“REPERCUSSIONS:”

INDIGENOUS NEW MEDIA ART AND RESURGENT CIVIC SPACE

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates Indigenous new media artworks shown at Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I argue that Urban Shaman is an institution of Indigenous resurgence and translocal citizenship in Winnipeg. The new media artworks I examine operate as authoritative civic spaces by drawing upon Indigenous aesthetic traditions and new media technologies. The first chapter centers on new media artworks by artists Scott Benesiinaabandan (Anishinaabe) and Rosalie Favell (Métis), conveying Winnipeg’s histories through their artistic renditions of personal and public archives that frame Winnipeg’s city spaces. The chapter locates these works in conversation with artists Terril Calder (Métis) and Terrance Houle (Blood) whose new media artworks reframe and restage civic archives in Toronto and Calgary. The next chapter considers how new media artworks at Urban Shaman by Jude Norris, Nadia Myre, Jordan Bennett, and Terril Calder enact what I am calling Indigenous civic ecology, relating human and non-human elements of the city through Cree, Anishinaabe, Mi’kmaq and Métis genealogies. The final chapter discusses how new media artworks by Jason Baerg (Cree/Métis), Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), and Scott Benesiinaabandan (Anishinaabe) advance a lexicon of aesthetic values, particularly “travelling traditional knowledge” and “blood memory,” in response to globalization. This dissertation illustrates how new media artworks shown at Urban Shaman embody critical Indigenous methodologies in relationships of ongoing praxis. Ultimately, it demonstrates that Indigenous new media art functions as, and through, practices of translocal Indigenous citizenship, rearticulating urban civic ecology, and
resurging, maintaining, and developing Indigenous epistemology and values in Winnipeg.
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Chapter 1

Civics Lessons: Locating Urban Shaman Contemporary Art Gallery in Winnipeg, Manitoba

You, people in the city of Winnipeg, are made up of Anishinaabe peoples. Your water diversion floods the resting grounds of our ancestors. The water that Winnipeg uses for food and drink, the water that makes up the cells of your bodies, that mixes your concrete for your streets and sidewalks, all of it is Anishinaabe, it is all made of us.

-Darryl Redsky, Anishinaabe, member of Shoal Lake #40 (Interview 09 Oct. 2014).

Indigenous new media artworks shown at Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery shape understandings and experiences of Canadian cities. Urban Shaman, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and open since 1996, is the first and only Indigenous artist-run centre in Winnipeg, among only two others in Canada—Sâkêwêwak in Saskatoon and Tribe in Regina. As such, Urban Shaman has had a foundational role as a kind of “hot house” for emergent forms of Indigenous

1 In 1913 Winnipeg flooded over 3,000 acres of Shoal Lake #40 First Nation to create an aqueduct that supplies Winnipeg with water. Thomas Deacon, Winnipeg’s mayor, wanted to build the aqueduct at Shoal Lake to better exploit his gold mines in the area. The aqueduct isolated Shoal Lake #40 on a manmade island apart from the mainland, and has resulted in a boil water advisory on the First Nation for the last twenty years. Shoal Lake has also lost many community members, including young people, who have had to cross the water in perilous circumstances to get basic supplies. When I visited Shoal Lake #40, during my pregnancy with my second child, I was told by settler ally Will Braun of one woman who lost her baby because of being stuck, due to weather, on the artificial island. Winnipeg and the federal government have never compensated Shoal Lake #40 for the water we use or for the flooding of their lands, nor have they invested in infrastructure that would provide adequate and safe access to and from the reserve, cut off due to the aqueduct that provides safe water to Winnipeg. Winnipeg also bars Shoal Lake #40 from development, claiming it could harm the quality of the city’s water. At the same time, Winnipeg has had no problem with the development projects of the First Nation’s settler neighbours in the community of Falcon Lake. Falcon Lake makes huge profits on lake property and tourism. Winnipeg uses Shoal Lake’s water, but the City also sells it for a profit of $45,000,000 a year (Manitoba Public Utilities Board 5). It is extremely rare for a city to make money from sales of an essential service.
contemporary art, particularly media arts. In addition to its exhibition of media arts, Urban Shaman itself enacts acts as a kind of “virtual reservation” space online, with transnational and global reach through social media such as Facebook and twitter. Urban Shaman’s media art exhibitions and screenings are, with its online presence, central to its institutional value, place, and meaning in Winnipeg, as they remap the component parts that make up Winnipeg as a city through Indigenous resurgence, memory, relationality, and authority as defined by scholars Glen Coulthard, Shawn Wilson, Taiaike Alfred, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Urban Shaman, beyond Winnipeg in particular, has been influential in the ways in which Indigenous media artists treat cities, contributing resurgent practices to visions of other urban spaces in Canada.

I begin with a story about a January 2015 magazine article to introduce the intersectional milieu of new media, settler colonialism, and Indigenous belonging and relationships in Winnipeg. The article raises many themes that I work through in relation to the media artworks in my study. The article raises these themes implicitly, as Winnipeggers, as readers, accessed this article through digital media online, tweeting and chatting about it in online communities. The article explicitly underscores new media as a centrepiece in its discursive and material locations, referring to comments on social media as one of its main foci to identify the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, as “most racist” in Canada. I cite this article to set the stage for this thesis and its arguments regarding new media’s decolonizing potential in relation to Winnipeg when configured through Indigenous artworks.

On January 22, 2015, *Maclean’s* magazine published an article called “Welcome to Winnipeg: Where Canada’s Racism Problem is at its Worst: How the Death of Tina
Fontaine has Finally Forced the City to Deal with its Festering Race Problem,” written by journalist and former Winnipegger Nancy MacDonald. The article is part of a Maclean’s issue on the topic of racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada. The cover image is a photograph of Winnipeg CBC broadcaster, radio host, and literary author Roseanna Deerchild, who looks out at the viewer, with her quoted words printed beside her: “They call me a stupid squaw. Or they tell me to go back to the rez.” The article begins with shocking and egregious examples of racist comments by professionals in Winnipeg on social media, situating these in relation to the recent sexual exploitation and murder of Tina Fontaine, a 15-year-old member of the Sagneeng First Nation. In fall 2014, Winnipeg police pulled her body from the Red River wrapped in a plastic bag. The article cites national poll results underscoring Winnipeg’s problem with racist attitudes, illustrating these further by discussing Winnipeg’s recent mayoral race involving two high-profile Indigenous candidates. One candidate, Robert Falcon-Ouellette, faced racist vitriol, and the other, Brian Bowman, who kept a lower profile about being Metis, won. Bowman has since centered his Métis identity, beginning at his swearing in ceremony. MacDonald further draws upon the example of Lorri Steeves—wife of a settler mayoral candidate, Gord Steeves—who was widely condemned for sharing on her Facebook page hateful, racist comments such as this:

Lorrie Steeves is really tired of getting harrassed [sic] by the drunken native guys in the skywalks. We need to get these people educated so they can go make their own damn money instead of hanging out and harrassing [sic] the honest people who are grinding away working hard for their money. We all donate enough money to the government to keep thier [sic] sorry assess [sic] on welfare, so shut the f**k up and
don't ask me for another handout! (“Gord Steeves’ Wife,” CBC)

MacDonald highlights that Steeves did not lose the race because of the backlash from this comment, which, she notes, speaks volumes about Winnipeg’s civic tenor. The article also discusses the divide between the North and South sides of the city, where Indigenous and settler communities live, respectively, seemingly worlds apart. While the Maclean’s article shed light on the problem of racism in Winnipeg, the article drew many criticisms as well, most importantly criticisms from Indigenous individuals in Winnipeg and in other cities.

Some Indigenous Winnipeggers, such as North End MLA Kevin Chief, felt that the article took a deficit-based lens towards Indigenous communities. Others, such as Cree author Max Fineday in Saskatoon, noted that MacDonald problematically frames racism in terms of the isolated acts and perspectives of individuals. This framework implies a liberal perspective in which the autonomous individual is the primary unit of civil society. According to this view, all responsibility solely rests at the feet of the individual, radically cut off from any social or spatial determinations. As I describe in Chapter Two, settler colonists imposed this imaginary framework of personhood upon the land and Indigenous peoples, and it is a central tenet of colonial genocide. Cree author Max Fineday exposes the oppression of this liberal worldview in Briarpatch magazine, where he writes that the Maclean’s article is flawed because it decries Native-on-Native violence without explaining its causes in systemic oppression. Many of the actors the article mentions—for example, those engaging in violence—are themselves Indigenous. The article sorely lacks the context of colonialism, which is still poorly understood by the settler population in Winnipeg and nationally. Fineday, moreover, having grown up in
Saskatoon, feels that the “most racist” city moniker is unhelpful. He concludes his insightful article with this point:

Winnipeg’s Mayor Bowman, the first Métis mayor of a major Canadian city, seems to be the only mayor now addressing the issue openly. Perhaps his response to the Maclean’s article can light a fire in the hearts of others and we can begin a conversation on race that is actually meaningful. If not, perhaps Maclean’s can follow up with every Canadian city and find that we are all tied for first when it comes to ignoring treaty relations.

I agree with Fineday. While the article highlights horrifying examples of what happens in the context of racist oppression, its liberal perspective fails to provide these with a thoroughgoing context. MacDonald does not address settler colonization, nor does she mention Indigenous perspectives on strengths-based lived experiences in Winnipeg. She only mentions the most visible and recent social movement actions. Kevin Chief, Winnipeg Point Douglas MLA, responded to the story by publishing his own editorial in Maclean’s. Chief describes feeling that MacDonald’s story sensationalized pain and victimization in his neighborhood, neglecting to discuss his community’s powerful strengths. These rebuttals, together, posit that Winnipeg’s Indigenous community, and Indigenous settler relationships, can best be understood through Indigenous peoples’ theorizations from the ground up, and when colonial histories are known.

A prominent Winnipeg radio host of 92 Citi FM, Dave Wheeler interviewed MacDonald on his program shortly after the publication of the article, and this interview further underscores Fineday’s and Chief’s points. Wheeler aggressively questioned MacDonald on the points that Fineday raised, aiming his vitriol to “prove” that Winnipeg
is not racist. During the broadcast on January 25, Wheeler argued that the violence in Winnipeg is mainly Native-on-Native; that Winnipeg has a Métis mayor; and that, in the case of Rinelle Harper, a young Indigenous girl who was assaulted and left for dead at the side of the Red River, the two men who assaulted her were Native, and the two who found her, saving her life, were white. In the *Maclean’s* article, MacDonald cites Harper’s experience as an example of the horror in Winnipeg. She locates these violent attacks within the national context of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.\(^2\) In spite of this approach in her article, when MacDonald responds to Wheeler on the radio she does not present an argument for understanding racism as systemic oppression. She also does not address that mainstream understandings of racism, as individual acts or views, function as a means of maintaining oppression, by leaving its cause—settler colonization—unchallenged. MacDonald’s article deserves praise for prompting a number of excellent responses and public discourse. At the same time, it seems that she did not have an understanding of racism that was much more nuanced than Wheeler’s. In contrast, Fineday’s response, above, is an excellent reminder that settler colonization, status quo in Canada, is the cause of these ills, and that, in this vein, Winnipeg is not “more racist” than other Canadian cities.

Instead, Winnipeg is a centrepiece in a broader national conversation due to its

\(^2\) According to the grassroots Amnesty International campaign “No More Stolen Sisters,” supported by the United Nations, “Indigenous women are going missing and being murdered at a much higher rate than other women in Canada—a rate so high it constitutes nothing less than a national human rights crisis.” According to the report, 1,017 women and girls identified as Indigenous were murdered between 1980 and 2012. Many suspect the numbers are much higher. See [http://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/campaigns/no-more-stolen-sisters](http://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/campaigns/no-more-stolen-sisters). In 2014, Urban Shaman hosted an installation of artist Christie Belcourt’s collaborative installation *Walking with Our Sisters*, a commemorative art installation for the missing and murdered Indigenous women of Canada and the USA. See [http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/](http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/).
unique demographics, with the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada, including two urban reserves. Winnipeg is also the geographic centre of the continent, and Treaty One territory, which means that Indigenous and settler diplomacy in Winnipeg laid the foundation for the settlement of all of Canada’s West. MacDonald quotes Anishinaabe University of Manitoba Professor Niigaan Sinclair who notes the historical founding of the province in violence, with the murder of Métis leader Louis Riel, is surely related to the intensity of oppression in Winnipeg. Multiple forms of historical and contemporary settler colonial violence resonate in Winnipeg, and in this sense the city imminently connects not only to lands immediately surrounding it, such as Shoal Lake #40 reserve, and to its north, where numerous other reserves are home to displaced Indigenous peoples, but also to other Canadian cities.

Winnipeg’s Indigenous community is visibly leading the way towards new conversations about racism since the publication of MacDonald’s article. On the day of its publication, Mayor Bowman held a press conference, during which he stood with prominent Indigenous Winnipeggers including Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs; Chief of Police Devon Clunis; CBC radio host Wab Kinew; former Association of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi; and others vowing to make a difference. Following this promise, on February 18, 2015, a historic meeting was held at the Forks, where eighty people discussed racism and shared a community dinner. These dinners are to be ongoing. Urban Shaman has partnered with the Mayor’s Office and many corporate sponsors to create a series of large billboards downtown showcasing Oji-Cree artist KC Adams’ Perception series. Adams depicts

3 Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population, according to the federal government’s department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, is 68,000 or 10% of the population.
Indigenous Winnipeggers through a split screen or diptych format in this series. On the right side, a derogatory remark such as “Hooker?” is highlighted, below a frowning face. The words “look again” span across the middle of each diptych. On the left side, the individual is smiling, and Adams highlights details about his or her everyday life (“mother, daughter, loves apples and coffee”). Adams notes that she snapped the images of her subjects while speaking to them about racial stereotypes, and she captured their facial responses to the words. Their beaming smiles, in contrast, reflect the sitter’s feelings about moments in his or her life, which do not reflect the stereotypes imposed on Indigenous citizens in Winnipeg. Urban Shaman has reached out to Winnipeg’s broader community, asking that citizens contribute their voices to this art project as it is created. Many more public responses are ongoing.

Adams’ *Perception* photographs—indeed her entire body of new media works—emphasize new media’s scope and relevance in terms of reconfiguring the social broadly, making civic dynamics visible in new ways. The article, the artworks in response to it, and the context that both reference reveal the broad relevance of new media in looking at Indigenous and settler civic participation. Winnipeg’s current situation speaks to how media use inaugurates forms of participation and belonging in both Indigenous and settler civic communities, constructing community identity in Winnipeg. New media in Indigenous communities enacts citizenship participation forms (Kappo and King 67-71); new media art at Urban Shaman makes resurgent Indigeneity visible.

I had a conversation about these dynamics with Urban Shaman Director Daina Warren, in which she noted that people are cautiously optimistic following MacDonald’s article, and feel we are amidst a sea change in which it is unclear what will happen next. In our conversation, I raised the term “decolonization.” Warren reflected: “decolonization is something that is not even really on the table yet, in terms of what is going on in Canadian society and Winnipeg’s in particular” (Interview 02 May 2015). She added that many artists, such as Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore, who in 2014 moved from Winnipeg to Montreal, feel the same way. This perspective is a meaningful corrective to those too quick to celebrate public discourse as “decolonization” in what remains a devastating, genocidal, ongoing situation of settler colonization.

Settlers in Winnipeg produce intense racist oppression through an ensemble of discursive and material factors. This ensemble stems from continuous colonization ongoing for over a hundred years in the province. I detail this history in Chapter Two. Indigenous social movement from the ground-up has been ongoing in Winnipeg within
this context, particularly in the downtown and North End. Communities have practiced Indigenous citizenship in civic spaces by producing land-based meanings in their communities, attending to health and well-being needs, and advocating fiercely and steadfastly on their communities’ behalf against oppression including racist governance, ignorance, bureaucratic indifference, and interpersonal hostility. These forms of citizenship have recently manifested in highly visible Idle No More protests and round dances in the city. All of these ongoing processes form the civic ground on which my study stands in Urban Shaman’s location, Winnipeg’s downtown area. This thesis contends that Urban Shaman plays a distinct and important role in producing this civic ground, and that the media artworks shown there offer meaningful lenses through which to view Indigenous contexts in Winnipeg as well as in other Canadian cities.

My thesis explores Indigenous resurgence against settler coloniality in Winnipeg through the lens of Indigenous new media art at Urban Shaman. My discussion of the Maclean’s magazine article, in relation to KC Adams’ artwork, Indigenous community voices in Winnipeg, and other prairie cities like Saskatoon, makes clear how new media practices are a part of Indigenous belonging and relationships in Winnipeg. The artistic and civic practices in my study are translocal and articulate Indigenous citizenship. This citizenship is based in Indigenous land-based cosmologies.

