

‘A social space,’ ‘A community hub’, ‘An anchor’, ‘A refuge’: Understanding a transforming sense of place in the park through graphic journalism and (hyper)local approaches

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Abstract

‘A social space,’ ‘A community hub,’ ‘An anchor,’ ‘A refuge’: Understanding a transforming sense of place in the park through graphic journalism and (hyper)local approaches

Sara Mizannojehehi

This research-creation thesis explores the ways in which (hyper)local and graphic journalism together are able to capture a changing sense of place—the understanding of and connection to a geographic space—within a local context. It does so by applying Niblock’s “journalism practice as research”, and Chapman and Sawchuk’s “research-for-creation” and “research-from-creation”, to create a (hyper)local-graphic journalism project focused on sense of place in the Montreal neighbourhood of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG), specifically around NDG Park. This work aims to depict an evolving sense of place while reflecting on the journalist’s role in its creation. Additionally, informed by this research’s findings and work from artist-journalists, scholarship on sense of place, and practices from first-person journalism, trauma-informed journalism and oral history, this research-creation thesis presents a set of guidelines for creating graphic journalism in a hyperlocal context.

Acknowledgements

If you lived in Montreal and looked outside of your window on May 1, 2024, you may have thought it was a dreary start to spring. Despite this, I made it out of my apartment and took the bus to the CJ building on Concordia University's Loyola campus, where I was heading to Dr. Elyse Amend's office for our first meeting. After our initial conversation, which included buses, suburbs and comics, she agreed to be my supervisor. This project could not have been done without her immense support throughout the past year. Not only did Dr. Amend encourage my illustrative approaches, but she was also a critical editor, sharpening this thesis into what it is today. Thank you, Elyse, for all the care you shared with me, whether it was through meetings, edits or conversations on maps, throughout this project. My second reader, Dr. Magda Konieczna, was the first professor I talked to at Concordia. Without her class, I would have never known about the power of connecting to the community in journalism and the beauty of NDG. Thank you, Magda, for your kindness, knowledge, and questions that encouraged more thinking throughout this project.

From critical approaches to journalism, to illustrating the unphotographed, community engagement, research approaches in journalism, creating journalism for the web, and finally, conducting personal interviews, I am immensely grateful for the classes at Concordia and how they influenced this project. In particular, I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. David Secko, who has encouraged me to think bigger since the beginning of my time in this program.

Beyond Concordia, I became the artist-journalist-researcher I am today because of Jillian Piper, Nana aba Duncan, Dr. Stéfy McKnight and Katie Graham, who inspired me to pursue a path combining illustration, journalism, and research-creation.

I spent years of my childhood at Mooney's Bay Beach and the Rideau Canal. Hot summer days were spent digging holes in the sand until I reached water, swinging until I got sick, or exploring until I found something new, like a bridge hidden in the tall grasses. The park was my first introduction to life in Canada. This work, although it's about Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG) park, is dedicated to the parks that came before it and after it: Mooney's Bay, Laleh, Gofogou, Vincent Massey, Andrew Hayden, Walter Baker, Rouncey, Trenholme, and Jeanne Mance.

Minutes before writing this, I was asking my mother if the order of the points in my discussion made sense, which speaks volumes about how much she has supported me throughout this project. Even though she lives in Ottawa, she is a part of my sense of place in Montreal through her phone calls and visits. My dad does not know much about the details of this project, but he's still supportive, waiting for me as I take photos from every angle of NDG Park. To my lovely parents, thank you.

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¹ This is not the same Nicole that I interviewed about her memories of NDG Park!

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Introduction: A community park, the stories within it, and an evolving sense of place

Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG) Park is an ordinary city park, situated in the neighbourhood of the same name in the city of Montreal. Besides its central cenotaph in remembrance of World War I and its crimson central pavilion, it is a typical Montreal park. It is neither an architectural marvel with ornamental fountains and chalets nor a forested landscape where one can get lost in paths for hours a day. The 9.5-acre park's charm comes from its chameleon-like nature, transforming with the seasons and even the time of day. Across the land, spread somewhat sporadically, are a play structure with a splash pad, a dog run that is never empty, a more-than-century-old war memorial, a baseball field that transforms into a skating rink in the winter months, and an abundance of benches and wooden seats strewn across a tree-covered landscape. The park's metaphorical heart and physical core is the placette, the small central square with its pavilion. On any given evening, there is a symphony of sounds spilling from the centre through the park's paths: the fast hum of a scooter, children's high-pitched laughter, the beat of the stereo from Tango or Zumba classes, the clattering of skateboards on pavement and the strumming of a guitar or boom of a DJ set.

Throughout the years, NDG Park has been a significant reference point for the community. It is where Montreal's Golden Chariot streetcar² stopped on its route to explore the city (Peate, 1973, pp. 57-58). It is where local organization Head & Hands hosted massive concerts called "Sunday in the Park" from the 1970s to the early 2000s (News Desk, 2012). It was where racial tensions

² The Golden Chariot was a tourist streetcar that took people around Mount Royal, stopping in NDG, Snowdon, the Plateau, and Downtown Montreal. It is known for its golden colour and open roof (Orlando, 2020).

came to a head in the 1970s (Kastner, 2023, p. 100) and where a tree-toppling storm passed through in 2017 (Parrillo, 2017).

The park is a part of the NDG community's sense of place (SOP), a concept discussed in multiple fields, including environmental studies, sociology and geography, with each defining it differently (Erfani, 2022, p. 454). In journalistic research, Gutsche and Hess (2019) have described a SOP as a connection to a location, so there's a sense of comfort and inclusion (p. 25) or a quality displaying people's physical, psychological or social connection to a geographic space, even without their presence within these places. Concurrently, journalism scholar Carrie Buchanan (2009) says a SOP for a citizen is a "sense of their locality and its place in the wider world" (p. 63). As the environment changes, local newspapers can capture that transformation by displaying a SOP through their written and photographed depiction of a place (Buchanan, 2009, p. 6). As of 2025, there are no newspapers in NDG, the last of which stopped publishing in 2023 (Morris, 2023). The lack of local reporting leaves a gap in capturing NDG's SOP as it transforms throughout the years.

My research-creation project was an attempt to fill that gap by capturing the community's relationship to NDG Park and how it has evolved through an exploration of graphic journalism, using approaches from (hyper)local reportage. By using comics, first-person reportage illustrations, mapping, and informational graphics, I have explored a changing SOP in a multimedia piece that bridges the history of NDG Park with its present. The research and creation explored three driving questions:

1. How can you capture a transforming sense of place using graphic journalism by utilizing approaches from oral history and place-based journalisms?

2. How do you fact check graphic journalism?
3. What is the journalist's role in graphic journalism within a community?

Journalists and scholars utilize the term “graphic journalism” to refer to hand-drawn forms of journalism. Comics journalism (Chute, 2016, p. 197) and illustrated reportage (Embury and Minichiello, 2018) are among others. The term “comics journalism” comes from journalist Joe Sacco, renowned for his reportage comics (Chute, 2016, p. 197). Comics researcher Scott McCloud defines comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (p. 20). Based on that definition, not all illustrated works of journalism are comics. Conversely, reportage illustration is an “event-based” means of producing artwork; the reportage artist attempts to capture what they see on location while creating a narrative (Embury and Minichiello, 2018, p.1). The term graphic journalism encompasses the field more broadly as it refers to any form of journalism that uses visual information (Schlichting, 2016, p. 2). For this project, I will refer to all journalists who draw as artist-journalists, so I am not limited to comics journalists or reportage artists.

A brief history of NDG Park

NDG Park stood as one of the two parks in NDG when the city of Montreal first annexed the area in 1910. In 1907, it was listed under the name of “Public Park” in the *Atlas of the Island and City of Montreal and Ile Bizard* (Pinsoneault, 1907) after the city completed their extension of Sherbrooke Street in 1893 (Gubbay, 1998, p. 43). It first appeared under the name “NDG Park” in a *Montreal Gazette* article during the same year (“Will Take a Vote”, 1907). On August 11, 1908, the Town of Notre-Dame-de-Grace officially gave it the name “Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Park.” Located in the older part of NDG, bordered by Sherbrooke Street, Côte-Saint-Antoine

Road, Girouard Avenue, and Marcil Avenue, the park colloquially goes by the names “Marcil Park” and “Girouard Park.” In 1919, a citizen-led initiative led to the creation of the park’s war memorial (“Authorized New Increases of Pay,” 1919), which the United Kingdom’s Edward, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) visited and inaugurated in October of the same year (“Prince Unveiled Soldier Memorial,” 1919). In 1938, the park faced potential replacement by a sports centre, which NDG residents vehemently stood against (‘Biggar’). Over the years, the park continued to be a hub for sports, particularly baseball and hockey. In 1961, it became one of the sites for NDG Baseball (Gray, 1961). In the early 1970s, racism erupted in NDG with white citizens fueling aggression against Black citizens. These aggressions came to July 11, 1973, during a night of unrest at NDG Park, which Black community members had forewarned the police about earlier (“Black Leaders Seek ‘Positive’ Measures after NDG Incident,” 1973) (Kastner, 2023, p. 100). Starting in 1970 and continuing for thirty years, the park was home to “Sunday in the Park.” These events, organized by Head & Hands, a youth organization in NDG, featured afternoons of festivities and concerts, encouraging community unity (Shapiro, 1973, p. 44). In 2017, a microburst devastated the park, tearing out dozens of trees (CBC News, 2017a) and closing it to the public for nearly three weeks (Parrillo, 2017). In 2018, an interuniversity initiative between Université de Montréal and Concordia University led to the redesign of the current NDG Park Pavilion (Faure, 2016), where the city launched the Rendez-Vous in summer 2024 (Ville de Montréal, 2024). The Rendez-Vous hosts musical events at the park every weekend, pairing them with drinks, food, and ice cream (Rendez-Vous NDG, 2024).

My memories and connection to the park

My first photo of NDG Park was from before I knew it was a park. I have two pictures of the River's Edge Community Church amongst budding trees on a rain-soaked April afternoon in

2023. It was the first time I was in Montreal that I knew I would be living there soon. Everything felt imminent. That afternoon, I was actively looking for apartments and had failed at finding one I liked. With its lens pressed against my back-seat window while my dad drove through NDG and Snowdon³, my camera snapped every time a part of Montreal intrigued me. The green church roof stood out amongst the gray clouds, catching my eye as we headed back to Ottawa. According to my Google Search history, the first time I thought about NDG Park was around midnight one week later. It was early May, hours after I had returned home to Ottawa from Montreal and secured my first apartment near the Vendôme metro station. The email confirming that the landlord had accepted my application arrived in my inbox at 11 pm. Lying on the couch trying to fall asleep, I scrolled through Google Maps and swiped on Safari searches to learn about my new neighbourhood. Despite having to work in the morning, the prospect of living somewhere new after 20 years in Ottawa and having an apartment of my own made me restless. I first discovered the train routes for the bulky gray EXO cars that passed my new apartment's window, then moved to the realm of grocery stores. Once I realized the nearest big grocery store was a 12-minute walk, I started looking at carts with wheels. Then, I searched how far I would be from my nearest coffee shop and then my campus, by car and on foot. The end of my search brought me to my future gym and finally NDG Park.

I could not explain why, but the idea of a park near my new home was exciting to me. Although my dad had made our small plot of greenery in Ottawa more grandiose by planting a willow, a maple, a linden tree, and multiple evergreens, I barely used my family's backyard; a fear of ticks and bees drew me away. A public park was different. Unlike our quiet and fenced piece of land,

³ Snowdon is a neighbourhood in the Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough that is by the Décarie Expressway (Quebec Autoroute 15) and connected to the rest of the city by the orange and blue metro lines. Concordia's Loyola campus is also located in the borough. It takes just one bus from the nearest metro station to get there, making it a desirable neighbourhood for students (like me).

a public park had an element of being elsewhere. Yes, this park was mine, but it was also everyone else's. People would flow through the pathways, on the fields, and under the shade of the trees. I could be at home here, yet I would be included in the pulse of my neighbourhood as a bench sitter or occasional artist, amongst the ball kickers, play structure folks, and dog walkers. Future searches brought me back to the park a few times, but my first visit happened on a warm July afternoon. I had twenty minutes for a walk before my cousins and I were going to return to Ottawa. Our visit barely lasted 24 hours, as I had accidentally bought tickets for one cousin and me to see Pitbull the same weekend we were supposed to spend in Montreal.

Now, it seemed like it was for the better. With seven people in a small studio apartment, an immovable kitchen island, and a range of different heat levels we found comfortable, sleeping had proven to be challenging.

I had calculated that I had six minutes to walk to the park. That would make the journey last 12 minutes and the destination six, with a two-minute grace period for photos. The lack of time made me leave my camera packed in my bag, but I brought my phone. On a day that was growing more and less overcast, depending on the different parts of the sky, I left my apartment, searching for directions to the park on Google Maps.

The route I took, left on Sherbrooke Street, past the Decarie Expressway, with the view of the Saint-Jacques bridge that my mom called "Washington Tower"⁴, to the Chalet Bar-B-Q restaurant with its comic-book-like sign at the corner of Sherbrooke and Addington Streets, and crossing the road at an intersection where traffic lights that never seemed to be green at the right time, was something I had to look up. Now, nearly two years later, the same path is so ingrained in me that I walk it every time I miss the bus without even having to think about the route.

⁴ The Washington Monument is a tall white obelisk in the heart of Washington, D.C., commemorating George Washington. Instead of its actual name, my mom calls it "Borje Washington", meaning Washington Tower in Farsi.

However, those first few times, I noticed more details, wondering about the flavour profile of the Pączki at the Polish bakery, promising myself I would be back. Observing the architecture of the houses on Girouard Street, I compared them to the those in Ottawa's The Glebe⁵ neighbourhood. I documented the entire walk, showing when and where I crossed the road, and what caught my eye, like the *dépanneur* that I thought I would visit regularly but never did.

The first time I properly visited the park was on August 13, 2023. Earlier that week, I had walked through the park on the way to Monkland Village⁶, but that evening, I found myself on the benches facing the Empress Theatre, just across from the park on Sherbrooke Street. I could lie and say that I was looking at the Empress, but I honestly cannot remember looking at its details until autumn. My sights were set on the closed travel agency with the Farsi and English lettering. It reminded me of a similar one I had seen when I last visited Iran in 2021. In my first real week in Montreal, I was on the hunt for similarities that could make this unfamiliar place a home. I had walked a marathon through the city for the same reason two days earlier. On my last night in Montreal until late August, I wanted to leave my apartment, so I decided to put the adage I believed to the test: I would go to a place that was both mine and public. The details of what I did at the park are foggy, but I remember trying to get myself to sit still, listen to music and soak in the setting sun. I was vastly more unsuccessful than I thought, lasting around seven minutes and seeing two dogs before I began my walk home.

My encounters with the park all follow a similar structure. I walked by it or through it as it transformed through the seasons. On chilly evenings when the nightlife buzz from the Plateau

⁵ The Glebe is a central neighbourhood in Ottawa, close to the Rideau Canal. It is known for entertainment, food, and shops.

⁶ Monkland Village, located on Monkland Avenue, is a picturesque area in NDG near Villa Maria metro station, filled with shops and cafes.

Mont-Royal⁷ felt like too much and a quiet downtown too sombre, I found myself walking on Côte-Saint-Antoine Road by the skating rink. The slap of the puck was just enough energy to remind me that life was bubbling in my neighbourhood.

When I made this park the subject for my thesis project, my relationship with it changed as well. I began to understand its inward workings, but it also stopped being a park. Every time I was there, I felt like I was obliged to pay attention to it. With this project ending, I am unsure what my new relationship with it will look like. Will it become a reminder of young adulthood in a new city?

Although I say that my relationship with the park has changed, the idea of being a park dweller was always more of a dream than reality. Beyond this project, the park has always been a more transitional space; it is the constant presence that reminds me I am at home every night, whether I am on the 105 bus or walking home from Vendôme metro. It is the occasional walk through the trees every season as I observe life from a distance. When I am a passerby, the park is not a subject; it is scenery, and it is a sign that I am in *my* neighbourhood.

Literature Review

1. News coverage and NDG

In 2025, neither the NDG neighbourhood nor the broader Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (CDN-NDG) borough has any local or hyperlocal⁸ publications. Métro Media's *Journal Metro* stopped publishing in August 2023, resulting in the discontinuation of local coverage within 17 Montreal communities. This included local news for CDN-NDG, and the page

⁷ Plateau Mont-Royal is a Montreal borough known for picturesque streets and nightlife on Saint-Laurent Boulevard.

⁸ To avoid confusion, as I discuss regional and community newspapers, I am referring to Negreira-Rey's (2021) definitions for hyperlocal (journalistic outlets separate from national news organizations or corporate groups that cover a space smaller than a municipality, the smallest area for local governance) Any coverage equal or bigger than a municipality would be local.

dedicated to news in the borough it used to update on its website (The Local News Research Project, 2024). NDG did have a hyperlocal paper, *The Monitor*, which operated from 1926 to 2009. Another community newspaper in the neighbourhood, the *Free Press*, shut down in 2017 (Wilton, 2017). In 2020, NDG briefly had an online hyperlocal news source, the *NDG Echo*, run by community member Julie Anne Pattee. Pattee's page covered issues specific to NDG, but she stopped updating it in 2020.

Currently, the only NDG-specific coverage comes from a weekly radio talk show, "What's Happening in NDG," which is an hour-long show broadcast on CJLO 1690AM in partnership with the NDG Community Council. CJLO is Concordia University's campus radio station, and their offices are located in NDG at Concordia's Loyola University campus, making them local to the area. The show typically focuses on events and groups located in the area.

Beyond the local, regional reporting on NDG primarily arises from *The Gazette*, Montreal's daily English-language newspaper, and *The Suburban*, an English-language weekly paper serving suburban Montreal, Laval, the West Island, and the East End. In addition, national news organizations, such as CTV, Global News, CBC/Radio Canada and CityNews and their Montreal-based offices, cover noteworthy events happening in CDN-NDG for a general Montreal-area audience.

Despite all of this, there is no NDG-specific news organization. Outside of noteworthy events or one-time coverage, what happens in NDG can go under the radar. As Rasmus Klein states: "Having a local news medium dedicated to covering you and people around you helps mark the identity of the place where you live as somewhere and helps mark people there as someone." (quoted in Nielsen, 2015, p.16). Without a local newspaper, NDG's stories only exist within the context of

greater Montreal's SOP. Without regular coverage of an area, it becomes difficult to capture its individual SOP.

