En/countering the Colonial: *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* and *You Are On A Mohawk Land*
Two Case Studies on Art, Refusal and Recognition in Montréal.

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Abstract

At a panel discussion in 2014, the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) artist, activist and community leader Ellen Gabriel drew attention to the absence of visual signifiers that Montréal is Mohawk territory. Gabriel identified this elision as an example of neocolonial dispossession. This thesis responds to Gabriel's provocation by asking what it might mean to remediate this visual absence and activate Indigenous visibility/assert Indigenous sovereignty in urban space, particularly that of Montréal. Framed by recognition theory and the problems of state-based recognition addressed by Glen Coulthard and Audra Simpson, this thesis looks at *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* (2015) by Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde, and *You are on A Mohawk Land* (2015) by Marie-Andrée Poulin as site specific artworks that exemplify strategies for countering the naturalization of settlement in the city of Montréal/Tiotià:ke.

Grounded in a long and rich history of artists responding to the complexity of Indigenous representation in urban spaces, I draw on texts by spatial theorists and Indigenous scholars that illustrate the challenging conditions under which these responses occur. These include disparate views towards land, the prevalence of settler co-optation of Indigenous art, and the deployment of formal recognition as a pacification or co-optation tactic. I argue that the specificities of site, material, context, and ephemeral quality of both *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* and *You Are On A Mohawk Land* work together to create space for meaningful and transformative acts of recognition that assert Mohawk sovereign relation to the contemporary urban space of Tiotià:ke or Montréal.

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To the land we live and love and work on. Thank you.

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Introduction:

We feel dispossessed within our homeland. This is Mohawk territory, but I don't see anything in this school, anything in this city that tells me that this is the land of my ancestors.
—Ellen Gabriel, speaking at Concordia University[1]

In September of 2012, speaking on a panel featuring Indigenous women's responses to *Plan Nord*, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) artist, activist and community leader, Ellen Gabriel positioned the aggressive resource extraction proposal targeting Northern Québec within the context of Canadian neo-colonialism—a practice characterized by persistent attacks on Indigenous land, language, and culture. She gestured to the lack of visual evidence that the city of Montréal "is Mohawk territory…the land of my ancestors" as contributing to her feeling of dispossession.[2]

Gabriel's remarks propelled me towards an urgent curiosity about the visual language of urban space, where imported architectural style and materials are imbued with an aura of 'progress' and specific narratives are privileged in their material reminders of conquest. Longing to see the public representation of one's history, peoples, and knowledge speaks to the social power of space, while Gabriel's particular subject position alludes to a specificity in terms of the consequences of absence for Mohawk or Kanien'kehá:ka peoples. As forms almost entirely defined by embededness in site, street art and site-specific practices are well situated to engage the city and its stories.[3] Thinking through settler narratives about the history of Montréal—which

[1] Ellen Gabriel, "Defending the Land: Indigenous Women's resistance to Plan Nord and community violence" panel discussion, Concordia University, Friday, September 28, 2014.
[2] Gabriel, "Defending the Land"
[3] The *Decolonizing Street Art Convergence* (DSA) makes the point of distinguishing that the work produced within its context is street art, distinct from public art because street art is "not financed by government or corporate institutions, or represents their interests." See: "Unceded Voices: Anticolonial Street Artists Convergence – Tiotià:ke

includes unique challenges, such as Franco-nationalism and its impact on identity politics in Québec (Mackey, 2002)—this thesis will look at *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne—to come to understand* (2015), by Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde and *You Are On a Mohawk Land* (2015), by Marie-Andrée Poulin as case studies. Operating in the context of the *Decolonizing Street Art Convergence* (DSA) (Delaronde) and the mobile artist-run centre, *Dare-Dare* (Poulin), these works both use the city productively as site, material, and subject to address narrative absence.

Like Delaronde and Poulin, this thesis takes the position that Montréal is Kanien'kehá:ka or Mohawk land. My understanding of this is that Kanien'kehá:ka are the sovereign peoples associated with this land. Their longstanding relationship to Montréal is affirmed both by historical records—as evidenced by the journals of Jacques Cartier on his October 2, 1535 arrival—and oral histories. In line with theorists Glen Coulthard (2014) and Audra Simpson (2014)—whose work on recognition calls for gestures of *refusal* or a turning away from settler and state forms of recognition and a movement towards *self recognition*—asserting Montréal as Mohawk land in this context can be read as an act of refusal of the naturalization of settlement which relies on specific forms of 'evidence' to disconnect contemporary Indigenous peoples from a longstanding relationship to Tiotià:ke (Montréal).

By framing Delaronde and Poulin's work within Indigenous critiques of recognition and in the context of calls for sovereignty, this thesis contributes to contemporary research that links memory, urbanism, and colonialism. Thinking through Gabriel's provocation alongside the rich theoretical work on recognition and writings about the use of Indigenous art, language, and motifs as a co-opting strategy, I adopt a critical approach to quick answers and remedial gestures

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/Montreal" *Montréal Counter-Information: autonomous communication for the struggle against authority,* accessed May 10, 2016, https://mtlcounter-info.org/en/unceded-voices-anticolonial-street-artists-convergence-august-14-23-2015-tiotiake-montreal/.

while also considering the importance of countering colonial normalization of conquest and dispossession in urban memorial structures, regardless of the state's capacity for integration. Further, because colonialism operates through individuals, is present in our relationships and in the structures within which we participate on a daily basis, the inclusion of my subject-position, and reliance on interviews will be used in conjunction with recognition theory, spatial theory, and discourse analysis.[4]

The capacity to intervene, engage site-specificity, and capture the attention of a wide public audience means that artists like Delaronde and Poulin, whose works operate in the public domain, have an important role to play in addressing the broader implications of settler misrecognition, including the erasure of living Indigenous peoples' connection to land. When the seeds of this thesis began in 2012, Québec was intensifying its bid for the Northern Gateway Pipeline (Plan Nord) and Gabriel was articulating the linkages between these resource exploitation projects and the greater context of dispossession, that includes the absence of clear signifiers that Montréal is Mohawk land. Four years later in 2016, I have just moved to Winnipeg for work. Across the border in North Dakota, the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, supported by Indigenous peoples from across the world, are on the frontlines of another aggressive attack on Indigenous land and life; standing together against the North Dakota Access Pipeline, which is threatening an essential water supply, as well as a sacred burial ground.[5] As the planet warms, and development intensifies to meet an increasingly aggressive consumerist society, the need for settlers to reconcile with Indigenous peoples, and even fight alongside them for better ways of

[4] For sources on decolonial methodologies see: Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2009); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples,* second edition (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd., 2012).
[5] Victoria M Massie, "To understand the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, you need to understand tribal sovereignty" *Vox,* October 28, 2016, accessed March 19, 2017, http://www.vox.com/2016/9/9/12851168/dakota-access-pipeline-protest.

relating to the world that sustains us, becomes increasingly urgent. In this regard, relationship and collaboration are increasingly important and have consequently been mobilized or activated in the works of contemporary artists, including Delaronde and Poulin.

Because I come to this research as an Anglophone settler of mixed European background, I understand that colonialism affects me differently than Indigenous peoples. At the same time, I recognize that the harmful effects of living in conditions of colonization concern everyone. What I mean by this is that racism is systemic. Author Claudia Rankin points to this in a Guardian interview published in 2015 when she stated:

> Racism is complicated. White people feel personally responsible for racism when they should understand the problem as systemic. It is interfering as much with their lives as with the lives of people of colour. And racism can lodge in them. It isn't them yet it can become them if they are not taking notice. [6]

White European populations came to North America under varied conditions, some as indentured servants, others as nobility, traders, refugees, and so forth. While some settlers retain knowledge of their homelands, family lineage, languages and traditions, for many, relocation created disorientation, alienation, and eventual cultural homogenization under the British Empire. This loss of history aids the settlement project whereby generations of settlers, disconnected from their heritage, become naturalized as 'Canadian.' This naturalization comes out of the pain of disconnection, yet it is also beneficial to the formation of nationalism necessary for settler colonialism to continue producing a population willing to defend their right to be here. As another scholar, Fred Moten succinctly puts it:

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[6] Claudia Rankine interviewed by Kate Kellaway, "Blackness in the white imagination has nothing to do with black people: The award-winning poet on Serena Williams, her emotional book signings and why racism is inescapable" *The Guardian,* December 27, 2015, accessed March 10, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/dec/27/claudia-rankine-poet-citizen-american-lyric-feature.

> The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?[7]

As Rankin and Moten suggest, for a white person, interest in meaningful Indigenous representation within and possible transformation of urban space must necessarily come from the recognition that we currently live in a collective situation that structures our relationships through systems of domination and exploitation.

Thinking through the structured nature of the violence of representation has also led me to recognition theory as a useful avenue of analysis for this project. What draws me in particular is the correlation between recognition and representation, which we see repeated over and again in calls for white institutions to begin recognizing and including people of color. And yet recognition is complex. In conditions of unequal power, such as those created in systems of white supremacy and colonialism, receiving recognition can be more harmful than beneficial, especially if recognition stands in for actual transformative change. When I first began thinking about the relationship between recognition and representation, I saw an almost irresolvable tension: How does one see oneself represented, while escaping the downfalls of structural recognition that might work against more fundamental changes needed for sovereignty? In thinking through this paradox, what I found was that the two artworks addressed in this thesis can be read as 'successful,' in that they use strategies such as ephemerality to manage complex issues around recognition, while also resisting state co-optation and integration.

Mnemonics and Urbanism: Empire and the Settler-Colonial Spatial Order

[7] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 140–141, quoted in Nasrin Himada, "A Positioning, Not a Question," *C Magazine, Issue 127 "Poetry,"* Autumn, 2015, 16.

That representation, memory and place collide in complex ways is exemplified in daily interactions with urban space, as well as being a longstanding field of study (Soja, 1985; Jacobs, 2002; Goeman, 2014; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008; Robinson & Zionts, 2015). The lack of Indigenous representation in cities, alluded to by Gabriel's sentiments are further complicated by the abundant valorization of European culture, histories, structures and values, which are foundational to urban space. In their collaborative essay "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" (2012) Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang address the particularity of settler colonialism as a situation that "operates through internal/external colonial modes simultaneously because there is no spatial separation between metropole and colony."[8] Within this situation of entanglement, however, there also exist crucial forms of segregation, spatial and otherwise. The physical density and spatial organization of cities mark them as particularly intense sites for the display and construction of rhetorical public memory on and about place. In "Lost in Translation: Language and Contemporary Indigenous Art" (2006), Cree curator, historian and art critic Richard Hill opens with "two biographies." The first—and most relevant to this project—addresses the language of place. On this, he posits the following reflections:

> Memorials built into the language of our environment function effortlessly in the background of our awareness. I grew up saying words like Kingsway, Vancouver and British Columbia thinking first that they signified only a street, a city and province. I hadn't the slightest idea that I was memorializing explorers and paying tribute to the British monarchy each time I spoke.[9]

[8] For more in-depth explanation of "internal" and "external" colonization, see: Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 4-5.
[9] Richard Hill, "Lost in Translation: Language and Contemporary Indigenous Art," 2006, *Aboriginal Curatorial Collective,* accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org/research/richardhill.html.