The main questions informing this thesis are: How do we map the value of Urban

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4 I noticed when I lived in the North End with my boyfriend and his parents in my teens. His mother, a Métis midwife, worked with other women to create the North End Women’s Centre, offering support to women and children, as just one example.

5 The Idle No More movement is an Indigenous community based movement that began in 2012 in Saskatchewan. The movement’s teach-ins, protests, round dances, and blockades act as ongoing resistance to colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty. See www.idlenomore.ca.
Shaman as an institution of Indigenous arts practices and land-based urban ecologies both for local and translocal resurgence and appearance? How do Indigenous new media arts connect to civic ecologies through their compositions, restaging the constitutive relationships of Canadian cities for Indigenous and settler citizens? What forms of citizenship and land-based practices are destabilized and expressed with Indigenous aesthetics at the centre of urban discourses? How has new media art emerged as a significant form in relation to the city for Indigenous artists? How does it shape and intersect with mediated forms of civic life and citizenship? How have Indigenous media artists conveyed the media forms of Indigenous histories in their work? How are forms of media imbricated in settler coloniality in both liberal and neoliberal iterations, and how do artists creatively contend with these formations? How do artists treat the screened city, alternatively, as a composition exteriorizing Indigenous civic grammars?

New media works at Urban Shaman create a lexicon of aesthetic values that shape visions of Indigenous citizenship and civic ecology as the land-based interrelation of human and nonhuman elements in the city. Urban Shaman presents works articulating an Indigenous vision opposed to the hegemony of liberalism and neoliberal globalization as continued colonial dominance in Canada. Against these settler foundations, my research describes how critical Indigenous methodologies in these works create aesthetic environments in cities far from their traditional territories, through exhibits that resonate across the distinct knowledge and experience of specific Indigenous nations. I argue, in regards to works by Rebecca Belmore, Nadia Myre, Jason Baerg, Terril Calder, Jude Norris, Scott Benesiinaabandan, Rosalie Favell, and Terrance Houle, that Indigenous new media art functions as translocal Indigenous citizenship within urban civic ecology,
maintaining and developing land-based Indigenous epistemologies and values.

Indigenous media works thus “resurge” against the settler nation state of Canada. According to Jeff Corntassel and Taiaike Alfred, the language of resurgence expresses these tenets:

- **Land is Life** – our people must reconnect with the terrain and geography of their Indigenous heritage if they are to comprehend the teachings and values of the ancestors, and if they are to draw strength and sustenance that is independent of colonial power, and which is regenerative of an authentic, autonomous, Indigenous existence.

- **Language is Power** – our people must recover ways of knowing and relating from outside the mental and ideational framework of colonialism by regenerating themselves in a conceptual universe formed through Indigenous languages.

- **Freedom is the Other Side of Fear** – our people must transcend the controlling power of the many and varied fears that colonial powers use to dominate and manipulate us into complacency and cooperation with its authorities. The way to do this is to confront our fears head-on through spiritually grounded action; contention and direct movement at the source of our fears is the only way to break the chains that bind us to our colonial existences.

- **Decolonize your Diet** – our people must regain the self-sufficient capacity to provide our own food, clothing, shelter and medicines. Ultimately important to the struggle for freedom is the reconstitution of our own sick and weakened physical bodies and community relationships accomplished through a return to the
natural sources of food and the active, hard-working, physical lives lived by our ancestors.

• Change Happens one Warrior at a Time – our people must reconstitute the mentoring and learning–teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity. The movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal, groups and one-on-one mentoring towards a new path. (613)

My thesis studies elements of Indigenous resurgence in new media arts, explaining that Indigenous artists generate imaginaries, aesthetics, and discourses that cannot be represented within the narrow framings of civil society that comprise both mainstream civic and academic contexts. The media artists in my study grapple with human and non-human aspects of cities, or their overall ecology, through Indigenous cosmologies that emphasize relationships with the land according to Indigenous ontologies. Ultimately this dissertation argues that Indigenous media art exhibits and screenings are translocal and land-based practices of Indigenous citizenship as belonging and relationship: to selves, environments, and philosophies, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and in other Canadian cities as well, specifically Toronto, Regina, and Calgary.

In the remaining pages of this introduction I describe Indigenous new media arts as translocal Indigenous citizenship that rearticulates urban civic ecology, maintaining and developing Indigenous epistemology and values in opposition to liberal and neoliberal regimes in Canadian cities. I provide analysis of keywords, and describe the feminist and
Indigenous research methods that I apply, acknowledging that my methodology is an emergent process, reflecting participant review and deep collaborative analyses.

While the introduction provides a summary of my argument and my methodology as the foundations upon which I have approached the material, Chapter Two considers the history of Southern Manitoba, privileging an Anishinaabe historiographic perspective on settler ethnic cleansing and genocide. Grounded in this historiography is my theoretical framework, which mobilizes Indigenous theories that are responsive to this history and centre the land in understanding and responding to it through contemporary media arts. Chapter Three turns to an analysis of media artworks that introduce Indigenous citizenship in Winnipeg as translocal and place-based, opposing liberal framings of citizenship and the city. The works posit values that interpret relationships between Indigenous selves and city environments through the co-constitution of people and place, and allow me to also look at the Canadian cities of Calgary and Toronto through the lens of translocal Indigenous arts practices. These artists regard city spaces as archival sites, positioning their figures in city streets and landscapes to revision lands through the context of Indigenous histories. The artworks in Chapter Four present civic ecology as multifaceted dimensions of Indigenous belonging pertaining to relationship with animals and land within cities. Their perspectives contrast starkly with possessive individualist liberalism, where “persons” exercise dominion over non-persons, specifically as private property owners. Personhood and land/property ownership are also coterminus in liberal individualism. In Chapter Five, artworks advance Indigenous conceptual frameworks to show the global contexts informing Winnipeg’s civic space. I focus on artists’ treatments of abstraction, understood as a colonial and an Indigenous
tenet, through the lens of Indigenous blood memory. The works in this chapter indigenize abstraction and globalization as processes of ongoing Indigenous relationships, as opposed to predominant settler theories and processes of globalization as separations, or disembeddings. I argue through these chapters for Indigenous art practices as citizenship-positing land-based ways of relating to selves, environments and philosophies that situate the city of Winnipeg, and Urban Shaman within it, on Indigenous terms. In my conclusion, I summarize my arguments and draw upon the connections between these chapters to show the connections between this dissertation and my forthcoming research and curatorial work.

1.1 Keywords

There are a number of keywords that I define briefly here, while remembering that these concepts are dynamic and contested. This section provides some guiding sense of my usage; my literature review in Chapter Two and the following chapters further animate this vocabulary.

In this dissertation I discuss concepts of civic space through the lenses of Indigenous artists and theorists. What I am calling civic space derives from the term “civil society,” which refers to a Euro-American tradition in which liberal forms of citizen participation in urban locations produce a public or civil sphere. These forms of citizen participation refer to the autonomous and self-interested actions of rational individuals, and this liberal understanding of the citizen has very specific historical origins in Europe in the late eighteenth century. Processes of industrialization that led Europeans into city formations, largely through processes of brutal capitalist appropriation of lands and villages, were at the origins of liberal political philosophy
(Marx). Everyday life in these cities became fragmented into work-and-home dichotomies, due to spaces of economic production being located away from the household, in factories and offices for instance. Men began to confine women to the home, and thus to dominate the so-called public sphere of civil society. The ascendant bourgeois or middle class coined the term civic or public sphere (Habermas), referencing the spaces of civilized, rational, exclusively male, property-owning citizens of ancient Greek cities. European men produced liberal political philosophy espousing this social order, which they posited as universally applicable and morally good. This philosophy also included definitions of what is a person, and how that personhood is embodied in acts of citizenship in public—that is, in city spaces where white, property-owning men exist. Property owning men exploited the unpaid work of women in their society as well as of other peoples and lands via colonies in Africa and North America. Women, workers, and colonized peoples produced much of the wealth with which these men designed and appointed their cities. Thus, citizens located the supposedly abstract and neutral—universal—concept of the civic sphere in European city spaces, where cities are milieu in which citizenship practices produce the hegemonic meanings and significance of shared places. Property-owning white men practiced, and were understood to practice, citizenship in public. This citizenship determined their belonging within national communities within what was at the time an entirely new form of European society: the liberal nation state. These men, from within their centralized hubs, determined and imposed meanings upon the places of “others” that they did not consider citizens—women, workers, and “colonized” peoples. Here they followed the ideals of ancient

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6 Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke, Hume, and Kant fall under this umbrella.
Greek philosophies and their understandings of citizenship and cities. Civic space, then, is a term that refers to a Euro-American tradition of society in which white men produce the public sphere, and understandings of citizenship within it. I use the term in Canadian civic space as a liberal milieu of citizen participation for two reasons. Firstly, I mean to show, by saying “space” instead of “sphere,” that citizenship occurs in specific material spaces that are not abstract (Benhabib). That these spaces are real signifies the importance of who occupies them; that is, who has access to citizenship depends on location. In nation states these places have always been cities. In Winnipeg today, as well as in other Canadian cities, Indigenous peoples, and artists in particular, are claiming Indigenous citizenship practices in city spaces. Secondly, the term civic space signifies belonging for those who act within it. Indigenous citizenship reframes belonging in the lands currently referred to as Canada, shifting it away from the determinations of the settler nation-state.

Liberal civility, in which the individual is the foundational tenet of society, defines settler civil society in Canada. These Western principles produce the “individual” that, through Western globalization, aims to achieve universality by destroying Indigenous forms of personhood. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, focusing on the destruction of Indigenous forms, connects the process of liberal hegemony to the “material redefinition” of lands, centering the relationship between Indigenous selves and landscapes (32-33). She describes how what she calls a Western cultural archive, a “system of classification and representation” that determines what counts as knowledge (52), forms both Indigenous selves and lands as objects of knowledge. In this vein, she writes, “Indigenous cultures became framed within a language and a set of spatialized representations” (52).
These spatial orderings rely on “liberalism as a system of ideas that focuses on the individual who has the capacity to reason in a society [centered in] individual autonomy and self-interest, and on a state that has a rational rule of law that regulates a public sphere of life” (59). Smith identifies this form as the philosophy of liberalism, and uses the metaphor of an archive “to convey the sense by which the West drew upon a vast history of itself and multiple traditions of knowledge which incorporate cultural views of reality, of time and space” in settler colonial contexts (59).

The project of the Canadian nation state, in this tradition, aims to create a space of seamless liberal reality (McKay). For Canadian historian Ian McKay, this was to be “a 'Canada’… as an extensive projection of liberal rule across a large territory and an intensive process of subjectification, whereby liberal assumptions are internalized and normalized within the dominion's subjects” (645). In line with Smith, McKay’s wedding of liberal rule and subjectification is key, as, for liberalism, both epistemological and ontological foundations, spatio-temporally, advance from the category “individual.” This category is dependent upon private property, or proprietariness. The Euro-American liberal concept applies firstly to the self, and extends beyond self-possession to construe all “property.” On this horizon of sociality, the understanding of individual prefaces other aspects of the life-world—the human subject as the individual is fundamentally prior to anything beyond itself, which is to say this political entity naturally occurs and its interests are taken as self-evident. McKay helpfully advances that this “individual” who has 1) freedom; 2) equality; and 3) property, is not “to be confused with actual living beings” (645). Instead, McKay advocates “treating 'liberty' and 'freedom' and (above all) 'the individual' as the contestable and historically relative terms of a particular and
probably transient political program” (645) in order to accurately appraise the project of liberal rule called “Canada.” This individual, consonant with the critiques of liberal citizenship laid out in the next paragraph through Winnebago scholar Renya Ramirez’ theory of translocal Native citizenship, and Tuhiwai Smith’s account of liberalism as foundational to settler colonialism above, founds a political cosmology that is anathema to Indigenous sovereignty. While liberal understandings of the individual have obviously changed over time and are subject to the specific contexts of their unfolding, their primary function in Canada has been to advocate for priority of interest for property-holding white settler men, and to posit their experience as the norm against which to measure all others and to which all should aspire. These liberal ideals are fundamental to Canadian civil society. In contrast, Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty was, and still is, fundamentally “outside” liberal dominion. As McKay writes, these:

were people whose conceptions of property, politics, and the individual were scandalously not derived from the universe of Locke, Smith, Bentham, or Lord Durham. The containment of these alternative logics was an ideological imperative of the liberal order, without which it could not exist as a transcontinental project. (652)

This project of Canadian dominion as the hegemony of “liberal reality,” then, is meant to serve the interests of specific subjects, whose identities are posited as universal norms, against the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples on their lands.

* Citizenship is another keyword that plays a central role in my dissertation, in relation to concepts and practices of civic space and liberal civility. There is prolific scholarly output on the topic of citizenship from many angles. I am focusing on
Winnebago scholar Renya Ramirez’s theory of Indigenous citizenship.™ Ramirez theorizes Indigeneity and gendered citizenship. In her book *Native Hubs: Citizenship and Belonging in the Silicon Valley*, she distinguishes a specific form of citizenship that she calls *cultural* citizenship, which she situates as Indigenous and gender-based, against the liberal, implicitly male and European emphases of mainstream citizenship studies. Ramirez describes Indigenous citizenship as spatial practice in relation to the colonial state, other nation states, and between Indigenous nations in relationships with each other. Ramirez claims that urban Native peoples assert translocal Native citizenship that differs from state-based citizenship, commonly understood to be a passive and abstract category bestowed upon those worthy of inclusion within the community of the settler state or its cities. This settler form of citizenship also posits “civilization” as a product of Euro-American modernity, in which European male philosophers separated “nature” as its binary and gendered opposite. Ramirez writes specifically against this framework of liberal settler citizenship, arguing that urban Native peoples practice citizenship by composing “hubs” formed by cultural processes and geographic places, “re-member[ing] the native body torn apart by colonization” (23). Hubs embody relationships between city and reserve spaces, between Indigenous nations, and between settler and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous citizenship practices, oppositional to settler framings of the concept, originate from the grassroots practices of Indigenous communities on their own terms. These practices also engage with the land in ways that Ramirez does not describe, but

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7 I have also found Engin Isin’s work in *Recasting the Social in Citizenship* and *Acts of Citizenship* on cultural citizenship and “citizenships” especially helpful. See Works Cited.
that she includes in her theory by asserting the place-based nature of Indigenous citizenship. These practices are spatial and embodied rather than abstract, and thus inhere in specific spaces that become places, or hubs, through embodied citizenship practice. They include, furthermore, what Ramirez identifies as gendered dimensions of citizenship, specifically emotions, care work, and participation in relationships, which continue to be excluded from prevailing conceptions of citizenship within a settler public sphere. Ramirez also emphasizes how Indigenous citizenship shapes cities, and is not merely shaped by them. Urban Indigenous citizenship is non-assimilatory to the settler state.

Indigenous citizenship is, in fact, not humanist either, meaning that it does not privilege human beings over and above non-human elements to which citizenship practices relate, as in Euro-American traditions of civic spaces and nation states. While European-derived citizenship holds that all non-human elements of life are private property to be exploited, Indigenous citizenship evolves in relationships of reciprocity and mutual autonomy with others—for example, animal nations (Craft). I am using the phrase civic ecology to signal the interrelationships between human and non-human elements within the political philosophy and practice of Indigenous nations. Indigenous civic ecology is the phrase I use to signify the spatial and, most importantly, land-based conceptions of relationship that form the basis of Indigenous citizenship, what Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard calls grounded normativity (Red Skin 13).

Indeed, I use the term civic ecology to encompass what Mohawk political philosopher Taiaike Alfred calls “the heart and soul of Indigenous nations: a set of values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism; that
honor the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive authority, and the deep interconnection between human beings and other elements of creation” (Wasase 60).

Euro-American theories of ecology in cities, such as that of Marianne Krasny and Keith Tidball, co-directors of the Urban Ecology lab at Cornell University, in both consonance and contradiction with this Indigenous set of core values, describe civic ecological stewardship as:

Practices [that] interact with the people and other organisms, neighborhoods, governance institutions, and ecosystems in which they take place…offering frameworks for understanding the role these practices play in larger social ecological systems. (3)

These authors coalesce Euro-American traditions of civil society and understandings of land through relationships to the natural world. For Krasny and Tidball, stewardship, understood as unpaid ecological care work, creates a new nature through civic relationships. This supposedly “new” nature may be genuinely new in the context of settler cities. But Indigenous peoples’ links between nature and collective life reflect a profound continuity across spaces, in terms of relationships with the land, for many thousands of years in North America. Krasny and Tidball frame civic ecology in terms of human stewardship of their city environment, with an implicitly liberal Euro-American understanding of the human at the centre of civic life. I deploy “civic ecology” as a more expansive term that conveys the broad self-determined relationalities of Indigenous nations in city and new media art contexts.