1.1 NDG, history and arts

Beyond journalism, NDG, particularly the area near the park, has been the subject of historical and arts-based research. In 2011, Tim Schwab created "Imagining NDG", a multimedia community art project. The project, resulting from four years of community collaboration, observed how the neighbourhood of NDG evolved throughout the decades (Heffez, 2011; Schwab, 2011). Although the website is now down, it showed the NDG of the past through archival photos, its present through interviews, and also included five documentaries (Schwab, 2011). More recently, PAAL has created "Histoires NDG", which has broken down the neighbourhood into its different parts and provided its stories. Narrowing in on NDG Park, Jamie-Lee De Groof's research on collective memory and the Empress Theatre emphasizes the park's connection to the theatre and performance arts in NDG, even illustrating a map of the park (2023).2. Practical approach to combining (hyper)local and graphic journalism.

2. Practical approach to combining (hyper)local and graphic journalism

In developing a methodology for combining local and graphic journalism to illustrate a SOP, I first establish a set of definitions for SOP, (hyper)local, and graphic journalism that I reference throughout the rest of this work. As these journalism subtypes are both practical fields, I also highlight different applications and methods that journalists have utilized within (hyper)local and graphic journalism and how they can capture a SOP.

2.1 Defining a SOP within place-based journalism

To illustrate a SOP, one must first define it. In Journalism Studies, Hess and Waller regard SOP as one's connection to a place and, as a result, how their interest in reading information that

touches upon their SOP (2014, pp. 125-126). A SOP varies on an individual basis; the definition does not assume that everyone living in an area has the same values, points of view or interests. In fact, one does not need to live in the place an article is about to be interested in reading it; they could be interested due to physical, psychological or social connections they have to the area (p. 126). Hess's SOP definition has evolved over the years and now correlates with an unexplainable sentiment of connection to a place, arising from a feeling of comfort, ease, and familiarity within it (Gutsche and Hess, 2019, p.25).

Another journalism scholar, Carrie Buchanan, first tied SOP to the local paper, highlighting that through its stories, readers could perceive a place through descriptions and photos, make sense of a place and its people, understand what characteristics represent it, and see its collective consciousness (2009, p.66). The newspaper highlights a reader's locality and its place in the wider world (2009, p.66). Starting a story by saying where it takes place, mentioning locations people are familiar with and utilizing tone (whether it is negative or positive) are all ways journalists can establish a sense of place (2018, p.79-80). Later, Buchanan would go on to clarify that a SOP refers to one's perception of a space combined with how society views it (Buchanan, 2018, p. 5).

Beyond journalism, geography scholars have said that a SOP is a combination of the emotional connection people have to places (place attachment), understanding a place as a part of oneself (place identity) and the variety of meaningful activities a place provides to an individual (place dependence). Interestingly, Westerholt et al.'s research shows that place attachment, identity, and dependence are all connected to people's perceptions of a place (2022, p.8). However, they discovered that even if a place has no correlation or even a negative correlation with these three factors, individuals can still consider it a meaningful part of their lives, highlighting how

complex a person's connection to a place can be (p. 10). This corresponds with Manzo's (2005) research, underscoring how significant places in people's lives were often non-residential and tied to their critical life issues, or turning points, highlighting that it may not be the place itself that is significant, but the moment one has in it (2005, p.74). It is these "experiences-in-place", as Manzo calls them, that make a place meaningful, adding to one's SOP.

Combining Gutsche and Hess (2019) and Buchanan's (2009; 2018) definitions, and Manzo (2005) and Westerholt et al.'s (2022) research, a SOP is a connection to a place, arising from associations a person has with it, the feelings they have within it, and how they make meaning of it. Concurrently, it is understanding one's place and how it fits into the wider world.

2.1 Local/hyperlocal journalism, and capturing a SOP

To create a form of journalism that was truly only about shared connection to place. Hess (2013) coined the term "geo-social journalism" as a replacement for the current model of community and local journalism in an increasingly online landscape (pp. 48-49). Geo-social journalism emphasizes that local newspapers are bound to the geography in which they exist; however, due to the boundless nature of technology, these papers must also consider how they are operating within a larger social space (Hess, 2013, p. 53). Hess's research falls within the realm of scholarship looking at SOP and place-based reportage. The two most common fields are local and hyperlocal journalism. Definitions for local and hyperlocal differ by scholar, but I refer to Negreira-Rey's (2021) definitions of hyperlocal digital media as journalistic outlets separate from national news organizations or corporate groups that cover a space smaller than a municipality, the smallest area for local governance. Conversely, any coverage equal to or bigger than a municipality would be "local".

Freeman's (2020) study of two communities within an Australian municipality compares the approaches of a newspaper designed for a larger local audience to one that is more hyperlocal. The municipality's local newspaper was based in one town and had satellite branches in others. Residents living in the same towns as the newspaper offices felt positively about its coverage. It was only when Freeman talked to community members in a more isolated and smaller village located 150 kilometres away from the nearest satellite location that there was dissatisfaction with coverage. Since reporters lived far from the town, they were unable to provide relevant information to the residents. As a result, the residents had created a separate print-only paper (2020, p.532).

Referring to definitions, this new paper would be "hyperlocal" while the municipal paper would be "local". However, assigning these names can interfere with catching the culprit, which is a reporter's proximity to the geographic area they cover. As a result, I will refer to the terms *hyperlocal* and *local* as scholars do in their research. When I refer to it, I will use the term (hyper)local.

In Buchanan's 2018 study of hyperlocal⁹ publications, she compared three news organizations that covered Cleveland, Ohio: a monthly citizen-journalism newspaper, a weekly regional newspaper, and a national hyperlocal news organization with a branch in the city. What Buchanan discovered was that the publication run by citizen-journalists published more stories on local¹⁰ places than non-local ones. Conversely, fewer than half of the stories the other two news organizations published focused on local areas. Buchanan argued that by including places

⁹ Buchanan's definition of a "hyperlocal" publication ties to Metzgar, Kurpius, and Rowley's 2010 definition as a form of news that focuses on a single community within a geographic location, promotes civic engagement among citizens, and is online only (pp. 779-781).

¹⁰ Buchanan defines local as within a publication's coverage area.

within Cleveland, instead of beyond it, the citizen journalists were able to capture a more local SOP in the city than the hyperlocal papers (2018, p.14).

This goes beyond a journalist's physical proximity to a place and becomes their understanding of the community. McAdam and Hess's study of five Australian local newspapers defines this sensibility as knowing people in the community, the area's history (place knowledge), and its geographic limits (2024, pp.7-11). Limits in this case meant ensuring that a publication's coverage area did not exceed the boundaries of a community, moving it beyond local (p.11). Journalists have a role in place-making by showing spaces, bringing them to life, and giving them meaning. Through newspapers, audiences can understand their SOP (Downman and Murray, 2018, p.16). However, a journalist can also demarcate a place with negative associations and stereotypes through their framing of events and the way they are written about (Gutsche and Hess, 2019, p. 63). Once a journalist reports a story, their reporting becomes the portrayal of said place. If their coverage focuses heavily on negative occurrences, it can lead to a misrepresentation of a place and a community (Gutsche and Hess, 2019, p.106).

In Gutsche's 2014 study of place-making as a news practice, he saw that journalists and officials had a different understanding of the Southeast Side of Iowa City compared to Black residents. By asking journalists, officials and residents of the Southeast Side to create maps of the city while describing what they were drawing, he observed how Black residents felt isolated (p. 500) and relegated to certain areas that were separated from white residents, through boundaries like highways (p. 503). Concurrently, journalists and officials shared similar ideas of place, with their maps underlining the same landmarks; they also used words like "crime-ridden" or "poor" to describe the Southeast Side, displaying their perception of place (p. 504). This underlines the

importance of journalists not just being in a place but going beyond official's perspectives of a place and establishing an understanding of residents' perspectives.

Wahl-Jorgensen's 2024 study backs this up as she highlights the relevance of local journalism entrepreneurs who report on a particular area, belong to that area, and understand the area's SOP. Across her interviews with local news editors, she emphasized the relevance of proximity and co-presence with an audience for establishing professional authority as an editor (p. 54). Due to their long-time presence in a community, local knowledge, living in the same place, and witnessing the community and the events occurring within it, Wahl-Jorgensen (2024, pp. 54-56) argues that these journalists establish trust with their audiences that they could not do otherwise. Usher brings up the concept of place trust, or the "cognitive distance between who you trust to acquire knowledge for you, as well as a material geographic reason for trusting someone else to do this" (2019, p. 105). When one cannot experience an event, they must trust the person who was there to provide that knowledge for them. Within marginalized communities, a journalist's lack of proximity to and disconnection from the history and preexisting issues in the place they are covering has led to mistrust and poorer coverage (Usher, 2019, p.115).

One way to increase community trust is by having journalists embedded in the communities they cover (McAdam and Hess, 2024). Beyond physically being in the place, a journalist can partake in events, join local clubs, and be a visible citizen of the area (2024, pp. 7-8). In McAdam and Hess's case, this characteristic, which they define as visibility, not only increased the community's trust in the newspapers but also their loyalty to them (p. 8). The pair define visibility and sensibility as "news presence" and highlight how they are a significant part of what makes local newspapers healthy in the digital age.

Together, these different cases establish that to accurately depict SOP, a journalist must understand a place by being in its proximity, embedding themselves in the community, and understanding citizens' perspectives. By doing so, they can establish a sense of trust and loyalty within the community they cover.

2.2 Graphic journalism, comics journalism, and SOP

Beyond observing SOP through a local journalism lens, one can look to graphic journalism as another vector for capturing a feeling of connection to a place and how that connects to the world. While existing research has evaluated how comics can capture time and memory (Chute, 2016; Kavaloski, 2018) and bring a reader into a setting (Dong, 2015), there is no research on combining graphic journalism with the local.

One of the intersections between graphic and (hyper)local journalism happens through the idea of “place knowledge”. This term, used in reference to local journalism, highlights knowing the history and stories about a particular location (McAdam and Hess, 2024). This ties to the work of comics journalist Joe Sacco, who says, “comics allow you to go back in time” (Chute, 2016, p. 210). His work illustrates his perception of history, juxtaposing public history with the personal stories of others he interviews, allowing the reader to see how they connect (Dong, 2015, pp. 49-50). Kavaloski (2018) argues that Sacco's comics are both journalism and history. Much of his work relies heavily on historical research, with testimonies of the present drawing attention back to the past; history influences the present, and Sacco's work illustrates that (Kavaloski, 2018, p.135). Personal history in Sacco's work often looks like recapturing memories of people he interviews during wars or crises. This makes the illustrated memories “doubly mediated,” as the interviewee's memories are not entirely objective, and the artist journalist cannot physically witness what they are describing (Dong, 2015, p. 45). Drawing memories in turn becomes an act

of inhabiting the memory subject (Chute, 2016, p. 202). This becomes even more pertinent when the memory has no photographic evidence attached to it. Illustrations allow one to capture these memories (Chute, 2016, p. 210), whether they belong to someone who experienced a concentration camp, like Art Spiegelman's father, or a witness to Hiroshima, like Keiji Nakazawa.

In *Maus* (1986), Spiegelman retells the story of his father in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. In the process of working, Spiegelman highlighted how memory has elements that will always remain unverifiable (Schwabsky, 1994 as cited in Adams, 2008, p.63). However, Spiegelman had other survivors review his work and vouch for how accurately it represented their memories, highlighting that through research and interviews with his father, authenticity remained at the core of his work (Adams, 2008, p. 64). Spiegelman's comics drew out Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats, highlighting the subjective potential of drawing (Chute, 2016, p. 6). Throughout the comic, Spiegelman's usage of featureless mice lets the reader project themselves onto the characters, generating greater empathy (Kruger, 2015, p.361). Concurrently, he intentionally juxtaposes the cartoony animals with realistic scenery and harrowing situations to create a sense of collision and charge (Chute, 2016, p. 186). Those who had experienced the concentration camps did not recognize themselves in the renderings of mice, but in the facts and story that he illustrated (Chute, 2016, p. 161).

Nakazawa's *Hadashi no Gen (Barefoot Gen)* tackles trauma and witnessing differently. Based heavily on his survival of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, *Barefoot Gen* tells the story of Gen and his family in Japan and the aftermath of the bombing. Nakazawa and Gen's stories mirror each other, but Gen's story contains some fictionalized elements; for example, Nakazawa never saw the deaths of his brother, sister, and father, instead hearing about them from his mother, while

Gen did (Yamamoto, 2017, pp. 162-163). Despite the minor fictionalization, Chapman, Ellin and Sherif classify Barefoot Gen as they do memoirs and oral history; they are all “deliberately created representations of the past that have been mediated by the intervening years” (Chapman et al., 2015, 69). Chapman et al. (2015) and Yamamoto (2017) explain how using different techniques in comic creation allowed Nakazawa to express the traumas he experienced and the post-traumatic stress he still experiences. Indeed, Chapman et. al (2015) goes as far as saying that the only weakness of visual media in displaying traumatic events is its inability to show smell (p.70).

Both comics provide images for uncaptured memories, allowing artist-journalists to visualize them through drawings. Images allow events to become situated in collective memory, argues writer Susan Sontag, as without them, an instant becomes unmemorable (Sontag, 2003, p. 67). This ties back to the purpose of the first illustrated newspaper, which was to allow readers to feel as if they were at an event through the provided illustrations. What they saw would allow them to have a clear and truthful memory of the event through the journalist who had been there (Barnhurst and Nerone, 2000, p. 64). Unlike film, pictorial narratives allow one to control the amount of time they look at something (Versaci, 2007 as cited in Chapman et al., 2015, p.61). Concurrently, unlike writing, they can also immerse the viewer in what they are showing. This aligns with Sacco’s description of comics as an “immediate medium,” throwing the reader into the atmosphere of the piece (Schack, 2014, p. 111). This idea is often referred to as “presence,” or the feeling of being in a particular location (Steuer, 1992, p. 75). One can view the idea of presence and immersion in Sacco’s *Footnotes from Gaza* (2009), which is mostly a collection of interviews with survivors of the Khan Younis and Rafah massacre. When illustrating these memories, Sacco is not present as a character, like he usually is in his work (Musleh-Motut,

2019, p. 63). Musleh-Motut (2019) argues that through *Footnotes from Gaza*, Joe Sacco recreates the presence of Rafah, allowing the reader to witness the testimony of the survivor and their experience through the comic (pp. 68-69). Concurrently, Chute (2016) discusses the intimacy of a comic due to the immediacy of hand-drawn visuals; through the artist's lines and portrayal of a moment, a reader gets to witness the experience (Chute, 2016, p. 262). Looking beyond comics, from 2009 to 2021, artist-journalist Gabriel Campanario illustrated a particular location or event in the city of Seattle for the *Seattle Times* "Seattle Sketcher" column, pairing it with a written article about the place in question. For Campanario, a good sketch captures both a SOP and time (Jain, 2021, 48:00).

Cortsen argues that creating a SOP requires illustrating familiar locations, writing relatable place-related dialogue, utilizing specific signage from an area, and showing how a place connects to the world (2015). By altering these elements, one can translate a comic's setting from one place to another. This would mean that a SOP is not just an individual perception, but a collective sentiment tied to a location's societal values, tying back to Buchanan's 2018 definition of SOP.

The commonalities between graphic and (hyper)local journalism highlight a need to research them in tandem. Since there are no local publications capturing its SOP right now, NDG is an ideal testing ground for capturing a transforming SOP throughout the years.

3. Qualitative approaches for capturing a SOP

To develop a methodology for combining graphic and local journalism to capture a SOP, I review other forms of scholarship that look to interview methods and reflexivity, respectively oral history and first-person journalism. Concurrently, I look at graphic journalism as a research method beyond capturing SOP.

3.1 Oral history and journalism

To illustrate an evolving SOP, one must know what the SOP was to see how it has transformed.

Beyond viewing archives, this can also involve interviewing community members about their SOPs. These interviews, which look at residents' memories, can draw parallels between oral history and journalism.

The former is a spoken recollection of a past event that the narrator has experienced that helps establish a collective history (OHA Core Principles). A recollection of oral history captures what an event meant to someone more than the event itself (Berman, 2023, p.79).

While journalism embraces oral history as a buzzword for truthful and “raw” but edited interviews, that is not oral history (Faulkenbury, 2020, p.254). In fact, it highlights a key difference between oral history and journalism: journalists clip their interviews to fit them into a larger story, while oral historians make their interviews as well as their transcripts available publicly, archiving their work and allowing it to be independently verified (Feldstein, 2004). The oral history interview then becomes a part of documented research from an event that oral historians can study in tandem with other forms of evidence (Chagas, 2012, p.66).

Oral historians have precise archiving methods that prevent people's history from getting lost. Their focus on archiving ties directly to the lack of archiving in journalism, or as Ringel calls it, “memory infrastructure.” The fear of losing critical news documents from the past becomes increasingly relevant in the age of technology, as newspapers lose physical archives and digital content online shifts daily. A reliance on resources like the Internet Archive¹¹ becomes key instead of professionally organized archives from newspapers themselves (Ringel, 2024). Ringel

¹¹ The Internet Archive is an online and accessible-to-all library of books, websites, and other artifacts. Anyone can upload content to the Internet Archive. Their “Way-Back-Machine” is a collection of past versions of websites or websites that no longer exist. For newspapers that no longer have accessible websites, the “Way-Back-Machine” is the only way to access what was once on them.

argues that this becomes problematic as the Internet Archives are not maintained in the same way as professional archives. Their captured content often follows random intervals and cannot record all the newspaper's stories.

Beyond archiving, these boundaries between journalism and oral history can become looser and more difficult to define. For example, the final goal of journalism and oral history is to provide the truth (Feldstein, 2004, p. 5). While Feldstein argues that oral history's mission is to recapture the past truthfully, journalism's corporate nature puts external pressures on its pursuit of truth (pp. 6-8).

These external pressures, however, are not certainties. Feldstein compares the journalist's tight deadlines with oral history's slower approach (2004), but journalism can exist beyond the realm of the daily newspaper and the inverted pyramid news story. Magazine writing and long-form projects, like feature articles, are among journalism formats that give the journalist more time to investigate, build relationships and tell a truthful story.

Feldstein also argues that the oral historian's mode of questioning is "gentler," while the journalist's traditionally objective role allows them to be more direct and adversarial with tough questions. Opposing what Feldstein stated, the Baylor University Institute for Oral History (BUIOH) guide also encourages the interviewer to "turn things around" and ask the interviewee to comment on a differing perspective. Zion et al. (2020) highlight that the difference is not leaving difficult questions or topics untouched, but making sure the interviewee's comfort comes first; they can tell the interviewer what topics they do not want to discuss beforehand, and during the interview if they do not want to answer a question, they will not have to (p.74).

