams Lake. Dorothy's mother, Margaret, was born in what is now known as Quesnel, as was her mother, Carrie, who spent eight years at St. Joseph's Mission. Carrie's mother, Katla, was a member of the Lil'wat Nation. She was married to settler Marvin P. Elmore when she was sixteen. As directed by his business ambitions, Katla and Elmore moved to Quesnel, where Katla had seven children. In the 1880s, Katla took the two youngest children and fled. It is speculated that she returned home to be with her own family.

In walking the distance that anchors the two trunks of my family tree in the last two months, I have become acutely aware of my freedom of movement. My life is defined by mobility with and across land, nations, performance genres and academic fields. The degree of my mobility, untethered from domestic, familial, or societal obligation, is unprecedented for the women in my family. I am grateful for the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking people who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial. I am aware of the humans, animals, plants, and organisms in relation to whom I move. I recognize that I benefit from systems and histories of violence, colonialism, and white supremacy in particular that secure my movement through public space. I am more likely to be attacked by a pack of wolves than by humans or by the police. I know that these systems of violence mantle the scholarly, artistic, and sporting fields in which I work and play. I honour the women on both sides of my family tree whose mobility was often restricted and directed by others and the freedom of movement that their lives have indirectly granted me.

Ken Wilson

Ambient audio: The sound is of feet crunching on a gravel road, with traffic on the Regina Bypass in the distance, while birds sing nearby. Occasionally a vehicle passes on the road while I'm walking.

Spoken text:
Seven Questions about Embodied Territorial Acknowledgments

1. What would an embodied territorial acknowledgment on Treaty 4 land in southern Saskatchewan be like? Would it sound like the rhythm of feet trudging along a gravel grid road, or the fluting of western meadowlarks, or the ceaseless wind, or traffic on a distant highway? Would it feel like tired legs or sore feet, taste like the dust raised by passing vehicles, smell like lilacs growing in the shelterbelt of an abandoned home quarter? Would it look like a field of canola or the grassland that covered southern Saskatchewan before Settlers arrived with ploughs and steam tractors, or the bright blue of a prairie sky?

2. Is embodiment an adequate response to criticisms of spoken territorial acknowledgments—the arguments that they are just mundane "box-ticking" exercises, "easily ignored and void of learning opportunities," or "moves to innocence" that attempt to claim legitimacy or absolution for Settlers' occupation of the land while doing nothing to repatriate Indigenous land and life? Are embodied territorial acknowledgments better than nonperformative verbal acknowledgments, statements which sound nice but make nothing happen?
3. Is walking on the land an opportunity to learn from it, to enter into a relationship with it, as Cree Elders have told me?
4. Or are embodied territorial acknowledgments just as fraught as their verbal equivalents? When I'm walking on the land, am I just a colonizer inspecting the property?
5. If I want to acknowledge that Settlers have not lived up to our treaty obligations or to understand the land as sacred, do those intentions make any difference?
6. Are embodied territorial acknowledgments a way to grapple with this country's ongoing practices of colonialism? Or are those practices too complex and deeply rooted for such acknowledgments to make much of a difference?
7. Are embodied territorial acknowledgments significant? Are they a tiny part of the unsettling that decolonization will require? At what point are micropolitics too small to make any difference?

Kimberly Richards

Ambient Audio: Outdoors, a horse trots, neighs, exhales and responds to his rider's gentle words.

In Lethbridge yesterday, the wind gust at fifty miles per hour. I've blown away from my birthplace on several occasions, migrating with and without my family in the search for opportunity. Four months ago, I joined my mother on her four-acre acreage on the traditional lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy; it has been the longest phase I have stayed in this place since I was six. Two of my teachers during this time have been the curious horses I care for and ride in neighbouring farmlands.

In the past 117 days, I have ridden more miles than I have driven, my petro-fuelled ambitions replaced with a living engine sustained by grass and oats. We travel at a speed conducive to noticing daily shifts moderated by wind and sun and rain. We navigate the melting of snow and defrosting of earth and enjoy the migration of geese and the growth of new plant life.

We share in the responsibility of safe transport during our expeditions. In winter, I guide my steed to weave carefully between combined rows where the snow has drifted and ice has formed. In summer, we gallop head-on into the wind, bone balanced on bone, muscle on muscle, bud-da-dum, bud-da-dum.

I listen to the rhythm of his breath, I feel for the fluidity of his joints. My pedagogy consists of the gentle application of pressure, shifts in weight, squeezes of calves until rest is rewarded and the day is lived swishing tails, swatting flies, standing by the water tank, sipping and dripping, chug, chug, chug.

I wonder how many days it would take to ride to Writing-on-Stone, where the Blackfoot people carved renderings of the four-leggeds in stone—maybe three? Maybe four?

Years of farming by people who look like me has destroyed the abundance of native plants that once existed here. The horses do not discriminate between native and non-native plants but delight in the existence of each bush of alfalfa, each head of rye; they live in the moment, never consuming too much, content when they are full, concerned only when a storm is coming, or they spy a potential threat to their safety. They are animated only by the truth of the moment. They are humble about the smallness of their existence and their vulnerability in the world. Pleased with the smallest of gifts, they express their gratitude with trust and kindness.

Virginie Magnat

Ambient Audio: Waves crashing on a Vancouver Island beach.

Traditional song sung in Occitan.

My name is Virginie Magnat, and I shared with you a traditional song from Occitania, a vast territory that stretches from southwestern to southeastern France, where I was born and grew up.

Occitan was my grandparents' language, which was systematically suppressed by education policies that established French as the official national language. Consequently, my generation has been entirely cut off from its ancestral culture and language, which has greatly affected the oral transmission of traditional songs. I've had to piece together my intangible cultural heritage, one song at a time within the remaining fragments of the repertoire. When I reflect on what ancestry means to me, I think about my belonging to a working-class family whose lineage can be traced to generations of resourceful, resilient and strong-spirited peasants from remote rural communities in Occitania, while at the same time charting a different path for myself by being the first in my family to attend university, a personal trajectory that has led me to take on the hybrid identity of scholar-practitioner within the North American field of performance studies.

This journey began when, at the age of fifteen, I was fortunate to receive a merit-based two-year full scholarship to study at Lester B. Pearson United World College, a nonprofit institution promoting international understanding through education and located in the coastal forests of Vancouver Island. What I did not know at the time, however, was that this foundational experience, which literally changed the course of my life and continues to be a source of inspiration for my teaching, research, and creative work, took place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Scia'new First Nation, also known as the Beecher Bay Indian Band. When I was a student at Pearson College in 1982–84, there were no land acknowledgments. The history of colonialism in Canada was never discussed, and the two hundred young people from over sixty-five countries that had all been selected and granted full scholarships to attend this special school and live together on its stunningly beautiful campus were unaware that they were uninvited visitors.

In 2019, I decided to return to Pearson College to teach theatre and to take part in some of the belated yet much-needed initiatives that were underway in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. The academic year opened with the first-ever official welcome by a representative of the Scia'new First Nation, Chief Councilor Russ Chips, who doesn't like prepared speeches because he believes it's much better to speak straight from the heart. In his welcome, he addressed the urgent need to strengthen the relationship between the college and his community and announced the creation of two scholarships specifically dedicated to Scia'new youth. This United World College was founded by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in 1974, so it took forty-six years

for this historic event to unfold. And while I was extremely grateful to have been able to witness it in person, I wish I could have shared this moment with my friend Evan Adams from Sliammon First Nation in Powell River, BC. He was the only Indigenous student throughout our two years together at Pearson College.

In early March, the global pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization, and all Pearson College students were sent home. I experienced the lockdown at my own campus residence at Pearson College, which has given me time to reflect on how I might offer a land acknowledgment as my humble contribution to the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between my alma mater and the Scia'new First Nation, to whom I am forever indebted. My land acknowledgment, therefore, honours the Scia'new people whose main community is located on Beecher Bay in East Sooke, thirty kilometres southwest of Victoria and only ten kilometres from Pearson College. This community traces its ancestry to people who spoke four different languages. The predominant language is now hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓. The Scia'new First Nations website provides important information about the Douglas Treaties, which cover approximately 930 square kilometres, 360 square miles of land around Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy.

The Douglas Treaties specify that the signatories and their descendants would retain existing village sites and fields for their continued use, the liberty to hunt over unoccupied lands and the right to carry on their fisheries as formerly. Yet, despite these promises, Indigenous people on Vancouver Island and throughout British Columbia ended up having fewer rights, less land, and less protection than most of their counterparts in the rest of Canada. To redress these colonial injustices, the Scia'new First Nation has been negotiating with the government of Canada a mother land claim agreement under the British Columbia treaty process. Also, on December 10, 2018, the Scia'new First Nation signed a memorandum of understanding with the district of Metchosin and Pearson College to develop a common vision for the lands in which the college is situated, an accomplishment to which Chief Chips proudly referred when he welcomed students in August 2019.

My land acknowledgment, therefore, pays tribute to the Scia'new First Nation's courageous struggle for self-determination and self-government. Speaking from the heart, I express my hope that this First Nation will regain its rights to manage and control its beautiful ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory. I also hope that Pearson College develops and sustains a respectful, responsible, and reciprocal relationship with its Scia'new host and neighbour.

Selena Couture

Ambient audio: Bird song, footsteps on gravel, traffic in the far distance. Duck quacks a couple of times part-way through.

Hello. My name is Selena Couture, and I am a white settler speaking to you from the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm and səlilw̓ətaʔɬ peoples and the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchim-speaking Sḵwx̱wú7mesh peoples**,** currently known as Vancouver, British Columbia. This is the place where I've been learning how to be a respectful visitor who walks alongside Indigenous people, lands, and other-than-human beings.

I returned here on March 18 from Amiskwacîwâskahikan, Treaty 6 Territory /Métis Region No. 4, where I teach at U of A, which sits on the stolen Papaschase reserve lands, shortly after the pandemic was declared. I came back to shelter in place with my family in East Vancouver.

I say these words of acknowledgment as a way to be in better relation to the lands I occupy—and yet, while I'm saying them, hidden in a closet in my house, I'm also feeling the inadequacy of this exercise. I know where I am and why what I'm saying is important to me. I have no idea where you are—you the person listening to my words—nor do I know "when" you are or "who" you are in relation to the lands you are on while you're listening. Acknowledging territory (as I've been learning from a settler positionality) is about grounding a gathering and clarifying the purpose of being together in a place, at a certain time, to do something and to foreground how *that* gathering might matter to *that* place. Without that synergy of embodiment in place, the words feel much more like a signalling that I'm not one of the bad white people . . . which, of course, mere words can't prove in any way.

All this said, I do have an offering of sound and place for you, reflecting on being present in a complicated landscape where I have both found comfort and implication during the pandemic.

I often walk east of my house toward the Hastings Park Sanctuary, a wetlands project created by digging up old asphalt and removing buildings from the Pacific National Exhibition site. It's a green growing place, and it smells like it. There are so many birds here—small yellow warblers quickly flashing and then disappearing, duck families paddling about and ducking under to eat. The first day I went there, I saw a Great Blue Heron standing on the shoreline, patiently fishing. The smells of pond water, rotting things, dirt, flowers, pollens, and the sounds of birds (even though they are sometimes muffled by the nearby traffic) really do make it feel something like a sanctuary—a place of refuge. I return here as often as possible by myself and eventually with others when we can be together outside.

I return another day with my daughter for a walk, and we're bemused to find that the PNE mini-donut vendors are selling to hundreds of people lined up in their cars. The smell overwhelms the green growing plants and ocean breezes. We walk around the sanctuary and then a bit further to circle the Livestock Building right beside it, where we find the Japanese internment plaque attached to an entrance wall. It says:

> Over 3,000 Japanese Canadian women, children and tuberculosis patients were unjustly detained here under traumatic and deplorable conditions between March 1942–March 1943. A public facility since 1929, the Livestock Building gained national historic significance as a federally authorized wartime marshalling site. The incarceration, confiscation of property, and forced dispersal from the coast of 22,000 innocent Japanese Canadians from 1942 to 1949 was officially acknowledged as unjust by Canada in 1988.
> In commemoration of all Japanese Canadians interned.
> Gaman (Endurance) Giri (Duty) Ganbare (Perseverance)

On another day, I walk around the sanctuary and then go further with a friend downhill toward the inlet and find a place where the shoreline is being restored to saltmarsh, and the local nations have shared hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ words and knowledge regarding plants, tides, and birds. I'll end my audio clip with the words they've put on the signs next to the ocean:

> qeθəlp
> lileʔəlp

sθəʔθqəy̓
xʷele:lp
sələic̓
st̓ᶿaqʷəy̓
k̓ʷal̓əxʷ
sməq̓ʷa
maʔeqʷ

I hope you are well—wherever you are.
Submitted with love and respect.

Dancing the Waterways in Leanne Simpson's *she sang them home*

Cara Mumford

Inspired by essay films meditating on time, travel, and ceremony and informed by cinematic cartography, my short dance film, *sing them home* (2020), travels the specific bodies of water that form the route that Atlantic Salmon once journeyed as they migrated to Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory. Seven specific bodies of water along the route are the sites of exploration of the vision offered in song by Dr. Leanne Simpson (Alderville First Nation) in *she sang them home* that the salmon will return one hundred years from now. Rooted in Nishnaabewin[1] and Indigenous food sovereignty, toward a vision of the collective continuance[2] of Michi Saagiig aki miijim,[3] the film uses movement—a duet between dancer and camera—to activate sites in and on the shores of these lakes and rivers in the present while remembering the past and future of this waterway and her kin.

I am a Métis/Chippewa Cree writer and filmmaker of Anishinaabe descent. "Chippewa Cree" is a reference to my family's migration route after the Riel Resistance at Red River, down through North Dakota to Montana, where we became known as the Landless Chippewa Cree, a group of Cree, Anishinaabe, and Métis families who had been displaced from our homelands. I moved to Peterborough, Ontario, in 2010 to help my mom, who teaches at Trent University.

I created the film in collaboration with dancer and scholar Dr. Jenn Cole, of mixed Algonquin-Anishinaabe ancestry, our fourth collaboration so far. Jenn's research incorporates site-specific dance as a methodology for remapping her home territory of Kiji Sibi/Ottawa River, layering back the stories of the lands and waters and the vibrancy of Indigenous presence, documenting the difficulties of doing so in the aftermath of colonialism.

I have been incorporating dance in my films since 2007, even before I recognized the connection to the Anishinaabe Seven Fires of Creation Story. The final fire of creation is the first human, the first dancer, lowered to the earth with pointed toes so as not to disturb a blade of grass. In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Leanne Simpson wrote about the Creation Story as told to her by Elder Edna Manitowabi, who tells us to insert ourselves into the Creation Story. She stated that after Gzhwe Mnidoo (Creator) lowered her to the earth,

> Gzhwe Mnidoo put her/his right hand to my forehead and s/he transferred all of Gzhwe Mnidoo's thoughts into me. There were so many, that the thoughts couldn't just stay in my head, they spilled into every part of my being, and filled up my whole body. Gzhwe Mnidoo's knowledge was so immense from creating the world that it took all of my being to embody it.
>
> This tells us that in order to access knowledge from a Nishnaabeg perspective, we have to engage our entire bodies: our physical beings, emotional self, our spiritual energy, and our intellect. Our methodologies, our lifeways must reflect those components of our being and

Cara Mumford (Métis/Chippewa Cree) is a filmmaker, writer and collaborative artist from Alberta, living in Peterborough, Ontario since 2010. Cara's short films have screened regularly at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto, and toured throughout Australia and internationally with the World of Women Film Festival. She is currently completing her MFA in film at York University.

> the integration of those four components into a whole. This gives rise to our "research methodologies," our ways of knowing, our processes for living in the world. (Simpson 2011, 42)

I see dance as an act of survivance—Gerald Vizenor's concept that combines survival and resistance—that shares embodied Indigenous knowledge through movement. According to Vizenor, "sovereignty is the right of motion" (1998, 182)—this includes the right to move where we want on the land and how we want in our ceremonies—and that the "sovereignty of motion is survivance" (183).

When movement is connected to a specific site, it includes our embodied relationship with that place (Mojica in Lachance 2018, 100). By remembering that the land is our archive and the body is a source of knowing,[4] the dancer learns "both *from* the land and *with* the land" (Simpson 2014, 7), and together they create meaning from the past, present, and future of human and nonhuman relationships with that place.

Site-specific dance is the best way I know to celebrate and communicate the significance of the land with which I am connected. As Tomson Highway once said, "Dance is a metaphor for being . . . if we cannot dance, we cannot pray" (in Hodgson 1999, 2).

I invite you to consider the making of this dance film as a prayer for the salmon to return.

sing them home*

In June 2012,
the summer before the Winter We Danced,[5]
Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and storyteller Dr. Leanne Simpson
performed what would later be titled, "she sang them home"
behind the Art Gallery of Peterborough,
on the shores of Little Lake.

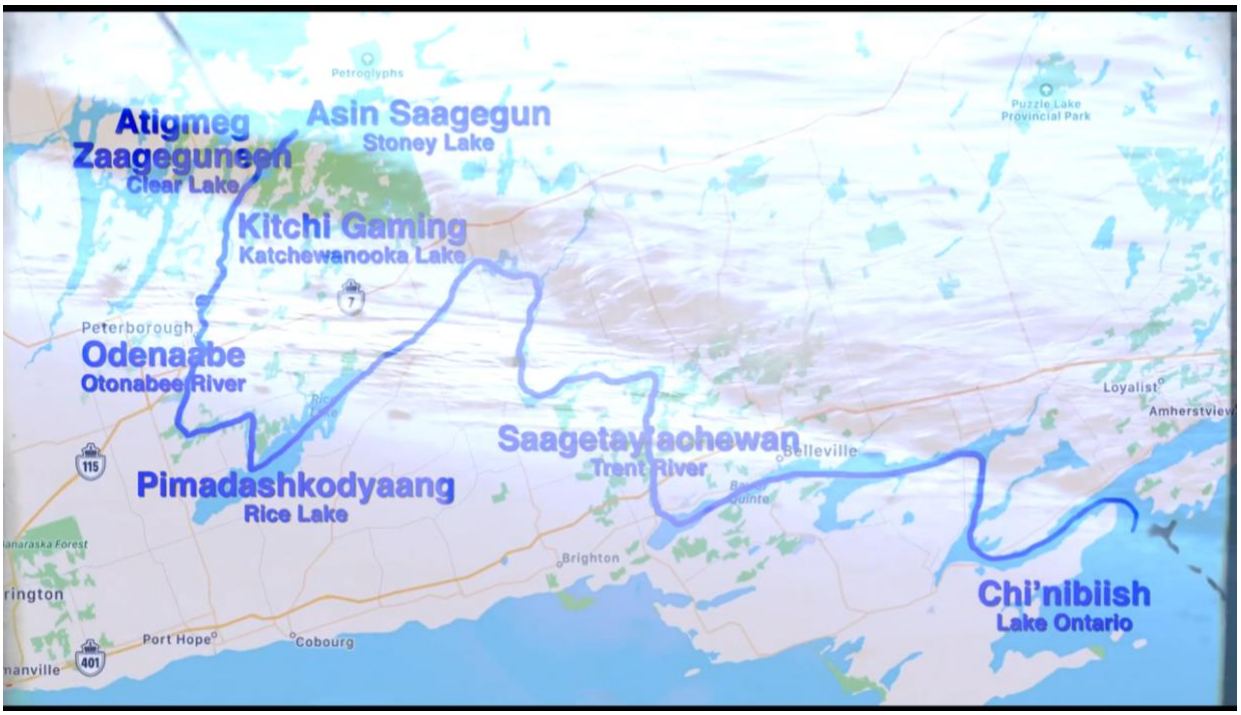
The song is about the first salmon
returning to the territory
one hundred years in the future.

And I began to think about the future I want
rather than the future I fear.

*Aside from journal entries, what follows is the transcript for the short dance film *sing them home* by the author. The film will be available on caramumford.com after January 2022.

Today I take a road trip with dancer and scholar Dr. Jenn Cole
of mixed Algonquin-Anishinaabe ancestry,
To visit each body of water listed in Simpson's song.

Chi'nibiish
Saagetay'achewan
Pimadashkodeyaang
Odenaabe
Kitchi Gaming
Atigmeg Zaageguneen
Asin Saagegun



Map. Film still: Cara Mumford.

It rains on our drive south,
predictions of thunderstorms looming over our trip.

Jenn and I both remember water offerings we've made in the past
followed by downpours of rain,
as if the sky is saying,

"that's not a water offering…
THIS is a water offering."

Journal entry 1: We drive to our first destination on the shore of Chi'nibiish (Lake Ontario) near the entrance to the Bay of Quinte[6] that leads to the mouth of Saagetay'achewan (Trent River). It's an extra hour of driving than the closest access to Lake Ontario, but we are both site-specific land-based artists, and the extra hour of driving is worth it for us. Both Jenn and I consider land-based work and site-specificity an extension of land as pedagogy since the land is both classroom and teacher—context and process—for Indigenous ways of knowing.

Jenn Cole dancing in Chi'nibiish (Lake Ontario). Film still: Cara Mumford.

bozhoo odenaabe
shki maajaamegos ndizhinaakaz
it's been a long time.[7]

We had planned for our next stop to be at one of the locks
but they're still closed to the public because of COVID-19.
I sneak under the warning tape but realize there is no access to the river anyway.

Jenn jokes about banging her head against the lock
in the way we've seen images of salmon throwing themselves against dams,
but we remember that we are trying to imagine
before and after the existence of the lock system,
so we drive up river and find access at a boat launch instead.

Jenn tells me about the dam that came down on the West Coast
and how the river and salmon came through at the same time
and showed each other where to go.

Journal entry 2: I realize here that my thesis for the film is essentially Simpson's thesis for her song. The locks must come down. At some point, I would like to learn the detailed consequences of removing the lift locks. I would like to research the range of opinions regarding full remediation (which has been extremely successful in restoring waterways and bringing back plant and animal species that were thought to be lost to those regions) versus modifying the locks to provide effective fish ladders. I want to learn about the perspectives of Michi Saagiig geographers, ecologists, historians, and futurists on what should happen to these bodies of water. The resulting information may end up in a future, longer version of this film or in the future history of the Red Card world (an ongoing Indigenous Futurisms project of mine). One day I hope those with the knowledge and the power will be able to apply this research and finally restore this essential migration route.

don't worry odenaabe
your wounds from the shackle locks
from the dams
they'll heal now they're gone

Jenn in Saagetay'achewan (Trent River). Film still: Cara Mumford.

I'm entranced by how the sunlight plays on the water,
which feels completely different from how it felt in Lake Ontario.

Our next planned stop is at Hiawatha First Nation on the shores of
Pimadashkodyaang,
known to the settlers as Rice Lake.

Sadly, there is no wild rice growing on Rice Lake anymore
because of the lock system flooding the lake,
destroying a delicate ecosystem,
drowning
the food that grows on the water.
We wonder if Hiawatha is still closed to outsiders because of the virus.
There is a sign on the road in saying that businesses are open between 10 and 6
but that public places are closed.
We wonder if the point of land we are aiming for is considered a public place.

To me it's ceremonial
because I have memories of water walks
starting and ending there.

We drive there and no one stops us, so we film.
Rice Lake has a gentle rhythm that always lulls me into a peaceful trance
and it is through that trance that I film.

Jenn on the shore of Pimadashkodyaang (Rice Lake). Film still: Cara Mumford.

it's this way, i can feel
my lateral line drawing forward
let me let me let me
taste you

The Otonabee River.

Odenaabe.
The river that bubbles like a beating heart.
Jenn says it feels like home.

Jenn in Odenaabe (Otonabee River). Film still: Cara Mumford.

bubbling
beating
birthing
breathing

This territory feels like home to me, too, but it's not.
I am Métis of Anishinaabe descent.
Red River Métis by way of Montana and Alberta.
I am not from here even though I feel connected here.
I am visitor and guest, cousin and kin.

Insider, outsider.

I connect to the land.
Through the land.

Outside in.

Journal entry 3: When reading Trinh T. Minh-Ha's writing on her film, *The Fourth Dimension*, her mention of her insider/outsider status as a Vietnamese filmmaker in Japan resonated with me. As a Chippewa Métis writer and filmmaker whose family settled in Alberta after the Resistance, I feel a similar insider/outsider status in this community. Before becoming familiar with Trinh's work, I struggled to succinctly describe my intention not to speak about or on behalf of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg communities or knowledge keepers; I have now found the language to say it is my intention to speak nearby them.

Katchewanooka Lake
Who does that name come from?
Because the Michi Saagiig I know call it
Kitchi Gaming.

Jenn says her movements feel freer here.

Jenn in Kitchi Gaming (Katchewanooka Lake). Film still: Cara Mumford.

my kobade told her daughter about that feeling
my great grandmother told her daughter
my kookum told her daughter
and my doodoom told me.

it was better than they said.

i've never felt like this
this is the perfect place
it's easy here

We drive around trying to find public access to Clear Lake
Atigmeg Zaageguneen

Google maps failed me here.
The waterfront is all private property: cottages, marinas and massive estates.
We find a claustrophobic access between a house and a boat house
just past the lock near Young's Point.

Jenn says she feels blocked in her movements.
I also feel blocked having only one direction to point my camera.
We drive around some more but find no other easy access
so Jenn says maybe she just needs to lie in the water to see what the lake has to say.
I apologize to the lake for not understanding that she had lessons to teach us.
I try my hand at slow cinema.

Jenn in Atigmeg Zaageguneen (Clear Lake). Film still: Cara Mumford.

careful with me odenaabe
i'm not strong like those old ones.
they fasted and swam up here every year
this is my first time
weweni odenaabe
weweni

We encounter the same lack of access at Stoney Lake.
Asin Saagegun

Jenn knows a public beach on Upper Stoney but it's 20 minutes away.
The sun in almost gone so we race to the beach,
chasing the light.
We miss the beautiful sunset but arrive in time for dusk and mosquitoes.

Jenn in Asin Saagegun (Stoney Lake). Film still: Cara Mumford.

There was bounty here,
sustainable, life sustaining bounty.
Salmon and Rice,
Berries, Leeks, Asparagus, Fiddleheads,
Maple Syrup,
Medicines,
and Clean Water.

Some of it is still here.
All of it could be here again.

My future includes
a sustainable sovereign future in this territory
under Michi Saagiig governance.
My future includes
tearing the locks down
so the salmon can return.

It won't happen all at once,
but it I believe this homecoming will happen, must happen.

If we restore the waterways,
the water will sing them home.

Reflection

Now that I have introduced myself to the bodies of water along the migration route, now that I have waded into each of them, sat in them and let the water move my camera as it responded to Jenn's duet with each lake and river, I feel connected to them in a way I never did before. I find myself wanting to journey the waterway by canoe next to get an even better sense of travelling the water along the migration route that the salmon will take.

The certainty with which I state that the salmon will return to this territory may be seen as naïve or a utopian dream, but utopian dreams serve a practical purpose. When Argentinian filmmaker Fernando Birri talks about utopia, he describes it as being on the horizon: "I will never reach it because if I walk ten steps toward the horizon, the horizon moves ten steps further, and if I walk 20 steps toward the horizon, I will be 20 steps further away. The reason we believe in utopia is because it makes us walk" (quoted in Manrique 2001, 58).

Birri's words make me think of the "long, slow, painful crawl" offered by Elder Shirley Williams as the translation for "Chibiomoodaywin"—the word that Elder Eddie Benton Benai uses for the Anishinaabeg Migration that led to the food that grows on the water (Simpson 2011, 67).

The intersections of these concepts are fundamental to my approach to Indigenous Futurisms, which is integral to looking at the past, present, and future of this waterway. Rooted in culturally specific, site-specific knowledge and driven by a desire for sovereignty and sustainability, my film work pursues that utopia with the hope of inspiring others on the long, slow crawl toward the same horizon.

Notes

1. In "Land as Pedagogy," Leanne Simpson explains that Nishnaabewin (a word she learned from Doug Williams) "is a broad term that in my mind encompasses all that is meant by the term Nishnaabe intelligence" (2014, 8).

2. I am using Kyle Whyte's concept of collective continuance here to describe a society's adaptive capacity with regard to food systems based on our relationships and responsibilities to human and nonhuman kin.

3. Aki mijim literally translates to "land food" and refers to locally harvested food that can be considered representative of Anishinaabeg identity (Pawlowska-Mainville 2020, 62). In this region, two of the most important harvestable foods historically are manoomin and Atlantic salmon, but the salmon no longer travel these waterways.

4. "Remembering the Centrality of Land" and "Remembering the Body as a Source of Knowing" are among the Indigenous Ways of Knowing that form the foundation for Native Performance Culture (Brunette 2010, 150–51) as conceived by Floyd Favel (Cree)—based on teachings by Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)—and Monique Mojica (Kuna/Rappahannock).

5. The Winter We Danced refers to the #IdleNoMore movement (winter 2012–13), a response to Bill C-35, Stephen Harper's omnibus bill that removed protection of 99.9% of waterways in Canada.

6. The salmon migration route and place names in the language used in the song were taught to Simpson by Elder Doug Williams. Unfortunately, the song did not include the Anishinaabe name for the Bay of Quinte—perhaps because it is Mohawk Territory, or perhaps because Simpson only wanted to list seven locations, given that seven is a significant number in Anishinaabe culture. I have yet to ask her.

7. These are the opening lines of Leanne Simpson's song "she sang them home." The lines from the song that were included in the film are woven throughout this piece with Leanne's permission.

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Moving with Whatcom Falls Park: A Score for *Unsettling in* Place

Elan Marchinko

White Butte Trails, Saskatchewan, Treaty 4 territory, 2020: Side-by-side, in a horizontal line, six performers move at a glacial pace. Bound together by one rope, these Indigenous, settler, and arrivant artists are viscerally exploring what it means to be enfolded, implicated within Canadian colonial violence. Elsewhere, someone drags their toes through sand, rocks, and twigs. A body rolls through dry grass and leaves. The names of loved ones are sounded into the air. Iron oxide is deployed to draw an endless, red boundary through the grass. This is *Trespassers Waltz* by the Curtain Razors, a series of co-occurring, multidisciplinary installations and interventions by fifty-two artist collaborators who are investigating themes of trespassing and isolation.[1] Put differently, these artists are injecting into space fifty-two nascent gestures of care and settler responsibility. As per COVID-19 physical distancing protocols, spectators are invited to wander the land. They are guided by the twists and turns of the trees such that they embody its mystery, and each vignette wields an element of surprise (National Arts Centre 2020).[2]

What does it mean to be held up by land on which one is always already a trespasser? In July 2020, amidst COVID-19, I relocated from the territory of the Lenape in New York City, New York, to the ancestral homelands of the Lhaq'temish or Lummi Nation (People of the Sea) and Nooksack Tribe ("always bracken fern roots") colonially known as Bellingham, in Whatcom County, Washington, USA. Due to the complexities of the pandemic, including the closure of the border, I haven't been able to return home to Canada. Moreover, friends and family often ask me how I am "settling in." For a white settler-Canadian who is currently a "resident alien" living in the United States, what does it mean to responsibly unsettle oneself while inevitably "settling in" to a new home on stolen land?

A fourth-generation settler of Ukrainian and mixed British Isles heritage, I have and continue to be held up by these lands and the many nations and people who continue to care for them and to whom I am grateful. I am also thankful for strong internet and communication technology that enables me to visit with loved ones, work with my graduate student cohort, and maintain my dance practice with my teachers on the East Coast. Indeed, platforms such as Skype, Zoom, and Instagram offer portals through which we nourish virtual ecologies of care and kinship. However, I feel disconnected from my new environment here in the Pacific Northwest. Not only are my colleagues in future time (Eastern Standard Time is three hours ahead), but due to glitches and lapses in bandwidth, time moves erratically, freezing then jumping ahead, spilling across what seems like an ever-unfolding present.

For many, distancing and sheltering-in-place protocols have shifted our connections away from the physical spaces we inhabit and onto the flat screenlands of Zoom. Even though the planet is at our fingertips, we are out of step and out of time with each other and with the outside world. The Curtain Razors spotlight multiple ways in which to reroute this temporal discombobulation such that those who are beneficiaries of neocolonialism and who live in relative comfort in these

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unprecedented times embody different rhythms outside of linear, colonial time. Their movement with the uneven terrain invokes how, for non-conformist bodies[3] within white ableist supremacy, "even the smoothest ground is not flat."[4] In other words, the Curtain Razors recruit the limitations of the pandemic to actualize possibilities for settler reckonings with "what lives on" from colonial violence (Dean 2015, 3).[5]

Stumbling toward Decolonization

What follows is my attempt to work through these questions and explore what it might mean to *refuse* to settle into my new home. And so, with Bellingham's Whatcom Falls Park as my performance space, I present a score for *unsettling in* to the Pacific Northwest. Along with the Curtain Razors, I also move with the work of settler scholars such as Paulette Regan, who proposes "unsettling the settler within" as a critical self-reflexivity required to learn from the experiences of residential school survivors and confront our own internalized colonialism (2010), and Denise M. Nadeau who deploys the term "unsettled spirit" to describe her constant practice of reexamining how she makes sense of her relationships with the world and with the earth (2020, 255).

Whatcom Falls Park is an ideal site to stage a score for unsettling in because, like most human-built environments, it is a microcosm of terra nullius practices where capitalist heteropatriarchy cut its teeth into so-called undomesticated wilderness to rehearse mastery over the natural world, superimposing onto it a mythology of discovery while setting its waters on fire. I am referring here to the 1999 explosion of the Olympic Pipe Line Company's liquid fuel pipeline. It is estimated that 277,000 gallons of gasoline infused Whatcom Creek, setting it on fire, killing three people, and doing catastrophic damage to the vegetation and wildlife. Recently, this scenario was repeated on a larger scale when images circulated of ocean fires in the Gulf of Mexico when one of the Pemex oil firm's underwater pipelines burst.[6] Also, many of the articles about Whatcom Falls by travel journalists and bloggers that pop up via a quick Google search punctuate their rich descriptions of the park's beauty and amenities with the same origin story that begins in the early 1900s and obfuscates the site's longer history (Lasbo 2017; Gillard n.d.).[7] Brenda MacDougall, who is a Métis geography scholar, tracks the evolution of historical scholarship vis-à-vis Indigenous knowledge systems of space and place and how these cosmologies might inform historiography as well as geography. MacDougall points out that as a colonial discourse, historical research is predicated on human-centred "relationships to time (continuity or change), but spatial considerations are rarely anything more than setting" wherein this obsession with settlement-focused analysis forecloses "a treatment of the land as a central character worthy of analysis. That is, *when* something happened normally trumps *where* it happened" (2017, 65, emphasis mine). With McDougall's thesis in mind, this score is envisioned partly as an alternative travel guide through the park that attempts to press against its insular history as a built place and attend to its longer story as a space.

This score is also a response to theatre scholar Bethany Hughes's proposal that, as a means to move in a good way, settlers engage in a mindful practice of *guesting* (2019, E-23, emphasis in original).[8] Riffing on Marvin Carlson's theory of ghosting,[9] Hughes, who is a registered member of the Choctaw Nation, describes guesting as "an active and intentional practice of presence" with the intent to honour and support the Indigenous people and spaces that always already inform our everyday lives (E-23). As such, guesting works in opposition to discovering, "which reduces the discovered to a kind of possession, and customer-ing, which commodifies and dehumanizes" and "is focused not on attaining or accreting, but on relationships, humility, and reciprocal nurturance" (E-23). For Hughes, guesting proceeds through five important elements: impermanence, dependence,

relationship, precedence, and reciprocity (E-24). And so, I incorporate each element into my score as a prompt to further examine the stakes of *unsettling in* to life in the Pacific Northwest. Importantly, Hughes reminds us that "in an Indigenous worldview, hosts include the land, water, nonhuman animals, and more-than-human presences" (E-24). Due to ongoing physical distancing restrictions in greater Whatcom County, my score is limited to the non- and more-than-human hosts surrounding the falls. I will need further pause to think through my responsibility toward the Lummi and Nooksack peoples on whose ancestral territories I now move. I would also like to note that, as an imperfect strategy to offset my white settler body from the centre of analysis, I have chosen to include only my photographs of the land and water instead of a film of myself moving through the space.