Other Indigenous scholars have similarly addressed the problematic ubiquity of colonial signifiers in urban spaces. In another example, Mishuana Goeman prefaces her book *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013) with a reflection on colonial and sovereign space:

> This project would begin before I was even cognizant of the power of place and its relationship to colonialism, race, and gender. Yet, even as young children, many of us learn the constraints and limitations of the socially constructed spaces we find ourselves in. While I may not have known the history of how reservations came to be or how colonial governments enacted power in that space, I was deeply aware of the difference when I passed the lines of trees that mark the territories between off-reservation and on-reservation.[10]

Thinking through the role of cities to empire, in her book *Edge of Empire* (1996), Australian cultural geographer Jane Jacobs addresses the importance of cities for the establishment of settler presence and authority locally, "harness[ing] resources [for] cities in imperial heartlands" and fueling "the spatial order of imperial imaginings."[11] Exporting France and Britain abroad to North America translated in mimetic city planning, architectural design, imported materials and nomenclature reflective of the metropolitan homeland. In other words, how cities were imagined—their organization, visual, and architectural character, and dominant economies—connected "outpost cities" back to their imperial origins.[12] Jacobs also makes reference to an "architecture of dominance," maintained and reinvigorated through memorial projects, preservation of heritage sites and other spatial practices.[13]

As transplanted sites of European power and authority, cities rely on a range of structural tactics to direct narratives through and within those spaces. In "Memorial Landscapes: Analytic Questions and Metaphors" (2008), critical geographers Owen Dwyer and Derek Alderman offer the useful term "memorial landscapes" to describe sites that are shaped by "partisan views of

[10] Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words, Native Women Mapping our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 1.
[11] Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.
[12] Jacobs, *Edge of Empire,* 4.
[13] Jacobs, *Edge of Empire,* 4.

collective memory…related to the past, but directly implicated in the shaping of alternative futures."[14] French Historian, Pierre Nora similarly used the expression "sites of memory" to account for the discursive and multivalent influences that bolster the development of collective memory, expressed in physical form,[15] while Goeman cites "the real" of settler colonialism, which she describes as having been "built on the violent erasures of alternative modes of mapping and geographic understandings."[16]

Absence and misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in urban space is intensified by the celebration of conquest and dispossession, with all their real psychological, social and material implications. The socio-political relevance of representational power falls within the broad scope of recognition theory, which can be understood, on the most basic level as 'being in relation', or as the idea that in order for a subject to come into being, they must be recognized by another subject (Taylor, 1994). French Algerian psychoanalyst and post-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon fleshes this out in practical terms using analysis alongside a series of provocations. In the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he proclaims that: "Black is not a man,"[17] and later he writes, "the Malagasy no longer exists…that the Malagasy *exists in relation to the European.*"[18] These two statements speak volumes about the inter-subjective nature of identity, which is

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[14] Dwyer and Alderman offer a helpful definition of what they term the 'memorial landscape,' which they define as: "The social or collective interpretation of the past is constituted, in part, through the construction of material sites of memory, generally termed 'memorials.' The conventional distinction between monuments and memorials—the former supposedly characterized by triumph and the latter embodying loss—is somewhat unhelpful (Young 1993). Monuments are one kind of memorial text, taking their place alongside a wide range of media designed to facilitate remembering and forgetting of the past. Typically situated in public space, memorials include a host of material culture elements associated with collective memory, e.g., street signs, historical markers, landmarks, statuary, preserved sites, and parks. Together, they constitute what may be termed the memorial or heritage landscape." Owen J. Dwyer, and Derek H. Alderman, "Memorial landscapes: analytic questions and metaphors," *GeoJournal 73, no. 3* (2008): 166.

[15] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[16] Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 2.

[17] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* (New York: Grove press, 2008), xii.

[18] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 77.

reflected in the rubric of recognition theory. In chapter six of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon emphasizes the role of education in constructing race as a category derived in relation to whiteness. Amongst other things, he cites the role of stories, comics, and cartoons "written by white men for white children" as a form of collective catharsis, whereby race is constructed in terms of villains and heroes.[19] For people of color the outcome of this is twofold. On the one hand, there is a positive association to whiteness, which translates into the desire to identify oneself with that whiteness. On the other hand, there is the painful realization when confronted with their 'non white' status that their bodies align with the villains rather than the heroes.[20] Similar mechanisms are at work in urban spaces, which emphasize European family and community structures and valorize European histories, while at the same time aiming to exclude or assimilate Indigenous (and other 'non white') bodies, stories, languages and histories in those same spaces. This narrative is reinforced architecturally, economically, and via visual signifiers, including the stories told through naming practices and memorials.

An obvious example is the narrative of conquest played out in Montréal's 'creation story' memorials, particularly those found in Place d'Armes. Located in the city's old port and considered the approximate site of the first settler village where the Jesuits lived, Place d'Armes is a large open plaza with public seating surrounded by a series of buildings, which, as well as being impressive architecturally, offers a condensed history of development and reference to European trade, industry and innovation. Notable buildings flanking the central monument include: the Notre-Dame Basilica and the Saint-Sulpice Seminary; the New York Life Building (1887), known as Montréal's first high-rise; the Bank of Montréal head office (1859), 'Canada's first bank'; the Royal Trust Building (1912-1913) designed by the prestigious New York based architects, Mead

[19] Fanon, *Bkack Skin,* 124.
[20] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 124-127.

and White; and the Aldred Building (1931) with its distinctly Art Deco architectural style. The site is well used, drawing local workers who gather in the square to eat in the summer and tourists who come to ride horse-drawn carriages and learn about the city's history via the monuments and architecture.[21] Within the centre of the plaza, there is a large monument, created in 1895 by Louis-Philippe Hébert. The monument is built around a central heroic figure, the early settler and 'founder' of Montréal, Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve. As an ally of the British and Dutch, the Haudenosaunee were seen as one of the primary threats to French settlement. Reflective of this, de Maisonneuve is flanked on four sides with statues including a generic 'Iroquois' seated, almost completely nude, and two settlers, known specifically for their role in negotiating with, and fighting the Haudenosaunee: Charles le Moyne and Lambert Closse. The memorial complex further incorporates brass reliefs depicting Iroquois conversions and battles. Its close proximity to the impressive historical architecture serves to further reify the history put forward by the monuments as existing in a continuum of 'progress' based in Euro-centric ideals. It is also significant because of two inscriptions written directly into the buildings stone: one in French, the other in English. These inscriptions pronounce Maisonneuve and the Jesuits victorious over the Iroquois. In English, the text is written as follows: Near this Square afterwards named La place d'armes / The founders of Ville-Marie/ First Encountered the Iroquois / whom they defeated / Paul De Chomedey De Maisonneuve / Killing the Chief with his own hands / March 1644. This layered narrative places the Indigenous body in contrast with, yet simultaneously central to a progressive, linear, narrative of colonization, technological progress, and ultimate civility proposed by the surrounding architecture. Here white civil society

[21] Alan Gordon talks about the importance of monuments and memorials for disseminating nationalist information through tourism to an international audience. See: Alan Gordon, *Making public pasts: The contested terrain of Montréal's public memories, 1891-1930,* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2001).

is symbolically equated with the heroic settlers represented in the memorials and architecture, juxtaposed against the savage Indian. By extension, urban space is constructed politically, visually and socially as the domain of white civil society, which must be cleansed—either by death or assimilation—of the (uncivil) Indigenous threat.

In addition to the discursive and educational function of recognition and misrecognition outlined by Fanon, and illustrated in the above example of Place d'Armes, recognition has serious political implications in international law.[22] We can think of the example of Palestine's status change in the United Nations in 2012 to "non-member observer status," or the challenges faced by the Iroquois Lacrosse team, which, in 2014, was refused entry into England because the country didn't recognize their Iroquois passport.[23] Simpson and Coulthard argue that State recognition in Canada can be insufficient, even dangerous; something that settlers 'bestow' while maintaining control over the terms. Writing in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (2014), Audra Simpson calls recognition the "gentler form, perhaps, or the least corporeally violent way of managing Indians and their difference, a multicultural solution to the settlers' Indian problem."[24] For Simpson, incorporation, with its emphasis on *culture*, undermines assertions of sovereignty so crucial to Indigenous life. Coulthard writes on recognition in similar terms in *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Forms of Recognition* (2014). He explains that current policies of recognition have their contemporary genesis in Indigenous resistance movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These movements arose in response to a number of

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[22] William Worster, "Sovereignty: two competing theories of state recognition," *Exploring Geopolitics: The Faces in the Geopolitical Debate,* February, 2010, accessed January 9, 2017, *http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/publication_worster_willliam_sovereignty_constitutive_declatory_statehood_recognition_legal_view_international_law_court_justice_montevideo_genocide_convention/*.

[23] Aimee Berg, "Fighting for more than a win: Iroquois lacrosse team back in championships," *Aljazeera,* accessed January 10, 2017, http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/9/iroquois-lacrossechampionships.html.

[24] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 20.

aggressive state policies such as the White Paper policy of 1969, which used the language of direct assimilation. For Coulthard, like Simpson, state recognition is not transformative, but symbolic, a pacification device or distraction. What both Simpson and Coulthard propose is that the move away from the language of elimination and assimilation towards recognition is rarely meaningful and often leaves settler colonial structures fundamentally intact.[25]

The inextricability of colonialism and urbanism in the North American context poses fundamental challenges to Gabriel's call for a transformative understanding that Montréal is Mohawk land. In response to the discursive power of memory that inheres in place, Alderman and Dywer propose that a denaturalization of "absences, inclusions and marginalizations implicated in the role of collective memory and urban space in the production of a normative social order," is accomplished by "multiply[ing] the number of analytic moments that can be brought to bear on a memorial scene."[26] Simpson and Coulthard alternatively offer *refusal* of settler recognition, where *self-recognition* (Simpson) and *resurgent politics of recognition* (Coulthard), offer robust alternatives.

Multiplying Analytic Moments: Art As Response, Art As Refusal

Though many factors influenced colonial expansion, the conceptual and legal implications of *Terra Nullius,* literally translated from Latin as "land that belongs to no one" is particularly pertinent to thinking about the role of art and recognition. Introduced in the form of a *papal bull* by Pope Urban II in 1065, *Terra Nullius* gave permission to European colonists to take

[25] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Forms of Recognition* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 6.
[26] Dwyer and Alderman, "Memorial Landscapes," 166.

any land inhabited by non-Christian peoples.[27] The legacy of this is legible in legislation such as the Indian Act (1876), which included the Reservation System and the Canadian Residential School system. Sanctioned via religious superiority and the force of the church, the New World was constructed as a place of savagery, both in its land and of its people. In visual culture this was often translated into visualizing the so-called New World as a place of pure unadulterated nature.[28] In Canada, this has been expressed in the visual representation of wilderness, depictions that promote the rightness of and even the *need* for colonial presence. Control over space, and identity in space, was and is still largely managed visually. The spatial order of colonialism was enforced via an abstracted form of mapping based on Cartesian principals, a Lockean view that established ownership over land as a socially normative value and agricultural development as an index of that ownership (Sparke, 2010; Goeman, 2015; Nagam, 2015).

Within North America there are many examples of artists challenging settler space in urban centers. A few pertinent examples include: *Native Hosts* (approximately 1986-ongoing), a series by Edgar Heap of Birds, who uses the formal language of cities, particularly nomenclature, to activate a set of relations that reestablishes Non-Indigenous people as "guests" on Native (Indigenous) land [figure 13]. Shown in numerous galleries throughout Canada, as well as on city buses and billboards in Calgary Alberta, Terrance Houle's *Urban Indian* series (2004) depicts a man dressed in elaborately beaded regalia moving through daily activities: buying groceries, riding the bus, sitting at a desk, kissing his wife goodbye [figure 14]. In Saskatchewan, Joi Arcand produced the *Here on Future Earth* series (2010), using Cree syllabics to imagine a future where Indigenous languages are vital and visible in daily life and urban spaces [figure 15]. In response

[27] Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* (West Susex, UK: Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015), 154.
[28] See: John O'Brian, ed., *Beyond wilderness: The group of seven, Canadian identity, and contemporary art* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2007).

to Vancouver's 125-year anniversary celebrations (2011), the *Digital Native* project (April 2011-ongoing) took over a billboard on the Burrard Street bridge, commissioning artists and writers to produce short responsive texts to activate the site and its relationship to colonialism [figure 16].[29] Like Delaronde and Poulin's projects, the ephemeral aspect of the aforementioned site-specific works combine with decisive material formalism and active confrontation of settler notions of place to incisively rupture official narratives sanctioned by many state-supported public artworks and memorials.

The artist Jeff Thomas is another important artist who exemplifies the links between recognition, urbanism and art so distinctly. As a photo-based artist, researcher, curator, cultural analyst and public speaker, Thomas addresses absence of Indigenous bodies and subjectivities in the landscape, albeit from a different perspective than the one favored by early colonials. Central to his work is a practice of self recognition as an 'urban-Iroquois.' I have heard him introduce himself this way in public presentations and on his website (jeff-thomas.ca), which reads:

> I am an urban-Iroquois. You won't find a definition for 'urban Iroquois' in any dictionary or anthropological publication - it is this absence that informs my work… My study of Indian-ness seeks to create an image bank of my urban-Iroquois experience, as well as re-contextualize historical images of First Nations people for a contemporary audience. [30]

Working mostly in Ontario, Thomas's self-naming practice and his extensive work documenting urban Indigenous experience begins to remediate the kind of absence to which Gabriel calls attention. The simple gestures of *self recognition* repeated in his visual art undercuts racist assumptions and imagery which reinforce persistent mythologies that romanticize and ostracize living indigenous people from contemporary urban society. The centrality of visual culture to the

[29] "Home," *Digital Natives,* accessed, January 10, 2016, http://digitalnatives.othersights.ca.
[30] "Home," Jeff Thomas, accessed March 18, 2017, http://jeff-thomas.ca.

colonial project makes art a fruitful site from which to contest and address absence and misrecognition and insert counter images in their place.

In Montréal, institutions also exhibit interest in addressing colonialism on a structural level, and artists are using these opportunities to address complex relations to land engendered by colonialism both from inside and outside institutional frames. While there are many examples to choose from, given the site and context of this project, it would be remiss not to highlight the work of Mohawk scholar, curator and educator, Ryan Rice, particularly for his curation of the exhibition *Viva Tiohtiake, or Hochelaga Revisited* (2009), which directly addressed the territory of Montréal as First Nations territory by "refuting Hochelaga's vanishing narrative…[depicting] personal experiences that cast a light on the still existent – yet often ignored and marginalized—Indigenous presence in the city."[31] Artist Robert Houle also addressed Montréal as Indigenous territory in 1992 with the exhibition *Hochelaga* at the artist run centre Articule. Looking at this history, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* and *You Are On a Mohawk Land* occur within a continuum of pre-existing traditions of refusal and art on and about the city of Montréal.