The BUIOH guide highlights asking open-ended, follow-up, and clarifying questions, while also avoiding loaded and leading questions; this is also standard in long-form journalism.

Looking through the guide, one significant difference between oral history and journalism is the role of the interviewee. While they are a narrator of their own story in oral history, in journalism, they are an interviewee and part of the story. Although most of the time this rings true, a narrative interview approach (Kartch, 2017) allows the interviewee to tell their own story uninterrupted, acting as a narrator. Amad and Cyr's 2024 piece, "Death of a Dream," which looks at Canadian international students' struggles as the government halts their work permit renewals, forcing them to leave the country, is an example of this; each interviewee tells their story in first-person.

Ultimately, journalists and oral historians prepare for an interview, taking into consideration a question's wording and the participants' comfort. Of course, the oral historian can go beyond the informed consent typically offered by journalists by sending their narrator guidelines on the questions they will ask. Moreover, they ask them to review their interview transcripts and give corrections (Faulkenbury, 2020, p. 257). Journalism standards typically advise against sending the entire piece to the interviewers before the journalist publishes it (Kent, 2020).

However, when it comes to care, journalism has come quite far. Contemporary approaches to journalism, such as trauma-informed journalism, which emphasizes a greater understanding of trauma both for interviewees and journalists (Thompson, 2020) or care-based practices, where journalists establish connections to the communities they are covering by being attentive to their needs, listening to them, being responsive, and taking responsibility (Robinson, 2024), are just two of the ways journalists have extended greater authority and attention to the interviewee and their wellbeing.

3.1 First person-journalism

In contemporary journalism, podcasting has become a popular medium. In particular, scholars often talk about the utilization of the first-person in podcasting due to the intimacy of the audio medium, where the voice of the narrator sets the relationship between the journalist and the listener (Lindgren, 2016)(Rønlev and Sommer, 2024)(Pettengill, 2025). The journalist is not just a narrator, but a character interacting with those they interview. Within the context of a podcast, Rønlev and Sommer (2024) say that the journalist-narrator can serve one or more of the character functions set by Michael Phelan: synthetic, thematic, and memetic. A synthetic first-person narrator acts as an observer of a story, while a thematic first-person narrator has both a connection to the story and is an outsider (pp. 6-8). Conversely, the memetic first-person narrator is telling their own story. Each of these roles builds a relationship with the listener and podcast host (pp. 9-10).

In a study of six podcasts told in first-person, Pettengill highlights different devices that a first-person perspective brings to the table (2025). One of these devices is bringing up a memory that ties into the story but is not a direct part of it, displaying the host's personal connection to their reportage subject (pp. 9-10). On the opposite end of the spectrum was "retrospective reporting," which showed the host retelling an event from their perspective. Pettengill says that this is most like objective reportage, with the caveat that the first-person increases the immediacy and proximity of the event they report on (p.9). The most common device was the development of reflexive narration, humanizing the host by showing their natural reactions (p.8).

However, first-person reportage did not emerge with podcasting, nor does it end with it. Tom Wolfe's 1973 work, *The New Journalism*, highlighted journalism in the 1960s that embraced first-person reportage, greater subjectivity, and a literary turn in journalism, incorporating devices like scene setting and dialogue into articles. The new journalism was a turn from values

in traditional “fact-oriented” journalism, which favoured a coverage of events instead of the process behind them, followed rigid reportage methodology, like the inverted pyramid structure, and embraced traditional objectivity (Dennis, 1982, pp. 4-5). Objectivity became a journalistic standard in the 1900s, standing for a neutral and facts-based approach to reportage where the journalist was detached from what they were writing about (Ward, 2019, p. 2).

Even before Wolfe, in the late 19th century, first-person journalism existed in Norwegian literary reportage, emerging from travelogues which took elements of literature and fiction, blending them with the writer’s observations of events into a form of journalism that is truthful to what the author themselves experienced (Bech-Karlsen, 2013). What was different about Norwegian literary reportage was its explicit combination of factual journalism with fluidity through painting, poetry, and writing about dreams. Bech-Karlsen (2013) argues that this form of writing was ultimately journalism, but writers would also add fictitious elements, placing their work between non-fiction and fiction.

One of the journalists he discussed was Christian Krohg, a painter and journalist who merged elements of impressionism into his work. Unlike the other journalists in Norwegian literary reportage, Krohg was truthful, but highly subjective and direct(Bech-Karlsen, 2013, pp. 17-19). His first-person perspective, paired with illustrative approaches, resembles the travelogues of the 21st-century cartoonist Guy Delisle. Unlike Krohg, Delisle does not claim to be a journalist (p. 228) and instead illustrates and writes what he sees and experiences, spending time in different countries. In his book *Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City*, Delisle’s perspective is that of someone who lives in Israel but has no personal ties to the country. Because of his honesty, the reader can perceive the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, how it has affected Palestinian

livelihoods, and the living conditions in Israel and Palestine, depending on where people are from and how they identify.

The idea of being truthful when writing in the first person means going beyond what you remember and investigating yourself, states Nichols (2021). This looks like fact-checking memories with online resources and your family, acknowledging one's positionality and biases, and admitting what you do not know (Nichols, 2021, pp. 57-67).

Delisle's work does much of this; he fact-checks himself, is honest about what he does and does not feel (Schmid, 2021, pp. 221, 242), observes his limitations as a visitor to Israel (p.242), and provides historical attributions and external perspectives (p. 249). However, Delisle (2021) rejects calling himself a journalist, instead referring to his work as autobiographical. Schmid argues that there is no quality of his work that separates it from that of other comics journalists (p. 229).

3.2 Graphic journalism as a method

Before there was a need to distinguish graphic journalism as a field within journalism, illustration was a regular part of newspapers. For 50 years, visual journalists were primarily illustrators, taking on different roles like special artists who focused on wars, artist-naturalists who were social commentators and observers, artist-explorers who reported on travel, and news illustrators who were regular reporters (Chute, 2016, p. 63). After the evolution of the printing press and cameras, there was a shift from narrative illustrative journalism to modern photojournalism as an objective, accurate, and immediate witness to events (Barnhurst and Nerone, 2000, p.78). Ultimately, due to their hand-drawn nature, drawings would never be purely denotative, meaning that beyond what was illustrated, there would be secondary meaning that the viewer would interpret (Barthes and Sontag, 1982, p.17). The artist would be intervening

with the subject they were capturing by attempting to reproduce it; they would be unable to capture everything a photograph could, and their style would get in the way of realism (pp. 17-18). To this day, the most common critique of graphic journalism has been its lack of traditional objectivity standards associated with the photograph and news reporting (Gutiérrez, Miren, et al., 2018, p. 49) Illustration's power to distort the subject through the illustrator's style implies subjectivity, unlike the photograph, which is often viewed as real-life being captured with a camera. Concurrently, Sacco himself believes his self-insertion within his comics is an indicator of subjectivity, highlighting his perspective as a journalist who was actively a part of what they wrote about (Jenkins, 2007).

In response to such critiques, artist-journalists have embraced various approaches to developing authenticity in their work. Weber and Rall (2017) argue that although illustration's subjectivity is obvious, all journalistic productions can be inherently subjective by only portraying one side, unconsciously inserting one's beliefs into their work, and including and excluding sources (p. 384). In particular, they underline the malleability of the photograph and how easily one can manipulate it.

Weber and Rall suggest using comic styles that adapt physical resemblances to real life to emphasize transparency (p. 386). Through the drawing's level of detail, the artist-journalist can ensure that what they are illustrating is based on something they have seen. Although they may not achieve realism altogether, employing a naturalistic style by valuing accuracy allows the reader to perceive artist-journalists as witnesses (Schmid, 2021, p. 141). Beyond illustration, including evidence becomes another means of emphasizing authenticity, as it justifies what the artist-journalist has created with facts (Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 389). Proof of an artist-journalist's witnessing could be through photographs, archival materials, data, and explanations

of their process that they include within their work, at the end of it, or as a separate layer (p. 389). An example of including evidence is *Salvezza con...A casa nostra* by Lelio Bonaccorso and Marco Rizzo (2022); within their work, they include photographic evidence of the scenes they have drawn, reference images, and fact boxes (Mangiavillano, 2023, p. 582). The artist-journalist's authenticity also appears through their role in the work.

Self-insertion, although an indicator of subjectivity, is a method for highlighting the journalist's role as a witness and an indicator of transparency (Chute, 2016, pp. 63-64). The author's presence in their comic often shows them at work, highlighting their authenticity (Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 385). Sacco states, "By inserting yourself in the narrative, you can also write the stuff that journalists do not, for example, about how people interact with you." (Jenkins, 2017). While they are witnesses, the reader can perceive the artist-journalist as an outsider to the situation they are in, through the style they use to illustrate themselves (Dong, 2015, p. 51). This same style is also a means of showing the "authentic self", something that a photograph cannot convey (El Refaie, 2012, as cited in Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 386). Conversely, the artist can also remove themselves from the story, displaying their lack of presence. When Sacco writes history, he is no longer present as a narrator; instead of his own commentary, he writes plainly and frames the comic with black borders, emulating an objective perspective (Kavaloski, 2018, p.132). Although Weber and Rall (2017) and Chute (2016), highlight the inclusion of the artist as a form of validation, some illustrators choose to exclude themselves from their work, beyond a few notes, like Olivier Kugler in "Escaping Wars and Waves: Encounters with Syrian Refugees" (Kugler, 2018) and the team who wrote "How One Uyghur Woman Escaped a Chinese Internment Camp" at *Business Insider* (Azim et al., 2021). Kugler appears in handwritten notes across his illustrations. He pairs illustrations of refugees with quotes from them and third-person

observations and facts, like a traditional journalistic article. Conversely, the team at Business Insider illustrated the story of Zumrat Dawut, a Uyghur Muslim refugee in the United States, in her first-person perspective; their only addition to the story were notes at the beginning and end to provide context on how they received the information (Azim et al., 2021). Beyond these notes, the team gave interviews on their process, discussing how they referenced Dawut's testimony at the United Nations and interviewed her to create their comic (Comic Book Herald, 2022). The inclusion of a meta-story explaining the journalist's process, whether it is included in the graphic journalism as notes or provided in a separate interview, is another method Weber and Rall highlight as a means of showing authenticity (2017, p. 389).

Graphic journalism also has qualities that traditional visual journalism lacks, tying it to trauma-informed journalism. The detachment an illustration has from real life due to its innate lack of realism, paired with the artist's style and subjectivity, can allow one to look at imagery that would be harrowing in photographic form (Skidmore, 2015). Moreover, depending on the artist-journalist's process, drawing can also make interviewees feel more at ease. For example, when documenting life aboard a refugee ship crossing the Mediterranean, Lelio Bonaccorso would sit on deck and draw refugees who wanted a portrait. Interviewees found sketching supplies less intimidating than cameras and recording equipment (Mangiavillano, 2023). As a result, they were more willing to speak and interact with the artist, even looking forward to seeing the final illustration. In a similar vein, when Isabel Macdonald documented a refugee camp in Haiti, she realized that a hand-drawn approach allowed her to hide a vulnerable interviewee's identity while still displaying their face (Macdonald, 2022, pp. 2011-2015). The pace of graphic

journalism can be another benefit; Sacco sees his work of comics creation as slow journalism,¹² filling in the gaps left behind by mainstream news organizations (Chute, 2016, p. 201).

Methodology

With my project, I aimed to answer three questions regarding SOP and graphic journalism by producing a hyperlocal graphic journalism piece on NDG Park. I utilize the term “hyperlocal” here as my coverage reflects an area smaller than a city borough, in this case, Montreal’s CDN-NDG borough, and predominantly the area immediately surrounding NDG Park.

RQ1: How can you capture a transforming SOP in a local context using graphic journalism?

RQ2: How do you fact-check graphic journalism?

To illustrate a transforming SOP at NDG Park, I borrowed methods from (hyper)local journalism and oral history and interviewed ten community members who had a role in creating the SOP at the park or had significant memories of the park. Using those interviews, I formulated a multi-article place-explainer, a piece that answers a question specific to a particular area (Athas & Gorman, 2012), on the park’s SOP throughout its existence, experimenting with three forms of graphic journalism: comics, infographics, and illustrative reportage.

Comics: I conducted memory interviews with four of those 10 participants, asking them to tell me about their most significant memory from the park. Afterwards, I utilized comics to visualize the memory that NDG citizens have of the park. I fact-checked these recollections to the best of my ability, referencing archives and articles that authenticate the memories.

¹² Slow journalism is an approach to journalism which slows down the process in favour of a deeper look at the subject. It is seen as an alternative to the fast-paced world of digital news. (Benton, 2020)

Illustrative Reportage: For historically significant events, I created illustrations based on a variety of archival sources, including the [Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec: les Archives Nationales](#) and [Archives de Montréal](#) (see table #1 for all the archives used in this project).

Infographics: For more recent or quantitative information, I used charts and maps.

Throughout this process, I explored how I could fact-check and create visual retellings that were authentic and truthful. This meant fact-checking the illustrative reportage and memory comics with archival sources, news, photographs from the interviewees, and other information available online, such as photographs, videos, weather and sunset time.

For the memory comics, I was in contact with the interviewees while working and asked them for clarifications as I worked to capture their authentic past.

RQ3: What is the journalist's role in graphic journalism within a local area?

As both an artist-journalist and a journalist within the area of NDG, I wanted to reflect on what my role(s) entailed.

I based my reflections on Gulyas and Hess's three C's of Digital Local Journalism (2024, pp. 8-9):

Community: How did my reportage on the park establish a sense of community within NDG while adding to the current perception of NDG?

Commitment: How was I committing myself to NDG and establishing connections beyond outreach for the sake of this project?

Continuity: How will the format of this place-explainer as digital affect its connection to the NDG community? Is there a way to explore other avenues of publication?

Beyond reflections, another consideration of my role fell into how I included myself in the piece, which can be one of the characteristics of creating authenticity (Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 385) and transparency (Chute, 2016, pp. 63-64) in comics journalism.

Within both comics journalism and illustrative reportage, artist-journalists can choose to include or exclude themselves within their work. As previously discussed in the Literature Review, some artist-journalists, like Joe Sacco and Dan Archer, include themselves in their comics; they exist as characters within their stories, interacting with those they are interviewing or just being present in the frames. This acts as a means of authenticity, as the reader knows that what they are reading comes from the perspective of the journalist and is subjective to their experience (Weber and Rall, 2015, p. 385). Conversely, some journalists choose to exclude themselves beyond a few notes or meta story describing their process (Kugler, 2018) (Azim et al., 2021)(Comic Book Herald, 2022).

In my approach, I include my perspective as the journalist, but as a secondary layer to the comics. I have retold my experience using autoethnographic illustrated notes and photographs that exist as a meta-story in the final piece. The secondary nature of my self-insertion into the story, both as an interview-witness and a resident of NDG, gives insight into the process and acts as a means of reflexivity on my role as an artist-journalist, community member, and a journalism-practitioner and researcher (Gutsche and Hess, 2019, p.106).

Research Approach

My research approach was guided by Niblock's (2012) work on journalism practice as research and her focus on reflexivity. To her, reflexivity is a necessity in this field, with reflection as a process of seeing and understanding one's beliefs and actions (p. 505). Within her paper on this subject, Niblock used first-person and reflected on her own experiences as a practitioner of

journalism and an academic(p. 504). Niblock proposes two approaches to journalism-practice-as-research: a theory-first approach starts with a question that the researcher attempts to solve by testing a theory in practice, and a practice-first approach, beginning with a problem that the journalist resolves through practice. The process of creation works in tandem with the process of reflection. Niblock says the latter approach works better with a flexible production schedule (e.g. self-publishing) and becomes helpful to experiment with new reporting techniques (p.506). For this thesis, I take a practice-first approach to find answers to my three research questions. Combining Niblock's approach with Kim Chapman and Owen Sawchuk's seminal 2012 work, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances,'" I have split my work into "research-for-creation" and "research-from-creation" (pp. 15-18), which I explain in further detail in the following two subsections.

Research-for-creation: the Place-Explainer and Memory comics

I conducted "research for creation," researching with the purpose of creating something (Chapman and Sawchuk, p. 15) by looking at NDG's history and finding significant moments for which there is no comprehensive visual retelling. Concurrently, I met residents of the community, understanding which of the park's events were the most significant to them. During this process, I narrowed the park's history into six articles (see process on pp. 39-42). This research culminated in the development of an interactive website on ArcGIS Storymaps, containing four completed and two in-progress illustrated pieces on different parts of the park¹³. Using the park as a starting point for events occurring across NDG, the place-explainer illustrates how the SOP in NDG park has evolved throughout the years and what the park means to people. It does so by combining personal history and historically significant events which occurred at the

¹³ There are two other components to this ArcGIS Storymaps, which I explain in the next section.

park throughout the years, like the Prince of Wales visit, protests, sports championships and the Sunday in the Park events. The place-explainer begins by explaining the history of the park's name and the relevance of public parks. The website then allows the reader to choose a story about one of six significant events or memory comics in NDG Park's history, displayed via a clickable map.

I wrote the place-explainer in first-person, and took the most objective approach, retrospective reporting (Pettengill, 2025, p.9), so I could increase my immediacy and proximity to the story and clarify how I got the information I did.

The interview subjects are past or current NDG residents, and significant community members like historians, city politicians, community organizers, and place-makers/designers. There were a total of 10 interviewees. For journalistic interviews, I reached out to different community members who were involved with the park throughout the years. Mostly, I contacted them directly through LinkedIn and email. In some cases, I received email referrals and set up phone calls from there.

For the memory comics, I placed a poster on the Facebook group "Thrive NDG", as it is the most active social media group on the platform. Two people, Brian Murphy and Nicole, reached out to me from that post. One individual, Jeffrey Kastner, was someone I had discussed my project with beforehand. Additionally, one journalistic interviewee became a memory interviewee with the participant's approval (see p. 111 for more information).