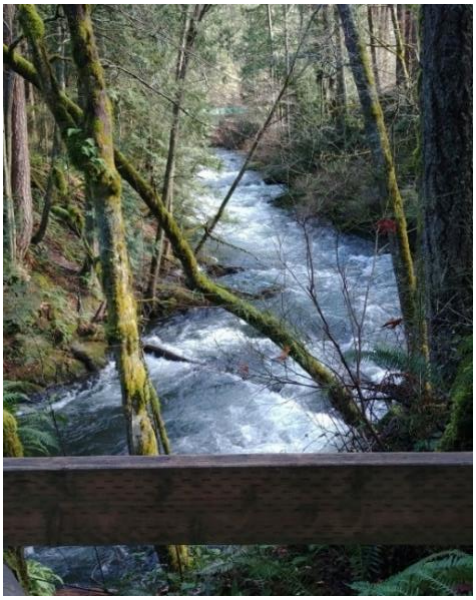
The Score

1. Impermanence: "Guesting is by nature impermanent," writes Hughes. "Guests are not resident owners. They come to a place already occupied, already owned. They come to a specific place, a place that existed prior to their arrival and prior to their needs as guests" (Hughes 2019, E-24). Escaping the roar of traffic on Lakeway Drive, the main road intersecting with the south entrance to the park, I begin my ascent up the gravel path to Whatcom Falls Park. I begin to tune my ear to the sound of the wind in the trees and the crunch of gravel under my feet as I walk in a moderate but steady rhythm. I think about the rocks that have occupied the earth for billions of years. They precede me and will proceed after me. I am impermanent, a mere snapshot in their time.

The path into Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

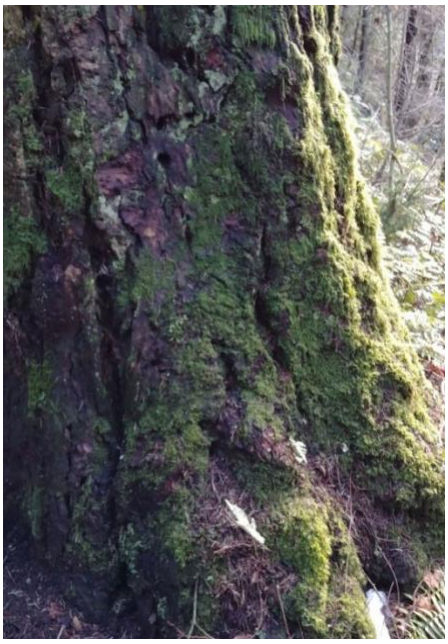
Close-up of the constellation of rocks, stones, and pine needles on the path into Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

2. Dependence: "Guesting reminds us that we are under the authority of our hosts. We are not preeminent. We are dependent. One can only be dependent upon someone/something" (Hughes 2019, E-24.). I take an even closer look at the constellation of rocks embedded in the ground. I am reminded that I am never completely standing my ground. Rather, the ground, as my host, is holding me up. And although I need the ground for support in these unprecedented, lonely times, the earth, the gravel, and the rocks do not need me. Although I stand on top of them, I am under their authority.



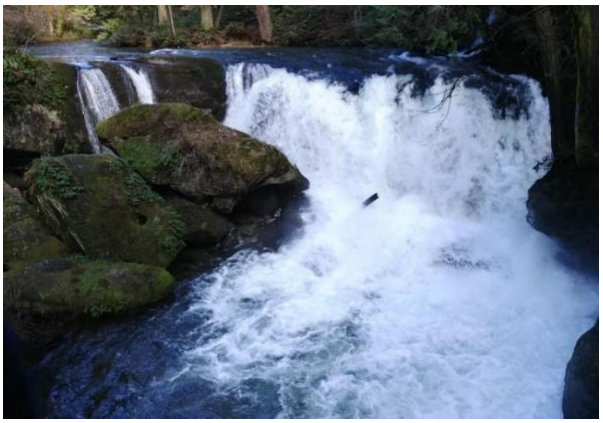
Whatcom Creek, Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

3. Relationship: "Dependency requires relationship. One is always the guest of someone, of someone who is real and alive" (Hughes 2019, E-24). I pass by a large oak tree. Its trunk is climbing with lichen. What does it mean to be the guest of slow-growing lichen? To dance with a tree in a pas de deux-like exchange of carbon and oxygen? Thinking through relational movement, Erin Manning writes, "Movement is one with the world, not body/world, but body-worlding. We move not to populate space, not to extend it or to embody it, but to create it" (2009, 13). What does it mean to body-world with an oak tree? How do I ask a tree for consent to world together and blur the boundary between human and nonhuman, where this dissolution is a practice that takes time, and that doesn't occur perfectly in the first instance, if ever?



Lichen climbs an oak tree, Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

4. Precedence: "The inherent relationship within guesting precedes the acts of guesting and hosting. Not only do hosts exist prior to a guest's arrival, but the relationship enabling the guest to arrive preexists their arrival too" (Hughes 2019, E-24). The first set of falls are in view. On the bridge, I feel the force of the falls, the mist on my face, and the vibrations of their rumbling and thrashing. How do the falls preexist me as their guest when their waters are never the same?



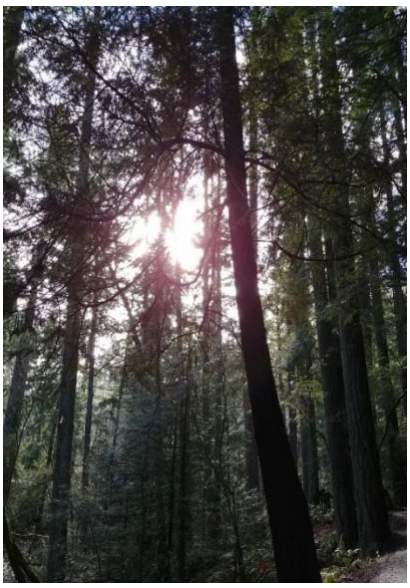
The falls, Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

5. Reciprocity: "Guesting well demands healthy relationships that invite respect, reciprocity, generosity, listening, conflict resolution, boundaries, and joy. Guesting is practising reciprocity in the interest of generously supporting your host. It implies obligations for the guest. Guesting is a practice that encompasses and accounts for all those relationships. It is not simple nor formulaic. Bringing flowers and wine as a hostess gift will not be enough. Guesting requires thoughtful, intentional, holistic practices in thought, speech, and action" (Hughes 2019, E-24). Having descended the gravel path, I hop back onto the sidewalk. Outside of being a tidy visitor, how do I engage reciprocally with the falls and all that the space holds in a responsible, meaningful way?

Park exit to Lakeway Drive, Bellingham, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

Reflection

As I amble back down to Lakeway Drive, my molecular structure is forever altered by the mist of the falls, the deep memory of the rocks, and the slow growing lichen. The lull of the oak trees coalesces with the roar of the main road, softening the hard concrete. *Even the smoothest ground is not flat.* Circling back to the Curtain Razors and their *Trespassers Waltz*, artistic associate Terri Fidelak describes the piece as "uncomfortable. A big part of the process is just being okay with the discomfort" (National Arts Centre 2020, n.p.). And as Hughes reminds us, "Guesting well takes time" (2019, E-24). It's okay to have more questions than answers as I stumble along this uneven path of settler responsibility. After all, stumbling is a suspension within movement without necessarily arriving. And so, I will continue . . . slowly . . . imperfectly . . . necessarily.



Sun peeking through cedar trees, Whatcom Falls Park, February 17, 2021. Photo: Elan Marchinko.

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Much gratitude is owed the editors of this special issue (Jenn Cole and Melissa Poll) for their infinite patience and guidance in the writing of this piece. Thank you also to the anonymous reviewers for their rigorous feedback, and to my colleague, Signy Lynch, for pointing me toward *Trespassers Waltz*.

Notes

1. Many thanks to Curtain Razors artistic associate Johann Bundon for providing the exact number of participating artists. According to the National Arts Centre (2020, n.p.) event page for *Trespassers Waltz*, these include artist leads Kris Alvarez, Johann Bundon, Terri Fidelak, Jayden Pfeifer and Joey Tremblay; production management Andrew Manera, Zoe Barclay-Wright; participating artists Iftu Ahmed, Rania Al-Harthi, Skyler Anderson, Julianna Barclay, Sarah Bergbusch, Teddy Bison, Belle Brown-McEwen, Heather Cameron, Elizabeth Curry, Raphaële Frigon, Fran Gilboy, Benjamin Ironstand, Zoë James, Kendra Kembel, Jay Kimball, Night Kinistino, Pete Kytwayhat, Barbara Meneley, Aren Okemaysim, Orion Paradis, Karley Parovsky, Janelle Pewapsconias, Jessie Ray Short, Ben Schneider, Zenaya Semple, Krista Solheim, Judy Wensel, Misty Wensel, Isabella Wishlow, I-Ying Wu; collaborators Jeff Morton and Edith Skeard (Bell Dreams); Traci Foster, John Loeppky, Emil Schmuck, Natasha Urkow, Ammanda Zelinski (Listen to Dis'); Olive Crozier, Ray Crozier, Iris James, Zoë James, Lazlo Wensel Paradis, and Lilla Fayant (Truly Unruly).

2. *Trespassers Waltz* examines the colonial relationship as exacerbated by trespass laws, which were amended in 2019 as the province's response to the murder of Colten Boushie, a young Cree man and member of Red Pheasant Cree Nation (Martin, 2020, n.p.). Colten Boushie was killed by gunshot on August 9, 2016, when he and four friends drove onto the property of white landowner Gerald Stanley because their vehicle had a flat tire. Stanley was acquitted of the crime.

3. I am referring to Hansen and Lanz's use of the term nonconformist bodies to describe the ways in which some bodies do not fit within the normative standards ascribed by ableist, capitalist supremacy (2009, 29). More recently, Hansen deploys nonconformist bodies to highlight the multiple ways in which people are physically, sensorily, or mentally in the world (2020, n.p.). This term is also helpful in thinking through how racialized bodies transgress and refuse to conform to standards underwritten by whiteness.

4. I am alluding to anti-Black violence and the murders in the United States by police of George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, among many others. Similar to Harvey Young's tracing of the Black body as a "second body, an abstracted and imagined figure" that "shadows or doubles the real one" (2010, 7), First Nations, Métis, and Inuit subjectivities are violently obfuscated by a limited number of tropes that deny their right to be viewed as human. Furthermore, in his analysis of performance artist William Pope.L's crawls, dance scholar André Lepecki describes them as "not only a profound critique of whiteness and blackness, of verticality and of horizontality, but also a general critique of ontology, a general critique of the kinetic dimension of our contemporaneity, and a general critique of abject processes of subjectivization and embodiment under the racist-colonialist machine—all by proposing a particular form of moving after the Fanonian stumble" (2006, 88).

5. Amber Dean questions what it means for a wider public to care about gendered racial violence regarding disappeared Indigenous women on Vancouver's Lower East Side (2015).

6. Diana Taylor deploys the term scenario to spotlight the persistent repetition of scenes of discovery over time. She writes, "scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries—sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution" where there are a limited number of possible, but adaptable, endings (2003, 13). Furthermore, scenarios "like performance, means never for the first time" (28).

7. In 1908, a group called the Young Men's Commercial Club colonized trails into the falls to transform it into a park. Then, in 1914, ownership of the park was transferred to the City of Bellingham, where a women's group called the Whatcom Falls Park Club added wooden bridges, picnic shelters, and helped design the landscaping and purchased land next to the park, connecting it to the downtown to make it more accessible to Bellingham residents. By the 1930s, the park was fully operated by the city (U.S. History, n.p.).

8. Hughes's article is a response to the proceedings of the 2018 ATHE conference in Boston, Massachusetts, "Theatres of Revolution: Performance, Pedagogy, and Protest." As part of the exploration of the conference theme, participants attended excursions to Plimoth Plantation, the nonprofit living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, that focuses on Pilgrims and Wampanoag in the seventeenth century.

9. Hughes suggests that if ghosting is that which *returns* to a physical or metaphysical space, as Carlson proposes, then guesting is the intentional act of coming to that space (2019, E-24, emphasis mine).

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Dis/locating Preferential Memory within Settler Colonial Land*scapes*: A Forward-Looking Backward Glance at Memoration's Per/formation

Leah Decter

Introduction

This paper introduces "memoration," a methodology I have developed over an extended period through my intermedia art practice and interdisciplinary scholarship.[1] The term memoration is a neologism reflecting the critical *activation* of the personal (*memory*) and the collective impulse to recall (*commemorate*). Memoration uses strategies that bring relational embodiment into conjunction with place/land in order to perform interventions into aspects of public, national, and personal memory tied to the transmission, substantiation, and dominance of settler whiteness in settler colonial states. In contexts such as the lands now known as Canada, the imperative of masking concomitant colonial and white supremacist ideologies embedded in the nation-building project heightens the stakes of what is remembered and forgotten. As scholar and educator Leigh Patel argues, a settler state "needs a story that can obscure its violently consumptive structure" (2015, para. 4). Sanitized versions of national narratives are commonly propagated through authorized sites of commemoration such as monuments. Among many examples in the Canadian context, this is illustrated by monuments that lionize figures such as Canada's first prime minister, John A Macdonald, without reference to his regressive policies, including the Gradual Civilization Act (1858), the Indian Act (1876), the Chinese Immigration Act (1885), and Indian Residential Schools (1883–1996),[2] and Edward Cornwallis, the "founder" of Halifax and governor of Nova Scotia, who was responsible for the genocidal "Scalping Proclamation" (1749) against Mi'kmaq people.[3]

While monuments, as purveyors of public memory, certainly help shape dominant understandings of nation, the circulation of ascendant national ideations is not contingent upon official modes of recollection. Vernacular sites and commonplace visual and material culture, as often tacit yet powerful agents of commemoration, also contribute to producing and substantiating a nation's "preferred memory" and the stories that go along with it (Lehrer and Milton 2011, 3). Again, referencing the Canadian context, these preferential national/public memories and narratives can be found in physical sites such as national parks, which enlist the public to perform connections between "Canadian-ness" and wilderness that recall the notion of terra nullius on which this country was "founded,"[4] and in this way support a story of Canadian sovereignty as "exclusive authority" over Indigenous lands (Bird and Corntassel 2017, 196). Material culture such as the Hudson Bay point blanket, as an iconic form of "Canadiana," performs a similar function by perpetuating within mainstream public memory stories of the fur trade and early colonial "contact" as the bedrock of nation-building in ways that are washed clean of the violence of colonial invasion including implications of the blanket's role in spreading disease in Indigenous communities.[5]

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As curator and scholar Erica Lehrer and historian Cynthia E. Milton suggest, artistic interventions that "activate, re-activate and de-activate" (2011, 8) institutional and other representations of the preferred public memory can highlight new ways of being and thinking. I propose memoration as a methodology for launching this type of intervention into implicit and explicit forms of commemoration with the aim of disturbing dominant Canadian mythologies, narratives and beliefs that are harbingers of stasis and denial and contributing to the potential of structural change generated by decolonial paradigms. In doing so, memoration provides a framework for "remembering otherwise" (Herscher 2011, 152) that activates a reckoning with the intergenerational responsibilities of being-in-relation,[6] in my case as a white settler, on Indigenous lands that are at the same time occupied and unceded. I suggest that by inciting critical place-responsive embodied forms of re-collection, re-cognition, and re-imagining, memoration interrogates idealized conceptions of the past and subverts their manifestations in the present with a view toward a future of otherwise possibilities.

Understanding my intersectional subject positions(s)—as an Ashkenazi Jewish white settler woman who is privileged to work as an artist and academic—vis-à-vis colonial structures and recognizing how I am implicated within their oppressive systemic operations has been essential to my deliberately unsettling investigations.[7] Situating the personal as a foundation from which to ethically ground these inquiries and articulations has also been central to this work. As I will discuss, by drawing my personal history and present location(s) into a conscious reckoning with the larger national and global histories and narratives that bear upon them, I cultivate a practice of critical self-reflexive interrogation-in-relation. A recognition of the ways memoration exists *in relation* has been vital to my development of it over the past fifteen years, as well as to the way I deploy it. Consequently, it is carried out in conversation and in parallel with decolonial and antiracist movements and is deeply informed by BIPOC artistic production, scholarship and activism, and by BIPOC colleagues who face a greater risk than I in generating such work. These ongoing commitments to looking critically and carefully both inward and outward—to learning and unlearning while keeping an understanding of my complicities in focus—shape the foundation of memoration as a relational, grounded, situated, and accountable methodology. In what follows, I discuss memoration as a parallel "Critical White Settler Project" (Decter 2018, 15) that aims to contribute to goals of decolonial and antiracist movements through artistic production from a white settler perspective because I have developed and deployed it from that positionality. However, I suggest, as a collection of strategies for remembering, listening, and relating "otherwise," it can be adapted from a number of perspectives to address a variety of contexts.

I do not claim memoration as an entirely new or unique practice but rather name it as a distinct set of intersecting strategies and theories that comprise a methodological approach. In order to tease out the central features of memoration in this text, I take a forward-looking backward glance at its beginnings, and I also provide a glimpse into its development and ongoing evolution. I begin by considering aspects of memory, history, and commemoration as they relate to the formation of a public memory and a nation's dominant stories. A discussion of the vernacular as an implicit yet highly effective—and affective—mode of commemoration is followed by a brief examination of the capacity for artistic practices to press upon taken-for-granted narratives, relations, and values through interruptions to forms of public memory. The next section provides insight into the early stages of memoration's development, focusing on a close reading of the first iteration of my performance/video work *Imprint* (2006–10), which I retrospectively identify as memoration's inception. In this examination, I call attention to the ways in which remembering and strategic forgetting are enlisted to calcify national narratives, and I highlight how *Imprint* intervenes in

normative ideas about land, place and emplacement, and constructions of national identity and belonging. I move on to elaborate on key aspects of memoration and how they have developed in the intervening years and conclude by introducing a recent video work, *l i s t e n* (2020), which indicates some new directions I am pursuing as memoration continues to evolve.

Public Re-collection and the Work of Remembering Otherwise

As authorized repositories of "heritage," sites of commemoration, such as monuments, work to inculcate and maintain a nation's dominant values by mediating the landscape of public memory. The degree to which monuments perpetuate deep-seated practices of selective remembering and forgetting by celebrating historical figures tied to colonial and white supremacist narratives has arguably never been more evident than in recent times. In the middle of 2020 and the midst of the global COVID 19 pandemic, the murder by police of Black Americans George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, as part of an ongoing pattern of racialized violence, propelled a groundswell of people into the streets around the world. These sustained actions, led by and/or mobilized in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, foregrounded the ubiquity of systemic violence faced by Black people within the US and internationally and highlighted the urgent need for racial justice across a range of contexts.

A number of the protests coalesced around or directly encountered monuments, which shone a bright light on the correlation between the systemic implications of white supremacy (including concomitant settler colonial logics) and the capacity for monuments to charge a nation's public memory by preserving skewed versions of history. In other words, these interactions with official sites of commemoration pointed to the ways monuments insistently torment those for whom the figures represented denote historical and contemporary oppression and violence against their very existence on a day-to-day basis, perpetuate dominant narratives and beliefs, and, in turn, substantiate the systemic inequities that make state violence against BIPOC people and other forms of oppression possible, permissible, and ultimately normalized. This attention also highlighted the imperative of addressing the powerful role monuments play in conditioning the ways lives are lived. Artists and activists responded in arguably unprecedented numbers by registering the archives of their own flesh and blood bodies against the calcified historical accounts embedded within the lionized stone and bronze-cast figures.[8] They toppled statues, pushed them into rivers, splattered them with paint, covered them with graffiti, gathered around them, projected upon them, and performed into and onto them.[9] By sharply challenging the narratives embodied in public monuments and refusing to let their presence continue undisturbed, the primacy of preferred national memories and narratives that condition and sanction systemic oppression was summarily rejected.

The critique of monumental influences on dominating national narratives—the archives of remembering and forgetting manifested by the monument that were so soundly tested in 2020—has a significant lineage. Focusing primarily on the post-WWII German context, scholar and curator James E. Young suggests that the monument's material form provides a simplified and expedient scripting of history that absolves the public of having to perform "memory-work." Young asserts: "It is as if once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember" (2000, 94). Moreover, if one is to be provoked by the monument to remember at all, albeit in this passive manner, the content of memory is dictated in line with the state's agenda. Much like the conjoined mythologies and ideologies they substantiate, monuments

deliver a version of historic certainty devoid of the "hidden, stolen and silenced narratives" (Lauzon 2011, 79) that might instil an uncomfortable haunting into self-aggrandizing national remembrance. While allowing for the passivity of relinquishing memory-*work*, the monument simultaneously inculcates dominant stories into public space and the dominant national imaginary. In this sense, monuments help to align public memory in lockstep with privileged social and political logics by directing what is remembered, eclipsed, and erased, while signalling how remembrance is to be discharged and regulated.

Young suggests that while the monument performs a prescriptive role in transmitting the privileged public memory, the counter-monument asks the viewer to undertake a more complex encounter with both the substance and process of memory. The counter-monument seeks to transfer the memory burden from the fixed representation harboured within the traditional monument as an object into the minds and bodies of members of the public themselves. The counter-monument aims to foster a dynamic engagement with the *act* of remembrance in which the viewer takes on the labour of commemoration. Young emphasizes the importance of such an ongoing process, suggesting that the counter-monument should bring the past into the present by actively engaging the viewer in order to provoke an inquisitive stance. As such, the counter-monument points to specific memory-knowledge that is in danger of slipping from the public record while also alluding to the ways in which people either evade or accept the responsibility of remembering. In this sense, Young's counter-monument appeals for both the recuperation of particular histories and deliberations over the activation of public memory-work itself; for a fulsome enactment of remembering *and* a vigilant posture against forgetting.

Expanding on Young's characterization of the monument and counter-monument in a discussion of politically grounded artistic interventions in post-Yugoslavia Kosovo, architectural historian Andrew Herscher advocates for a practice of "remembering otherwise." This, he asserts, is a form of critical memory work that exceeds the binary of remembering and forgetting by incorporating "the many multiple forms that remembrance can take, some of which may appear as forgetting," and doing so in resistance to representations of "state sponsored memory," such as that which is commonly found in the monument. In taking up the monument as fodder in this way, artistic incursions can directly and obliquely address the layering of histories *and* erasures endorsed by the monument itself, as well as performing practices of remembering and forgetting that extend outside of the monument's transmissions.[10] Such interventions can undermine the practice of national remembering with currents of remembering otherwise, re/con/figuring the monument as an important site of intervention and a "medium of political discourse and action" (Herscher 2011, 152).

As I have discussed, there is certainly an urgency for practices of remembering otherwise to be applied to monuments as official forms of remembrance that insinuate themselves into public space as representatives of preferential narratives and beliefs that ultimately impact people's lives. However, while these official sites undoubtedly shape the dominant imaginary, vernacular forms of commemoration that reside in the informal facets of our everyday lives and spaces are also powerfully influential in the circulation of the nation's ascendant ideation. Much like the monument, the commonplace is mediated by scripted and skewed interpretations of the past that have been calcified into the present. As scholar and curator Monica Patterson contends, "things and traces, architectures and places, landscapes and spaces all work to constrain and promote particular memories" (2011, 145). In Canada, this re-performance of pernicious everyday aggressions is a current that runs through things, traces, architectures, places, landscapes, and spaces that are often

held dear by mainstream society and, in this way, forms an underpinning of entitlement that elides the reality of complicities and serves the erroneous perception of innocence.

Through that which is represented—and, notably, that which is not—everyday commemorations perform a constant surreptitious reiteration that schools normative thinking into all aspects of society, shaping dominant national identities and stories as naturalized. Familiarity often conceals the correlations between dominating ideologies and the material, visual, spatial, and relational facets of our everyday lives. As a result, the commonplace is frequently experienced with little or no attention to its connection with, for example, settler colonial nation-building and the logics of white supremacy. These seemingly inadvertent acts of repudiation overlook the presence of anything capable of upsetting the comfortable narratives that condition beliefs and relationships. In turn, this pedagogical opacity entrenches narratives, mythologies, and relations that serve dominant culture. The everyday thus functions as a site of actualization for the official remembering (and forgetting) that instils dominant stories and values within the mainstream public memory. Similar to the monument, the ubiquity and potency of informal commemorations offer significant opportunities for artistic interventions that incite a form of "radical defamiliarization" (States 2010, 35). Memoration is largely directed toward defamiliarizing common-place elements of national and personal memory which, while they perform a similar function as their more formal counterparts, often go unnoticed. In this sense, memoration draws strategies of remembering otherwise into the interstitial spaces between the preferred interpretations of personal and national memories that inhabit the day-to-day as de facto "narration[s] of truth" (A. Simpson 2016, 444).

Imprint: Setting the Scene

The *Imprint* iterations form a foundation for memoration by interrupting national and personal re-collections and questioning the "truth" within both the content and construction of the myths they produce. This series of performance and video works is underpinned by explorations of my maternal zaida's (grandfather's) experiences of loss and displacement preceding his arrival to Canada, and the ways in which the resulting lacunas filter through generations to be embodied within the present. Interrogating his transit led me to consider the ways translocations to the lands we call Canada—even if perpetuated by dislocation and oppression—fold into the project of colonial dis/possession[11] and prompted me to reexamine related familial, cultural, and national narratives. Together, the iterations of *Imprint* speak to the ways migrations such as my zaida's function as instruments of colonial settlement and how these (and related) factors situate contemporary presences such as mine. These investigations raise questions about the repetition of familiar settler narratives, such as those that situate hardship and hard work as avenues for settler emplacement and entitlement. Moreover, they highlight the capacity for such stories to distance contemporary "settlers" and our/their ancestors from colonial nation-building by erasing correlations with colonial invasion and ongoing occupation. While this was not the first work in which I tackled questions of settler colonial nation-building, contending with these *particular* correlations led me to further interrogate the ways I am implicated in histories and contemporary guises of settler colonial domination. Following this trajectory has led me to a process of reckoning with my intergenerational responsibilities as a white settler committed to forms of co-resistance that co-posit decolonial ways of being and relating.

The first iteration of *Imprint*, a durational performance for the camera that became the substrate for multiple video iterations, is the version on which I will focus here. It took place on the outskirts of

Winnipeg in January 2006 and is set within a quintessentially Canadian winter landscape—an expansive, flat field thickly blanketed with snow. The white-grey ground-plane of the field and the uniformly overcast sky would be almost indistinguishable in this vista if not bisected by a black fringe of leafless trees that form a distant horizon line. A snowstorm insists its presence into this familiar prairie scene with increasing ferocity over the length of the performance, blowing nearly sideways by its conclusion. Within this setting, dressed in an outsized black overcoat, bulky hat, and winter galoshes, I carry out two interconnected actions that are repeated over several hours. They are gestures that trace time, agency, and dis/possession. One echoes the Jewish custom in which visitors place pebbles on a gravestone, and the other embodies settler desires embedded in Western modes of territorial claim. Moving in a straight line away from the camera, I carry a stone roughly the size of a small loaf of bread out into the distance, footprints marking the snowy field. I stop, turn to the left, and with a series of right-hand turns, I pace a large rectangle. I turn again to enter this frame, now delineated by my tracks in the snow, walk to its centre, and place the stone on the snowy ground, and subsequently one atop the other. After pausing to look westward into the distance, I exit the paced enclosure and walk directly toward the camera, returning to retrieve another stone. As the storm intensifies and these actions are repeated, a transitory perimeter is etched and re-etched onto the snow's shifting surface. At its centre, the stones accumulate in an increasingly visible pile, a growing geological bruise that mars the skin of the snowy expanse.

Leah Decter, *Imprint* (performance documentation) (2006). Videographer: Erika MacPherson.

A Tension to Memory and the Agency of Embodied Repertoires

References to the Jewish cultural practice of placing a small stone on a grave to mark one's visit, which I invoke in *Imprint,* are an integral part of my artistic lexicon. Speculations as to the origins of this tradition vary; however, the one I draw upon suggests it derives from the practice of rebuilding deteriorated stone cairns when visiting a burial site. In re-piling the stones, visitors mark both their commitment to maintaining this trace and the grave itself. This action simultaneously summons the

past, present, and future, given that a visitor will be able to find the grave only by virtue of the previous visitor's re-marking. As a measure of care that was once utilitarian, this practice has evolved into a symbolic act of marking that situates memory alongside duty across time. I don't interpret this gesture as nostalgic or even primarily as a reference to the *subject* of remembrance. Instead, in showing that someone has at/tended the burial site, it highlights the intentionality of the visitor and suggests a choice to take responsibility for the *activation* of remembering as a form of deliberate maintenance.

While the evocation of this custom in my work draws upon, situates, and implicates my Ashkenazi Jewish background, I also map its meanings into broader social contexts. It can simultaneously direct the viewer's attention to the activation of accountable forms of remembrance and, conversely, to the ways memory is often instrumentalized for destructive ends. As an intentional act, it can reflect carefully considered forms of memory-work that trigger critical action and change. Yet, as an established custom, it also implies the dogged and unexamined reiteration of well-worn habits and tropes. In its original form, the act of re-piling served a practical purpose of re/identifying the location of the interment. Carried forward into the present and future, it functions as part of a repertoire that has the capacity to, as performance theorist Diana Taylor suggests, "both keep and transform choreographies of meaning" (2003, 20). In this way, the gesture evokes the continuance and the evolution of cultural practice. It also recalls the stubborn re/production of preferred public and personal memory in the service of substantiating normative thinking and, conversely, a critical act of remembering otherwise. Consequently, its performance in *Imprint* signals both the ways I am implicated within projections of dominant public memory and my intentional acts in disturbing their assumptions.

Leah Decter, *Imprint* (performance documentation) (2006). Videographer: Erika MacPherson.

The spectre of a pile of stones in a prairie expanse has many connotations beyond that of a cairn. My reference for this is the familiar sight of heaps of stones often found along the fence lines and in

the corners of cultivated fields. From this perspective, the pile recalls modes of "settlement" and the clearing of land for what was erroneously seen by colonizers as the superior practice of "British husbandry." This reference to European agrarian practices transposed to the lands we call Canada, as well as other colonially invaded territories, also recalls the notion of "terra nullius," which was used to justify European dominion over Indigenous lands through expediently fluid definitions that characterized the land first as empty and later, underused or "improperly" used. A pile of stones in a cultivated field may also call to mind the stringent conditions of clearing and cultivating the land imposed on Métis people who received land as a consequence of taking scrip[12] (Cheryl L'Hirondelle, conversation and correspondence with the author, 2014, 2017). A number of people who have seen the *Imprint* videos have also remarked that the pile of stones evokes the "grandfathers" collected for use in sweat lodges in many Indigenous cultures.[13] If the extended geological temporality suggested by the rigid flesh of the stones themselves is considered, they can be understood as archives of a more-than-human body; as archiv*ers* or witnesses to the histories, presents, and futures of the places they inhabit. The pile of stones thus takes on a tenor of extended temporalities and geographical specificities. It also evokes the human and more-than-human inter-narratives of a place: stories that, although often existing disjunctively, nonetheless do so in relation. In this way, stones recall the divergent experiences and worldviews that both bind us together and separate us in uneasy tension within this land through powerful points of dis/connection.

Landing Mythologies and Lineages

Demonstrating the place-responsive nature of memoration, *Imprint* embeds my embodied presence and my interactions with the stones into a land/scape of significance. Not only is the land the literal subject of contestation in the settler state, but land*scape* is a powerful symbolic referent that undergirds colonial invasion and the ongoing Canadian nation-building project of "settlement" as a de facto colonial occupation. The possession and exploitation of land by the settler state and society lie at the heart of colonization, while the assertion and realization of Indigenous sovereignty and corresponding rights to the land—illicitly obtained and dispersed by the state—form the crux of decolonization (see Alfred 2005; Coulthard 2014; Tuck and Yang 2012). Land*scape*, as a politically, socially, and culturally mitigated representation, is often integral to the production of national allegiances and identities. As historian Simon Schama argues, "National identity . . . would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated and enriched as a homeland" (1995, 15). This is certainly the case in the Canadian context, in which conceptions of wilderness landscape propagated by the Group of Seven and still circulated in representations of their paintings, both in museums and through all manner of household products and décor (including coffee mugs, stationery, throw pillows, wall calendars, and placemats), endure as a "quasi-official image of Canadian national identity" (O'Brian and White 2007, 13) that enfolds neatly into colonial logics. Accordingly, enlisted as both land—the very raison d'être of colonization—and landscape, a significant undercarriage for the myths that perpetuate colonial ideologies and practices, the setting for *Imprint* plays just as integral a role as my actions.

The stormy frozen landscape of *Imprint*'s setting brings to mind the common Canadian trope of the "great white north," a descriptor that draws together notions of nature, wilderness, and race to underscore the normative conception of Canada as a white nation, albeit with a "colourful" yet constrained "mosaic" provided by official multiculturalism. Myths of the great white north substantiate the Canadian state and white settler population as innocent, privileged, and superior as a way of legitimizing both the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and nations and the exploitation

and management of BPOC subjects.[14] This notion of the great white north has made appreciable contributions to shaping ideas of Canadian identity by explicitly tying place to race. Indeed, when Group of Seven member Lawren Harris wrote about "the great North and its living whiteness" (Harris 1926, 85) to distinguish a nascent Canadian identity from that of the United States, he not only invoked snowy landscapes, he also clearly characterized Canadian identity as white (see Watson 2007). This was not the reality in Canada or the United States at that time; nor, of course, is it today. Canada was and still is, however, a nation that diligently insists upon white*ness* as that by which all else is measured. These associations with the great white north, and the racist and colonial desires they betray, continue to be deeply imbricated in contemporary Canadian nation-building. The image of the great white north in *Imprint*, represented by the familiar landscape and the insistent winter storm, speaks to the ways in which such ubiquitous tropes insidiously condition the preferred public memory and white settler imaginary, and thus what is privileged as the Canadian national identity. Inserting my body into this ideologically driven geographical scene both disturbs and implicates me within the dominant national psyche that dictates who counts as a "Canadian-Canadian" (Mackey 2002, 20), or, in the highly offensive words of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who should be accommodated as "old stock Canadians" (2015). I will state here that I consider myself implicated in this way as a white settler subject in the present, even though there are certainly times within Canada's history in which these categories would not have included my Jewish ancestors.

Leah Decter, *Imprint* (performance documentation) (2006). Videographer: Erika MacPherson.

The rectangle I pace traces my presence and labour and references the colonial process of reworking Indigenous land into property through imperial cartography, the staking of claim, and logics of possession. Scottish anthropologist Tim Ingold characterizes such delineations as "lines of occupation" inscribed by imperial powers "across what appears to be in their eyes . . . a blank surface" (2016, 81). Demarcations onto the land, envisioned as empty through the conceit of terra nullius, remain charted with purpose in settler states. These ideologically driven mappings are embedded within the terrain of Western culture as it has been imposed in these lands from the onset

of colonial invasion. The proprietary assertion of Eurocentric concepts of land as a commodity to be owned and capitalized on works to validate the rights of emplacement, occupation, and resource exploitation afforded to settler citizens, corporate interests, and the colonial state. While these entities benefit from what Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar and poet Leanne Betasamosake Simpson refers to as "hyper-extractivism" that "remove[s] all the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning" (2017, 73, 75),[15] Indigenous sovereignty and land rights and conceptions of land embedded in the worldviews of distinct Indigenous nations are continually called into question. In this way, in the context of the settler state, the conception of "settler certainty" (Mackey 2016, 23) is imbricated in the very notion of land itself.

Leah Decter, *Imprint* (performance documentation) (2006). Videographer: Erika MacPherson.