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde, Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne And The Politics of Recognition

> *It came really quick: traditional regalia, wear traditional regalia, and then just go out and interact with people and acknowledge the territory. It was about acknowledging the territory… And I think on a very fundamental level it's about respect.* —Lindsay Delaronde, in conversation with the author, February 2016.

In August 2016, multi-media, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) artist Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde performed *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* (to come to understand). Over the course of an hour, Delaronde walked along Avenue Mount Royal, the vibrant commercial artery that runs east from the iconic 'mountain' from which the city derives its contemporary name. Traversing

[31] Rice, Ryan. *Hochelaga: Revisité/Revisited,* (Montréal: MAI Montréal arts interculturels, 2009), 1.

between Rue Berri and Boulevard Saint Laurent, Delaronde instigated exchanges with half a dozen people, mostly European tourists, including some from France, one homeless man who spoke about his own Indigenous heritage and a pair of young Québecois who recalled hearing about "the Iroquois" in a history course [figure 1]. She wore regalia, which she borrowed from her cousin, Kahentiio, consisting of a delicately patterned knee-length light purple tunic with two shades of pink ribbon accentuating the cuffs and V-neck, three strips of dark pink ribbon running vertically up the sleeves from cuff to shoulder, and one thick dark pink ribbon encircling the hem. Under the tunic, an ankle length maroon skirt edged with the same two shades of rich pink ribbon and under this, maroon leggings with ribbons fastened neatly to the bottom of each leg. On her feet she wore tan moccasins, folded at the ankle with leather fringe, electric blue vamps edged with a row of aqua beads, finished in the center with two beaded flowers: one larger cadmium red towards the toe, and a smaller indigo blue one towards the ankle. She also carried an eagle feather, which she beaded (and later gifted to her father), a braid of sweet grass and a lighter for burning the sweet grass [figure 2]. Her garments, which are handmade, created links via Delaronde's body to her family and cultural identification as a Kahnawakehró:non (Mohawk from Kahnawà:ke). In the context of the city, the distinct tailoring and decorative elements of the regalia signal difference, registering outside normative urban fashion practices. For Delaronde, wearing regalia signalled her specific cultural affiliations as a Kanien'kehá:ka:

> It's part of our identity, you know: the way we do our beadwork, the way we make our art; our creation stories, baskets and our pottery; our long houses and our songs and all of the cultural piece to it. I think we are able to use that in any way that we choose in our lives. That's for us. In other cultures they wear other things, and that's for them. So part of wearing the regalia is part of acknowledging who I am, again addressing the identity piece, which is accentuated in our regalia. It's just basically about how a culture expresses itself.[32]

[32] Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde in discussion with the author, February 18, 2016.

In her performance, Delaronde uses her bodily adornments and her language to interrupt the flow of the everyday interactions with the city. Acts of translation within these exchanges reveal the generosity of her approach, reflective of her specific worldview. Approaching select people she met on the street, Delaronde opened the encounter by stating: "*Wat'Kwanonwera:ton Katsitsakatste iontats"* [Welcome, my name is Katsitsakatste], following this: "Hi my name is Lindsay, I'm a Mohawk First Nations from Kahnawà:ke…do you know what First Nations territory we are on?"[33] The difference in approach between Delaronde's Mohawk and English greeting—where one is offered as a welcome, the other posed as a question—illustrates how translation can reveal socially coded knowledge embedded in linguistics. When she spoke in Mohawk Delaronde expressed a specific relationship to place that situates herself as a contemporary embodiment within a continuum of a people who have had continuous presence in and pre-contact relationship to the place where the introduction occurs (Tiotià:ke / Montréal). In this context, the 'welcome' acknowledges this specificity and asserts a sovereign position within that territory. When this greeting is translated, Delaronde relies on the cultural and linguistic codes familiar to western, Anglophone social norms, a world she is also very familiar with and a part of. In these brief moments of exchange, Delaronde is generous in her negotiation of multiple, even conflicting spatiotemporal, linguistic and epistemological terrains. This negotiation was important to Delaronde's guiding principles of connection, respect and relationship building.

Indigenous regalia across North America carry weighty symbolism as something that has often been simultaneously appropriated and forbidden. Mohawk regalia adopted the use of trade materials: woven cloth, ribbon, and sometimes beadwork, making it a symbol of intercultural exchange that is intrinsic to contemporary Mohawk life. See: Ruth Phillips, "Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900" (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

[33] Delaronde, February, 2016.

While Delaronde's Mohawk 'welcome' implies an ordering in terms of the relationship between herself as a Mohawk woman and the 'other' non-Mohawk people she encountered, Delaronde's specific worldview allows for her to maintain this position without a divisive or hierarchical attitude. On the one hand, there is the recognition of her position as an Indigenous, specifically Kanien'kehá:ka woman and the attendant familial, cultural and spiritual meaning that holds in relation to this specific territory. On the other hand, there is a commitment to showing equal respect for the dignity and value of those she encountered. For Delaronde, though the primacy of Mohawk relation to Montréal guided aspects of the encounters she sought, her approach was also informed by an ethic of engagement, which sought to mitigate what she calls an 'us' and 'them' approach. Though these two positions produce a certain amount of tension within the work Delaronde sees *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* as an extension of a personal journey, which "starts with reconciliation and relationship and extends to addressing someone and saying, 'do you want to talk to me?'"[34] The moment of meeting and the responsiveness that is inherent in interpersonal connections is also where the works performativity exists, as Delaronde explains:

> It changed a little bit as I went along because it's intimidating, you're intervening and these are people's daily lives. People are just walking around and then you're performing this intervention. You're asking for this space, and then there is what happens in between—it's very performative. I could have done that work on my own. I could have sat at a corner and sang Iroquois songs [and] that interaction would still be there, but [by interacting with people directly] I become a conduit of sorts—I am initiating a response. Rather than passing by you I'm initiating, I'm intervening. I want to do that in a respectful way, where I'm not harming myself or anybody else. [35]

A final element of *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* was to perform a smudging ceremony by lighting the sweet grass braid, and using an eagle feather to guide the smoke and prayers upwards, towards

[34] Delaronde, February 2016.
[35] Delaronde, February 2016.

the creator.[36] Delaronde explains that offering to engage in ceremony is central to the intention of the work to foster greater understanding, as emphasized by the title, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* which translates as "to come to understand." Offering smudge, Delaronde explains, shows the "cultural practice of ritual, which is part of who we are and how we express our spirituality."[37] For Delaronde, presenting herself in regalia, speaking Mohawk and offering smudge provided those she encountered a first introduction or the opportunity to more deeply understand the First Peoples whose land they inhabit. As Delaronde puts it, "who are they? How are they? What do they do? What do they look like? What is their language? […] It's about showing people who we are. It's really simple."[38] In this way, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* provokes affective understanding, accomplished through exchange and direct demonstration of what it means to be a Mohawk, Onkwehonwe (Indigenous) woman.

In the Introduction to Coulthard's *Red Skin White Masks,* he proposes a resurgent politics of recognition as a way to disengage from unproductive dialogues with the settler state, while recentralizing Indigenous knowledge and ways of being:

> We [Indigenous people] begin to collectively redirect our struggles *away* from a politics that seeks to attain a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition for Indigenous nations toward a *resurgent politics of recognition* premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power.[39]

Though aspects of Delaronde's performance might seem to have a certain ambivalence with regards to the kind of recognition she is seeking—if she is looking for recognition from those she

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[36] Delaronde explained in a personal communication that the meaning of the Eagle feather is specific to each First Nation or individual using it. For her, the Eagle is a sacred bird, which carries important medicines. The feather can be used according to each individual's discretion including bringing prayers to the creator, and positive energy to those using it. It also represents the interconnected nature of all living things, adaptation and healing. Lindsay Delaronde, personal communication with the author, May 25, 2016.
[37] Delaronde, May 2016.
[38] Delaronde, May 2016.
[39] Coulthard, *Red Skin,* 24.

encountered, or not—upon a closer reading of the work, it becomes clear that the main elements of *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* orient towards the aims outlined by Coulthard above. Using a form of direct action, Delaronde introduced herself as a Mohawk person and asserts Mohawk connection to Montréal in an act of territorial recognition. In her words:

> What I wanted to accomplish is what I did—acknowledging territory. The conversations that extended from that was the unknown, but the objective is to acknowledge the territory…because that's where the knowledges are, that's where the history is, and the people…So just that gesture, that action, that's the result. The analysis of that is secondary.[40]

For Delaronde, what mattered was recognizing the land together with those she encountered. The outward expression of her Mohawk identity was important to this process, signalling a continuum of connection, while reminding the land (and the new settler populations) that she is still there. In this instance then, rather than being a proprietary gesture, Delaronde's recognition of territory is one of connection and ongoing respect. Further, the act of showing newcomers how to relate to territory is an important aspect of maintaining relationship to it, as well as an act of generosity.[41] Consistent with Coulthard's belief in the role of self-actualization, though Delaronde expressed a desire for connection with those she met on the street, she was not seeking affirmation. This was already established on her terms, prior to these encounters.

Though a return to cultural knowledge and traditional practices is not without its complications, nor is it unanimously supported as a way forward (See: Fanon, 1952; Chow, 2002; Garneau, 2014), Coulthard makes a compelling argument for cultural resurgence as holding transformative decolonizing potential. In the concluding chapter of *Red Skin, White Masks*, he is explicit about the role of cultural resurgence when he departs from Fanon, who, until this point

[40] Delaronde, February 2016.
[41] Isaac Murdoch (Manzinapkinegego'anaabe / Bombgiizhik), "Newcomers and Treaty Relations: a panel discussion" (University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, February 28, 2017).

in the text, serves as a vital point of reference. For Fanon, a return to previously repressed cultural practices is understood as a necessary, but not permanent component of the decolonizing process, whereas for Coulthard, this return should be continuous rather than fleeting:

> Although Fanon eschews an evolutionary anthropological theory of historical development in which societies are viewed as developing along a linear path from primitive to civilized, he remains wedded to a dialectical conception of social transformation that privileges the "new" over the "old." When this dialectic is applied to colonial situations, the result, I claim, is a conceptualization of "culture" that mimics how Marxists understand "class": as a transitional category of identification that colonized peoples must struggle to transcend as soon as they become conscious of its existence as a form of identification.[42]

This is reflective of the orientation towards a politics of resurgence, for which Coulthard turns to the writings of Anishinaabe feminist writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Taiaiake Alfred as sources. For Betasamosake Simpson, a politics of resurgence means de-centring colonialism. Rather than using mental, emotional and material resources to address colonialism, resurgence reorients itself towards "reinvesting in [Indigenous] ways of being" including language, law, artistic and performance-based traditions.[43] Delaronde mirrors the approach promoted by Betasamosake Simpson and Coulthard to resurgence by situating reconciliation as a personal process that occurs within her, rather than something she hoped to achieve through her interactions during *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne*.[44] Though Delaronde did invest energy in engaging non-Indigenous people—and the structural aspect of colonialism that disassociates Indigenous people from the lands we live on—she did it on her terms.

Taken in context, the very act of engagement can be understood as part of a resurgent practice. In making the conscious choice to approach and welcome people on the street, she

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[42] Coulthard, *Red Skin,* 153.
[43] Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Press, 2011), 32.
[44] I asked Delaronde directly about her work in relation to current discourse on reconciliation. Delaronde, February 2016.

expressed a desire to break down barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, established historically and reinforced by contemporary neo-colonialism. Guided by principals of respect, and the centrality of relationship to communicating, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* is directly informed by what it means to Delaronde to be Indigenous. In her words:

> You can't have an oral tradition if you don't have relationships, and so, I'm just really trying to encompass everything that I learned about being a Native person, and what that means to me, and I just try to accentuate that and be that in my daily living…A lot of First Nations values revolve around respect and I think we still carry those teachings really strongly, and that's what I tried to perform, that's what I tried to embody in the performance around relationship.[45]

Whether framed in the language of resurgence or self-recognition, what is clear is that at a fundamental level *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* inserts Mohawk presence and interrupts settler relation to the land occupied by the city of Montréal, while resisting incorporation. Relying on relationship and orality, her body, dress, language and teachings of her culture, Delaronde's gesture comes from a place of self-determination. As an ephemeral artwork, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* resists neat incorporation into adaptive settler mythologies of recognition, which give the appearance of substantial change, while remaining fundamentally unaffected.