New media is a significant element of any Canadian city context, permeating the lives of most citizens, be they Indigenous or settler. For this reason, this dissertation
focuses on new media artists, that is, artists who engage with new media technologies. Steven Loft, a Mohawk theorist of new media art, takes a genealogical stance in relation to the term new media art, situating it in the function of media within longstanding Indigenous cosmologies that are always in flux and, most importantly, connected to place. Loft discusses what he calls the media ecologies (Cubitt; Fuller; Strate)\(^8\) of Indigenous art as longstanding in Indigenous societies, citing “winter counts, birch bark scrolls, and the Aztec codices” as a few examples (“Mediacosmology” 172). Loft shows how media function for Indigenous peoples in ways that are consonant with the functions of cyberspace and digital forms within it, such as hypertext (172). For example, Angela M. Haas describes wampum precisely as hypertext, citing it as “an American Indian intellectual tradition of multimedia theory and practice” (77-100). Not only are the forms and concepts that undergird, support, and materialize new media consonant in uninterrupted lines of continuity through Indigenous media ecologies, but, as Cree artist and scholar Cheryl L’Hirondelle notes, the movement pathways of Indigenous ancestors across the land of North America provided the routes upon which settlers built their roads, and these ancient Indigenous routes convey the spatial infrastructure for the electrical lines along which digital data travels (152-53). Indigenous thoroughfares, based on relationships with the land and animal nations, are literally the material networks of movement for new, or digital, media forms. L’Hirondelle argues that in order to

understand contemporary forms of Indigenous sovereignty, especially in relation to media and art, this awareness of the Indigenous material ground is essential. Loft’s and L’Hirondelle’s framework provides the context in which settler scholars Mark Tribe and Reena Jana define new media art as 1) works that mobilize tech but are not concerned with it, or media, as a subject, and 2) works that use media technologies that, by the 1990s, “were no longer new” like video art and experimental film. From a Euro-American perspective, new media art, due to familiarity of computing and advances in hardware and technology, is accessible and often doesn’t require training. New media art is also conceptual or abstract, concerned with ideas, often self-reflexive, and invested in responding to art historical concerns—though perhaps less so than other contemporary art fields. I enfold the above definition of new media artworks within Loft and L’Hirondelle’s Indigenous lens where the primacy of Indigenous history is a given. This perspective resonates with the final keyword that I define here: decolonization.

Decolonization is a term that has different meanings depending on context. In some cases, it refers to the transformation of colonial relationships into reciprocity and respect between Indigenous and settler peoples. In Canada, this process requires the centering of Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, ways of being, laws, and practices, accompanied by the transfer of huge quantities of money and power to Indigenous communities from the state, in accordance with treaty agreements and continued non-treaty sovereignty. Primarily, though, it involves what Dene theorist Glen Coulthard calls “an alternative politics of recognition…about Indigenous peoples empowering themselves through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning that seek to prefigure radical alternatives to...colonial power” (Red Skin 18). Decolonization
refers to Indigenous communities healing and resurging against the effects of colonization, on their own terms and in their own regard. Further, as Coulthard writes, “Indigenous cultural claims always involve demands for a more equitable distribution of land, political power, and economic resources” (*Red Skin* 19). Resurgent action towards Indigenous sovereignty defines my understanding of decolonization, and I offer this dissertation, from my heart, with this aim in mind.

1.2 Civics Lessons

My path to this dissertation began when I started learning about Indigenous arts in 2010, through a constellation of sources that were both academic and personal. I spent that year completing a master’s degree in cultural studies, teaching for the first time, and applying for PhD programs. For my master’s research, I was interested in new media aesthetics, its impacts on civic identities, individual and collective, and how this played out in cities. New imaging and computing technologies impacted my life and the lives of those around me, and this inspired my interest. A chance encounter led me to focus on the work of a Blackfoot artist, Floyd Blackhorse, who designed a light projection of the Blackfoot Spirit Woman creation narrative that he planned to shine over the Red and Assiniboine rivers in downtown Winnipeg, an area known as The Forks. His version of the creation story has a contemporary ecological focus, portraying environmental destruction and re-creation in relation to Spirit Woman, spanning from urban life in Winnipeg, through early settlement, to the beginnings of Turtle Island, and back. Blackhorse planned the work in Winnipeg to convey Indigenous knowledge that interacted with the civic site. The proposed work illuminated for me how civic place-images in Winnipeg, specifically in this case The Forks, mobilize civic practices and
power relations in settler society. I continue to be grateful to Blackhorse for the opportunity to learn, think, and write about his work. One of the many things I learned was that works of art are frequently interpreted in terms of their reception by a mainstream settler audience. I had understood artworks in terms of hegemonic authorities on contemporary art, supported by “the gazing eye” so to speak, of elite settler society, prior to encountering Blackhorse’s work. I began to see, through Blackhorse’s project, that this discourse was impoverished. I began to understand that interpreting art through a dominant settler lens feeds into coloniality and hegemonic imaginaries. Dynamics of marginality and dominance cause many issues. These include funding, and Blackhorse’s work ultimately was not installed. These dynamics continue to create boundaries around the possibilities for audiences to view and discuss works of art. The understanding I gained from Blackhorse’s work continues to broaden in my experience working on my dissertation at Urban Shaman, in relation to Indigenous arts and the evolving visibilities of which they are a part.

In the fall of 2010 Winnipeg’s arts community was abuzz about the upcoming Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years exhibit, curated by Candice Hopkins, Steve Loft, Lee-Ann Martin and Jenny Western. This show, coming to the Plug In International Contemporary Art gallery in Winnipeg that winter, was to be the largest international exhibit of Indigenous contemporary art ever held. I discuss this exhibition again in my conclusion but for now it is important to know some of the “buzz.” The curators write:

With its myriad histories, trajectories, tensions, collisions, and selfimage(s), the city of Winnipeg offers an intriguing juxtaposition for these artistic mediations.  

Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years presents international Indigenous
perspectives in a city that in many ways also epitomizes the future of Aboriginal people in Canada. Works in multiple venues throughout the city will serve as catalysts to invent different ways of thinking, acting, and being in the world of our shared future. At this pivotal moment in time, Close Encounters invites engagement with the speculative, the prophetic and the unknown. (Hopkins, Loft, and Martin)

The curatorial framing was, needless to say, very inspiring.

At this same moment, in 2010, I encountered an old friend and schoolmate who I’d not seen in ten years, since junior high. Our lives in school, I used to tell myself, were in some ways homologous: socially marginal, sexually active. But that homology left out the keynote: she is Métis; I am white. In 2010, at a moment of my personal and professional “arrival” in the academy, as a single mother who had “made good” (I had not yet “risen from poverty”) opened for me a new and complex road of reflection on whiteness, social power, and academic privilege. My cultural studies degree and upper level undergraduate courses had helped me to cast my trajectory in something of a critical light. Still, it seemed to me in that moment that academic prestige was relationally constructed in a much broader civic context than that which I had previously considered. Now I know that the context for our shared history is called the settler colonial, liberal, capitalist nation state of Canada. Unlearning its values has involved developing an intersectional lens that begins with addressing my own social location, as a white settler in living, face-to-face relationships of accountability with others. The ugly power of whiteness was visible to me in a new and personal way at the time.

This encounter also cemented my interest in Indigenous contemporary arts as a kind
of social movement in a field of neocolonial power. The commingling of this experience with my study of Indigenous contemporary arts highlight how both are of a fundamentally aesthetic nature. I understand aesthetics as reflecting what is perceptible in a specific time and place. I reflected, in the weeks that followed, writing my doctoral proposals, on the sensory distribution of white prestige and Indigenous stigma. I thought about the city scene, the downtown area, and memories of growing up in the northern context of Indigenous oppression in Thompson, Manitoba. While my own experiences of marginality did allow me to gain knowledge that inspired my politicized stance as a cultural studies student, my white privilege had certainly prevented me from gaining relevant knowledge on how to respond in a just and human way to my civic context – through acts of what Métis theorist David Garneau calls conciliation.9

I have since had the opportunity to learn about how numerous Indigenous scholars of contemporary art, including Daina Warren, Cathy Mattes, Sherry Farrell-Racette, Julie Nagam, Heather Igloliorte, Dylan Minor, Dylan Robinson, Erin Sutherland, and Jason Lewis have been changing academic knowledge and practice in decolonial ways. In 2010, however, being able to interpret art was for me about class identity, and, inextricably, performing whiteness. When I started looking at Indigenous artworks, they called for a very different practice that began with unlearning coloniality in all its manifestations. Now I am unlearning a “way of thinking with an imperialist’s mind” (Alfred 102),

9 Garneau defines conciliation as “the action of bringing into harmony” parties that are separate and are currently in negative relationship with one another (35). He contrasts conciliation against the settler state concept of reconciliation. Garneau uses the metaphor of the Catholic sacrament of reconciliation (with the church) to describe the inappropriate relationship that Canada is trying to impose on residential school survivors (of confession and reconciliation—to the state). He then discusses the “original sin” of theft of land, and how Indigenous and settler peoples can conciliate only if this is corrected.
through practices and place-based relationships at and through Urban Shaman. Here Indigenous genres of knowledge and civic practice are acted out and presented in profoundly pedagogical ways, though much of these genres remain irreconcilable and inaccessible to settlers, including myself.

My interests took me into Urban Shaman where I completed the research for this dissertation. In 2012 Cree curator and gallery director Daina Warren offered me a job working for Métis artist, curator, and Native studies professor Dr. Sherry Farrell-Racette, under Warren’s supervision. Later, I worked for Warren and Farrell-Racette separately as a research assistant. I cannot overstate the value of these opportunities. I would not have written this dissertation without them. I worked for three years at Urban Shaman organizing the material archive of the gallery, and scanning and digitizing all of the programming materials. Prior to this work, I understood the connotations of the word “archive” as: intimidating material fragility, meticulous cataloguing, and epistemologies of order (with all of the violence these entail, pace Foucault). My experience archiving at Urban Shaman was more pragmatic than these abstract ideas convey. The issue of taking care not to smear or besmirch the archive was secondary to the excitement of organizing these materials so that people would be able to see them. People could teach with them! Students could cite them! Derrida’s oft-cited “archive fever,” for me, was the obsession I developed with organizing everything for greatest ease of access, thinking all the time about how we could make the digital archive available online. This breathless enthusiasm was then tempered by the need to ensure key stakeholders controlled the materials and how to present them. At this stage, Urban Shaman is working with a SSHRC-funded research group, ArtCan.ca, to host the archive online. We will code the data, based on
Sherry Farrell-Racette’s plans, according to the oral histories of Urban Shaman, to be recorded in fall 2015. This archive, as I describe in more detail in Chapter Three, is decolonial in the sense that those most affected by its contents and use control it. The archive evolves in the trusted care of Indigenous cultural workers and artists.

I paid attention, when looking at the contents of Urban Shaman’s archive, to which works caught my attention as examples of engagement with urban locations. The archive itself is an example of this genre of work. Sometimes I would find materials for my study in preparation for invited lectures or book chapters, and I would discuss the works with the artists in advance of my deadline. These works form the basis for my analysis in Chapter Three. Themes also emerged out of collaborations with my boss Daina Warren. For example, we co-presented material at the Banff Center for the 2014 meeting of the ArtCan.ca collective, which was focused on animals in contemporary Canadian art. Searching “animals” in the archive inspired in me a stronger awareness of animal-human relationalities in Indigenous cosmologies. Many works at Urban Shaman dealt with this subject, while simultaneously challenging colonial conceptions of these relationships. Many of these works were also firmly located in urban contexts. Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson invited me to participate in a panel on “indigenist materialities” in contemporary art. This invitation helped me to further engage art historical conversations in relation to these works, and Chapter Four represents the fruit of my conversations and work with these scholars. Lastly, artists who worked at the gallery, or showed their work during my tenure there—Rebecca Belmore, Jason Baerg, and Scott Benesiinaabandan—became friends of mine, and our conversations inspired the fifth chapter of this dissertation. My relationship to the archival materials was always attended
by relationships with artists and curators, and these in-person relationships inspire the foci of my chapters, more so than the broad civic themes I identified initially.

I learned about how Urban Shaman forms a particular institutional presence in Winnipeg that creates indigenized spaces within a continuum of what is possible and impossible in civic spaces in Canada. This dissertation reflects my process of archiving, learning, and unlearning from artworks and exhibits shown there and the people associated with them. It also encompasses the value articulated by Tuhiwai Smith in her work *Decolonizing Methodologies* of centering Indigenous interests and concerns in all discussions of Indigenous contexts. My dissertation centers the expressed interests of artists, whom I met through Urban, in the ways that their work reframes Indigenous contexts in cities. The chapters reflect our conversations and their ideas about their exhibits as well as my own thoughts.

1.3 Civic Practice: Urban Shaman

Urban Shaman is an intersectional space that radiates around a series of activities, politics, visibilities, and ecologies. Art production and exhibition at Urban Shaman composes a new civic ecology inclusive of settler citizens. Founders John Schneider, Lita and Leah Fontaine, Liz Barron and Louis Ogemah incorporated Urban Shaman on July 30, 1996. The gallery was Ogemah’s idea. He was an intern at Plug In Gallery in Winnipeg at the time, and he wanted to create a new artist-run centre specifically for Aboriginal artists. The original founding board members were able to successfully apply for funding through Canada Council for the Arts, Winnipeg Arts Council and Manitoba Arts Council. This was an exciting moment for Indigenous contemporary art in Canada, as simultaneously, Tribe Gallery, another Aboriginal artist-run centre, was founded in
Regina, along with Sâkēwēwak in Saskatoon. Urban Shaman was originally located in the basement of the Mondragon building, a cooperative space located on Albert Street in Winnipeg’s Exchange district (pictured below). Thanks to an arrangement with the Mondragon cooperative, rent had only to be paid when Urban Shaman held a show. Otherwise the group could not have afforded the space at the time (Barron 4). The first exhibit was of Dakota, Anishinaabe, and Métis artist Lita Fontaine’s new media works. Urban has been an important resource for Indigenous artists, hosting many first solo shows since then. Urban Shaman also provided an Indigenous theoretical context that bridged art practice and criticism, within the lens of Indigenous aesthetics, with lived experience. As Lita Fontaine notes, this experience was of racism as well as ongoing community support and participation (30).

In the reflections of the founding members, it seems that there are two poles along which Urban Shaman’s value as an institution runs. The first is that it provides a space to show Indigenous art. When it was founded, public galleries were not showing Indigenous artists. As Lita Fontaine describes, “We had no place of our own, a space where there was no need to explain our particular experience or worldviews…Urban was to be a place that we could dialogue upon common ground” (22). Secondly, Loft writes, Urban Shaman holds an important place in the landscape of Canadian art. Our intent was always to be the catalyst for broader discussions around Aboriginal culture; both for Native and non-Native people as well as to provide impetus for Aboriginal artists to begin, or continue creating art…Shared understanding and shared cultural resources provide us with a starting point. (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 11)

This rationale continues to be the basis for Urban Shaman’s mandate as an organization. While there is, in Loft’s terms, “tension between the need for Aboriginal group identification and the need for the dominant culture to “understand” (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 25), Urban Shaman has been a place that successfully negotiates and reveals these tensions. Urban Shaman primarily provides a space for Indigenous artists and curators to negotiate their own arts practice.

Such exhibition spaces, as Ho-Chunk scholar Amy Lonetree writes of decolonizing museums, are “transforming sites of harm into sites of healing and restoring community wellbeing” (200). Lonetree elaborates in regards to one tribal museum she visited, “The community actively uses this place to understand who they are. This place matters. Tremendously” (200). Urban Shaman is a decolonizing gallery in these ways. It
embodies “important ideological shifts in contemporary museum practices” (Lonetree 29). Lonetree describes decolonization in museums as: “honouring indigenous knowledge and worldviews; challenging stereotypes; knowledge making and remembering for communities; discussing hard truths to promote healing and understanding” (52). Gallery spaces like Urban Shaman decolonize both institutional practices and social perceptions. But Urban Shaman does more than that.