In *Imprint,* the conjuring of colonial cartographies slides into the purview of narrative. My footsteps, inscribed into the snow, recall the imposition of narratives attached to the land and the landed that are foregrounded within Canada's colonial context. On a still day, my footfalls, through the dozens of re-tracings enacted over the course of the performance, would have compacted the snow into a well-worn path, at least until the next significant snowfall. The storm, however, rendered my footprints decidedly more transitory, transforming them from decisive tracks into a contest between embodied human gesture and the more-than-human agency of the elements. Repeatedly obscured by the falling snow and re-trodden, they became a palimpsest of marking, unmarking, and remarking that evokes both the trials of place-making and the imposition of colonial settlement. In calling both to mind, the struggles of making place anew are mired with the state of occupation, drawing into focus the bonds between "settlement" and the goals of dis/possession that are fundamental to Canada as a settler colonial state. Moreover, this action recalls how dominant narratives are marked and remarked, imprinted into the landscape of the nation so that their inscription is eventually rendered in(di)visible, and they are thus construed as inherent and incontrovertible.

References to my zaida's translocation that form *Imprint*'s underpinning and inhabit its iterations through my attire and my pacing bring the notion of personal memory and history into the work. Invoking my family lineage and our place-making in these lands alongside interrogations of colonial practices, national mythologies, and cultural genealogies summons correlations between Canadian immigration policies and the settler colonial project that are often concealed within dominant historical accounts and the subjective archives of personal memory and family stories. By calling up the transit of my ancestors, I mean to place distinct histories in the context of the colonial dis/possessions within which they are implicated and to highlight the ways immigration policies have been configured in settler states to occupy Indigenous lands and consolidate the settler state (see Mackey 2002). It is not my intention to refute the very real challenges of translocation. Nor am I aligning with the anti-immigrant stance that has come to prominence once again in the age of Trumpism. Rather, I mean to complicate and re-cognize taken-for-granted narratives of arrival and placemaking by alluding to historical realities that are overwritten by deep-seated, doggedly reproduced, and colonially expedient public and personal memory. In doing so, I am working to breach the chasm perpetuated by dominant myths and memories that distances contemporary white settlers from our/their colonial complicity. By drawing my family history into *Imprint* and scrutinizing its ties to colonial formation, I advocate for place-based and positionality-driven intergenerational responsibility that closes these gaps of denial while ensuring that I remain implicated.

Imprints and Echoes: Memoration's Foundations and Extensions

Imprint demonstrates the foundational features of memoration as a methodology that reveals, interrogates, and interrupts colonial and white supremacist logics in a number of ways. In challenging totalizing colonial structures and systems, and the tropes, myths, and narratives with which they are entangled, it highlights both the ubiquitous contemporary replication of colonial forms and how these forms can be actively resisted and refused. The placing of stones performs an act of re/collection—a considered re/building that underscores a commitment to accounting for that which risks being hidden or overlooked when affected by the biases of memory. The snowy field forms a stage from which my presence and gestures perform interventions into powerful colonial myths that script land and landscape as sites commemorating white settler certainty and desires for emplacement. The act of marking established by my walking and re-walking implicates me—as an immigrant (descendant) and white settler—within the systems that nurture narratives promoting settler colonial and white supremacist ideals and obscure the stories that do not. This pacing also references the imposition of Western forms of mapping and possession and the process of "settlement" while foregrounding intergenerational responsibilities toward the activation of decolonial re-cognition. Summoning my personal lineage situates my contemporary presence in relation to the transtemporal impacts wrought by a colonial project predicated on the imposition of whiteness and the pretense of illegitimate state sovereignty over Indigenous land and control of Indigenous life. In this way, *Imprint* establishes memoration as a methodology that draws attention to settler colonial conditions that are rooted in the past, persistent in the present, and bear heavily on what is possible in the future. The strategies of embodiment, sitedness, relationality and activated genealogical accounting—or reckoning—that I have described remain vital facets of memoration as a methodology that activates critically informed remembering otherwise. My use of them, however, has evolved over the fifteen years since the original *Imprint* performance.

Embodiment

Embodiment has been integral to memoration, including its manifestation through performance practices such as the repetitive gestures enacted in *Imprint*. Embodiment was deployed differently in (*official denial) trade value in progress* through physical proximity and the labour of handwork as participants sat side by side sewing responses to former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement "we have no history of colonialism" (see Ljunggren 2009) onto a large-scale composite of Hudson Bay point blankets.[16] It is also captured in *oh-oh canada*[17] through the notion of ingestion as members of the public are invited to eat artist-designed maple sugar candies that convey stories and knowledges overlooked within mainstream Canadian culture. Embodiment, expressed in these varied forms, is key to animating the practice of remembering otherwise because bodies can both hold and transfer knowledge. As Diana Taylor asserts, "beliefs and conventions are passed on through bodily practices and so are all sorts of assumptions and presuppositions" (2016, 32). It follows that if the body can reinforce concretized beliefs in this way, it can also be summoned to call them into question. Just as sites of commemoration can be transmuted into "sites of dissent" (Hill and McCall 2015, 1) in the subversion of the dominant histories they substantiate, the body can be deployed to problematize dominant national ideations harboured therein. Moreover, if the body is "a place where experience echoes, sinking deep into the bones before reverberating back into the world" (Martin and Robinson 2016, 11), it can also function as a conduit through which both the performer *and* the audience/viewer/participant can be provoked to feel, reflect, re-think, and potentially to act.

Harnessing "contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox" within embodied form (Gómez-Peña quoted in Taylor 2016, 3), performance art practices can inculcate vernacular sites of public memory—whether iconic material culture or landscapes, reified monuments, or the body itself—with productive ambivalence. Deployed in this way, the body in performance can provoke a "poetic deviation" (Pavis 1983, 56) that impinges on the normative. In proximity, the body performs both the tensions and synergies of relationality. Through movement, it performs agency, conveying the labour entailed in activating responsibilities toward transformational change. As I have discussed elsewhere, in stasis, the body can act as an impediment, forming an obstacle that causes pause and reflection (Decter 2016, 57). In memoration, such embodied activations scrutinize the complex narratives of regressive settler colonial structures, reductive national mythologies, and distancing personal stories without capitulating to a desire for closure or certainty. This puts the onus on the viewer, offering spaces in which they can engage critically and actively with the structures and conditions in which they are variously implicated and/or by which they are variously impacted.

Siting

"Placing" the body has been a feature of memoration from the beginning, as it further invigorates the capacity of remembering otherwise by disquieting the assumptive measures of spatialized ontologies. Works such as *Imprint* are sited in iconic yet comparatively generic landscapes, while other works focus on specific locations. For example, *Unbecoming,* a weekend-long performance in which I gilded a canoe, addressed Thousand Islands National Park's historical and contemporary implications in relation to the thin veneer of civility that masks Canada's record of colonial dis/possession.[18] Regardless of variations between the generic and the specific, the sites in memoration artworks provide meaningful performance grounds that politically situate the embodied gestures or activities. These spatial-corporeal intersections reiterate the significance of the land when confronting decolonization while subverting generalized conceptions of land/scape and resonances of particular places that coalesce to maintain a worldview of settler whiteness. In addition, the more-

than-human aspects of the settings often assert themselves in ways that are variously amenable and/or productively obstructive to my intentions resulting in humbling environmental interjections that propel body/land and human/more-than-human relationships into high relief.

Over time, the spatial-performative frames of memoration artworks have reached further into everyday public spheres in which the power dynamics of place are often reproduced surreptitiously, and dominant narrations and commemorations are tacitly validated. Curator and writer Jessica Wyman contends that artistic interventions into such spaces can create zones in which "the social"—and, I would argue, the political—"cannot be separated" from "the artistic" (2011, 111). Wyman goes on to suggest, "artists who disrupt the social sphere assert their own subjectivities as members of the amorphous public, extending the possibilities not just of resistance through artistic means but through everyday action in the world" (111).[19] Aligning artistic intervention with acts of resistance "in the world," my deployments of memoration are intended to insert embodied presence into everyday spaces as a nexus of the personal-public-political that situates me as both complicit within, and disturbing, the dominant settler polity—the amorphous public. At the same time, memoration's foundational strategies provide openings for audience members and participants to situate *themselves* in ways they find meaningful.

Relationality

Practices of placing *in relation* on all accounts are vital to memoration and have significantly broadened since *Imprint*, particularly through the heightened affective context of a live encounter. Memoration artworks incorporate relational strategies to problematize colonial binaries, reject the primacy of the individual, resist the imposition of an all-knowing authorial voice, charge the work with unpredictability, and highlight ethical interaction and the potential of co-resistance. They offer opportunities for experiential animation, reducing the gulf between performer/artist and audience and propelling the viewer beyond the capacity of "mere looking" (Cronin and Robertson 2011, 10) in a variety of ways. For example, in *memoration #2: constituent parts*, a nine-hour performance commissioned for Métis curator Erin Sutherland's "Talkin' Back to Johnny Mac," I invited audience members and pre-arranged accomplices to engage at different points in an otherwise solo performance.[20] Other memoration artworks and projects are wholly predicated on relational platforms. For example, *geodetic implications* was an immersive experiential performance in which participants engaged with one another and a geodetic marker in Kingston's City Park,[21] while *official denial*, described above, relied on dialogic participation and collaboration for its production.

Each opportunity for participation or collaboration in memoration projects reiterates the imperative of both individual and collective activation, which, as Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard suggests, are both necessary in "subvert[ing] the interplay between structure and subjectivity that sustain colonial relations" (2014, 140). Further, these invitations reflect calls for all those in a settler state to take on the intergenerational responsibilities of acting from their differential subject position(s) (see Byrd 2011). The mobilization of relational engagement in memoration resists the drive toward unity and universalism, instead embracing what the New BC Indian Art and Welfare Society Collective refers to as "disjunctive collectivity" that highlights the importance of "(d)issent, difference and contestation" (2015, 55).[22] Memoration's relational invitations are thus devised so that they can be accepted or refused and/or adapted to the individual *by* the individual in order to account for layered histories, a range of subjectivities, and intersectional (and sometimes incommensurable) strata of belonging among audiences viewers and participants.

Reckoning

Traversing national mythologies, personal histories, and notions of place, *Imprint* introduced the pedagogy of reckoning that lies at the heart of memoration. As Aleut scholar Eve Tuck and settler scholar K. Wayne Yang point out, decolonization calls for substantive change with regard to land and sovereignty, as well as forms of reparation and land repatriation that exceed the symbolic (Tuck and Yang 2012). These goals, however, will arguably not be achieved without a monumental transformation in the mindsets and priorities of majority white settler society. This shift requires an ongoing, critical, and unflinching practice of reckoning. In memoration, this unfolds in a reciprocal manner that cultivates an understanding of being situated—spatially, politically, culturally, and socially—*in relation*. For me, this includes reckoning with the ways I exist in relation to settler colonial and race-based structures, to colonial and Indigenous histories, to those with whom I inhabit this land as uninvited "guest," and to the land itself. In other words, it is a practice that deeply interrogates who I am where I am, not as an exercise in self-indulgence, absolution, or redemption but, rather, as a route to understanding my relational intergenerational responsibilities.

A practice of reckoning *in relation,* such as memoration deploys, is a necessary step in substantially changing colonial values, beliefs, and practices in order to embrace the labour and responsibility of contributing to change in co-resistance. However, any form of self-reflection on the part of white settlers risks simply re-centring whiteness. In this sense, as the feminist writer and scholar Sara Ahmed suggests in discussing her concept of the double turn, it is vital for the white settler subject to "stay implicated in what they critique" (2004, para. 59). Further, she argues that while it is crucial to turn inward in this way, this must be paired with turning "away from themselves, and towards others" (para. 59). Turning toward others, in turn, must be done in ways that are nonextractivist and that reject the colonial desire for mastery. In looking outward as a white settler, it is also vital to recognize the security with which those who garner unearned benefits inhered within logics of settler whiteness do so and, conversely, the far greater risks that BIPOC people incur in generating self-representation and disturbing dominant structures.

With these crucial factors in mind, memoration mobilizes a series of double turns toward and away from the self that activate reckoning-in-relation through the "extra-rational" (Garneau 2013) potential of relational and performance art practices. I grounded *Imprint* in my own reckonings and did so in consideration of relational factors. I placed my ancestors' arrivals in relation by recognizing their correlation to the colonial project and the impact of settlement/occupation. I placed myself in relation by recognizing the ways my contemporary presence hinges on these histories and continues to perpetuate dis/possession. I placed myself in relation with the land (and those who inhabit it), recognizing it as both the site of contestation and an archive for incommensurate inter-narratives. As memoration has evolved, I have deepened my practices of reckoning, sharpened my use of relationally, and strengthened my embodied interchanges with specific geographies. My current memoration projects extend inquiries into the socio-spatial-political implications of land-body intersections to dig deeper into encounters with place and draw attention to strategies through which white settlers might explore noncolonial ontologies in nonconsumptive ways within spaces of Indigenous sovereignty.

Projecting Otherwise Possibilities: Memoration Moving Forward

While I understand facets of memoration to be operating in resistance to colonial systems, beliefs, and structures, I recognize the limitations of this focus in a long-term projection of the arguably

radical change entailed in living decolonial lives. A methodology that constructs itself only in opposition inherently invokes dominant orders, foregrounding them on some level even as it subverts them. However, as Leigh Patel argues, incisive attention to "genealogical knowledge" is a vital undergirding for the expansive re-imaginings necessary when "dreaming and building on wholly different terms" toward just futures (2015, para. 10). Patel's assertion foregrounds the urgency of undertaking committed, deliberate ongoing un/learning when striving to re-shape beliefs and actions to eclipse the colonial frame. In other words, the past must be reckoned with in the present in order to envision and change what is possible. Yet, although summoning the reified narratives of nation can be fruitful in revealing and disturbing colonial systems—much like enlisting the monument in the formation of counter-commemoration or remembering otherwise—it does not constitute a fully robust strategy on its own. With this in mind, I suggest that while memoration responds to calls for white settler activation by disturbing the colonial, it is also focused on propositions that exist outside of colonial vision. In this way, it is at the same time an activation of dissent and resistance that is intended to undo and a relational incitement of "change by particles" (Garneau 2015, 76) that is disconnected from the colonial mindset. In re-collecting what has been done in the past and interrogating the ways it impacts the present, memoration mobilizes relational, embodied, site-responsive reckoning as an appeal for the critical re-cognition of who we are and where we are while generating activated re-imaginings toward the otherwise possibilities of transformed futures.

Beginning with *Imprint* and following through the work I have undertaken using memoration as a methodology in the intervening years, I have placed my body in performance and in relation within specific locations. These works largely foreground my actions, with the land/scape or site acting as a meaningful and immersive scenographic frame and more-than-human elements sometimes serving as a foil or collaborator. My recent video, *l i s t e n*, inverts this aspect of memoration, privileging the land itself as the agent performer. *l i s t e n* can be seen as a mirror to *Imprint* through its contemplative bearing. It differs, however, in that the more-than-human takes the stage with me acting as a supporting performer or secondary collaborator. I created this video in the spring of 2020 as my contribution to the Canadian Association for Theatre Research (CATR) working group Moving Together to Reclaim and Resist (MTRR). MTRR evolved from the CATR's Walking Our Way Here seminars, which mobilized critically informed place-responsive walking practices that explored Indigenous histories, knowledges, and presences in relation to the territories in which each year's CATR conference took place and offered opportunities for participants to create performances in those contexts. With attention to the complexities surrounding the performance of land acknowledgments as a practice that is variously critiqued, embraced, resisted, and rejected in Canada and elsewhere, the conveners of the working group prompted members to create embodied land acknowledgments in the form of audio pieces that could be shared as a podcast as the conference moved online due to COVID 19.

My impulse was to acknowledge the land through an act of stillness instead of the embodied movement associated with our usual practice of walking. Rather than foregrounding my voice as is done in conventional acknowledgments, I wanted to privilege the voice of the land—or the more-than-human—by listening. Moreover, I wanted to convey listening in a fully embodied way, which brought me to work with video instead of audio. I had decided to listen to the land in some manner when I was fortunate to come upon the fleeting moments of a river's spring break-up in Treaty 1 territory close to the border of Treaty 3,[23] which I captured using my phone, a provisional tool that has arguably, at this point, become an extension of the body. *l i s t e n* is made up of five side-by-side vertical screen panels depicting different views of the river as the sun sets over the horizon of the opposite riverbank. Shifting with my breath and the movements of my body as I try to remain still,

the shots undulate slightly so that the horizon lines of each section match up only sporadically. As the sun sets, chunks of ice flow downstream, sloshing, groaning, and scraping along the shore, backlit in the waning light. Overhanging branches rattle against the ice as it passes. Every now and then, a bird calls out. This video offers a brief interlude of listening unencumbered by verbal declaration, an extended moment in which the land speaks first and speaks back, in which the land speaks what is to be acknowledged. While I strive for stillness, the river is endlessly in motion evoking a continuum of temporal and territorial inter-connectedness that binds us together in ways that are often fundamentally discordant.

In part, this video is an activation of embodied listening through what Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson refers to as a "critical listening positionality" (2020, 52), which takes into account the implications of my presence as a white settler in occupied Indigenous lands. It is perhaps no more or less a land acknowledgment than any other work created through strategies of memoration. That said, on some level, the otherwise rememberings of memoration frequently gesture toward a form of "actioned" (Robinson 2019, 20) land acknowledgment, if such a thing aspired to think and feel the land as a network of distinct and interconnected agencies, to recognize and subvert ongoing violences and impositions of settler whiteness, to align with lineages and movements of Indigenous resistance, to respect a continuum of Indigenous sovereignty and presence; if it were grounded in the work of intergenerational responsibilities and accountabilities, and in nonextractivist approaches to listening and being-in-relation. As a gesture toward—an implicated act of visual, aural, and embodied attention, a listening to this river's agency within the contours of lands that are both invaded and unceded—this video signals some of memoration's current and future trajectories.

Leah Decter, *l i s t e n* (video still) (2020).

As memoration is an evolving methodology, my deployment of it is necessarily fluid, and my analysis of it is responsive to its unfolding. While I endeavoured here to trace some of its salient features reflecting on its beginnings and trajectories, this is by no means an exhaustive or definitive

exposition of memoration. Moreover, my interest here is not to suggest memoration as a prescriptive model that will ensure ethical efficacy. Rather, my aim is to illustrate the strategies I have employed and developed over time, from my positionality as a white settler, in order to exercise my intergenerational responsibility to remember otherwise, to contribute to decolonial dreaming and informed relational activation.

Notes

1. I first used the term memoration as the title of the 2010 work "memoration #1: one hour of snow angels," which was performed on the frozen Red River in Winnipeg. The term reappeared as the title of the work "memoration #2: constituent parts," which was performed in Kingston, Ontario, in 2015. Through the development and analysis of this second work, I came to think of memoration as a methodology that applies not only to these two works that bear its name but to the majority of my works that engage with colonial critique and decolonial re-visioning.

2. While there are numerous monuments to John A. Macdonald throughout Canada, in late March 2021, it was announced that the city of Regina would be removing its Macdonald monument pending a new location. See Atter (2021).

3. In 2018, the Cornwallis statue in Halifax was removed, in part due to concerns about vandalism. As of April 2021, a decision on its fate is still pending. See Patil and Williams (2018) and Campbell (2020).

4. Terra nullius is a quasi-legal concept on which North America was "founded" and which deems the land unoccupied or not being used in a "civilized" manner. See *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* (1999).

5. The use of trade blankets as a means of spreading disease in Indigenous communities is contested; however, its *implication* as such is not uncommon in public and scholarly discourse. See https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hudson-s-bay-point-blanket.

6. Dylan Robinson (2016) discusses intergenerational responsibility as a productive alternative to the prevalence of intergenerational *ir*responsibility in mainstream Canadians' responses to ongoing colonization.

7. I draw here on scholars such as Sara Ahmed (2004), Jodi Byrd (2011), Aileen Morten Robinson, Fiona Nicoll (2004), Clare Land (2015), and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2008), who variously discuss the importance of dominant subjects engaging in and contributing to decolonial, anticolonial, and antiracist paradigm shifts, doing so from the specifics of their positionalities, and ensuring to remain implicated.

8. Nagam discusses the capacity for embodied "living Indigenous archives" to intervene in "authoritative documents" of "traditional archives" that construct "particular stories of the world" (2017, 117).

9. On Richmond, Virginia's Monument Avenue, monuments to Confederate leaders, like many such monuments across the US and the world, were splashed with paint and marked with texts highlighting the racist ideologies and practices the figures represent. Demonstrators gathered around the massive Robert E. Lee monument in Richmond for over forty days while artists projected images of Black American historical figures and Black Americans killed by police on it. Figures on a Confederate memorial in Portsmouth, Virginia, were beheaded, as was the Columbus monument in Boston and the John A. MacDonald monument in Montreal, which was toppled to the ground. Drawing connections between the violence of white supremacy and colonization in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, protesters stood atop the vacant pedestal of a Columbus statue in St Paul, Minnesota, holding upside-down American flags bearing the names of Native American and Canadian Indigenous people killed by police. In Detroit, four Native American jingle dress dancers occupied a vacant Columbus statue pedestal long enough for photographer Rosa María Zamarrón to take a photo that subsequently went viral. In Europe and the UK, monuments to slave traders, monarchs, and politicians were targeted in similar ways, with a statue of Edward Colston being tipped into the Bristol Harbour and surreptitiously replaced with a sculpture of a BLM protestor. These represent only a fraction of

the monumental interventions that took place at this time in relation to BLM activism. See Bland (2020), Aguilar (2020), Stewart (2020), Emba (2020), and Hickey (2020).

10. Examples in the Canadian context include Peter Morin's "Salt. Washing. Beuys. Fat. Royalty. Copper. Canadian Club. John. Locked. Bear. Drum. Circle" (2015), Rebecca Belmore's "Quote, Misquote, Fact" (2003), Jeff Thomas's "Champlain Series" (2000–11), and Life of a Craphead's "King Edward VII Equestrian Statue Floating Down the Don River" (2017).

11. I use the term dis/possession to connote the process that characterizes settler colonial forms: the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands concomitant with colonial acts of possession on the part of settler state and polity.

12. Métis scrip was a certificate issued by the federal government in Canada largely in what is now Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan in exchange for land rights following the 1870 Manitoba Act, which provided for land to be transferred to Métis peoples. While scrip was supposed to be redeemable for land (or money) in a timely fashion, the process lagged with distribution systems only beginning to be formalized in 1885. Redeeming scrip was difficult and complicated, with many barriers that ultimately led to most Métis families receiving neither land nor payment. See Robinson (2019) and Muzyka (2019).

13. In many Indigenous cultures of what is now called North America, the stones used to provide heat in sweat lodges are referred to as "grandfathers." See Iseke (2013).

14. See Baldwin, Cameron, and Kobayashi (2011). See also Mackey (2002) and Thobani (2007) for discussions of the ways Canada's official policies of multiculturalism cast Indigenous peoples within the purview of the Canadian mosaic while placing limits on "belonging" for BPOC people.

15. In her 2017 book *As We Have Always Done*, Simpson characterizes extractivism as extending well beyond what are generally understood as resources. She states: "My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain and uphold the extraction-assimilation system." (75)

16. See https://leahdecter.com/official-denial-trade-value-in-progress. I initiated and designed this project and co-activated it in collaboration with Jaimie Isaac.

17. See https://leahdecter.com/oh-oh-Canada. This project includes candy designs by Adrian Stimson, Cecily Nicholson, Michael Farnan, David Garneau, Peter Morin, Lisa Myers, and Cheryl L'Hirondelle.

18. See https://leahdecter.com/unbecoming.

19. I will note that, although not all subjects may be situated or see themselves as "members of the amorphous public," it can be argued that artists of various subjectivities who intervene in public space are nonetheless asserting their subjectivities into that space and, in doing so, often intentionally question, subvert, and/or infiltrate "the amorphous public" as "outsiders."

20. See https://leahdecter.com/memoration-2-constituent-parts.

21. See https://leahdecter.com/geodeditc-implications.

22. This collective is made up of Tania Willard, Gabrielle Hill, and Peter Morin.

23. This is the unceded territory of the Anishinabewaki, Dakota, and Métis Nations.

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Diaspora Walks: Small Lessons in Unlearning

Nazli Akhtari

This is a walking/thinking exercise on the page. It began by a series of embodied walking provocations, individual and collective. It brings together my research in performance studies and my personal walking practice. I write about my walks within the context of Canada's settler colonial state, my institutional life, and politics of diasporic subjects as a first generation migrant woman, racialized brown and Muslim, who is complicit in settler colonialism on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee lands and territories of Coast Salish peoples, Squamish, Stó:lō and Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam Nations. This essay queries walking's potential in enacting recognition through which I hope we can render pedagogies of citizenship anew. My walking on these pages strays away and returns, as a walker's mind always does (Solnit 2000, 134). I ask whether walking can offer everyday lessons in unlearning Canada's "pedagogies of citizenship and modalities of settlement" (El-Sherif 2019, 1) with the hope that this exercise adds to the conversations in diaspora studies and in ways we can continue learning from Indigenous recognition and care of territorial lands as relations and Indigenous methodological interventions in unsettling colonialism.

As scholars of performance studies, learning to unlearn calls us to task most urgently. The field from the outset has argued for an understanding of performance as a framework to examine "onto-historical formation of power and knowledge" (McKenzie 2001, 18). The decolonial approaches within the "anti-discipline" (Raznovich 2007, 8) of what we recognize as performance studies are predicated on the notion that performance renders visible the "contemporary formation of power and knowledge" (19). However, as Kānaka Maoli scholar Lani Teves reminds us, performance studies' imperialist impulses persist and not necessarily through the imposition of firm disciplinary frameworks, rather through knowledge extraction. Teves writes, "imperialism is not mostly about imposition; it is pre-eminently about extraction. Extraction leads to ownership and, in the wrong hands, slides into impersonation and appropriation" (2020, 253–54).

Indigenous artists and scholars, including Stó:lō scholar of Indigenous Arts Dylan Robinson, teach us about epistemological violence reinforced through extraction and consumption of Indigenous knowledges and cultures. Robinson, in turn, argues for "blockade" as a form of "structural refusal" and a key intervention that Indigenous artists use for disrupting the flow of Indigenous knowledge extraction and consumption (2020, 23). Thinking with Anishinaabe writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and public intellectual Naomi Klein, Robinson notes how the discussions of extractivism exceed the material world, more precisely that of the pipelines and natural resource development in First Nations territories across Canada. He echoes Klein in contending that "extraction isn't just about mining and drilling, it's a mindset—it's an approach to nature, to ideas, to people" (quoted in Robinson 2020, 14). Extraction as a mindset and approach undeniably permeates a range of methodological and theoretical approaches within academic fields concerned with postcolonial theory and antiracist scholarship. Indigenous interventionist approaches challenge and inspire those of us who grapple with extractive and other imperialist logics internalized by our communities and, in turn, have become conventions that undergird the performance and scholarship we produce

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about historically excluded cultures. There is potential for walking together here without claiming to walk the same way or the same road.

We need a relational politics in order to move away from normalizing extraction and consumption of historically excluded cultures, refuse to claim uncritical models of cultural identity, and undertake lessons in unlearning. To these ends, this essay picks up walking as a potentially inclusive and relational way of being in the world shared by human and nonhuman animals. I ask whether attentive forms of walking can offer diaspora subjects ways to move toward a relational politics, in particular for those of us racialized as Muslim who, as the Egyptian Canadian scholar of critical Muslim studies Lucy El-Sherif writes, often find ourselves "positioned as perpetual immigrants, compelled to exalt whiteness or be evicted" and "caught between an unresolved tension of settler spatial relations to nation and Indigenous spatial relations to Land" (El-Sherif 2019, 1). Such politics would ask that we develop forms of unbelonging to the settler colonial state, and instead learn from Indigenous nations' notions of land as relational and ongoing fights for sovereignty, also trusting in decades of intellectual, anticolonial, and antiracist work undertaken by Indigenous, Black, and feminist scholars and artists.

In putting forward this provocation about walking's potential, this essay remembers, with immense pain, Talat Afzaal, Madiha Salman, Yumna Salman, Salman Afzaal, and Fayez Afzaal, the family of five who believed in the healing power of gathering to walk and witnessing the sunset to combat the isolation and difficult conditions of living in a time of public health crisis. On one of their walks in London, Ontario, the family were attacked in an act of terrorism just because they were Muslims and walking. Only the youngest, Fayez, survived the Canadian white settler boy's attack on his family and faith on that Sunday afternoon of June 6, 2021. I must acknowledge that when I first began writing this essay and considering walking's potential, such an act of violence was simply unimaginable to me. The fact is, however, that Islamophobia is a multi-billion-dollar industry financed by colonial settler states. In the Indian American scholar and activist Deepa Kumar's words, "Empire creates the condition for anti-Muslim racism, and Islamophobia sustains empire" (2021, 7). It kills in all its incarnations of difference. Most notably, it soft-kills through representations that reduce the Muslim and brown body to "bare life," which Iranian socialist Zeinab Farokhi (building off Giorgio Agamben's concept of the "state of exception") posits normalizes dehumanization and criminalization of the Muslim body (2021, 16). Indeed, "walking is never neutral" (Springgay and Truman 2018, 14). In the past two decades, dominant media representations have rendered Muslim and brown bodies legible for ridicule, hate, maiming for fun, and killable. The magnitude of hate that surfaced in the attack on the Afzaal family speaks to the power of performance and media representation that seeps into the material world and takes life.

The timing of the act of terrorism in London, ON, which took place within a week from the discovery of the mass grave of 215 Indigenous children murdered in the Kamloops Indian Residential School, is crucial. This has spiked a many-nation conversation as more discoveries of unmarked graves follow. The world is also witness to a heightened moment within the ongoing struggles of Palestinian people against settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing. Since the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian racism and hate crimes against people of colour have increased. The chain of violence and hate crimes attests that we need a coalitional and relational politics. This is not to overlook the particularities of each case's historical, cultural, and social contexts. Rather, we need a politics that acknowledges these differences as generative possibilities in order to get at the root of violence, which is always the same: white supremacy. From a walker's perspective then, in this time of global crisis—"emboldened White supremacy—it is crucial that we

cease celebrating the White male flâneur, who strolls leisurely through the city, as the quintessence of what it means to walk" (Springgay and Truman 2018, 14). Instead, as Springgay and Truman, the editors of *Walking Methodologies in a More-Than-Human World: WalkingLab*, invite us, "we must queer walking, destabilizing humanism's structuring of human and nonhuman, nature and culture" (14).

My provocations thereby rely more on a shared longing to belong in the form of cousin culture and queer kin making, in other words making kin beyond blood relations, relational formations that have always sustained racialized, historically marginalized, and underserved communities. Writing on Idle No More and the marginalization of negative affect, Robinson describes Indigenous scholars, artists, and activists as follows: "We are the twenty-first century's 'angry Indians'—cousins to the 'melancholic migrant' and 'feminist killjoy' in our unwillingness to let go of less-than-palatable cultural difference in order to participate as proper subjects of both the nation state and academic systems" (2017, 216). My walking/thinking in the following sections marks my unwillingness as that "melancholic migrant" and "feminist killjoy" cousin (Ahmed 2008). This piece, which takes on attentive walking as an everyday lesson in unlearning, is further a call for walking companions. I am inspired by Algerian curator and scholar of modern culture and media Arielle Aïsha Azoulay, who reminds us that taking part in "unlearning imperialism," we need to do so with companions, which "means no longer privileging the accounts of imperial agents, scholars included, and instead retrieving other modalities of sharing the world and the many refusals inherent in people's public performances, diverse claims, and repressed aspirations" (2019, 51). Walking as an everyday lesson in unlearning, and hopefully "unlearning with companions," allows us to retrieve an accessible and inclusive modality for sharing the world. It also holds a significant place in a wide range of social and political movements and across practices of refusal (51). This piece invests in walking exactly because its attentive forms have the potential to bridge the rifts between personal and social, mundane and extraordinary.

Diaspora Walks

Walking above all facilitates mobility. I take walking, broadly, to address movement across politicized spaces by people with diverse and versatile mobilities. Walking is not necessarily bipedal. It is a movement that, in all forms and enacted by bodies, encapsulates time, space, and embodiment. This compels considering whether agentic and attentive forms of walking could offer counter-practices to forced mobilities which are central to understanding diaspora. In my engagement with diaspora studies, I seek out an ontology of diasporic conditions that, above all other things, has to do with material and affective conditions of politically controlled time and space, and more precisely, modern capitalism's political management of time, which feminist media scholar Sarah Sharma conceptualizes as its *power chronography* (Sharma 2014). My understanding of diaspora experience is also informed by cultural studies and Black diaspora studies scholars, including Stuart Hall and Rinaldo Walcott. In its broadest sense, diaspora is mobility violently enforced by modern capitalism's spatial-racial ordering (Ogden 2018, 78). In turn, Western imperial diasporic histories are unfolding narratives of (traumatic) movement beginning in 1492.

Diaspora studies has yet to engage seriously with Indigenous decolonization and that of land more precisely. Mi'kmaw scholar of Indigenous studies Bonita Lawrence and feminist postcolonial scholar Enakshi Dua, for instance, expose how wrong it is that antiracism on Indigenous territories often "does not begin with, and reflect the totality of Native people's lived experience—that is, with the genocide that established and maintains all of the settler states within the Americas" (2005, 121).

Dua's approach to decolonizing antiracism is examining one's complicity in the ongoing project of colonization, namely the ways in which "the bodies of knowledge" that one has "worked to build have been framed so as to contribute to the active colonization of Aboriginal peoples" (2005, 122–3). Lawrence and Dua's call is taken seriously by Walcott, who asks diaspora studies to consider transatlantic slavery together with Indigenous colonization "as a cultural revolution that is still unfolding in ways that remain deeply traumatic but that are now also complicatedly implicating and entangling" (2020, 347).

Walcott addresses Black diaspora studies, in particular. I propose that his call, in conversation with Lawrence and Dua's earlier work, should be extended to diaspora studies more broadly and its engagements with the diversity of regional, ethnic, religious, and racial contexts in needing a more in-depth and reflective engagement with the legacies of colonial modernity and geopolitical economy of the past five hundred years. My current research[1] recognizes that my field of Iranian diaspora studies, for instance, stubbornly remains focused on what I would call "politics of departure" instead of what Walcott terms "ethics of arrival" as "making life in a place where the ethics of arrival can be fashioned through the brutal thefts of Euro-Western dominance and Indigenous claims to restore their stewardship of the lands" (2020, 353). I define "politics of departure" as explicitly concerned with anthropocentric subject positionings that are always already bound to imperialist and nationalist affects and the reasons that underlie departures from one nation-state to another. While there are specific histories and strong reasons that justify the emphasis on the histories, politics, and embodied valences that underlie departure from one's ancestral homelands, a shift becomes necessary to most sub-fields within diaspora studies not to fully abandon "politics of departure" but rather to approach it also in relation to "ethics of arrival." This is a crucial consideration for our engagements with diaspora because, as Walcott notes, "the ideas birthed in the context of the Atlantic world have been central to the ways in which European coloniality spread its global reach and thus the ways in which many other diasporas have come into being" (2020, 348). In engaging with diaspora, we must also note that the racial capitalism of the last five hundred years and European dominance on hegemonic global thought have been, in the first place, instigated through transatlantic slavery and the brutal theft of Indigenous territories (Walcott 2020, 347). As such, a relational politics above all demands reflection on and accountability for one's "ethics of arrival" on Turtle Island, recognizing these unfolding and entangled colonial legacies.

Diaspora walks that I propose here are those walks that move us with awareness of modern capitalism's legacies and those that move us in ways such that we ask ourselves about our "ethics of arrival." Walcott rightfully reminds us not all movements should be categorized as diasporic, noting that "diaspora cannot be adequately deployed as a term that means all kinds of movement across borders as has partly become evident in much scholarship and institutional posturing today" (2020, 346). I precisely call these diaspora walks to highlight histories and their significant implications for our current engagements with place and movement on stolen lands. My provocations are concerned with my personal "ethics of arrival" and call to companions to walk with me, historically conscious of the geopolitical economy that underlies diaspora's history of violence enacted through ongoing displacement, dispossession, and genocide. I respond to Walcott's note that, in its inclusivity and within its "conceptual and political range," the term "diaspora" can camouflage connections and contexts for the materiality it attempts to encapsulate. He argues that "the disappearance of Indigenous peoples from the diaspora conversation" is a case in point (Walcott 2020, 347).

