

Living On The Land: Exploring Inuit Translocation  
A Visual Autoethnographic Experiment in Animated Database-Documentary

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## Abstract

This research-creation project features auteur animation in an interactive, non-linear database idiom exploring the theme of Inuit translocation in order to expand the genre of animated documentary. Premised on the engaging aesthetic sensibility of auteur animation, and the open-ended narrative possibilities of the authoring software, *Korsakow*, this experimental hybrid media work is presented as a viable alternative to the discourse of the indexical image in documentary filmmaking.

The creative research & development process associated with auteur animation is implemented as visual autoethnography in a non-linear database documentary entitled, *Living on the Land*. Witnessed through the subjective, conscious experience of a citizen-researcher, past memories and current observations are invoked as narrative strands that intimate an underlying context of colonial legacy and reflect on limitations within our social imaginary that impact rural Inuit who migrate to southern urban centers, particularly, Montreal.

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## Introduction

*Living On The Land* is a research-creation project, proof-of-concept, using the digital tools of interactive database-filmmaking and the creative practice-led research & development process associated with auteur animation. Implementing a visual autoethnographic approach, I explore the theme of Inuit translocation from the rural North to southern urban centers, Montreal, in particular, in a non-linear documentary film. My engagement with this subject is based on a recent personal experience which motivated a desire to understand the social and political context that linked current observations in my immediate environment with memories of a stay in the arctic village of Salluit, in northern Quebec, over thirty years ago.

Currently, as Norman Dale points out in a doctoral thesis entitled, '*Decolonizing The Empathic Settler Mind: An Autoethnographic Inquiry*', there is interest and commitment in Canada to reframing and changing Native/Settler relations at the 'macro-level of public discourse.' (2014 49) *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, resulting in a formal apology brought the trauma inflicted on Inuit through the residential school program to the public eye as Inuit gave testimony through oral histories. Within the Inuit community, the *Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Thematic Reports and Special Studies 1950–1975* was created to establish an accurate historical archive of a colonial period and the consequences of actions such as the Inuit dog slaughter by the RCMP and re-location of Inuit families to Northern outposts to accommodate government interests. The *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Report*, published in 1976, described its researchers' desire 'to provide an explicit statement, by the Inuit, of their perception of the man–land relationship.' (QTC, 2013 6)

‘In 2013, the *QTC* histories have a similar purpose concerning the relations of people with their government. It is a more fluid relationship than the one linking Inuit to their land, but it is important, and will be for years to come. The *QTC* histories focus on Inuit experiences, but there is much more to say about the events and people who were working in the region in the service of the state, the churches, or private ventures. There are shared histories as well as separate histories that are necessary to keep dialogues going.’ (QTC, 2013 12)

It is in relation to these shared and separate histories, that making the political personal has direct bearing for this work. Paulette Regan, lead researcher with Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, flags a “critical lack of settler self-reflectivity” ( Regan, 2010 52) ‘in prescribing for means of unsettling settler perspectives.’ (Dale, 2014 7) Scholar, Adam Barker, attributes the conflicts that arise between Indigenous and Settler peoples as the results of the thoughts and attitudes within each and every person. (2010 329)

## 1. Converging Realities

One evening I inadvertently witnessed an occurrence in my neighbourhood of Mile End, Montreal. There is an ATM banking machine in a vestibule of the Desjardins Caisse Populaire on the corner of Mont-Royal and Clark Street. I have often seen itinerant people sleeping there especially when the weather is wet or cold. Walking down Clark Street on a chilly snowy evening, I saw a group of police officers standing over a prostrate man lying in the snow on the sidewalk just outside of the vestibule entrance. As I neared, I saw the man on the ground was an Inuit I had noticed before in the neighbourhood. He

was wearing a short-sleeved light shirt and jeans, no coat, or boots or other winter clothing. He appeared to be unconscious. The police officers surrounding him, two men and a woman, were shouting loudly at him to get up, that he would have to move. Their body language was aggressive; they were ‘on alert’, hands poised over pistols. I approached, but didn’t try to intervene given the attitude of the police. I was told to move on and didn’t witness the outcome of the situation. This event shocked and dismayed me to such a degree that I could not let it go; I was haunted by it.

This scene struck a highly personal chord and brought to the fore past memories of Salluit. That Inuit were here in the south in such apparent distress was highly disturbing. Also highly disturbing was my own reaction. I felt twisted, confused and ineffectual. Day to day activities prevailed in the neighbourhood and the presence of street people, Inuit and others, appeared to be relatively invisible in the midst of it. How could tossing a few coins in a cup alleviate an untenable situation? What was the right thing to do? I began my research with the experiences I possessed and the tools of expression with which I am familiar.

## 2. Instrument of Departure

I have always been fascinated by the art of animation. Referred to as ‘the illusion of life’, animation can conjure believable worlds and characters that could not possibly exist. I’ve spent the better part of my career as an animator, initially working in commercial studios and later at the National Film Board of Canada where I discovered the freedom of experimental auteur animation. In the context of this paper, auteur animation may be understood as the signature style of animation filmmakers who work in the short

film genre and ‘execute the core themes, techniques and expressive agendas of their films.’ (Wells, 2002 79) While this may encompass infinitely diverse techniques and a myriad of captivating styles, what truly captures my imagination is the amazing latitude of visual communication possible in this medium, of being able to draw out both literally and metaphorically, what moves me.

I believe that the aesthetic sensibility of auteur animation has the capacity to embody a compelling view of subjective experience, which, in turn, positions animation as a unique means for ‘the creative treatment of actuality’, as defined by filmmaker and critic, John Grierson. (Grierson, in Honess Roe, 2013 13) I would further add that animation may be employed in documentary to credibly portray the ‘unportrayable’, (Honess Roe, 2013 23-25) the unconscious, memories, and interpretative metaphors, all of which carry and express our lived experiences. While animation as a medium has figured large in many animated documentaries,<sup>1</sup> my research suggests that the particular expressive, experimental and interpretative qualities of auteur animation have not really been explored in or as non-linear, database narrative.

In our Postmodern era of partial, plural and contingent knowledge, I am particularly interested in exploring auteur animation as a viable documentary means of addressing social or political issues and ask how this form, as a non-linear database narrative, might expand the genre of animated documentary. To address this possibility, I begin, generally, by first situating auteur animated documentary in the contemporary context of moving-image culture, drawing on the perspectives of critical animation studies, film studies, and new media studies. Theoretical discussions relating auteur

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<sup>1</sup> Feature films such as *Persepolis*, *Waltz With Bashir*, BBC’s historical recreation film, *Walking with dinosaurs*, National Film Board public information series, *Understanding the Law* and *Science Please* indicate varied



animation in terms of aesthetics, representational strategies and authorial intent to discourses of ‘the real’ in documentary studies are then examined and interwoven in an analysis of selected auteur animation films. I then review literature on narrative and storytelling to advocate for non-linear database narrative as a valid documentary mode.

### 3. Map Making

*Living On The Land*, the animated Korsakow film, which is the main outcome of this project, explores Inuit translocation from the North to the streets of Montreal. I draw upon my own experience to position myself as a witness or bystander, first as a visitor to the village of Sagluk, now Salluit, in 1979 in Nunavik and recently, as a resident in my Montreal neighbourhood of Mile End where there has been a new and noticeable presence of Inuit who appear to live on the streets. Since the late spring of 2015, I have observed several groups of three and four Inuit who frequent Mont-Royal Street between St. Urbain and St. Laurent and the alleyways adjacent. While certain individuals seem to remain in the area, new faces also appear in the groups. There are generally more men than women and all appear to be mature adults. I have yet to see young adults in this area<sup>2</sup>.

Working with this experience, I visually explore Inuit translocation through the lens of personal observations, associations and memories. Having investigated Inuit perspectives through extant Inuit film, art and journalism as well as the writings of Inuit leaders and policymakers and the mandates and reports issuing from related institutions

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<sup>2</sup> I have, however seen larger mixed groups of young Inuit together in the area around Atwater and Ste-Catherine streets as well as groups of young and older women, most likely due to proximity of an Inuit drop-in centre and a shelter for Native and Inuit clients.

and organizations under both aboriginal and government direction, I turn the lens of observation inwards to focus on an emerging understanding of myself as a subject member of white settler society and the degree of my implication in colonial legacy.