My treatment also situates Urban Shaman as uniquely significant, as an institution, in its treatment of Indigenous media art as citizenship in relation to the civic archive. I hope to advance the locality of the exhibitions I discuss as multilayered, institutional, and urban, within a history that has made a sovereign aesthetic possible. I note the connections between Urban Shaman and other institutions that have exhibited Indigenous new media art, specifically other institutions and cities that have hosted the exhibits, or versions of them, in my body chapters. Indigenous theorists set the framework that I will use in my analysis, and I put them in conversation with artists’ visions and decolonizing tools, set in specific contexts, in the chapters to come. I discuss Indigenous media art as forms of land-based knowledge, citizenship, and civic ecology. The forms in the context of my dissertation also speak to what tools are most applicable in building a framework for intellectual labour in Indigenous contexts.

My focus in this study reflects Urban Shaman’s seminal prioritizing of new media works. Urban Shaman reflects this priority in its first show of Fontaine’s media works and its Marvin Francis Media Gallery, which honours late Winnipeg Cree poet and media artist Marvin Francis, author of City Treaty and other works voicing the themes taken up in this study. I investigate how Indigenous artists and curators at Urban Shaman
understand an Indigenous environment within the context of settler colonialism. In sum, I look at how artists create self-determined conditions of perception with their audiences to resurge Indigenous civic space and ecology as land-based citizenship. I examine Indigenous new media art practices composing epistemic and aesthetic traditions transmedially, across media, and translocally, across place. Connecting aesthetic practice with its contexts conveys settler grammars through the lens of resurgent and intergenerational Indigenous ones, reframing civic ecologies in Canada.

1.4. Methodology:

I align myself with the broader politics and strategic goals of Indigenous research in constructing my methodology. Indigenous methods have many names. Maori scholar Tuhiwai Smith identifies “claiming; remembering, indigenizing; intervening; connecting; reading; representing; envisioning; reframing; creating; sharing” (143). All of these methods affirm how discussing Indigenous contexts is not simply representation but participation, a performative act of building these contexts (xxvii). In thinking about research design, interests, and practices, my research has unfolded where possible as a shared resource between myself and artists, wherein the design of the chapter responds to artist interests, which I ensure through practices of participant review.

In this dissertation I undertake interpretation of Indigenous art and its civic potentials from a critical settler perspective. I see scholarly research, in line with Indigenous principles of relationality, centering relationships (Wilson), and prolineal genealogy or performative action (Smith), as a thing that, rather than recording, enacts a

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10 In referring to Indigenous epistemologies of civic space, I am writing about Indigenous theorizations of identity, community, and land that are specific to the worldviews of the artists in my study.
politicized and material making. Scholarly research has been and continues to be a colonial practice in most of the knowledge production that takes place in the settler academy. I try to rub my research against the colonial grain of academic knowledge wherever possible. As Wilson writes of research in Indigenous contexts, “knowledge in itself is not seen as the ultimate goal, rather the goal is the change that this knowledge may help to bring about” (37). He goes on to say, “if research hasn’t changed you as a person, then you haven’t done it right” (136). I take responsibility for my research in relationships with Indigenous artists and researchers, and it is these relationships, more so than isolated reading, writing, or viewing practices, that have changed me as a person. I describe my methods of accountability below. Specifically, I employ the following methods: unstructured interviews with artists and curators, critical urban geography, and discourse analysis of media art works and exhibitions.

1.4. a) Feminist and Indigenous Methods: Interviews and Analysis

Feminist and Indigenous methods guide my processes of interviewing, critical geography, and discourse analysis. I focus on frameworks that foreground self-reflexivity, by practicing standpoint epistemology and intersectionality as crucial elements of collective practice in knowledge production. These methods call for researchers to care for “the process of research as a discursive site,” in itself, “for subject formation and potential restaging” (Aikens 7). I apply these methods in the formation, engagement with, and analysis of interviews, towards the inclusion of participants as researchers. I relate to the artists in my study as theorists who, through their practice as Indigenous artists, hold expert knowledge of the social through the lenses they share through their words and artworks.
Before describing my methodologies at length, I find it important to raise a critique of my settler subject position in this research by Billy Ray Belcourt, an Anishinaabe undergraduate student at the University of Alberta in Comparative Literature, who wrote a blog post last December about white academics in Native studies. I feel that his post pertains to my research in this dissertation, as I am a settler scholar producing knowledge about Indigenous new media art, working with artists to do so. In his post, Belcourt describes the history of anthropology and other disciplines that produced knowledge about Indigenous peoples, recalling that this knowledge has been a site of colonial whiteness, not authentic Indigeneity. He writes:

Despite these histories of injury, of being injured by whiteness, we are not having conversations about the (colonial) power relations re-opened when white people produce knowledge about Indigenous peoples, when white people teach indigeneity to Indigenous peoples themselves. That is, I contend that Native Studies is not a space for ‘allies’ to disavow their white guilt, to dislocate themselves from the history of colonization through which indigeneity was made abject precisely because this history is our present.

We are not having conversations about the ways in which the academy is built on stolen and colonized Indigenous lands, how it is an institution of colonialism, how it institutes colonialism. As Indigenous peoples, we need to question the narratives of neoliberal progress through which an Indigenous body in the academy signifies racial progress. This is not progress when Indigenous students face structural and interpersonal violence in the classroom. This is, however, resistance insofar as our very fleshiness signifies survival, insofar as our fleshiness disrupts the whiteness of
the academy by frustrating the ways in which whiteness organizes spaces and organizes itself as space.

Knowledge is, however, political when it determines what is thinkable and who can produce it. Knowledge is, however, oppressive when Indigenous peoples do not have access to the knowledge produced about us, when such knowledge produces us as subjects. Knowledge is, however, problematic when white people aren’t accountable to Indigenous peoples and don’t unsettle the colonial history through which settler life-ways are already Indigenous death ways.

In my methodology below, I describe how my knowledge production is political insofar as it is created by me, a settler scholar, with Indigenous artists towards decolonial change that decenters whiteness. My work decenters the authority of settlers to describe life on these lands, including but not limited to that of Indigenous peoples, and interrogates the explanatory efficacy of Euro-American theories insofar as they are settler colonial on these lands. When I teach this material, I ensure that my students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, understand that Indigenous knowledge remains Indigenous knowledge, and that it can never become settler knowledge. I believe that settlers can respond and produce knowledge that unsettles the coloniality of the university and its genres of knowledge and power. I understand that one facet of unsettling knowledge in the academy is that settler responses can never be at the centre of the conversation about Indigenous/settler relationships. The priority of Indigenous perspectives must remain at the centre. In these ways I understand my teaching, and my scholarship broadly, as figuring genres of settler response to Indigenous knowledge, in what Scott Morgensen
calls “power laden conversations.” Morgensen argues that “because Native and non-Native queer modernities are constructed relationally, dialogue, particularly when it centers Native queer modernities, works to denaturalize settler colonialism.” In my classrooms, and in this dissertation, we are having conversations about the intense coloniality of the academy, in conversation with the knowledge of Indigenous artists, which we discuss with the artists’ consent. At the same time, Canada Research Chair Dr. Dylan Robinson pointed out to me that settler scholars deciding on what Indigenous knowledge to centre, what to exclude, and even the very act of “affirming” Indigeneity through “indigenizing” in the settler academy may itself re-inscribe colonial relations of power (Interview 13-Sept-15). I work and live as a scholar and citizen in Winnipeg in ongoing states of unease and lack of assuredness on these themes – one might describe these states as “unsettling”. I take Belcourt and Robinson seriously, and I wonder if new policies in post-secondary contexts in Canada will provide frameworks for Indigenous content that are, in more thoroughgoing ways, truly in the control of Indigenous peoples. I wonder if postsecondary teaching will be recognizable in relation to what it looks like today, if and when we reach this point of thoroughgoing decolonization of these institutions. I see my teaching as an extension of my research methodologies in this dissertation outlined below, and offer my thoughts on their effectiveness herein. At the same time, I remain emphatically open to challenge and critique along the lines of those criticisms raised above.

In terms of both interviews and participant observation feminist theorist Mary Hawkesworth advocates standpoint theory as a guiding research principle (11). My interviews with artists took place over the course of three years, from winter 2012 to
summer 2015. I undertook twenty-six interviews in total. Following Hawkesworth, I use standpoint in a number of ways, as: 1) reflexivity about my personal interests in my project, and those of artists; 2) relating my everyday activities and locations to my position as a knower vis-à-vis both settler colonial and indigenizing contexts; 3) offering multivocal text throughout my dissertation, quoting Indigenous scholars and artists at length without wholly synthesizing their words into my own interpretation, thereby “owning” my position in relation to their words; 4) making visible the ways that settlers maintain power through control over culture and knowledge, and 5) disseminating my research in ways that empower Indigenous peoples. Standpoint, enacted in relationships with others, is a crucial framing of reflexivity. The imperative to perform autonomous reflexivity, knowing the self as the liberal subject of mastery, is to ape “Western man” since the Enlightenment. This way of knowing has been critiqued in numerous contexts as constitutive of social violence (Smith; Chow). In discussing reflexivity as standpoint, in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Chandra Mohanty writes of “self-reflexive collective practice in the transformation of the self, reconceptualizations of identity, and political mobilization as necessary elements of the practice of decolonization” (17, emphasis added). Here she advocates a “politics of location,” “refer[ing] to the historical, geographical, cultural, psychic, and imaginative boundaries that provide the ground for political definition and self-definition” (115). In my project, I enact a politics of location by participating in relationships with the artists in my study, as well as multiple civic relationships. My location as a white settler co-composes the psychosocial domains that I co-inhabit with others. I speak with others about the contexts and works that my study explores, centering the perspectives of
Indigenous peoples and artists, while owning my own position, to create accountability in our relationships. I see this kind of accountability as, in part, a vulnerability that continues to unsettle the certainty and comfort that, in many ways, attends my emplacement as a settler.

I also deploy intersectionality (Crenshaw; Hill Collins), as the study of the social as a fluid matrix of multiple determinations of power and oppression. Intersectionality creates explanatory rigor through deep collaborative interpretation with participants in formulating lenses, analysis, and interpreting data. I read Mohanty in tandem where she focuses on “self-reflexive collective practice” (17) or experiential co-generated knowledge. This responsibility in relationship cares for the pernicious function of “epistemology as social control,” and makes sense of knowledge with others as an emergent production in the “psychosocial entanglements of difference” (Gunaratnam 12).

For the purposes of my study, I undertake the feminist methods described above in these ways:

1) using my lived experience and position as a settler subject within the community of Winnipeg as a means to create knowledge with the artists in my study

2) having members of the Indigenous arts community assist in the conceptualization of the study design

3) incorporating participant review throughout the study

Margaret Kovachs, in Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts writes in line with insights generated by feminist methods, such as those identified by Black feminists Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins on intersectionality above, that “Indigenous methods share two interrelated characteristics with other qualitative approaches (e.g., feminist methodologies): (a) both approaches are
relational, and (b) both approaches must show evidence of [both] process and content” (119). My practices of responsible relationship include diffuse processes of civic participation. For example, I teach courses presenting this work with Cree curator and gallery director Daina Warren to undergraduate students at the University of Winnipeg. I share this research with broader civic audiences, for example, through Youtube videos and on radio programs. I am also a collaborator in building a forthcoming art history website, ArtCan 2.0, pending SSHRC funding, which will advance the perspectives of all key stakeholders in Urban Shaman’s history.

I also participate in Indigenous social movements and arts activity as another critical method for working outside of closed academic conversations. In 2013 I helped coordinate the Winnipeg Walking with Our Sisters memorial installation commemorating the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I am developing plans with Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba to raise awareness, through art production, of the injustices perpetuated through hydroelectric development in Manitoba. Finally, I am working with Shoal Lake #40 First Nation, and Pimicikimak Cree Nation, to inform University of Winnipeg students about the phenomenally unjust source of our city’s water and electricity through public events. These latter two projects also correlate with my activism, with Pimicikimak and Shoal Lake #40, towards currently negotiating forthcoming exhibits at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, created with communities, to increase the visibility of Winnipeg city’s relationships with these communities in terms of resource development. All of these activities build relationships that are critical to informing the questions and methods that guide this dissertation, helping me to better understand what my research aims to change in pursuing a
decolonizing agenda. Decolonization, for Coulthard, reverses settler colonial aims to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority (Red Skin 25). In pursuing decolonization in this study I cite Indigenous elders in Manitoba in their use of key concepts, such as the words of elders published in policy documents regarding Indigenous memory (see Chapter Five). These processes are mentioned throughout the chapters of this dissertation in relation to its content, to further connect the artworks with their land-based contexts.

Kovachs identifies, in tandem with this line of thought, “two overriding challenges” highly pertinent to my study. These are 1) “finding and using a “non-extractive” research approach,” and 2) “negotiating the epistemological differences between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing” (40). For me, a non-extractive method describes research that contributes to the aims of Indigenous artists in my study and the Indigenous community where I live in Treaty One territory. I ensure that my project is as close to this ideal as possible by 1) adhering to feminist and Indigenous methodologies as described here and in my theoretical framework in Chapter Two 2) participating in social movements, as described above, and 3) consulting with my interviewees and my colleagues at Urban Shaman in producing and disseminating knowledge. This dissertation negotiates the differences between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing throughout every chapter. In this way, each chapter strikes out against settler hegemony in domains that are academic, social, and broadly material.

Participatory Methods of Data Collection and Analysis:

I collected the data for this research project beginning in the winter of 2012 and ending spring 2015. Urban Shaman
hired me to do the work of digitally archiving all of its exhibition history. The artwork I encountered in this job formed the basis of my study. Attending an Idle No More round dance with artist Rebecca Belmore, curator Daina Warren, and artist and curator Erin Sutherland, holding a work of Belmore’s in shared protest, inspired my foci in my fifth chapter. Four of us stood and held up Belmore’s work in the wind and snow at an Idle No More protest in Winnipeg in 2013, in front of the new, not yet opened, Canadian Museum for Human Rights. In the work, a series of women’s shirts hung upside-down on a line strung between wood poles. A blood-spattered white towel hung in the middle, and blood also stained the women’s shirts, which had long, straight, black hair attached to their the neck collars and cuffs. The shirts displayed the words “no more” in white paint, one letter per shirt. The shirts, and the hair, blew in the wind.\footnote{I am explicating this work at much greater length in a forthcoming journal article with Jamille Pinheiro-Dias and Scott Benesiinaabandan. "Blood in Arts and Activism in North and South America: Civic and Aesthetics Mergers in Public Space." \textit{Canada and Beyond: A Journal of Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies}. 5. 2016.(accepted/forthcoming).}
Working as Belmore’s, Warren’s, and Farrell Racette’s research assistant helped me to negotiate key themes, as I learned from their practices as Indigenous artists, curators, and art historians. As I learned about Urban Shaman’s overall exhibition history, I identified loose codes and themes that I saw in the exhibition content and critical writing surrounding each work, including grant applications by curators. These codes and themes were subject to participant review in the form of interviews in which I shared the collected data at each stage of the research.

1.4. b) Interviews: Semi-Structured

Interview participants in my study include Métis artists Terril Calder and Rosalie Favell, Blood artist Terrance Houle, Cree artist Jude Norris, Anishinaabe artist Nadia Myre, Cree Métis artist Jason Baerg, and Anishinaabe artists Rebecca Belmore and Scott
Benesiinaabandan. I did not have the opportunity to interview Mi'kmaq artist Jordan Bennett, whose work I discuss briefly in Chapter Four. Because I did not interview Bennett, I refrain from analyzing his work, but cite, at length, his own writing about the exhibit which I include in my chapter. I used semi-structured interviews (Olson) in my conversations with Indigenous artists, and undertook conversations with each interviewee, in person or by Skype, email, or phone. With the consent of interviewees, interviews were audio-recorded and stored in a secure location in my home. Interviewees had the opportunity to review and edit my original transcripts of our conversations before my preliminary analysis, including the removal of information they would not wish to be included in my study.

I used semi-structured interviews so that artists had the opportunity to determine the direction of the conversation as they saw fit. I asked artists, through open-ended questions about their work, to consider how, or even if, they might think of their work in terms of the themes I had identified prior to our conversation. This process involved the ongoing co-designing of interview questions, which created conversation, as opposed to a discussion structured by the “right to know” on terms envisioned solely by me, the interviewer. In this way the artists and I created an analysis that resonated with them. I undertook ongoing consultation and invited the contributions of the artists regarding the analytic codes and themes that I identified not only in my preliminary analysis of their work but also in the interviews, as well as the final write-up. I mobilized interviews to create knowledge collaboratively, grounding inquiry in my and the artist’s concerns and perspectives. The artists I spoke with also had the opportunity to review my analysis of their works in relation to that of other artists, including the opportunity to defy my
proposed themes and connections. This process of data analysis created dynamic conversation across multiple perspectives in this dissertation. Finally, I am in conversation with four participants in regards to further disseminating the knowledge we generated together, through a film festival with workshops, a co-authored journal article, and by collaborating on a documentary film.