To understand NDG Park's history, I reviewed various archival sources, with the majority of my research coming from the Montreal Gazette's archives, as it contained the most thorough collection of stories on the park. All of the archives I referred to are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Archival sources consulted

Archives	What I used
Montreal Gazette Archives	Multiple articles to verify events that had happened/ find photos for illustrations
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec: les Archives Nationales	Reviewed “J.A. Godin, Plaintiff vs The City of Montreal, Defendant Joseph Arthur Godin .- 1912-1913” and the related drawings
Archives de Montréal	-Referred to their collections on Montreal war memorials and NDG Park - Referred to several photos they had of NDG Park and the surrounding area
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec: Bibliothèque nationale	Reviewed the years 1973 and 1996 in their NDG Monitor collection
Le Devoir Archives	Cross-referenced 5-10 articles with ones in the Montreal Gazette
Concordia University Library, Special Collections and Archives	Viewed parts of the Leon Llewellyn collection looking at community newspapers and information about the various Black Community Councils across Montreal boroughs.
Head and Hands Archives	Viewed their photos, posters, and notes on “Sunday in the Park”

Beyond archives, I filed one access-to-information request with the City of Montreal to learn what trees had fallen during the 2017 microburst and what they had planted. I did this to ameliorate my understanding of how the SOP had evolved after the storm. I received a response to this request in April 2025, stating that they had no records and forwarded my request to the borough of CDN-NDG. In May 2025, the borough responded with a map of the trees that they were going to plant in NDG Park after the 2017 storm.

Research-from-creation: Reflexivity through fieldnotes and exit interviews

Research from creation, which is the development of data and research from the creative process (Chapman and Sawchuk, 2012, pp. 17-18), comes from two components of this project. Both of

these components are a part of the ArcGIS Storymaps, but they differ in their purpose. The first source of information gathered through the “research from creation” process is the field notes I took throughout the entire process. These illustrated process notes and reflections are publicly available to read as a part of the final project. Although less extensive than originally envisioned, they provide insight into the process. I used these field notes within a meta-story article, exploring my relationship and connection to the park, validating my process and transparency. This article followed Nichols’s guidelines for writing about oneself truthfully (2021, pp. 57-67), namely fact-checking memories, acknowledging positionality and admitting what you do not know.

The second source is the creation of four memory comics and one indirect memory comic. I interviewed three community members who told me about their connection to NDG Park and their most significant memories from it. My sources for the memory comics were four residents of NDG and myself, also a resident of NDG. The five of us had lived in NDG for different lengths of time, ranging from less than two years to over 65 years, our combined experiences encompassing NDG Park from the 1950s to the 2020s. The fifth memory comic was my own and was a part of my notes (see p. 69). I chose to do this as I have lived in NDG for less than two years, which is shorter than the other interviewees’, so my SOP was significantly less dependent on history than theirs. Additionally, this has helped me understand the process and display my pre-established connection to NDG Park as a means of transparency.

For each interview, I conducted one or two pre-interviews to inform the main interview and determine whether there would need to be any additional considerations. In one case, a participant had so many memories that they wanted to go through them with me briefly to see what I would want to hear more about. In another case, the participant wanted to know more about how much of their personal information I would include.

To decide where the interview would take place, I made sure that the process was collaborative between the interviewee and me. I would often offer suggestions for locations if the interviewee was unsure. Ultimately, in all the cases, the participant gave the final say on the location: one was at the participant's workplace, another in a cafe due to a storm, one at the park, and one over Zoom. For the interviews, I took a similar approach to Olivier Kugler, who would take photos and notes during the interview that he would later sketch and turn into a completed digital drawing (Humphreys, 2016; Walters, 2017). I took several reference photos of the interviewee and anything they felt was necessary to their story, and asked them to send me any photos, notes or artifacts they thought would be beneficial as well. I asked them if they were okay with me publishing any of the pictures I took. After they talked about their connection to the park, I asked them if they had any items that they felt represented these memories (e.g., if someone talks about going to Cinema V after the park, would they have a ticket to send me). Immediately after each main interview focused on participants' memories connected to NDG Park, I conducted a secondary interview with each of them, discussing the research process and their experiences and feelings about it (see pp.110-111).

For approximately four to six weeks, I worked on their comics. When I needed their insight on a frame or a story, whether it was through a question or an additional photo, I reached out to them via email. In one case, I showed a participant a part of their comic to make sure it was accurate. After the comic's completion, I asked the interviewees for their thoughts on the final piece. Once they were happy with it, I sent each of them a survey to reflect on the process and the result. I ultimately scrapped this as their insights mirrored their reactions to the comic. To see the structure and questions, refer to the appendix (see pp.111-112).

A home for the research-creation: the final website and booklet

The final website is a multi-page ArcGIS story map and a work of interactive journalism. Usher defines this as a “visual presentation of storytelling through code for multilayered, tactile user control for the purpose of news and information.” (2019, p. 20) Embracing the “tactile” nature of interactive journalism, which lets participants physically interact with the work, the reader can click through different elements within the park, which are placed on a map, that lead them to different articles on the SOP at the park. Another characteristic of interactive journalism is that it is built using software, which applies to my work as well, since I laid out the narrative using ArcGIS (Usher, 2019, p. 22) . ArcGIS has a versatile map-building platform, where one can develop visually compelling and interactive maps, which are the basis of the article. The multilayered element also comes from the Scrollytelling abilities of ArcGIS Storymaps; this is a form of web design where elements move or transform as one scrolls with their mouse, increasing its interactivity (European Data Academy, 2023).

The final work follows a structure that guides the reader forward, giving them an initial understanding of the park; but at the end, they will have the opportunity to explore the park on their own by navigating a map of the park, which hosts the six place-explaining stories, the memory comics, and self-reflection. This method combines an author-driven approach, where the author guides the direction of the story, with a reader-driven one (Gutiérrez, Miren, et al. 2018. p. 50).

Additionally, I created an initial booklet version of the final website, so that it can be accessible offline. The booklet contains all of the information but is not interactive.

Ethics and Trauma Informed Journalism

I required ethics clearance from Concordia University’s research ethics board (protocol 30021409, granted on February 11, 2025), to use the memory comic interviewees’ responses

within my research and for future research publications. To avoid parachute journalism, which is entering a community without knowing anything about it and producing a piece that improperly illustrates who they are (Grant, 2020), I intentionally selected a community that I have ties to already and a park that I frequent. Within the context of this project, I have done research on the area and the park for eight months. For another class part of my Master's degree, I spent four months working on it. I do live in the area, within a 10-minute walking distance from it, which makes me a part of the park dwellers and community. Using Rønlev and Sommer's guidelines, I would be a thematic character, as I am somewhat connected to the story, but the story is not mine (2024, p. 9). By adopting a first-person perspective in the article, I establish my role as a community member and allow myself to be vulnerable while displaying my gaps in knowledge and local context.

When it came to trauma-informed reporting, I based my methods on the *Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice's 2023 guide to Trauma Informed Journalism* (CITIPP Guide), and the *Trauma Aware Journalism News Industry Toolkit* (TAJ Toolkit).

The most important of these throughout all the interviews was informed consent and context, which the CITIPP Guide emphasizes (2023). I wanted all interviewees to understand the goal of this project, which was to illustrate the evolving SOP at NDG Park. I told them how I would use their interviews and the possibility of publishing their interviews. In the comic interviews, the pre-interviews had a dedicated section on reading the consent and journalistic information forms, while in the journalistic interviews, I gave a shorter explanation of the project's goal.

For the comic interviews, I explicitly mentioned when I would be using our conversations for the project. The pre-interviews were off the record, conversational, and to establish trust and connection (Benderev, 2022). Moreover, I concluded my work by getting those whose memories

I illustrated to review it and to express whether they wanted any changes in the way I represented their stories. This was to avoid extractive methods or getting the information I need without considering the interviewee and taking no accountability for what I produce (Wallace, 2020).

Reflections and discussion

Looking back on the research and reflections I have conducted on NDG Park since September 2024, the interviews from March to May 2025, and the creation occurring from January to July 2025, the following discussion looks at the process of illustrating a changing SOP in NDG through combining graphic journalism with approaches from (hyper)local journalism and oral history. Beyond SOP, I review what the fact-checking process looked like within graphic journalism, and touch on my role as an artist-journalist through my reflexive notes and the exit interviews with the memory comic interviewees.

Reflections on using graphic journalism to capture a changing SOP

A collective and changing SOP

In the final multimedia feature, I spotlight the different words that interviewees use to describe their SOP at NDG Park. One commonality everyone brought up was the park's role as a gathering place. Beyond this, interviewees highlighted its versatility, connecting the park to music, war, sports, drugs, church, friends, dance and more. This versatility mirrors how NDG Park appears throughout its history: it is a central place for a variety of community events, sports, and ceremonies. Although each individual participant corroborated the idea that the park was a meeting point, they also described how their SOP changed with time and as they evolved themselves. Beyond changes to personal perceptions of place, historical records highlight how the park was physically transforming. These changes happened through intentional actions, like adding the dog park or creating a cenotaph, or unexpected events, like the 2017 storm.

In turn, the idea of the park acting as a continuously evolving meeting point for NDG residents became the theme of the “Place-Explainer”, using the idea of place as a community connector from *geo-social journalism* (Hess, 2014, pp. 48-49). To establish a SOP, I reviewed people’s perceptions of the park through *The Gazette*’s archives and conducted interviews to see the current psychological and physical connections people had to different parts of NDG Park throughout the years (Gutsche and Hess, 2019). As a result, I tied five structures in the park to the events that changed or impacted NDG Park’s SOP:

1. The Monument: The creation of the cenotaph, Prince of Wales’s visit in 1919/Remembrance Day at NDG Park/Place de Vimy

The completion of the war memorial in NDG Park coincided with the Prince of Wales, Edward VII’s, visit to Montreal. On October 30, 1919, he inaugurated the cenotaph in the park (‘Prince Unveiled Soldier Memorial’, 1919). Looking at the archives, one can see how the memorial, which came together through community efforts, has been the site of Remembrance Day ceremonies for NDG residents throughout the years. In 2017, the city revitalized the monument, renaming the southern part of the park *Place de Vimy* (CBC News, 2017b). The monument is a key part of the park’s past and present, and despite some changes, its role has remained unchanged throughout the years.

2. Place 375e: J.A Godin and Silvano De la Lata’s redesigns for the park

According to the *Bibliothèque Nationale’s Archives Nationales*, in 1912, architect Joseph Arthur (J.A.) Godin created an extravagant design for NDG Park that never became reality. After the city failed to reimburse him for his design, Godin filed a lawsuit against the city that the court rejected in 1917. More than a century later, a team from Concordia University redesigned the

placette, or small square, at NDG Park (Faure, 2016). This story covers the park's physical transformations by architects.

3. The trees: The August 2017 microburst

This section recalls the devastating storm that felled many trees in NDG Park and even closed it down for weeks (CBC News, 2017a) through the eyes of a former borough mayor. Beyond being a retelling, it addresses the trees in NDG park, how they changed, and their impact on the community before and after the microburst.

4. The Chalet (Part 1): Rendez-Vous

In 2024, Jérôme Glad and the city of Montreal created Rendez-Vous at NDG Park (Kelly, 2025). These were live music shows, happening throughout summer and autumn weekends, pairing live entertainment with food and drinks. This article addresses arts and culture at the park and the most recent change to its SOP.

(Draft) The Chalet (Part 2): Sunday in the Park and Montreal vs. Racisme

This article-in-progress covers how racism, community, and music played a part of the SOP at NDG Park by looking at Sunday in the Park, a series of large-scale concerts held in the park from 1970 to 2002, racial tensions at the park in the year 1973, and most recently the 2022 MTL vs. Racisme concert at the park (Shapiro, 1973).

5. (Draft) The baseball diamond and play structure: Replacing the park with a sports/ stadium/Sports and recreation at NDG Park

Recreation is a significant part of NDG Park's history, with activities ranging from skateboarding to ice skating to baseball. However, the city nearly replaced the park with a sports centre in 1938 ('Biggar'). The creation of a single-purpose sports centre feels antithetical to the versatility of recreation at NDG Park, which continues evolving every year.

The SOP in the park holds the past and present simultaneously, and my ultimate narrative displays that dichotomy in a non-linear manner, going back and forth between the present and the past (Enns, 2010, p.53). Enns argues that by utilizing time in such a way, one can highlight elements that no longer physically exist, yet through remembrance and memory, they live on (pp. 53, 58).

As a result, each article focuses on a subject that affects the park today and ties it to a historical event (see Table 2).

Table 2: Past and Present Events

Present event	Past event(s)
Rendez Vous, MTL vs. Racisme	Sunday in the Park, 1973's racial tensions coming to a head
The current trees at the park, the current SOP at the park	The 2017 Microburst
Remembrance day 2024	The history of the cenotaph, the history of Place de Vimy.
The creation of "Place 375e"	J.A Godin's vision for NDG park
Sports and recreation at the park now	The unrealized plans for building a sports stadium

Creating a SOP: place-based and graphic journalism

Illustrating an evolving SOP happened in two parts. Before I could illustrate, I had to understand the SOP at NDG park throughout the years. One establishes a SOP through a combination of psychological, physical, and social connections to objects and people in place (Gutsche and Hess, 2019) so I attempted to see different people's perceptions of the park through the memory comics.

Capturing an evolving SOP happened in two parts. Before I could illustrate, I had to understand the SOP at NDG Park throughout the years. One establishes a SOP through a combination of psychological, physical, and social connections to objects and people in place (Gutsche and Hess, 2019), so I attempted to see different people's perceptions of the park through the memory comics.

What was interesting here was that the same place could evoke different sentiments from different people, despite there being a common perception assigned to it, particularly through the news. In the case of NDG Park, these perceptions were significantly less harmful than Gutsche's 2014 study of Iowa City.¹⁴

For example, the news paints NDG Park as more drug-laden and unsafe in the 1990s and, although interviewees mention this, that was not their only perception of the park at that time. As a result, I illustrate both sides of the story. Another example was the war memorial/Place de Vimy. Although all interviewees who mentioned the memorial noted its role as a reminder of the war, they also had other memories of it. One person felt connected to it because their father was a veteran. Brian mentioned it was the meeting point for him and his friends, and Jeffrey said it was where his son crashed his bike.

Moreover, even more general locations had specific memories. The baseball diamonds at the back of the park reminded one interviewee of playing baseball, Jeffrey of running into an old friend, Nicole of the sunset, and Brian of how he spent most of his time playing basketball, despite the park having no basketball nets. It was these experiences-in-place that made ordinary places in the park significant and meaningful to them (Manzo, 2005, p.74).

¹⁴ Gutsche's study revealed that journalists' and residents' perceptions of the Southeast side of Iowa City varied greatly from one another; the Black community felt isolated and relegated to certain areas. Concurrently, journalists perceived these places as "crime-ridden" and "poor". (see p.14)

To illustrate their sense of place, I ensured that the park looked historically accurate in my illustrations, but that the participants' perceptions of different locations were also visible in these drawings. Beyond personal memory, I wanted to understand the SOP at the park more generally, going back to Buchanan's (2009) definition of SOP as a "sense of locality". By embracing the concept of McAdam and Hess's (2024) news presence through visibility and sensibility, I was able to understand NDG Park's SOP by connecting to the greater local perception of the park.

- Visibility: Throughout this process, I went to NDG Park regularly to observe when it was busy, when it was quiet, and what events occurred within the park. Starting in May 2025, I visited it at least once a week, and before that, I tried to make it there three or four times a month. I also lived in the area, so I walked by the park regularly, even though I did not directly visit it every time.
- Visibility: I embedded myself in the NDG community by attending the weekly NDG History Meetings, attending local events, like Remembrance Day and Rendez-Vous, and getting to know residents, local government, and community groups in the area.
- Sensibility: I expanded my knowledge of NDG (place knowledge) by conducting research on the history of NDG Park and how it fits into the greater community through conducting interviews, looking at archives, and reading news articles on the park.
- Knowing my limits: Pertaining to the hyperlocal, I kept my research limits within the scope of NDG Park and not all of NDG
- Creating a SOP: Combining different forms of graphic journalism

Illustrated Reportage



Figure 1. My attempts at illustrative reportage, following Embury and Minichiello's (2018) approach.

I used illustrated reportage in the stories about the park and its history. Traditionally, an artist-journalist creates reportage illustration on the spot as they observe an event as it happens (Embury and Minichiello, 2018, p.69). Although I did use this approach to cover the Rendez-Vous events, skateboarding, and breakdancing at the park (Figure 1), the majority of my work was different. My approach was closer to that of Olivier Kugler, who took photos of what they

were seeing during their interviews and used them to create a detailed illustrated work afterwards (Walters, 2017).



Figure 2. My illustrative reportage pieces, following Olivier Kugler's approach.

The times when my approach resembled Olivier Kugler's are listed here (Figure 2):

1. On two occasions: Remembrance Day and when I was watching skaters at the rink while the weather was not suitable for drawing.
2. During the first Rendez-Vous event, I was also talking to interviewees and community members, so I had no time to draw.
3. During my interviews, I wanted to concentrate on listening to the interviewee, so I took photos to draw from later.

Originally, I wanted to use both photos and graphics in my work, but ultimately, I only used graphics to maintain the place-explainer as a work of graphic journalism.



Figure 3. Illustrations based on photos I took of ordinary days in the park.

In a few cases, my approach was unlike Kugler's or Embury and Minichiello's. Originally, I took some photos and planned to use them in the final place-explainer. I later decided I only wanted illustrations, so I drew them. These photos were taken in more ordinary settings within the park (Figure 3). I only used photos I took in my reflection piece, where I show my process (Figure 4).

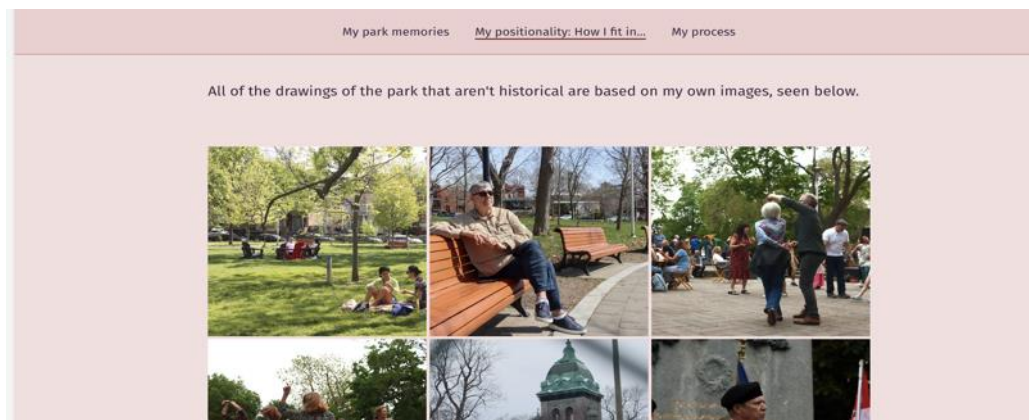


Figure 4. My reference photos on my final website.