I term my methodology ‘animated visual autoethnography’, which I define as a fusion of autoethnography and a creative research & development process employed by auteur animation filmmakers, such as Samantha Moore, Michèle Cournoyer, Theodore Ushev and Chris Landreth, to name but a few. Through an iterative process of visual creation and scholarly research, my intention has been to ‘feel my way through’ the historical, social and political circumstances that have characterized the then and now of this subject and to situate Inuit translocation and myself within these circumstances. As this work is a form of visual research, I include a discussion of the relevance of a practice-led creative process as a method of research inquiry.

Rather than undertaking an ethnographic participant-observer position through interactions with individuals or attempting an objective sociological analysis, I have chosen to highlight the human aspect of this situation, framed as a self-reflexive personal response to observed phenomena in the socio-political context in which I also am embedded. Within the purview of qualitative autoethnographic research, I self-identify as both the textual and extra-textual author of the *Korsakow* film that serves as the vehicle of my research creation project, presented here in a *proof-of-concept* stage of development.

## Chapter 1: Lay of The Land: Animated Documentary

### 1.1. Theoretical Viewpoints on Animated Documentary and Three Examples

Animation and documentary have a long relationship that has been expressed in various ways since the early days of moving-image history.<sup>3</sup> (Honesty Roe, 2013 1) For the purposes and scope of this work, I begin with an overview of cinematic history, from the perspective of new media. Lev Manovich has drawn a continuum from 19th century pre-cinematic practices, when images were hand-painted and hand-animated, to current filmic practices in the digital age. Cinema, historically, moved through a period of being primarily a recording medium, to now become “live-action material + painting + image-processing + compositing + 2D computer animation + 3D computer animation” and, therefore, can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation.” (2001 301)

Although not specifically referring to fiction or non-fiction, Manovich’s summary is quite useful in understanding the divide between animation and documentary with regard to truth claims; how animation and its crafting, in contrast to the ‘recording’ or photography-based period of cinema, has largely been excluded from, or seen as a form apart, by the discipline of film studies. Although documentary form has traditionally rested upon photographic indexicality as a means of representing reality, ‘changing conventions regarding non-fiction visual representations [...] now raise questions about

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<sup>3</sup> A discussion of the history of the animated documentary can be found in DelGaudio, 1997; Patrick, 2004; Strøm, 2003; Wells, 1997.

notions of realism and indexicality in relation to animation and non-fiction. ' (Ehrlich, 2015)

In her book-length study, scholar Annabel Honess Roe, points to the hybridization of animation and documentary occurring throughout cinema's history, such as the use of animation 'in non-fictional contexts to illustrate, clarify and emphasize' and the presence of animated segments featured in non-fiction films from the early 1940's to present time. However, these particular instances of animation use do not directly challenge the popular understanding of documentary's truth claims and it is only since the 1990s, that we have seen an increase in the production of what has become known as the 'animated documentary'. (2013 1) Consulting the programs of current international animation festivals, as well as documentary festivals, will confirm the presence animated documentary film works ranging from accounts of autobiographical content to political and social issues expressed through innumerable creative approaches.

As a touchstone for innovative approaches to non-fiction practices, Honess Roe cites John Grierson's definition of documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality', which affords broad interpretation and 'has proved resilient to aesthetic, ideological and technological developments in documentary making'. (2013 4)

She then goes on to suggest that 'an audiovisual work could be considered an animated documentary if it: (i) has been recorded or created frame by frame; (ii) is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its creator; and (iii) has been presented as a documentary by its producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences, festivals or critics. (2013 4) In contrast, educator and filmmaker, Sheila Sofian, loosely

defines an animated documentary as “any animated film that deals with non-fiction material” (Sofian 2005, 7).

To further elaborate on the mediascape of moving-image culture, animation theorist, Paul Wells, concludes that the ‘collapse of previously assured processes and disciplines into one another, and the fact that the very term ‘animation’ has become ‘a mere catch-all that speaks to all manipulated moving-image practices’, now underscores a need to ‘re-imagine animation’ itself. Because animation has become ‘the core condition of filmmaking per se’, as a means of delineation, it is ‘of critical importance to re-explore animation through the intentions of its creator and the contexts in which it was made.’ (Wells, Hardstaff, 2008 6-7) From this perspective, authorship may be seen as a crucial factor in determining how an animated documentary might be defined and received.

Jonathan Rosenkrantz, in an article titled “Colourful Claims”, references the writings and taxonomies of film studies scholars Bill Nichols, Michael Renov, David Bordwell, Andre Bazin, Trinh Min-ha, and Paul Ward in an attempt to clarify a definition of animated documentary. The author begins with two contradictory quotes relating to documentary film theory: *‘Every film is a documentary.* (Bill Nichols, 2001) and *‘There is no such thing as documentary [...].* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1993)’ and continues, ‘Nichols is discussing the relation between documentary and fiction, while Minh-ha’s argument is about the impossibility of catching ‘truth’ with a camera’. Rosenkrantz endeavors to reconcile the apparent polarity that ‘all film is documentary or documentation is impossible’ by looking at conceptual categories of evidence and truth. He posits that, while it may be commonplace to invoke Nichol’s modes of documentary to legitimate the

animated documentary, ‘animation differs significantly from live-action film in a way that has consequences for its documentary claim.’

Drawing on Barthes’ photographic *noeme*, the semiotic sign system of C.S. Pierce, and the cinematic theory of Andre Bazin, Rosenkrantz makes a case that the evidentiality of documentary’s truth claims, based on photographic technology, is existentially different than paintings or animation, which may or may not have a referent in the physical world, don’t require one or that it be a particular one. The reconstitution of digital images from computerized code complicates even further what a truthful representation of reality might be; that said, truth itself is never fixed, but contextualized. ‘The real issue is the existential difference between the photograph and the drawing, but this doesn’t mean that the potential of animated documentary should be denied. It merely means that drawings document *differently*.’ (Rosenkrantz, 2011)

While it is clear that, with increased access to filmmaking software and hardware, creators now have the potential to push the boundaries of experimentation through hybridization of media forms, at the same time, conventional assumptions relating to more traditional forms still endure, such as the perception that documentary is true and animation is not real or is fantasy. In light of this, what are the functions of animation in the documentary genre?

Annabelle Honess Roe offers three functions as follows: 'Mimetic substitution', where animation directly stands in for live-action, aiming to imitate reality as closely as possible; Winsor McCay’s ‘*The Sinking of the Lusitania*’ (1918) and Ari Folman’s ‘*Waltz with Bashir*’ (2008) stand as examples of this approach for events for which photographic evidence did not exist. 'Non-mimetic substitution', means that animation is still used as a

substitute for live action, but the goal is a creative interpretation of reality, rather than accurate reproduction; Orly Yadin and Sylvie Bringas' *Silence*, on the subject of the Holocaust (1998) and Brett Morgen's *Chicago 10* (2007), on the trial of American anti-war protesters in the late 1960's, do not attempt realism, but imaginatively portray their subjects. Finally, the 'Evocative' function of animation, is used to show an *experience* of reality, and animated documentaries of this kind tend to deal with feelings and thoughts, which cannot be easily delivered through live-action.' (2013 35); films such as Samantha Moore's *An Eyeful of Sound* (2010) and Michelle Cournoyer's *The Hat* (2010) reflect a subjective interpretation of a subject drawn from actuality.<sup>4</sup>

Tom Gunning points out that 'in cinema, we are dealing with realism, not 'reality' and that cinema works with images that possess an impression of reality, not its materiality.' (Gunning, 2007 44) In this case, perhaps all cinema asks that we 'suspend disbelief' as viewers. What then is realism? Is it something that looks realistic or natural? Is it something we can believe to be true? In animation, CGI technology has pursued rendering realistic appearance to the point of the 'hyper-realistic'. Animation not only portrays accurate physical movement in accordance with the laws of physics, but extrapolating from it, also presents the impossible in a believable way as may be seen in current popular fantasy and science fiction feature films, an example being the feature film, *Avatar* (2009)