1.4. c) Analysis of Art

I engage in art criticism as an emergent process, because I want to avoid theorizing over the emerging aesthetic and intellectual domains presented by the artworks in my study. I apply discourse analysis and critical geography, informed by the feminist and Indigenous methods described above, to analyze and connect the enunciations of artists creatively contending against settler colonial contexts.

1.4. d) Critical Geography

Winnipeg, for Candice Hopkins, Steven Loft, and Le-Anne Martin, vis-à-vis the Close Encounters exhibit, is “a city that in many ways embodies the future of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.” I undertook a selective critical geography of the city as it is the focus of artists’ works. Geographic analysis is highly relevant given the ways that artists focus on cities, the coloniality of Canadian city environments, especially Winnipeg (Falcon-Ouellette, Jacobson-Konefall, and Sutherland), and the cosmological emphasis that Indigenous peoples place on land, and space, as opposed to Euro-American epistemological emphases on time (Coulthard, Red Skin 22). Critical geography grounds its approach in critical social theory. I bind this practice to artists’ resurgent engagement with cities. As postcolonial settler geographer Jane M. Jacobs writes, the place making undertaken within the “post-imperial city” bears the imaginative and material traces of
"colonial inheritances, imperialist presents and postcolonial possibilities" (25). I look at Indigenous new media art engaging the city and presenting complex connections with specific places. My analysis centers these connections as contemporary mediated and embodied consciousness of place, land, and ecology in the city. Artists’ perspectives contrast the logic of belonging articulated through the colonial state and advanced through racialized planning initiatives within the city, as well as mainstream media visuality. I show how Indigenous processes of visualization counteract "known" settler histories and places, offering rearticulations and refusals of the aesthetic epistemologies of empire as they are forwarded through the city. Finally, I posit that Indigenous artworks demand that I, as a settler, produce alternative modes of thought and practice in negotiation with the city as Indigenous land.

1.4. c.ii) Discourse Analysis

In undertaking discourse analysis I am compelled by Tuhiwai Smith’s genealogy of Western knowledge production in relation to research involving Indigenous peoples. I put the works in my study in conversation with mainstream public discourse, looking at how the artworks critique Canada’s “language for imagining” (Smith 67). Here I draw upon her argument for a conception of the West as an archive, providing knowledge and practices for settlers to dominate, exploit, and destroy Indigenous peoples and their lands. Tuhiwai Smith’s critique helps me as a non-Indigenous researcher to interrogate my knowledge and theoretical and affective commitments in view of colonial power/knowledge structures, and to mobilize her insights towards analyzing knowledge in the public domain. I practice discourse analysis to attend to the ways that artists contest colonial meanings within Winnipeg, and in other Canadian cities where applicable.
I also intertwine Tuhiwai Smith’s approach to Western discourse with cultural studies theorist Anne Gray’s methods for critical engagement with discourse. Gray highlights, firstly, analyzing:

wide discursive systems of power: attending to these systems one would ask questions of materials such as how does the text lay its claims to authority? How is power at work in the text? How are conceptions of ethnicity for example woven through the text? (189)

Secondly, Gray underscores analyzing verisimilitude as critical to the struggle over meaning “within the textual construction, language, argumentation, etc. but also in the reader's encounter with the text” (189). She suggests asking: “Whose verisimilitude?” — whose politics does this serve?” (189). I interface these questions with the critiques of colonial knowing forwarded by Indigenous scholars such as Smith, as well as the artists participating in my study.

In Chapter Two, for example, I track originary settler colonial formations pertaining to Winnipeg through discourse analysis, which involves mapping the system by which particular objects of knowledge are formed. This method allows me to interrogate key symbols as objects of knowledge, in a photograph or video, for example, in the chapters that follow. For Tuhiwai Smith, settler states deploy “tactics and strategies of implantation, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organization of domains” to produce the land and its inhabitants as objects of perception (23). Discursive practices act as mechanisms of visibility and location, forming objects of knowledge. Canadian social discourse produces Indigenous peoples as objects of knowledge under the sway of the colonial sovereign nation, dependent on the state and markets for their
lives. Discourse analysis reveals how this production relies on aesthetic verisimilitude that produces a settler colonial ontology. I also use a form of discourse analysis to consider artworks in terms of Indigenous knowledge and verisimilitude, especially as these advance and remember land-based histories, what Anishinaabe scholar Julie Nagam calls “place-based cultural foundations” (72). I consider arts-based Indigenous citizenship as translocal acts and relationships, and emphasize that contemporary art is an important domain in which these relational processes are carried out. While I call my reading of Indigenous artworks “discourse analysis,” I note that Indigenous worldviews do not separate “discourse” and “materiality” as do Euro-American theories. There are relationship in Indigenous arts that cannot be adequately described under the signifier “discourse.”

In this vein settler scholar and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies Mario Blaser centers political ontology in Indigenous contexts, with ontology understood as total enactments involving discursive and non-discursive aspects. Blaser's perspective is that “there are other worlds—not cultures—that are different from the modern one …and [ontology is important to] grasp the power dynamics and the productivity of their mutual engagements in the present conjuncture” (873). Prior critics discuss the relationship between specifically colonial discursive and ontological structures in ways that relate to the aesthetic emphasis in my study. Postcolonial literary critic Homi Bhabha, for example, argues that in the colonial period the formation of nation states occurred through the co-emergence of “traditions of political thought and literary language,” particularly the realist bildungsroman, or novel of individual development, during the period of colonial expansion (1). This “language for imagining,” portrayed the
linear development of the European individual (Smith 59). This aesthetic discourse became a process of societal development, precipitating the domination, exploitation, and destruction of Indigenous peoples and their lands through a liberal humanist imaginary. I discuss this specific process at length in Chapter Two. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed, discussing approaches to the figure of the “stranger,” in postcolonial contexts, further foregrounds the relationality of bildung, by which knowledge of others composes a subject. In this way settler citizens know themselves by “knowing” the Indigenous other in a narrative and spatial teleology. For Avril Bell this perspective is produced through aesthetic repetition culminating in the politics of recognition, centering the perspective of the white settler subject and attempting a “fusion of horizons,” ending in “inclusion,” or assimilation, as an extension of nationalist bildung (860). All of these scholars engage in discursive analysis to produce their politicized findings and dismantle hegemony, creating new perceptual realities. I align myself with the artists in my study by doing the same, while at the same time describing their art production according to Indigenous theories, detailed in Chapter Two, which emerge out of different material histories and philosophies than those of the colonial critiques above.

1.5. Chapter Descriptions

In Chapter Two, I interweave the historical context of my study with its theoretical framework. This approach aligns with the spatial emphasis of Indigenous cosmologies, which understand theory as experientially generated from the ground up in relation to the land. I address the location of Indigenous contemporary art, and the history of the place where the works were exhibited, for this reason. I then convey a post-contact history of Winnipeg, focusing on the context and negotiation of Treaty One. In relaying this history
I emphasize an Anishinaabe perspective on history in Southern Manitoba. At the same time I draw connections to historical social and economic processes that spread across the plains, affecting Manitoba and also Saskatchewan and Alberta. Many of these processes, such as the fur trade, the collapse of the bison, the implementation of the Indian Act, and the Confederation of Canada, had impacts far beyond Manitoba. Next, this chapter provides a theoretical framework based on the interdisciplinary theoretical approaches of Indigenous scholars. Following this framework I describe Winnipeg’s liberal media regime, emerging out of the history in Southern Manitoba, as a context for Indigenous media arts practices and processes at Urban Shaman. The final section of this chapter assembles Indigenous media arts theories as an explanatory framework for my analyses in my body chapters.

In Chapter Three, I analyse how artists Rosalie Favell, Scott Benesiinaabandan, Terril Calder, and Terrance Houle resurge Indigeneity to create a civic archive through new media art at and through Urban Shaman. I emphasize how Urban Shaman forms an institutional presence in Winnipeg that creates indigenized spaces within a continuum of possibilities for personhood, archival memory, and civic space in Canada. I discuss colonial archives and their intersection with liberal personhood as a dominant form of civility. I contrast this assemblage with artworks centering the strength of the individual in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, decolonizing perceptions of Indigenous people as “individuals” in cities. The works in this section are either self-portraits, or portraits of single figures in urban landscapes. New media art works and exhibits in this chapter produce an archival imaginary connecting Indigenous social history with the city of Winnipeg, while locating both in relation to being an Indigenous person. Indigenous
media works present archival stewardship according to Indigenous precepts. Their enunciations of personhood create an Indigenous civic archive, revisioning the self in relation to both urban and non-urban spaces, querying the settler binary where self is distinct from place and land, and revealing its histories.

In the fourth chapter I discuss Indigenous ecology in relation to media art in the city, building on the archival perspective as it is developed in Chapter Three to ask: of what ontological domains are these archives a part? Indigenous notions of ecology include the land and its histories, spirituality, life experience, sacredness, protocol, ceremony. I look at the ways that these themes, in artists’ conceptions of land and animals, articulate in civic contexts of art production and reception. I discuss Terril Calder’s “The ‘Gift’”; Jordan Bennett’s “Skull Stories;” Jude Norris’ “Affirm/Nation;” and Nadia Myre’s “The Want Ads and Other Scars.” Indigenous theorists of cosmology and relationality define ecology in concert with the artists in this chapter. I challenge the work of North American settler civic ecologists Marianne Krasny and Keith Tidball, and Australian settler art historian Jane Bennett, who draw upon a liberal public sphere tradition in thinking the ecological in the city, and materiality in contemporary art, respectively. This triangulation between Indigenous art and theory, settler civic ecology, and new materialist art history allows me to bring resurgence and citizenship into an ecological framing that further develops Ramirez’ theory of translocal Native citizenship in view of the non-human and the aesthetic.

In Chapter Five I consider globalization in relation to Indigenous citizenship in Winnipeg by examining artistic engagement with Indigenous abstraction and blood memory. This chapter builds on artistic conceptions of Indigenous relationships, through
citizenship and ecology, which were described in Chapter Three and Four. In light of these I critically analyze Euro-American histories of abstraction, such as those of Fredric Jameson and Lawrence Grossberg, under the sign of capitalist modernity within a dominant settler tradition of historiography and cultural studies. Artists Jason Baerg, Rebecca Belmore and Scott Benesiinaabandan present alternative conceptions of abstraction in terms of Indigenous communities’ knowledges and histories. I also look at Euro-American conceptions of blood and its function in social relations. Anishinaabe, Cree and Métis artists contrast with these, centering the abstract concept of Indigenous blood memory as a resurgent way of relating in civic domains on a global scale.
Chapter 2

Civic History: Anticolonial Winnipeg

In this chapter I compose a historically situated theoretical framework. My land-based theoretical framework is responsive to Indigenous theories towards understanding the artworks I discuss as Indigenous citizenship and civic ecology, located at, and in relation to, Urban Shaman in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My introductory chapter began by claiming that new media artworks shown at Urban Shaman shape understandings and experiences of civic space in Winnipeg, operating as a space and institution of resurgence, relationality, memory, and authority for Indigenous peoples both in and outside of Winnipeg. I continue to focus on the centrality of new media in contemporary civic life, arguing that Indigenous artists engage with media in continuous traditions of use with their Indigenous nation’s media regimes pre- and post-contact. I further situate Chapter One’s discussion of my own experiences as a white settler living in Winnipeg and Thompson, Manitoba, and my civic relationships in these contexts, by providing Winnipeg’s history, from the point of Indigenous-settler contact. That is, in this chapter I examine the historical and contemporary production of civic space in order to locate this framework in the area now called Winnipeg, in Southern Manitoba, outlining a genealogy of settler colonial media in Winnipeg. The historical context of Winnipeg enriches what keywords mean in the context of this study. This chapter further delineates the keywords—civic space, citizenship, resurgence, decolonization, and civic ecology—that are conceptual centrepieces within this dissertation, within the historical and theoretical context of my argument. My genealogical tracing of keywords in this chapter provides a foundation for my analysis of Indigenous media art, describing my assembled theoretical
lens of Indigenous resurgence and citizenship, and Indigenous aesthetic and media theory.

In 2.1 I discuss Indigenous histories in Southern Manitoba pre- and post-contact, with emphasis on the latter period. I rely largely on the work of Anishinaabe lawyer and legal scholar Aimée Craft, who describes how Anishinaabe traditions of governance and community, practiced in evolving formations for millennia, inform the post-contact context which I examine below, specifically in the agreements that facilitated the fur trade and negotiation of Treaty One. I also describe the deleterious effects of settler colonization in Southern Manitoba in this section, relating the experience here to the other plains provinces. In 2.2 I compose a theoretical framework that responds to Indigenous critical theories following my delineation of this history, centering keywords that situate my study of artworks and civic aesthetics in relation to what I describe as the study’s geographic and historical context. In 2.3 I theorize the evolution of Winnipeg city as a civic space through the lens of media technologies, after my discussion of Indigenous critical theories of citizenship, but before Indigenous critical theories of art. In 2.4 I discuss Indigenous aesthetic and media theory as it applies to this art history. This chapter elaborates this theory while locating my discussion historically in Winnipeg.

2.1 Biopolitical Codes of Settlement

Cultural bridging can only take place when the colonial attitude takes responsibility for learning the colonial history that is too easily overlooked in the desire for knowledge of the other’s culture. (Wanda Nanibush, *In the Garden of Signs*, 37)

Colonialism, as a genocidal form of settler sovereignty, has come to organize Winnipeg’s communal life, providing the civic and aesthetic milieu in which Urban
Shaman is located. Settler colonialism, as critical settler scholars Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini define it, is “a global and transnational… resilient formation that rarely ends…. settlers come to stay.” Another way to put this is that settlers “destroy in order to replace” (Cavanagh and Veracini). This phenomenon has been a part of European imperial globalization for hundreds of years, and its specific iteration in Manitoba, while distinct, correlates with the form that Cavanagh and Veracini describe above. While I reference settler colonial studies framings at the outset of this account, I must emphasize, with de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Lindsay, that while settler colonial studies as a discipline aims to “cultivate a culture of ‘doing the right thing,’” there are no “fundamental shifts in power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples or the systems within which we operate” (386) in centering settler colonialism as a topic of study. Studying settler colonialism is not automatically decolonial; it may need decolonizing. For example, Corntassel, Dhamoon, and Snelgrove cite “Veracini’s history of the concept [of settler colonialism] where Indigenous studies and Indigenous resistance is pretty much erased” and where Veracini “credits white historians” (11). These authors note that what they call “naming [settlers] as a process of containment” is different from “indigenous articulations” where “‘settler’ is a demand for transformation” (14). As a critical settler, I center Indigenous demands for transformations through artworks, in “relationships of accountability and trust” (Corntassel, Dhamoon, and Snelgrove 19) with Indigenous artists, curators, and critics. These relationships center Indigenous understandings, of which I provide a partial genealogy of in relation to Winnipeg, Urban Shaman, and Indigenous artworks in this chapter.
Winnipeg’s history provides insight to the works in my study as they engage with the colonial genealogy producing a settler civil society. Tuhiwai Smith, in this vein, discusses coming to know the past as a “part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization” (34). As Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd and critical settler Scott Morgensen argue, settler identities compose through the production of disappearing Indigeneity (Morgensen; Byrd), a process that begins with settlers producing colonial territory and develops through lived civic practices. Settler theorist Patrick Wolfe explains that settler colonies need to eradicate Indigenous societies as “autonomous polities originating independently of the settler social contract,” with assimilation being “the ultimate and least redressable mode of elimination.” In these terms Métis scholar Bonita Lawrence describes how:

systems of classification and control enable settler governments to define who is “Indian” and control access to Native land…forcibly supplant[ing] Indigenous ways of identifying the self in relation to land and community and naturalizing colonial worldviews. (“Gender, Race” 3)

Lawrence writes that these processes should be understood as “a discourse, forming an entire conceptual territory on which knowledge is produced and shaped…ways of understanding Native identity” (Real Indians and Others 20). Settler-of-colour critic Renisa Mawani concurs that colonial biopolitics require “making up people, chang[ing] the space of possibilities for personhood” (28) and thus eradicating Indigenous ways of life. Through these processes, white settlers become what Mawani calls “exalted subjects,” entitled to the land and citizenship within it.