When it came to the past events and memories of non-comic interviewees (Figure 5), I could not re-observe what had already taken place to the same degree as I could with events that I witnessed in real-time.



Figure 5. Past events and their recreation through illustrative reportage.

Despite this, I still used the guidelines set by Embury and Minichiello to capture a SOP in my reportage illustrations of historical events. Although I could not apply all of their guidelines, because I could not re-experience these events in real time, table #3 outlines how I adapted their approach to this project:

Table 3: Embury and Minichiello's SOP and my adaptation

Embury and Minichiello's suggestions (2018, p.95)	My adaptation
Visit the location and investigate it for the purposes of making illustrations later by drawing, taking photos, audio recordings etc.	After I read about a historical event, I visited its location and investigated it.
Use open-source GPS navigational software to orient and understand the location	Beyond open-source navigational software, I also looked at historical maps and older open-source satellite images.
Research your subject before going in to illustrate them.	Researching was the primary part of my work. I looked at news archives and read about where events took place, who was involved, and what happened. I then looked for archival photos that would help me build the scene.
Be prepared to draw people moving around	Since I was observing, I embraced a looser and quicker style to emulate what I actually did when drawing on location.

In the case of J.A Godin's redesign for NDG park, I illustrated scenes which were completely imaginary based on his redesigns for the park. For these images, I used my images of the current park and drew what Godin's structures would look like within them (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Imagining J.A Godin's NDG Park in 2025.

Ultimately, I made it clear when I was covering a historical event, or something I had observed first-hand by writing in first person, which is reminiscent of Sacco's (2000) *Safe Area Gorazde*, where he places an autobiographical narrative within a historical one and brings in witnesses of past events into the final piece (Kavaloski, 2019, pp. 132-133).

Memory Comics



Figure 7. Some of the monochromatic comics depicting the past.

Within the memory comics, the style was completely different. Using the information the participant told me during the interview, I drew every scene by scene. When a memory was either too specific to the participant or too distant in the past for me to find a reference photo, I made the drawing monochrome (Figure 7). This action is in reference to Joe Sacco's utilization of black borders and quotation marks in *Safe Area Gorazde* to display survivors' testimonies that he had not experienced or observed himself (Kavaloski, 2019) (Dong, 2015 42,45). What differs in my work is that if the memory was recent or I could verify it through photographs or other archival sources, I used colour to present it (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Memories that I was able to partially verify through photographs.

In each comic, I included 2-3 frames that depicted the participant mid-interview, highlighting the element of transparency (Weber and Rall, 2017) (Figure 9). The setting of the interview was also evident, but I would not be in the frame. In some cases, I included my voice, which is something else Sacco did in *Safe Area Gorazde* (Dong, 2015, 45) and Olivier Kugler did with infrequent footnotes throughout *Escaping Wars and Waves* (Davies et al., 2025, 89) (Figure 9). Although I do not show up in the comics, I explain my role in them in my reflection piece.



Figure 9. Comics where I show the interviewee being interviewed. In the second comic, the green speech bubbles depict my voice.

Infographics

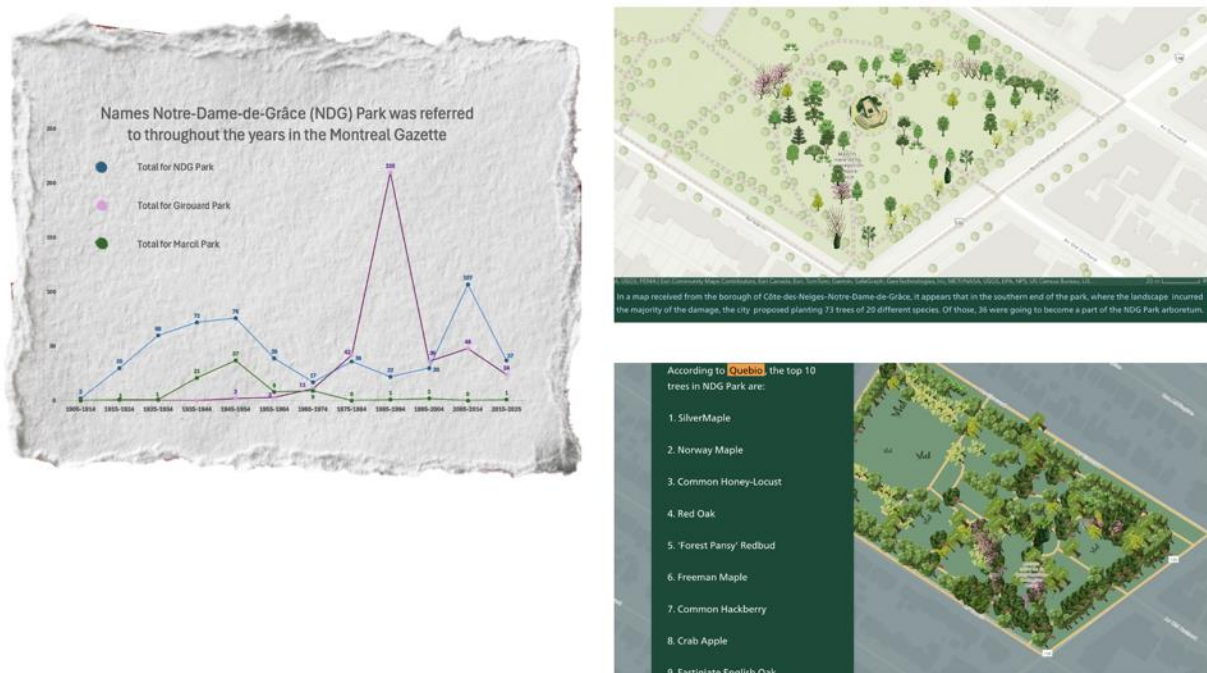


Figure 10. The three charts and maps depicting quantitative information in the final website.

I ended up using four maps and one chart in my work. While the chart and two of the maps were informative and used to display quantitative information about the park (Figure 10), one map's

purpose was a narrative structure visualization, connecting the different elements of graphic journalism together (Figure 11). To create the map, I began with a satellite image base layer, which I then covered with a translucent base, so that readers could view the underlying structures. For the actual park, I imported its paths and shape. To illustrate it, I added trees, grass, the different structures within the park that connected to stories, the people from the memory interviews and also myself. These are clickable components that do not follow any particular order, allowing readers to navigate through the story in any way they desire, highlighting a reader-driven approach to exploring the park's SOP (Gutiérrez, Miren, et al. 2018, p. 50).

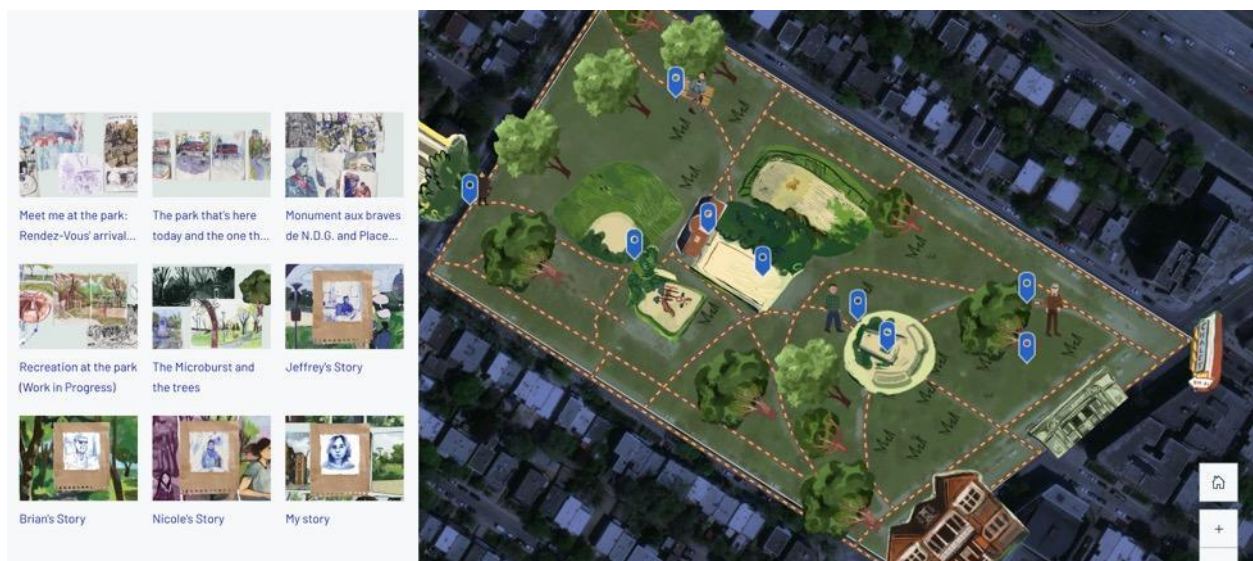


Figure 11. The map acts as a narrative structure to the articles within the final website.

To decide the placement of the memory interviewees on this map, I looked at the location they mentioned the most or where their significant memory was. Often, these lined up very clearly. Beyond elements in the park, I also added the Chalet BBQ restaurant across from the park, a nearby funeral home, and the Empress Theatre. As a result, the final map illustrates the park's SOP by showing familiar locations, utilizing familiar signs, and showing how a place connects to the greater NDG and Montreal area, embracing Cortsen's (2015) approach to illustrating a SOP. As a narrative element within a work of comic journalism, it physically places the reader into

where the story takes place, helping them understand what is happening (Holland, 2015, pp. 94-95).

My last map is a hand-drawn map that is a part of my reflective piece (Figure 12). I continued utilizing Holland's approach when showing my perspective; I tracked my memories within a map that the reader could follow.

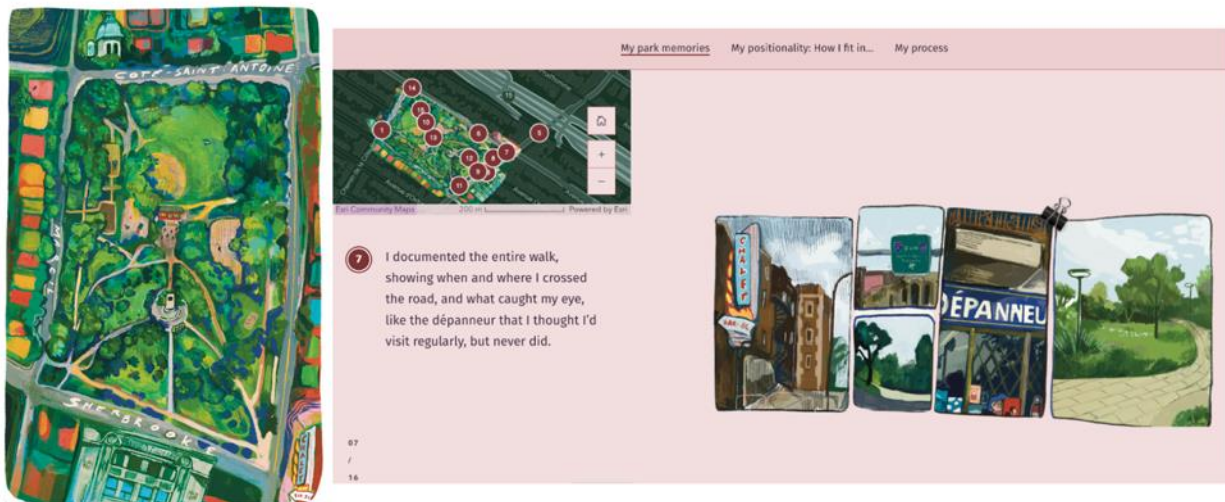


Figure 12. The map acts as a narrative structure for my memories of the park.

Creating a SOP: oral history and graphic journalism

While I was working, I observed that the memory comics I illustrated shared similarities with both oral history and journalism. While there were elements of genre blending, the final work is ultimately closer to journalism than it is to oral history. In my case, what differentiated these comics from journalism and oral history was how I am not publishing or archiving the entire interview and have purposefully selected parts of the interview that best fit the story of the evolving SOP at NDG Park (Feldstein, 2004). My piece is closer to a journalistic retelling of the SOP at the park than a story of the interviewees (see Table 4)

Table 4: Oral history and my approach:

Oral History	My approach
The narrator gives informed consent	The interviewee gives informed consent.
The person being interviewed is the narrator of their story, emphasizing that they are a “live human subject” (Oral History Association, 2018b)	Although I do refer to the people I interviewed as interviewees, their role was closer to that of a co-narrator. I embraced a narrative interview approach (Kartch, 2017), allowing them to tell their own story. My role was asking open-ended questions, listening, asking for more details, and posing follow-ups (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2016)
There is no standard verification method. The facts of the interview are verified using pre-existing documents and sources. Other historians can verify the account by comparing it to other oral histories. (Feldstein, 2021, 21). Concurrently, Columbia University includes a section on fact-checking in their guide, highlighting that it is light and done by the narrators. Although a fact might be false, it might provide valuable information in other ways (Bertin-Mahieux et al., 2022). Some argue that there is not enough verification, and oral histories complement historical documents (Berman, 2023, p. 80).	I fact-checked these memories to the best of my ability using standard journalistic fact-checking methods “The Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide: Fact-Checking Lived Experience” (Baker and Fairbank, 2022) and elements from the CBC’s Peter Johnson’s “Visual Verification Workshop” (Johnson, 2025).
The narrator reviews their interview transcripts and gives corrections (Faulkenbury, 2020, p.257). (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2016)	The interviewee reviewed the entire final comic and provided their feedback. This procedure is closer to oral history than it is to journalism. Typically, a journalist can send a source a snippet of their article for verification, or a general description of the article (Kent, 2020).
The interviews are available in their entirety (Feldstein, 2004, p 20). There is minimal editing done to maintain the integrity of what the narrator said and who they are (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2016)	After each interview, I had to narrow the interviewees’ memories into one narrative. This meant that I framed it by making editorial decisions about what information was relevant to the narrative. The difference was that the interviewee narrated their story,

	similarly to Amad and Cyr (2024). However, I did not edit what the interviewee said at all.
The oral historian makes an interview's transcripts available publicly, archiving their work, and allowing it to be independently verified (Feldstein, 2004, p 22)	Because I did not keep the entire interview in my comic, I also will not make the voice recordings from these interviewees publicly accessible. The final comic and website will be archived to the best of my ability, at a minimum on my website and Concordia University's Spectrum, but hopefully in a printed format within the university or the City of Montreal.

Reflections on creating truthful and authentic graphic journalism within a (hyper)local context

Throughout the creation of the memory comics and the illustrations of past events, the most significant hurdle I faced was showing a scene as accurately as possible, while simultaneously avoiding the inclusion of details that I could not confirm or went beyond what the participant was open to sharing. Within both the memory comics and the reportage illustrations of past events, I was illustrating something I had not personally experienced. What I drew was doubly mediated through me: an external source was telling me about their experience, and I was then illustrating their retelling (Dong, 2015, pp. 42, 45).

Creating truthful illustrated reportage

For the illustrated reportage pieces, I took different approaches depending on the amount of accessible information. When I was depicting scenes that I could find images for in newspapers or archival records, but no physical images, I did not want to assume anything that I could not confirm, such as clothing, appearances, or settings. To recreate the scene as accurately as possible, I drew the location using only the confirmable evidence; to me, this made sense for a journalistic illustration. For historical scenes, I would find images of the people involved and draw them out separately, so that the reader could put a face to the name. For the actual scene, I

would try to find photos of the location where it took place and draw that as well. Then, I would illustrate the parts of the scene I felt confident about; this looked different based on the amount of evidence I had. To explain further, I outline the processes and decisions made for two cases :

Case 1- Prince Edward's visit to the war memorial (Figure 13):

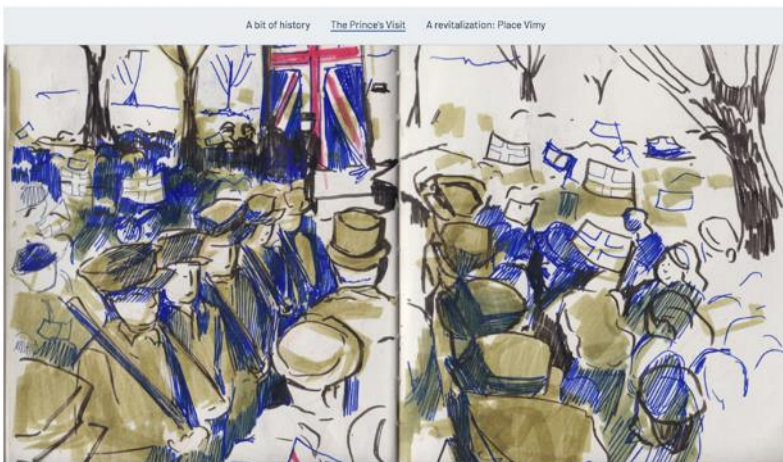


Figure 13. Sketches from the Prince of Wales visit to NDG Park.

I was unable to retrieve any photos of Prince Edward at NDG Park on October 30, 1919, in my archival research. There are photos of him on that day in other parts of Montreal, wearing a trench coat and a hat, so I used these photos as references. Using the descriptors from *The Gazette* article on his visit to the park, I illustrated what the scene looked like. However, I made the details in these illustrations

blurrier than in others that I had photos of or observed myself. I looked up the people mentioned in the article but was not able to find photos for most of them. I drew anyone I had a reference

for more visibly in the scene. For others, I either used semi-silhouetted figures, backs of heads, or cropped hands to illustrate what was happening.

Case 2- Recalling what happened after the microburst (Figure 14):



Figure 14. How I pieced together the August 2017 microburst.¹⁵

As this happened in 2017, there were significantly more photos of the settings available online. I also had a memory interview to help with my retelling. To verify both the memory interviewee's

¹⁵ This individual did not want their name mentioned in the research paper component of my work, so I have redacted all the specific people in this comic.

retelling and the details of the actual microburst, I utilized insights from CBC journalist Peter Johnson's workshop on visual verification, which I attended on April 25, 2025. Johnson suggested verifying an event through multiple visual sources, so one could confirm the time and place something happened. Using X (formerly Twitter) and searching for specific terms on Google, I was able to trace back everything the memory interview noted to an online record. The memory interviewee discussed leaving a city hall meeting early, so I found the [meeting minutes](#) from that day and verified that they were there until the last vote. They mentioned firefighters setting up a temporary fire post in the neighbourhood, which I confirmed through a [Global News](#) video. I found [an additional photo](#) of the same area on X showing a fallen power line. I used Google Maps historical street views to understand how these scenes fit in together and illustrated them. For the people in the comic, I used the news clip to see what they were wearing on that night. Although I was unable to illustrate the exact settings, I could draw scenes that had a higher probability of happening in the way that I depicted them. For example, the memory interviewee discussed making a phone call, so I drew them talking on their phone on one of the streets near the fire post. To illustrate the park after the microburst, I went on YouTube and found a video from someone who had filmed the park right after the storm and then on the next day, when the cleaning process began. With the videographer's permission, I based my illustrations on his videos and Google Maps' Archival street views. Finally, I filed an access to information request with the borough to see what new trees the city had planted in place of the fallen ones. I used that information to develop a map of the new trees at the park.