Nea Ehrlich outlines two very interesting perspectives on the use of animation as a political aesthetic in animated non-fiction. She discusses the possibility of de-sensitizing and re-sensitizing effects depending on the viewer's perception. If animation is thought of

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<sup>4</sup> I note here that, due to limited space, it is not possible to address the existing multiple categorizations for animated documentary and non-fiction film proposed by scholars such as Paul Wells, Paul Ward, Bill Nichols, Carl Plantinga, Micheal Renov, and others.

as an unacceptable fantasy form for presentation of actual content, and it is then used, the content risks being accepted as less real even if it is an urgent political topic based on actual events, because the protagonists are seen as ‘not real’ people, but actually fictional characters. This can have an unwanted de-sensitizing effect. In another respect, if animation is accepted as believable and trustworthy, then animation’s visual novelty can also increase interest and serve to provide a re-sensitized feeling, important in approaching political topics in the information overload of today. We have become so accustomed to seeing visual atrocity that a new aesthetic might jolt us into seeing anew and provide a powerful effect. (Ehrlich, 2015)

‘Truth-telling is as much, or more, a set of expectations about what will be said as it is an intention to say something. Truth seems to escape the direct control of either the truth-teller or the truth-hearer, although as a phenomenon it seems to be one of reception rather than of projection, by which I mean that truth is something we recognize first of all, not something we make.’ (Rout, 1991) How then, does this fit with a documentary intent? Is there such a thing as an accurate representation? I propose that auteur animation’s constructed nature foregrounds its subjectivity and, thereby, can be seen as a transparent representation of reality. Yet, what a personally authentic representation is for one filmmaker is not necessarily so for another. Finally, the perception of whether a work is true or ‘true enough’ rests with the viewers, who decide for themselves. Authenticity is a relative term and, as Latour suggests, ‘we cannot expect representation to do what it cannot, represent without representation’. (Latour in Ehrlich, 2015)

As the attempt to categorize and classify documentary films into distinct modes of representation is problematized by the fact that many films employ multiple



strategies, invoking overlapping categories within a given film, the same holds true of animated non-fiction. The following key works by animation auteurs address their subject matter with ‘a documentary intent’. By this I mean, films that expressly explore, present or refer to an existing social or political issue, in *the* world through animated means and bear the signature style of their author/maker. I identify signature style as not only the technique and visual style employed to carry an authorial personal vision, but also a propensity for a particular mode of address or voice. Honess Roe’s definitions and functions of animated documentary serve as a general frame of reference.

I. ‘*Joda*’ is an animated documentary short by Theodore Ushev, produced in the context of a series to support an active cause to release Iranian filmmaker, Jafar Panahi from a six-year prison sentence and twenty-year ban on making films, traveling or giving interviews. It was created frame-by-frame, is about *the* world and has been declared, presented and received as a documentary. However, the official synopsis is as follows



‘A woman writes a letter that will be read by a man in prison, a letter full of love, worry, compassion, suffering and hope.’ The letter is fictitious.

This poetic short creates an affective experience of confined imprisonment, frustration and disconsolation. Sequences of live-action footage of Panahi, conflict on the streets and excerpts from Panahi's films are transformed by hand-painted layers digitally composited and seamlessly combined with sequences of hand-drawn and painted animation. The live-action footage establishes actuality, yet is subsumed and integrated into the overall visual aesthetic. The 'real' becomes indistinct and abstract, as if seen from a great distance, out-of-reach; the abstract is composed of a moving texture of written Arabic script, which acts as 'skin-crawling' veil of illegible expression; words that cannot be read as a metaphor for a vision that cannot be seen.



Black title cards with bold white script punctuate shots of conflict in the street; 'Apart', 'Confidant', 'Way', 'Hope', 'Torn', 'Anguished.' Text alternates with action as we look out a window with an over-the-shoulder shot of Panahi; do we see his thoughts or is the filmmaker declaring content? An intimate voice-over reading of an imaginary letter leads the narrative structure and sets an emotional tone that draws us into the experience of Panahi's seclusion and struggle. The letter functions as a message of hope and support

to him and to us. The diegetic sounds of street conflict, muted and distorted, contrast with the singular voice. We are made aware of interior and exterior, inside the narrative sharing Panahi's discomfiture and outside as spectators who hear and 'witness' his plight. The opening shot of an animated eclipse of a full moon fading into darkness, bookends with the last images of the film. Referencing an image from Panahi's film, "The White Balloon", we see a young girl's balloon slip her hand into the sky. This balloon is black, but as it rises to infinity, a muted, barely visible reverse eclipse stays in the light; is this metaphorical hope?

Ushev's approach to integrating live-action footage with hand painting goes far beyond superficial rotoscoping.<sup>5</sup> There remains enough trace of the actual to perceive, but the constructed and mediated imagery establishes another mode of reading. The film functions 'evocatively', to create through affect and aesthetics, an intense and moving experience of Panahi's predicament. The imagery created is a metaphorical commentary by Ushev. It is clearly constructed, clearly a subjective interpretation and draws attention to an actual political issue in need of address. Textually, Ushev approaches the situation of Panahi, as a sympathetic fellow artist and shares an imagined and empathetic interpretation of the filmmaker's imprisonment with viewers. Viewers are not lead to 'believe' the veracity of what they see, the aesthetic intervention precludes this, but rather to allow the emotional experience of this creative interpretation to raise questions from which to draw their own critical conclusions. The film is composed of the combined voices of Theodore Ushev, Maral Mohamadian, (of Iranian descent who wrote and read

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<sup>5</sup> Rotoscoping is an animation technique, which allows animators to trace over footage, frame by frame, for use in live-action and animated films with the aid of a projection device.

the letter) and project initiator and producer, Marcel Jean, former Head of French animation at the NFB.

**II.** Jonathan Hodgson's *Feeling My Way* is summarized on his website as follows:  
'A journey from home to work is seen through the filter of the conscious and subconscious mind. Through the use of moving collages and painterly animation combined with live-action footage, the viewer is able to share the traveller's experiences and his mental reactions to the trials and triviality of urban existence.'



Although there may be common elements of construction and technique to compare to Ushev's *Joda*, this film reflects a direct personal experience and a first-person account of such. Live-action footage is transformed through a process of xerography, frame-by-frame painting, writing and visual manipulation, then re-filmed every alternate frame to create an 'animated image quality'. (Hodgson, 2006: 64–5) Hodgson is 'documenting' his actual daily experience from both an observable external and interpretative internal viewpoint at the same time. The use of the term 'filtering' in the synopsis establishes the subjectivity of the representation being offered and, in suggesting that the viewer can share Hodgson's experience via the film, an assumption is being made that this film will 'evoke' a common recognition of the experience of streaming

consciousness. In general, it may be said that much of auteur animated documentary is premised on drawing out viewer empathy. As Honess Roe points out, ‘analytical philosophy generally accepts that I can suppose that other people have mental states that are similar to the mental states I experience, and without this empathy much human interaction would be impossible.’ The notion of ‘sharing’ our experience is, therefore predicated on empathy and ‘our certainty that other human beings are mostly very like ourselves.’ (2013 138) Of course, it goes without saying that the culturally embedded identity of both author and viewer qualify this commonality and not all representations attain the universal. Auteur animated documentary, however, might be said to both expand and intensify the possibility of empathy by giving visual and auditory form and expression to the dimension of the imagination as well as the observable world.