Another pertinent aspect of *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* is the context within which it was conceived and performed. The *Decolonizing Street Art Convergence* (DSA) is an independent street art convergence, which emerged in 2013, the result of a conversation between Montréal-based queer, feminist street artist, Camille Larivée, who is of Métis and Innu ancestry and interdisciplinary artist Tom GreyEyes of the Navajo nation.[46] GreyEyes contacted Larivée after seeing an image online of her textile street art piece, "Decolonize Turtle Island" [figure 3]. Motivated by their conversation, and the opportunities for urban visibility afforded by the street

[45] Delaronde, February 2016.
[46] The name of the convergence has recently changed to "Unceded Voices, Anti-Colonial Street Artists Convergence."

art format, Larivée began contacting Indigenous street artists across Turtle Island (North America). Operating on funds raised through crowdsourcing and individual donations, the DSA is opposed to government or corporate funding, which would contradict the convergence's anti-capitalist, anti-oppression mandate.[47] In this context, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* was created in an explicitly anticolonial framework that did not need resources or approval from private or government funding bodies and which actively guarded against cooptation and monetization.

The focus of the DSA on street art is an interesting container for *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* on a number of registers. As a convergence that emphasized street art, with an anti-colonial mandate, the DSA uses a medium that engages the material structures of the city. Historically allied with 'outsider' culture, the illegality of its form means that street art is most often produced by people who operate outside normative flows of industrial capitalist, or productive time; working in the night and moving in erratic patterns the street artist rejects legal classifications of ownership and property.[48] However, lacking explicit critical feminist and anti-colonial frameworks has also meant that the same aspects that make street art so radical also make it a harsh medium dominated by (white) men, at least in North America. The DSA identifies the physical and social risks that female identified artists in general, and Indigenous artists or artists of color in particular, undertake operating as street artists, where they can be tokenized, belittled, or physically harmed. Responding to this, the DSA, in its second iteration, refined its mandate to emphasize support for female-identified Indigenous street artists and street artists of color, to "develop a network of solidarity and support between Indigenous street artists [and] promote

[47] "About" Decolonizing Street Art website, accessed June 2016, https://decolonizingstreetart.com.
[48] For more on this see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1991).

anti-colonial resistance through diverse street art interventions."[49] Another element of street art that the DSA is responding to is a recent development of "street art festivals" such as the Mural Festival in Montréal, which is backed by major funders that puts street art at risk of cooptation and corporatization.[50]

In addition to giving space to those most marginalized in the street art milieu, Laravée shares the perspective of her Indigenous peers working in the medium, that the street is an important site for decolonization. Narratives of settler emplacement in urban contexts, which produce and reinforce a perceived inalienable right to Indigenous territories, are naturalized through repetition, architectural style and the teaching function of monuments and memorials. These elements conjoin with urban planning and tourism to proliferate the message of colonial success on a global scale.[51] Spatial theorist Edward Soja writes about space as existing like society: "in both substantial forms and as a set of relations between individuals and groups."[52] The simultaneously fixed and malleable nature of physical forms and social relations make the work of artists who engage directly with the city particularly valuable for addressing Indigenous representation in urban space. Writing on the role of Indigenous street art in the essay "March of the Land Writers: Unsanctioned Indigenous Street Art Interventions" (2015), Matthew Ryan Smith describes it as "a symbolic method of occupancy, one where the image stands in for the body, and the controversial 'tag' (or signature) of the artist is but another means of visibly,

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[49] Camille Larivée in Krista Hessey, "Speaking through the Walls: how Decolonizing Street Art is connecting Indigenous artists in a creative and artistic fight against colonialist oppression" *McClung's* (Toronto: Ryerson University, April, 2016), 8.
[50] Jiliane Golczyk "Is Mural Fest an Art Festival?" *Word and Color,* accessed May 15, 2016, https://wordandcolour.com/2015/06/23/is-mural-fest-an-art-festival/.
[51] See: Alan Gordon, *Making public pasts: The contested terrain of Montréal's public memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2001).
[52] Edward Soja, "The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Retheorization," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures,* ed. Derek Gregory et al, 90-127. (London: Macmillan Education UK, 1985), 90.

reoccupying tribal lands by embodying its spaces, a push toward decolonization."[53] Smith addresses how graffiti fleshes out complex issues around land, law and sovereignty. Describing the 2012 series *Indian Land* by Tlingit-Unangax visual artist Nicholas Galanin—who intervened on a sign marked "Indian River" by changing the word "River" to "Land" [figure 4]—Smith points to the tension between settler governance and Indigenous sovereignty evoked by these acts. He writes:

> Are these interventions illegal? Yes, technically so. Yet, the very notion of graffiti's illegality is thrown to question when considering Indigenous land claims, since a law cannot rightfully be enforced on another sovereign nation's people or territory. The tension in this grey area between land claims and the illegality of graffiti makes the practice of unsanctioned interventions so consequential, so political. [54]

Though Delaronde's performance left no lingering trace on the surface of the buildings themselves, for the hour she occupied the streets of Mount Royal, her body likely provoked curiosity in those who saw her. Whether they would be able to identify her as specifically Haudenosaunee, or Kanien'kehá:ka, her regalia created a visual rupture in the urban environment. For those whom she interacted with directly, Delaronde's use of Kanien'kéha and her acknowledgement of the land through name and ceremony (sweet grass burning) signalled a continuity of relationship to a physical and conceptual place (Tiotià:ke /Montréal). The conceptual labour of the performance is continued through its other iterations, as documentation that circulates in printed articles and online, in conversations, artist talks—and this thesis. The ephemerality of performance gestured towards the specificificity of time and place, while at the same time, photographs remain as documentation that allows the labor of Delaronde's initial gesture to be multiplied, reproduced, circulated on the Internet, in publications, or readily

[53] Matthew Ryan Smith, "March of the Land Writers: Unsanctioned Indigenous Street Art Interventions" *First American Art Magazine, Issue No. 9,* Spring 2015, 24.
[54] Smith, "March of the Land Writers," 25.

available for public presentation. In addition to the ephemeral nature of the work, the commitment by DSA organizers to maintain an anti-capitalist, Indigenous controlled convergence also protects the work from being easily absorbed into a settler politic of incorporation. The organization's mandate and ways of operating exercise the rejection that Simpson and Coulthard address.

Further, Delaronde's positioning within a street art convergence and her choice to create a performance are both interesting to consider from the perspective of refusal. When I first heard Delaronde talk about *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* I was interested in her transparency with respect to the process. She chose the medium of performance based on logistics relating to time and energy. Because she is living away from her home community of Kahnawá:ke, in Victoria, British Columbia,[55] where she is completing a degree in counseling, she talked about the importance of being on 'the rez' when she comes to Montréal.[56] Being with her family and within the sovereign space of the reservation was her priority. *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* worked within that constraint: "I needed to think about what I was going to do that was going to be about immediacy, impermanence."[57] The flexibility offered by the DSA's directly decolonial mandate allowed Delaronde control over the form her gesture would take. Using her body, the urban context and guided by her specific worldview, Delaronde made space for Mohawk subjectivity and relation to place in the fraught urban space known today primarily as Montréal.

<<Ské :kon>>: Marie-Andrée Poulin, You Are On a Mohawk Land

[55] Victoria British Columbia is located on Coast Salish and Straits Salish Territories and is defined by the 1850 Douglas Treaty with the Teechamitsa people. Today, the Kwsepsum (Esquimalt), Lekwungen (Songhees), Scia'new (Beecher Bay) and T'Sou-ke (Sooke) First Nations have members who are descendants of the Teechamitsa. Delaronde is a Mohawk from Kahnawà:ke. She belongs to the Wolf Clan.
[56] Delaronde, February 2016.
[57] Delaronde, February 2016.

The site-specific text-based piece, *You Are On a Mohawk Land,* by Québecoise artist Marie Andrée Poulin uses similar strategies to those employed by Delaronde in *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne*. Between January 21 and March 24, 2015 nine discrete phrases written in Mohawk were displayed on a backlit billboard next to the St-Laurent Metro station in downtown Montréal. The phrases progressed from a simple greeting in week one—Ské:kon (Bonjour/Hi) [figure 5]—to more provocative territorial remarks beginning in week two: "*Kanien'keha:ka/ raonawenhontsa/ íhsete*" (You are on a Mohawk land) [figure 6]. Later texts referenced legal and social contracts between the French settlers and Indigenous peoples, such as week four: "*sahsó'tshera/ wahatiié:na ne/ skén:nen*" (Your ancestors accepted the peace) [figure 7]. These relations are brought into the present moment with week five "Hen" (Yes) [figure 8], which could be read as either a question or an answer to the proposal made the week before. Week six: Entewatatenorónhkwake (Peacable contact) [figure 9], and seven, Skén:nen/ akwé:kon/ Tsi/ Iowenhtsá:te (A peaceful world) [figure 10] likely references the Haudenosaunee's confederacy structure, which is referred to as "The Great Law of Peace." The phrase also suggests a prelude to the next reference to the Montréal Treaty, or "The Great Peace of Montréal," signed between New France and representatives of over forty Indigenous nations in 1701.[58] The phrase selected for week eight, wa'kwariwa'né:ka ne/ atesewarénnia'te/ onhontsakwé:ken/ skén:nen enkénhake (and we ask

[58] For an idea of how the French see their relationship with the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous people, see: Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montréal of 1701* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001),192. Conversely, an entry in Mohawk Nation News by Kahntineta Horn reveals another perspective. See: Kahntineta, "1701 Great Peace of Montréal" *Mohawk Nation News,* June 28, 2012, accessed, February 18, 2017, http://mohawknationnews.com/blog/2012/06/28/1701-great-peace-of-montreal/. And Laurie Leclair writes in *Anishinabek News,* about the treaty as playing an important role in quelling six decades of fighting in the region, although with skepticism towards the French narrative of peace and reconciliation. See: Laurie Leclair, "Revisiting the site of one of the most important diplomatic meetings of Canada's early history" *Anishinabek News: The voice of the Anishinabek Nation*, June 8, 2015, accessed February 10, 2017, *http://anishinabeknews.ca/2015/06/08/revisiting-the-site-of-one-of-the-most-important-diplomatic-meetings-of-canadas-early-history/*.

you to help us to spread the peace to the world) [figure 11] suggests the offering of another opportunity for peaceful relations between contemporary Mohawk peoples and French settlers.

The phrases were an extension of a previous collaboration between Poulin, an emerging Québecoise artist who primarily works in performance and the Kahnawá:ke community, specifically, the artists Marian Snow and Elder Kahentinehtha Horn. In the project description for *You Are On a Mohawk Land,* published on the Dare-Dare website, Poulin explains that, in 2014, she was invited to create a performance art piece for the opening of *Racines* (Roots), an exhibition curated by Jocelyn Parenteau. The exhibition celebrated the colonial history of settlement in Sorel-Tracy and particularly the *filles du roi*, or Kings Daughters—a contingent of approximately 770 single women, often orphans, who were shipped to New France between 1663 and 1673, encouraged to marry and procreate, in a governmental effort to remediate the gender imbalance in the colony, promote 'family values' and bolster the colony's growth. Many Québecois today proudly trace their family lineage back to one of these women.[59] The invitation was interesting considering that Poulin's practice specifically addresses absent, erased, or hidden histories and populations.[60] Characteristic of her practice, Poulin decided that rather than personally use the space she was given, she would invite members of the Mohawk community to act in place of her. Drawing on her previously existing relationship with Snow, Poulin was able to invite Mohawk Elder Kahentinehtha Horn who agreed to participate in the exhibition. For her contribution, Horn spoke about Sorel Tracy's history as First Nations territory. In an interview I conducted with Poulin, she recalled the experience as tense. Leading up to the evening she had not told the curators her intentions and had very little understanding herself about what was going to

[59] See: "King's Daughters" *La Société des Filles du roi et soldats du Carignan, Inc*, accessed June 14, 2016, http://www.fillesduroi.org/src/kings_daughters.htm.
[60] Marie-Andrée poulin in conversation with the author, February 23, 2016.

happen. She described the strain in the room as Kahentinehtha Horn delivered a speech in English and Mohawk to a predominantly Francophone audience. Provoking linguistic tensions, and the inherent erasure of Mohawk's from the celebratory exhibition, at one point in the evening, Horn stated "I will rectify your history."[61]