Section 2.1 provides the details of this history mostly from the time of Treaty One, centering the voices of Anishinaabe lawyer Aimée Craft and many Indigenous
diplomats who signed Treaty One, and Elders who remember this history for their communities. I also cite historians James Daschuk and Paul Burrows, who detail the politics of famine and disease that the Government of Canada used to subdue the Indigenous peoples and destroy their societies on the plains, and ethnic cleansing as land removal in Southern Manitoba, respectively. The production of a settler colonial discourse and ontology in Manitoba began with early Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) settlement for the purposes of developing the fur trade in the area (Tough 26). The HBC understood themselves to own what they called Rupert’s Land—a significant portion of what the Indigenous inhabitants continue to refer to as Turtle Island—for 300 years prior to Canada’s confederation. The company understands itself to have gifted the land to the British Crown. As Burrows notes, “none of the distinct Aboriginal Nations in the area agreed to sell their lands or surrender their sovereignty to the HBC” (75). The mercantile company, through destruction of the Indigenous economies in the region, constrained Indigenous peoples as a debt-dependent labour force, preventing Indigenous peoples from autonomous political formation and disrupting Indigenous ways of being on the land. The nation state profoundly extended this process: in Southern Manitoba, though many Indigenous peoples had assembled into thriving communities practicing mixed economies—outstripping settlers in farming practices in St. Peter’s Reserve, present day Selkirk, for example—processes of ethnic cleansing, resettlement, apartheid, and colonial economic restructuring culminating out of Treaty One fractured and forcibly dissembled many of these communities, massively cutting Indigenous territory while framing the land in terms of settler claims. The Canadian government also dispossessed the Métis, sending white Anglo settlers to move into the region and destroying the autonomy of the
Métis political community (Ens 4). The Government of Canada created conditions of starvation for Indigenous peoples precipitating epidemic disease that allowed for exploitative land transfers through which settlers made huge profits. Additionally, Canada’s Indian Act laws, incarcerating Indigenous peoples on reserves and requiring their lives to be managed in every detail by a settler Indian agent suppressed resistance to land removal (Lawrence, “Real” Indians and Others). These policies eroded Indigenous autonomy and self-determination, and framed survival paradoxically in terms of state paternalism premised upon biopolitical extinguishment. These methods have created a discursive framing of Indigenous peoples as “dependent” on settlers and disabled Indigenous autonomy from the settler governance structure. All of these policies conceived of the land in terms of the colonial state and its markets, and this framing persists in the present.

Indigenous peoples have lived in and traversed the area of Southern Manitoba, including Assiniboine, Sioux, Lakota, Cree, and Anishinaabe, for more than ten thousand years prior to Winnipeg city’s establishment. The centrepiece of Indigenous history in the site now called Winnipeg, spanning millennia, is The Forks, the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in the city’s downtown, historically a major trading spot. At the same time, Lake Winnipeg, less than 100 kilometres north of Winnipeg, linked to major rivers for travel in all directions but south. However, the Red River can be taken to the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. Thus Winnipeg was an important transnational Indigenous hub, a place of treaty, trade, and sharing between cultures (“Winnipeg”).

This trade locale appealed to European capitalists upon their arrival in the country. The Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), a fur-trading concern out of England,
employed both British and French fur traders. At time of first European settlement in the area during the 1700s the HBC was and had been trading with the Indigenous peoples for fur for almost a century. Increasingly the HBC’s pursuit of furs, alongside that of other fur-trading concerns, caused ecological strain on all resources in the area. This strain, up to and including the collapse of the bison in 1891, ensured the Indigenous population would be in perilous circumstances both prior to and after the signing of Treaty One, the first of the numbered treaties in Canada, signed in what is now Winnipeg. Prior to treaty with Canada, the process of ecological destruction effectively ensured the HBC a debt-dependent work force in areas across the plains. After Treaty One and the entrance of the province of Manitoba into Canada’s Confederation, not long after which the buffalo herds collapsed, ecological devastation paved the way for settlers to acquire land sold for grossly undervalued sums, in attempts to allay starvation by Indigenous peoples previously debt dependent on the HBC. As I describe below, the destruction of a subsistence economy in the region as well as the fur trade basically destroyed the autonomy of the Indigenous economy on the plains, creating a situation in which Indigenous peoples were dependent upon external sources to stay alive. Indigenous communities that did prosper with agricultural practices, however, such as the one in St. Peter’s, Manitoba, very close to Winnipeg, also had all their lands, homes, and agricultural implements stolen by settlers—because they were too successful and settlers saw this as unfair (Carter 159; Burrows). As I describe in greater detail below, the government of Canada heinously exploited the situation of Indigenous destitution that they and their settlers created. Canada’s exploitation of Indigenous lands to the benefit of the settler population, state, and economy, cost tens of thousands of Indigenous lives.
These deaths followed smallpox epidemics, introduced by Europeans, which ravaged the continent killing millions, including on the plains.

Settlers built trading posts Fort Douglas (1813) and Fort Garry (1822) at The Forks historical site—the site of Blackfoot artist Floyd Blackhorse’s aforementioned artwork in Winnipeg (see Chapter One)—prior to Manitoba’s entrance into Canada’s confederation in 1871. The Swampy Cree and Anishinaabe peoples lived in the area at the time of the first permanent European settlement in Manitoba, though most Swampy Cree moved west prior to permanent European settlement. Anishinaabe inherited much of Southern Manitoba from the Assiniboine peoples, who had dominated the region for five hundred years in huge numbers prior to the smallpox epidemics introduced by Europeans, which killed most Assiniboine before permanent European settlement in the area. The first of these European posts, on Anishinaabe land, was the fort of the so-called Selkirk settlement. Lord Selkirk, a Scottish settler, aimed to create a colony where his people could live a better life than in Europe, as many Scots were destitute due to market forces in the British Commonwealth.

A set of two initial agreements allowed the Selkirk settlers to take up residence along the Red River, on an expanse of land that encompasses what are now the cities of Winnipeg and Selkirk, and the rural land between and around them. The first agreement precipitating the Selkirk settlement was between the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Crown, wherein the HBC granted the land to the British Crown. Anishinaabe or Swampy Cree nations in the area had not agreed to sell their lands or surrender their sovereignty to the HBC. Still, settlers understood the HBC to have granted the land to the Crown, on

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12 There are divergent theories about how this occurred. See James Daschuk’s introduction to *Clearing the Plains.*
whose behalf Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, negotiated agreements with the Anishinaabe in 1817. Again, the grant to Douglas, prior to treaty with the Anishinaabe in Southern Manitoba, was not made on the basis of a single treaty with Indigenous nations. For this reason, there is questionable legality in the genealogy of title from the Hudson’s Bay Company to the Crown, and Canada’s resulting state sovereignty.

Settlers on the ground observed the mootness of the Crown’s ownership in the agreements between the Anishinaabe peoples in Southern Manitoba and Lord Selkirk. Douglas, as Anishinaabe lawyer Aimée Craft and settler historian Paul Burrows write, was paying the Anishinaabe quit rent to use two-mile tracts of land as agricultural settlement along the river. Douglas noted, as reason to make this arrangement, “[the Anishinaabe’s] resentment towards my settlers for having taken possession of their lands with neither rent nor purchase of them” (Craft 60). He described the quit rent as a “gift,” or rent reframed as a “small annual present” (60). Settler law would view this arrangement, disingenuous use of the word “gift” notwithstanding, as a tenancy agreement and not a purchase (Burrows 56). It is unclear from a European perspective, in the case of the written text of the 1817 treaty between Lord Selkirk and the Anishinaabe, whether the agreement indicated a sale or sharing of the land. Craft argues that from an Anishinaabe perspective, the agreement resembled previous agreements between the Anishinaabe and the HBC, which did not include the sale of any land. These ongoing trade agreements were based on Anishinaabe legal protocols, including gifts and ongoing reciprocity towards mutual benefit. The Anishinaabe would have understood this treaty to be a renewal of ongoing relationships (Carter 48). Burrows notes, from a settler historical and legal perspective, that if the HBC’s grant of the land were valid this treaty itself
would be unnecessary. Craft points out that the Anishinaabe understanding of Treaty One was informed by the practices of annual rent and continued Anishinaabe jurisdiction, as agreed in practice with the Selkirk treaty, as settlers negotiated Treaty One with many of the same bands as in 1817. After this original treaty between the Selkirk settlers and the Cree and Ojiway in 1817, settlers occupied two-mile tracts of land along the Red River.

Treaty One followed the Selkirk treaty in Southern Manitoba after a variety of circumstances made treaty desirable both to the Anishinaabe and the new settler colonial nation of Canada. Treaty One was the first of the numbered treaties Canada negotiated with Indigenous peoples for land. Canada, prior to Treaty One, negotiated with the Red River Métis for the province to enter confederation. Southern Manitoba was the key to Western settlement and the railroad; both were indispensable to Canada as a project. The Crown owed the Métis 104 million acres, and in order for Canada to provide these lands they needed treaty with the Anishinaabe. For the Anishinaabe, agriculture, and European help with the transition to a new economy, was desirable, after the influx of settlers and fur traders caused game to decline. The HBC removed its social safety net accompanying the fur trade when it ceded the land to the Crown. HBC credit had meant increasingly necessary provisions as the trade ecologically destroyed the plains’ Indigenous economy.

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13 As Craft lists, further precedent included the Niagara treaty (1764, 1781), Covenant chain (1676, 1677) and wampum belts, which were referred to in the negotiations in Southern Manitoba. These agreements were based primarily on Indigenous legal principles, and so the Anishinaabe would have understood the treaties with Lord Selkirk as “an opportunity to brighten the chain” of agreements following Eastern treaties such as the Treaty of Niagara, with the Royal Proclamation, that Anishinaabe understood to ratify “consensual relationship of peace, protection, and respect” (Craft 122; See also Henderson). As Craft argues, the Anishinaabe would have had these legal precedents in mind when they considered both the 1817 discussions and Treaty One in 1871, as opportunity to renew relationships. See Heidi Kiwetinenipesik Stark in “Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal.”
Relationships between Indigenous peoples in Manitoba and the HBC shifted during the company’s decline, and the industrial capitalism that followed involved the coalescence of subsistence and mercantile economies and the deleterious effect of these conditions on Indigenous workers; in Northern Manitoba, the mercantile HBC enacted extremely exploitative policy. The mercantile economy destroyed Indigenous subsistence by predations upon food sources in many places. The HBC, following this, provided credit to workers in the North on an unjust basis that did not protect them from starvation and the conditions of the environment in times of restructuring. These negative HBC practices were far less in Southern Manitoba than further west on the plains, or in the North, however. The Anishinaabe in Southern Manitoba were eager to treat to ensure ongoing relationships of mutual benefit in this time of profound ecological and social upheaval and change.

Treaty One negotiations emphasized non-interference—specifically, that Indians could continue to use their land as they had in the past, setting aside some land for settlers to practice agriculture. According to Craft, Indigenous peoples would not be confined to reserves, but could live on them if they themselves wanted to practice agriculture; however, “settlers would not force them to adopt white ways or interfere with their ways” (117). Attendant to the treaty negotiations and remaining today are conflicting views of land between settlers and Anishinaabe within which to apply the concept of non-interference. As Craft argues, liberal enlightenment views of land as private property undergirded a view at the time of Treaty One of agriculture as the natural use of land (Tully, A Discourse on Property and An Approach to Political Philosophy). Yet at the same time, “the Crown negotiators did understand that the Anishinaabe did not deal with
land issues through an acquisition and possession model” (Craft 70). Craft further writes, “Anishinaabe understandings of the land cannot be translated into common law property concepts” (70). In Craft’s reading of the treaty, the Anishinaabe agreed to share the land with the settlers, “in a spirit of equality and non-interference” (70).

Since the Anishinaabe could, according to treaty, continue to use all resources, they were not actually giving up the land. For the Anishinaabe, the two, land and its use, are inseparable concepts, mutually defined through relationship. Craft cites Elder Victor Courchene who notes that the settlers “asked for only the top six inches of the soil for farming; that is all they were given” (101). Anishinaabe concepts of land tenure do not relate to concepts such as “surrender” or “reserve.” The Anishinaabe measure distance in units of activity, so they did not agree to the reserve sizes as described in the written treaty. Craft writes, “the measuring of land in abstract or spatial terms was not a useful exercise” (69). While settlers assured the Anishinaabe of continued use, they never discussed the concept of surrender and extinguishment of title in the negotiations.

According to records in The Manitoban (an 1870s periodical), Chief Peguis told his son Henry Prince, who negotiated Treaty One, that everything outside of the two-mile tracts in the Selkirk treaty was to be maintained for the Indians (Craft 35). As Craft writes, “If they [concepts of surrender or extinguishment of title] were [raised], it would have brought negotiations immediately to a halt, as the Anishinaabe would not have agreed to a surrender of the land” (99). Even without raising these concepts there were many disagreements.

According to Craft’s sources, some of the disagreements were as follows: the Anishinaabe argued that two-thirds of the province be reserve land, “set aside” for
potential Anishinaabe agricultural use. However, Commissioner Archibald, who
negotiated on behalf of Canada, argued that 160 acres of agricultural land per family of
five was excellent, and that since there were so many settlers coming, they would never
get as good a deal (Craft 127). The Anishinaabe replied that they wanted the terms they
had asked for and could not settle for the commissioner’s terms. In *The Manitoban* a
portage Indian is recorded as having said “what puzzled his band is that they were to be
shut up on a small reserve and only get ten shillings for the balance. [This] they could not
understand” (Craft 120). The chiefs were not willing to treat on the basis of the Crown’s
offer. Chief Wa-susk-koo-koon suggested that the Indians were to get all that they needed
towards their future wellbeing, in perpetuity, for free as a result of this deal (Craft 120).
In this vein, Chief Aye-ta-pe-pe-tung noted that he could not see any benefit to his
children from the arrangement the settlers proposed. Astonishingly, something changed
between this conversation and the signing of the treaty on the eighth day, and whatever
changed has been withheld from the historical record (Craft 139). Anishinaabe
understandings of the treaty relationships and Anishinaabe legal protocols have yet to be
applied to the treaty relationship to this day, despite their importance in treaty negotiation
and their pre-eminence in Anishinaabe-European relationships prior to it.

Anishinaabe legal protocols undergird Treaty One as it was preceded by many
trade agreements between Indigenous peoples, the HBC, and French fur traders.
According to Craft, these longstanding relationships between Indigenous peoples and the
HBC informed Indigenous understandings of the treaty’s meaning, especially since
agreements with Indigenous peoples brokered with the HBC in practice relied primarily
on Indigenous protocol and law. The land was without a settler government and under
Indigenous control and governance, on which the fur traders relied. Anishinaabe legal traditions informed the treaties equally if not more so than European laws (Craft 21). An Anishinaabe legal perspective radically challenges the implementation of the treaties to present day.

Anishinaabe law that informed these agreements, or *inaakonigiwin*, is, Craft relays, “all about relationships” (8). The Anishinaabe, at the time of Treaty One, “were governed by their own legal tradition” (10). Anishinaabe legal scholar John Burrows writes that this tradition was all about “balanced reciprocity” guiding relationships, and Anishinaabe protocols were adopted by settlers in the securing of the treaty, whether or not the settlers understood them (12). For Craft, “the Crown’s invocation and adherence of and to the protocols certainly informed the Anishinaabe’s understandings about what they mean” (98). These principles included “reciprocal obligations of care continuously reaffirmed through gift giving” and “spiritual kinship” through care obligations (59). For example, in the treaty negotiations citing the British Queen as “Great Mother,” the Queen was given the respect of being a mother among mothers, in relationships of sacred duty of care. “Renewal of obligations and relationships” are important to the Anishinaabe legal framework (51). Annual renewal and renegotiation of treaties, feasting and ceremony, as with Anishinaabe annual relations with mother earth, informed all previous agreements with fur traders as well as those with other Indigenous nations. Craft cites Pratt, Bone, and the Treaty and Dakota Elders of Manitoba who argue that these generally involved a pipe ceremony, “where treaty sanctified by the pipe of peace was sacred text, as in a sacred promise made to the creator” (113). Kinship terms informed understandings in the vein of obligations of love, kindness, and caring (101). For example, a “mother,” among
other mothers, is responsible to “produce a good life” for her children, “while respecting their autonomy” (Craft 110). Anishinaabe legal principles included “respect for autonomy and jurisdiction,” and by following Anishinaabe protocols, settlers invoked their laws, including the laws of mother earth: respect, love, kindness, and caring. Craft describes how settlers mistook Anishinaabe understandings of the Queen’s protection and assistance for dependence and submission (110). The Anishinaabe also understood the “mother” would ensure equality between children, understood as “sharing, borrowing, and mutual exchange” (110). Clearly this is not what happened. Settlers, it seems, have interpreted the treaties as Indigenous consent to be ethnically cleansed from their lands.