In addition to the use of live-action footage, the indexical traces of Hodgson’s process of constructing his film may be seen in the hand-written and hand-drawn words and images that replace a voice-over narration. His thoughts and impressions are ‘spelled out’ in written, quivering text and drawings that appear over the street scenes and people he encounters. We are taken beyond surface appearance into active perception, interpretation and imagination. Hodgson’s hand opens the door in the first sequence and we see his feet walking in another shot. This situating of the author in his own film may be seen as an element of a ‘performative’ mode of documentary and serves to underscore both the actuality of the event and the contrasting constructedness of the film. Diegetic sound recorded as he walks the streets works provides a grounding counterpoint to the visualized animated imaginings overlaying the film. This animated mediation ranges from

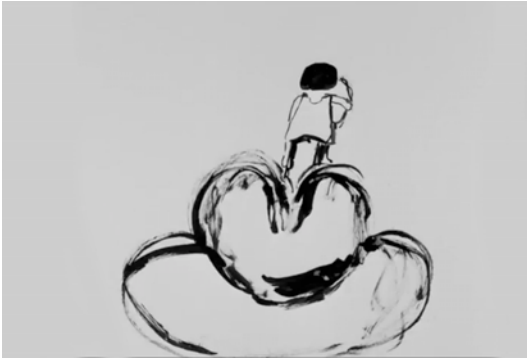
minimally present to totally present creating a dynamic passage in and out of abstraction, not unlike the drifting and focusing of our attention from one waking moment to another.

The two films above are both auteur animated documentaries that may be considered ‘evocative’ and present a depiction of a subjective interpretation of the world, one from an first-person point of view, the other as a poetic speculation on another’s experience of the world. *The Hat* by Michèle Cournoyer, can also be deemed a non-fiction work in the ‘evocative’ mode, but employs a very different strategy of visual representation from the first films discussed.

**III.** ‘*The Hat* is a tough, visceral experience. With naked honesty, animator Michèle Cournoyer invites the audience to share in the pain of a woman whose body is on display and whose soul is forever soiled. A film without words.’ (nfb.ca Website, synopsis) *The Hat* presents a female character, a stripper in a bar, whose memories of rape as a child transcend temporal reality to be perpetually present through the symbol of a man’s hat.

Cournoyer describes her creative process as ‘autofiction’. ‘It’s direct; there’s no intermediary. I become all the characters in my drawings. I dig deep into my emotions and personal experiences.’ (Mitchell, 2014) It is not that the works she creates are necessarily her personal, autobiographical stories; she researches existing documentation, solicits interviews of first-hand experiences, views films, compiles notes. What she describes is the process that follows; a synthesizing and internalizing of this research. The fictional character is no one person, but a personification of ‘all women’ who have suffered abuse. She embodies her subject matter through personal engagement in order to

achieve a communicative intensity. (Cournoyer, 2014) This film might be seen as a tour-de-force empathetic enactment of the experience and consequences of child rape.



‘Generally, experimental films constitute documentary forms insofar as they document the process of their own production.’ (Marks, 2011 309) Moreover, in this case, the stark visual design of simple hand-drawn black ink on paper recalls a calligraphic mark of felt intention. The mark, the line, the smudges and smears and splatters are the meaning; reflect the ‘dirt’ of the act of child abuse. The film is a continual metamorphosis of one image into the next in an unrelenting narrative movement. As a viewer, witnessing the immediacy of this telling is highly disturbing. The accompanying soundscape composed by Jean Derome, which heightens and intensifies the sense of violation and damage in the visual representation, is indicative of the power and importance of audio in evocative animation work.

Tom Gunning discusses the affect of cinematic motion as being a primary means of conveying emotion; ‘we do not just see motion and are not simply affected emotionally by its role in a plot: we feel it in our guts or throughout our bodies.’ (2007 39) Gunning is referring to cinematic motion, camera movement and editing pace as triggering our kinaesthetic sense of identification, but animation involves another type of

motion as well. While it does address our kinaesthetic sense, the motion of metamorphosis draws us in, not only on the physical level of body identification, but also cognitively. As we recognize what is forming, taking place, we are being moved from one place to another, from one understanding to another; animated metamorphosis is experiential in nature, both for author and viewer.

This process is engaging on multiple levels and is one of the ways in which animation documents differently than the photographic index; the referent is in a sense, our own embodied experience, our recognition that we witness something ‘knowable’, no matter how unrealistic it may appear.

*‘The Hat’* can be seen as ‘evocative’ work in that it is a subjective, conscious rendering of a reality. I find the concept of ‘an enactment’, differing from a re-enactment of a specific actual event, to be quite helpful in identifying the type of interpretative dramatization that may be employed in certain auteur animated films to portray or bring alive a given subject. The documentary intent in this film can be seen as a desire to draw attention to and to provoke critical rather than complacent viewing through compelling aesthetic means. In documentary terms, the author-spectator pact is founded on trust. Cournoyer, as an animation auteur, can be seen as entering into an experiment, which exceeds merely presenting an authorial viewpoint on a subject due to the extreme level of personal implication. She holds back nothing of her own psyche in the performative dramatization of her creative process. She claims, “I don’t have any set expectations of what the audience will feel. It’s a surprise every time.” (Mitchell) I posit that what elicits ‘trust’ in this type of work, is recognition of the degree of commitment to an uncompromising search for the ‘truth’ of a subject.



Most documentary is only truthful in that it represents an attitude of mind. The aim of propaganda is persuasion, and persuasion implies a particular attitude of mind towards this, that, or the other subject. (Rout, 1991) In the context of a documentary intent, I hold that the difference between persuasion and propaganda is rooted in transparency and, if a representation of reality is presented as subjective rather than objective or indexical, it is important that it not be deceptive.

## 1.2. Travelling Through Hybridity: New Narratives

### Positioning Meaning and Expression

Lev Manovich writes that ‘in the second part of the 1990s, moving-image culture went through a fundamental transformation. Previously separate media [.....] started to be combined in numerous ways. By the end of the decade, the “pure” moving-image media became an exception and hybrid media became the norm. (2007 1) Perhaps in response to the increasing complexity of modern life and relative ease of access to digital technologies, creative expression and the ways in which stories are told has inevitably become multi-faceted. How then, does new media affect narrative?

According to literary scholar and critic Marie-Laure Ryan, ‘the intrinsic properties of the medium shape the form of the narrative and affect the narrative experience’. Seen in cognitive terms, narrative is not a linguistic object, but a mental image and, as a cognitive construct, opens up the possibility of employing any number of media. The cognitive representation of narrative could thus be the mental equivalent of a ‘multimedia’ construct. (2004 12) According to cultural theorist Marsha Kinder, ‘narrative is a cognitive mode in all human societies that we use to contextualize experiences. Cultures are kept alive through open-ended narratives cognitively.’ (2011)

In the introduction of their book, *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, Kate Nash, Craig Hight and Catherine Summerhayes suggest that, ‘One way of looking at documentary’s present is through the lens of experimentation; that contemporary documentary makers, as well as audiences are reimagining what documentary might become: non-linear, multimedia, interactive,

hybrid, cross-platform, convergent, virtual, immersive, 360-degree, collaborative, 3-D, participatory, transmedia or something else yet to clearly emerge.’ (2014 2)

However, although new tools and technologies afford the possibility of ‘new ways of conceptualising the documentary project and new means for ‘audiences’ (as viewers, navigators, users or collaborators) to engage with these forms, documentary makers continue to engage with the real and to be conscious of the social, political and ethical consequences of so doing.’ (Nash, Hight, Summerhayes, 2014 2)

Beginning in the early 2000’s the number of the digital, interactive projects available for internet viewing has burgeoned. The National Film Board’s establishment of an Interactive division and an online screening room in recent years, provides access to a growing archive of digital, interactive projects, representing a large range of experimental and innovative projects, many of which employ highly sophisticated and individually programmed interface designs, examples being Kat Cizeks’ *Highrise* and Kevin MacMahon’s *Waterlife*.

Interactive web documentaries<sup>6</sup> may or may not incorporate animation and may operate through different degrees of linearity or non-linearity as well as incorporate fictional and/or non-fictional elements. Following from here, if we were to qualify non-linear database films as such ‘open-ended narratives’ mentioned above, it becomes quite interesting to consider the role of the ‘fragmentary’ both as a means of narrative expression and as having a particular documentary significance.