Formally, *You Are On a Mohawk Land* was displayed on a stand-alone billboard, at ground level in the rugged, open concrete space on the South side of the St-Laurent Metro station. Backed with yellow plastic, and adorned with a red stylized arrow that lights up through a series of individual bulbs at night, the billboard takes on the appearance of something you might encounter on highways, alerting you to a remote ice cream and burger shack, or fruit stand. Clumsy plastic letters sit on its surface waiting to be arranged and then rearranged to create bold textual messages. Situated behind the billboard is a mobile trailer, adorned with a black and white, graphic mural produced by the Montréal based collective EN MASSE, in collaboration with youth from Oxy Jeunes and Innovation Jeunes [figure 12].[62] The trailer is the mobile home of the artist-run centre, Dare-Dare: centre de diffusion d'art multidisciplinaire de Montréal. In 2004, the centre initiated "Dis/location: projet d'articulation urbaine," which involved abandoning its fixed gallery space for a nomadic one that would allow the center to engage more directly with the city in order to facilitate site specific projects and artistic practices that engage public space.[63] These investigations are facilitated by "successive moorings, lasting two or three

[61] Poulin, February 2016. ; There are many issues with translation in this work. For example, Horn's speech was written in English and presented in English and Mohawk to a Francophone audience. After it was given orally, the speech was translated into French, and then sections were translated into Mohawk later for Poulin's project. Similarly, within the process of conducting interviews with Poulin, I had to work with assistance from Maude Johnson, Marie France Daigneault Bouchard, and Hermine Ortega for translations, and transcription.
[62] For more info about En Masse see: "About" EN MASSE, http://enmasse.info/about/. For more info about their work with Dare-Dare, see: "GRAF' Roulotte" Dare-Dare, http://www.dare-dare.org/en/events/graf-roulotte.
[63] Edith Brunette, "In the Shadows of the Floodlights: Dare-Dare at Quartier Des Spectacles" in *Esse, Arts + Oppinions, Spectacle '82* (Autumn, 2014): 55.

years, in parts of the city that offer rich contexts for questioning social, political, historical and urban issues."[64]

The nomadic gallery site came to the Saint-Laurent metro station in 2012 and remained for three years, until 2015. This location allowed Dare-Dare to address public space in a highly charged, extremely rich site that had recently undergone an intensive redesign and rebranding, shifting the historic Red Light District and its attendant references to the region's links to the sex industry, into a 'Quartier des Spectacles' or Entertainment district. The Quartier des Spectacles (QDS) is one of many focused redesigns taking place in the downtown core.[65] These redesigns or 'rejuvenation' projects highlight the programmed nature of public space, which makes room for some bodies, activities, and identities, while actively rejecting or relocating others.[66] This is particularly obvious when considering the composition of the board of directors of The Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles. As the governing body with the authority to manage the physical and cultural activities in the district, the Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles board is notably lacking in community partnerships, composed instead of government organizations, commercial entertainment venues, large-scale festivals, and even a real-estate development company.[67] DIS/LOCATION is described on the center's website as an "urban articulation project…[that] derives its title from a diverging and complementary stance, welded together with

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[64] Brunette, "In the Shadows," 63.
[65] Square Viger in the downtown's east side has been an ongoing challenge for the city as a site mostly used by homeless and transient populations. Similarly the recent redesign of Cabot Square in the West end of Downtown towards Westmount was finished in 2016 receiving mixed reviews for gestures of inclusion towards the Indigenous populations that frequented the area prior to redevelopment. Most recently, in preparation of the cities 375th birthday, the city is planning huge investments into the downtown core, hoping to attract tourists and residents to the region. See: "5 Massive Montréal Urban Renewal Projects to Be Unveiled in 2017" *Tourusn Montreal,* accessed, March 29, 2017, http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/meetings/2016/11/03/urban-renewal/.
[66] See, for example: Alan Hustak, "Turning right on red-light district, Demolition of an old building is the start of a transformation from spectacle into Quartier des spectacles," *Montreal Gazette*, February 17, 2008, accessed March 29, 2017, https://www.pressreader.com/canada/montreal-gazette/20080217/281535106682673.
[67] "About us" *Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles*, accessed June 8, 2016, http://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/en/about/qds-partnership/.

a forward slash."[68] As a mobile artist run center interested in public space, relocating to the heart of the Quartier des Spectacles provided Dare-Dare with the opportunity to engage the edges of permissibility in public space and public art. Partnering with the Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles and operating in the highly controlled space of the QDS put Dare-Dare and its artists in direct relationship with some of the most powerful cultural organizers in the city.[69]

Playing simultaneously with notions of anchorage and movement, the approach taken by Dare-Dare to their DIS/LOCATION project allows for constructive engagement with the communities, institutions and socio-political conditions that shape each of the locales. Poulin was drawn to the center's call for 'public writing' projects, which she saw as a relevant opportunity to expand on the collaborative project that began in Sorel Tracy. She was drawn to the location of the billboard, as situated very near to the Montréal Native Friendship center, an important space for urban Indigenous people located just one block from the metro, on the corner of St. Laurent and Ontario streets. Its positioning on St. Laurent street is also relevant, as the city's socio-linguistic dividing line demarcating the Anglophone populations to the west of St. Laurent and Francophone populations to the east. The major artery also runs North-South through the city ending at rivers on both sides, including the Saint Lawrence to the south. The significance of this river to the Mohawk of Kahnawà:ke and its symbolism within Mohawk and settler relations is complex and deserving of contextualization.

The historic formation of and contemporary challenges faced by Kahnawà:ke, the Mohawk Nation located nearest to Montréal, including extensive land loss and the loss of access to the Saint Lawrence river, make it a pertinent and relevant case study which exemplifies settler driven spatio-temporal divisions. Simpson cites the beginnings of Kahnawà:ke as "formed from

[68] "Call for Proposals" *Dare-Dare,* accessed June 10, 2016, http://www.dare-dare.org/en/call-for-proposals.
[69] Brunette, "In the Shadows," 55.

Mohawk migrations out of the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York to a French Jesuit settlement called Kentaké (La Prairie) just south of Montréal."[70] The settlement was initially formed by a heterogeneous group of Indigenous peoples linked by their interest in Christianity. It moved four times before establishing itself on the south shore facing what is now Montréal. This resulted in the eventual establishment of a permanent mission using a seigniorial land grant from the king of France, Louis IX. The character of the settlement shifted over time with people migrating there for increasingly diverse reasons, including respite from challenges within the Iroquois confederacy, temperance from alcohol, and proximity to the fur trade.[71] By the 1670s the heterogeneous composition of Kahnawà:ke eventually shifted to take on a predominantly Mohawk character. In chapter two of Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus*, "A Brief History of Land, Meaning, and Membership in Iroquoia and Kahnawake," Simpson created a sub-section titled "Kahnawà:ke beginings: 'Christian Dogs' and the Genesis of Difference." This title evokes the discursive relationship that formed settler understandings and presentation of Kahnawà:ke. Emphasizing Kahnawà:ke's early composition as Christian and "mixed," archaeologists and ethnographers constructed the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke as "other" within the literature on Iroquoia.[72] This classification benefits the aims of settler society, whose success depends on the disappearance of Indigenous populations. Differing from slavery contexts, where the persistence and growth of the African population was desirable as a source of free labour and property, in the context of settler societies, policy and attitudes were directed towards dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their ancestral links as quickly as possible.[73] This happens through genocidal acts including the creation of residential schools (the last one notably closed only in

[70] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 56.
[71] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 45-47.
[72] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 33-34.
[73] Patrick Wolfe, "Race and the trace of history" In F. Bateman & L. Pilkington (Eds.), *Studies in settler colonialism politics, identity and culture* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 274-275.

1996 in Saskatchewan), aggressive adoption practices and outright theft of Indigenous children from mothers, as well as (ongoing) sterilization practices.[74] Many of these practices, particularly related to adoption and residential schools were, and occasionally still are, constructed as acts of benevolence, or if not that, a gentler form of 'cultural genocide' allowing settler populations to distance themselves from the violence of actual genocide, while naturalizing and legitimizing their occupation.[75] Discursively, salvage ethnography and the related vanishing Indian paradigm relied on and in turn promoted the belief that Indigenous people were 'disappearing' due to the impact of settler culture and influence.[76] The academic construction of Kahnawà:ke as inauthentic, "not really Mohawk" is a consequence of these linked paradigms that enforce strict boundaries on identity based on narrow understandings of cultural expressions of authenticity. For Simpson, these narratives, "evidencing the sense of 'remnant status,' or immanent loss, for Mohawk nationhood that is based on bodily and, perhaps, cultural death," produced anxiety within the community that has lasting effects on Kahnawa'kehró:nen today.[77] In addition to this discursive pressure Kahnawà:ke, along with Tyendinaga, Six Nations and Tonawanda, have been aggressively dispossessed of their already limited land base. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kahnawà:ke lost fifty-thousand of the sixty-thousand acres initially

[74] A news story surfaced in 2016 about an Indigenous woman forcibly sterilized in Saskatoon in 2008 see: "Aboriginal women say they were sterilized against their will in hospital" *CBC,* January 07, 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-january-7-2016-1.3393099/aboriginal-women-say-they-were-sterilized-against-their-will-in-hospital-1.3393143.

[75] The legal definition of genocide is cited as follows: Genocide is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part ; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." cited in the "UN Special adviser on the prevention of genocide, analysis framework", accessed March 30th, 2017, http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/osapg_analysis_framework.pdf.

[76] The salvage paradigm derives from salvage ethnography, largely associated with American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942). James Clifford and others have written about the topic, see: James Clifford, "The others: Beyond the 'salvage' paradigm," *Third Text* 3, no. 6 (1989): 73-78.

[77] Simspon, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 42-43.

"granted" to them by the state.[78] More recently, the construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway in 1957 not only further reduced Kahnawà:ke's land base, but did so by the destruction of the community's connection to the Saint Lawrence river, the banks of which served as a referent for historical memory, as the site of the first village of Kahnawake and a space of leisure. The seaway cut off access to this and the river, which was an important site of social identity and pride, as well as a source of economic wealth for the community, whose members fished there and took up roles as guides and deliverymen.[79] Thinking of the mutual importance of the Saint Lawrence as a conduit with major importance socially and spatially to the island city of Montréal and Kahnawá:ke, the placement of *You Are On a Mohawk Land* in relation to it bears significance.

Expanding the context: Montréal, Urbanism, Sovereignty and Art

Asserting Montréal as Mohawk land must be understood in the context of historical and ongoing, mostly fraught relations between the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples and the French and English settlers who colonized the island city of Montréal. As previously mentioned, one of the most prominent and intensely programed memorial sites in the city, Place d'Armes, takes up this relationship as a central theme. Though Place d'Armes went through a re-design process in 2010, including extensive changes to the physical space, the narrative elements of the memorial structure were left intact. This speaks to a continued investment in the ideological function of these sites. As one of the most popular tourist destinations, the histories produced at Place d'Armes have the capacity to proliferate on an international scale. The violent maintenance of

[78] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 49.
[79] Johny Beauvais, *Kahnawake: A Mohawk Look at Canada and Adventures of Big John Canadian, 1840-1919* (Kahnawake: Khanata Industries 1986).; "Kahnawà:ke Revisited: The St. Lawrence Seaway" (parts 1 and 2), *Mohawk Council of Kanhawà:ke,* accessed March 18, 2017, http://www.kahnawake.com/community/revisited.asp.

this narrative can be thought of in terms of Simpson's writing on misrecognition and possibilities for refusal, where she writes:

> In my ethnographic work I was deeply mindful of the range of possibilities available for political life, for identification and identity within and against recognition, all instantiated in refusals. There seemed, rather, to be a "tripleness," a "quadrupleness," to consciousness and an endless play, and it went something like this: "I am me, I am what you think I am, and I am who this person to the right of me thinks I am, and you are all full of shit, and then maybe I will tell you to your face" and "Let me tell you who you are."[80]

The acknowledgement that how a person or group is perceived on the level of individual to individual, as well as a structural level, impacts the material realities of Mohawk people in very specific terms joins with a desire to push back at that, to refuse and confront it in this quote by Simpson. As she says later in the same section, "There was an enjoyment in this […]The struggles in these moments form part of the quotidian life of self-consciousness and political assertion. There was something that seemed to reveal itself at the point of refusal—a stance, a principle…"[81]

In a similar manner to the experiences Simpson references in *Mohawk Interruptus*, including Mohawk encounters with state authority via border agents, and ethnographic encounters, the formal language of memorials, such as the use of heavy stone, scale and spatial proximity to important historical sites grants them a naturalized, seemingly official authority. In contrast, the quotidian implications of the billboard used for *You Are On a Mohawk Land* counters this visual language, even refuses it: the letters, which are easily changeable, signify dynamism and transformability. As a contemporary structure used primarily for marketing, the billboard, unlike the monuments at Place D'Armes, assigns the Mohawk and in this instance, explicitly Mohawk language, a place in a dynamic, ever evolving, urban present. Poulin's act of adding her

[80] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 107.
[81] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 107.

name to the work also changes the dynamic between a memorial site and an artwork on the level of responsibility. Where the memorial as a form defers responsibility—usually offering little or no information about its provenance—an artwork places accountability on a specific, living individual. In *You Are On a Mohawk Land* both the artist and Dare-Dare are implicated in the construction and dissemination of the work and its content and can be held accountable. Acting in a similar manner, in *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne,* Delaronde's body, contemporary regalia, use of ceremony and language, signals a counter representation to the defeated historic Iroquois. She embodies a continual, contemporary presence that is dynamic, retains cultural memory and is also urban.