Burrows details that for many years before Treaty One settlers had been encroaching upon Indigenous lands in Southern Manitoba. That is, settlers were already reneging on the original Selkirk treaty in efforts “to push Indians away from the white colonial settlement belt” (63). This underscores the fact that the reservation system was a form of apartheid (Burrows 71), though it was not explained to the Anishinaabe in this way. These practices of marginalization stand in stark contrast to what was promised in the treaties, both their written texts and oral negotiations. The appropriation of St. Peter’s Reserve for white settlers’ use, and the forced relocation of the Anishinaabe and Cree there to what is now Peguis Reserve, located in an inhospitable and flood-ridden part of the province, is a salient example of these apartheid practices. Settler records acknowledge that the town of Selkirk, incorporated in 1886, was built at the centre of an Indigenous reservation called St. Peter’s Reserve, according to Treaty One. However, settlers decided to exclude the space from the reserve land, and could, thanks to the ambiguity of the treaty as written in 1871 (Burrows 87) and an illegal land “surrender” in
Motives for this theft in 1907 include that the soil conditions in St. Peters were better than elsewhere, and the Cree and Anishinaabe who lived there experienced more economic and social prosperity than their settler neighbours. The peoples there had been at diverse, ambitious economic and social activity for some time, about 100 years, to great success (Burrows 107; Carter). This “surrender” was patently criminal in nature, even to the extent that the Provincial settler court agreed that it was “invalid” and “void.” Nonetheless, the St. Peter’s Cree and Anishinaabe resisted for three decades after the “surrender” before settlers forcibly removed them and then imprisoned them for returning. Settlers removed them to land far inferior for the pursuit of life, resulting in loss of life, and supplied the community with none of the promised infrastructural support they would need to build a new community home (Burrows).

Food was intentionally withheld from struggling communities after the numbered treaties, creating intergenerational famine and epidemic tuberculosis, among other diseases, that killed unprecedented numbers of people. This was consonant with the experience of other treaty Indians on the plains. The lack of good faith and reciprocity is made all the more galling in Southern Manitoba because Chief Peguis led the HBC and British Crown’s best allies in the Red River valley. His son led this specific Anishinaabe community during the signing of the Stone Fort Treaty in 1871, the first treaty (after confederation), Treaty One. Peguis and his family were instrumental in the treaties and thus the possibility of settlement in the West. Burrows writes, “the establishment of the town of Selkirk was the greatest act of theft and violation of Treaty One” (75). However, the land in question in Treaty One includes downtown Winnipeg along the rivers, not only the current town of Selkirk that is about a 40-minute drive from downtown. Craft’s
Anishinaabe view of Treaty One suggests that the entire theft of land, which settlers and Anishinaabe agreed to share, is equally as egregious as the specific ethnic cleansing of St. Peter’s Reserve.

Across the plains, the Canadian government, centralized in Ottawa under John A. MacDonald’s Conservatives, withheld food until Indians were on the brink of starvation to reduce expenses following treaties and ecological collapse. Historian James Daschuk writes that these rates of malnutrition and disease would not be seen again by humanity until the Warsaw ghetto in 1942 (177). For years, malnutrition if not outright starvation caused communities to be killed “by” tuberculosis, which the government framed as “hereditary” despite the fact that TB is caused by overcrowding, bad air quality, and poor nutrition (177). The steep decline in conditions for treaty Indians, while food procured by the government “for Indians” rotted in warehouses, precipitated thousands of deaths by starvation and disease. One minister on the plains wrote the following:

I saw some at Victoria, last spring, who came in from the plains starving, and demanded provisions from the settler & the H.B. Co. There were no buffalo on the plains all winter, and they suffered frightfully. They told us that many Indians had eaten their horses, dogs, buffalo skins and in some cases their snowshoe laces & moccasins and then died. How much worse will it be in a year hence?

(Daschuk 118)

Other groups, like the Dakotas who did not sign treaty, did just fine with their traditional hunting ways. The Dakotas were free from treaty, therefore free from tuberculosis. In Southern Manitoba, as elsewhere, commercial fishing on Lake Winnipeg by newcomers was more important than famine and death for Plains Indians and this enforced priority
killed many Indigenous peoples who signed treaty. At the same time, Daschuk writes, “a number of treaty holdouts were living on the lake in affluence.” The “protections” afforded by treaties became the means by which the state subjugated the treaty Indian population, who the settlers framed as hereditarily diseased (Daschuk 150).

According to Daschuk, studies have shown that “people of the plains were perhaps the tallest and best nourished peoples in the world due to bison hunting” (100); after signing treaty, overcrowding and malnutrition caused epidemic TB, measles, and influenza. These outbreaks occurred after smallpox had already ravaged communities. Inadequate food aid following the collapse of herds led people to corral onto reserves for rations. Colonial agricultural policy intentionally caused reserve farms to fail, while farm instructors on reserves were “universally known to be brutal wretches”—low-ranking employees that controlled every aspect of daily life or reserve and took advantage (Daschuk 177). The Canadians starved the people into submission on reserves, while at the same time keeping them barely alive to prevent scandal among the settler population. The government recognized that settlers would be scandalized by widespread Indigenous death caused by outright intentional starvation (Daschuk 136).

By 1930, against treaty agreement, only 2.9 percent of the land in Manitoba was reserved for First Nations (Burrows 34). Additionally, the Indian Act in 1876 had tremendous effects on hastening land “surrender” after Treaty One. With the instatement of pass laws on reserve, Indians required an Indian agent to access medical care and to sell goods. These laws made it impossible for communities to survive in many cases, and caused huge amounts of suffering among those that did survive. Many individuals opted out of Indian “status” just to get out of the brutal incarceration conditions on reserve.
Every Indian who agreed to take on the identity “Métis” was given scrip and allowed to leave reserves. Indigenous communities with least contact with Indian agents and the Canadian government, those who did not participate in the treaties, fared best, by far. As I described above, those who signed treaties were starved onto reserves; this malnourishment caused thousands of deaths in less than a decade, and ill health has continued to this day. The federal government appropriated lands through ethnic cleansing.

Following the fur trade society, the Red River Métis had also developed a settlement at Winnipeg’s location, and Canada cheated them out of their land as well. The Red River Settlement was discouraged formally and informally from persisting as a political community after 1870, the year that Manitoba entered the confederation. Settler government intensified this strategy as Canada began to settle the West following the government’s hanging of Métis leader Louis Riel in 1885. White Anglo settlers were able to move into the region in the thousands and dominate the Métis, who were promised land that they were not granted, and given “scrip,” a deed to land with no means of cultivation or settlement, which meant that Métis had to sell their scrip for food.

The development of economies in Manitoba after the HBC arrived was subservient to capitalist ownership outside of the region, serving state agencies and private capital. The government framing of treaties, after Manitoba became a part of Canada, supported settlement and the ongoing commercial interests of the HBC. This information provides a context for many of the relationships of inequality that exist today.

Daschuk places a lot of emphasis on this fact in his book. Similarly, Glen Coulthard brings up this point in relation to every court battle today involving a first nation. Those who did not sign treaty have more rights, and fare much better, than those that did.
in Manitoba. Civil society developments today still support state and market interests. Indigenous scholars and artists, in contrast to this settler hegemony, theorize and articulate resurgent conceptions of the land using media technologies.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Indigenous Aesthetic Ecology

I frame my understanding of Indigenous new media art, its themes in my study, and its relationship with civic contexts through the lens of Indigenous scholars’ interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. In doing so, I follow the seminal work of critical settler art historian Carla Taunton, in her groundbreaking dissertation *Performing Resistance/Negotiating Sovereignty: Indigenous Women's Performance Art in Canada*. I also include responses from other non-Indigenous critics to Indigenous critical theory to align myself, as a settler, to their negotiations of Indigenous frameworks in knowledge production. These frameworks are synthesized, shaded and refined within the overarching concept of translocal Native citizenship (Ramirez). I put them in conversation with a concept of civic ecology as Indigenous land, in order to radiate the Indigenous citizenship frameworks of artists within Indigenous ontologies. These ontologies and citizenships eschew a default humanist view in which European conceptions of the “human” are at the centre. I follow Indigenous centering of the land to provide an ontological context reflecting Indigenous epistemologies. I develop these themes and relationships in the chapters that follow, as the specific works in each section nuance and extend them.

I look at how the literature on new media art at Urban Shaman intersects with politics of land and citizenship in Indigenous arts, providing an analysis of Urban Shaman as a space and institution of Indigenous authority. My understanding reflects the work of Indigenous curators and artists at Urban Shaman, including the history of critical
response to specific exhibits, which Urban Shaman’s gallery archive preserves in various publications. I especially engage Steven Loft and Dana Claxton’s collection of essays *Transference, Tradition, and Technology in Native New Media Art* and Steven Loft and Kerry Swanson’s *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways through New Media Art*. This Indigenous theoretical framework, looking at Urban Shaman, describes key concepts relating to Indigenous artistic movements.

Though I engage the writings of non-Indigenous scholars in my argument, for some intellectuals this is not an effective strategy in Indigenous contexts. Eric Ritskes, Chandri Desai, and Aman Sium, co-editors of the journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*, write:

> decolonization is not always about the co-existence of knowledges, nor knowledge synthesis, which inevitably centers colonial logic. Whiteness does not ‘play well with others’ but, rather, fragments and marginalizes—so it must be asked: Co-existence at what cost and for whose benefit?” (iv)

This discussion of co-existence is central in the context of my thesis. Most Euro-American theories are part of totalizing global frameworks outside of which it is incoherent to cite them. Euro-American theories resonate with the societies that built them; unsurprisingly, the theories of colonists don’t lend themselves to sharing space very well at all. Their works spring from a history of ideas that tends to begin and end uncritically, in that they solely consider Euro-American aims, socially and politically. These aims have been and continue to be colonial. Indeed, the artworks in my study clearly oppose the uncritical acceptance of Euro-American ideas for all of these reasons and more. I myself as a white settler personally run the risk, as well, of fragmenting
Indigenous knowledges when I apply my own ideas, for example, to a Cree artwork.

How am I answerable to these concerns? Firstly, where I do engage Euro-American theories I surround and contextualize them with Indigenous theorists and artists intellectual genealogies. I test them against the principles of key Indigenous concepts and through methods of artists’ participant review. When I engage with a European theory I do so in order to draw upon Euro-American critiques of the formations of modernity, and to highlight the ways in which, as Scott Morgensen argues, Indigenous and non-Indigenous modernities are relational with one another. My writing responds to the visions of the Indigenous artists in my study, many of whom aim to reframe civil society, though differently, for both Indigenous and settler peoples. Indigenous artists present knowledge that benefits everyone in Canadian society. Similarly, Indigenous aims, contexts, and artworks make beneficial demands in academia towards more intellectually rigorous approaches that become visible through their praxis with Euro-American theory. This is neither “co-existence” of knowledge nor “synthesis” but reframing or rearticulating theoretical perspectives to centre Indigenous thought, de-centering whiteness and settler coloniality. I theorize a select exhibition history at Urban Shaman by responding to Indigenous theorists in relation to these works.

One key theme arising in both Indigenous theories and writings about Urban Shaman is that of self-determination. Tuhiwai Smith describes Indigenous self-determination as a research agenda and as “a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, and economic terrains” (116). Indigenous self-determination juxtaposes with liberal notions of self-determination that inhere within the concept of the autonomous possessive individual as the
foundational unit of a settler colonial society. Alfred emphasizes the autonomy of individual conscience in Indigenous worldviews. This autonomy relates to the distinct relationships that compose Indigenous nations; it is not autonomy as understood through a liberal lens. In order to clarify this, part of a self-determination agenda, according to Tuhiriwai Smith, is “naming the world according to an Indigenous worldview … bringing to the center and privileging Indigenous values, attitudes, and practices” (125). This knowledge, within my study, applies to arts-based understandings of citizenship in the public sphere on Indigenous lands.

Indigenous conceptions of citizenship, discussed in my introduction, are different from those of the settler nation-state, as they do not rely on the liberal individual as the fundamental unit of society. According to Maggie Walter (Trawlwoolway), “Indigenous/settler Treaty rights have always been, and remain, predominantly competitive and non-compatible” (341). The framework of individual rights, arising out of this non-compatibility, negates Indigenous peoples’ rights, as well as the forms of civic participation that are salient to them as peoples, opposed to those of the capitalist state. Tuhiriwai Smith, on the topic of civic society, identifies the principles of settler colonization as founded upon “conceptions of society and of the individual based upon the precepts of rationalism, individualism, and capitalism” (32). For Tuhiriwai Smith, “the individual, as the basic social unit from which other social organizations and social relations form, is [a] system of ideas that needs to be understood as part of the West’s cultural archive” (51). This is to say, as noted in my introduction, settler nation-state citizenship is fundamentally based on the rights of the liberal individual as an abstract concept, out of any socio-historical context that would mediate its status as a bearer of the
right to individual freedom and private property. For Walter, basing the notion of rights on the abstract individual:

> inherently privileges Western culture and whiteness where continuing and consistent socio-economic disadvantage for Indigenous peoples is posited as individual and communal incapacity, poor behavioral choices, and undeservingness. (343)

In contrast, Indigenous citizenship models in my study are founded on the relationship praxis of shared lived experience, responsive to specific Indigenous contexts and histories. Loft says of self-determination at Urban Shaman, “[d]issent begins from a position of cultural sovereignty. It’s why places like Urban Shaman are so important” (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 26). He further writes,

> Within the context of a large and growing Aboriginal population, the projects and outreach by Urban Shaman offer a contemporary “meeting ground” in the city. It is in this way that we create self-defining narratives of art and culture that promote inclusion and complementary discourse respecting unique cultural imperatives and dynamic communities. This is not an oppositional stance, a victim stance, or an identity stance. This is the process of nation-building. (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 27)

Loft and Smith theorize Indigenous self-determination and nationhood together, bringing the praxis of Indigenous citizenship, self-determined and specific to Indigenous nations, to the forefront of Urban Shaman and artworks shown there. While, as Loft writes, this praxis is not a directly oppositional stance, I suggest that decolonization, as understood by Taiaike Alfred, is a necessary consequence of this citizenship.
Alfred’s theory of decolonization is a kind of praxis-based knowledge production. In *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Alfred forcefully posits decolonizing praxis against the legitimacy of the colonial nation-state. He refers to legitimacy as the acceptance and support for colonial institutions in settler societies. For Alfred this legitimacy is the most fundamental element of colonial domination. He proposes a method that he calls “creative contention” in opposition to a movement of resistance defined within the terms and logic of colonial power (60). Alfred conceives of the struggle for Indigenous people’s rights and identities in new terms, via creative contention, in the context of political action. The Canadian settler nation-state is an artificial and colonial horizon on the capacity for thought and relationship. The space of the city through the parameters of the Canadian nation-state is antithetical to a decolonizing vision; breaking down its legitimacy is a consequence of Indigenous creative contention.

Indigenous social movements for decolonization and the knowledge upon which they are based are coalitional and transnational in scope, drawing upon cosmopolitan knowledge and identifications. Thus, the decolonizing projects of Indigenous peoples emerge to compete for hegemony with settler aesthetic regimes to bring into being new decolonized forms of being and knowing in both Indigenous and settler peoples. Indigenous artwork, then, is translocal in an additional sense: it mobilizes these energies across borders, towards forming oppositional consciousness for change.