Of immediate relevance to this work is, *Korsakow*, an open source, authoring software for database narratives. *Korsakow* film is composed of ‘discrete, narrative units’,

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<sup>6</sup> I use web documentary as overall category and term to include the many forms of interactive work currently online and mentioned above in Nash, Hight, Summerhayes.

or ‘fragments’ as such, which constitute a database of source materials. As *Korsakow* co-developer, Matt Soar, describes, filmmakers employ ‘algorithmic editing’ (2014 262) to create ‘interactive spatial montages’ from the database allowing for, not only multiple different viewing experiences for the user, but as well, liberty from the constraints of linear narrative and the possibility to add to or further re-work the film on the part of the maker. (2014 253) Characteristic documentary *Korsakow* films ‘rely less on spectacle than the presence of a “voice” and produce ‘affective narratives’ that are ‘not didactic in the sense of making a specific or directed argument, but offer up a field of views through interview, stories, asides and observations’ thereby, foregoing ‘a single, essential narrative trajectory.’ (Miles, 2013 in Soar, 2014 265)

Soar invokes the terms of ‘articulation’ and assemblages’ from cultural studies to draw a parallel between the form or structure of *Korsakow* films and the way in which they generate meaning. ‘Articulation, then, is ‘the contingent connection of different cultural elements that, when connected in a particular way, form a specific unity’ (Slack & Wise 2005 127), called an assemblage. All articulations, and hence assemblages, are in flux, being not merely *contingent* but also *contested* (2014 263). With software developer Florian Thalhoffer, Soar sees *Korsakow* as both a ‘process of cultural and political engagement’ and a ‘*philosophical* intervention into the politics of ‘story’. (2014 265)

Teacher and *Korsakow* filmmaker, Adrian Miles, elaborates further that ‘Database has a cinematic logic ...wherein.. a combination of hermeneutic force and cognitive schemata allows meaningful work to be created because things are brought into temporal, and spatial, proximity for a reason. As we are culturally and biologically adept at attributing cause and motivation, this does an enormous amount of the work that we

mistakenly think we need to attribute to ‘architecture’ or ‘interaction’ online.’ (2014 80)

Moreover, ‘documentary, when reconsidered as affect image, and therefore as an affective knowing, offers wonderment and knowledge as its account for what is, or might be. This wonderment is often realized through reflective, poetic and associative forms of documentary’ (2014 79).

At this juncture, in considering auteur animation in Korsakow, it is possible to see a relationship to the essay film, and other forms of personal non-fiction filmmaking as discussed by scholar Laura Rascaroli. ‘Essay films point to their extra-textual authors as the true source of the act of communication.’ Rascaroli sees personal cinema forms as belonging to a first-person, authorial and experimental tradition, which do not seek a one-to-one dialogue with an embodied spectator, but fashion themselves as private monologues or dialogues with the self or intimate partner, only allowing the spectator to be an overseeing or overhearing third party. However, she believes that this monologic, self-centered structure always hides a dialogic attitude, which seeks a relationship with an audience. (Rascaroli, 2009) This perspective, I feel is very pertinent to the way in which certain auteur animators and *Korsakow* filmmakers might approach their work, specifically the subjective and self-reflexive positioning of the author. In ‘speaking through’ the evocative, associative and poetic, as a documentary approach, it might be said that an author-filmmaker is processing lived experience as narrative searching; is inhabiting the work in multiple guises and stances to allow facets of meaning to emerge. The degree of personal implication and a tendency to stylistic experimentation and hybridism can also be considered similar.

### 1.3. Vantage Points: Visual Research and Autoethnography

#### Methods of Focusing through Subjectivities

In the general paradigm of qualitative research, the writings of Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk on research-creation, specifically, the modes described as ‘research-through-creation’ and ‘creation-as-research’ have been the touchstone of my approach. The iterative process of going back and forth between creation and reflection or knowledge development that ‘research-through-creation’ involves and the hands-on form of theoretical engagement termed, ‘creation-as-research’ have served as a means of accessing insights that would have been difficult to discover by other means. Through the act of responding visually in images to an initial witnessed scene, a creative process began to unfold that eventually revealed a larger context.

‘Creative productions constitute knowledge in a different, but culturally equivalent, way to other forms of transcribed research findings [...] in terms of expanding what “is” in the world by revealing new layers, permutations of reality, or ‘experiences to be experienced.’ (2012 21) In the process of linking lived events that occurred both in a fairly distant past as well as in a fairly recent present, I have come to ‘re-experience’ my own experience in a new perspective through the process of researching and developing the project, *Living on the Land*.

To clarify further the workings and benefits of practice-led research, I acknowledge the importance of scholar Ross Gibson’s concept of a dual consciousness of implicit and explicit knowledge ‘generated in the oscillation between an artistic process and a linguistic explication; of a cognitive translation from a set of semantic and affective

structures to a linguistic set...which does not 'decode' the work, but opens an arena for debate around the knowledge that has been synthesized and proffered both in the work and in the linguistic account.' (Gibson, 2010 11)

An important operating element of this approach becomes evident when considering the role of metaphor in visual language. Lakoff and Johnson position metaphor as fundamental to cognitive thought. 'Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.' (1980 3) In this sense, knowledge may be gleaned in an indirect, evocative and associational manner through metaphorical imagery. In the creative process, given the subjective referential framework from which metaphorical imagery arises, arriving at an insight may be due to an 'affective feeling out' and exploration of one's own perceptions and experience, rather than a direct 'decoding' as Gibson posits.

As Chapman and Sawchuk point out, because 'research-creation is a term that works across disciplinary boundaries and projects typically integrate a creative process, experimental aesthetic component, or an artistic work as an integral part of a study', (2012, p. 8) the boundaries between theory and practice are somewhat blurred and challenging to define in clear categories. It is in this area of hybridity or liminality, that I place 'animated visual autoethnography', as a method of capturing subjective experience that communicates a perception of reality through the affordances of auteur animation in tandem with personal narrative.

There are overarching views on autoethnography as a meeting of autobiographical and ethnographical content. How this is described and nuanced has a relationship to the medium in which it is created. According to Ellis and Bochner, autoethnographers use

personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience by ‘retrospectively and selectively writing about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity.’ (Bochner, Ellis, 2011).

Scholar Catherine Russell writes that in ‘the new autobiography’ of filmmaking, in the meeting of autobiography and ethnography, identity or self-representation is not necessarily the revealing of an essential self, but a ‘staging of subjectivity’, a representation of the self as a performance. In the politicization of the personal, there are discursive possibilities, be they ethnic, national, sexual, racial, and/or class, based in the plural "voices" of the filmmaker as the speaker, the seer, the seen as well as collagist and editor. (1990)

Theorist Suzanne Gannon writes that ‘The dilemma of autoethnography arises from the performance turn in the social sciences, a turn toward approaches to knowledge that construct “partial, plural, incomplete, and contingent understandings” rather than “analytical distance or detachment” ( Denzin, in Gannon, 2006, p.475 ); yet, ‘human subjectivity produces the world and all within it as we know it.’(2015, p.230) In view of the constructed nature of animation and that an auteur animator inhabits or portrays self through created and invented characters and events onscreen, it becomes possible to see ‘the convergence of autobiographical impulse and the ethnographic moment’ (Spry, 2001) acted out and synthesized through performance.

For Spry, this convergence is represented through movement and critical self-reflexive discourse enacted within performance. I adapt this notion of performance for auteur animation by transferring movement from the existing body on stage to the created bodies or world on-screen and locate a critical self-reflexive ‘voice’, as defined by



Russell, within it. This, in turn, touches upon theories of affect in cinema as presented by film scholar, Laura Marks and as sociological observations by Ruth Leys and Eric Shouse. 'The importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her non-conscious affective resonances with the source of the message.' (Leys, 2011 435) I posit that auteur animation triggers such resonance and this in turn, I would argue plays an important role in the dialogic attitude embedded in personal non-fiction film forms.

What may be considered central to the affective element of auteur animation in a visual autoethnography is the embodied intent carried through every created aspect of each image. Beyond the referential content portrayed in the re-living and processing of experience, personal and observed, there is an 'extra layer of interpretation' adding to the reality of enacting or reliving personal experience. (Ackay & Schorr, 2005 10) The act of choosing to use a fine delicate line or a rough broken stroke, the use of colour or stark black and white, the degree of realism, stylization, abstraction and use of imaginative elements in the imagery, the energy of gesture or careful rendering of detail, the speed or languor of animated motion all originate from an emotive interpretive impulse. Through the artistic act of drawing, painting or animating in or through a variety of mediums, an intuitive self-reflexive performance is taking place; the source of the affective message may be considered an emanation of the authorial animators performance.