Diaspora walks are inspired by Walcott, Lawrence, and Dua and, as part of this special issue on *Performing (in) Place: Moving on the Land,* hope to bring the recognition of Indigenous and ancestral

lands into diaspora conversation. The diasporic relationality I propose here uses walking as a strategy to move, not necessarily socially with others, but instead collectively and being accountable in the sometimes invisibilized presence of others (Springgay and Truman 2018, 11). It takes the feminist geographer Juanita Sundberg's "walking-with" framework that entails "serious engagement with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies" because "walking enacts situated and contingent ontologies between land, peoples, and nonhuman others" (2014, 40). This inspires exploring the potential in agentic and attentive forms of walking as counter-practices to enforced mobility. My interest in walking also extends into rehearsing affective possibilities of phrases such as walking backward, walking out, and walking off as working metaphors to further home in on a relational politics.

Walking Backward

In 2017 and 2018, I practised two walking backward exercises at academic conferences. The first time we were a group of scholars in the *Digital Defence for Artists and Scholars* working group convened by performance and digital media scholars Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Kalle Westerling at the American Society for Theatre Research. We gathered in a small meeting room at a Hyatt hotel in Buckhead located in Standing Peachtree on the territories of the Muscogee and Cherokee nations of Georgia. This walking iteration was a gesture of critique of techno-optimism. The second time, my walking exercise responded to the five-year engagement of a CATR *Walking Our Way Here* seminar convened by Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe scholar of Indigenous performance Jenn Cole and Canadian settler scholars of performance and culture Natalie Rewa and Keren Zaiontz. We gathered on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory where Queen's University is situated. This time, I invited participants to walk backward for five minutes, followed by fifteen minutes of journaling. The seminar focused on forms of reflection and action in recognition of our relationships to the ancestral lands and territories we arrive at as CATR participants. These two walking provocations responded to radically different scholarly discussions and were mostly informed by my background in theatre practice and my interest in exploring embodied knowledge as scholarship. I was committed to working within the notion that walking is the simplest yet most compelling art form. As a practitioner of contemporary performance and audience of dance and visual art, some of the best works I had seen consisted of walking iterations from the expansive repertoire of human and nonhuman animal walks. These include Mona Hatoum's 1985 performance *Roadworks* (see Perrot 2016), *The Green Line* (2004) by Francis Alÿs, Kubra Khademi's *Armor* and *Eternal Trial* from 2015 and *Kubra et les bonhommes piétons* from 2016 (Khademi 2016a, 2016b, 2016c), and Janet Cardiff's *Walks* beginning in 1992 and ongoing (Cardiff and Miller 2021) among many others).

I imagined walking backward more precisely as an exercise alongside other post-digital, durational, and meditative practices that task us to simply inhabit our bodies. In a time when our digital footprints are assembled into large bodies of data, sold in a fraction of a second, mined for patterns, and have turned into major extraction sites, I imagined this exercise would help open up the conversation to include parts of our identities, collective memories, and geographical histories that are often erased or lost in the blur. Several questions propelled my interest in "backward" as an allegorical term and a form of movement: how do we engage walking backward on physical, literal, and metaphorical levels? How does performing walking backward recharge our experience of temporality? How can we position forward within backward (how come one can walk backward yet move forward)? How do backward impulses limn our desire and struggle for "progress" when the ethnonational myth situates its progressive politics always already against the "backward" other and

through her worldlessness[2] and nonpersonhood? In hindsight, my interest in "backward" was also informed by my diasporic desire to rewind, remember, reenact, reclaim the past, my own history. I hoped for my walking backward undertakings to help me restore the sense of balance I had lost as I moved through spaces and histories with discomfort, hoping for a sense of spatial and temporal orientation. My walking backward exercises responded to the fractured experience of time and space in diaspora.

Walking Our Way Here

The *Walking Our Way Here* seminar at CATR continued to stay close to my work precisely because of the emphasis that the group discussion put on space and movement in academic spaces and in finding a renewed focus and reflection as we move on Indigenous territorial and ancestral lands. Space and movement are equally germane to studying diasporic and minoritarian performance cultures. It is not hard to conclude that historically there have not been enough spaces in Canadian academic institutions for work on diasporic cultures. The more generous advice given is often "you have to make your own spaces" or "build your own table." These common analogies acknowledge that success and social mobility depend on access and proximity to spaces of whiteness and knowing how to move within and around them. Common advice encourages and "advocates" making space alongside spaces of whiteness. However, it overlooks the material conditions of racial capitalism, thereby reallocating the labour of building, making, and starting out on the shoulder of already marginalized and racialized students, educators, and practitioners. Queer working-class multidisciplinary artist Shaista Latif reflects on "the table analogy" that resulted in a conversation in the community workshop, *How I Learned to Serve Tea*, that Latif hosted at a curated festival in February 2020 in Tkaronto. Latif writes: "And how can one build a table when you don't even have the material conditions for you to be able to buy supplies to construct a table. Also this fucking table analogy needs to end because we know who gets to be at the table" (Latif 2020). Latif's reflection is informed by long-term advocacy work and commitment to calling out and taking issue with the theatre community in Tkaronto and creative industries nationally that exploit identity politics, detaching it from class politics and using representation as a quick fix, a solution to remedy institutional racism.

Among other things, Latif is concerned with the real material and labour conditions that the table analogy performs. The table analogy and similar phrasings such as "make your own space" perform further harm on epistemological levels that often go unnoticed and unrecognized. Feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker conceptualizes such harm under the ethical concept of *epistemic injustice*, broadly defined as "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (Fricker 2007, 1). Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice* illuminates "ethical aspects of two of our most basic everyday epistemic practices: conveying knowledge to others by telling them, and making sense of our own social experiences" (2). Fricker characterizes two forms of epistemic injustice: "testimonial injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge; and hermeneutical injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a subject of social understanding" (8). She argues that "concentrating on the normality of injustice" can help us to gain so much philosophically about our epistemic conduct (8). Testimonial injustice is an everyday reality for those of us rendered "off-white" against the constant hovering of whiteness, and for those of us whose displacements and linguistic dispossessions are marked by off-key tones and accented voices. Regardless of diverse positionalities, those of us working in the academy are the subjects of knowledge in the broader ethical sense that Fricker theorizes, and it happens that we also career in

the knowledge business. Therefore, we are much more privy to individual and collective forms of epistemic conduct that might reinforce various forms of violence and harm.

Hermeneutical injustice is harder to locate and to call out. To put it in practice, French-Congolese radical/critical psychologist, Guilaine Kinouani, builds on the concept of epistemic injustice to offer the notion of "epistemic homelessness" for trauma-informed work to especially help racialized womxn. Kinouani defines "epistemic homelessness" as losing anchor in one's epistemic confidence and truth base. Put simply, epistemic homelessness refers to the condition of not knowing what you don't know (Kinouani 2017). The table analogy and "make your own space" rearticulate the neoliberal tropes that celebrate social entrepreneurship and privatization of labour built on resource extraction along with the exploitation of people of colour, dispossession, and displacement of Black people and genocide of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, these analogies perform a doubling of harm, at once erasing the material and labour conditions that are involved in building/making and effacing the epistemological confidence and ontological security required for moving/walking within spaces of whiteness and sitting around the table "with manners."

Homelessness expressed here, often linked to forced material homelessness by racist capitalist extraction and misallocation of resources, is an ontological symptom of the postcolonial condition or an effect of what Stuart Hall called the "traumatic character of the colonial experience" (1990, 225). On an epistemological level, homelessness becomes germane to the trauma of institutional life that most racialized and historically excluded folx experience. I remain cautious here that conceptualizing homelessness from an ontological or epistemological vantage point might amount to using it as a metaphor that overlooks the material conditions of the unhoused. I rather consider the violence at work in both epistemological and material injustice to be of the same kind, so much so that material homelessness comes after epistemological injustice has taken its toll. The unhoused is first violated in her capacity as a knower. This is somewhat different from the sense of homelessness as the broader metaphor of the postcolonial epoch or, in Iranian social anthropologist Shahram Khosravi's words, as "a paradigm, as a way of being in the world, as a lifestyle, as ethical and aesthetic normativity [that] opens the door to accepting the other as she *is*, not as how we want her to be" (2010, 95–96). Home is that territory, the thing, or the person, within and through which we embody our imagination using cultural affects and materials we associate with a sense of being home. And the sheer act of imagining, we often forget, demands a degree of epistemic confidence and ontological security, which is being violently stripped away from so many of us in our everyday as well as institutional lives. To embody diasporic experiences and make home on Indigenous lands invites a reterritorialization of our imaginations. Territory, we know, is much more than an analogy here. Emplacement on Indigenous Lands already walks the unknown and coming to know along ethical, material, and epistemic dimensions.

On a personal level, walking as an everyday practice has helped me throughout the years with the discomfort of navigating my lack of epistemic confidence and my ontological insecurity.

Walking Out/Off

The work of the *Walking Our Way Here* seminar resonated with me on a pedagogical level, too, because as much as they contribute to "formalization, bureaucratization, and rote presentation" of land acknowledgement" (Robinson 2019, 22), performance spaces and theatre institutions across Turtle Island have been central to my understanding of Canada's past. The land acknowledgments

that the front house managers read before shows I have attended throughout the years served as the first pedagogical contact that taught me that violence and irreconcilable harm had happened before I arrived. At the time of my landing in 2009, the histories about settler colonialism, theft of Indigenous lands, and the ongoing dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples accessible to new migrants were limited to mainstream media and a few pages in the citizenship guide for newcomers, namely *Discover Canada: Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*. Some immigrants have language barriers that hinder their access to a more informed range of social knowledges and services, and some, who have finally made it to Canada after hard voyages and escaping their excruciating pasts, might adopt denial as a survival strategy in order to be able to make life here on stolen lands. It is also important to note that, as a guide that everyone who applies to become a citizen must study, *Discover Canada* renders perfectly manifest what Walcott calls Canada's "white lies" spotlighting the multicultural one (2019, 394–96). Walcott calls "multiculturalism a lie because it continually keeps in place the idea that Canada is a white nation, with all the not-white others constituting its 'colored' adjunct citizenry." To accept that "multiculturalism is a successful policy," Walcott posits, is also acceptance of "the lie that whiteness in the Canadian state has decentered itself" (396).

Once I had spent enough time within Canada's borders to become a citizen, Bill C-24 was already in the House of Commons. I had learned about residential schools, missing and murdered Indigenous women, the Chinese Head Tax, and the internment of Japanese Canadians under the War Measures Act. The Trans-Mountain pipeline protests were happening across the lower mainland and northern BC. On the day I went through the citizenship ceremony, the judge read a long welcome speech congratulating us on becoming citizens of the best nation-state in the world, on escaping poverty, war, and our terrible pasts. She then shook hands with each person. At my turn, she commented on my looks and told me how lucky I was to be a Canadian. I was scared, ashamed, and appalled. I wished she would look me in the eye and say that with this package comes an unforgivable debt. I wanted her to tell the room that our pasts and presents just got more troubled. Instead, the judge's words echoed what one would see in "Explore Canada—the best of the best," Canada's promotional videos that reperform its extraction project with frames moving through glassy cosmopolitan cityscapes, children of empire, panning across raw natural landscapes of mountains, oceans, forests, and icebergs with no histories, territories, peoples, or extinct species in between. It felt like such a relief to *walk out* of the building. It feels like such a relief to *walk off* the lies they feed us. I sense a similar relief every time I *walk out* of the unrepairable relationships of circles and spaces unwilling to work at reconciliation. It feels good to claim a right to opacity and to refuse to believe in "white lies" or give in to whiteness's entitlement to knowing everything about everything.

Networking Walks

Walking works through affects and with effects. In its many variations, walking imperfectly quilts personal and political. It has always mobilized social and political movements. Walking, like diaspora, has an unfolding history. Anger has always found solace in walking. Feminist killjoys march. Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman remind us that "As a research methodology walking has a diverse and extensive history in the social sciences and humanities, underscoring its value for conducting research that is situated, relational, and material" (2018, 14). My walking/thinking propositions are not novel; rather, this proposal for walking as lessons in unlearning is informed by decades of anticolonial, antiracist, and feminist work. Attentive walking as an embodied reenactment and through metaphorical renderings breaks down unlearning's project

into small lessons. It gives us opportunities to develop a relational politics to unsettle the techno-neoliberal and racial capitalist context of Turtle Island.

As a personal experience, walking's affective potential rests precisely on its everydayness and citational form that evokes "ordinary affects," in Kathleen Stewart's words, making us aware of the affective dimensions of everyday life (Stewart 2007) and that which animates ordinary and everyday assemblages with the power and intensity to change us and to be changed by us. Walking always already comes along with my body no matter what place, how far from my ancestral lands, and how long after my ancestors I walk. As such, walking belongs to an ancestral repertoire. My body is at once "the archive and the repertoire" (Taylor 2003) of all my ancestors' walks. I walk not exactly but nearly like my mother does, and she walks just like her mother did, her mother just like hers. My yet-to-be-born children would step forward into the world one day and walk just like I do. And it is precisely my walking that has been recording my origins, the story of my displacement, and the history of my tomorrow. When my body is the archive, my "walking as 'anarchiving' attends to the undocumented, affective, and fragmented compositions that tell stories about a past that is not the past but is the present and an imagined future" (Springgay and Truman 2018, 14). At the same time, ancestral migrations and movements Indigenous to Turtle Island already walk here. Walking allows us to engage in cross-temporal kinship. Awareness of potential relationality between ancestors in the midst of my embodied practice reconstitutes my kinetic, ontological, and epistemological landscape. Walking as such disrupts "dominant narratives of place and futurity, remapping Land and 'returning it to the landless'" (14). Our ancestors walk together, differently.

As an exercise in unlearning, this piece first and foremost searches for radical possibilities that walking, in movement and thought, can offer me as a settler in deepening my recognition of the ancestral lands and territories I inhabit on a daily basis. My personal account of attentive walking seeks everyday lessons in unlearning "Canada's pedagogies of citizenship and modalities of settlement" (El-Sherif 2019). Furthermore, as a collective exercise in "walking-with" and "unlearning with companions," walking allows for building a network. This network of walks could consist of what feminist sociologist of Muslim Canada Jasmin Zine calls "small acts of subversion" (Zine 2008, 56) or the Iranian American sociologist of the Middle East Asef Bayat categorizes as "social non-movements," broadly defined as "the collective action of dispersed and unorganized actors" (Bayat 2013). Some examples of small acts of subversion and social nonmovements we can learn to unlearn from are people who live in poverty and unhoused people who claim rights to urban spaces and amenities, or youth who perform their identities and youthfulness through their desired lifestyles. This is not to romanticize experiences of poverty, homelessness, or class struggle. Rather, we might learn from and with consenting marginalized companions how to expose the violence of racial capitalism and how to refuse to abide by its spatial regulations that might ask us to stay or evacuate.

Put differently, this is to refuse to give up on ambling and loitering or to only pass through or walk with passion and direction. Robinson's invocation of the blockade invites us to disrupt movement as usual. We can learn to un-map the cartographies imposed by settler colonial states and racial capitalism by inhabiting differently. For instance, unemployed youth's powerful claim to public spaces in many regional contexts, including the place of my upbringing, Iran, is the underlying reason why young folks are criminalized just for being youth and loitering in public spaces. In the same regional contexts, youth historically have been drivers of cultural, social, and political change, which attests to the political power of "small acts of subversion" and "social non-movements." Unpacking "social non-movements," Bayat argues that "these claim-making practices are made and realized mostly through direct actions, rather than through exerting pressure on to authorities to

concede—something that the conventionally-organized social movements (like labor or environment movements) usually do" (Bayat 2013). In a sense then, a network consisting of attentive walks can similarly emerge as an "un-articulated strategy to reduce the cost of mobilization under the repressive conditions" (Bayat 2013) of our institutional lives and as subjects to the nation state's biopower and modern capitalism's power chronography. This dispersed yet attentive network of walks that recognize the histories of place while questioning the legitimacy of capitalism's power chronography and its public choreographies is the constellation of various lessons in unlearning that I call diaspora walks.

While the thinking I am able to call home and the epistemological grounds I navigate as a scholar member of the Iranian diaspora is not guaranteed to align with anticolonial practices, aligning walking and thinking in place on Indigenous lands extends my capacities for kinship with those involved in decolonization. The network of those thinking about the powerful capacities for walking, ambling, marching, loitering, mobilizing, and inhabiting otherwise is strong. As I walk with new awareness, walk out, walk off, I enter into an experience of territory that is more relational.

Notes

1. My discussions on notions of diaspora, politics of departure, and "ethics of arrival" in this section appear in my dissertation, *Diasporic Constellations: Performing on the Periphery of the Archives*, 2021.

2. Hannah Arendt coined the term worldlessness, which is "often used to describe the state of people who were left with no world to dwell in" (Azoulay 2019, 58).

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ARTICLES

Migrant Memory, Movement, and Misrecognition: Reactivating Diasporic Experience Toward an Anticolonial Politics of Place

Jimena Ortuzar

> When your life experience is touched and formed in and by the Third World, geopolitics matter; or when you realize that as a citizen of the First World you belong to a history that has engendered coloniality and disguised it by the promise and premises of modernity, you encounter coloniality from the two ends of the spectrum.
>
> —Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, "On Decoloniality"

Walking and Thinking . . .

I walk and think about the Avá Guaraní, Kolla, Mapuche, Ranquel, Qom (or Toba), and Tupí Guaraní nations on whose ancestral lands I first learned to stand and walk.

I walk and I think of the Matlatzincas, Mazahuas (Hñatho), Nahuas, and Hñäñhü, and the Tenochca (or Mexica) nation on whose ancestral lands I ran and played as a child.

I walk and I think of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk, of the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan on whose lands I first walked upon arriving in Turtle Island.

I walk and I think about the Anacostans (or Nacotchtank), the Piscataway and Pamunkey peoples on whose ancestral lands I marched and chanted with my children.

I walk and think of the Anishinaabe, Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation on whose ancestral lands I now dwell and learn.

I walk and I think about the Coyaima Natagaima, Embera Chamí, Embera Katío, Muisca, Nasa, Sikuani, Guambiano, Kankuamo, and Uitoto peoples on whose ancestral lands I hope to walk and think soon.[1]

Two moments that explore what it means to recognize and respond to ancestral lands through embodied practice have inspired me to recently engage in walking, moving, and thinking in different parts of Tkaronto, where I now live. The first occurred during "Walking Our Way Here," a walking/movement working group convened by Jenn Cole, Natalie Rewa, and Keren Zaiontz at the 2018 Canadian Association for Theatre Research conference, which took place at Queen's University in Kingston. During our collective walk on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee ancestral lands, Anishinaabe scholar and theatre practitioner Jill Carter handed the walkers a piece of thick and textured red fabric while speaking to us about the Crawford Purchase of 1783 (the fabric

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symbolizing the red cloth gifted to the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) and asking us to engage with the question of where "here" is. I have carried this red fabric with me (in the same red bag I've carried for ten years) since that walk as a reminder to think about the land, its original inhabitants, their histories, and their struggles.[2]

The second moment took place when Malaysian-born dancer and choreographer Lee Su-Feh performed a ritual of acknowledgment at the 2019 PSi (Performance Studies International) conference in Calgary to recognize the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda.[3] The performance, as she put it, was "one immigrant's way of acknowledging the Indigenous territory on which she dances," ultimately asking spectators to consider how we are all situated in relation to the nation known as Canada and to the colonial project. Courageously, Su-Feh performed this ritual during a storm, her body shaking as she endured the cold rain. The difficult conditions under which this acknowledgment was performed gave rise to another question: how might diasporic experiences of hardship and displacement aid in responding to and acknowledging Indigenous lands and territories? Can these experiences be activated in immigrants whose communities tend to conform to the dominant order of settler colonialism?

Drawing from my own immigrant experience of feeling the ground shift under my feet, I explore the possibilities of walking/moving with a different relationship to memory and mobility, one that reactivates distress and displacement. Newcomers endure hardship and struggle to overcome feeling uprooted, disoriented and out of place in order to assimilate, only to realize that we are participants in the ongoing process of colonization. How might this struggle to survive and assimilate be recovered and redirected toward an embodied practice of meaningful recognition of our relationship to Indigenous lands? What follows is the beginning of a process toward this recovery, one that retraces and reinvents my movement as a newly arrived immigrant but also my trajectory toward Tkaronto—in other words, how I made my way "here" in the first place. The key to this journey, however, is how I engage the present conditions of my movement with my memory of migrancy and misrecognition of the land we call Canada, connecting past experiences with a move toward an anticolonial politics/praxis of place (Arat-Koç 2014).

I had initially envisioned a walking/movement practice that demanded a great deal of effort and created significant physical discomfort in the hope of forcefully prodding my memory. I soon recognized that this particular memory work demands a different kind of attention—attention to gestures and sensations, emotions and expressions, needs and desires that are constituted in and through mobility and migration. I also realized that I must travel further back, well before my arrival to these lands. Migration is not only marked by departures and arrivals. It is processual and contingent. Its possibilities and enactments entail embodied, affective, and material components of becoming (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2007, 228). As such, my journey of migration toward and within this land is not a closed chapter in the past. It's open to imaginative reworkings and transformations. Critically engaging with it can extend the possibilities for reflective connection to place. It might even disrupt the migrant fantasy of freedom and mobility—the fantasy of the modern subject whose movement happens in innocence even as it takes place on colonized territory (Lepecki 2005, 14). If it is true that a diasporic experience allows for "a new imaginative relationship with the world" (Rushdie 1992, 125), then imaginatively becoming more attuned to the place in which we live and move might shift our relationship to Indigenous lands, communities, and histories to one of responsibility and care.[4]

Falls and Detours

Falling Walk

I remember thinking many years ago while living with my family in Toluca, a small city in South-Central Mexico, that there was a slim chance we could be headed for Calgary. Images of Calgary had flooded our home through a tiny black and white television showing the Winter Olympics. I had never seen snow except for the ice patches at the peak of the Xinantecatl, a volcano at the edge of our town. At that time, I had no idea Calgary was also called Moh'kins'tsis or that it was in the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). I knew little about the land called Canada, a place long eclipsed by US imperialism and, at this conjuncture, by international politics at the close of the Cold War. This all changed when I learned that my parents were seeking asylum in Canada. We were moving to the "First World."

Ideas of First and Third worlds, North and South, had a powerful influence on the sense of place and worth in the world for people situated in what is now known as Latin America.[5] The First World signalled progress—the idea upon which modernity rests—while the Third World remained associated with nature, the raw material for the "forward-moving engine of progress" (Mignolo 2005, 82). Moreover, the differences between the north and the south of the Americas[6] were not simply cultural. This conception only "masked the colonial power differential that was translated from its construction in Europe and imposed on the Americas" (80). In other words, the differences between Europe and the two Americas had been defined in Europe (first in Spain and Portugal, and later in England, France, and Germany)—they were not cultural but imperial and colonial differences (80–81). Though America as a continent had long been considered inferior in European narratives, it was Latin America that eventually emerged as the underdeveloped subcontinent, within the West and yet outside of it, inferior to and dependent on a First World that was always already ahead.[7] In this spatial and temporal hierarchy, the city of Calgary appeared as everything that Latin America had yet to become. I was as fascinated as I was terrified by the prospect of moving there.

But as it turned out, our assigned destination wasn't Calgary; it was St. John's. We had never heard of this mysterious place, and in pre-internet times, it was impossible to simply google St. John's, Canada. So, my mother searched the atlas (the Google Maps of the pre-internet age) while my brother and I waited anxiously. When she found the little dot on the map, she gasped. It seemed so far north, the most easterly city on the map, right at the very edge of the continent. Vertigo. The feeling that we might fall—fall off the edge of the map. Indeed, "falling is a movement between one place and another" (Claid and Allsopp 2013, 1). For my parents, who had lived in Argentina and Chile for most of their lives, the other extreme of the hemisphere must have felt like the end of the world. This is not to say that we viewed the world upside down (like a McArthur's map where the south is on top and the north is at the bottom). We knew very well our place on the north-south axis of the world where the north dominated the south, most visibly through US political interventions in Latin America but also finance capital, trade agreements, debt, austerity, labour exploitation and extractivism. As Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh observe, "when your life experience is touched and formed in and by the Third World, geopolitics matter" (2018, 5). Attention to geopolitics is certainly a legacy of anti-imperialist struggles in Latin America, though at such a young age, what I sensed all around me was both contempt and desire for the "Anglo" Americas that had ended up on top, in the north and the First World.

If my relation to the hemisphere was infused with a particular view from below, it was also shaped by Eurocentric legacies embedded in Western geopolitics of knowledge. Indeed, the very map of the continent on which my mother and I traced our transnational journey northward was the result of cartographic conventions and naming privileges during Europe's colonizing enterprise. As with the world map, so too "colonial narratives, descriptions and arguments appropriated the world," turning it into a universal regime of truth (Mignolo 2005, 187). Western Christian Europeans assumed their specific image of the world was "the representation of a geohistorical ontology of the world"—this is how "coloniality of knowledge orients both geopolitical designs and body-political subjectivities" (195). Decolonization from Spanish and Portuguese rule in Central and South America during the nineteenth century had succeeded politically (and to a lesser extent economically), but it had not been accomplished epistemically. The "logic of coloniality" (Mignolo 2003) remained and was reinscribed in the nation-building projects that followed independence from the empire.[8]

The walking practice I began responds to the coloniality of knowledge that had long shaped my subjectivity and also aims to recover the vertigo my family and I felt when confronted with the fact of moving so far north and so close to the edge of the map. It's a simple walk with two conditions. The first involves allowing myself to get lost along the streets and alleys of the city, a mode of ambling that works against my cartographic conditioning—that tendency to see the world as a map with fixed points of location. As Cree scholar Dallas Hunt and settler scholar Shaun Stevenson observe, "the production of maps remain(s) an integral mode of solidifying nationalist, and indeed, settler colonialist constructions of Canada's geography" (2017, 374). The primacy of geography is a key aspect of imperial culture (Said 1993, 93) and refusing it means rejecting "an assumed topography, an already 'worlded' world" (Clifford, 1989).[9] Lost in urban space, if only momentarily, the city becomes a place that is once again unknown—a site open to new creative engagements and relations that disturb settler motion and subjectivity. It's a reminder that place is not an ontological object that is rooted and bounded, and certainly not a set of coordinates on a map. As Glen Coulthard explains, "place is a way of knowing, experiencing, and relating to the world" (2014, 79). It's a process that is open and subject to change, to be redefined and reimagined in practice.

While getting lost in the city may recall the urban walking practices of *flâneurie* and *dérive* or "drifting" where individuals "let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain" (Debord [1958] 2006, 62), and which historically valorized the male gaze of a socially privileged white and abled-bodied walker, my attempt to get lost is about recalling the sense of disorientation I felt when I arrived in Tkaronto as well as the actual (and frightening) experience of getting lost.[10] It is also about recalling the experience of loss, the loss of connections and attachments to place that often fuel migrant imaginaries of diasporic return to the homeland. Remembering these early migrant experiences as I walk—remembering the feeling of the ground shifting under my feet—brings an awareness of my affective and embodied experience of space with new attention to where "here" is. Reactivating migrant memory through movement to shake up perceptions of space thus differs from psychogeographic walking practices, which too often treat urban space as open territory for exploration and self-discovery.

The second aspect of this walk involves moving along the edges—the edges of walls, structures, ledges, sidewalks, bridges, benches, cracks, and crevices—so as to feel a slight sense of vertigo, a sense that I might fall, the feeling of becoming unbalanced, unsettled, unsure. The here-and-now uncertainty of falling, as Emilyn Claid and Ric Allsopp observe, sparks "a realisation that a sense of self emerges in relationship with the environment and that letting go (falling out) of a fixed identity taps into a potential for unknown possibilities" (2013, 1–3). In contrast, the sense of falling from the

map we had imagined and experienced so profoundly was linked to epistemic assumptions of Western knowledge. The act of almost falling is also a reminder not to fall into colonial spatial and discursive practices. Recovering vertigo through a walking practice, then, is one way to start letting go of colonial thinking and doing.

Detour Walk (An Unwalkable Walk)

"You'll never forget your first immigration officer," filmmaker and scholar Ali Kazimi told his audience as he recounted his experience of arrival during a conference on radical hospitalities and intimate geographies that took place in Toronto in 2017. He was right, I thought. I would never forget the name of the immigration officer who met us at the airport in St. John's, even after all these years. It's hard to describe how shocked he was when he saw us, or rather when he realized that we were the refugees. Despite our lack of English or the look of terror on our faces, we couldn't possibly be people coming from South America (in his particular vision of the world). We just didn't fit the image he had constructed of us, or perhaps we had simply failed to perform properly as new arrivals. It turns out that our immigration officer knew as little of the Americas of the South as we knew of the land called Canada. This (mis)encounter set the tone for the next turbulent weeks as we waited to know what would happen to us. The weeks felt like years, the ground felt shaky and unstable, and the feeling of falling returned.

During this time, my brother and I were to stay close to the hotel where we were housed in the outskirts of the city, so we took several walks between the hotel and a place called the Avalon Mall on Kenmount Road. What I remember vividly from this walk was the sound of our feet as we marched on the pebbles of an unpaved road, the cold wind on my cheeks, the overcast sky, and the feeling of displacement and uncertainty. I realized that knowing where I was on a map meant nothing; maps told me little about where "here" was—the land on which I walked, its people and their histories. We had ended up there as a result of Canada's refugee dispersal policy and, like so many immigrants, ultimately made our way to the larger metropolitan centre of Toronto.

While the current pandemic makes it difficult for me to physically retrace the steps of these walks, it doesn't prevent me from imagining a walk—a walk that recognizes the missteps of our trajectory. That we had suddenly found ourselves in a liminal place, waiting for others to decide our fate, opens up possibilities to imagine what might have happened in this time of suspension and how things might have unfolded differently. This walk, then, is an imagined walk that I visualize in retrospect. It's a walk in which we know we're arriving as guests on the ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk as well as the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and it's a walk in which our stay as guests in this land is not determined by paper documents or left to the whims of an immigration officer. In this walk, I remember and reimagine the sound of our feet as I marched with my brother among the pebbles of that unpaved road. In this moment of suspension—of not knowing where I am—I recall walking on pebbles many times before on the land that had been home to me for so long. This was a land where I knew something about its peoples and histories: the ancestral lands of the Matlatzincas, Mazahuas (Hñatho), Nahuas and Hñäñhü, and the Tenochca (or Mexica) nation. Beyond the land where I lived, I had walked on pebbled roads to visit the lands of the Zapotec (Binnizáa), Mixtec (Tu'un savi), Chinantec (Tsa jujmí), Huastec (Téenek), and Mixe (Ayüükjä'äy). I imagine a trail of pebbles linking these lands with the lands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk across Turtle Island. This trail is a figurative one that connects shared histories of colonial violence but also of political and identity struggles for sovereignty and survival. As Diana Taylor observes, what connects many populations across the Americas is not the geographical fact

of the hemisphere but the conditions of impossibility and opposition that define their "shared hemispheric reality" (2007, 1417). This shared hemispheric reality includes traumatic memories of genocidal practices as well as ongoing struggles against racial, economic, and political oppression in the here and now.

In this reimagined walk of suspension, the land on which I am a newly arrived guest appears less strange and more familiar. It's no longer just a location on a map from which I might fall; it is a place of Indigenous cultures and histories, languages and cosmologies, traditions and rituals, habits and beliefs. It is also a place where Indigenous people continue to fight to maintain and protect the land, where the struggle for sovereignty is based on responsibility to the land rather than on control of territory (Monture-Angus 1999, 36). As Patricia Monture-Angus of the Mohawk Nation relays, "the request to have our sovereignty respected is really a request to be responsible. I do not know anywhere in history where a group of people have had to fight so hard just to be responsible" (36). In this reinvented memory, I no longer walk in fear; I walk with care and gratitude, with respect and admiration, and with a desire to learn what responsibility really means from the traditional custodians of the land.

Making My Way Here

Shame Walk

Making my way here means, in one sense, looking back at my journey to this land (along with the stumbles and detours that make it a distinct migrant experience).[11] But making my way here is also about a journey in the making, across real and imagined borders, across space and memory, in the hope of becoming more attentive to the land on which I now dwell. It's a process that might reveal unexpected insights and pathways for a more meaningful relationship. However, learning about my relationship and responsibility to the land called Canada means taking account of my relationship with a land called Mexico, a place to which I had previously migrated as a child, and one that radically changed my view of the world. My arrival in Mexico represents a critical moment in my transnational journey; it was the beginning of an education in class-specific consciousness (and its complex relation to race and nationality) as well as the beginning of an awareness of the land as a place with a history—a history that felt palpable there, as if the stories of the past were constantly seeping into the present.[12] It's important to note, however, that much of the Indigenous history I learned was framed through the national ideology of *indigenismo*, which glorified Mexico's Indigenous past while ignoring the contributions and claims of contemporary Native peoples.[13] It was not until after I had departed that the Zapatista rebellion burst onto the political stage, bringing to light the ongoing activism of Indigenous organizations fighting for autonomy and self-determination.

Before Mexico, I had grown up in Argentina, in the largest public housing development ever built in Buenos Aires, which housed thirty thousand people in more than a hundred monoblock buildings linked with elevated walkways. Living in this massive low-income housing complex as a small child had shaped my social consciousness: with everyone around me living in the same way, in the same buildings and the same tiny apartments, life appeared (to my five-year-old eyes) relatively equal for all. This illusion was, to a certain extent, a reflection of Buenos Aires at large, where the middle classes consciously ignored disparities in an effort to maintain the social integrity of a city they associated with their own class identity.[14]

No such illusion seemed possible in Mexico, where class origins were (and continue to be) a central factor in the production and reproduction of social inequality. Class difference was hypervisible in Mexican society—it was seen and felt everywhere and all the time. However, racial dynamics were not explicit or publicly acknowledged, largely as a consequence of the homogenizing racial logic of *mestizaje* that valorized a mixed national identity (Moreno Figueroa 2010, 387–88).[15] The mestiza identity as a measure of national belonging erased Indigenous struggles for autonomy while the discourse of a racially undifferentiated society hid the presence of racism in the country.[16] I quickly learned I had a social advantage as a South American immigrant with white skin, but I was constantly reminded that I lacked the corresponding socioeconomic status associated with whiteness as a site of privilege. This lack of socioeconomic status is readily understood as a material condition, but it has a performative dimension that shapes everyday encounters. Manner, dress, language, taste, style, as well as education, housing, and access to capital (the ability to make and spend money), are all part of a codified system of identification rooted in visible or performed social markers.

I wondered if class difference mattered so much in Canada and whether it was so palpably present in daily life. Perhaps it would no longer be a problem, I thought, because what I lacked in terms of social status and material well-being could surely be remedied by moving to the First World—the land of the modern and the possible, of progress, wealth, and opportunity. First World dreams reigned among aspiring middle-class Mexicans holding on to promises of prosperity in a country that was always in a state of becoming a modern industrial nation. Rather than waiting for the First World to arrive (which certainly meant it would arrive only for some), migration offered the possibility to go there at a time when staying put proved increasingly difficult for us, both from a political-legal and economic standpoint. Migration, however, is rarely the result of a fully rational and calculated choice at a single point in time and more often occurs in relation to articulations of the past, present, and future as well as imaginations of the world, emotional valences, aspirations, hopes and desires (Collins 2018, 967; Shubin 2015, 353). Fear and anticipation filled my mind as I thought of migrating northward, moving up toward that little dot at the edge of the map of Canada that represented "a better-than-survival kind of living" (Berlant 2007a).