The early tensions between settlers and the Haudenosaunee manifest in new forms contemporaneously. The most well-known example is an eruption that occurred in the summer of 1990 between the Mohawks of Kanesatake and settlers in Oka Québec, which quickly spread to include Kanewakehró:non and settlers on the south shore of Montréal. The escalation quickly evolved into an armed stand-off between the Mohawks of Kahnawake, the Québec provincial police and the military. Commonly referred to as 'the Oka Crisis', or Oka standoff, the confrontation took place over the course of seventy-eight days, between July 11 and September 26, 1990. The dispute centered upon land in the town of Oka Québec, which shares borders with the Mohawk reservation of Kanesatake, sixty kilometers from Montréal. A development company had been granted permits for condo development and the extension of an existing golf course onto land that included a Mohawk burial site.[82] Blockades were erected near the site by the Mohawks of Kanesatake, and later, the Mohawks of Kahnawá:ke blocked off the Mercier bridge, an essential thoroughfare for people commuting between the island and the suburb of

[82] Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1993.

Châteauguay on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River. They used their location in solidarity with Oka, to draw attention to the dispute as a representation of ongoing land grievances between the settler government of Canada and Indigenous peoples. This action moved the confrontation from a somewhat remote location (Oka and Kanesatake) to the city, where it directly impacted urban commuters. Québecois, angered by the inconvenience, expressed heightened racism, even, at one point burning an effigy of a Mohawk warrior on the bridge [figure 19].[83]

This moment marks one of the only contemporary armed conflicts between Indigenous people and the settler state in Canada, creating a lasting sense of segregation and mistrust, particularly between the Mohawk and Québecois. Delaronde spoke about trying to get Mohawk artists from Kahnawake to come to Montréal to participate in the DSA and the resistance to this she encountered. She ascribes this to a continued mistrust and discomfort towards the island city felt by many people living on the reserve. In the years following the standoff, artists continue to respond to the confrontation and the systemic causes that gave rise to it. Abenaki filmmaker, Alanis Obomsawin created a powerful documentary in 1993, called *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, while many artists including Gabriel created artwork relating to their direct or second-hand experiences of this deeply impactful moment. One of Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore's most well known works, *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* (1991, 1992, 1996) was created in response to the violence of this moment [figure 20].

That the settler government gave permission to develop Mohawk land, including sacred sites, and turned state resources against them when they resisted, reflects the difficulties faced by Mohawks in protecting their ever decreasing land base, and making territorial claims on lands

[83] Obomsawin, "*Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance.*"

previously lost. Mohawk writer, curator and educator, Ryan Rice reflects on the impact of this moment on artists as motivational, "inspiring, in both good or bad ways, artists to be activist," to rip apart the colonial project, and not to forget Canada's violent colonial history.[84] When Delaronde spoke about acknowledging the land and its history in *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne*, I understand now that this recent history is part of that acknowledgement. As she said: "the land holds the knowledges."[85]

Oka clarified settler attitudes towards Indigenous land-based sovereignty, and reflected the material, and social consequences of these attitudes, which are created and reified by the settler state and its structures. Because access to and control over land and its attendant resources is central to imperialism and settler colonialism, Indigenous land claims are a continual threat. As previously discussed, Kahnawa'kehró:nen are marked by the theft of their land and their access to the waterway. Delaronde spoke of her relationship to this loss as an absence of memory,

> We don't even know what we lose. I think colonization is confusing that way because you don't understand what you've lost, because you never had it, but you know that there's something that belongs to you. It's like if I had a dog and it ran away, then I would know that loss. But, I've never been connected to the rapids in a way that my grandmother was, like we used to. [86]

Currently, the Mohawk's of Kahnawà:ke are working towards a land-claim negotiation with the Federal government to reclaim the lands lost. Much of the disputed territory has been developed into suburbs of Montréal. Though there is precedent for successful urban land claims, it is not without resistance.[87]

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[84] Dylan Miner, "Interview with Ryan Rice." *Deep Routes: The Midwest in All Directions,* edited by Rozalinda Burcila, et al., 10-13 (Chicago: Compass Collaborations, 2012), 11.
[85] Delaronde, February 2016.
[86] Delaronde, February 2016.
[87] Christopher Curtis, Kahnawake Chief says Mohawk land can't be bought," February 16, 2016, accessed March 20, 2017, http://montrealgazette.com/news/kahnawake-chief-says-mohawk-land-cant-be-bought.

In addition to a continuous struggle to recover the Seigneurial land, 'granted' to the Kanien'kehá:ka by the French crown in 1680—known as the Seigneury of Sault St. Louis, which encompasses part of present-day Chatauguay, Saint-Constant, Saint-Catherine, Candiac, as well as access to the Saint Lawrence river—the potential threat of land claims on the island of Montréal itself looms. Evidence of the tension to prove or disprove title on the island is exemplified by the focus of one master thesis, titled *Histoire de l'occupation amérindienne de l'île de Montréal et de sa région entre 1534 et 1763* (2008) by Marie-Eve Fiset (UQUAM), which took as its central question whether there is suitable *evidence* of settlement for the Kanien'kehá:ka to make land claims on the island. Using textual sources by primarily non-Indigenous authors, and the Western legal framework of the Supreme Court of Canada, Fiset draws the conclusion that the current history does not provide substantial enough evidence to prove Aboriginal title. <<*À partir des données historiques disponibles, il apparaît peu probable que des Autochtones répondent aux critères du titre aborigène.*>>[88]

While contemporary land grievances fall within the boundaries of settler legal structure, particularly the previously mentioned Seigneury of Sault St. Louis, which encompasses a large tract of land on the island's south shore, it is important to recognize that the Haudenosaunee, including Kanien'kehá:ka "lived, travelled and worked in the region long before the French settlers arrived."[89] That their importance to the security of French settlers living on and around the island of Montréal is the reason for the creation of the Seigneury in the first place speaks to their presence and ongoing relationship to the territories surrounding the island, as well as the

[88] Marie-Eve Fiset, "Histoire de l'occupation amérindienne de l'île de Montréal et de sa région entre 1534 et 1763" (Masters Thesis, L'Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008), 94.
[89] Daniel Rueck, "Kahnawá: ke Timeline: Some Key Events Related to Land and Resources to 1957" (2012): 1. For more on Kahnawá:ke land claims, see: Joan Holmes, "Kahnawake Mohawk Territory: From Seigneury to Indian Reserve" presented at the National Claims Research Workshop in Ottawa, November 9, 2006, accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.joanholmes.ca/KahnawakePaper.pdf.

island city of Montréal.[90] Furthermore, disputes over land can be understood as symptoms of settler politics of recognition itself, which view land as property to be owned, benefited from, given and taken.

Because of the centrality of territorial acknowledgement within the work of Delaronde and Poulin, I will offer a brief comparison of the ontological frameworks that shape Mohawk and Euro-settler understandings towards place and connection to land. In order to accomplish this I will summarize essential points from an essay written by the Mohawk and Anishinaabe educator and scholar, Vanessa Watts in 2013, and a lecture given by Audra Simpson at McGill University in 2015.

In Vanessa Watts' essay "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!)" (2013) Watts uses a comparative model to bring into relief the differences between Indigenous and settler relations to territory and the non-human more generally by "examin[ing] how agency circulates inside of two different frames: Place-Thought (Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmologies) and epistemological-ontological (Euro-Western frame)."[91] Place-Thought, according to Watts means that Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmological frameworks rely on literal, rather than abstracted relations to place, which is understood as "a literal and animate extension of Sky Woman's and First Woman's thoughts."[92] She recalls, "When Sky Woman falls from the sky and lies on the back of a turtle, she is not only able to create land but becomes territory itself."[93] In this world-view, there is no distinction between creator and created. Rather humans are

[90] Holmes, "Kahnawake Mohawk Territory," i.
[91] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 21.
[92] Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought," 22.
[93] Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought," 23.

"extensions of the very land we walk upon."[94] Comparing Sky Woman and First Woman to the Christian origin story, Watts writes of a very different situation, one of separation between human and nature where, "the interaction between a female (Eve) and non-humans (serpent, Tree of Knowledge, apple) led to the damnation of all future humankind," cast out of the garden, "no longer *of* their surroundings, but outside them."[95] In this arrangement, Watts explicates that unlike in the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee worldview, women and non humans are the source of pain and suffering and separation from nature, which positioned humans in a state of domination.

Simpson took a similarly comparative approach to establishing a framework for a larger discussion about colonization in North America for her keynote address during McGill's Fifth Annual Indigenous Awareness Week in September of 2015. In her address, titled, "We are Not Red Indians (We Might All Be Red Indians): The Gender of Anticolonial Sovereignty Across the Borders of Time, Place and Sentiment," she compared Sky Woman to John Locke's *Of Property* (1689), which she describes as a settler creation story where land is understood in terms of ownership, controlled by and for white men, guided by reason and the Aristotelian divisions of civilized vs. savage / man vs. beast.[96]

In Montréal, as previous discussions about land title indicate, settler society's primary investment in the city's Indigenous history is rooted in western frameworks and values. As Watts and Simpson's comparative models illustrate, much of this relation is formed by a foundation of separation between human and land, which allows for a social structure of governance that emphasizes commerce, ownership, dominance and ultimately, exploitation. Another social value

[94] Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought," 23.
[95] Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought," 24.
[96] Audra Simpson, "We are Not Red Indians' (We Might All Be Red Indians): The Gender of Anticolonial Sovereignty Across the Borders of Time, Place and Sentiment" (Key-note paper presented at the McGill University, for Indigenous Awareness Week, Montreal, Québec, September 21-25, 2015).

for Euro-western society, which is not wholly disconnected from exploitation, is the practice of producing heritage—the act of promoting historical memory through preservation of sites, as well as the use of monuments to memorialize specific historical figures or events. Heritage as it relates to the presence of Indigenous people in Montréal, is identified by way of archeological artifacts, particularly related to the Hochelaga site(s). These hold social value for non-Indigenous, people, primarily those of French or British descent, who have a historical stake in the Island's origin story. Interest in this early Indigenous settlement unfortunately rarely translates into respect for, or recognition of, a continuous, sovereign, Indigenous connection to the city in the present. Archeological evidence and memorials produce an early Iroquois presence that does not carry into the contemporary moment. The Iroquois who previously inhabited Montréal are cast in metal, and prose, as now extinct, a lost race of savage warriors who were defeated and evicted by heroic Jesuit settlers. The implication is that these heroic efforts were made so that you the (spectator) can now stand, unthreatened in the space of the monument, today.

Despite structured attempts to erase Mohawk presence from the Island, early explorers, such as Cartier and later Champlain recorded interactions with Iroquoian people in the region as inhabitants of the fortified Iroquoian village of Hochelaga. Archaeologists contend alongside historians and their institutions (including museums) that the Iroquois of Hochelaga were a distinct group called "the St. Lawrence Iroquois," that disappeared, "sometime after 1543."[97] In Fiset's thesis, she includes a figure from *Les Iroquoiens du Saint-Laurent, peuple du maïs* by Roland Tremblay (2006) featuring a map with four hypothesis of where Hochelaga could have been located, with each of the four locations in distinct parts of the city [figure 21]. The almost absurd prioritization of debates around the location of Hochelaga exemplifies the skewed priorities of

[97] Bruce Trigger, *Natives and newcomers: Canada's" heroic age" reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 1986).

institutional knowledge, which filters Indigenous history through the lens of archaeology, disconnected from Indigenous oral history about the site or the island's early inhabitants. Giving authority to 'scientific evidence' over living Indigenous peoples' oral histories and knowledge is an ongoing obstacle to developing an understanding of Indigenous connection to the Island.

The effects of the aforementioned differentiation of worldviews are reflected in thinking through the 'evidence' presented by settler institutions to infer that Iroquois peoples have a historic, but not ongoing relation to place. For the settler institutions controlling the dialogue about Hochelaga and its potential sites, the primary interest is regarding the authenticity of the site. Whereas, for many living Iroquois, such as Kanien'kehá:ka elder Kahentinehtha Horn, the real problem is how the discourse has been shaped. Horn addresses this directly in her online blog "Mohawk Nation News." In an entry titled "Myth Busters," published by Horn on November 9, 2006, she addresses the assumptions and assertions underpinning a travelling exhibition that was designed and displayed by the Pointe-à-Callière museum in Old Montréal, called "St. Lawrence Iroquoians, Corn People" (November 7, 2006 – May 6, 2007).