## Chapter 2: Traveling Notes: *Living on The Land*

### 2.1. Reflecting on Process

In a recounting of the process involved in the development of this research-creation project, *Living on The Land*, the first note would have to be a mention of the scaling down of an original intention to address general urban homelessness as a documentary subject, in favor of focusing on Inuit translocation. There is always a timeframe involved in any production endeavor and a necessity to adjust scope to reflect this. Regardless of the significant scaling, the discipline of Critical Inuit Studies comprises a significant area of study and the aspects I have referenced here (and would refer to in a completed film) reflect only a partial view of the complexity of the numerous issues affecting Inuit historically and currently.

It became quickly apparent to me that conducting observer-participant fieldwork in an ethnographic manner would be inappropriate for several reasons. Primarily, I have no experience of interacting with people at risk, am not familiar with fieldwork protocols or ethics, and did not feel I possessed sufficient knowledge of Inuit culture to formulate an effective and relevant research objective. From my viewpoint, given these circumstances, to present myself as a researcher who ‘needed’ Inuit participation for my work, seemed invasive, unkind and essentially, exploitative. Apart from showing basic courtesies, what right had I to solicit information and possibly intervene in circumstances of which I had little knowledge? Because of my previous contact with and regard for Inuit, I could not help but feel keen concern for what I was seeing. Crucially, I doubted

my ability to not become emotionally involved and lose perspective on how to best interact.

Over two seasons, I witnessed different aspects of Inuit on the streets and in the alleyways in my area; panhandling, some heavy drinking, companionship in groups, conflict with other homeless groups, conflict with each other, signs of physical harm (perhaps from violence?), humour, encounters with police, simple moments of enjoyment. I read much of this as a sign that there was nowhere to go, that they were on the street out of necessity; again, I do not really know what the individual reasons or circumstances are.

My early experiences that now seemed so long ago had indicated serious problems in the Inuit community. Through the filter of time and distance, this had faded from the immediacy of my life. Current events now provoked a guilty shame and a sense of frustrating impotence arose. In trying to deal with this reaction, looking in the mirror became an inevitable necessity.

I have put forth a project of auteur animation in *Korsakow* as a tool of inquiry. The iterative process I have followed during this project is difficult to unravel. Rather than a linear journaling, I will instead highlight how certain themes and challenges played out in this learning experience. I have already elaborated the literature on the separate, but overlapping elements of theory and methods relevant to justifying my approach and have outlined the importance of practice-led research in this venture.

On the level of motive and self-interrogation, in a progression of questions, I asked what my feelings of empathy could possibly achieve; how could I move past being a passive bystander; what social and cultural constructions was I looking through; how did Inuit see themselves? To address these questions, I read and screened extensively

from both scholarly and Inuit sources. Eventually, I found myself looking into a Pandora's box of colonial effects. What wasn't apparent in the beginning, was that my own implication and connection to colonial legacy was intimately and insidiously influencing all the above.

Our life story belongs to us, but in the writing or telling of ourselves, others are always involved; it doesn't happen in isolation. (Ellis, 2011) 'Autobiography is the writer's attempt to elucidate his present, not his past'. (Renza, 1977 3) In this sense, memories are re-presented from an understanding of a current self or identity. It seems impossible to be definitive about past experience, to accurately portray things exactly as they happened. Nonetheless, in attempting to draw upon events some decades ago, I bring with them a younger self and, 'remember' how I saw things at the time; This illustrated for me how shifting perception may be.

I was born in Newfoundland. Perhaps due to being the last province to join Canada, in 1949, Newfoundlanders somehow had the dubious honour of being the brunt of derogatory jokes and attitudes. I was still a child when my immediate family moved to Montreal. I remember being taunted and mocked in high school for being a 'dumb Newfoundlander'. This was the start of feeling 'an outsider' which was perpetuated by later being 'une anglaise' at the peak of Quebec nationalism. Although, this may have pre-disposed me to believe I shared something with people of other cultures, from other countries, living in Canada, I somehow never truly understood the import of 'being an outsider' in colonial terms; that 'belonging to a land' is immensely different from 'living on a land' in the sense of a developed deep-rooted cultural identity. In my family history,

I have heard vague stories originating with my great-grandparents and grandparents generations immigrating from Scotland, England and Ireland to settle in Newfoundland. The founding of the British colony was in 1610. The indigenous Beothuk had inhabited the island since 500 A.D. By the early 1800's they were considered extinct through violence and disease due to contact with European settlers.

According to anthropologists and by the histories Inuit tell, the Inuit have inhabited the Arctic Northern lands for more than a millennium and other indigenous peoples, the North American continent for several millennia. It is not my intention to provide a colonial history of Canada, but rather to indicate the perspective that a different relationship between a land and a people may exist when it has developed over countless generations and that experiencing drastic changes in this relationship can only impact a culture in a very significant way. 'History for indigenous people is not past, but present.' (Taiaiake, NFB website, Aboriginal Perspectives)

In this light, land claims carry an important weight and the losses are lived out in consequence. As settlers, however, it seems that history is in the past and I know that I, personally, do not carry an ever-present awareness that my privilege, material and otherwise, is directly linked to colonial practices. The tendency is to believe what's done, is done, now let's move ahead. Where do we go from here?

Despite a relatively short tenure in North America, Canadian culture and nationalism are well established and Canada has only recently begun to acknowledge, to a degree, the harm and social injustice inflicted on indigenous peoples as a result of colonial objectives of territorial sovereignty. In a doctoral thesis, entitled 'Decolonizing The Empathic Settler Mind: An Autoethnographic Inquiry', Norman Dale puts forth that

the trans-historical trauma and injustice resulting from foundational acts of dispossession is perpetuated through the mind-sets of settlers and their society. He proposes that the ‘unsettling’ of dominant hegemony in settler minds by sharing one’s own convoluted personal and cultural past in stories with others, may well be among the most important possible bridges between the settler and the native; (2014 59); that respecting others as opposed to “othering” them ( ...) is an essential component to a broad social vision of decolonizing us all. (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, in Dale, 2014 77)

He identifies himself as ‘an empathetic settler’, one who acknowledges indigenous rights and works to re-dress inequities, frequently in the service of First Nations tribes as consultant, or negotiator in matters of development projects or government contracts and treaties. In very detailed accounts of working with indigenous peoples, he discloses some of the hidden attitudes that have hindered his achieving a truly equal exchange. Foremost, was that of being empathetic, of wanting to help, then of inadvertently assuming a superior position, of thinking oneself capable of ‘fixing’ problems, or having the best solutions. In his experience, the unequal power held by a white privileged settler in relation to an indigenous person, is so internalized, that it prevents recognizing the autonomy of another, even when in their service. There is a tendency to ‘take over’, to control and direct, without actually respecting a democratic process, or hearing different solutions; but most importantly, stepping back until invited to contribute. (Dale, 2014)

In searching for a way to work with my own experiences, I was obliged to recognize an inclination to romanticize Inuit culture, possibly because of a sense of being an outsider that I feel when observing cultures that seem to operate more collectively, and from my viewpoint, have a strong cohesive social identity. In the absence of knowledge,

shortcuts may be taken. Reducing complexity to simplicity, focusing on broad stereotyping, eliminating nuance and contingent possibilities can be seen as a form of racism that permits diminishing and dismissing the concerns of others, no matter how unintentional.

In saying that I only speak for myself, now means that I speak as a settler. I accept this as an important understanding of where I stand and recognize myself as a member of a particular social and cultural group living on conquered land. I have looked into my own processes and experiences to re-think what lies behind and question what may lay ahead.