I soon discovered that moving northward came with a different kind of mobility than expected—downward social mobility. As new refugees/immigrants with no home, no jobs, no networks, no language, no return ticket, and no assurance of our legal status, we had fallen down the social ladder to the bottom and were now desperately struggling to gain a foothold in a foreign place. Our first home in Toronto seemed to reflect this feeling of falling or sinking below the surface: a dark, minuscule (surely illegal) basement with a stove hidden inside a closet and a little bar sink too small to wash plates (except perhaps little dessert plates, which we didn't have). Its low ceilings and tiny windows indeed made us feel like we were living underground.[17] Nonetheless, it felt good to have some sort of housing we could call home after weeks of being in limbo, both in St. John's and Toronto. We worked hard to make it liveable, finishing the unfinished basement on our own, and fixing, sanding, varnishing, and painting recycled furnishings. I was surprised by our strong desire to make the uninhabitable homely.

I quickly learned to love my new subterranean dwelling; it was a refuge from the daily hardships and sorrows of migrant life in the city. However, I had accepted my new home only insofar as it could be kept secret. I dreaded to think what kids at school would say if they knew where I lived (it was bad enough that I was the new immigrant with the outdated outfits who couldn't even speak English). But I had learned to conceal well what I lacked (to the extent possible) during my time in Toluca, where doing so was simply part of social relations and everyday life. I kept quiet about my

living conditions at school, and this was easy enough given my lack of proficiency in English. However, I soon started walking home from school with a couple of girls from my class who lived in the neighbourhood. With my stop first on the route home, I had to think of some way to keep my home a secret from my new friends. This need led to a particular walking-home-from-school practice that unfolded as follows: upon reaching my stop—the house of our landlords that hid my home below it—I would say goodbye and slowly walk up the stairs to the porch of the house (as if it were my house). Once I would reach the door, I would slowly open the mailbox beside it and pretend to sift through the mail while looking out of the corner of my eye as the girls walked away. Once they had turned the corner and were out of sight, I would descend carefully from the porch and make my way down the narrow alley toward the back of the house where the stairs to the basement were located. I performed this ritual every day for the entire school year.

What would have happened if my school friends had discovered where I lived? Certainly nothing scandalous given that, on the one hand, class divisions were neither obvious nor extreme compared to what I had experienced in Toluca, and, on the other, the neighbourhood was a motley urban space that housed people from many walks of life. I had translocated my lived experience of class difference from Toluca to Toronto along with the humiliation it brought about. I was performing this ritual out of shame or fear of feeling ashamed—ashamed about the lack of proper housing, which was a reflection of a lack of social standing and ultimately of being poor. It was compounded with our position as outsiders, as newcomers from the Third World, always already inadequate, always already inferior. I continued with this walking practice until, one day, we were able to afford a real apartment farther away but above ground level.

My current walk is a reperformance and reconsideration of this walking-home-from-school practice. Unlike the previous getting-lost-and-walking-on-the-edges walk, this walk has a very specific route and movement. The neighbourhood, just north of St. Clair Street and Oakwood Avenue, has clearly changed over the last couple of decades, not in dramatically visible ways but certainly in terms of who can afford to live there. I spent some time walking around the neighbourhood before starting the walks so as to refamiliarize myself with the urban space and remember what it was like in those early days of feeling so out of place.

The walk starts at my old school, located at 231 Glenholm Avenue. I walk across the back premises of the school and through a path that runs parallel to Earlsdale Avenue, stopping along the way to notice my shadow on the ground. I cross Oakwood Avenue through the crosswalk (which now has a school crossing guide), walk north along Oakwood and turn right at Earlsdale. I keep walking for several blocks until I reach number 79. I climb the little stairs to the porch and quietly approach the entrance. I slowly open the metal mailbox (hoping no one inside the house will notice). But I don't hover over the mailbox like I used to—I'm no longer waiting for anyone to walk away (no one is watching me). Instead, I place an envelope addressed to myself inside. The next time, I place a note addressed to no one in particular. The next time, I whisper into the mailbox. I plan to drop a tiny pebble in the mailbox on my next walk.

With each walk, I reflect on the shame I felt or feared, which, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reminds us, is an affect that moves toward painful individuation but also uncontrollable relationality (2003, 37). I realize now that as refugees/immigrants, our way of relating to the land and the people of Canada was structured by a "politics of inclusion" (Coleman 2016, 62) as we tried desperately to adapt and survive in our new environment. In striving for inclusion in the Euro-Canadian project, we were unwittingly becoming implicated in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The

more immigrants strive toward inclusion, suggests Sunera Thobani, the more they become invested in "the nation's erasure of its originary violence and its fantasies of progress and prosperity" (2007, 16). However, during this early period, as new arrivals trying to survive, fantasies of progress and prosperity had all but evaporated and were nowhere on our horizon. Our struggle for social belonging was perhaps better characterized by what Lauren Berlant calls "aspirational normativity," an affective need to "feel held by the social world," a desire "to feel normalcy as a ground of dependable life"—one that doesn't have to be reinvented again and again (2007b, 281). Walking up the steps of that house, as I did every day in the presence of new friends, was about both enacting and being in close proximity to that dependable life that ensures reciprocity in one's exchanges, a confirming reciprocity that, as Berlant observes, "engenders satisfaction and optimism toward a better-than-survival kind of living" (2007a).

Walking Toward an Anticolonial Praxis of Place

As I continue this process of recovery and recognition, my hope is that reflective walking practices like this one, while only small gestures, might nonetheless help in shifting migrant attention away from aspirational normativity and toward what Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson call "grounded normativity" where the land is the basis of reciprocal relations and obligations to other people and the other-than-human relations that constitute the land (2016, 254). Whereas aspirational normativity is an affective need driven by the desire to belong to a place, grounded normativity is an ethical framework arising from place-based practices (254). Aspirational normativity leads to a constant reinvestment in normative promises of intimacy under capital (Berlant 2007b, 281) while grounded normativity, and the practices of deep reciprocity it entails, emerge from an intimate relationship to place (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 254). Unlike "the feeling for that feeling" of aspirational normativity, which doesn't depend on the forms of living to which it attaches (Berlant 2007b, 281), grounded normativity is about living in relation to others and other life forms, and crucially, in ways that are not dominating or exploitative (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 254). This shift in attention demands a critical awareness of how migrant desires for aspirational normativity perpetuate structures of colonial and capitalist dispossession. While changes in how immigrants see their relationship and responsibility to the land will not happen through reflective walking practices alone, an intentional practice of walking and thinking through embodied memories of shifting grounds could be the beginning of undoing the coloniality of thought that underpins both migrant trajectories to the "First World" and migrant aspirations for a better-than-survival kind of living that so often results in assimilation to, and participation in, a settler colonial state.

Immigrants, like settler nationals, argues Taiaiake Alfred, must radically reimagine themselves, no longer as citizens or citizens-in-the-making, but as human beings in equal and respectful relation to other human beings and the natural environment (2010, 5–6). Diasporic memories of loss and displacement can be useful sources for such reimagining, especially since decolonizing entails a critical engagement with the past—how as migrants we made our way "here," and, as Jill Carter asks us, what it means to be "here" now. This critical engagement and constant questioning of how we are (and came to be) situated in relation to the colonial project might allow for a deeper understanding of the past, one that connects the consequences of colonialism and capitalism across the hemisphere. If migration is a transformative experience, then perhaps we can think of the transformation as ongoing, as a process in which immigrants learn from and respect Indigenous land, thought, and politics. For immigrants like me who now call this land home, this transformation entails engaging with the erased histories of "here" through embodied memories of loss and

displacement that elicit new responsiveness to the land as well as recognition of its caretakers and their struggles. This unfinished walking practice (thus far comprised of falling, detour, and shame walks) is a gesture against forgetting such migrant experiences in the hope of *un*making place (as previously constructed through assimilation to settler colonialism) and better understanding the reciprocity and responsibility of grounded normativity.

Recovering migrant memory while moving on the land and in recognition of Indigenous territories is one small step toward an anticolonial praxis of place that reconsiders how I might inhabit the land differently. To dwell on Indigenous land and "embody territory as Indigenous people do," explains Métis theorist David Garneau, "is not to settle the land" but rather "to settle oneself" to a territory that's not one's own (2015). To dwell on Indigenous territory as an immigrant, then, entails dwelling on my movement northward to this land and learning how "to home without settling," without imposing a will upon the land and with respect for its Indigenous stewards (Garneau 2015). Walking is a means to this dwelling on the past and the present, to this movement of thought that keeps me unsettled.[18] While my walking and thinking in Tkaronto is, for the moment, a solo practice (and certainly a personal journey), I envision a collective practice in the near future, one where I walk with others who might share their migrant journeys to "here" and where we reflect together on our relationship to settler colonialism as immigrants or newcomers to this land. As I continue walking while waiting eagerly for the next "Walking Our Way Here" walking/movement working group, I think about the possibilities that diasporic experiences might open up for both immigrant and Indigenous peoples who share histories of movement to, within, and beyond the land we now call Canada.

Notes

1. I will be a guest in the land now called Colombia and will walk on the ancestral lands where the city of Bogotá is now located.

2. I believe Jill Carter had invited us to leave this red fabric anywhere in the urban landscape, during or after our walk, or later throughout the conference. I remember searching for a location that might be a meaningful place on which to leave it. I hesitated, worried about finding the right place (a reminder of how much work I have ahead of me to decolonize my thought process). The little piece of fabric remained in my red bag, accompanying me but always reminding me to be mindful of where "here" is. I have been keeping it in my care until the right place reveals itself to me.

3. Su-Feh first performed this ritual to acknowledge the Squamish, Tsleil-waututh and Musqueam nations on whose traditional unceded territory Vancouver is situated and where she lives and works.

4. I thank Jill Carter, Jenn Cole, Melissa Poll, Natalie Rewa, and Keren Zaiontz for inspiring me to engage in walking, thinking, and writing in recognition of my relationship to the ancestral lands and territories on which I live and work. I'm also grateful to the peer reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

5. This was especially the case during the 1980s and 1990s when new democratic governments were emerging after years of military regimes and the political aspirations of the governing elites were fuelled by the possibilities of moving closer to the First World, politically and economically. For a discussion on how the name and concept of "Latin America" emerged, see Mignolo (2003).

6. Before the colonial invasion that began in 1492, the "Americas" were named Abya Yala by the *Kuna-Tule* people of the land now known as Panama and Colombia. The name resurged in 1992 when Indigenous peoples throughout the continent protested the 500th anniversary of the "Discovery of America." As Mignolo explains, "Abya Yala became a way to rename, disrupt, and counter 'America,' a name-idea imposed in, by, and through 'conquest'" (2018, 22).

7. For a discussion of the divisions within America after the revolution of independence see the chapter "'Latin' America and the First Reordering of the Modern/Colonial World" in Mignolo (2005).

8. For an extensive discussion on the logic of coloniality that remained after independence in South America, see Mignolo (2005), particularly the chapter "'Latin' America and the First Reordering of the Modern/Colonial World."

9. Clifford is referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of "worlding" of a world in which areas and territories were inscribed through imperial power and defined in Eurocentric terms.

10. I was eventually found by a police officer, which was also scary, given I had learned to fear the police while growing up in Mexico.

11. "Making my way here" comes from the title of the walking/movement group "Walking Our Way Here" mentioned at the beginning of this reflection.

12. This last observation is the premise of the latest walk I began, which I have yet to articulate in writing.

13. *Indigenismo* was a cultural and political movement that emerged during the twentieth century in Latin America, which advanced the study and often the defence of Indigenous people and cultures. However, in Mexico, as Diana Negrín da Silva observes, this construct defined "the national imaginary through which indigeneity came to be both celebrated and shunned" (2012, 145).

14. Not seeing was about more than just ignoring poverty in the country's capital—it was also a matter of survival during Argentina's military dictatorship (1976–82) when thousands of civilians were disappeared. Seeing or witnessing violence came with the risk of becoming a victim of state violence and disappearance. In her insightful analysis of Argentina's Dirty War, Diana Taylor argues that seeing or witnessing violence "put people at risk in a society that policed the look"; the choice to not see the atrocities taking place in the country led to a "self-blinding of the general population" (1997, 122–23). For a discussion on the middle-class imaginary in Buenos Aires, see Guano (2004).

15. *Mestizaje* refers to the racial and cultural mixing of Indigenous, European, African, and other ethnicities. In Mexico, however, the "myth of mestizaje" is based on the fusion of Spanish and Indigenous peoples (and more specifically in the violent coupling of Spanish conquistadores and Indigenous women), which purportedly produced a syncretic identity that combines the best attributes of the two races. For a discussion on the myth of mestizaje and a critique of the official narrative about mestizaje in Mexico, see Navarrete (2016).

16. While racism is routinely denied and often conflated with class, it is highly visible through politics, aesthetics, speech, and attitudes that associate contemporary indigeneity with poverty and underdevelopment. However, as Negrín da Silva notes in her study on Wixárika youth activists in Mexico, a growing urban heterogenous Indigenous population is increasingly challenging the racial imaginary of *indigenismo* (2012, 145).

17. I would later discover what residing below the surface really meant when I learned about the tunnel dwellers in Bucharest, who until recently were living fully underground in the city's heated tunnels.

18. On the mobility of thought as integral to walking methods, see Springgay and Truman (2018).

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Walking as Embodied Territorial Acknowledgment: Thinking about Place-Based Relationships from the Side of the Road

Ken Wilson

I'm walking due west of Regina, Saskatchewan, following a gravel grid road into the teeth of a windstorm. On the tracks that parallel the road I'm walking on, a train is approaching, a long, ponderous line of double-stacked containers slowly heading east. It has hardly passed when another eastbound train, this one pulling covered hoppers from the potash mine west of the city, rumbles by. On the western horizon, trucks are silently moving along the new Regina Bypass. A stack of railway ties piled beside the tracks fills the air with the stink of creosote. Swallows cast shadows across the road. Passing vehicles throw up clouds of dust and sand; the wind flings it into my face. A pair of red-winged blackbirds plays in the wind, hovering and calling to each other.

I turn south on Pinkie Road. The walking is a little easier, since I'm not heading into the wind, but the gusts shove me toward the ditch. I'm leaning sideways. Someone has dumped a bushel of corn mixed with fertilizer on the shoulder. When Pinkie approaches Centre Road, it arcs west, and I find myself walking into the wind again. On the overpass that carries Centre Road over the Bypass, the wind pulls at my glasses; it wants to tear them away and throw them onto the highway below. I'm bent double, now, like a wing walker in a barnstorming show. I need to get out of this wind, so I turn south on Condie Road, toward Highway 1. The road is a gravel berm laid across the landscape, flat and straight. In a momentary lull in the wind, I hear a meadowlark singing.

The wind is tiring, and I start singing to encourage myself to keep going. My voice startles two grey partridges, which scuttle into the air, complaining. Excess grain rots in a field beside the road; its plastic storage tubes have been torn open by the weather. A truck passes, and I exchange a wave with its driver. I sit in the grass beside the road to rest for a minute, my back against the wind. The city fills the horizon. Between here and there, trucks move along the Bypass. A field of stubble is in the foreground. When I stand up to keep walking, I place my hand firmly on a thistle hidden in the grass. As I pass the right-of-way of the Keystone pipeline, I startle a jackrabbit.

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Verbal land acknowledgments have become commonplace in Canadian academic and artistic institutions and spaces over the past fifteen years, a process that seems to have been accelerated by the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on Indian Residential Schools in 2015. Acknowledgment, sociologists Rima Wilkes and Howard Ramos, lawyer Aaron Duong, and Lakota scholar Linc Kesler contend, "refers to a recognition and appreciation of another's right to self-determining autonomy and existence" (2017, 91). Yet recognition "is an inherently challenging political project," particularly in settler-colonial states like Canada, which

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"have long used recognition as a means of defining Indigeneity and therefore setting the terms of who is entitled to Indigenous peoples' land" (91). The practice of land acknowledgments developed as a result of the "the work of Indigenous activists and . . . has spread as a result of this work" (92).

Verbal land acknowledgments have been subjected to critique as they have spread, however, particularly by Indigenous writers. Métis legal scholar and writer Chelsea Vowel suggests that when these acknowledgments first began "they were fairly powerful statements of presence, somewhat shocking, perhaps even unwelcome in settler spaces. They provoked discomfort and centered Indigenous priority on these lands" (âpihtawikosisân 2016). But "what may start out as radical push-back against the denial of Indigenous priority and continued presence, may end up repurposed as 'box-ticking' inclusion without commitment to any sort of real change" (âpihtawikosisân 2016). nêhiyaw geographer Michelle Daigle argues that while some land acknowledgments are "respectful and meaningful" if "the people undertaking them—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—do so in a manner which activates the relational accountability that is embedded in this legal and political practice, by calling up one's kinship relations," most land acknowledgments do not meet that standard (2019, 711). Those that fall short are, Daigle writes, merely "hollow gestures of lip service as routine-like territorial acknowledgments are quickly forgotten and brushed aside to resume business as usual, according to well-established colonial and racialized power asymmetries" (711). She argues that settlers making such acknowledgments are more invested in pronouncing names correctly—getting their lines right, in other words—"than actually learning about the place where they live and work, with all of the complexities of historical and ongoing colonial dispossession and violence, elaborate and sophisticated Indigenous kinship networks, and the legal orders and authorities that have cared for that place for millennia" (711). "Indeed, such performances further propagate the myth that Canadians are reconciling their relationship and that everything is okay," she contends (711). Land acknowledgments are therefore part of the "plethora of performative politics" on Canadian university campuses. They have caused "many Indigenous faculty, students, and staff and, most importantly, the original caretakers of those territories, to ask what follows such performances of recognition and remorse, or what should be put in action instead of hollow gestures and performances" (711). Actions speak louder than the words mouthed by settlers, but those actions need to be authentic rather than superficial performance.

It's easy to read the words of a land acknowledgment, Stó:lō academic Dylan Robinson notes, but "we have to recognize that acknowledgment is an irreducibly relational and situational protocol. Everything changes depending on who you are and whom you're speaking to" (Carter, Recollet, and Robinson 2017, 207–8). Most land acknowledgments, he continues, "act as what Sara Ahmed calls 'non-performative'" (208). In "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism," Ahmed reflects on "institutional speech acts" that "make claims 'about' or 'on behalf' of an institution" (2006, 104). "Such speech acts do not do what they say: they do not, as it were, commit a person, organization, or state to an action," she writes. "Instead, they are nonperformatives" (104). Ahmed is using the word "performative" according to philosopher J. L. Austin's argument that a performative utterance is one that performs an action; it makes something happen instead of just conveying information (Austin [1962] 1975, 6–7). However, "the speech acts that commit the university to equality," Ahmed suggests, "are nonperformatives. They 'work' precisely by not bringing about the effects that they name" (2006, 105). By describing verbal land acknowledgments as "nonperformative," Robinson is suggesting that their purpose is to make nothing happen. Such statements, then, are substitutes for action; they take the place of decolonizing work instead of furthering it.

A lost toy on a front lawn. Regina, Saskatchewan, July 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

Verbal land acknowledgments, then, according to Vowel, Daigle, and Robinson, are typically either hollow performances or statements intended to do nothing. Is there any other form of land acknowledgment that might address these critiques? Might walking on the land, for instance, as a form of embodied land acknowledgment, be an improvement on verbal acknowledgments? Might embodied land acknowledgments enable settlers to come into a noncolonial (see Garneau, n.d.) and nonextractive relationship with the land where they are walking? I am a settler, born and raised in the Haldimand Tract in southwestern Ontario and now living in Treaty 4 territory in southern Saskatchewan. Over the past year, I have been engaged in an ongoing practice of walking in and around Regina as an attempt to answer those questions, hoping that there is a way, as Métis artist David Garneau writes, for a settler like me "to home in these territories without trying to settle them" (Garneau, n.d.). I'm not the only person thinking about walking as a form of embodied land acknowledgment; I was part of a Canadian Association for Theatre Research working group in 2020, in which settlers and Indigenous people thought about the practice in a podcast that is available online (see Cole and Poll 2020). This essay, based on my PhD research, sets out to ask questions about my walking practice—without coming to definite answers, since my walking project is ongoing and unfinished—and to think about both its limitations and its possibilities.

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I cross the highway—the old Ring Road, built between the 1950s and the 1970s, the precursor to the new Regina Bypass—and walk east along the gravel path that graces Assiniboine Avenue. There is smoke in the air; perhaps someone is burning leaves left over from last fall. Kids are everywhere, cycling on the sidewalks, enjoying the warm spring sunshine. I walk into a neighbourhood where

every street is named after nearby Wascana Creek, the body of water that flows through the city. All the houses are two-storey pink or buff stucco boxes, crowded together on small lots. I remember when this subdivision was built twenty years ago. I pass the city's Mormon Temple at the entrance of this neighbourhood; its tall, golden statue of the Angel Moroni and his trumpet is a landmark.

I walk along Wascana Circle to the McKell Wascana Conservation Park. Wascana Creek meanders in curves and oxbows here, and the land is marshy: a perfect habitat for ducks. I cross the creek on a footbridge and follow a path into what I take to be a tame pasture. When I see the remains of last season's little bluestem, one of my favourite native prairie grasses, though, I wonder if I'm wrong. I listen to the wind and the red-winged blackbirds and meadowlarks. I cross a line of fence posts without wire. A blank sign tells me nothing.

The path peters out in the middle of the pasture. I can see farm buildings in the distance. I don't want to encounter an angry dog while trespassing—getting bitten would mean spending hours in an emergency ward half closed due to the pandemic—so I turn back. Twittering swallows are flying overhead, but I'm not sure what kind; I'm not carrying a field guide and don't know enough about birds to hazard a guess. I wish I did. There are bluebird nesting boxes on the fence posts. I cross back over the creek again and follow its winding course southeast. A row of mansions backs onto the park: the view of the park is an amenity, the creek a spectacle. A jackrabbit flees the tall grass. I wonder if its young are hidden there and turn to walk closer to the houses, where the grass is mown short, so I won't disturb them.

I see an open gate in the steel fence separating the houses from the park and walk through into a vacant lot: one more mansion is needed to complete the set. The streets near the park are strangely silent. Sparrows and my own footsteps are the only sounds. Then I hear two women chatting behind me as they walk their dog. Their voices suddenly bring the sounds of the city—traffic, power washers, lawnmowers, music on someone's radio—back to my ears. I walk out to the highway. I hear frogs and meadowlarks and blackbirds singing during lulls in the traffic.

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Working against the structures of settler colonialism is, according to Canadian academics Emma Battel Lowman and Adam Barker, collective work that must be undertaken in solidarity with Indigenous peoples (2015, 16). My walking practice has been a solo one over the past year, partly because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and so it does not fit that description, but it may offer an opportunity for what Australian scholar Clare Land describes as a self-reflexive examination of my complicity in colonialism, "including by interrogating who we are in terms of identity, culture and history, and the shape of our lives" (2015, 29). That examination, as the French-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi tells us, is difficult, even impossible. Memmi states that the colonizer who wants to refuse to be a colonizer is bound to fail: "everything confirms his solitude, bewilderment and ineffectiveness. He will slowly realize that the only thing to do is to remain silent" ([1957] 1991, 43). "If he cannot stand this silence and make his life a perpetual compromise, he can end up by leaving the colony and its privileges," Memmi concludes (43).

A grain bin beside the highway during harvest. Regina Bypass, northwest of Regina, Saskatchewan, September 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

Memmi's argument suggests the impossibility of rejecting settler colonialism while remaining a settler by birth and citizenship. And yet, many settler Canadians are in the same place: they reject our country's continuing colonization of Indigenous peoples but find it difficult to put that rejection into practice. At best, we end up engaging in the kind of symbolic actions that Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang dismiss as mere "*conscientization*" (2012, 19), actions that feel good but aren't tangibly contributing to the goal of decolonization, which they define as the repatriation of "*all* of the land" to Indigenous peoples (7). No doubt they would describe my attempt at an embodied land acknowledgment by walking as conscientization: trying to come into a relationship with the land is not the same as facilitating its return. If they are correct, the practice of embodied land acknowledgments may be as worthless as their verbal precursors. I'd like to rescue my practice from that conclusion. I may not succeed.

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I'm walking west along College Avenue in the centre of Regina. I pass three boarded-up houses, wooden Craftsman bungalows waiting to be torn down and replaced with something new. Perhaps these houses were seen by their owners as mere income properties, assets on a balance sheet, rather than dwelling-places: as objects, in other words. Who can say? The siding on one has been scorched, and I wonder if the fire happened before or after they were abandoned.

Around the corner, an idling Harley-Davidson fills the air with its rumbling. Landscapers are building someone's front sidewalk. I smell gasoline. I walk through streets of so-called "wartime"

houses, prefabs built for returning veterans in the late 1940s. Dandelions are blooming on the edge of a lawn, the first food of the season for the bees fumbling with the yellow flowers. New grow boxes, not yet filled with soil, are being installed in a front yard; someone is using the pandemic to take up gardening. A demolished porch is waiting to be hauled away. The city is constantly in flux, growing and being torn down.

Grackles clack in a hedge, and a robin sings for a mate in a tall poplar. Ducks fly past, low, in formation; I can hear the whistling sound their wings make against the air. I suddenly see a clawfoot tub, painted bright pink, lying on its side next to someone's driveway, like a resting sow. I think about famous literary pigs: Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*, Napoleon and Snowball in *Animal Farm*, Parson Trulliber's pigs, the Gadarene swine. Those allusions don't fit. This bathtub is just a bathtub: abandoned, like the bungalows, and waiting to be hauled away.

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The urban and rural walks I've been engaged in around Regina over the past year—to use the language of psychogeography, these "drifts" or *dérives*—have been, in part, an attempt to come into a relationship with the land: an effort to develop a nonextractive connection to the land, one that might be impossible for a settler like me to achieve. After all, some critics argue that psychogeography repeats an imperial impulse, that because of the practice's emphasis on "discovery," psychogeographers end up playing at being colonial explorers (Richardson 2015, 15). The critique of psychogeography as colonizing is powerful. Robinson describes the history of walking as an art practice as overwhelmingly "dominated by white male artists, as much as the writing on walking methodologies has been dominated by white male geographers" (2020, 255). In such a context, he continues, "we can understand settler colonial modes of thought as not merely the product of interpellation by the state and educational institutions, but formed and maintained through the rhythms of everyday experience" (255–56). Robinson calls for "a significant expansion of antiracist, queer, feminist, and decolonial proprioception that operates outside of the often teleological form of the walk, and colonial-exploratory modes of discovery enacted through the *dérive*" (256). Still, Robinson cautions against arguing that all forms of walking art are "irrevocably compromised by the normative frameworks" he describes (256). Some forms of walking art resist those frameworks. Does mine? Or is such resistance rooted in identity, and therefore not available to white, cis-gendered men like me? Do the structures of settler colonialism make that resistance an impossibility?

An urban crow. Regina, Saskatchewan, June 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

One way to think about whether walking by a white, cis-gendered settler might resist the "normative frameworks" Robinson is discussing—whether, in other words, such walking, and the learning it attempts to generate, could be considered forms of resistance to the colonialism he sees bound up with many forms of walking art—is to consider the difference between observation and specularity. English filmmaker and film theorist Laura Mulvey raises important questions about the differences between these forms of the gaze. When I look at the space I'm walking through, when I take photographs and notes, am I excited by the idea that what I'm looking at is an object of my own pleasure, or do I see that space as an extension of myself and my place in the world? The first would be a form of what Mulvey, through Freud, calls scopophilia; the second would be what Mulvey, through Lacan, describes as narcissism. Both are ways of relating to space as if it were spectacle; both desire to control that space, to exert power over it. Mulvey's primary interest is the way that "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female," the way that women in cinema are displayed as sexual objects for male visual pleasure (1975, 11), but is there a way that colonized space can be displayed for settler visual pleasure as well? Is there something called "the colonial gaze"?

Indian English critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha argues that there is. In his discussion of the pathological colonial gaze, he draws on Lacan's work on the mirror stage, as Mulvey does. "The Imaginary is the transformation that takes place in the subject at the formative mirror phase, when it assumes a *discrete* image which allows it to postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities, between the objects of the surrounding world," Bhabha writes (1994, 77). "However, this positioning is itself problematic, for the subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational. This is the basis of the close relation

between the two forms of identification complicit with the Imaginary—narcissism and aggressivity," and these two forms of identification "constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to the stereotype which, as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it" (77).

Colonial discourse, the product of the colonial gaze, Bhabha continues, is "then a complex articulation of the tropes of fetishism—metaphor and metonomy—and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the Imaginary" (1994, 77). In any example of colonial discourse, "the metaphoric/narcissistic and the metonymic/aggressive positions will function simultaneously, strategically poised in relation to each other," and the subjects of this discourse will be "constructed within an apparatus of power which *contains*, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge—a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness" Bhabha calls "the stereotype" (77–78). Such stereotypes are constructed in "regimes of visibility and discursivity—fetishistic, scopic, Imaginary"—and by understanding those regimes, we can "see the place of fantasy in the exercise of colonial power" (79). Garneau goes further: "The colonial attitude is characterized not only by scopophilia, a drive to look, but also by an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit," he writes. "The attitude assumes that everything should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage" (2016, 23). The inclusion of the word "traverse" here implicates walking in Garneau's critique. Perhaps settlers like me walking along a grid road in rural Saskatchewan can be nothing more than colonizers inspecting stolen property, and my desire to come into a relationship with the land is exploitive and sees the land as just another commodity to be employed for my pleasure, knowledge, traversing.

Bhabha is writing about the colonizer's stereotypes of colonized peoples, rather than the colonizer's way of seeing the land as an object, as spectacle. That distinction is important in relation to my walking practice because I'm alone and rarely see anyone—settler or Indigenous—unless they are driving past me. In addition, even in normal times, rural Saskatchewan's grid roads are not typically considered congenial places to walk. As settler pilgrimage scholar Matthew R. Anderson observes, if you're walking in rural Saskatchewan, anyone who sees you will assume your vehicle has broken down (2018, 153). Instead of people, what I see is the land, including the built environment of the city. Am I engaged in observation or in specularity as I look at these spaces? Am I entering into a relationship with the land as I look at it, or am I treating it as an object? What kind of gaze am I using when I look: one that is loving, or one that is extractive, sees the land as a thing, takes and gives nothing back?

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I walk out to Highway 33. I was here not a week ago, and not much has changed. There's a smell of cedar mulch from bushes planted behind a deer-resistant fence. I hadn't noticed those before. Despite the rain we've had, Chuka Creek, which runs through a culvert underneath the highway and then between the houses to the west and the Bypass, is nearly dry. No frogs are singing. One red-winged blackbird trills from its perch on one of last summer's cattails. A hawk roosts on a streetlight, and trucks thunder southwest on the overpass above. I make a wrong turn and retrace my steps. I see someone sitting in the passenger seat of a junked car rusting away behind a windbreak, along with farm equipment and a pickup truck. Who is it? What is he doing? I look again: no one's there. The seat is empty. I hear the first meadowlarks of the day singing. A fire is burning in the far distance, sending a column of dirty smoke into the air.

A duck is swimming in a dugout next to the service road. The traffic noise recedes behind me. I pass the Intermobil freight terminal. Shipping containers are stacked along the train tracks. Only one gantry is working; the other is silent and still. A rabbit bounces over the grass. To the west, past the highway, I can see the city's downtown. A meadowlark is singing on a rusting earth mover. At a level crossing, a goose waddles away from me down the railway track.

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In an interview with Naomi Klein, Anishinaabe writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues that colonialism is based on extracting and assimilating, and the alternative to extractivism is "deep reciprocity." That "deep reciprocity," Simpson continues, is "respect, it's relationship, it's responsibility, and it's local" (Klein and Simpson 2013). It's also based in love. In her own territory, Simpson tells Klein, "I try to have that intimate relationship, that relationship of love—even though I can see the damage—to try to see that there is still beauty there" (Klein and Simpson 2013). Simpson isn't the only Indigenous writer to use such terms to describe a connection with the land. Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan, for instance, in a discussion of the sweat lodge ceremony, notes that the participants "say the words 'All my relations'" before and after praying; for Hogan, "those words create a relationship with other people, with animals, with the land" (1995, 40). During the ceremony, she continues, "the animals and ancestors move into the human body, into skin and blood. The land merges with us. The stones come to dwell inside the person" (41). "We who easily grow apart from the world are returned to the great store of life all around us, and there is the deepest sense of being at home here in this intimate kinship," Hogan writes (41). However, the real ceremony begins when "the formal one ends, when we take up a new way, our minds and hearts filled with the vision of earth that holds us within it, in compassionate relationship to and with the world" (40–41). The kind of relationship that comes out of ceremony, and the intimacy of the connections between people, animals, and the land that occurs during ceremony, speaks to a form of connection that is deep and powerful, one that is literal rather than metaphorical. I read Hogan's words and reflect on the much different lessons I've learned about my place in the world, lessons I'm trying to unlearn. I think about the phrase "all my relations"—in Plains Cree, nêhiyawêwin, a language I've been trying to learn as part of my research, the words are kahkiyaw niwâhkômâkanak. This expression is not a figure of speech. It's a literal statement of connection to the world. One of my Cree teachers, nêhiyaw Professor Bill Cook, told us it's even more than that: it's a prayer, one that reflects the "deep reciprocity" Simpson describes. As the late Anishinaabe writer Richard Wagamese stated, "It's a way of saying that you recognize your place in the universe and that you recognize the place of others and of other things in the realm of the real and the living. In that it is a powerful evocation of truth" (2013).

A Cree Elder I know, a poet and a fellow walker—we met on a participatory, convivial walk between Mortlach and Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, and again on another walk from Humboldt, Saskatchewan, to Fort Carlton, both organized by Swift Current, Saskatchewan artist and historian Hugh Henry—told me, as we trudged down a gravel grid road, that when I'm walking on the land, I'm coming into a relationship with it. Even if the grassland has been ploughed under, even if you're walking past canola fields, she said, you can still feel the sun on your face, see the sky, hear the birds, sense the gentle contours of the land with the muscles in your legs—because, contrary to popular opinion, the prairie is never completely flat. You're not alone when you're walking by yourself, she told me. You are with the land. It is with you.

Her words have stayed with me, and they remind me of Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman's notion of "walking-with" (2018, 11). Walking-with, they write, should not be misunderstood as "conviviality and sociality, or the idea that one needs to walk with a group of people. You could walk-with alone" (11). They suggest that what is essential to walking-with is an explicit acknowledgment of "political positions and situated knowledges, which reveal our entanglements with settler colonization and neoliberalism" (11). "Walking-with is accountable. . . . Walking-with is a form of solidarity, unlearning, and critical engagement with situated knowledges. Walking-with demands that we forgo universal claims about how humans and nonhumans experience walking, and consider more-than-human ethics and politics of the material intra-actions of walking research" (11). When I'm walking on the land, am I also walking-with the land? How close is walking-with to Indigenous ideas about being in relationship with the land?

That is a difficult question. Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts begins her discussion of relationships to the land with creation stories: the Haudenosaunee story of Sky Woman and the Anishinaabe story of the Seven Fires of Creation. These stories "describe a theoretical understanding of the world via a physical embodiment—*Place-Thought*" (Watts 2013, 21). "Place-Thought" is the central term in Watts's argument. "Place-Thought is the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated," she writes. "Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (Watts 2013, 21).

Long forgotten on the edge of a grid road. West of Regina, Saskatchewan, June 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

In contrast, settlers look at the world abstractly: "How they are articulated in action or behavior brings this abstraction into praxis; hence a division of epistemological/theoretical versus ontological/praxis" (Watts 2013, 22). Haudenosaunee or Anishinaabe cosmological frameworks, however, "are not an abstraction but rather a literal and animate extension of Sky Woman's and First Woman's thoughts; it is impossible to separate theory from praxis if we believe in the original historical events of Sky Woman and First Woman" (22). The complex theories of Indigenous

people, then, and the way they conceive of the world and their connection to it, "are not distinct from place" (22). As Watts explains, Haudenosaunee or Anishinaabe framing is circular: it moves from Spirit to Place-Thought, which determines agency within creation; societies and systems become extensions of that agency, creating an obligation to communicate, which leads back to Spirit. In contrast, Western framing is linear, beginning with a divide between epistemology and ontology, between knowing and being, which separates constituents of the world from how the world is understood, limiting agency to humans, and creating an "exclusionary relationship with nature" (22).

Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie describe the crucial distinction between the ontology of Western place-based paradigms, which (to paraphrase the Cartesian *cogito*) say something like "I am, therefore place is," and the ontology of land-based Indigenous paradigms, which state something like "Land is, therefore we are" (2015, 55–56). In other words, the ontology of place privileges the individual human, whereas the ontology of land privileges land and the life of a collective (56). "This represents a profound distinction that cannot be overlooked," Tuck and McKenzie write. "Understandings of collectivity and shared (though not necessarily synchronous) relations to land are core attributes of an ontology of land" (56). In addition, "the *land-we* ontology . . . is incommensurable with anthropocentric notions of place" (56). The land comes first in Indigenous thought and practice. Ontologies that put humans first, either at the centre of place or as "small and simple cogs in a universal scheme," are incompatible with Indigenous land-we ontologies (56). Indeed, many Indigenous cultures refer to land formations as ancestors (56–57). According to Tuck and McKenzie, that idea is "simultaneously poetic and real; it is both a notion and an action" (57). It is an affirmation of kinship with the land.

In contrast, with our linear cosmology and anthropocentric ideas of place, settlers often see the land as something we can manipulate for our own benefit, from which we can extract value. Settler anthropologist Eva Mackey suggests that settlers tend to see themselves "as outsiders to, and conquerors of, nature. Such concepts of relationship to land in terms of possessive ownership and control are widely believed to have been foreign to First Nations" (Mackey 2016, 45–46). A relationship of ownership is the opposite of one based on kinship. Settlers think the land belongs to them, that they are separate from or above it; Indigenous peoples think they belong to the land, that it is their kin. That's a fundamental difference, encoded in the English language; Potawatomi biologist and writer Robin Kimmerer suggests: "English encodes human exceptionalism, which privileges the needs and wants of humans above all others and understands us as detached from the commonwealth of life" (2017). The Potawatomi language, in contrast, because it considers many nouns to be animate and has no pronoun equivalent to "it,"

> is a language that challenges the fundamental tenets of Western thinking—that humans alone are possessed of rights and all the rest of the living world exists for human use. Those whom my ancestors called relatives were renamed *natural resources*. In contrast to verb-based Potawatomi, the English language is made up primarily of nouns, somehow appropriate for a culture so obsessed with things. (Kimmerer 2017)

Such linguistic differences help explain why the first thing settlers did when they arrived in what's now called Saskatchewan was to begin ploughing under the grassland ecosystem. Possession of the land was contingent on that destruction, according to the 1872 Dominion Lands Act: breaking the land was considered a sign of its improvement and thus of the inhabitant's possession of it. The land was not a relative; it was a thing, a resource. Nothing has changed; in fact, today, temperate

grasslands are the planet's most endangered ecosystem (Kraus 2016). Almost none remains near Regina, where the heavy clay soil is good for growing grain and oilseeds. Here the grassland is gone.

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It rained briefly last night; the lawns have turned green, and buds on the elm trees are beginning to open. I think of Robert Frost: "Nature's first green is gold." I walk past a crew of city workers standing around an open sewer hatch. Crossing the creek on the pedestrian bridge, I notice all the birds, piyêsisak: grackles, red-winged blackbirds, mallards. I saw a pelican yesterday, gliding overhead. Spring is definitely here.

I walk along side streets and alleys for as long as I can before I have to turn onto Albert Street, the city's main north-south artery. Someone has spilled wheat in an alley. Crows are eating soggy bread in a vacant lot; they fly away when I try to take their picture. Fallen catkins under a poplar tree smell impossibly sweet. On Albert Street, the sidewalks are empty of pedestrians. I'm hungry and bite into the apple I've brought with me.

Just before the Ring Road, where Albert Street becomes Highway 6, heading south to the US border, I notice frogs, ayîkisak, singing in the ditches at the side of the road, unheard by passing motorists sealed in their vehicles. Their companionable music follows me all day.

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I'm aware of the dangers of môniyâwak like me idealizing Indigenous forms of knowing and, especially, trying to participate in them. That desire can become—or perhaps is—just another colonizing gesture, an extractive attempt to acquire knowledge, or a misunderstanding of the fundamental differences between Place-Thought or land-we ontologies and our own settler ways of being and knowing. Nevertheless, settlers need to change the extractive way we engage with our world, our home, if we are to stop the ongoing ecological catastrophe, and perhaps coming into relationship with the land that puts it at the centre of the world would be a way of making that change. I'm not sure that form of relationship is available to settlers, though. Watts discusses radical European and American thinkers who have tried to accord agency to the natural world—Donna Haraway, Vanessa Kirby, Bruno Latour—and concludes that the levels of agency they grant to the land and its creatures "are a product of the epistemology-ontology paradigm," which carries within it "the idea of human ownership over non-human things, beings, etc." (2013, 30). How could settlers rework their way of thinking about the world, literally, from the ground up? How could we shift our thinking from an I-place ontology to a land-we ontology, to use terms from Tuck and McKenzie's argument? That's a tall order; it's not likely to happen by taking a few walks around Regina. Walking might even turn out to be one more extractive, objectifying process.

An abandoned road sign. Regina, Saskatchewan, June 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

In fact, Robinson argues that all settler attempts at learning—about the land, about Indigenous peoples—are necessarily extractive. Our "desire or hunger to know" is, he contends, implied by the Stó:lō word for settler, "xwelítem," which means "starving person": not only starving for food but for gold as well (Carter et al. 2017, 210). That hunger for resources—"for the rocks, the trees, the water, and the land itself"—has been joined by a new form of hunger: a "hunger to do the right thing, to fit the Indigenous into one part of the multicultural mosaic, to understand and make accessible Indigenous 'issues' through settler logics" (210). He's talking about the desire for "reconciliation" with Indigenous peoples, a notion he rejects as insufficient, but by extension, his argument applies to anything settlers do, from walking on the land to learning an Indigenous language. His argument leaves me wondering whether any desire to know or learn is always a sign of insatiable hunger, the kind of hunger that drives the cannibal monster in Cree narratives, the wîhtikow. I learned about wîhtikowak from one of my Cree teachers, Professor Solomon Ratt, and immediately recognized the resemblance between their behaviour and that of settlers. And yet, I find myself wondering if there is any form of learning available to settlers that is not born out of the hunger Robinson describes.

Is there any way that learning by a settler might affirm Indigenous values of "reciprocity, responsibility, and accountability" (Carter et al. 2017, 208)? Is my attempt at coming into relationship with the land by walking doomed to fail because I begin in a place defined by settler epistemology and ontology? Are my attempts at learning nêhiyawêwin extractive? I know I'll never be a fluent speaker of the language, but I hope to glimpse through it a different way of seeing the world. Is that extractive? Robinson might be right: as a settler, I exist in an epistemological and ontological paradigm in which I've learned to relate to the land by taking from it, rather than relating

to it as kin. Perhaps it's not possible to break out of that epistemological and ontological prison. Memmi's suggestion that settlers who want to resist colonization will always find themselves trapped within it might well be correct.

Before I raise questions of how one relates to the land and its agency, a preliminary question might need to be asked: whether settlers can observe the land without turning it into spectacle, without falling into the ways of looking that Mulvey, Bhabha, Garneau, and Robinson critique. Perhaps seeing the land as spectacle, as an object, is part of what enables extractive approaches to it. Is it possible for settlers to become witnesses rather than voyeurs? Anishinaabe/Ashkenazi theatre scholar Jill Carter suggests that witnessing is "an intentionally generous act," and that the witness "embodies communal (hi)story in that her body becomes the vessel on which that history is written, her mind becomes the surface on which its details are imprinted, and her voice becomes the vehicle through which that history is transmitted, passed back to those who may have forgotten and passed forward to those who will have to remember" (2020, 19). To be a witness is to be "locked into a covenant relationship with the witnessed," to acknowledge responsibility (19). "Voyeurism, on the other hand, is an intentionally capricious act: it accepts no responsibility, it requires no somatic engagement, and it is performed without generosity," Carter continues. "The voyeur/spectator stands apart from the story, *consuming only what is pleasing* (in that it titillates, edifies, nourishes, or affirms) and rejecting anything that may unsettle the stomach" (19). Voyeurism is extractive: it "consumes, digests, and expels" (19). Carter is concerned with making settler viewers of Indigenous performance aware of "their own *complicity* within a system of oppression that, by turns, punishes, spectacularizes, and disappears Indigenous bodies," of "their *accountability* to the living Indigenous body," of "their *responsibility* to respond to that body as witness, not consumer" (21). She leaves open the possibility that settler audiences might become witnesses rather than voyeurs, but she makes the difficulty of this shift clear. As a form of embodied territorial acknowledgment, can walking on the land become a form of witnessing for settlers?

A city rabbit in a vacant suburban lot. Regina, Saskatchewan, June 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

As a way of thinking about these questions, I turn to settlers who have written about the land—particularly grassland, the ecology that existed here, where I'm walking, before settlers arrived—in a way that suggests it is a sacred space, not merely a resource. In Trevor Herriot's essay "A Way Home," we see a settler writing about the land and relating to it in what seems to be a nonextractive fashion. In that essay, Herriot, a writer and naturalist based in Regina, suggests that "if enough people would discover all that is good and holy" in grassland songbirds, "we might be able to turn things around"—that is, stop destroying the remaining grassland, where those birds live—"before it's too late" (Herriot 2009, 3). That language—"all that is good and holy in these birds"—speaks to Herriot's sense that this ecosystem, which exists only in fragments where I walk, is sacred. That language is characteristic of Herriot's belief in the importance of the grassland ecosystem. But that sense of the sacred is connected to identity. He invites his readers to visit a patch of wild grass:

> Walk into the middle and lie down. Press your back against the earth and let the exhalations of the soil enter your body breath by breath. With grass blades waving overhead and the sky beyond, the human spirit has half a chance to come to its senses. If there are birds singing in the air, all the better. They will tell you where you are and, if you listen long enough, they may tell you who you are in the bargain. (Herriot 2009, 4)

For Herriot, making an embodied connection to the grassland by lying in a patch of wild grass and observing its birds will both locate us physically and unveil our identity. What makes this statement a surprise is that, although he was born and raised in Saskatchewan, he seems to have found his identity by discovering the "spirit" of the grassland by learning the names of its plants and birds. That learning mattered for him, not as an Adamic form of naming, not as a way of turning those more-than-human beings into possessions, but "in its capacity to call things forth from generality into a particularity that allowed for admiration, familiarity, even wonder" (Herriot, 2009, 11). In particular, knowing the birds locates Herriot in this place. "The influence of beings as unprepossessing and elusive as grassland birds is something like gravity, a weak though persistent mystery that holds us in place," he concludes. "The heart recognizes such a gentle force, knows that in simply becoming aware of its pull we take a small step toward belonging here ourselves" (12). Perhaps it's through developing a sense of this ecosystem as sacred and entering into a dialogic relationship with its creatures by learning about them that Herriot has come to feel that he belongs here. That sense of relationship is no doubt different from the one Simpson and Hogan describe, but it might be something to build on, something that might shift us away from a way of life premised solely on destructive extraction.

Like Herriot, the American writer and insect ecologist Jeffrey A. Lockwood, who teaches at the University of Wyoming, sees the shortgrass prairie of the American high plains as a sacred space that has had a powerful effect on his life. Lockwood is a scientist, and his job is to examine the prairie closely; what he sees when he looks at the grassland plants and animals is "the good labor of living, competing and cooperating, sustaining self, and creating community" (Lockwood 2004, 7). "The grassland is a setting that reflects my life, evoking the depth and wonder of the eternal present," he continues (7). The grassland is "a gateway to the ultimate manifestation of the infinite and the infinitesimal, the universal and the particular. Whatever else God might mean, to merit our reverence God must be transcendent. And to deserve our awareness, God must be immanent" (7). That transcendence and immanence, he writes, is "manifest in the earth beneath my feet" (8). Like Herriot, Lockwood makes direct physical contact with the grassland, but unlike Herriot, who advocates lying down on it, Lockwood takes off his shoes and socks and walks barefoot on the grassland, a brave thing to do given the number of thorny plants and cacti he encounters.

A sense of the land as sacred and having a powerful effect on his life is one thing, but Lockwood also suggests that he converses with the grasshoppers he studies, and with the wider ecosystem of which they are a part. Any ecologist "who wants to relate to a prairie as a living being worthy of deep respect is pushing the limits of modern science," he writes, and he admits that he risks his professional credibility when he claims that he "hears the creatures of the grasslands. Their speaking is neither literal nor metaphorical, but it is true in a way that transcends mere sensation and abstraction, reaching through and beyond the objective facts of ecology" (Lockwood 2004, 34). Lockwood acknowledges that few of us are able to see the land in this way; many if not most of his students cannot imagine that a parcel of land has any value except as real estate, except as an asset with a monetary value (140–41). In that belief, they are far from alone; it is the foundation of our extractive economy.

After the rain. Regina Bypass, south of Regina, Saskatchewan, September 2020. Photo: Ken Wilson.

Dialogue, "deep respect," love, a dissolution "of separateness from the world," and a sense of the sacred—surely Lockwood's connection to the grassland is a kind of relationship. Of course, Lockwood doesn't use the word "kinship" to describe his relationship to the grasshoppers he studies; he suggests that his connection to those creatures is not unlike one of parent to child, a notion that reinscribes a hierarchy of relationship rather than seeing a connection of equals (Lockwood 2004, 43). Nevertheless, might the way Lockwood and Herriot think be as close as settlers can get to seeing and experiencing the land as, literally, a relation? Perhaps—but it's important to distinguish between what they are doing and the cosmological understanding Watts describes, particularly in regard to the hierarchy Lockwood sees in his relationship to the grasshoppers. Could I adopt Herriot's and Lockwood's ways of thinking about the land? I'd like to

think so, although I'm walking in a city and in a countryside dominated by industrialized agriculture, rather than on what's left of the grassland ecosystem, and I find it much harder to see the sacred in such places. Nonetheless, I'm still walking on the land, experiencing the wind, the sun, the birds, and the sheer scale of this place through my senses. That experience might be a way to develop a relationship of kinship with the land.

Is it possible to look closely at things without turning them into objects or wanting to possess them in some way, without voyeurism or fetishism or the narcissistic belief that the land exists to serve our needs? Is it possible to learn about the land, engaging with it in a way that offers witness and extension toward reciprocity? Lockwood's description of scientific research suggests that observation without possession is possible—in fact, he claims that's what he does when he's conducting his fieldwork. Herriot's claim that knowing the names of birds allows for feelings of admiration and wonder also suggests that possession, or even the desire to possess, is not necessarily a part of looking as observation. Lockwood and Herriot may not see the land and its creatures as kin, as relations, and they might see humans as the dominant partner in that relationship. This signifies settler distance from Indigenous paradigms and reflects the differences between the cosmology Watts describes and our own ontological and epistemological frameworks, or the distinctions Tuck and McKenzie see between Indigenous and Western ontologies of land and place.

I hope my way of looking at the land is similar to Herriot's and Lockwood's, if not Simpson's, Hogan's, and Watts's. I could easily be wrong. I'm doing what I can to shift my connection to the land, to appreciate it as kin, to decentre humans from my thinking about it, but my efforts, my walking, might not be enough. Could walking, as a form of embodied territorial acknowledgment, offer an opportunity to begin to enter into a relationship with the land, to shift my sense of being in the world from an anthropocentric paradigm to a land-centred paradigm, to start becoming a witness to the land rather than a voyeur? I'll continue walking, hoping to find out, trusting that this methodology is taking me in the right direction, knowing that I walk carrying both an intention toward the possibility of shifting paradigms and my own distance from such a transformation.

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I'm walking east now, heading for home on the shoulder of busy Highway 1. Two ducks fly out of a slough, and red-winged blackbirds and yellow-headed blackbirds, two different kinds of cahcahkâyowak, chase each other in the reeds.

I stop to take pictures of the interchange where the Regina Bypass meets Highway 1. The wind jostles me; it's hard to keep the horizon straight in the viewfinder. A borrow pit—a hole from which the soil used to build the overpasses that make up this interchange was taken—lies behind a fence, filled with water. A remnant of the old highway still stands between the onramps, looking like a miniature asphalt-covered butte. The multiple overpasses of this interchange seem to last forever. Finally, I am past them, beyond the way they concentrate the wind, the sound of the traffic. The highway, twin ribbons of asphalt and speeding vehicles, stretches east. Dark clouds—waskowan—dominate the horizon, and I wonder if it's starting to rain in the city.

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Our Ancient Forests: Virtual Visiting and Art for Conservation

Emma Morgan-Thorp

In the final days of 2020, one thing is keeping me together: snow. If I'm not up early enough, my dog Jack will come up to my side of the bed and, whining quietly, push his wet nose into my face. I'll slip out of bed, pulling tights, socks, and a sweatshirt out of my chest of drawers in the dim light, trying not to wake my partner. I'll go over my checklist (tea, leash, and collar and treats for Jack, car keys, driver's licence, phone, hiking boots . . .) while Jack dances around me. Soon we will be out the door, into the truck, and off through quiet neighbourhood streets, heading into the backcountry in search of snow. On lucky days, we'll find snow falling. Sometimes it takes a steep drive followed by a steep hike, starting in cold rain and striving upward until the frigid drops turn semi-solid and nest in our eyelashes. Other days it's a matter of driving until the snow is too deep for the truck to pass, then continuing uphill on foot, tossing snowballs for Jack to catch in his mouth. On weekdays, we won't go far at all and often won't find snow, taking solace instead in the penetrating damp of the Pacific rainforest and the thunderous rush of creeks and waterfalls. Every day, I am aware of how lucky I am; while so many people are stuck indoors, living in apartments and condos, or car-less and unable to risk subway and bus rides out of the city, I have this truck, its winter tires, these strong legs, and waterproof boots. This dog (along with a canister of bear spray and a knife tied to my backpack) allows me to feel safe on trails where I'm not likely to meet another human being. Once or twice a week, we meet a friend at the trailhead, and this is the only time I socialize in person with anyone other than my partner. I have always loved walking in the woods with my dog, but now, in the depths of a grey winter, after over nine months of Covid-19 restrictions, it is unquestionably the highlight of my days.

In what follows, I consider how virtual reality (VR) presents both opportunities and challenges for settlers seeking to develop deeper and more complex relationships with the more-than-human world and artists attempting to engage the public in environmental struggles. I do so by taking a close look at two virtual reality experiences in an exhibition about the need to save an ancient forest from the threat of logging. The *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition took place in November 2020 at the Sunshine Coast Arts Council (SCAC) gallery in Sechelt, BC, on shíshálh and Skwxwú7mesh territory, and featured work by a group of artists who had been taken on a walk through the nearby Dakota Bear Sanctuary. Two of the exhibition's works featured elements of virtual reality: one, *Tree Earth Sky,* invited the gallery visitor to don a VR headset and look around at the rainforest, including a peek at the mycelium belowground; the other, *Sanctuary: The Dakota Bear Ancient Forest Experience,* ushered the audience into a small geodesic dome for a 360° film tour of the Dakota Bear Sanctuary hosted by T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss, an interdisciplinary artist, ethnobotanist, activist, and member of the Squamish Nation who is of Skwxwu7mesh, Stó:lō, Métis, Hawaiian, and Swiss descent.[1]

I take up these two VR pieces in order to work through questions about the use of VR both as a means of visiting a wild place and as a means of moving audiences to environmentalist and anticolonial action. How can VR stand in for the experience of being in an ancient forest? Without physical presence and embodied sensorial experience, how can an individual experience the sense of

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reciprocity that lies at the heart of ethical relationships with the more-than-human world? In tackling these questions, I turn to the work of Danis Goulet and Lisa Jackson to learn about some of the anticolonial innovations that Indigenous VR artists have brought to the medium. I also consider the risk of nonperformativity in art that seeks to spark empathy: the possibility that the experience of the art will provide a kind of catharsis that forecloses upon the possibility of action. This work is informed by the thinking of Lisa Nakamura and Sita Popat, who theorize about the capacities, limitations, and ethics of VR. I have also included some of my own experiments in performative writing: autoethnographic accounts of my encounters with wild spaces and more-than-human beings where I live on Tla'amin territory and through my virtual encounters with wild spaces via VR. In researching and writing this piece, I have come to better understand the complexity of the desire to commune with ancient forests and their inhabitants, the importance of challenging our own acquisitive and extractive desires, and the potential that virtual reality holds for helping us understand when our physical presence may be more detrimental than beneficial.

On Positionality and Apposite Methodology

In thinking about virtually visiting with ancient forests and walking as a method for interrogating relationships between humans, wild spaces, and more-than-human beings, I have based my reflections on my experiences as a settler on Tla'amin territory and visitor to shíshálh and Skwxwú7mesh territory during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a settler writing about anticolonial environmentalisms, I take direction from Métis scholar and artist David Garneau's writing on irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality and parallel spaces for settlers to figure things out on their own, and, in particular, the ways in which these concepts are taken up by xwélméxw (Stó:lō) musicologist Dylan Robinson.[2] Settlers opposed to colonialism may understand that there are a number of things required of us in the project of environmental anticolonialism, such as supporting Land Back movements and Indigenous land protectors, insisting that consultation rights are honoured, and calling upon our elected officials to fulfil their obligations under UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report.[3] However, it is also necessary for us to examine our complicity in ongoing colonial processes beyond our presence on the land and to interrogate our relationships with the more-than-human world. These interrogations may yield opportunities for us to divest ourselves of some colonial influence. This challenge will also require us to think through how we can relate to the land in non- (or less) colonizing ways without appropriating Indigenous worldviews or forms of relationality. Community-facing art and performance present one strategy for taking on this task. These accessible artistic modes may engage a broad range of people with diverse relationships to the environment, including, but not limited to, those already committed to environmentalism. There is a great deal to be done from within environmental movements to subvert white supremacy and colonialism. Meanwhile, from within communities deeply invested in—and perhaps not at all critical of—extractivism, there may be more complex relationships with the more-than-human world than one might at first imagine.

For these reasons, I am interested in the human craving for interconnectivity, reciprocity, and understanding with plants: a sense that there is a familiarity, give and take, even friendship with members of the more-than-human world, particularly in beautiful wild places that feel somehow outside the human realm. This desire may be a reaction to the selfish, anthropocentric, and extractive approach to "resources" that settler colonialism takes in North America. However, it may also involve an equally extractive desire to know, to possess, that has much in common with the forms of perception that Dylan Robinson calls "hungry listening" (2020, 2). I wonder if the human

longing for interrelationality also contains an opportunity for more ethical engagements with the nonhuman members of our immediate communities and whether we may be more open to this type of relationship during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The choice to include autoethnographic accounts of walking in this academic paper follows Dylan Robinson's call for apposite methodology. As he describes them in *Hungry Listening,* "apposite methodologies are processes for conveying experience alongside subjectivity and alterity; they are forms of what is sometimes referred to as 'writing with' a subject in contrast to 'writing about'" (2020, 81). In an online workshop in February 2021, Robinson emphasized the importance of an apposite methodology that is particularly attentive to form, reminding participants to be considerate about the frameworks we use to approach our topics. He asked participants to consider the aesthetic choices that we make when deciding how to be in relation to our own thoughts and the subjects of our thinking (2021). Robinson himself turns to poetry throughout *Hungry Listening*; I have chosen autoethnography. I have done so for three primary reasons. First, it compels me to be up front and thoughtful about my own positionality and context, which prompts me to remember that my viewpoint is just one of many ways of seeing the world, one that is particularly privileged in many ways while also being limited by my identity, context, and experience. Second, it permits me to pay particular attention to my sensory and embodied experiences and to consider the sensory and embodied experiences of those around me. This opens my eyes to the many ways in which I am in a reciprocal relationship with the world around me and am not only perceiving but also being perceived. Thirdly, the use of thick description draws me out of more rigid academic writing and into a way of noticing, reflecting, and writing that is more intimate, more artistic, more personal, and more accessible. When I am writing autoethnographic thick description, I am putting to use the critical mind that academia has trained but doing so as a breathing, feeling member of an ecosystem and a community.

Our Ancient Forests: A Virtual Walk and the Cultivation of Empathy

On November 14, 2020, the Sunshine Coast Arts Council (SCAC) hosted an online conversation, "Artists in Dialogue with Our Ancient Forests," in which artists who contributed to the *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition at the SCAC discussed their experience visiting the Dakota Bear Sanctuary and the work they subsequently produced about that experience. Gallery director and curator Sadira Rodrigues opened the session with the following welcome: "As a means of acknowledging the responsibility of living and working and playing on the traditional territories of the Sechelt and the unceded territories of the Squamish people, I feel that the exhibition, in many ways, and this kind of dialogue, is part of the responsibility that we hold at the Sunshine Coast Arts Council to enact a different set of relations between individuals and between the land and between our institutions. And so, to me, the exhibition is our territorial acknowledgement of the responsibility that's enacted, to be able to live in these tremendous places" (Rodrigues 2020). The visit to the Dakota Bear Sanctuary, often referred to in the exhibition as The Sanctuary, was coordinated by Vancouver-based arts organization The Only Animal, whose stated mission is to "change the world through creative disruption" (2020), along with the Living Forest Institute and Elphinstone Logging Focus.[4] Living Forest Institute (LFI) works toward preservation of surviving "natural forests" by connecting members of local communities with them, stating: "We believe that our remaining natural forests are integral components of the local communities in which they exist, and play an essential role in the well-being of the planet. We promote this belief through collaboration with environmental, First Nations, political, educational, artistic, cultural, and other organizations to produce art and

educational activities that develop stronger connections between community members and local natural forests. In our effort to inspire action and preservation, our focus is on education, inspiration, and activism" (2020). Elphinstone Logging Focus (ELF) is a BC nonprofit created to keep the public informed about potential logging threats to "important" forest lands. On their site, they clarify the meaning of "important" in their mission statement: "ELF is not opposed to 'harvesting' of second growth forests using partial-cut techniques, however is opposed to industrial style logging and seeks a ban on clear-cut logging since it destroys eco-systems" (Elphinstone Logging Focus 2020). They further state that their mission is to "protect key forests and habitat in order to conserve ecosystems and support recreation, tourism, and community resilience" (2020).

Our Ancient Forests saw the stated goals of these organizations—to enact a different set of relations between individuals, the land, and institutions; to create change through creative disruption; to inspire action and preservation through education, inspiration, and activism; and to protect key forests and habitat—coalescing in the creation of a multimedia exhibition on Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and shíshálh (Sechelt) territory. I visited the exhibition at the SCAC gallery space after listening in on the artists' discussion via Zoom. I came away with an appreciation of both the thought and the artistic work that had gone into the exhibition's creation. I also had questions as to the efficacy of arts-based interventions to spark community engagement and meaningful change in logging practices and conservation.

Certain components of the exhibition have enjoyed public engagement outside of the SCAC's *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition in Sechelt. The Wild Empathy Project's *Tree Earth Sky,* a virtual reality experience that employs the more recognizable VR apparatus of the headset, has been available to visitors at Science World.[5] *Sanctuary: The Dakota Bear Ancient Forest Experience*, a 360° video installation created by T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss, Damien Gillis, and Olivier Leroux, sold out all presentations at Vancouver's PuSh festival between February 3rd and 7th, 2021 (PuSh 2021). The festival's webpage for the presentation describes it as "an ecological adventure—a feast for the senses, and an implicit call to action" (PuSh 2021). *Sanctuary* ushers viewers—one or two at a time, due to Covid-19 safety restrictions—into a geodesic dome just large enough for a bench and the viewers; onto the dome are projected the enormous mossy trees and undergrowth of the Dakota Bear Sanctuary while birds call out and T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss leads audience members through an explanation of why this place is so important to protect. Creator Damien Gillis has been quoted as saying, "I felt we needed a visceral experience to take viewers as close as we can to being in that place," while the PuSh description touts it as offering "the thrill of true immersion" (PuSh 2021). The same site promises that the experience of *Sanctuary* "will bring you to a new understanding, and a new sense of urgency" (PuSh 2021). Visceral, immersive? Absolutely. Beautiful and moving? Yes. I found myself wondering, though, as I made my way back up the Sunshine Coast from Sechelt to my home in Powell River whether it would indeed bring its audiences new understanding and, even if it did, whether the sense of urgency it inspires would motivate action as its creators hoped.

Damien Gillis, Cease Wyss, and Olivier Leroux, *Sanctuary: The Dakota Bear Ancient Forest Experience*. Sunshine Coast Arts Council, Sechelt BC, November 2020. Used with permission of Damien Gillis.

I haven't been to the Dakota Bear Sanctuary though I drive past it every time I make my way to Vancouver. Despite its relative proximity to huge human populations, not many people visit the Sanctuary. Unlike the nearby ecotourism destinations of the Sunshine Coast Trail, Suncoaster Trail, and Tetrahedron Provincial Park, the Dakota Creek watershed region has not been marketed to tourists and contains no network of formal hiking trails. In fact, this is an essential element of its importance as home to crucial black bear habitat as well as potentially some of this country's oldest trees (Lavoie 2020). In a short film shot by Trent Maynard on location in Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw, unceded Squamish territories, bear biologist Wayne McCrory explains that the Dakota Bear Sanctuary is home to a concentration of black bear dens, probably due to the intensity of logging in the surrounding area (Maynard 2021).[6] If the Sanctuary is logged too, there will be nowhere left for these bears to hibernate.

Unfortunately, the Sanctuary—known in the context of government and resource extraction as Block A87126 (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh 2021)—was until recently up for auction to be logged. The Elphinstone Logging Focus website, which is kept carefully up to date on all developments, reported in September 2020 that Block A87126 had been removed from the action list for harvest by BC Timber Sales (BCTS), a deferral of at least one year (Elphinstone Logging Focus 2020). BC Timber Sales is responsible for one-fifth of the province's annual allowable logging and, despite its claims of sustainable harvest, has a history of untrustworthy activity when it comes to logging old growth trees (Lavoie 2019). Ross Muirhead of ELF suggested that the Dakota Bear Sanctuary may be the most deferred block in the province's history: "The government and BCTS can't come to terms with the fact that destroying an ancient forest with rare overlapping natural and cultural values would be an environmental crime" (quoted in Elphinstone Logging Focus 2020). Muirhead and his allies, including the artists who participated in the SCAC's *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition, are advocating for the Sanctuary to be permanently protected. Given that all activity by BC Timber Sales is conducted

by the provincial government elected to represent us, these atrocities are being committed in our—British Columbians'—names (Wilderness Committee 2020). None of this information is difficult to come by. And yet, our communities' artists are in a position to be making work that pleads with the public to advocate for the Sanctuary and other places like it. Why is it that we need them to convince us to be moved to feel empathy for these black bears and the other inhabitants of the Sanctuary? And, when they are successful in provoking our compassion, do we then take action?

The exhibition at the SCAC and, to an even greater degree, *Sanctuary*'s inclusion in PuSh, allowed the public to access a place that they would likely never visit. Even for those of us lucky enough to walk in the rainforest regularly or even sit at the foot of old growth trees and breathe their oxygen, it is an honour to enter the Dakota Bear Sanctuary, albeit virtually. And yet, there is surely a marked difference between experiencing a place in person and having it shown to you via (immersive, 360°, visceral, but nevertheless constructed, narrated, and edited) film. In thinking about the effectiveness of *Sanctuary* and the other pieces featured in the *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition, I wondered: Are the people who choose to view the exhibition and the film learning much that they did not know before? Even if they are, are their paradigms being shifted or are most people who choose to attend these exhibitions already opposed to old growth logging and ecosystem destruction? Even if their opinions about logging, or old growth logging, or even just logging in this particular place are changed by the art they encounter, will they be moved to act? The savvy curators and artists engaged in this campaign have offered many easy opportunities to speak up for the protection of the Dakota Bear Sanctuary, from an online Citizen Action Kit to prewritten, prestamped letters visitors to the SCAC exhibition could sign.[7] But will this be enough? Is greater commitment from the public needed? Can art solicit this kind of engagement? More particularly, can art be as effective as allowing people to visit the place themselves?

*

I enter the gallery. It's my second time here, and I am once again overcome by the beauty of the room, its white walls hung with photographs of ancient trees, its heavy beams and wooden ceiling creating the sense of being in a forest, the sun pouring in through a massive skylight in the ceiling's centre. To my right, through a curtain, I can hear drumming, singing, and, over this, voices murmuring. Ahead of me, the room opens up to framed photographs, carvings, and installations. A woman sits at a small bench with a VR headset and a bottle of sanitizer. I turn to my left and read the artists' statement. "What role does art have in saving our ancient forests? How can artistic practice transform how we collectively understand the irreplaceable value of the last stands of ancient forests that remain, not just on the Sunshine Coast, but throughout British Columbia?" (Our Ancient Forests 2020). I raise my phone to take a photograph, hesitate, turn to the woman at the VR station, ask permission. Yes, she says. Having read and photographed the artists' statement, I move forward into the space of the exhibition.

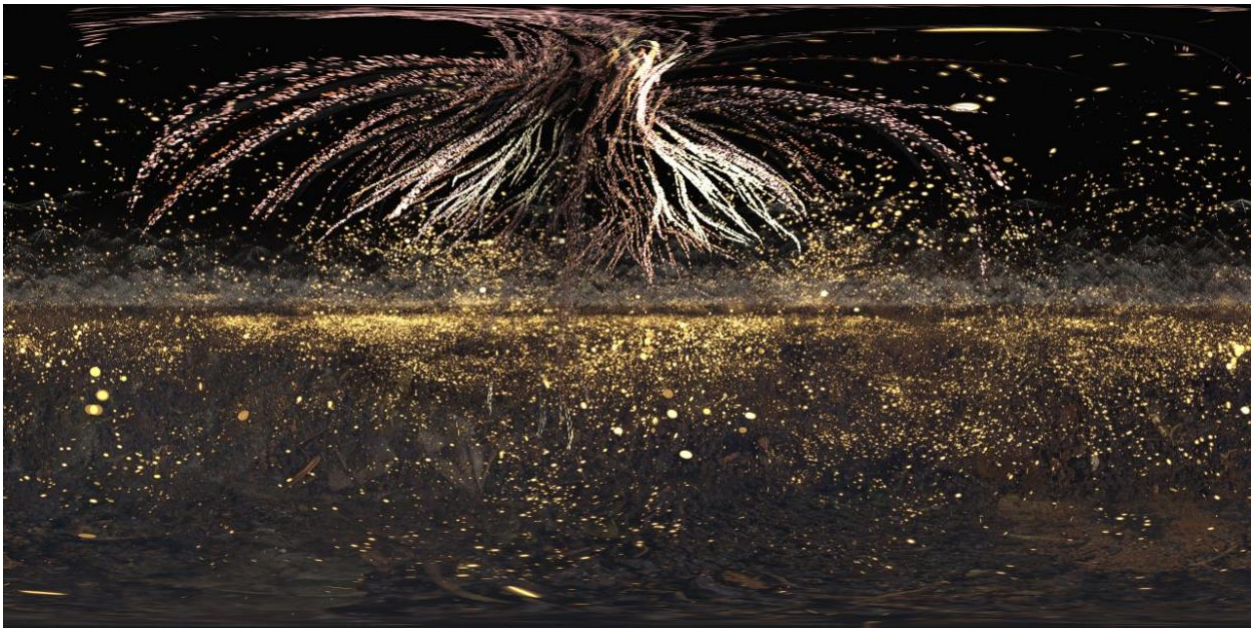
*

I enter the woods. The morning is cold, and the invasive Himalayan blackberry and ivy at the entrance to the trail glisten with silvery frost. I have walked this trail many times, and I am once again overcome by its beauty. To my right, down at the beach, I can hear the sea lions barking. To my left, traffic noises through the trees. A raven croaks, and I look around for it, hoping to catch a glimpse, knowing that if my dog sees it first, he will give chase. My pulse rises a bit at the threat of having to restrain him, and I wrap the leash more tightly around my hand. As we make our way along the trail, we pause for Jack to sniff and pee. I notice a fallen stick decorated with hair ice, its long, silky strands curling delicately away from the wood. Evidence of the presence of the fungus Exidiopsis effusa*, I remember. As we continue walking, my body warms from the exertion, though my nose and ears stay cold. The forest smells*

wonderful today: cedar and soil and salt air rising up to meet my nose as the ground gradually thaws. I am writing this description in my head as I walk and, head bowed to my phone to make a note, I don't notice a jogger approaching. My heart jumps as I race to restrain Jack, suddenly barking at this unexpectedly fast movement past us. I apologize, smile, we make our way in the opposite direction. I flex my fingers and feel the blood flowing through them, take measured breaths, enjoy the cool air as it enters my lungs.