In her post, Horn confronts the idea that the Iroquois who occupied Hochelaga had mysteriously disappeared. Further, she contends that spreading this idea is threatening to contemporary Iroquois people. She writes: "[i]t's like finding yourself invited to your own wake when you're not dead…It felt like a death threat."[98] In response to the position that the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples living today in Montréal, or on the Kahnawake, Kanesatake, Tyendinaga, or Akwesasne reservations are not the same as the St. Lawrence Iroquois that Cartier and Champlain encountered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively,

[98]Kahentinetha Horn, "Myth Busters in Montreal" *Mohawk Nation News,* November 8, 2006, accessed June, 2016, http://mohawknationnews.com/blog/2006/11/08/myth-busters-in-montreal/.

Horn explains that the Haudenosaunee peoples moved around for social reasons, and also spent long periods of time away from settlements to allow the land to rejuvenate. She explains:

> Our idea was to use the ground and when it was getting depleted of minerals and nourishment, we would plant orchards, take down our villages and then move to our next site for 20 or so years. We had 4 to 5 regular sites. It would take from 80 to 100 (years) to complete a rotation. By the time we returned, the earth would have regained its nourishment…We certainly didn't expect a bunch of foreigner(s) to move in and defile it with asphalt and all the other pollution that has made this once beautiful place infertile for agriculture or man.[99]

Though corrective texts have been written to address settlement narratives of Eastern Canada, such as Bruce Trigger's 1986, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered,* there remains a distinctive "colony to nation" style historiography, described by Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgkins in their Introduction to *Settling and Unsettling Memories: Essays in Canadian Public History* (2008).[100] And settler narratives remain firmly entrenched in the stubborn commitment to the belief that the St. Lawrence Iroquois formed a distinct linguistic and cultural group, separating them from existing communities that comprise the contemporary Iroquois Confederacy, including the Mohawks.

While the archaeological evidence presented to defend the disappearance of the Haudenosaunee who once inhabited Tiotià:ke is debated within the field itself,[101] the speculative nature of the archaeological evidence, which positions the Haudenosaunee of Montréal as distinct—and extinct—is disturbingly convenient to the settler colonial project of land acquisition. In contrast, as Horn's writing highlights, many Kanien'kehá:ka abstain from defining their ancestral connection to land based on the minutia of archaeological discourse. In the face of such deep-rooted structural removal of Haudenosaunee from the region, the

[99] Horn, "Myth Busters."
[100] Nicole Neatby and Peter Hodgins, *Settling and unsettling memories: essays in Canadian public history* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 12.
[101] See: Bruce G. Trigger, "The strategy of Iroquoian prehistory," *Archaeological Essays in Honor of Irving B. Rouse,* ed. RC Dunnell and ES Hall, Jr. (The Hague, New York: Mouton 1978), 275-310.

radicalism of asserting Montréal as Mohawk becomes ever more obvious. Delaronde's body inserted into the urban landscape of Montréal during *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* is an embodied rejection of centuries of scientific work to write her out of that space. Her very existence is a refusal to disappear, and an acknowledgement of an ongoing relation to place. Simpson speaks about this kind of refusal, the refusal to be eliminated, as an indication of "settler precariousness." This precariousness manifests itself in myriad ways, including the framework of land claims and the failed process of placing legal constraints upon a living, dynamic people. Identifying this, Simpson writes,

> Contorting oneself in a fundamental space of misrecognition is not just about subject formation; it is about historical formation. And by refusing to agree to these terms and to be eliminated Mohawks are asserting *actual* histories and thus legislating interpretive possibilities in contestation— interpretations of treaty, possibilities of movement, electoral practices— not only individual *selves.*[102]

In *You Are on A Mohawk Land* Poulin's choice to collaborate with the Mohawks of Kahnawake in an earlier exhibition in Sorel-Tracy similarly confronted deep-seated beliefs that would exclude and misrepresent Haudenosaunee in the history of place. The unexpected collaboration arose when Poulin was invited to perform during the opening of an exhibition that celebrated the city's founding in January, 2015. Rather than occupy space herself Poulin used the invitation to perform at *Racines* to facilitate dialogue between Horn and the francophone community present at Sorel Tracy. By then taking the text delivered by Horn, returning it to Kahnawá:ke for translation, and then situating the translated selections in a public space in the city, Poulin extended the conversation, linking urbanism and colonialism directly into the urban space of Montréal.

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[102] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 22.

Whose public? Art in the "public" domain: co-optation and resistance

The centrality of land to territorial acknowledgment, and the nature of both Delaronde's and Poulin's work, brings another important socio-spatial construction into consideration—the notion of public space. The very idea of public space conjures visions of an equal democratic space available to everyone and anyone, and yet, this is often not the case. The limits of democratic space become obvious when, for example, protestors go off route, or homeless people make too frequent use of a space in the public sphere. Furthermore, consideration of who was identified as the stakeholders of this 'shared' public space also raises interesting questions, particularly when considered within the context of ongoing settler colonialism. Addressing the latter point, Coulthard interrogates leftist political theory around 'the commons,' which ignores Indigenous sovereign relation to land. He posits that any stance towards land-based politics that does not recognize the colonial framework merely reproduces the strategies of dispossession enacted by neoliberal capitalist agendas. In the face of socialist theoretical frameworks that centralize critique on the role of capital, Coulthard suggests a radical shift in perspective that centers Indigenous values, histories and spatial relations. Because of the importance of this critique for reframing leftist values, his writing on this subject bears quoting at length:

> I suggest that by shifting our analytical frame to the colonial relation we might occupy a better angle from which to both anticipate and interrogate practices of settler-state dispossession justified under otherwise egalitarian principles and espoused with so-called "progressive" political agendas in mind. Instead, what must be recognized by those inclined to advocate a blanket "return of the commons" as a redistributive counterstrategy to the neoliberal state's new round of enclosures, is that, in liberal settler states such as Canada, the "commons" not only belong to somebody—*the First Peoples of this land*—they also deeply inform and sustain Indigenous modes of thought and behavior that harbor profound insights into the maintenance of relationships within and between human beings and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity, nonexploitation and respectful coexistence. By ignoring or downplaying the injustice of colonial dispossession, critical theory and left political strategy not only risks becoming complicit in the very structures and processes of domination that it ought to oppose, but it also risks overlooking what could prove to be invaluable

> glimpses into the ethical practices and preconditions required for the construction of a more just and sustainable world order.[103]

Here Coulthard reiterates the points made by Gabriel, Watts, and Simpson; that North America relies on continuous dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands. Further, he suggests that acknowledgement of this set of relations not only creates the potential for thinking about space in terms that can become accountable to an ongoing colonialism, but also infers a way of relating to place that can begin to benefit from Indigenous understanding of relations between land and humans, as outlined previously by Watts and Simpson.

In this respect, the distinction between public art and street art is not incidental in the framing of *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne*. In the context of the DSA, *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* was created in the framework of a mandate that explicitly defines their work in terms of street art, *not* public art. This is an important differentiation, which addresses space in material terms, rather than conceptual ones, and points to public space as something to be wary of, to question[104] This is in contrast to *You Are On A Mohawk Land,* which is produced within the context of a 'public' arts institution that receives government funding, unlike the DSA. Though not explicitly outlining colonialism as a critical point of reference, DARE-DARE clearly remains skeptical of the notion of 'public space,' which it takes up as a site for investigation and transgression. Poulin's intervention in this sense can be read as taking on some of this work. By placing Mohawk language and the territorial acknowledgement, which comprises the work's title, Poulin is creating definitive links between so-called public space and specific Indigenous peoples. Goeman also takes up this position in her search for productive ways to counter colonial spatial ordering.

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[103] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 12.
[104] "Unceded Voices: Anticolonial Street Artists Convergence – Tiotià:ke /Montreal"

The following passage infers the centrality of the colonial frame, as she speculates on the possibilities that might arise from such a productive re-orientation:

> In addressing claims to the right to spatial justice, many Native activists and writers have suggested asking, whose land is it that is deemed public by interests that have always been about the privatization of land and bodies? How might we (re)map the social, historical, political, and economical in these moments to include a critique of colonialism and imperialism? The geographic language employed in our work toward spatial justice has the potential potency of unpacking neoliberal accumulations of private wealth, but recognition of colonial restructuring of land and bodies must be recognized. Complicating the history of spatial restructuring in settler societies not only enables us to perceive the Americas as layered with complex histories and enduring struggles, but also permits us to imagine forms of resistance that do not perpetuate violence.[105]

Ideally organizations like the DSA, and projects like *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne and You Are On a Mohawk Land,* in conjunction with the intellectual labor of theorists like Coulthard, Goeman and others, can activate this framework and bring about a structural shift in spatial theory and all other arenas of enquiry that occur on occupied territory.

Getting it wrong: Multiculturalism, Recognition and Public Art

Another challenge that arises out of the failure to identify colonialism as a central framework of critique is that solutions, which can seem like positive steps in the right direction, merely continue to reinforce settler colonial control over space, discourse and the dissemination of resources. Problematic presence, as much as absence, structures the environment within which potential 'solutions' to the problem of Mohawk representation in Montréal exists. In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (1993) cultural theorist Talal Asad numbers the incorporation of difference amongst the "flexible strategies" that, he argues, are

[105] Goeman, *Mark My Words,* 205.

used to make whole societies governable. [106] And Eva Mackey, in her book *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (1999) describes "the construction of culture and difference, and not simply its erasures, [as] an integral part of flexible Western projects, practices and procedures."[107] Throughout this thesis, I have made reference to the ephemeral qualities of *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* and *You Are On a Mohawk Land* as a useful strategy for avoiding co-optation and incorporation of difference. In this final section, I will explore this problematic in more detail, relying on an example from Canada's west coast, featured in the edited volume *The Land We Are* (2015), which provides a glaring example of how Indigenous representation in public art can be coopted by the goals of the state. In this instance, rather than having the positive outcome of territorial acknowledgement, Indigenous representation further entrenches negative settler–Indigenous relations and spreads misinformation.

In the co-authored essay *Public Art In Vancouver and the Civic Infrastructure of redress* (2015), Dylan Robinson and Karen Zaiontz address the (mis)use of Indigenous artists and public art in the city of Vancouver, which is situated on unceeded xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) territories. Vancouver, in contrast to Montréal, which is comparatively lacking in Indigenous public art and symbolism, abundantly uses Indigenous artwork throughout the city. The misuse of Indigenous art and cultural symbolism in a city like Vancouver is one of the reasons I began thinking in terms of recognition and its limits, rather than quantifying representation when approaching the question posed by Gabriel regarding visual indicators that Montréal as Mohawk land.

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[106] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 12.
[107] Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Routledge, 1999), 30.

Because of the relative abundance of public art that addresses Coast Salish and Salishan language in Vancouver, Robinson and Zaiontz were able to look at the effectiveness of public art as a survey. Assessing the works comparatively allowed for better understanding of how each either maintained integrity, producing layered and challenging meanings, or conversely, became an easily recognizable and assimilable gesture. The authors aptly describe this comparison as, "the ongoing contest between integration and self-determination."[108] By looking at works "that position viewers as readers of Vancouver's cityscape," Robinson and Zaiontz critically reflect on the potential for these public artworks to become ready-made consumables, rather than subversive or challenging, whereby,

> A viewer of text-based public artworks may read the signs but not be called upon to engage with what they represent, namely the more unsettling fact that such work (like the city itself) exists in place of the displaced Coast Salish communities that lived there for thousands of years before settlement.[109]

This perceived danger comes as cities begin to see the use value of representing Indigenous peoples, without genuine commitment to shifting the relationship. This follows a logic that understands that sometimes a thing's presence can signal something more troubling than its absence.

This becomes particularly poignant in the Olympic Village in southeast False Creek, where Robinson and Zaiontz use the example of a commissioned sculpture called *Olympic Truce* (2010) [figure 22] by the Kwakwaka'wakw/Tlingit artist Corrine Hunt. Produced by an Indigenous artist, whose homeland is not Vancouver, but whose visual language falls enough within the realm of "West Coast" Indigenous art to be read as 'authentic,' *Olympic Truce*

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[108] Dylan Robinson and Keren Zaiontz,"Public Art in Vancouver and the Civic Infrastructure of Redress," in *The land we are: Artists and writers unsettle the politics of reconciliation,* ed. Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall. (Winnipeg: Arp Books, 2015): 22-23.
[109] Robinson and Zaiontz, "Public Art in Vancouver," 23.

produces a false reading. Further, Robinson and Zaiontz describe being "struck by how natural it appears for North West Coast First Nations' art to materialize the Olympic ideal of 'building a better world through sport.'"[110] Given the numerous land-claims that remain outstanding throughout the province of British Columbia, and the tendency for Olympic games to ignite decolonial sentiments, and call attention to a nation's problematic policies, the placement of Indigenous art in this instance, as a 'truce monument,' becomes an obvious tool of the settler state. Much in the same way the monuments at Place d'Armes proliferate highly constructed narratives about Montréal, the vision of easy truce proposed by *Olympic Truce* promotes a readily consumable narrative of tidy reconciliation for locals and tourists.