Although, I have not followed an ethnographic method of giving voice to the other for reasons stated earlier on, I have investigated Inuit perspectives through extant Inuit film, art and journalism as well as the writings of Inuit leaders and policymakers and the mandates and reports issuing from related institutions and organizations under both aboriginal and government direction to inform this project. (Please see the bibliography and mediography for sources). As an example, I referenced a document, published by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women Of Canada Association, a support organization that advocates for equity and social improvements for Canadian Inuit women through leading and encouraging participation in policy development and community projects. *The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture*, is meant to address challenges non-Inuit encounter in interacting with Inuit due to a lack of understanding and familiarity with Inuit culture. Pauktuutit decided that a broader understanding of and empathy for Inuit culture would turn challenges into opportunities and enhance more positive interaction between members of both cultures. (2006 1)

From the writing therein, I was able to see my time and experience in the village of Salluit from an Inuit perspective. While, at the time, I felt my visit to be a valuable one and reached my own conclusions, I now understand how limited my knowledge of the culture was. To illustrate a point, although a Canadian friend with a contract in Salluit had invited me, I failed to understand that appearing in the village without an obvious role would be perceived as invasive, given a general understanding that I would need to be taken care of or accommodated by the community. I assumed my friend had established this, but, of course, room had to be made for both us in a host home as there were no hotels or other accommodations and conditions were crowded. This in combination with my understanding that Inuit were not a highly verbal culture and that I shouldn't make small talk or ask direct questions prevented me from communicating in a subtle and indirect fashion, my interest in being there. My failure to do this was inevitable perceived as 'rude', whereas I believed I was being respectful by keeping quiet and observing.



## 2.2. Introduction To Korsakow Film: *Living on The Land*

### Forming The Work-In-Progress

The work presented here in *Korsakow* has been developed to ‘a proof-of-concept’ stage, to be elaborated as a larger film project in a future context. Due to time constraints, it wasn’t possible to include all the material that would make a more complete recounting of my own experience and observation. The form and content of auteur animation develops over time throughout its production and is iterative on both levels. (For comparison, ten to fifteen minutes of full animation would involve a time commitment of one to two years.) A complete film would have much more material and would be fully animated.

Currently, this project consists of two stages of ‘animatics’. Animatics are equivalent to a shorthand version of projected scenes, wherein each still image stands-in for a passage of animated movement, to indicate content and duration. These images are cross-dissolved to provide a sense of timing and give a flow to the narrative content.

Of the individual clips or ‘SNU’s’ included in *Living on The Land*, a number closely resemble what the final fully animated scene will look like stylistically, how it will move or metamorphose and what the anticipated timing will be. (‘SNU’ stands for smallest narrative unit and is the basic unit in a *Korsakow* film. A SNU may be composed of a single video clip or a short pre-edited sequence as well as stills or composite images with or without audio, which are imported into a project.) Other clips, are composed of images that read as a linear sequence of storyboard sketches in order to narrate certain events or aspects of the subject matter, but are only the first telling and the

first sketching out presented in this way to give an overview. In the process of being animated, this material will be re-discovered, each image expanded into an individual scene or clip and transformed visually in unexpected ways through an intuitive approach of ‘feeling one’s way’ through a subject or event. This process doesn’t necessarily happen evenly or in a predictable order and what can be perceived now as linear narrative, would transform into a more suggestive form of telling. The soundtracks now in place are open-source stand-ins for what would eventually be an original commissioned soundscape in a finished project. Due to a still-to-come amount of missing materials and the animatic stage of development, I felt that a layer of voice-overs would give dimension to the work.

When the elements of design and content, both visual and audio are tentatively in place, the materials are honed and integrated until, as a whole, they present and embody authorial intent. In this instance, this project is put forth as a animated visual autoethnographical exploration of witnessing Inuit translocation and a subjective grappling with the context in which it occurs.

Witnessed through the subjective, conscious experience of a citizen-researcher, past memories and current observations are invoked as narrative strands that intimate an underlying context of colonial legacy and reflect on limitations within our social imaginary that impact Inuit who migrate to Montreal.

## Chapter 3: Shifting Imaginaries

### 3.1. Beyond *Living on The Land*

In my portrayal of past events, I began with the general cultural and social events of my memories and have yet to include my witnessing of aspects of a community in distress that were also occurring at the time of my visit to Salluit. For immediate purposes, I used imagery and events that seemed less problematic in terms of playing to negative stereotyping and would allow for a simple dynamic between past and present with limited material on view. Again, these events pass through the lens of my autobiographical recounting and can only be seen as a partial, plural, incomplete, and contingent understanding.

While engaging with this work through a reflexive visual autoethnographic research process has made me more aware of the fallout effects of colonial practices on Inuit in Canada and the North, it has also challenged me to re-examine my own role as it is and what it might possibly be in the future. I feel far from having a resolved vision of how Inuit self-determination might be achieved in the existing social and political structure or from actually being a ‘decolonized empathetic settler’. For the time being, herewith, in the process of making the personal political, I hope to have ‘opened the arena for debate’ as Ross Gibson phrases it. (2010 11) This research-creation vehicle is intended to be a proof-of-concept for the presentation of a social concern in a manner that is evocative, invites reflection and raises questions, points to a larger issue and does not direct the user/viewer to a forgone conclusion.

### 3.2. Signposts

Qikiqtani Inuit say that they are seeking ‘saimaqatigiingniq’, which means a new relationship ‘when past opponents get back together, meet in the middle, and are at peace.’ (QTC, 2013 388) In moving towards self-determination, the challenges facing Inuit have been voiced in myriad ways. Unfortunately the scale and scope of scholarship and work available from both Settler and Inuit efforts, expands far beyond this particular project and would need to be investigated through further work.

As an overview of a very relevant dilemma facing Inuit currently, Norman Dale, frames ‘a classic bifurcation, that of the clashing imperatives of restoring traditional culture and lands so damaged by colonialism, versus embracing neo-liberal “community development” prescriptions based on seeing the past as a romantic preoccupation, one to be superseded by enthusiastic Native participation in the modern non-Native economy.’ (2014 185) It is worth noting that this dilemma is also complicated by inter-generational dynamics as can be seen in films such as “If the Weather Permits” by Inuit filmmaker, Elisapie Issac.

At this juncture, what might be the possible narratives that would permit moving in the direction of ‘saimaqatigiingniq’? *‘Uploading selves: Inuit digital storytelling on YouTube’*, a study of new narratives by Wachowich and Scobie, situates digital autobiography as the recent trajectory of Inuit storytelling that ‘bypasses established rules and institutions of cultural representation’ and ‘creatively mediates pasts, presents and futures.’ (2010 81) On the micro-level of personal change, I reiterate Dale's proposal that ‘getting to know and share one’s own convoluted personal and cultural past in stories with

others, may well be among the most important possible bridges between the settler and the native.’ (2014 59)

I would offer here that the sharing of such stories by settlers and for settlers would also be a positive step towards decolonization and might facilitate moving towards the middle, with awareness of uneven power positions and assumptions of superior expertise; Through telling, it may be possible to learn to listen. For scholars, perhaps as both Dale and Ellis advocate, reflexive autoethnographies may instigate changes in researchers themselves and in the effort to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging and accessible, there exists this possibility of sharing stories and building understanding.

On a general note, it might be said that, in what constitutes cultural productions, re-imagining, re-visioning and re-visiting with awareness are all modes of moving forward. There is much evidence that this is happening through a growing body of works by both settlers and Inuit that lays the groundwork for future investigation and future hope.