*

I take my place at the low, wooden bench and accept the VR headset passed to me by the gallery attendant. Tree Earth Sky *begins underground in a sparkling animation that evokes the mycorrhizal network and its exchanges of nutrients among the roots of ancient trees. I turn to look over my shoulder: I am surrounded by the bustling energy of microscopic organisms which link the trees, plants, and fungi that reach above the forest floor. The VR experience shoots me up, plantlike, above the soil's surface and allows me to look around at a bright old growth grove. I crane my neck, feeling the headset heavy on my nose and forehead, to look up at the boughs that reach toward the sky.*



The Wild Empathy Project. *Tree Earth Sky*. Sunshine Coast Arts Council, Sechelt BC, November 2020. Used with permission of Julie Andreyev.

In the time it has taken me to explore the gallery, the other few patrons have left. My last stop will be inside the curtained area that's home to the immersive Sanctuary *installation. In the video, Squamish Nation member T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss welcomes me and guides me among massive cedars, telling me about this special place. We climb into a bear den in a hollow tree, and I try to imagine how it must smell when the bear is sheltering there, its musk and warmth. I feel like an interloper here, in someone else's home, and I do experience a sensory echo of the tight space, find myself imagining the moist, crumbling bark against my skin. I feel honoured to be in this space. Wyss also takes me to a clear-cut and asks me to imagine this fate for the ancient, vital Dakota watershed; again, I am moved: I worry, I feel myself becoming angry. Lastly, I am permitted to witness a traditional song and begin, perhaps, to understand why Wyss refers to her activist artistic work as "ceremonial activism" (Derdeyn 2021). It is in this moment that I reflect on how my perceptions of beautiful old growth spaces like the Sanctuary may differ from those of the people whose families have lived on this territory for many generations. The drumming carries me back out from under the dome, through the curtain, and into the bright light of the gallery. I cast another look around me at the*

masks, photographs, and installations I've spent the afternoon inspecting, but I do not linger. I thank the attendant and let my feet carry me back to my truck. I drive until I'm in the forest, and then I begin to walk.

*

An article by Dorothy Woodend in the *Tyee* titled "Exploring an Ancient BC Forest, Before It's Too Late" opens: "One day, the only trace of old-growth forests might be virtual replicas. The trees, plants, streams and animals all rendered in pixels and projections, a ghost version of something that was once wildly alive" (2021). As Woodend suggests, the virtual visits to the Dakota Bear Sanctuary carry within them the spectre of a dystopic future wherein our only vestige of these wild and ancient places is through the memory of film. The notion of archival footage and the ability to access a virtual experience of rainforests would be cold comfort, of course, for the species who make their homes there today. Woodend also writes that the film "offers a remarkable immersion, akin to the practice of forest bathing" (2021). She further notes the importance of the sound design, which features the music of birds and moving water, and adds, "Cedar boughs add another sensorial quality, recreating the sight, sound and smell of the forest" (2021). And yet, we are not in the forest, and the recreation is not complete. Although the creators of *Sanctuary* have shared something truly beautiful and arguably very powerful, we cannot feel the cool damp of the rainforest on our skin, nor the prickle of fear (of predators, primarily, though some fear poisonous plants, bugs, getting lost) that undergirds the awe and respect of walking through the rainforest. Despite painstaking and heartfelt work on the part of the artists, virtual reality simply cannot replicate the experience of visiting the places it portrays. While this does not mean that the art will not still have powerful effects on those who experience it, it may have ramifications for its touted role as an extractor of empathy from our—the public's—technology- and media-saturated psyches.

In "Feeling Good about Feeling Bad: Virtuous Virtual Reality and the Automation of Racial Empathy," Lisa Nakamura describes how the first stage of VR development (VR 1.0) focused on helping people experience parts of the world that were inaccessible to them by placing them in a virtual approximation of those places or situations. One example of this is a VR experiment from the 1990s called Virtual Gorilla, which allowed the user to experience the perspective of an adolescent gorilla. "The kind of empathy envisioned here is about learning about the non-human through visual re-embodiment," Nakamura writes (51). In other words, the creators wanted to show users what it's like to be a gorilla. VR 2.0 (post-acquisition by Facebook in 2014), on the other hand, has been styled and marketed as an ethical technology, intended to create compassion and empathy through instruction about morality. While VR 1.0 was more about curiosity and access to the wondrous, VR 2.0 has been constructed as what producer Chris Milk calls an "empathy machine" (Milk 2015). The distinction is in the use and framing of the product rather than the tech itself. As Nakamura explains, "both early VR's empathic learning and VR 2.0's empathic feeling are founded on the concept of toxic re-embodiment: occupying the body of another who might not even own their own body" (2020, 51). Nakamura shares the disturbing example of documentary VR that is *One Dark Night* (2015), which makes the user a witness to Trayvon Martin's murder (51). While one might imagine the potential misapprehensions and negative effects of thinking one understands what it's like to be a gorilla, the reproduction of fatal violence against a Black teenager takes the use of VR—a technology sold for entertainment as well as moral education—to a new level, where it is clearly exploitative, inarguably toxic.

How, then, should we understand the use of VR to encourage the development of compassion for endangered wild places? If we are re-embodied in The Wild Empathy Project's *Tree Earth Sky*, what

kind of body do we virtually inhabit, whose vantage point do we assume, and to what kind of information do we understand ourselves to have gained access? In *Sanctuary*'s geodesic dome, we appear to remain ourselves, tourists on a guided walk; *Tree Earth Sky* leaves us no such familiarity. Underground, we might be micro-organisms. We might be energy itself. While Nakamura's work is useful to an analysis of *Sanctuary* and *Tree Earth Sky* in terms of understanding VR, its history, and some of its pitfalls, it is worth noting here that Nakamura focuses primarily on race and that the bulk of VR as she describes it in this article is about people. More specifically, it is a way for primarily white, nondisabled males to access the perspectives of and gain insight into the lives of less privileged people. There are crucial differences in the use of VR to access a "wild" space, a predominantly nonhuman space. The Wild Empathy Project has chosen not to try to give us the experience of inhabiting the perspective of a bear or tree or even a specific person or character. Rather, *Tree Earth Sky* and *Sanctuary* transport us to a place that is inaccessible to us. Toxic embodiment may not be a factor here: instead, we are granted access to a place we'd likely never otherwise visit. But is there, even then, a risk—like the one Nakamura describes—of experiencing an emotional connection *rather than,* instead of *and then*, taking action? What are the ramifications of being able to look around this place without physically placing oneself there? What kinds of reciprocity, intersubjectivity, and relationality may be missing in the VR experience?

In October 2020, the Indigenous Connections Working Group of the Doctoral Student Association at the University of Toronto offered a presentation titled "Decolonizing Virtual Reality" via Zoom. The presentation featured Dr. Jennifer Wemigwans (Anishinaabekew) in conversation with VR filmmakers Nyla Innuksuk (Inuk), Danis Goulet (Cree/Metis), and Lisa Jackson (Anishinaabekew), who spoke about their work and their relationship with the medium. During the talk, Goulet raised the question of the identity of the viewer, which she explained is central to every VR project (Wemigwans et al. 2020). When we are brought into the intimate space of the virtual reality being offered and our perception is centred in that experience, it is important to take stock of who is doing the looking. And yet, this component of the experience is often elided in favour of prioritizing that which is viewed: the space (and, often, people) to which the VR user has gained access (Wemigwans et al. 2020). Jackson later shared a story that cast some light upon this issue. She described directing a 360° video about the Highway of Tears for CBC's *The Current,* featuring Matilda Wilson, a long-time advocate for Indigenous women who frequently go missing along Highway 16, which connects Prince George and Prince Rupert (Goldhar and Bloch 2016). Jackson talked about the importance of how Wilson's story was communicated to the audience. She wanted to avoid the fly-on-the-wall anonymity often furnished by virtual reality, which allows viewers to escape accountability. To avoid giving audiences a voyeuristic experience, she chose to film the interview in Wilson's home and to ask her to look directly into the camera: "So there was a sense for people watching that they were sitting in her home, on her territory, and she was speaking straight to them. There was a kind of accountability, an agency there, and her agency felt a little stronger: she was in control of her story. It was important for people to feel that they were a guest in her home" (Wemigwans et al. 2020). Jackson also talked about how, in all of her work, she strives to create environments that do not tell her audiences how to feel. She described how this approach tends to move people to bring their own contexts and histories to the experience of watching a film or using VR, which can be very uncomfortable for them but also offers the opportunity to engage more deeply with the content, implicating themselves, making decisions as to how they interpret it, and truly grappling with the questions it raises. This approach certainly contrasts with the more prescriptive—and arguably exploitative—virtual reality experiences designed by some of the producers Nakamura describes, which purport to offer an empathetic experience but rather offer voyeuristic identity tourism to privileged participants without requiring their active participation or offering agency to the subjects

of the experiences (2020). Jackson's anticolonial approach to virtual reality offers insight into how VR can be mobilized in more ethical ways than those developed by Milk and similar creators.

In my efforts to think through the efficacies and drawbacks of virtual reality, I posit that under the twin shadows of anthropogenic climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, many human beings may be experiencing a renewed desire for relationship and interconnectivity with wild or natural spaces. As we act on our desire to build relationships with the more-than-human world, it is important that we try to do so in a reciprocal way and that we interrogate greedy, possessive, or extractive impulses that may arise in us. In order to do this careful work, we will need to reflect upon our positionality, the contexts that motivate us, and the possible effects of enacting our desires upon places and more-than-human beings. The *Our Ancient Forests* exhibition invites us to think about how we might love a place and develop deep empathy, compassion, and care for it without needing to leave our footprints there. Although we will miss out on the full sensory experience of presence and may risk losing sight of our interrelationality with the place, if we are not there in an embodied sense, there is a possibility that virtual visits, whether through the technology of virtual reality or feeling transported by other forms of art, can still inspire a felt connection in us. In my opinion, what is missing when we are not *in place* is the reciprocal bond, felt not just by us humans but also by the place and its other inhabitants. But what virtual reality forces us to consider is that our physical absence from some spaces may, in some cases, have more positive than negative effects.

While VR circumvents physical reciprocity with one's environs and the full potential for multisensoriality, it does not foreclose upon all possibilities for an embodied experience. In "Missing in Action: Embodied Experience and Virtual Reality," Sita Popat writes about the possibility of feeling embodied during VR experiences despite the technology's tendency to alienate users from their physical selves (2016). Popat describes her virtual experience of crashing into a cliff face in a hot air balloon in a performance installation called *White Island*: although she knew that she would not be hurt, she still flung her arms up in front of her face to protect herself (2016, 5). Popat's experience understandably yielded a greater adrenaline rush than my relatively calm few moments sitting in a bear den in a hollow tree. Due to the nature of our respective VR experiences—she wore an Oculus Rift headset and could only see the virtual world all around her, while I was seated on a bench inside the Sanctuary geodesic dome and could look down to see my own body and the gallery floor—we experienced different levels of immersion. Still, we both experienced degrees of proprioception: Popat expected to see her arms where she had held them up before her face to shield her from the oncoming cliff (5) while I felt my shoulders narrow as I instinctively made myself small enough to fit inside the bear den. Popat describes proprioception as a sixth sense, "encompassing internal connectivity, spatiality, and movement," which allows for "new ways of knowing (in) the world" (7, 8). Our embodied responses to the data our respective VR experiences gave us—bracing for impact, tightening into a smaller space—demonstrate that this sixth sense was at work within us both despite the stark differences in scenarios and technologies. Popat's work allows me to understand that while there are many differences between physically visiting the Dakota Bear Sanctuary and visiting it virtually, it is overly simplistic to suggest that VR cannot facilitate some kind of embodied experience within the virtual version of the old growth forest. In fact, Popat (with reference to *Virtual Art* author Oliver Grau) describes virtual reality as "a space in which to do the undoable, to rehearse the unrehearsable," further noting that "in this space we might begin to access alternative embodied experiences to expand our individual perspectives" (12).

Popat refers to her "blurred body" as inhabiting a space between the physical and the virtual while participating in *White Island* and states that this position allowed both binary points to become permeable in her embodied experience within the installation (2016, 13, 14). She says, "This allowed me to do the undoable by drawing on and extrapolating from bodily memories in order to color my interactions with the virtual world" (14). Her body remembered impact and reacted as though impact with the oncoming cliff would not be virtual, just as my body remembered slipping into a narrow space and translated that bodily memory onto my virtual experience. As Popat puts it: "My body was not fooled, but my perception of the virtual experience was deeply informed by my embodied knowledge of being in the world" (14). Further research about how these types of proprioceptive semi-embodied experiences of wild spaces via virtual reality may affect our individual perspectives (which is to say, audiences' empathetic engagement with old growth ecosystems, not to mention their likelihood of taking action for old growth protection) lies outside the scope of this paper but presents an alluring avenue for future study.

Update: Victories—And the Fight Continues

While editing this piece for publication in February 2021, I learned of an exciting update in the story of the Dakota Bear Sanctuary: the Squamish Nation and the BC government had reached an agreement on the protection of the land (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh 2021). TSL A87126, the Dakota watershed area, was off the auction table and had been removed from the BC Timber Sales operating plan. The agreement recognized the cultural importance of the area and the province's commitment to reconciliation, stating that the Nation and the BC government would work together to find a land use designation (such as an Old Growth Management Area, Wildlife Habitat Area, or Squamish Nation Area of Interest) that restricts development and harvesting there (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh 2021). On June 10, 2021, a further development emerged: the Squamish Nation announced a moratorium on all old growth logging on their territory (Squamish Nation 2021). This moratorium takes the form of a two-year deferral on old growth logging while the Nation updates its 2001 Xay Temixw Land Use Plan. The press release notes that 78,000 hectares of old growth on Squamish territory are currently at risk of logging, and that these forests have never been ceded by the Squamish people (Squamish Nation 2021).

The province has an extremely poor record when it comes to honouring its commitments to protect old growth (MacLeod 2021). In 2019, the BC government commissioned professional foresters Garry Merkel (Tahtlan Nation) and Al Gorley to create an in-depth strategic review of BC's old growth forest management practices. Their report, "A New Future for Old Forests," highlighted twelve recommendations, two of which were classified as "immediate responses" (Gorley and Merkel 2020). These include recommendation six: "Until a new strategy is implemented, defer development in old forests where ecosystems are at very high and near-term risk of irreversible biodiversity loss" (Gorley and Merkel 2020, 55). Despite this recommendation, the provincial government continues to log old growth in at-risk areas. In fact, in Ada'itsx, the Fairy Creek watershed on Pacheedaht and Dididaht territories, land defenders have been blockading against old growth logging since August 2020 (Rainforest Flying Squad 2021).

While we can celebrate the Squamish Nation's successes and our relief that the crucial bear habitat in the Dakota watershed is presently safe from logging, settlers must continue to support Indigenous land protectors in their work to assert their sovereignty and defend the more-than-human world elsewhere in our province. We must hold our colonial provincial government accountable for its

promises about old growth protection and the rights of Indigenous peoples. And we must try to understand, untangle, and decolonize our own relationships with the lands we live on and their more-than-human inhabitants.

Art's Role in Saving Our Ancient Forests

The Our Ancient Forests artists' statement asked, "What role does art have in saving our ancient forests? How can artistic practice transform how we collectively understand the irreplaceable value of the last stands of ancient forests that remain, not just on the Sunshine Coast, but throughout British Columbia?" (Our Ancient Forests 2020). What role did art have in saving this ecosystem, this habitat, these ancient trees? It's hard to quantify. Curator Sadira Rodrigues told me that 185 completed letters were taken from the Our Ancient Forests exhibition and mailed to provincial decision-makers by the Living Forest Institute (Rodrigues, personal communication, July 12, 2021). It seems likely that the Squamish Nation was empowered to make their definitive declaration about old growth logging on their territory because the narrative here in BC about Indigenous sovereignty and extractivism is changing, in no small part because these topics have been brought centre stage by the activities in the Fairy Creek watershed.

What role did art have in saving the Sanctuary? This question has been overshadowed by the roles that direct action, protest, and public discourse have played. That said, there's more to the artists' statement: "How can artistic practice transform how we collectively understand the irreplaceable value of the last stands of ancient forests that remain?" (Our Ancient Forests 2020). Note that the 360° VR experience centred Indigenous leadership and relationships with place. The ceremonial drumming and singing constituted a crucial element of the piece. This is one way that the experience may have transformed settler audience members' understandings of the irreplaceable value of the Sanctuary. While settlers inclined to protect ancient forests may have been more likely to visit the exhibition than those inclined to log them, there may not have been a clear understanding of Indigenous perspectives among all visitors. Let us recall what Lisa Jackson said about how she chose to represent her subject in her VR project: "There was a kind of accountability, an agency there, and her agency felt a little stronger: she was in control of her story. It was important for people to feel that they were a guest in her home" (Wemigwans et al. 2020). One crucial way that the Sanctuary VR experience may transform the public's collective understanding of the fight to save ancient forests is by giving non-Indigenous members of the public a clear and emotional understanding that we are guests in someone else's home: that of the Squamish Nation and that of the territory's more-than-human inhabitants. Jackson also said that across her oeuvre, she avoids prescriptive strategies in favour of allowing audiences to bring their own experiences to her work and figure out for themselves how to interpret it subjectively (Wemigwans et al.). According to Jackson, this allows viewers or participants to implicate themselves in the story being told, which brings us to the crux of this question about VR as an empathy machine. Even as the work moves us to empathy, does it move us to action? I believe this to be far more likely if we feel implicated.

The use of virtual reality in the *Sanctuary* and *Tree Earth Sky* installations is important because it allows participants to "visit" the Dakota Bear Sanctuary without actually imposing themselves physically upon the space. Yes, this forecloses on the possibility for the kind of reciprocal experience we may yearn for, in which we feel the ancient forest with our many modes of sensory perception and in which we feel felt by the ecosystem and its more-than-human inhabitants. And yes, the

understanding of reciprocity sparked by this feeling of physical presence and embodiment can hold us accountable for our actions and their consequences upon more-than-human communities. However, we can understand that in some contexts (for instance, critical bear habitat and an ancient old growth ecosystem), the best course of action may be to stay away. This is where art can give us a glimpse of places we may wish we could visit and give us insight into what life there is like. *Sanctuary* and *Tree Earth Sky* are offerings through which we can experience visiting (with) this sacred old growth ecosystem, and the hope is that they may prompt us to act on its behalf. Indeed, we may learn things through the artists' eyes—for instance, about the relationship members of the Squamish Nation have with this place or what it's like among the microorganisms below the surface of the soil—that we would not learn from visiting ourselves. Settler art audiences and organizations have an opportunity to support the Squamish Nation's efforts to protect the Dakota Bear Sanctuary, and we are reminded of this opportunity—and responsibility—when we interact with these VR installations. To support the Nation's work to protect the Sanctuary (and now all old growth on their territory) is to support their sovereignty. We can acknowledge that the settler desire for connectivity with the more-than-human world may drive our willingness to be moved to environmentalist and anticolonial action by art while remaining wary of our own extractivist "hunger" to go everywhere, see everything, understand everything, experience everything. We can perhaps deny that hunger by accepting that our visits to places like the Dakota Bear Sanctuary need to remain virtual sometimes and take up the challenge to act for their protection anyway.

Notes

1. A video version of the *Tree Earth Sky* VR experience is available at https://vimeo.com/516807205.

2. From *Hungry Listening*: "Garneau's concept of irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality . . . acts as a corrective to . . . assertions that decolonization must necessarily proceed through multicultural and intersectional dialogue. According to Garneau, such irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality are built from the premise that, 'while decolonization and Indigenization is collective work, it sometimes requires occasions of separation—moments where Indigenous people take space and time to work things out among themselves, and parallel moments when allies ought to do the same'" (Garneau 2016, 23, quoted in Robinson 2020, 235).

3. See the Unist'ot'en Camp (https://unistoten.camp/) and the Treaty 8 First Nations' efforts to block the Site C dam through the courts (https://westmo.org/news/press-release-treaty-8-first-nations-head-court).

4. Vancouver lies on the traditional, unceded territory of the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh), and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The Only Animal is a theatre company practising creative disruption, often through intimate, site-specific theatre. Their work addresses environmental issues, climate change, and the natural world.

5. More information about The Wild Empathy can be found on their website: https://www.wildempathy.org/.

6. Shot on location in the Dakota watershed, Maynard's short film, *Ancient Wonders of the Dakota Bear Sanctuary*, features interviews with elder Xwechtaal Dennis Joseph, Elphinstone Logging Focus members Hans Penner and Ross Muirhead, bear biologist Wayne McCrory, UBC geographer Dr. Nina Hewitt, and Sierra Club campaigner Jens Wieting.

7. The Citizen Action Kit is accessible at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SJdATCSQHxjBsbrQIKta1D8QJRTV7q-slw4SFgCEfTk/edit.

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Dancing with Land: An Asynchronous Artist Panel

Alana Gerecke, with Michelle Olson, Julie Lebel, Olivia C. Davies, OURO Collective, and Lee Su-Feh

Questions about the role of place in performance—and land in movement—have found new resonances within academic conversations in recent years. The increasing urgency of the ongoing environmental crisis has forced an examination of the reciprocity between cultural practices and the lands on which they are situated. That is, the ecological emergency asks us to think hard about how our actions and choices shape our immediate material environment—and how the specificities of our respective material environments shape our seemingly autonomous choices and actions. Framed by this expanded understanding of relationship and relationality, arts practice and research have become increasingly interested in decentring the human within a broader network of agency and action. I am thinking, for example, of the rippling effects of new materialism, with its emphasis on the animacy of the more-than-human (Barad 2003; Bennett 2010) or, as Rebecca Schneider frames it in her analysis of the new materialist "turn" in performance studies discourse, "the idea that all matter is agential and that agency is distributed across and among materials in relation" (2015, 7).

These important lines of inquiry and practice are inseparable from a multifaceted effort to account for the ongoing enactments of colonial claim on ancestral Indigenous territories. Indeed, Indigenous scholars trace unaccredited borrowings of Indigenous worldviews through many of these conversations. Consider Vanessa Watts' (Mohawk and Anishinaabe) articulation of "Place-Thought" as it operates in Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmologies: Watts describes Place-Thought as "the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated" (2013, 21). This worldview holds that "land is alive and thinking" (21). Watts goes on to critique a "colonization of these Indigenous cosmologies" (22)—a position echoed by Métis scholar Zoe Todd, who seeks to "indigenize these Euro-Western narratives" (2015, 11) by "credit[ing] Indigenous thinkers for their millennia of engagement with sentient environments, with cosmologies that enmesh people into complex relationships between themselves and *all* relations, and with climates and atmospheres as important points of organization and action" (Todd 2016, 6–7). Consideration of land/body reciprocity on Turtle Island must be grounded in its cultural, historical, and embodied specificities.

The kinaesthetic implications of this inquiry into the animacy of land is not new terrain for movement practitioners, many of whom have long engaged with the embodied complexities of dancing with land. Dance artists practise intimacy with ground on a nearly daily basis: with the rubbery marley surfaces in many ballet and contemporary studios, with the individual floor textures of a specific training or company studio, and—in many cases—with non-theatrical, non-studio spaces. The practice of what is sometimes termed "site-based dance" has a vibrant history in the Western theatrical tradition (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2011; Hunter 2015; Gerecke 2016), but this is only part of the story. Longer and deeper histories of dancing with land weave through Indigenous

Based in Vancouver, on the unceded traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, **Alana Gerecke** is a settler scholar, mother, and dance artist of mixed European descent. Her research examines the spatial politics of site-based dance. She is Artist-in-Residence at Vancouver's Dance Centre and a 2021–22 Shadbolt Fellow at Simon Fraser University.

movement histories, functioning in some instances to establish land claim and law (Dangeli 2016; Robinson 2017). Of course, dancing outdoors in public spaces also has rich histories in street, social, and community dance traditions. Dance and land intersect in myriad and material ways across a range of movement forms.

In what follows, I bring a set of five questions about dancing with land to five contemporary dance practitioners based in and around the city colonially known as Vancouver, constructed on the unceded and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaɁɬ (Tsleil Waututh) First Nations. Within the broader conversation on site-specificity, I am interested in the unique expressions of place-based practice that manifest in response to different landscapes, histories, and eco-social compositions; as such, I keep my focus contained to the specific site I call home. I approach these Vancouver-based artists as a white, cis-female, uninvited settler of mixed European descent who does not live with a disability; I have lived and worked in Vancouver for two decades. I intend this panel publication to offer a platform and readership for the important contributions of the artists featured; for this reason, I pose my questions as invitations, and then I pass the mic to the artists to have the last word.

The artists featured here represent a spectrum of backgrounds, career stages, and aesthetic approaches, and they bring their specific embodied histories into their respective formulations of relation with the land. **Michelle Olson** of Raven Spirit Dance is a guiding force in Vancouver's dance scene, an established choreographer and performer who has cultivated a contemporary dance aesthetic shaped by Indigenous worldviews. **Julie Lebel** of Foolish Operations focuses on intergenerational and community-based processes in her improvisation-based choreographic methods, with a particular focus on dancing with young children. **Olivia C. Davies** of O.Dela Arts is an Anishinaabe woman, mother, and Indigenous contemporary dance artist with an investment in nurturing connections between Indigenous women in dance through her *Matriarchs Uprising* festival and other community-engaged initiatives. The **OURO Collective** (current members include Cristina Bucci, Rina Pellerin, Maiko Miyauchi, Eric Cheung, Shana Wolfe, and Ash Cornette) fuse contemporary dance aesthetics with street dance techniques like hip-hop, waacking, breaking, and popping. **Lee Su-Feh** of battery opera explores themes of colonial violence, immigration, pleasure, place, and displacement in her movement and voice work. Each artist articulates a fuller and self-defined understanding of their context and background in the opening of their respective contribution.

I should note that because this writing was developed amid the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, my approach to gathering has been shaped by the material conditions of remote engagement. The questions were posed and answered asynchronously via email correspondence, and the responses drew together into a whole with a kind of staggered, patchwork temporality. As you will see, each artist took their own approach in determining the format—as well as the content—of their responses.

My five questions build on my ongoing research (both academic and artistic) into the politics and kinaesthetics of site- or land-based movement. With the questions I pose, I seek to spotlight the grounded, refined, and body-based knowledge that dancers and choreographers cultivate in the articulation of their practice. These artists speak to the careful and—crucially—*kinaesthetic thinking* that dancing with land demands. Although their contexts and practices differ in important ways,

these artists share a committed attunement to how the land moves them, to the "land [as] an active collaborator, a co-choreographer" (Gerecke 2019, 39).

MICHELLE OLSON

Biography: *Michelle Olson is a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the artistic director of Raven Spirit Dance. She studied dance and performance at the University of New Mexico, attended the Aboriginal Arts Program at the Banff Centre, and was an ensemble member of Full Circle First Nations Performance. Michelle works in dance, theatre and opera as a choreographer, performer and movement coach, and her work has been seen across Canada. She was the recipient of the inaugural Vancouver International Dance Festival Choreographic Award and currently teaches movement at Studio 58 and the UBC Theatre Department.*

AG: What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?

OLSON: When I engage with site-specific practice, the spaces and places that I work in have their own story to tell. What is the meaning of the space and place, what memories does the land have to share with us, and how, as an artist, can we jump on this invisible current of memory and articulate it into space?

The draw for me to do site-specific work/land-based work is that there is an immediacy to sensation, impulse and connection. The land is the container that holds us, and through our sensations, we build a relationship with this land, diving into the images, story and impulses that are offered to us. These unique offerings are specific to time, place and space and are the heart of this kind of work for me.

Grey hoodie woman in cityscape. Lacey Baker in *Ta'wan.* Photo courtesy of Chris Randle.

AG: How does your place-based practice shape your movement vocabularies, presentation choices, and your approach to collaboration?

OLSON: My movement vocabularies are guided by land that they exist in. I have a fuller human experience when I create and perform on the land. The reciprocity of the land cultivates this language of deep human sensation and experience. When I lean into the earth, balance on the side of my hip, and look up to see the shimmering of trees' leaves and the light flickering through those leaves, that outer experience pierces deep back into me, and from there, the image of the bird stirs in my belly and then erupts from my sternum and flies towards the light. My image-making is in relationship with the land. It is not unlike how my out-breath from my lungs feeds the trees and how the trees exhale to feed me. The interdependence to realize images is tangible and so satisfying.

Being on the land can be overwhelming as well: there is so much to attend to and so much to see and listen to. I remember a moment with [Yvette Nolan,] my dramaturg for *Ashes on the Water*. I was sitting on the beach at Crab Park, looking at the mountains, ocean, the port, the boats, the seabus, the people and all the dogs. I looked at her and said, I do not know how I am going to do this; I do not know how I am going to find focus in this work. It was overwhelming. But through the process, I started to find my relationship with the environment. Align with the land, and then you can make choices that guide focus, that disappear elements and amplify what you want to see and feel.

Woman on rock against sky. Jeanette Kotowich in *Ashes on the Water*. Photo courtesy of Chris Randle.

AG: In your practice—and beyond—what is your relationship to the specific Indigenous practices, histories, and ways of knowing that are embedded in a given place?

OLSON: Doing this work on the traditional and unceded territories of the Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam) Nations affects the work deeply. There is an uncovering and deep listening that happens in the creation of work. For *Ta'wan* (Illuminations in Sḵwxwú7mesh), the piece was danced in Coal Harbour, where the edge of the built-up city meets the ocean. With the guidance of Bob Baker—an elder, mentor, and dance group leader and choreographer from the Squamish Nation—we imagined the not-so-distant past, where there were not large condo buildings but were large maple trees in a huge grove where the First Nations used to hunt deer. Remembering with the land, we built this work. We were gifted a deer mask for the piece, and, wearing the mask, the deer dancer led the audience to the different sites of the piece. We had a feast with the performers and creative team and offered a spirit plate to the spirits of that land so that they may be fed and honoured. Because it is also them that hold us as the land does. So many memories want to be remembered and spirits want to be heard, so we tread lightly and with respect as we smudge, sing, and give thanks so we can align ourselves with these deeper and wiser voices and let these voices be amplified and seen through our bodies.

AG: Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?

OLSON: The land always surprises me and always affects my choices. That is the joy (and terror!) of this work. In the studio, the process can be so self-referencing at times, therefore control can be maintained—and this has its own rightful place. But when an artist goes out on the land, some of that control has to be given up to trust: the body must respond first, and you do not know what you are responding to until you meet it. There is a fear that you might not meet it; it is thrilling when you do.

I am also surprised by the process that our dancing presence invokes in the spaces where we do this work. In *Ashes*, as we were improvising at the edge of Crab Park, we were joined by a young Indigenous man, ever so briefly. The dancers began to howl—and from across the park, this young man responded with his own howl. This response went on, and then he came racing around the beach where we were working with smudge in his hand, almost as if it was an Olympic torch. He circled us quickly and ran off. As we were making connections to space, place, and memory, our creative process ignited his own connections as well. It was a beautiful moment.

AG: Is there anything else you think we should consider about dancing with land?

OLSON: Dancing on the land is a real thing. It is not an abstraction. Your experience is not an abstraction. The land is your body, your body is the land.

JULIE LEBEL

Biography: *Born and raised in north-eastern Québec, on the ancestral and unceded lands of the Innu Nation, from a family of settlers of French and Irish ancestry, Julie Lebel now gratefully lives and dances on the ancestral and unceded Indigenous territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil Waututh) First Nations. She is a choreographer invested in intergenerational community-engaged dance, often*

in public space settings, involving musicians, visual artists, filmmakers and writers with a body of work spanning twenty years. She is the artistic director of Foolish Operations, connecting people of all generations through new dance experiences, especially with and for very young children, often in francophone or bilingual contexts. As a member of Lower Left Collective (USA, Germany, Norway, and Canada), she teaches and performs Ensemble Thinking. Julie is a proud mother of very active twin girls who act as first consultants in all of her creative endeavours.

AG: What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?

LEBEL: It started when I moved back to Sept-Îles after graduating from UQAM in 1998 with a BFA in Dance in the *interprétation-création* program. The lack of access to indoor spaces is what first brought me to dance outdoors and opened an endless set of questions.

Sept-Îles is a twelve-hour drive east and north of Montreal, on the unceded lands and waterways of the Innu. Its population ebbs and flows with industrial developments, roughly around thirty thousand people, including the people of the Innu community of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam.

I am a child of a boomtown flourishing from resource extraction, mainly iron ore. My parents had settled there in the 70s. Most of my friends' parents were also settlers. We were children of The Quiet Revolution: our parents fought to take power out of the oppressive clergy's hands. We were children of Québec Inc, taking power back from the anglophone economic dominance and fighting for workers' rights. We were children of the feminist movement in which our mothers made a place for themselves in the workforce, opened daycares and refuges for women suffering from violence and abuse. Caught in this electric current, there were few efforts toward building bridges in our white and settler-dominated schools with the few Innu children who attended the off-reserve school, leaving us separated by a deep cultural divide.

This divide is sensitively captured in the film *Kuessipan*, released in 2019. It is set in the amazing landscape around Sept-Îles. My words to describe both this divide and the landscape are inadequate in comparison. Watching the film brought me right back to my birthplace and also reminded me how I long to connect to this place and do my part of the work to build bridges, and how complicated it is, now that I have roots and a family on the opposite side of the continent. Alone in a crowd of unknown people in Vancouver [watching the film], laughing at the jokes nobody got, I cried my longing for this community in this landscape.

Back in the late 1990s, few of us returned to Sept-Îles after university. The town was slowly rebuilding after a long recession, but there was little infrastructure for artists in Sept-Îles at that time, especially for dance artists. As a young artist, participating in building that infrastructure in Sept-Îles felt more compelling than creating a space in the Montréal dance scene. I started creating works with unusual dance partners for the time, such as an eleven-year-old girl, an intergenerational group of people, and a range of people who participated in the collaborations with other (non-dance) kinds of expertise.

Julie Lebel dancing in *Hiveresse*, a short dance film captured in -30° C (2002). Still from video footage by Gabriel Rochette-Bériau.

Dancing in the snow or the sand, I worked in dialogue with the elements: light, water, minerals, wind, and often away from urban sounds. I often worked with people of all ages, from different walks of life, and in dialogue with artists from across disciplines. These experiences expanded my notion of what dance could be—and of who (and what) I could dance *with*.

Left: Jasmine Lebrun, a member of a choreographic research group in Sept-Îles (2001–2002) who participated in a first edition of *Drift-Walks*. Experiments with these walks seeded choreography for *Relevé de terrain* (2006–11), a piece that referred to the sensory memories of these walks. Right: Gabriel Rochette-Bériau, filming elements to be projected in the theatre. Image by Julie Lebel at Rivière Manitou, Québec.

AG: How does your place-based practice shape your movement vocabularies, presentation choices, and your approach to collaboration?

LEBEL: The centre of my practice is a collective choreographic approach called Ensemble Thinking developed by Nina Martin in the late twentieth century, and then within the Lower Left Collective (from 1994, onward). Since I was first introduced in 2004, I kept reaching out for more Ensemble Thinking workshops and experimenting in my own practice. I was invited to join the collective in 2019. As members of the collective, we define Ensemble Thinking as a set of dance improvisation movement scores that deeply focus dancers' attention to compositional forms in order to hone the capacity to shift fluidly among solo, group, and Contact Improvisation compositions and to artistically navigate the complexities that often arise in improvised group dances.