In contrast, the *Digital Natives* (2011) project, curated by Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham, used billboard signs to project messages conferred via social media by invited artists, scholars, poets and curators from Indigenous and settler backgrounds. *Digital Natives* used the public domain to draw attention to the history of the site in a dynamic way with extremely uncomfortable and unsettling messages. One example cited by the authors was a text by Edgar Heap of Birds that addressed the irony of Vancouver's strategic incorporation of Indigenous motifs, given the history of residential schools and attempts to eradicate Indigenous cultural practices. The text reads as follows: "IMPERIAL CANADA AWARDED SEX ABUSE TO NATIVE YOUTH BY THE BLACK ROBES NOW PROUDLY BESTOWS BRONZE SILVER GOLD MEDALS WITH INDIAN IMAGE"[111]

In June of 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded eight years of proceedings with a closing ceremony and publication of its findings,

[110] Robinson and Zaiontz, "Public Art in Vancouver," 31.
[111] Robinson and Zaiontz, "Public Art in Vancouver," 45.

including calls to actions.[112] In this context, gestures towards redress become fashionable on individual and institutional registers, while their longevity and sincerity remain questionable.

Conclusion

We propose that Indigenous story, dreaming, and history are the foundation of all cities in Canada. Artists explore these concepts of shared existence and the Indigenous foundations of place through dreamlike imagery. —The New BC Indian Art and Welfare Society Collective, 2015.[113]

Long ago, James Luna once said, "The Land we are standing on; It's all Indian land." I read it in one of his catalogues, I liked seeing it as a line, written. Public space as a material is a good way of seeing my approach to making work, especially performance works. I take off my shoes, stand, and momentarily imagine how it must have been before Europeans made it theirs. My physical being becomes conceptually grounded, my female Indian-ness unquestionable. From this place I can address what is immediate and know that I am one in a long line of Indigenous artists. —Rebecca Belmore, interview with Wanda Nanibush, 2014[114]

Ending at the beginning, I conclude with a glance back to that moment when Ellen Gabriel looked around the amphitheater at Concordia University, pausing to point out the absence of visual evidence that Montréal is Mohawk Land. This formative moment acted as a gateway into a set of interconnected deliberations concerning land and ownership; the inter-related history of urbanism as a tool of empire and settler colonialism; recognition and its alternatives: refusal and resurgence; Montréal's historical and contemporary relationship with the Haudenosaunee peoples and how it is structured by institutionally-formed knowledge about their history that claims authority over Indigenous forms of knowledge production; the adaptable role of art and representation, as that which might benefit the settler state, or as a means to enact sovereignty despite its attempts at cooptation.

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[112] For more information about the TRC see: http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=905.
[113] The New BC Indian Art and Welfare Society Collective, "Unreconciling Public Art," in *The Land we Are,* 55.
[114] Rebecca Belmore interviewed by Wanda Nanibush, "An interview with Rebecca Belmore," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): 215.

As I looked for ways to approach Gabriel's words, which I understand both as a proposition and a call to action, I have learned from the Indigenous scholars and artists I have encountered, like the New BC Art and Welfare Society Collective suggest above, to soften my perception of the seemingly impenetrable force of the city's concrete narratives. This process taught me about the fundamentally challenging question of what it means to represent something so complex as Indigenous land-based sovereignty, and put me in contact with Indigenous artists, thinkers and theorists whose perspectives have contributed to a heightened awareness of the challenges and possibilities afforded by Gabriel's call to recognize and visualize Montréal as Mohawk land—the land of her ancestors. These challenges include divergent legal, academic and scientific positions that structure Mohawk and settler relationships historically and contemporaneously. Also proposed by this thesis is the possibility for art to act as an interruption to the normative flow of information in and about the city that circulates by way of memorials, engravings, interpretive panels and billboards.

Taking two examples of artists who work with the medium of the city, which they activate as Mohawk, and who, at the same time both materially and institutionally resist incorporation into settler narratives of multiculturalism or compulsory 'reconciliation,' shows potential avenues for what Robinson and Zaiontz have called a *civic infrastructure of redress.*[115] Further, by reading *Aiako'nikonhraién:ta'ne* and *You Are On A Mohawk Land* through the writings of Audra Simpson and Glen Coulthard on recognition and refusal, this thesis has argued a structure for an interpretive framework that position the gestures of Delaronde and Poulin outside the realm of settler recognition.

[115] Robinson and Zaiontz, "Public Art in Vancouver," 22.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued for the utility of ephemerality as a strategy that can provide artists with a means of practicing radical refusal through their work. While I understand this to be a useful approach, I also see the need for more permanent interventions into public space to counter the dominant narratives that remain impactful both to those who are misrepresented, as well as to those who encounter these messages and absorb them consciously or subconsciously. For instance, as we enter an era that is post Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), territorial acknowledgements are becoming more and more institutionalized. While acknowledgement can act as a distraction, or a quick fix to larger structural issues, I am hopeful that the impacts of continuous repetition of Indigenous territorial acknowledgement, alongside the work of Indigneous artists, activists and scholars, will collectively contribute to genuine shifts in perspective and transformative relationships.

It should also be noted that Indigenous visibility and representation in a city like Montréal is dynamic and complex. Though it is claimed as Mohawk territory, the confluence of rivers and abundance of water bodies means that the region was inevitably a place of meeting and exchange.[116] With eleven First Nations and Inuit in the province of Québec, the city's Indigenous character is constantly being defined and refined. In this regard, though they manifest differently, settler colonialism poses problems that both Indigenous peoples and settlers have to live with and struggle against in our respective ways and from our respective positions. The works of Delaronde and Poulin exemplify how each subject position can contribute to advancing dialogue and unsettling settler relation to place.

[116] As a meeting place, Montréal has significance to many Indigenous peoples contemporaneously and also pre-contact. This causes some contention amongst Indigenous peoples. Asserting Mohawk sovereignty is not intended to suppress the nuanced and diverse relations to the territory on which Montréal is situated.

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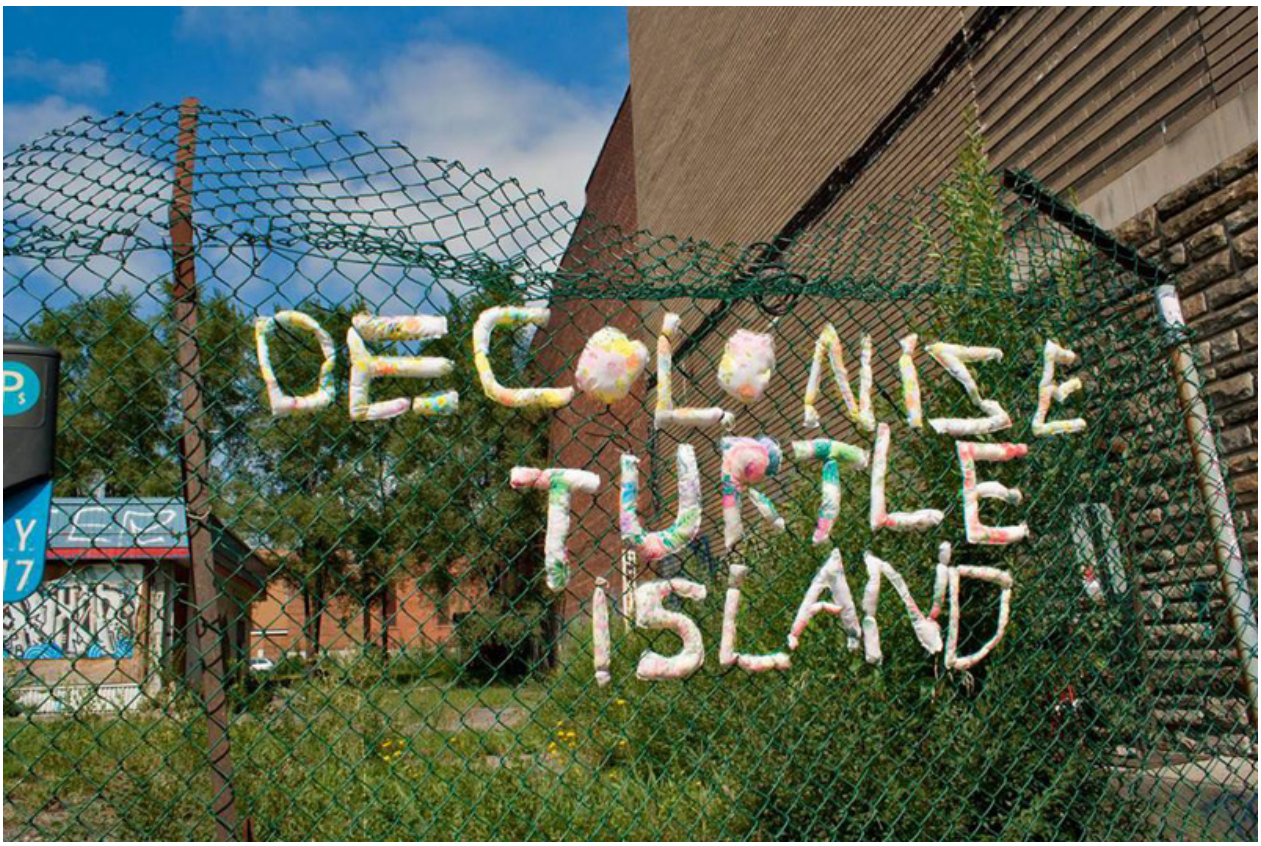

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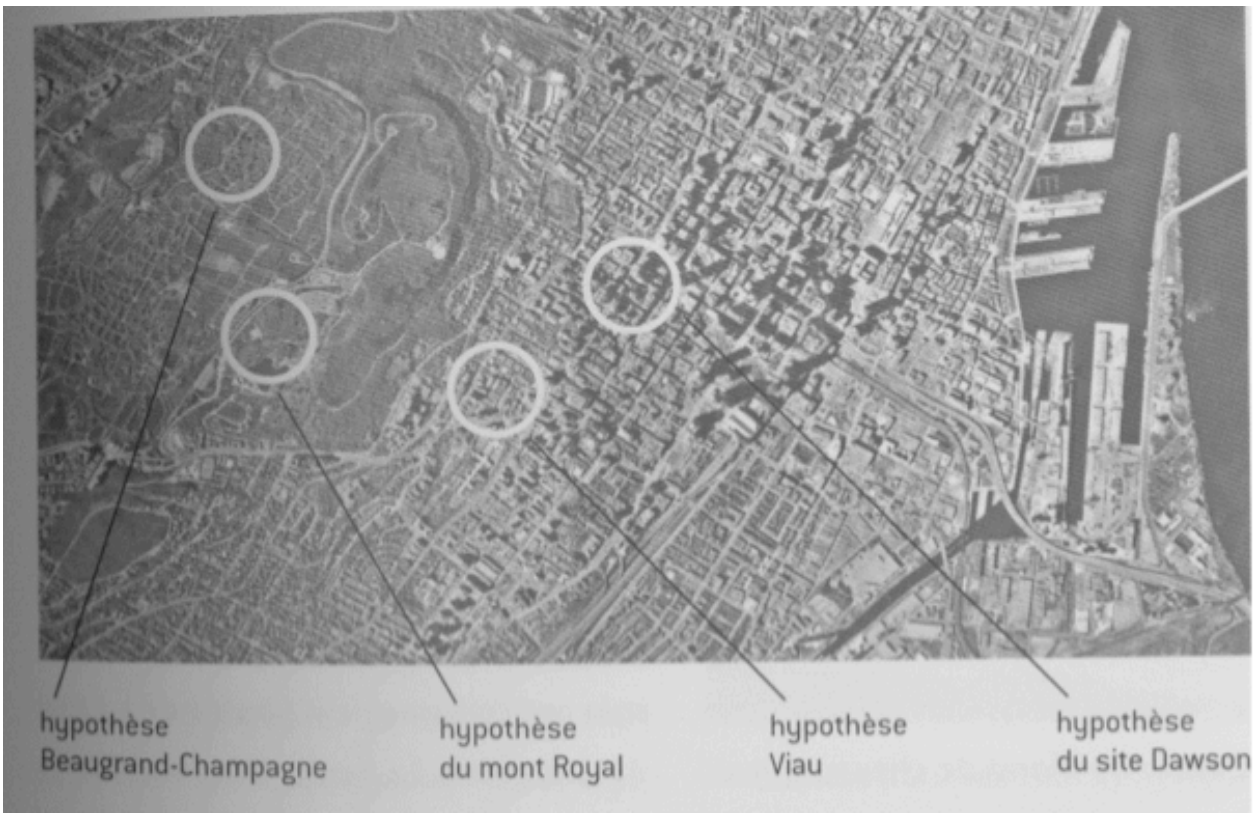

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