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(\*NB – On above website – click on ‘consult the works for Free Jafar Panahi’ – Joda is the first in the series.) Last accessed April 3, 2015

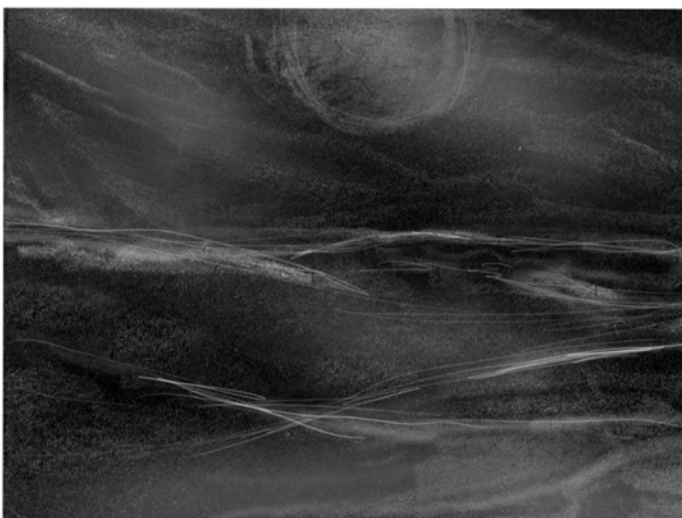
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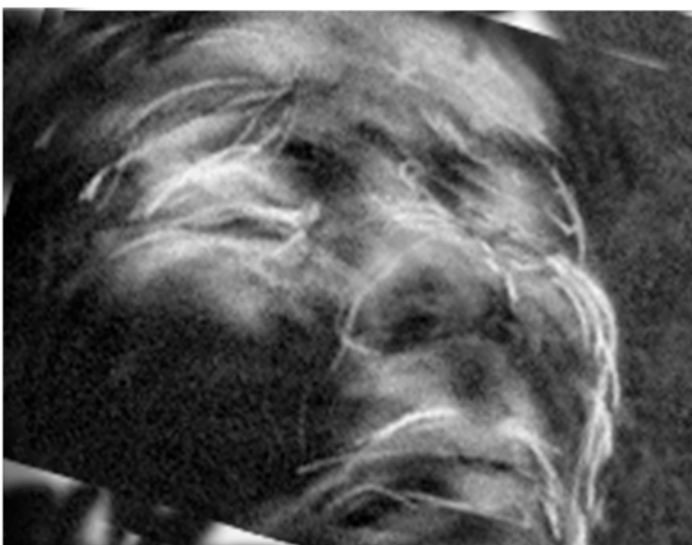
## Appendix Of Selected Visual Research Images

*Living on the Land*



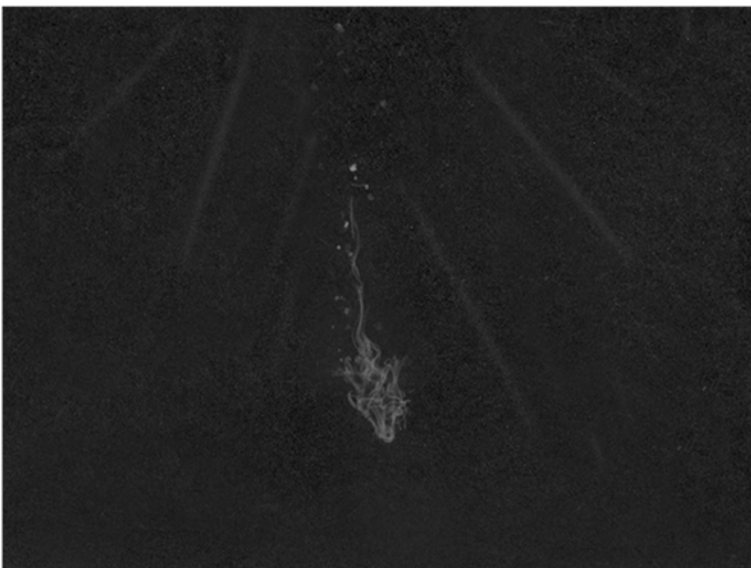
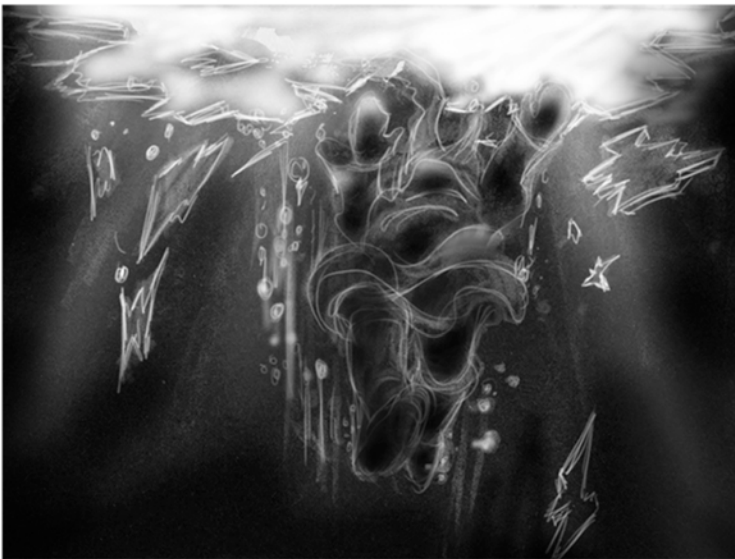


SCREENSHOT  
IMAGES  
FROM  
*Living On The Land*





SCREENSHOT  
IMAGES  
FROM  
*Living On The Land*





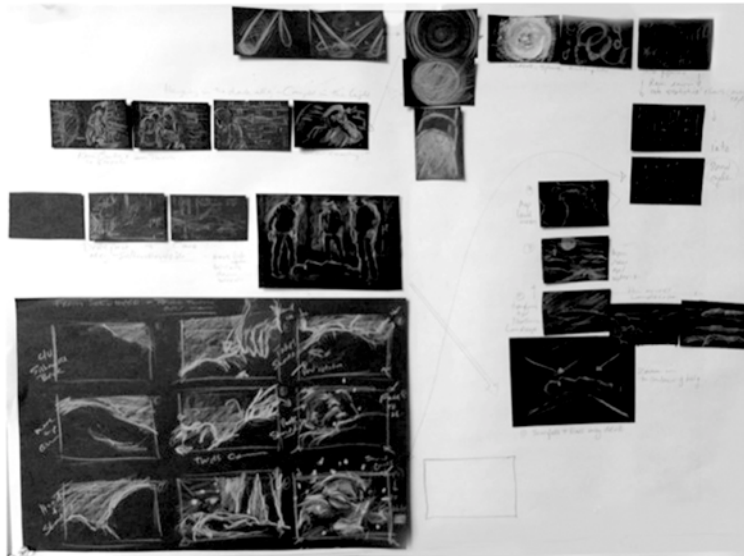
SCREENSHOT  
IMAGES  
FROM  
*Living On The Land*



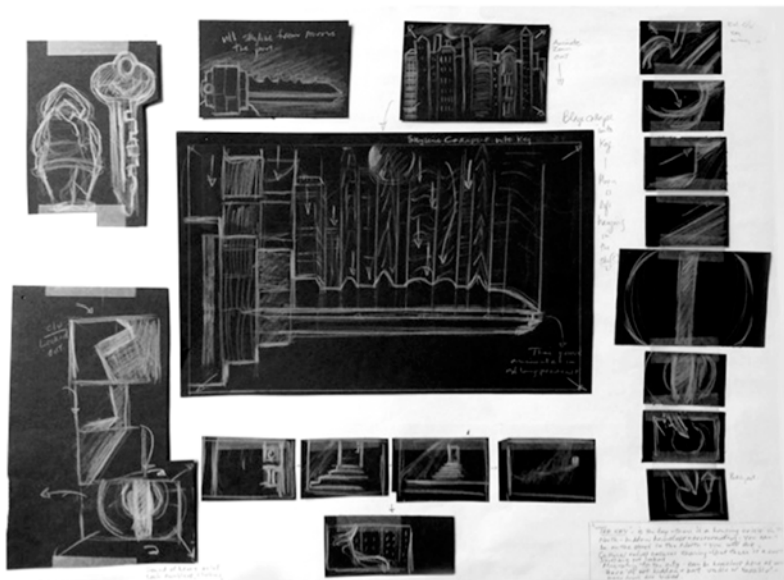


Inspirational free sketches to begin project.  
Top image has been broken into separate elements and animated in opening  
Film clip.





Planning out possible  
imagery sequences for  
film clips.



The interactive database Korsakow  
film which accompanies this text may  
be viewed, temporarily at:  
<http://mattsoar.com/oldford>

A linear edit has been made as a  
preview of the material in the  
Korsakow film and provided here  
as 'Living On The Land'\_Linear