Creating truthful memory comics

For events that were newsworthy, there was always an amount of evidence to refer to, but for a participant's memory the process was different.

My guideline for fact-checking was the Truth In Journalism Fact Checking Guide's chapter on Fact-Checking Lived Experience (TiJ Guide) (Baker and Fairbank, 2022). I followed these guidelines, but to different degrees that I justify based on the memory.

Memory comics: Fact-checking and illustrating places and objects

The memories that participants recounted often extended to their family, friends, and people they may no longer be in touch with. The TiJ Guide spotlights the “Personal Principle”, which means that all individuals mentioned in a retelling should be a part of the fact-checking process (Baker and Fairbank, 2022). For the majority of the memories, I do not utilize the personal principle, as the impact of these memories was mainly on the interviewees themselves; it did not extend to the others within their recollections. To explain this further, I outline the processes and decisions made for three different cases:

The Personal Principle: Case 1- Unnamed friends (Figure 15)-

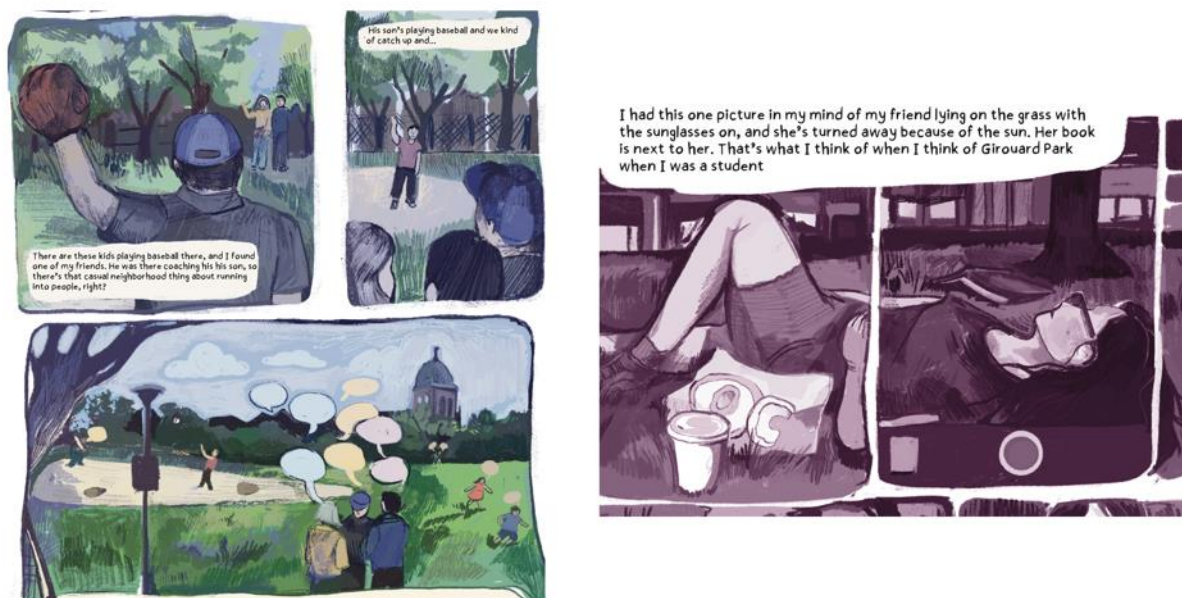


Figure 15. Jeffrey and Nicole's unnamed friends and how I drew them.

Jeffrey mentioned one friend they saw playing baseball at the park, for whom they provided no photo or name. In this case, I had such limited knowledge of the second person involved that I saw no reason to corroborate that they had seen Jeffrey at the park. Moreover, I did not illustrate his face or any definable characteristics, beyond having a son.

Nicole mentioned going to the park with a friend, but only told me her gender and what she was wearing. She mentioned having a photo of this occurrence, but did not provide it.

Simultaneously, she did offer evidence for other occurrences I had asked her about and had mentioned being a private person, so I did not ask her specifically for that photo. To recreate it, I referred to her physical description and another more general photo I had requested and received. The “Personal Principle” ensures that no one in a story would be surprised by their appearance in said story (Baker and Fairbank, 2022). With the amount of identifiable information provided, these friends might not even recognize themselves in these comics. These memories are neither accusatory nor emotional and would likely not garner a strong reaction from the people in the memories.

The Personal Principle: Case 2- Significant figures in harmless memories (Figure 16) –



Figure 16. Jeffrey's children and Brian's girlfriend and friends.

Brian and Jeffrey both mentioned people who played more significant roles in their memories as well. Brian mentioned two groups of people: his first girlfriend and her brother, and his friends in school. He went out with his first girlfriend, someone he did not want to name, when they were in their early teens. Although he expressed that they had an amicable relationship, it was approximately 60 years ago and lasted three months. I could have asked for her information and to reach out to her to ensure that their relationship had truly been amicable, but due to the nature of the relationship and the lack of identifiable features in the drawing, I did not see it necessary. With Brian's school friends, I was able to verify their connection through social media. Brian had posted a photo of his friends after they had gone for lunch, something that he brought up in the comic, and I drew an illustration based off of that photo.

With Jeffrey, it was a bit different. When Jeffrey told me the story of his son's bike ride, he mentioned how it was the first memory his son brought up to him. Although the "Personal Principle" highlighted that I should have verified this memory with his son, I did not, due to the harmlessness of the memory and my sense of trust with Jeffrey. With Jeffrey, a lot of his memories revolved around his family; I did not directly reach out to any of them for the same reasons. After the comic was finished, he did mention showing it to his family, so his son did ultimately see the end result.

The Personal Principle: Case 3- Renowned figures and events ¹⁶- The last "Personal Principle" issue arose when an interviewee mentioned a few political figures and events affecting people beyond themselves. For some of the figures mentioned, I could verify their involvement in the story through documentation, such as videos, meeting minutes, and news articles, placing them at the events that the memory interviewee discussed. There was one individual whom the

¹⁶ Since this individual did not want their name mentioned in this paper, I am not providing the comic showing the figure they referred to.

memory interviewee recalled several times, who played a significant role in the story and was/is also a known figure. I reached out to him directly to validate the memory from his side.

Memory comics: Fact-checking and illustrating places and objects

Fact-checking how places looked involved a different process, as it depended on what information was publicly available online and what information the memory interviewee could provide. Since I based these comics on the interviewees' memories, the majority of the



Figure 17 Brian's fact-checked memories.

information they provided was what the TiJ guide calls “internal facts”. These are events they specifically experienced and that only they could best verify (Baker and Fairbank, 2022). Substantiating their details beyond what the person remembered became difficult. To validate these memories and illustrate them as accurately as possible, I searched for “external facts” within the internal

ones. External facts are those that go beyond the interviewee's recollection, like information about events, places and weather (Baker and Fairbank, 2022). As done previously in this chapter, I outline the processes and decisions made for three different cases part of this research below:

Case 1: Brian (Figure 17)– Brian had no images from any of the memories he described but was very open to providing detailed visual descriptions of himself. He would mention specific items of clothing that were easy to find references to online. With Brian's comic, referring to older images proved to be a necessity throughout the process. To illustrate his school and his

girlfriend's school, I searched for photos from the 1900s; both schools still exist but have changed since his adolescence. Since both these schools had religious affiliations at the time, I found photos on websites that connected to their religions. For the Bank of Montreal image, I found an image from the City of Montreal Archives. For the photo store, I used advertisements from *The Gazette* to verify the location and Google Maps to draw out the original building. I did not draw the sign, as I was unable to find a photo of the actual store.



Case 2: Jeffrey (Figure 18)- To illustrate Jeffrey's son striking the fence around the monument, I first had to find a photo, as there is currently no railing in that area. I looked for older images of the war memorial and sent Jeffrey one, asking if it was the same fence. Once he confirmed it was, I drew it in. For the remainder of his comics, I referred to a set of images from the Ville de

Montreal Archives from the 1990s, as this was the decade that the incidents Jeffrey was talking about took place. Jeffrey also provided several photos that were not directly tied to his memories but matched the timeline of his recollections, allowing me to use them as references. For example, he spoke about his son's bicycle, which was a hand-me-down from his older daughter and showed me a photo of his son at the age when the memory took place with the same bike.

This photo became the basis for his son's appearance in the article. Beyond personal photos, Jeffrey found a photo online of the box that his children used to collect beer caps and sent it to me. I also used a publicly available photo from his daughter's portfolio and a photo of the place his son is working from to draw them currently. I used this combination of personal memories, photographs, and public archival sources to recreate Jeffrey's memories to the best of my ability.

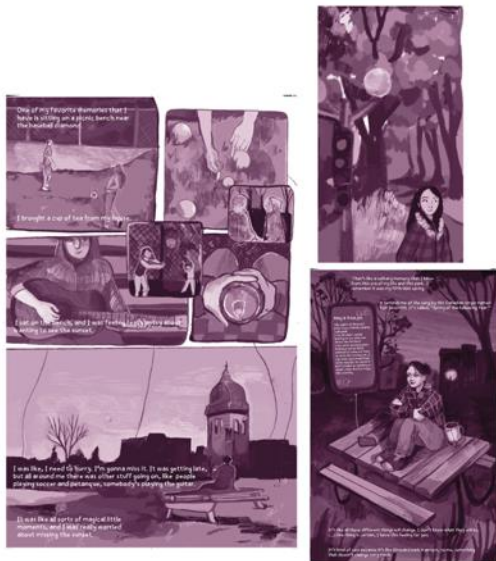


Figure 19 Nicole's fact-checked memories.

Case 3: Nicole (Figure 19)- Since most of Nicole's memories were recent, I also drew from observation. For her memories of the park in 2017, before the storm,¹⁷ I consulted Google Street View's images of the park. After our interview, Nicole did not provide photographic evidence but sent me notes she had taken at the park. One corresponded with her "significant" memory from the park. This note described the scene around her and heavily influenced the final illustration, as she had

provided evidence for the memory. I was also able to validate some of Nicole's memories through external facts I found online. Although Nicole said she missed the sunset in her memory, I checked the time of the note she sent me and verified online that it was from before the sunset. From personal experience, I know that at the park, the houses and church block the sun, so it might just be her perception of the lighting. I also viewed historical weather records and searched through Instagram posts from that evening. Through reverse-searching and converting the coded timestamps to actual times, I confirmed that these photos were posted after sunset but before the

¹⁷ Before the storm, there were significantly more trees in the park.

next one on May 10, 2017. At the end of this process, I asked each participant if the drawing validated their memory, and each participant verified that it did.

Reflections on assessing my role as a journalist in graphic journalism

My role, as told through reflective notes

From October 2024 to July 2025, I kept notes on my process of working on this project. The work of Isabel Macdonald, who reflected throughout her process of developing graphic reportage on the Haitian earthquake, inspired my notetaking process (Macdonald, 2021). These reflections were to be entirely illustrative, but the result was a mixture of illustrations, rough comics, voice memos, and typed notes. I completed the writing for these reflections in real-time, but I would often complete illustrative notes later (Figure 20).



Figure 20. Three comics based on a typed note (a), voice note(b), and a written note (c).

When the process began, my reflections involved recalling the different steps of the process, from my supervisor accepting NDG Park as the subject for my research to meeting Jeffrey Kastner. In the first few months, I had no major reflections as I worked to develop my project proposal. Later, I began including notes on my perception of the park and the process of working

on my master's thesis, expressing my frustration with getting interviews and slow progress. As I visited the archives and learned more about the park's history, I began creating rough sketches of different graphics I wanted to include. (Figure 21)



Figure 21. My reflective notes throughout the process. I began drawing my comic in my notebook but changed my mind.

When the interviews began, I debriefed on points or questions that came up during the interview and how I felt afterwards. Moreover, I also reflected on my process. For example, I initially illustrated the memory comics in my notebook, but after reflection, I realized that working digitally made more sense (Figure 21).



Figure 22. Reflecting and drawing my memories of the park.

However, for my own memories of the park, I completed some of my illustrations in this notebook, as I wanted to maintain a consistent visual voice between my reflections and my memories (Figure 22). These notes were my attempt at “self-insertion” (Chute, 2016, pp. 63-64) (Weber and Rall, 2017, p. 385). By displaying my presence, positionality, and discussing feelings throughout this research-creation process, I embraced Sarah Niblock’s “journalism practice as research” approach (2012). Concurrently, I tried to emulate the work of Guy Delisle in *Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City* (2011). Delisle not only talks about the history he learns but also shows the reader the places he visits, the people he meets, and even shows his work process. Within my notes, I do the same, showing who I have talked to, what my process looks like and what research I conducted.

Towards the end of the project, I began doing illustrative reportage sketches in the park. These continued in a second notebook and contributed to the final article (Figure 1). All together, these observatory notes highlighted how I was committing myself to NDG and establishing

connections. They tracked my time in the archives, at the park, and talking to different community members (Gulyas and Hess, 2023). I included these notes, my own perception of the park (see p. 4) and a summarized version of my process as a reflective piece in my final website (Figure 23).

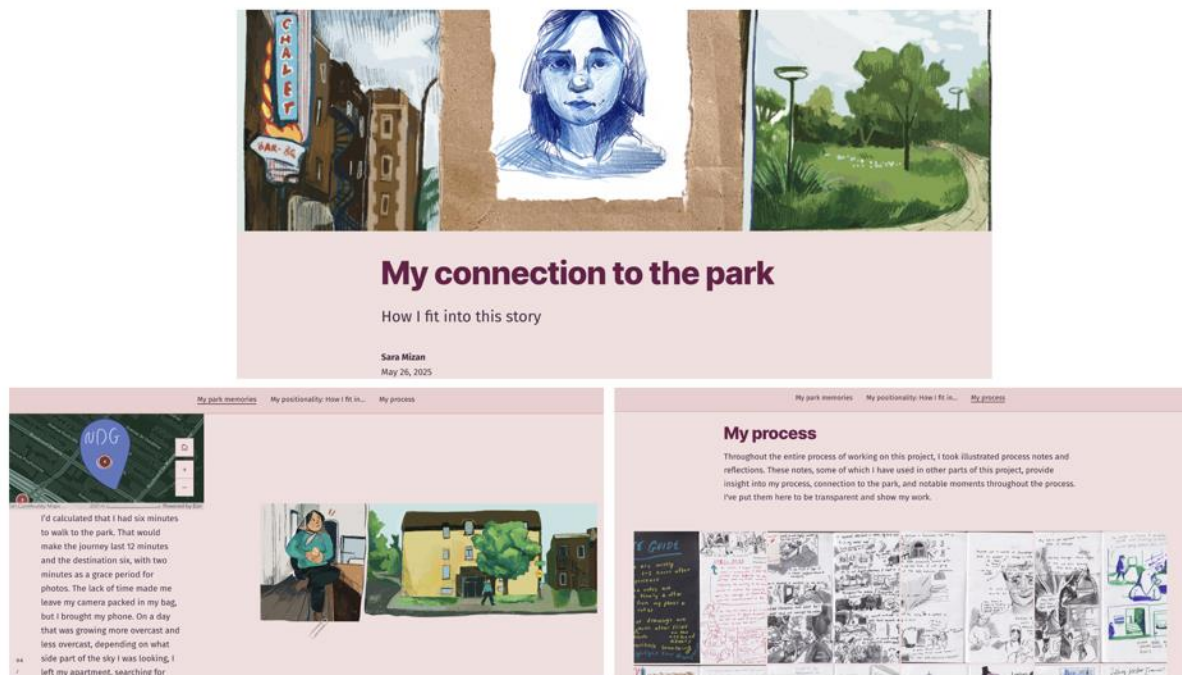


Figure 23. The page summarizing my reflections on the final website.

In my notes, I also reflected on my role as journalist and what the final product of this project will look like. In the following sections, I expand on some of these reflections:

Interpretation and the accurate memory

Accuracy in comics can be thought of as an interpretation of an occurrence, instead of the actual event, and emphasizes how all visual media are mediations of what actually occurred (Gusain and Jha 2024, p. 64). My notes grapple with this idea, as what I am creating is ultimately a doubly mediated interpretation (Dong, 2015).



Figure 24 Reflecting on my perception of the park

Several times, I realized that I had not asked enough questions during interviews because, in my head, I had interpreted the scene and filled in some of the blanks with my own imagination. For example, when Jeffrey told his story from 1991, I imagined him looking as he did in 2025 with different clothing. As I initially did not consider the 34 years that

had gone by, I had to ask him for a photo of himself from that year.

With Brian, this issue was more prominent (Figure 20a). When he talked about driving by NDG Park, his car never came to mind, because I was imagining myself sitting with my parents in their van as he told his story. As I worked on his illustration, I realized how many different possibilities there could be for his car model. Once I had completed the drawing, I had another question: what street was he driving on? I have only driven by NDG Park on Sherbrooke Street West; as a result, Brian was driving on Sherbrooke Street West in my head. I reflected on this issue because it highlighted a difference between comic and written journalism. In writing, I might be able to exclude these details. For example, by stating, “In the late spring, Brian was driving by NDG Park. He looked out his window and smiled,” I would be truthful, even though this description might not be complete. With comics, I had to include the park and what he saw in some way. There is a much higher threshold for necessary visual information when it comes to comics journalism.

My own SOP

As I interviewed more NDG community members, I realized that my perception of the park was evolving as well. Hearing about individuals' events-in-place (Manzo, 2005, 7), establishing new memories, and all the history I had learned about it had significantly transformed my perception of NDG Park and other parks. It reminded me of how one's perception influences their SOP (Westerholt et al. 2024, 8). For example, Nicole talked about using the park as a place to practice running. One morning, I decided to follow her route and realized how difficult it was with the park's incline. In the same vein, I became more attuned to other happenings in the park, like sports, games, and events. For example, hearing about bocce courts and pétanque in the interviews made me observe them in other parks for the first time. As a result, I began to understand how my reportage on the park would add to the current perception of NDG, making me feel more responsible for accurately representing its sense of place.