A significant part of Ensemble Thinking is the set of tools for composing space as an ensemble. Ensemble Thinking is usually practised indoors, in the studio and the theatre with professional dancers, but I kept wondering about possible applications for outdoors and with a community of people who may not identify as dancers.

Left to right: Sabrina Dionne, Joan Grégoire, Marco Dionne, Josée Chaboyez, Emmanuelle Roy, two unidentified child participants, Kathy Ouellet St-Pierre, Marie-Claude Laberge, and Françoise Cliche. These were participants of an experiment called *Solo for One Idea*, which was part of the project *échelle humaine* (Sept-Îles, 2005). This photo was taken by visual artist and collaborator Sébastien Cliche.

This photo documents an Ensemble Thinking score called "One Idea Spatial" that I modified for this site, a track and field park, with long-time friends and family, many of whom had participated in a multi-generational choreographic research group in 2001–2002. "One Idea Spatial" invites dancers to form one simple spatial idea together, as simply as possible—this means, usually, that each dancer should have a similar amount of space between each person, for example, because, otherwise, it makes two spatial ideas or more.

In the summer of 2019, I travelled to Marfa, Texas—Nina Martin's home base and Lower Left's summer intensive central—with the intention to explore the possibilities for Ensemble Thinking outside of the studio, in the desert. We experimented with silent walks while sensing light, sounds, space and other living beings. Though onsite, I felt that I could not dance. I felt that adding content was not my place. It felt more appropriate to listen and witness with presence.

AG: In your practice—and beyond—what is your relationship to the specific Indigenous practices, histories, and ways of knowing that are embedded in a given place?

LEBEL: One of my favourite places in this world is "La pointe de la rivière Moisie." This river is called Mishta-shipu in Innu-aimun, the language of the Innus. I have visited this place many times, in all seasons. This place is filled with my own memories, visits with my mother, my brother, my daughters, in times of hardship and in times of celebration. I also try to listen and notice the older history. I can see how the unique biodiversity of this place has been carefully tended for thousands of years by people who knew the medicine of these plants. I can see how the salmon must have brought communities to these shores.

I have often wished to dance in this place, but every time I set out to go dance, my dance is a quiet walk: a simple dance of awareness, of being present in space. In Ensemble Thinking, we practise giving and taking focus. In this place, I can only give focus, I stay still, I make myself small, my dance is to watch and listen; it is my way to give respect.

I am grateful for this short video-poem about the Mishta-shipu, *De la rivière à la mer* (2019). This piece gives us access to some of the Innu ways of knowing about this place. Set in this place, the document features celebrated poet Joséphine Bacon and artist Johanne Roussy, who returned to Sept-Îles, developed a practice of "sculpture sociale," and built much-needed bridges between Innus and settlers, artists and people of all walks of life and ages.

Caring deeply about a place like La pointe de la rivière Moisie is what supports my learning process about truth, permission, responsibilities, relationships, interconnection, and my environmental footprint.

AG: Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?

LEBEL: I recently went for a walk with Carmen Rosen, the Artistic Director of the Still Moon Arts Society, who has a life-long artistic practice embedded in environmental stewardship. I wanted to consult her on her artistic process with birds for our new project for families with babies and toddlers: *Moving Resting Nesting*. She told me how she became fascinated by birds because she realized that their call was telling her where she was, giving her information about the specific lay of the land (like how the presence of a seagull tells you that you are near the ocean). I was telling her how birdsongs helped me through the pandemic lock-down depression by bringing me back to the present, back to the fact that I was OK and that my immediate family was OK. I am hoping that by bringing attention to birds in our project, we can provide the same feeling to other families—to feel centred, to feel in connection with the land and each other.

OLIVIA C. DAVIES

Biography: *Olivia C. Davies is an independent producer, consultant, and contemporary Indigenous dance artist who creates across choreography, installation, and community-engaged projects, exploring the emotional and political relationships between people and places, often investigating the body's dynamic ability to transmit narrative. Her work traverses boundaries and challenges social prejudice, conveying concepts and narratives with creations and conceptual platforms that open different ways to see and experience the world. She honours her mixed Anishinaabe, French Canadian, Finnish, and Welsh heritage in her work. She is the artistic director of O.Dela Arts, Matriarchs Uprising Festival, and a founding member of Crow's Nest Collective (Vancouver) and Circadia Indigena Arts Collective (Ottawa).* www.oliviacdavies.ca

AG: What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?

DAVIES: I think I have always had an affinity for dancing outdoors, though it has only been in the last ten years that I have actually activated sites outside of the studio or the theatre with my own work. Growing up, I remember witnessing Dusk Dances in Toronto, Ontario, in the Trinity Bellwoods Park near where I lived and thought that was a really cool way of presenting dance. Fast forward to 2011 when I was an usher for the Dancing on the Edge Festival in Vancouver, BC, where I volunteered to accompany audience members in their walk from the Firehall Arts Centre to Crab Park where they would witness the work *Ashes on the Water* by Raven Spirit Dance, and I was immediately inspired to create dances for outdoor sites. The way Raven Spirit Dance's choreography incorporated the specific landscape of the site and drew audiences into the land and the water was very compelling and brought about a whole new way of experiencing the site.

Olivia C. Davies during her 2019 Leña Residency on Galiano Island, hosted by Dayna Szyndrowski. Photo courtesy of Dayna Szyndrowski.

In the following years, I have created a number of works for different outdoor sites, including a few unique locations along the Vancouver Seawall for a series of "pop-up" performances. These dances were very fun to make and perform—in part because they were witnessed by an audience of nearly a hundred fun-loving cyclists led by a merry motley crew of hosts who took them along their "PUP BIKE TOUR" at sunset in the summer months. I would continue coming back to dance at the

water's edge, experimenting with the way the shoreline landscape inspired choreographic experimentation. Back in 2013, I received an invitation to compose the choreography for a Fringe theatre show that was being created on Granville Island, specifically using the architecture of the walkway surrounding the Sandbar Restaurant. This work was especially interesting as the site itself kept changing; construction and various upgrades to the façade meant that the site was in constant flux, different from one rehearsal to the next and posing the challenge of creating and re-creating the ensemble choreography each day.

In collaboration with other Indigenous creators, I have enjoyed a special connection to the way our stories want to be danced in relationship to the earth, the sky, the waters, and the fire of our hearts. This became apparent to me as I experienced working with dancers on the land in Six Nations Territory, Ontario, mentored by Santee Smith; working with Charles Koreneho in the parks surrounding the Shadbolt Arts Centre in Burnaby, BC; and working with Penny Couchie and Aanmitaagzi ensemble members on their land in Nipissing First Nation, Ontario. Each of these experiences helped me to develop a keen sense of how the body can work in coordination with the natural elements of a site, expand storytelling, and deepen my awareness of how much my spirit longed to be in connection with the land in this way.

I have now made several solos and duets on the land in various sites in Ontario and BC that stem from this source of inspiration that comes from listening to the land and waters and reflecting back to the site how my heart is activated. The invitation from Canoe Stories Festival in Ottawa, Ontario, to share a dance in honour of the Water allowed me to envision and share "Kichisippi Love – An Honoring" in 2019, which has now been followed by three similar solos honouring specific aspects of site, including "Apple Tree Honoring" for the 19 Waltzes performance series in Vancouver, August 2020, and then the short film, "Xwáýxway Swoon ~ A Love Song" created and filmed in Stanley Park, BC, September 2020. Each solo brought forth a new way of experimenting with how the land and water invoked choreographic impulses that connected me to the site in new and powerful ways.

AG: How does your place-based practice shape your movement vocabularies, presentation choices, and your approach to collaboration?

DAVIES: Movement generated in land-based explorations is experiential in a way that is different from what comes out of my body when in a studio setting. The shaping of the body is influenced by the variety of shapes, tones, and textures existing in the site. The body deciphers the inherent rhythm found in the way the landscape rolls out. The heart tunes in to the pulsing energy of living matter in the plants, bugs, and birds above. Breath quickens and slows with the changing wind. The play of light and shadow encourages me to risk the new discoveries to be made with a heightened sense of inner vision. I am making new connections to the environmental features through the senses, and my movement adapts accordingly.

AG: In your practice—and beyond—what is your relationship to the specific Indigenous practices, histories, and ways of knowing that are embedded in a given place?

DAVIES: Through reflection on where I am and what has existed in the site prior to my entering upon it, I can experience a sense of time and history that engages me in the reality of our interconnectedness. An aspect of my own Indigeneity as a mixed heritage Anishinaabe-Kwe (Ojibwe

Woman) is to recognize my responsibility to the lands and waters and the creatures who share this earth with humankind. By entering a site and taking a moment to breathe, look around, and sense the others in the space that share its experience with me and its deeper history, I ground myself in deeper connection with the site and can tap into the way of being that is required of me for a fully embodied experience. Certain sites are embedded with long-standing histories that, when researched, can impact the choice made to enter into the space or not and what must be considered in doing so; it is important to understand that there are Indigenous practices specific to territory and tradition that ought to be considered before moving forward in explorations on certain sites. For instance, before I start a movement exploration, I will put down tobacco and burn smudge (traditional plant medicines) as an offering to the site as this protocol was shared with me as a way of honouring all creation before setting out to investigate what choreographic impulses emerge.

Olivia C. Davies during a *Tinana Whenua Project* workshop, hosted by Charles Koroneho at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in 2018. Photo courtesy of Yvonne Chew.

AG: Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?

DAVIES: In creating a duet for Vines Festival with aerialist Emily Long, we needed to choose a site in Trout Lake Park, Vancouver, BC, where the aerial hoop could be rigged to a tree branch safely. By choosing this particular tree, we were beholden to it as our landmark for the ensuing choreography in this part of the park. It became a very important focal point for the work. Upon noticing the many small twigs the tree had shed, we were inspired to use these as the demarcation of our performance space—laying out twig after twig in a giant circle around the tree that separated us from our audience and the rest of the park. The tree became a part of the choreography in multiple

ways: holding the space, drawing us to it, carrying us in the aerial hoop, and providing us with the means of creating a boundary between the space we activated and the space of our witnesses.

AG: Is there anything else you think we should consider about dancing with land?

DAVIES: Consider the multiple histories that exist in the site and move with consideration for how you enter and leave the site, the others who inhabit the space (past, present, and future), and what you might do to carry out the choreography in such a way that honours and respects the natural rhythms of the space.

OURO COLLECTIVE

Biography: *OURO Collective (OURO) creates and produces new dance works on the unceded territories of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. OURO was founded in 2014 by Mark Siller, Dean Placzek, Maiko Miyauchi, Rina Pellerin, and Cristina Bucci. Fusing hip-hop, waacking, breaking, popping, and contemporary dance as their foundation, each street dancer has trained with the founders of their respective dance styles and brings specific knowledge to the group aesthetic. The collective aims to advance the public's appreciation of street dance culture through dance classes and events/workshops, with a focus on youth engagement activities in smaller communities in BC and creating high-quality dance work for public presentation.*

OURO Collective exploring the relation between movement and environment at Spanish Banks Beach in Vancouver. Photo courtesy of Jessika Hunter.

AG: What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?

OURO: Street dance communities around the world frequent public spaces for their practice. It is not uncommon to find professional street dancers and enthusiasts who flock to the same area to perfect their craft—Vancouver is no different.

For several years, dancers and members of OURO Collective have been working and training in Vancouver's Robson Square ice rink. The location, easily accessible by public transit, allows movers from different parts of the city to congregate, create, and exchange together. Robson Square remains one of the few free public spaces with shelter, contributing to an ever-growing dance community.

OURO Collective rehearsal for *SOTTO 51* at Robson Square. Photo by Vitantonio Spinelli.

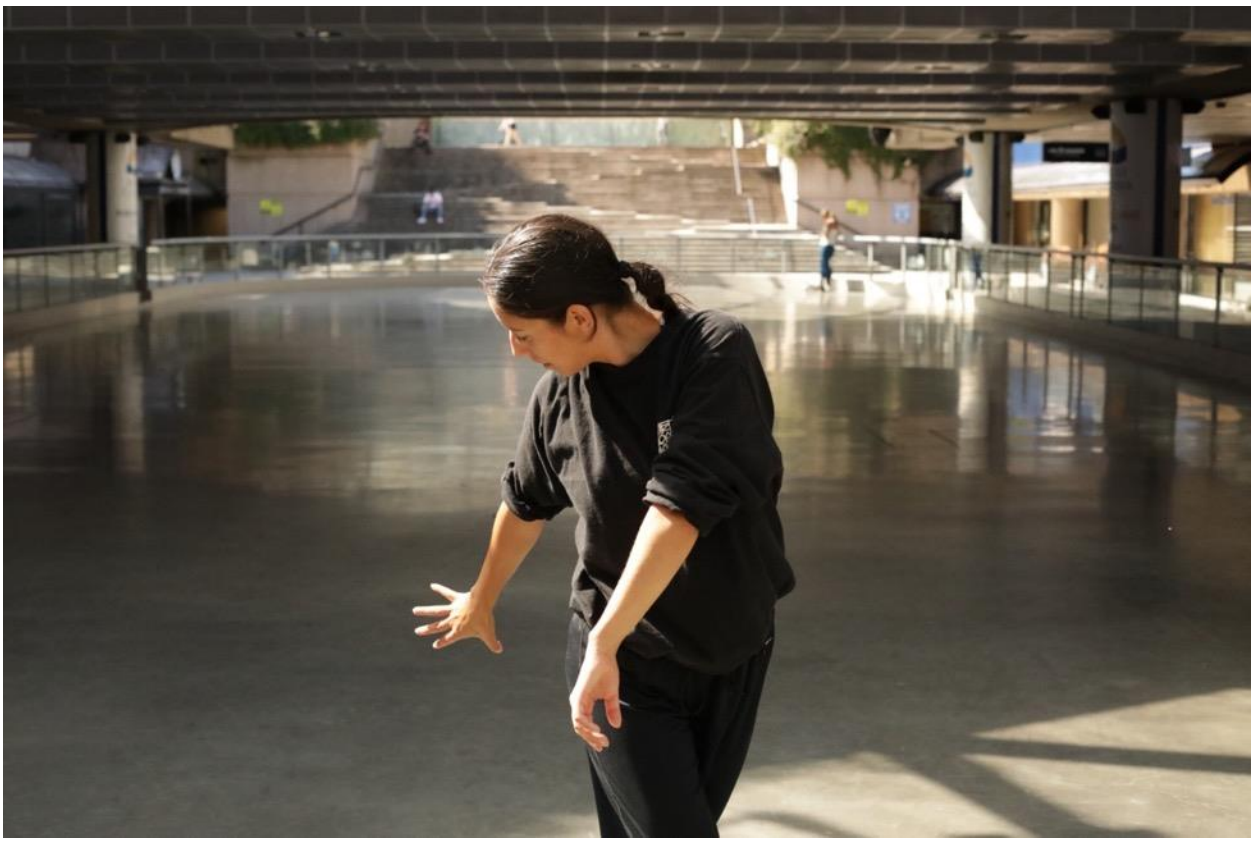
This past year OURO has been interested in exploring how creating a piece in an unconventional space such as Robson Square, where we have grown as individual artists, could shape new work as a collective. The new work, entitled *SOTTO 51*, premiered as a digital presentation this fall (October 1–7, 2021). A live presentation of the work will take place in August 2022 at Robson Square.

AG: How does your place-based practice shape your movement vocabularies, presentation choices, and your approach to collaboration?

OURO: Unconventional spaces lead to unconventional results. The ice rink is architecturally and acoustically unique due to its sunken plaza and dome, which provide artists with a sense of security and privacy to create. The public frequently watches from above and at the perimeter of the rink.

The live premiere of *SOTTO 51* will reflect and pay homage to this. The show will be donation-based and open to the public, and our audience will move throughout the plaza as our piece progresses.

Spaces in which OURO Collective creates are integral to the outcome of our work. Throughout the years, our pieces have given off different tones depending on which studios and spaces we are working in. Studios with fluorescent lighting and white walls delivered more angular choreography with synthetic sounds. In contrast, a studio with natural lighting and wooden tones resulted in deep earthy music with melting and connecting movement. We are excited to see what we produce in this outdoor space as we continue rehearsals. Robson Square is a mix of so many elements—hard concrete angles with flowing trees and bushes, quiet breeze with a sense of urgency, and the sound of the waterfalls against the hustle and bustle of the downtown business district. Everything from sight to smell inspires new movement ideas.



OURO Collective rehearsal for *SOTTO 51* at Robson Square. Dancer: Rina Pellerin. Photo by Vitantonio Spinelli.

We see *SOTTO 51* as an enormous collaboration with our dancers and the entire plaza. Robson Square is an uncontrolled environment where elements of nature, pedestrians, and fellow artists in the space influence what we create. In rehearsing in the rink, our work has sparked onlookers' curiosity, invited dialogue, feedback, and adaptation to the site.

AG: In your practice—and beyond—what is your relationship to the specific Indigenous practices, histories, and ways of knowing that are embedded in a given place?

OURO: Members of OURO are not Indigenous to this land, and it is of utmost importance that we seek knowledge of the history and people of these territories to better understand the world today and discover new ways to contribute to reconciliation. By dedicating a portion of our creation process to learning Indigenous history and practices through Indigenous educators, we hope to have this information resonate throughout rehearsals as we continue to progress towards reconciliation as individuals and as a collective.

We are thankful and grateful for our time at the Aboriginal Gathering Place at Emily Carr University with Brenda Crabtree and Connie Watts. Crabtree is the Aboriginal Program Manager at Emily Carr and belongs to the Spuzzum Band and has both Nlaka'pamux and Stó:lō ancestry. Watts is Associate Director of Aboriginal Programs and has Nuu-chah-nulth, Gitxsan and Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry. Through several educational sessions, they shared their knowledge of Aboriginal history, culture, and stories. It is our mission to create work that acknowledges and respects the people, land, and culture that came before us.

AG: Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?

OURO: When we planned the opening of *SOTTO 51*, we had envisioned a large stage spread across one side of the plaza. Once we got into the space, everyone gravitated to the pattern on the pavement—the cement slabs were laid out in wide rectangles that grew smaller and tighter in the centre, which resulted in a duet that begins far apart, then pulls closer towards the centre on a small patch of marley as dancers start to connect. The dancers incorporated elements of Robson Square's architecture into their respective styles, popping and waacking, and adopted a method in which they reacted to exterior sounds, animals, people, structures, and textures of the ground while following a loose score.

Robson Square, Vancouver. Photo by Vitantonio Spinelli. This photo was taken during an OURO Collective rehearsal for Act 1 of *SOTTO 51*. In Act 1, we focus on developing choreography that is directly influenced by our surroundings.

AG: Is there anything else you think we should consider about dancing with land?

OURO: Education, understanding, and respect are key elements before creating a piece. It is so important to respect where you are, who came before you, and how you leave the land for future generations.

LEE SU-FEH

Biography: *Lee Su-Feh is an artist whose work encompasses choreography, performance, teaching, dramaturgy, writing, and community organizing. Born and raised in Malaysia, she was indelibly marked by teachers who strove to find a contemporary Asian expression out of the remnants of colonialism and dislocated traditions. Since moving to Vancouver in 1988, Lee has created a body of work that interrogates the contemporary body as a site of intersecting and displaced histories and habits. In 1995 she co-founded battery opera performance with David McIntosh, and together they have led the company to earn a reputation for being "fearlessly iconoclastic," producing award-winning works that take place in theatres, on the street, in hotel rooms, and in print.*

AG: What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?

How does your place-based practice shape your movement vocabularies, presentation choices, and your approach to collaboration?

In your practice—and beyond—what is your relationship to the specific Indigenous practices, histories, and ways of knowing that are embedded in a given place?

Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?

Is there anything else you think we should consider about dancing with land?

LEE: My work is informed by my settler-immigrant body. My body carries multiple generations of not belonging to the land and waters it lives on.
I dance with the land in order to find belonging.

I was born in what is now called Malaysia.
Before it was Malaysia, it was a British colony called Malaya.
These days, however, in an effort to know myself differently, I prefer to remember that I come from a peninsula protruding out from the mainland of South-East Asia into maritime South-East Asia, into a stretch of islands called the Malay Archipelago, or the Nusantara Melayu. I come from a complex part of the world that has had a long history of cultures meeting and mixing, and it has been this way since antiquity.

I was born on the coast of a narrow body of water called the Straits of Malacca, which connects the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. This body of water has also connected peoples and cultures from China, India, the Middle East, and, of course, was vital in the European colonial project. Tea, opium, and spices brought the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spanish, and the British to South-East Asia; and along with them, the ensuing ruptures from land and waters, from language, from community, with repercussions all over the planet.

My Southern Min-speaking ancestors came to the Nusantara many generations ago from Fujian province, on the east coast of China. I come from a place defined by the movement of bodies and water.

I also happen to now live in a part of the world defined by the movement of bodies—both human and nonhuman—and water: I am honoured and grateful to live as a guest, uninvited, on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people—the xʷməθkʷəjˀəm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil Waututh).

It took me, however, almost twenty years after arriving in Vancouver, as an immigrant from Malaysia, to remember those names—xʷməθkʷəjˀəm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil Waututh). When I reflected on why, I realized it was because I didn't see those names as often as I saw the name of Captain Vancouver. I didn't hear them as often. I also realized that I had been looking at geography from very colonized eyes. I saw geography as a two-dimensional map with clearly demarcated borders. I began to realize that as long as I thought of territory that way, I was never going to understand where I lived. I was never going to understand my relationship to it, and my relationship to the bodies it held. Because this two-dimensional way of looking at land does not include time, nor history. This way of looking at land erases histories that are inconvenient. Histories that trouble the flat surfaces, the clear lines of the settler-colonial imagination.

So, this is an answer to the question, "What first drew you to dancing on the land?": I dance on the land in order to trouble the flat surfaces of the smooth dance floor. To remember an older technology of knowing inside me.

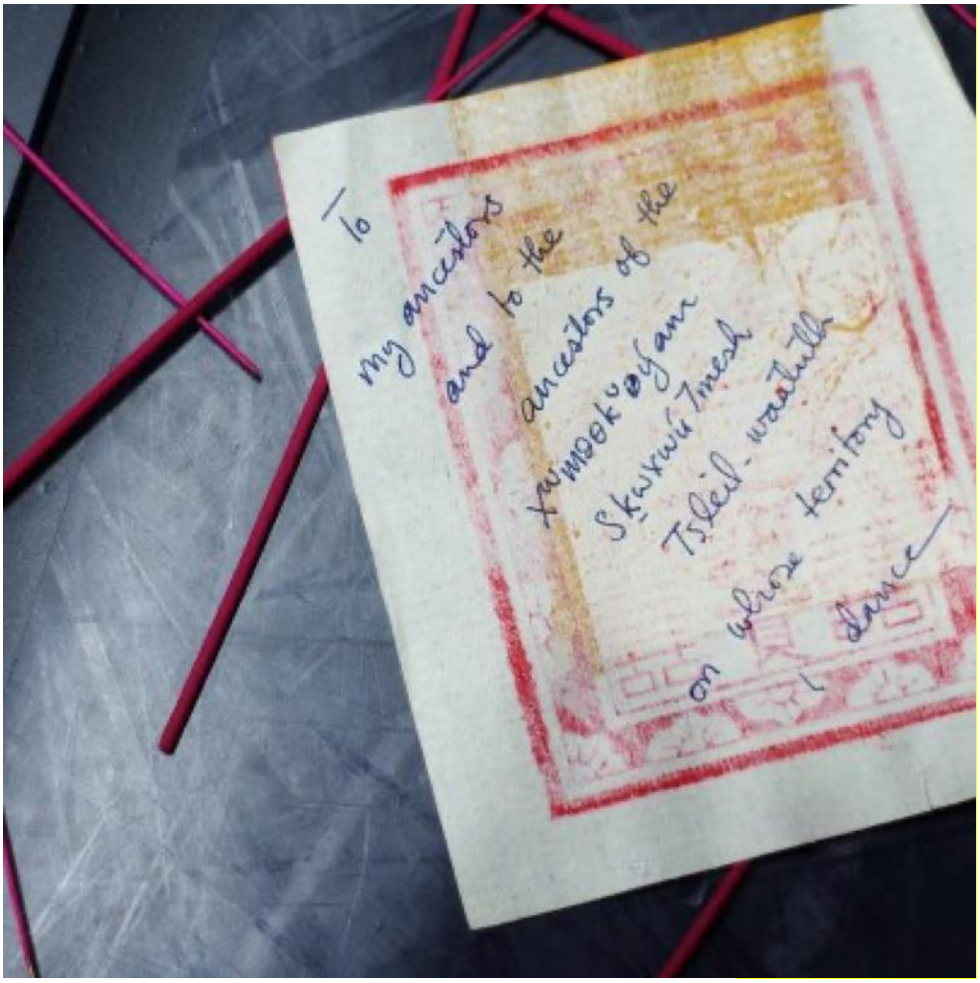
Several years ago, I read an interview of Glen Coulthard. Mr. Coulthard is a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, an associate professor of Indigenous and First Nations Studies at UBC, and he wrote the book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014). In the interview, he said a thing that blew me away, and which has since become a bit of a manifesto for choreography for me.

He said, "Land is a relationship based on the obligations we have to other people and to the other-than-human relations that constitute the land itself" (as quoted in Walia, 2015). My work is an attempt to understand and practise this statement in my body through the act of dancing. It is a response to missing parts of my knowledge: knowledge about myself and knowledge of the body I am dancing with. In this case, the body I am dancing with is the land. It is a response to the feeling of discomfort in me that I, as a Canadian citizen, am complicit in the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples here on Turtle Island. And the first step towards being able to do anything about it has to be the act of remembering.

In 2010, I made a work called *Everything* in response to a commission from the Dance Centre and the Canadian Music Centre to create a piece of work "about Vancouver." I think of *Everything* as one immigrant's way of acknowledging the Indigenous territory on which they dance.

In this solo work, the dance comes out of a negotiation between what I, the dancer, carry and the surface on which I dance. Using Daoist ritual objects such as I-ching sticks, incense, and spirit paper, I create a chance-operated environment that offers obstacles and openings around which I

move. Surrendering to the inherent nature of each object—the weight, the energy, and the tasks attached to each of the objects—the body is called into a dance that connects the human body to the elements. Embedded in the piece is both a personal as well as a public ritual of acknowledgment—of who we are and where we are.



Spirit paper featured in *Everything*. Photo courtesy of Yvonne Chew.

On each piece of spirit paper is written:
To my ancestors
And to the ancestors of
The xʷməθkʷəy̓əm*
The Skwxwú7mesh* and
The Tsleil-waututh*
On whose territory I dance

I figured if I wrote the names of the xʷməθkʷəj̓ʔəm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil Waututh) a thousand times, I would for sure be able to remember them. And everywhere I went with this work, I would be required by the protocols of this work to learn and remember whose territory I was going to be dancing on.

So, another simple answer to the question, "What first drew you to dancing in close proximity with site or land?" is: making a land acknowledgment.

As a settler-immigrant, whenever I make these land and water acknowledgements, I am trying to remember where I am. I am trying to remember that as an immigrant, I have had the privilege of living, singing, and dancing here even as the people whose territory I am on have had their own singing and dancing threatened, sometimes silenced by the state whose passport I carry. I am remembering that this disruption continues into the present day through the prison complex, through the child and family services that have taken away more Indigenous children from their parents than the residential schools did, through the pipelines that run through Indigenous communities, through the resource extraction industries that leave Indigenous communities without clean water.

Because remembering where you are and when you are is to know where you are in space and time, and this is the act of dancing.

I work from a colonized body. I grew up thinking and believing that to be a better human being, I had to be white or to play white. Along the way, I learned to speak English and French better than my mother tongue, Hokkien. Along the way, I learned that in order to be taken seriously as a dancer, or just as a person, I had to move in ways that left parts of me unacknowledged, and therefore, unknown.

My friend and colleague, choreographer Zab Maboungou once said, to dance is to be with what you don't know about yourself and what you don't know about the other. So, I dance with the land in order to learn what I don't know. What I don't know about myself, and what I don't know about the land I am on.

After spending a few hours every day writing an acknowledgement over and over for a month or two, I am left in a kind of prayer space. And when I perform the work, I feel my body supported by something more than the potentially violent gaze of the spectator. I feel supported by the objects I am touching, holding, and letting go into space. I feel the presence of my ancestors holding me. The shaking of the joss sticks installs an involuntary tremoring in my body that wakes me up to the autonomic nervous system responses in my body. The chance-operated landscape that the fallen objects create is a sort of chaos that disrupts the known parts of the world, the known parts of me. And my hope is that the body of the performance tremors into the body of the audience; and in that contact between two bodies, in that touch of two somatic systems, there is a possibility that the spectator might become a participant. That we might then dance together, the audience and I. I hope for that because the body that is dancing WITH someone is different from the body that dances FOR someone. To dance WITH is to be in a reciprocal energetic relationship with another. To dance FOR feels transactional and less sustainable.

The early iterations of this work were in the black box, which frustrated me because it felt like I was still dancing FOR, not dancing WITH. Eventually, this work has become a durational piece that I perform only outdoors with the caveat that I be allowed to burn the objects with the public. In this way, the work is now an invitation for the public to partake in a communal ritual of acknowledging one's own ancestors and the ancestors of the people whose land we are on.

Lee Su-Feh and audience in *The Things I Carry*. Photo courtesy of Yvonne Chew.

Since *Everything*, I have made two works, *Dance Machine* and *The Things I Carry*—and they both are land acknowledgments in different forms that invite the public into different kinds of embodied experiences.

Lee Su-Feh in *Dance Machine*. Photo by Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques.

Like *Everything*, they both conceptually trouble the flat surfaces of the settler-colonial imagination by literally having stuff on the floor: a bed of cedar (*Dance Machine*) and a blue tarp that crumples up (*The Things I Carry*). Like *Everything*, they both represent an exploration of what it means to be my immigrant body and all it carries, dancing on Indigenous territory and inviting others into this exploration. I wouldn't call them land-based in the sense that one gets immediate proprioceptive stimuli from nature; they were more like responses to the land as a political idea. Or a response to the construct of cities, which is where I have performed them, as layers of human construction over the surface of the actual planet. Like *Everything*, these works have embedded in them, preparations—rehearsals, writing, meetings, visits to places: protocols that demand research and engagement with the land on which they are being performed.

In *Dance Machine*, for example, I gather a group of artists from the place and from afar. Not only do the artists spend time getting to know one another, dancing, working, resting, talking through the interconnected materials of the installation, but they also spend a day visiting with an Elder or representative of (one of) the host nation(s) that the *Dance Machine* is in. The objective here is to listen to history told from an Indigenous perspective as a way to bypass the settler-colonial narrative. The invitation to the artists is simply to listen and situate themselves in relation to this history. For some artists, the process includes engaging the public in their learning/teaching process. For others, it is a more private process. I practise letting go of outcomes. (I am not always successful.)

Lee Su-Feh in *The Things I Carry*. Photo courtesy of Graham Isador: www.Instagram.com/presgang.

The inquiry in these works has led me to my current project, *The Territory Between Us*.

The Territory Between Us is a network of dances, exchanges and actions that are based on a mask carved by Bracken Hanuse Corlett (Wuikinuxv/Klahoose). This mask was carved in response to a year of conversation between me and Bracken: these conversations were between two artists getting to know each other, conversations that touched on our relationship to this territory, to art, to traditions, and to our families and loved ones. We would talk of the mask as a representation of the territory between us: me, an immigrant and him, Indigenous to the west coast of Turtle Island. We would refer to the mask as "The Territory Between Us."

Mask and Bracken Hanuse Corlett. Photo courtesy of Dean Hunt.

My sole task on receiving the mask was simply to submit to it, to be guided by it.
At this point, the question I was interested in was: how might the human body write choreography into a mask and then, how might the mask write choreography onto human bodies? In a way, I was asking Bracken, the carver, to choreograph me.

Lee Su-Feh and mask on Gilford Island, Kwakwaka'wakw territory. Photo courtesy of Jason Macnair.

Bracken Hanuse Corlett's practice fuses digital media, audio-visual performance, writing, painting, sculpture, and drawing, combining traditional Indigenous iconography and history with new media and concepts. While he had studied carving with renowned Heiltsuk artists (also his cousins), Bradley Hunt and his sons, Dean and Shawn Hunt, he had not dedicated his career to it. This project allowed Bracken to explore his carving skills while supported by his mentors, his cousins. It allowed me to reflect on my early dance training and performance experience in Malaysia, where I was privy to my first dance teacher, Marion D'Cruz's explorations with masks. So, while the mask is informed by both our respective traditions and histories, this exchange was between two contemporary artists, and the mask is not a traditional one.

In initiating this exchange, I had imagined a process where I would put on the mask, listen to what it demanded from my body, and simply make a dance for it. I wanted to create a score for the mask in collaboration with other dance artists—a score that came out of us all listening to the mask—so that the mask, along with this score, could be danced by anybody willing to submit to its demands.

The big surprise, and one of the answers to the question "Can you describe one moment in your personal performance history when the land or site surprised you and/or redirected your movement choices?" is this:
The mask said, "No. You may not dance with me. Yet."
I heard the no as a feeling of unease in my body when I put it on in front of the other dancers.
I heard the "no" in the questions and uncertainties of the dancers who had put on the mask.
I heard the no in the look of uncertainty I noted in colleagues to whom I showed the mask.

Bracken and I talked about the politics, the permissions, the historical hurts that have happened in a long history of settlers taking things that weren't theirs to take. He talked about the responsibility he felt in carving into a raw piece of cedar. He talked about carving as an act of responsibility to the

life-giving energy that was in this cedar. And when he gave me the mask, he was giving me the responsibility to continue taking care of it, to listen to the cedar.

Lee Su-Feh and mask. Photo courtesy of Jason Macnair. A moment in a consultation dance with the mask on Gilford Island in the Broughton Archipelago, in Kwakwaka'wakw territory.

I decided to listen to this "no." I stopped trying to "make" a dance with the mask and recognized the mask instead as a being with a life of its own, not an object for me to impose my will upon. This was the submission I had been looking for, but it wasn't exactly what I had in mind! But I'm going with it. Because this is also dancing.

Since then, the mask has become a witness to my process. I feel its presence as a witness to all that I do, and as something I have to be accountable to. The mask is, after all, a part of a fallen cedar. It is part of the land, and when I listen to it, I am listening to my responsibilities to the humans and non-humans that constitute the land itself.

So, I take the mask into the studio with me. I take the mask on my travels. I take the mask into the land (along with an assistant to help me record the moments). I have what I call "consultation" dances with the mask: these dances are private moments of intimacy with the mask, sometimes in studio, but most often in the forest, by the ocean. To learn about what I don't know.

I look through its eyes, but they do not line up with mine. So, I have to move my body in response to this new view of the world. I have to listen harder. Feel more through my skin, my feet, my whole body. I make sounds in the mask as a way of echo-locating myself. I listen harder to the sounds around me as a way to figure out where I am.

When I am behind the mask, I feel quite far from humanity. Sometimes this feels like loneliness, and so I reach out to others. I learn to ask for the support and connection I need. Out of this need has come a set of writings—scores for dancing across distances. These scores get shared with other people—sometimes artists, sometimes not—and they are a way of being in relationship with one

another. Out of this reach out to others, new dances, new music, new songs have emerged. But along with them, the mask (and the land it carries) reminds me to figure out my responsibilities to my collaborators and to the works that emerge out of our relationships. Responsibilities that are beyond those that can be easily framed by capitalism and colonial ideas of property and ownership.

I'm not sure it changes my vocabulary other than in superficial ways. But it has changed how I position myself to dancing. I see dancing now as a way of knowing, as a way of relating.

Screenshot of an "algorithm" that has come out of the listening to the mask. Content by Lee Su-Feh. This algorithm is a set of instructions for dancing that was recently published in the *Capilano Review* (Lee 2021):

An algorithm for dancing with the planet.
An algorithm for dancing with your beloved.
An algorithm for dancing from enough-ness.
To practice love in the midst of distress,
To practice care in the midst of distress.

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