The format of this project

Throughout working on this project, I considered the format of the place-explainer and how it would change its connection to the NDG community (Gulyas and Hess, 2024). Currently, only people with functioning and relatively strong internet connections can experience the online-only place explainer since it is very image-heavy. While working, I had different community members and scholars suggesting a printed version of this project, making it accessible to everyone at the park. In my notes, I reflect on what a printed version of this project could look like and illustrate the layout of the navigational map if I were to print it. After completing the website, I did create an initial booklet-version of the project. Although this is not part of this master's thesis, I will be developing and distributing a physical version of this project in the future.

The role of the interviewee

Pre-existing knowledge of the interview and process

My journalistic interviews with community members and leaders were with people I knew of through local news or word of mouth but had never met. I had background information about them, but they knew nothing about me or my project beyond the message I sent them.

When it came to the memory comics,¹⁸ it was a different process. My three main memory interviewees thoroughly knew about my project, either through a pre-interview or pre-existing connection. In the exit interview, they highlighted that having pre-existing knowledge through our conversations or reading the consent forms made them feel at ease because they knew what they were getting into.

Jeffrey, I had met at the beginning of my project, and we had been talking over the past few months. He did not have a pre-interview, but instead, we had discussed the project in-depth before. I sent him the consent forms and discussed them with him on the day of the interview. Having just completed his master's, he was familiar with this process.

Conversely, I went into pre-interviews with Brian and Nicole not knowing anything about them, as they had reached out to me via Facebook Messenger and email after I had posted a callout on Facebook. Because of this, the first interview was very informal and consisted of getting to know each other and understanding the consent form and journalistic information. Doing this allowed the first interview to act more as a conversation than a formal sit-down.

The journalistic interviewee who became a memory interviewee underlined the importance of the pre-interview and pre-existing context. When I asked them what was missing from the interview, they answered:

¹⁸ One of the memory comics was with the outlier.

“Even if a certain aspect was missing, I tend to fill it in any way. Someone who might be less literal may not have given you as expanded or full answers.”- Memory interviewee

Without a pre-interview, I was only able to ask this interviewee about matters that were public knowledge and less specific to them, making it necessary for them to expand on what they had said.

The importance of location, position and choice

I gave the interviewee the final say on the interview location. I took this from the *Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice’s guide to Trauma Informed Journalism*, which mentioned allowing the interviewee to select the interview location (Quigley, 2023), and the *Trauma Aware Journalism News Industry Toolkit*, which emphasized giving control to the interviewee and ensuring they felt safe where they were being interviewed (2024). With all the interviewees, I suggested the park as our meeting place, but that did not work out for most of them.

Jeffrey, whom I interviewed in early March, said he would be available during his office hours at work. During the interview, he sat behind his work desk, and I sat in a chair in front of him.

After the interview, Jeffrey expressed that our seating arrangement helped him feel more comfortable:

“I am in the behind the desk chair, and you’re coming to the desk chair, which puts me in a kind of elevated position, which I like. These things kind of count in terms of making people comfortable and feeling like you are in control”- Jeffrey

Similarly, Nicole expressed that giving her the last say in the meeting place was something she appreciated.

“And so, it's nice to have met in a part of town and a part of the neighbourhood that is familiar to the interviewee,”- Nicole

With Nicole, our location got changed due to an April snowfall. Two days before we met, I emailed her and suggested two establishments but emphasized that I would be open to any location. Ultimately, Nicole selected a café I had mentioned.

Only Brian's memory interview happened in the park. In terms of place and memory, Brian emphasized how being at the park helped him recall his memories more clearly, as he'd have visual triggers when looking around, like the old Bank of Montreal or the Empress Theatre.

"It definitely made me feel better about talking about the park. It was really crucial for me. I did not want to do it on Zoom. I wanted to be here for sure."- Brian

Keeping what Jeffrey said in mind, I sat where Brian chose, which was near the monument, the site for many of his memories.

Interviewee's comfort and trust

By working in comics, I was able to grant everyone the amount of anonymity that they were comfortable with. The hand-drawn nature of the project allowed me to grant interviewees and other people in their retellings the level of anonymity they desired; they only existed in illustrated formats (Davies and Rifkind, 2025).

In all the interviews I conducted, I embraced the narrative interview approach, where I listened to the interviewee tell me their story (Kartch, 2017). Even in the journalistic interviews, I would allot some time to hear about the interviewee's personal narrative with the park.

For the comic interviews, which were conversational and narrative-focused (see structure on p. 110), the elements of discussion and dialogue were touched upon by all three main interviewees. Brian said that he felt listened to and that I would progress the discussion based on what he had said. Jeffrey said that being able to engage in dialogue meant that he did not feel restricted by rigid guidelines. Through the open-ended line of questioning, he felt like he could go in different

directions. Nicole liked how she could explore her connection to the park first before diving into her memories, as it allowed her to discuss the background before going into the details.

Reflecting on trauma-informed journalism and privacy

Given that I asked participants to recall their significant memories from a public park, I did not expect to hear any traumatic memories. However, three minor incidents arose during this research. Concurrently throughout the interviews, I also observed the theme of privacy. I expand on them in the sections below. To maintain their anonymity, I do not mention the participants' names when discussing the incidents:

1. When one participant described their memories of the park, they veered towards more positive memories. But during the exit interview, they revealed more negative aspects of their relationship with the park, including one interaction with an individual that made them uncomfortable. I did not include this experience, as they stated that overall, their relationship with the park was positive, but gave them the space to share it.
2. One participant was explaining their history with the park and asked me to keep a part of their story private. I made sure not to push them to share more or explain the situation beyond what they felt comfortable telling me. I did not publish what they told me, and reiterated at the end of the interview that I would not publish it. The CITIPP guide emphasizes respecting an interviewee's boundary when they tell you "no".
3. As they retold a story, one participant got emotional. I asked them if they needed some time before continuing with the interview, which is what the CITIPP guide suggests, and made sure they were okay. The participant mentioned that despite tearing up, they enjoyed sharing their experience. After completing their comic, I sent them two versions:

one where they got emotional and one where they did not. I asked them which version they felt comfortable with sharing and respected their choice.

Privacy

One overarching theme that also arose was privacy. I did not want to reveal too much about the lives of the people I was illustrating. For example, for Nicole's privacy, I confirmed that all scenes of her comic took place in public spaces across NDG, rather than near her home. In Jeffrey's comic, I wanted to show elements of his family home, but did not want to invade his privacy. I used several blank backgrounds and minimal props to illustrate rooms in their home. Later, I mentioned this to Jeffrey, and he drew the layout of his living room, describing it with the level of detail he felt comfortable with.

Methods from trauma-informed journalism are necessary in all forms of journalism but can go ignored for covering traditionally non-traumatic subjects. Comics tend to be a vessel for capturing trauma and memory (Chute, 2016), so embracing trauma-informed practices in the methodology should be a necessary part of the creation process. Although these comics did not look at particularly traumatic memories, I was dealing with regular community members who might not want to be put into the spotlight or have their lives written about. A trauma-informed approach becomes equally critical in (hyper)local graphic journalism, as it allowed me to establish a connection with the interviewee and tell their story in a way that did not overexpose them.

Conclusion

In more than half a year of capturing the evolving SOP in NDG Park, I have observed just how necessary a (hyper)local approach was within graphic journalism, while working within my own community. To bring readers into the park, capturing its presence, I had to experience the park

myself and draw out its details, from its lamps to its pavilion. To know what was relevant to illustrate, I had to connect to people and become a part of my community (McAdam and Hess, 2024) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2024). By hearing people's perspectives of the past and present, oral history interview methodologies helped me establish a sense of comfort with the interviewees and to listen to their history with the park. To create accurate illustrations, I had to understand the park's history and see it as well; looking at archives and reading about NDG's past became a critical part of this project. Although historical approaches are necessary, the work I created is still ultimately journalism due to its framing.

Because of this, using journalism fact-checking procedures also becomes necessary to validate what I drew. A memory requires a different fact-checking approach, which combines traditional journalistic fact-checking of a personal experience (Baker and Fairbank, 2022) with visual verification (Johnson, 2025). Moreover, I discovered it requires dialogue with the fact-checking subject; they can often provide evidence through their documentation, such as photos, notes, and videos. Ultimately, all these rely on the artist-journalist's role. They, like a journalist, will ultimately be creating a perception of a place, but their perception requires greater visual details, requiring them to look for visual sources like archives, newspapers, and photographers. They need to be connected to their sources, understand their boundaries, and embrace trauma-informed approaches (Quigley, 2023). Concurrently, they need to be aware of their perception of events and how it can infiltrate their drawings. Positioning themselves beforehand can undo some of these biases that may appear in their perceptions (Nichols, 2021, p. 59). Because of this, it's equally important for artist-journalists to show their process and their positionality as they create (Macdonald, 2021).

Based on my experiences conducting this research and informed by past literature, I present a set of guidelines for capturing a transforming SOP within a local/hyperlocal context in Appendix 1. Researching, understanding, and illustrating NDG Park's transforming SOP has been a rewarding and meaningful experience as it allowed me to connect to my community and tell its story; the process should not be limited to one locality, and I hope that this research allows for the creation of more works that bring graphic journalism into local contexts.

In future research, I would also like to further consider the role of the interactive elements, like the maps, Scrollytelling, and bookmarking, I used within graphic journalism to display an evolving SOP. It would be beneficial to explore how these elements are a part of the reader's experience, helping develop a virtual recreation of place. The research would build upon the existing work of Gutiérrez et al. (2018) and Usher (2016).

Limitations and Next Steps

Although I tried to illustrate the evolution of NDG Park's SOP throughout its lifespan, I faced difficulty in illustrating certain parts of its history. Primarily, I had difficulty finding sources for the racial tensions and gathering of 200 Black individuals at NDG Park on July 9, 1973.

Although every Montreal newspaper had written about the outcome of that night, which was gunshots, I could not find anyone who saw what had happened, was at NDG Park that evening or remembered the aftermath. I reached out to the CDN Black Community Association, which led me to one source and the Leon Llewellyn Archives at Concordia University, which were helpful, but did not provide any additional context.¹⁹ For these reasons, the article I wrote on the events of July 9, 1973, is not included as part of this thesis. It brings into question how this method, even with its preliminary look into trauma-informed journalism, fits into capturing more difficult

¹⁹ There was one article from The Black Voice, an Anglo Black Montreal newspaper, where the author mentioned what had happened at the park on July 9, 1973, but I had previously seen it.

subjects, especially with tighter deadlines. Within the scope of this research, I was not able to establish the necessary relationships to do this story justice, and I was also unable to find enough sources. As I continue this project outside of school, I hope to explore how to establish the same sense of trust while looking at more sensitive topics within a newsroom setting that has tighter deadlines, referring to Chute's research of comics as a vessel to capture trauma (2016).

Moreover, I would like to look into the source-finding process for graphics journalism and cover that more extensively within the guide.

Beyond specific events, there were some informational sources that I was unable to investigate to the extent that I wanted. Due to my existing knowledge of French, I could not review the French newspaper archives as extensively as I did with *The Gazette*. However, because of the context similarities, I would cross-reference the Gazette with French articles on the same subject.

The most underutilized resource in my research was the Bibliothèque Nationale's collection of stories from the *NDG Monitor* community newspaper. There was no way to search through the collection of microfilm, located at the Bibliothèque Nationale, for a particular story. I had to manually look through the films, which catalogued the newspapers' content from every year. As it was a local newspaper, its coverage was NDG-specific and might have contained stories not covered by mainstream news organizations. However, looking through the microfilms proved to be much more time-consuming and was ultimately an action I could not pursue beyond cross-referencing three specific events:

- The racial tensions at NDG Park in July 1973
- Sunday in the Park events in 1973
- The exact year/month the city put in the dog run (I heard different years from one academic source and one from the old dog run association)

Unfortunately, the latter of these ended up remaining unclear and required more research through the archives, as I had no year to base my research on. It is one of three parts of the park's SOP that I still have no explanation for:

- The kiddie pool (I heard through word-of-mouth and via [the Opera Dans le Parc website](#)).
- Deteriorating bocce courts. (I heard through word-of-mouth from two people) .

Even beyond archives, the park's multiple names made searching even more difficult. In a few articles, journalists even referred to it as a square instead of a park. Moreover, several hundred references to the park were in the classifieds section of the newspaper, rendering them impractical for this project. Ultimately, I was not able to read through the entirety of the articles and had to narrow my search to specific events.

Beyond academic research, I may continue adding to the body of work illustrating the SOP at the park. Talking to different sources introduced me to parts of NDG Park's SOP I was previously unfamiliar with. Despite being an insider to the community, I am still an outsider in many respects, given that I have only lived in the neighbourhood for two years and only in my adult life. To capture greater transformations in its SOP, there are still people I would like to reach out to, beyond the scope of the events I covered: the skateboarding community, the breakdancing community, theatre troops, Opera in the Park members, comedy night hosts, and dog owners/dog park visitors.

I also did not realize how long the fact-checking process for illustrations could be. Paired with an abundance of new information about recreation at the park, I was also unable to complete the article on recreation at the park. Outside of this project, I am hoping to finish the chalet article and divide the recreation article into an explorative map where the readers can click through

different elements at the park, like the play structure, dog park, or skating rinks, and learn about how they shaped the park's SOP.

Time was a constraint and a significant part of this project. With Niblock's (2012) practice-first approach, embracing non-traditional newsroom approaches and taking one's time were key, as the ultimate goal was not a typical new story but a self-published digital development. Creating a work of local-graphic journalism which embraces oral-history techniques can both be difficult to create in a newsroom or not be perceived as journalism. However, as comic journalists and scholars before me have discussed, that difference is the strength of the media. The subjectivity, meta story elements, and style, amongst other characteristics are what make comics journalism authentic (Weber and Rall, 2017). Although this approach may seem unconventional, future research based in experiments like this can question the boundaries of journalism and ask if defining boundaries is a setback in itself. Within this project, I could not address this, but it would be beneficial to explore further in the future.

Throughout this process, community members and city officials were also enthusiastic about an offline version of this project, whether it would be a physical exhibit or a printed book. I developed a booklet from my work, which can be printed or shared as a PDF. After the completion of the final three articles, I am hoping to complete this, and search for ways to distribute it by reaching out to local organizations. I would also be interested in exhibiting the history and the illustrations physically at the park, bringing its evolving SOP into the actual space it takes up in the community. By doing so, the project will live beyond the confines of academia and move to where it lays its roots: the park and its surrounding community. People can interact with it, provide insight, and continue sharing how their SOP has evolved at the park. This is just one chapter of the park's story, and its two unfinished articles are a sign of that.

Creating a physical version of this project can keep these stories alive and the community connection continuous.

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Appendix 1

Guide: Creating graphic journalism in a local/hyperlocal context

Capturing a transforming sense of place within the local

When I started this project, my aim was capturing how a place could evolve throughout time and how I, as an artist-journalist, could convey that transformation through graphic journalism.

Transformation, to me, means both physical changes, such as businesses shutting down or new buildings being built, as well as more sentimental ones. How do certain happenings, minute details, and the people we know change the way we perceive a location? What I am trying to capture is a transforming sense of place. This term holds multiple definitions across different disciplines, but all of them point to a person's physical and psychological connection to a place. As journalism researchers, Robert Gutsche and Kristy Hess describe it, a sense of place generates a feeling of comfort and inclusion within a location, and highlights how someone fits into the wider world.

A sense of place is unique to its beholder because we all have experiences and meanings we associate with a place. Simultaneously, there are commonalities between our senses of place because of the shared physical characteristics of a location we've experienced or live within.

When I tried to define a sense of place, I observed both journalism and comics research. Comics scholar Rikke Platz Cortsen has discussed how illustrating familiar locations, writing relatable place-related dialogue, utilizing specific signs from an area, and showing how a place connects to the world (2015). writing relatable dialogue, utilizing signs from a specific area, and showing how a place connects to the world outside can help establish a sense of place (2015). Within the scope of newspapers, journalism researcher Carrie Buchanan has said that writing about places

that are within a newspaper's geographic boundaries can help display a local sense of place better than expanding beyond it (2018). What they both get at is that a sense of place requires an understanding of a location's past, present, and people who are a part of it.

As I worked on this project, what I learned is that you can only capture a transforming sense of place in graphic journalism by borrowing approaches from other forms of journalism (and even other fields), modifying them to fit the illustrated approach. Graphic journalism takes elements from place-based journalisms, like local and hyperlocal, to understand a current sense of place. Concurrently, it needs oral history to allow one to observe the past sense of place. In this guide, I will discuss my process and explore how you can apply what I learned from capturing NDG Park's transforming sense of place to other communities and spaces.

Local journalism and graphic journalism

To truly understand a community, you need to become a part of it. McAdam and Hess highlight that this means connecting to the people in that place, understanding it, learning about it, and personally embedding oneself into it. (McAdam and Hess, 2024). If you are working on a project in a particular neighbourhood, I strongly recommend doing your research iteratively and then talking to people who live there. Each of these is relevant: talking to community members helps you understand a place and build trust. The connections I established in this project were not just connections for the sake of information; I was genuinely interested in the stories of people I reached out to and how they all linked to the story of NDG Park. By getting to know these different people and embedding myself into the community, I felt more accountable to accurately capture their sense of place.

Research is also extremely important because it allows you to look at the location you are researching from a distance. You can see its past, its stories, and how they all fit into its present.

Reviewing archives, news stories, books, and even blog posts can provide insight into what events and people most impacted an area, and how that place fits into the larger scope of the community. Although these findings might not directly impact your project, you will have more points of reference when you talk to community members, and they are telling you about the history of the place you are developing work on. This is beneficial in two ways: you will understand how their retellings fit into the place's history, and they will see that you actually know about the place you are researching, so they may provide more information.

Oral history and graphic journalism

Sometimes, someone's recollection is so relevant that it becomes a snapshot of history itself. Conducting an interview utilizing methods from oral history becomes key to accurately capturing a sense of place, as it allows you to capture their entire story, not just a snippet of it for the sake of an article. It also gives the interviewee more authority. They are a narrator, and I, as a journalist, am helping frame their story in a way that's truthful to them. Beyond that, an approach that utilizes oral history can help establish a closer bond with the interviewee and encourage more natural dialogue. The process of informed consent, pre-interviews, and making sure that the interviewee knows what they are getting into and how you will ultimately use what they tell you also becomes more significant.

This is what my practice looked like, and how it compared to oral history:

Oral History	My approach
The narrator gives informed consent	The interviewee gives informed consent.
The person being interviewed is the narrator of their story, emphasizing that they are a "live human subject" (Oral History Association, 2018b)	Although I do refer to the people I interviewed as interviewees, their role was closer to that of a co-narrator. I embraced a narrative interview approach (Kartch, 2017), allowing them to tell their own story. My role was asking open-ended questions, listening,

	asking for more details, and posing follow-ups (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2016)
There is no standard verification method in oral history. The facts of the interview are verified using pre-existing documents and sources. Other historians can verify the account by comparing it to other oral histories. (Feldstein, 2021, 21). Concurrently, Columbia University includes a section on fact-checking in their guide, highlighting that it is light and done in collaboration with the narrators (Bertin-Mahieux et al., 2022, p.3). Although a fact might be false, it might provide valuable information in other ways (Bertin-Mahieux et al., 2022). Some argue that there is not enough verification, and oral histories complement historical documents (Berman, 2023, p. 80).	I fact-checked my interviewee's retellings to the best of my ability using standard journalistic fact-checking methods from "The Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide: Fact-Checking Lived Experience" (Baker and Fairbank, 2022) and elements from the CBC's Peter Johnson's "Visual Verification Workshop", which I attended in-person (Johnson, 2025).
The narrator reviews their interview transcripts and gives corrections (Faulkenbury, 2020, p.257) (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2016).	The interviewee reviewed the entire final comic and provided their feedback. This procedure is closer to oral history than it is to journalism. Typically, a journalist can send a source a snippet of their article for verification, or a general description of the article (Kent, 2020).
The oral historian makes interview transcripts available publicly, archiving their work, and allowing it to be independently verified (Feldstein, 2004, p 22)	Because I did not keep the entire interview in my comic, I also will not make the voice recordings from these interviewees publicly accessible. The final comic and website will be archived to the best of my ability, at a minimum on my website and Concordia University's Spectrum, but hopefully in a printed format within the university or the City of Montreal.

If there is one takeaway here, it's that I as a journalist, was not telling my interviewee's story.

My role is relaying it. I have made sure the way I ultimately frame their story is accurate and truthful to what they told me. Concurrently, I had to remember that I was a journalist. After

talking to community members, I have to make sure what they are telling me is accurate by fact-checking and conducting further research, whether it is by visiting archives or reading historical sources.

Reflexivity, personal perception, and place

It's also important to gain your own sense of a place by embedding yourself in a community and establishing a connection to the physical location. What about the place sticks out to you? What communities are you interested in getting to know? Do not forge a connection for the sake of having a connection. For example, I chose NDG Park because I like the concept of a public park, and the park was a place I frequented. I talked to the people I did because their stories were fascinating, and I knew they also cared about the park.

Establishing a connection to a location can also look like observing. In my case, I already lived in the community I was researching, but I also visited the object of my research, the park, more regularly. Every few days, I would go to the park and just see what was going on. I took note of what features either stood out or repeated across the land. This activity can help gauge what the significant features of a place are that others will also recognize.

Example: List of unique features in NDG Park-> church, red pavilion, cenotaph, dog park, baseball diamond, play areas, Chalet BBQ sign, funeral home, Empress Theatre

List of repetitions-> lamps with hat-like metal lampshades, benches, paths, trees, big groups sitting together, skateboarders, events at the pavilion

Taking notes of how your perception changes is also helpful. Sometimes after a park visit, I would notice something new and write it down, or after my interviews, I observed that what people had told me was beginning to frame the way I looked at the park as well. These

observations might seem minute, but your sense of place is also changing, and it helps to be mindful of that and truthful when relaying that to the reader.

Visual interview

One way that helped me understand an evolving sense of place was conducting interviews with people who had experienced NDG Park at different times and asking them for their memories. Asking people about their memories is helpful as they often highlight what mattered to them and what meanings they associated with different events. For example, I did not realize the significance of “Sunday in the Park” to NDG residents until I talked to community members. To illustrate the interviewee's sense of place accurately, I required a lot of specific details. To create an environment where the interviewee was comfortable sharing with me but would also remember more details about the place they were talking about, I followed these guidelines:

1. ***Asking about the individual's past with the place:*** Instead of the traditional journalistic interview with time constraints, be more relaxed when conversing with the interviewee and open a dialogue. Ask broad questions based on your pre-interviews that allow them to explore their memories. Remember that they are sharing their story with you.
2. ***Asking about a significant memory of the place:*** Here, the interviewee is doing most of the talking. Their explanations will often be detailed, as this is their most important memory. As they are talking, note parts that you feel require additional details and highlight elements they bring up more than once. These can be significant. For example, one interviewee brought up the park's role as they grew up from university to now, and that was the recurring theme of their story within the park.

3. ***Follow-ups to clarify details on the memory:*** After they have told you their memory, ask them any questions that came up during their retelling. Additionally, ask them for any visual details they may have missed. Make sure not to assume anything about the memory, like the season, the interviewee's appearance, or the location where it took place. Sometimes, when someone is retelling an experience, you might visualize incorrectly. Some questions that can help are:

- a. What was the weather like that day?
- b. What season/day was it?
- c. What were you wearing?
- d. What did the _____ look like (e.g. What did the car you were driving look like?
What did your son's bike look like?)
- e. Where were you located? Could you draw it out for me?
- f. Do you have a photo that might help me?
- g. Did you look different then? Do you have a photo?

4. **Asking what would be one word they would use to describe their sense of place at _____?**

This question allows them to summarize their experience in the location with one word. Instead of trying to get at it organically, asking allowed me to explain exactly what I meant by sense of place and for them to understand it as well. It can help you frame the other memories in a way that is at the core of the interviewee's perspective. For example, if someone says the park is their "anchor", you can put together their memories in a way that shows why they would consider the park as something that keeps them grounded. This question gave me insight into what the park

meant to them holistically and highlighted similarities in different people's perceptions of the park.

Consent and Connections

Throughout all the interviews, I made sure interviewees had informed consent and context of what the project's scope and end-goal were. For interviewees who play a smaller role within your project, you can explain the interview process to them when you meet them or through email, giving them time to ask any questions. For more significant interviews, the best way to get informed consent and give context is through a pre-interview. In the pre-interview, you can:

- A. ***Establish a connection with the interviewee:*** These interviews are informal and are a way for you to get to know who you are interviewing. I explicitly mentioned when I would be using our conversations for the project. Otherwise, the pre-interviews were off the record, conversational, and to establish trust and connection (Benderev, 2022). These connections can pay off in the final interview because you will be comfortable with the interviewee.
- B. ***Context:*** Here, you want to make sure that the interviewees understand the goal of this project. You can explain what you think the final product will look like and what their role is in the narrative.
- C. ***Consent:*** The pre-interviews also focus on consent. In my case, I created two forms, a consent and journalistic information form, that I went through. These forms explained how I would use their interviews and what publishing their interviews could look like. For example, I said that I would be publishing my work on a personal but public website, and I would later attempt to get it published elsewhere. Traditionally, you do not need to do a consent form in reporting, but doing an informational form that explains the process lets the interviewee understand what they are getting into.

D. **Questions:** The interviewee will often have questions about the process (e.g. the use of their full name, the purpose of the project, the type of questions, what memories are important, etc.) In this dedicated time to discuss the project, they can ask these questions and simultaneously, you can see your knowledge gaps. For example, when someone asked me about why I needed their full name, I said that it's standard in journalism. However, as I thought about it, I realized that for the context of my project and their role in it, it would not be necessary.

E. **Establish a rough idea of what the interview will entail:** After the pre-interviews, you will know what the interviewee will likely want to talk about. Moreover, if the interviewee is uncertain about what they should talk about, you can provide guidance. For example, if you are interviewing someone about their most significant memories of a place, a person who has lived there for over 50 years might have many. They can discuss their memories with you, and you can help them decide how to tell their story.

During the interview, consent is equally important. There may be difficult topics that come up. Here, do not push the interviewee to say more than they feel comfortable with. Moreover, they may bring up something that they do not want to include. Respect their wishes.

Illustrating the uncaptured

Throughout this project, I have often had to illustrate past events that have no photos. To fact-check and draw these happenings as accurately as possible, I followed a few guidelines:

1. **Ask for evidence:** Even if someone does not have a photo of a memory or event, they might have other evidence that can help illustrate the memory accurately. For example, if someone is talking about something that happened while biking, you can ask for a photo

of their bike at the time. You can ask for the specific location of the event as well and see if you can find more photos on your own.

2. ***Refer to archives:*** This was the most helpful resource for illustrating the uncaptured. I visited and viewed archives from across the city of Montreal, which you can see in my citations. The archives can help you cross-reference a memory. For example, if someone says that a building used to be a camera store, you can look through newspaper archives and find an ad for the camera store to validate its location and see if there's a photo that can help you. Newspaper archives are excellent for information and photos. There are also borough/district, municipal, provincial/territorial, and national archives. If you are looking for specific information about an organization, there are also often organizational archives.
3. ***Traditional fact-checking:*** Traditional journalistic fact-checking is necessary as well. *The Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide* is a great helper. Often, you will be able to find some verified forms of information, whether it's a written explanation of an occurrence or photos of it.
 - 3.1. As an artist-journalist, I do not stray from this evidence and only draw what I can confirm. If I draw something I could not validate, I will highlight that by intentionally blurring its details.
4. ***Personal research through search engines:*** There is a lot of information available online for more recent events that can help validate them and provide visual references for illustrations. Using a search engine and highlighting specific search terms with "" can lead to sources that would have been hidden otherwise. For example, if you are looking

to see the number of trees at a park, search for the terms "trees" and "park name," and narrow down the years you are looking for, and you might just find it.

5. ***Personal research through records:*** If you are trying to verify things like geography or weather, there are weather records and open-source maps, satellite images and street view captures that can be immensely helpful.
6. ***Personal research through social media:*** Going through social media, like Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube, can be an archive of time as well. If you are looking for a visual reference to draw an event, a YouTuber may have been there and captured it. You can reach out and ask them if you can refer to the footage and credit them. Social media is more difficult to parse through for specificity, as often the quotation marks do not work properly, but X (Twitter) still has a good search engine that allows you to search for a specific term at a specific time.
7. ***Search in another language (if applicable):*** Sometimes what you are looking for might not be in the language your mind automatically goes to. Since I primarily speak English, I looked at several English-speaking sources, but switching to French helped me find more sources, like meeting minutes and articles, that I would not have found otherwise.

An example of me putting these methods to the test was when I was redrawing the Prince of Wales's visit to NDG Park. I wanted the prince to look as accurate as possible, but there are no photos of Prince Edward at NDG Park on October 30, 1919. There are photos of him on that day in other parts of Montreal, wearing a trench coat and a hat, so I used these photos as references. Using the descriptors in the Gazette article describing his visit to the park, I illustrated what the scene looked like, but the details are blurrier than settings that I have photos of or have experienced myself. I looked up the people mentioned in the article but was not able to find

photos for most of them. Those of them whom I was able to find, I drew more visibly in the scene. In the rest of the scenes, I either used drawings of people where their faces were not visible or used hands to illustrate what was happening (e.g. when the Prince receives a rose, the rose-giver is not illustrated because I could not find a photo of her.)

Reviewing the piece

After the interviews, I concluded my work by getting those whose memories I illustrated to review it and to express whether they wanted any changes in the way I represented their stories. This was to avoid extractive methods or getting the information I need without considering the interviewee and taking no accountability for what I produce (Wallace, 2020). This step was helpful as it allowed the interviewee to make sure I had understood them correctly. Although this is not traditionally done in journalism, I felt it was necessary in this context because the interviewee was the only person who had experienced their memory and could verify if my drawing resembled it.

Interview structure for the memory comics

I conducted four interviews from March to May 2025. One of these interviews did not follow the regular structure (explained further in the section titled “Outlier” on p. 104) I divided the process into four components:

- a) ***The pre-interview:*** This occurred with two of the participants. Jeffrey did not have a pre-interview because he knew of the project extensively beforehand. In this unstructured meeting, the participant and I discussed their connection to the park and their significant memories.
- b) ***The interview:*** This interview followed a specific structure each time. Although I did not word the questions in the same way, to maintain the conversational flow, the end goal was the same (Table 5). The interview was meant to be an hour long.

Table 5: Interview Question Themes

Interview Question Themes
i) Asking about the individual’s history with NDG and NDG Park
ii) Asking about a significant memory of the park
iii) Follow-ups to clarify details on the memory
iv) What would be one word you would use to describe your SOP at NDG Park?

- c) **The exit interview:** The exit interview asked the same questions each time and lasted between four to 20 minutes (Table 6)

Table #6: Exit interview questions

Exit interview
What parts of the interview process did you enjoy most, and why?
Were there any parts of the process you did not enjoy? What were they and why?
Did you feel comfortable during the interview? / Did the process feel invasive? What made you feel that way?
(If they were uncomfortable) How could I have made you more comfortable?
If I were to interview someone else, what should I do differently?
Did being in the park help you remember more clearly?
What questions did you feel were missing?
What do you hope this comic will be able to show readers about NDG?

- d) **The scrapped exit survey:** The exit survey was sent to the participants via Google Forms and asked the same questions every time. This was sent to and answered by the participants, but their answers were excluded from the research as they did not provide any new insight (Table 7).

Table 7: Exit survey questions

Exit survey
How do you feel about the comic?
Why do you feel that way?
Do you like how you were drawn?
Do you feel the comic represented your memory accurately? How?
What do you feel was missing in the representation of your memory?
Do you feel like the style adds/ takes away from the realism in the comic?
Do you feel the comic accurately represents the NDG park in the way you remember it? Do the drawings resemble the park and the area
Do you feel that the fact-checking and added historical and archival information was beneficial to the comic? Why/why not?
If I were to make another comic based on someone else's memory, what should I do differently?
How involved did you feel in the process of creating this comic? Would you want more or less involvement?
What would be the best way to share this comic and article with your community?

Outlier

There was one outlier, who followed a different process than the other participants. As they were originally meant to be a more journalistic interview, their knowledge of the project's outcomes was significantly less than the others. Once we had started talking, they gave me insight into their life by the park. I realized that they would make a good fit for this for a memory comic as

well. I told them about the project, and they consented. Unless it is relevant to their commentary, I will refer to them as participant. If their response corresponds with them not being initially interviewed, I will mention that they were the journalistic interviewee who became a participant.

Appendix 2

Consent form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: In That Sense: Exploring the Intersection of Sense of Place, Local, Hyperlocal, and Graphic Journalism at Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Park

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Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: elyse.amend@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study:

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A.PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to see how journalists can use graphic journalism, a form of journalism that uses visual information, like comics, illustrations, and infographics, within local journalism. Particularly, it focuses on how these two forms of journalism can come together to capture a sense of place.

B.PROCEDURES

The project focuses on Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG) Park located at the intersection of Sherbrooke Street and Girouard Avenue. The end result of this research will be an article that illustrates the park's history and present and additionally, a guide for conducting graphic journalism within a community. A part of this project includes developing comics for various residents' memories of NDG Park.

This research seeks to survey and interview NDG residents who have shared their memories about the park for this comic.

After the comic is created in late April/early May, it will be shared with research participants. Participants will be asked to take a short survey that mainly asks about the accuracy and illustrative style of the resulting comic.

Survey participants will also be asked if they are interested in participating in an exit interview planned to last up to 20 minutes. Participation in the survey does not require participation in the interview. The exit interview will be recorded.

Those who decide they would like to participate in the exit interview will be asked questions on how it felt being interviewed about their memories of NDG Park. These questions address how comfortable they felt, the length and detailedness of the interview process, and what parts of the process they enjoyed and did not enjoy.

The survey and interview will be used for research and developing a guide on creating graphic journalism within a local context.

In total, participating in this study will take approximately two hours.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research.

These risks include:

- Low levels of discomfort in discussing any potentially negative emotions related to the piece of comic journalism that includes their memories of NDG Park.
- Low levels of discomfort in discussing any potentially negative emotions related to being involved in the process of developing the comic.

This research is not intended to benefit you personally.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information gathered will be identifiable to the researcher and her supervisor. We will gather the following information as part of this research: your name and your answers.

We will not allow anyone to access this information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use this information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

We will protect the information by keeping it on my personal computer and not on any digital drive. After publication, it will be archived on a hard drive for five years before being destroyed. My computer, the hard drive, and the files are password protected.

We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

☐ I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

☐ Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research. Refer to me as “one of the individuals who appeared in the comics”

We will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

E.CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you do not want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher thirty days after the survey. This is only for the exit interview and survey. The comic itself falls under journalistic consent and will vary.

To make sure that research money is being spent properly, auditors from Concordia or outside will have access to a coded list of participants. It will not be possible to identify you from this list.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

F.PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions, and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Information form for article

Article Title: Untitled article looking at the long history of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG) Park

Journalist: Sara Mizannojehdehi

Faculty Supervisor: Elyse Amend

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: elyse.amend@concordia.ca Source of funding for the study:

A. PURPOSE

I am creating an article exploring how NDG Park has evolved over the years and in its history. A place's history is not purely about the events occurring within it but the people who spend their days there, becoming a part of its story.

For that reason, I am collecting stories of NDG residents who have significant memories of NDG Park. Whether those are good memories or bad, I am looking to talk to individuals who experienced a part of their personal history in the park and would not mind sharing it.

I will be taking that memory to create a comic from your experience, tying it to NDG Park's greater history.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to partake in an hour-long in-depth interview on the park at the park, a location close to it, or virtually. This will also include asking you for any additional photos, documents, or memorabilia you believe will be helpful in verifying and recreating the memory. This part of the interview will only be used to create an article on NDG Park.

As these interviews will take place in the winter/ early spring, I will make sure the weather is appropriate and discuss with you beforehand if an in-person meeting works for you.

I will be doing my best to fact-check your story, which could mean I return with follow-up questions.

After the comic is done, I will show it to you so you can confirm its accuracy to your memory.

C. PUBLICATION

This comic will be published as a part of the article on NDG Park. I may attempt to get it published in a Montreal newspaper or a Canadian magazine. I will also be publicizing it to the best of my ability.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDING

Your name will be a part of this article. We can discuss anonymity in special circumstances or not using your last name, but generally, your full name will be published.

I will be voice-recording this interview to refer to when creating the comic.

If you allow, I will also be taking a photo of you during the interview. This is not at all mandatory. If you do not wish to be photographed, I will be drawing you while we talk. If you want to be photographed but do not want the photograph published, I can do that as well.

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this article. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time before the publication of this comic online, which will occur on the first of June 2025. The time period between the initial interview and seeing the comic would be the best time to stop proceeding.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

Once it is published, I will keep it up unless there are special circumstances.