Translocal citizenship relates to the terms by which we come to knowledge. Alfred cites “a framework of Euro-American arrogance” as fundamental to contemporary colonialism (91). One must, “both symbolically and in reality, dismantle this framework”
towards “understanding, acknowledging, and advancing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing which can move scholars [and citizens] toward a stronger sense of accountability” (Weber-Pillwax 69). I note out of my experience living in Winnipeg that citizens have a difficult time speaking about the possibility of alliance against colonial oppression and settler privilege in Canada. It has also been my experience that statements are very readily and repeatedly formed that solidify the existing relations between settler and Indigenous peoples on very unjust terms. For example, Métis scholar Erin Sutherland, in a co-authored publication of ours, cites examples of racist comments in the *Winnipeg Free Press* newspaper’s online edition. She writes:

Reactions to Idle No More demonstrate limits to Aboriginal belonging in Canada, expressed in comments left on some of the articles about the movement in Winnipeg:

1- “all expenses should be billed to the indians [sic] so we can get some money back before all the chiefs hide the money in overseas accounts.” (Sun News Winnipeg, 24 March 2013).
2 -“What about the RIGHTS OF THE REST OF US CANADIANS. Do we not have any RIGHTS? Cut out the WELFARE. Make them get a JOB and pay TAXES like the rest of us Canadians” (Sun News Winnipeg).
3-“I wonder how many natives are willing to move off the reserves I would think not many. Their money would stop and they would be screaming give us back out to reserves. How would they ever be able to conform to Canadian ways” (Winnipeg Free Press, 15 August 2013).
4- “They themselves have broken the treaties by allowing liquor on reserves. Also let’s implement the treaties stop the welfare cheques, and pay $15 annual. Build a school on reserves. Let us follow the treaties signed over 100 yrs ago. Maybe they should be asking ask not what my country can do for me but what I CAN DO for my country!!!!!! That being Canada” (Winnipeg Free Press, 26 January 2013).

The artworks in my study consider the issues of racism cited from the comments section
above, relationally critiquing settler discourses. My sense is that I may practice a citizenship invited by this work, confronting rather than accepting colonial violence. I, as a citizen, invite settler alliances towards dismantling our colonial citizenship, and forming coalitional imaginaries with Indigenous peoples in Canada for decolonization.

Alfred’s theory of decolonization aligns with Smith’s and Loft’s understanding of self-determination. Settler thinkers Ritskes, Desai, and Sium write of decolonization that it “centers Indigenous methods, peoples, and lands…in a constant (re)negotiating of power, place, identity and sovereignty” (i). They write, “decolonization does not exist without a framework that centers and privileges Indigenous life, community, and epistemology” (ii). Ramirez’s scholarship described in my introduction, focusing on translocal Native citizenship, is itself a decolonizing act of Indigenous citizenship. She decolonizes the power to define citizenship when she centers Indigenous experiences and knowledge of what citizenship means. Ramirez’ interviewees, in the specific context of her study, as well as Ramirez herself, decolonize citizenship in the Silicon Valley through the context-specific praxis of many Indigenous nations in relationships with one another. Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson argues in Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods, that “the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality, or that relationships form reality. The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to all the relationships that it forms” (70).

The artists in my study perform decolonization through relationships of translocal Indigenous citizenship, emphasizing that contemporary art is an important domain in which these relational processes are carried out. As Loft writes of Urban Shaman, “by presenting Aboriginal art in an appropriate and contextualized environment, we engage in
the dialogue of a living, dynamic, and important perspective” (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 26). The interpretations of the artists in my study are self-determined, decolonizing acts of Indigenous citizenship that shape cities, particularly Winnipeg.

This Indigenous shaping can be understood through Tuhiwai Smith’s term “indigenize,” which has two dimensions. It involves, first, a “centering of the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors, and stories in the indigenous world,” and, second, “centering a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous political action” (146). In using the word “Indigenous” I am also following Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee), who suggest that “Indigenousness is an identity constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism…[It is to be] Indigenous to the land in contrast to and contention with the colonial societies and states…[in an] oppositional, place-based existence” (601). Métis scholar Bonita Lawrence adds that:

Indigeneity refers less to colonial modes of existence and identity than to a future, postcolonial refashioning of Indigenous identities truer to Indigenous histories and cultures than those identities shaped by the colonial realities that continue to surround Native peoples at present. (“Real” Indians 22)

Finally, Loft writes, “Defining Indigeneity through art practice can be fraught, but it’s vital that we do it. It’s a contentious term and one that we must explore if we are to move the discourse of articulate resistance, radical subjectivity and cultural self-determination” (“It’s Not Open Heart Surgery” 24). In all of these conceptions of the term, Indigeneity, and the citizenship practices through which it is acted out, is decolonizing and self-determined.

2.3 Settler Urban Media Codes
I now connect the biopolitical history that I described at the outset of this chapter to my study’s emphasis on media technology, in order to convey how the works in my study critique the contemporary liberal media regime in Winnipeg. The logic of settler genocide of Indigenous peoples, in the interest of the liberal state and markets, coheres with Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, which expresses temporal continuity and spatial demarcation through the circulation of print media, including maps and census data. These media abstract citizen understanding away from lived experience on the land, instead centering mainstream views of the state and market. Anderson’s definition, then, rightly centers media in settler nation-making, as centralized settler media cognitively cuts off the nation, as the land and its inhabitants, from the relations that determine their existence. Anderson’s conception of media needs to be updated to attend to the newer globalized audiovisual capitalism, diminishing the nation-state, while constantly updating the state’s current neoliberal impetus. Audiovisual and digital media are central domains in which Indigenous resurgence dismantles settler legitimacy. This has clearly been the case in the context of Idle No More’s online communities, as one example.\textsuperscript{15} Centralized mass media, as well as participatory digital forms, often tend to uphold the legitimacy of the state, as they abstract citizenship as a set of liberal principles, particularly where state and market hail citizens as aspiring and possessive individuals. These hegemonic strategies function against the interests inherent in the lived experience of most peoples. In Canada, mass media processes and the extreme priority of

\textsuperscript{15} Tanya Kappo gives a useful account of the Idle No More movement in her book with Hayden King, *The Winter We Danced*. See the interview titled “Our People Were Glowing.”
settler state and market capitalism find their foundations in the mechanisms of settler genocide of Indigenous peoples, in imagining Indigenous peoples as disappeared for all intents and purposes, and their lands as “terra nullius.” Indigenous resurgence in Canada, in contrast to the liberal dynamics of mass media, has engaged new media technologies to create alternative genres of resurgent praxis, and this praxis inspires my interest in the history of media on these lands.

Indigenous media art emphasizes various media as its most pertinent genealogy in civic life. New media artworks converge visual new media and urban spaces as citizenship in a mediated public sphere (Appadurai; Canclini; Buck-Morss). As Tanya Kappo from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, and treaty eight territory in Alberta puts it:

Social media has really provided a forum for us. It’s like this constant community meeting and you can go and hang out there any time, a regular space to visit. And especially now that our people live in so many different locations, social media has also become the place to share thoughts on everything and anything. Because of the nature of our societies now, it’s really an ideal medium for important conversations. (Kappo and King 68)

New media urban citizenship, including artworks, re-imagines many concrete city sites by making “claims or counter-claims about rights, responsibilities, identity, recognition, and (re)distribution” (“Introduction” n.p.). Media artworks take up a number of these claims and their formats in Winnipeg, and in other Canadian cities as well.

While Winnipeg has originated through settler colonial biopolitics, or the constitutive relations between “bodies, forces, technologies, disciplines, and institutions” (Esposito), its contemporary civic life, alongside other Canadian cities, is increasingly
linked to new media technologies. These contribute to the homogenization of the space as settler colonial. I consider elements of downtown Winnipeg’s hegemonic framing, as Urban Shaman is located in Winnipeg’s historic Exchange district, which is full of warehouses, mercantile architecture, and neoclassical banks. One example can be found in this image by photographer Bryan Scott, who posted it on his blog:


The Winnipeg blogger took this image of the northeast corner of the intersection Portage-and-Main, the heart of Winnipeg’s downtown, just blocks away from The Forks. Scott published the image with this caption: "Main Street. A passerby threatened to smash my camera as I was taking this shot, and then stumbled away into the night.” This would not be a surprising occurrence at this site for Winnipeggers. A couple of blocks north of the buildings on Main Street, behind where the shooter is standing, are a series of notorious
and dangerous live-in hotels that house some of the most intense, brutal poverty in Winnipeg. Indigenous and settler homeless people live in these hotels. Scott’s website, *Love Hate Winnipeg*, offers a series of photographic essays on the spaces of the city, raising the privilege of the gaze, spectatorship as a site of productive relations, and material civic encounter. The blogger captures the banking buildings in his image in a critical lens, as he gestures towards racism in assumed citizen rights to the city at that site. It would be easy to presume that a white camera holder is accosted by a homeless Indigenous person. As with Lorri Steeves’ comment, Indigenous bodies are figured as contemptuously threatening to settler private property.

I see this image’s emphasis as highlighting how downtown Winnipeg’s settler colonial aesthetic supports the hostile marginalization of Indigenous personhood. Winnipeg’s heritage sites, as the city began as a "gateway to the west," celebrate the development of industry in the distribution of goods westward. Winnipeg’s construction of space conveys this history in the neoclassical style of "Banker's Row," the built exegesis of imperial expansion. As critical settler geographer Jane Jacobs writes in the context of Britain and Australia, the symbolic, affective, and ritual effects of heritage designation and gentrification “preserve buildings and city scenes which memorialize the might of empire” (29). The architecturally imposing HBC building, a few blocks away from this intersection to the west, houses heritage objects as material icons of national identity on display prominently both inside and outside of the store. Critical thought about these domains is an intimate matter of personal and social identity in Winnipeg. Indigenous new media artworks are, in contested prairie space, resurgent against images
like those in the blog post above, or in Anderson’s hegemonic media. The works orient themselves in decolonizing relation to the hegemonic civic genres of new media.

Hegemonic media genres in Canada are distinctly Euro-American, and they materially affect city spaces. For French media theorist and philosopher Bernard Stiegler, contemporary hegemonic technologies form territory by producing its grammatisation, that is, media grammars that determine individual perception and structural organization of time and space in a liberal dominion. Stiegler writes of digitalization of territory, where technics, or “organized inorganic matter,” function with an “unparalleled degree of interlocking with surrounding environments” producing spaces "geo-graphically" (Technics and Time I, 3). Stiegler calls these practices mnemotechnical systems: organized inorganic devices—such as writing or more recent audiovisual and digital technologies—that mediate, or technically produce, conscious time and space as lived (Technics and Time 1, 140). Various forms of technics exteriorize the individual’s memory and knowing, locating her within a milieu of common history. Organized prosthetic systems compose settler ecologies of place. In Stiegler’s Western theory, time, as the centrepiece of ontology, and “differance,” or temporalizing differal through semantic structure, makes time that becomes space. Indigenous understandings contrast as they posit relationships with the autonomous and agential land as productive of temporality and becoming. Stiegler’s theory, then, describes the configuration of time in Winnipeg through settler technics, which composes ecologically with the land in settler ontological production and emplacement through media that emphasize time.

Settler prostheses in Winnipeg organize local practices that form a civic body. Tuhiwai Smith says that settlers “code” land into meaningful spaces, though she does not
distinguish settler spatial ontologies in specific contexts like that of Winnipeg.\textsuperscript{16} Stiegler’s media theory is helpful here in introducing the primacy of media in the overall coded configuration of the settler city. In Winnipeg, the liberal capitalist logic of the settler colonial project configures these codes. For Winnipeg planner Sara Cooper the identities of settler spaces in Winnipeg, and her case study, The Forks, are created in opposition to First Nations spaces, and “Winnipeg’s heritage is presented in ways that eschew acknowledging the impacts of colonialism on the city” (90). Cooper writes, correctly in my view, that decision-making at The Forks reflects settler priorities. However, one contrasting space in The Forks site is the Oodena circle, a built structure the Indigenous community uses for ceremonies, protests, pow wow, memorial, and other community events. Still, Cooper details how planners constructed the identity of The Forks heritage site as “pleasant, green, and attractive” in contrast with Winnipeg’s overall downtown, understood to be a place of racialized “poverty and violence” (57). Physical barriers in which there are located “gateways” into the Forks reinforce its separation from the rest of the city. At the same time, planners present heritage at The Forks by keeping technologies such as railway cars and elements of old rail yards visible and exposed as the “distinctive’ history of the site. Cooper writes “the heritages presented at The Forks shape a story of peaceful encounter that locates Indigenous heritage in the past, while

\textsuperscript{16} Some critics, such as Sherene Razack in her book \textit{Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society}, and city planner Sarah Cooper in her master’s thesis \textit{The Meeting Place: Examining the Relationship between Colonialism and Planning at The Forks, Winnipeg}, engage French Marxist and poststructuralist critical geographer Henri Lefebvre’s seminal work \textit{The Production of Space} (1970) when discussing settler colonial cities in Canada. I am not engaging with his work here because I am a) focused on media and b) interested in Indigenous theories of settler spaces, which differ from both Marxist and poststructural accounts (see Coulthard for more on these important differences).
non-Indigenous heritage has progressed and continues to evolve” (59). I noticed a plaque as one example of this when spending time with my family at The Forks in the children’s park (image below):

![Plaque at Forks Heritage Site](image)


This plaque gives Métis peoples a nod of respect, detailing how the government did not uphold its agreement with the Métis. Note the writer’s use of passive voice, “were not respected,” as she hides the responsible agents or subjects of the sentence’s action. Lower down, the plaque figures Indigenous peoples—the Ojibway and Cree—as agriculturally and morally incompetent: “frustrated” and “increasingly dependent, divided, despondent.” Settlers, though it was “not easy,” are shown to adjust or “transition” well and move forward into the future. This framing is dishonest and racist. First of all, the
Indigenous community of Ojibway and Cree at St. Peter’s, in southern Manitoba, were far more agriculturally successful than their settler neighbors. This is part of the reason the settlers decided to ethnically cleanse them from their lands. Secondly, and at the same time, the Ojibway and Cree increasingly have rights in the courts as First Nations, for example when it comes to opposing resource exploitation on their territories. Métis, though the recent 2014 Supreme Court decision recognizes them as “Indians” under the Constitution, currently do not have the rights of status Indians. That this plaque would recognize the Métis community, while casting aspersion upon the credibility of the Ojibway and Cree as continuing viable communities, is hardly incidental to Ojibway and Cree opposition to the right of settlers to freely exploit them and their lands. This political expedience is even uglier as, despite the misinformation on the plaque, St. Peter’s did not participate in the Métis resistance in 1885, instead supporting those they understood to be their English allies. Finally, Métis artist KC Adams recalls that in her family’s experience there was a significant racist hierarchy in southern Manitoba favouring Métis, as European fur-trade men took Indigenous “country wives.” The plaque in the downtown children’s park, embodying this history, recognizes the Métis in terms of “their” loss, while denigrating First Nations.

Winnipeg lionizes colonial railway histories and settler industries through heritage districts, monuments, and organization and design of public and private spaces. Transplanted European architectural styles, both commercial and residential, and even non-Indigenous tree species lining city streets, colonize the area. At the same time, though, the praxis of Indigenous communities reframes and indigenizes different
technological and aesthetic forms, such as those of the CN Rail, as many lives entwine meaningfully with the railways.

The relationships between civic space and identity are key to continuing settler colonialism but also to Indigenous resurgence against it. As critical settler geographer Amber Dean writes, “settlement of Western Canada…is ongoing in the construction of our spaces and identities” (115). Dean argues that hegemonic production of racialized spaces enables and abets continuing colonial violence: for Dean, the relational coding of racialized spaces of poverty in Western Canadian cities has a “narrative logic” in which racialized space is regarded as degenerate, thus “wasted”: there is nothing of value there and thus nothing there at all (129).17 Métis scholar Erin Sutherland notes that Indigenous imagery, replete in Winnipeg’s racialized spaces, paradoxically undergirds racism in that it shows the “tolerance” of Winnipeg’s dominant settler-Anglo population. Indigenous imagery in Winnipeg, for Sutherland, is seen as settler tolerance, and not as meaningful Indigenous presence. I historicize the radically constrained perceptibility of racialized civic spaces, their histories, and the peoples within them in terms of the mnemotechnical systems of settler colonization.

Technology, according to Stiegler, is the central stake of group memory formation. He argues, “the unity of a social group is the product of their projection of a common future, a desired communal unity which is always still to come, but which nevertheless structurally depends on the active adoption of a common past” (Technics and Time 3, 138). Stiegler posits temporality as the primary stake in the production of

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17 Sutherland and I have a forthcoming book chapter on this subject written with Robert Falcon-Ouellette, called “Civic Visibilities: Mediating Indigenous Presence in the City.” See the Works Cited for details.
settler spaces and the ways media secures hegemonic identifications. I read this grammar, or ordering, primarily via audiovisual media, due to its central role in constructing civil society. Hegemonic forms of civic ecology in Winnipeg flow through the nation-state and economic markets, while markets accrue ever greater precedence through ubiquitous media. For citizens of the city, meaning channels through the markets of everyday life, where “imagination” articulates in "a complex transnational construction of landscapes" (Appadurai 31) generated by markets. Similarly, Hardt and Negri designate empire as a field in which "communicative, cooperative, and affective labour [are] given primacy" (xiii) in the material constitution of what they call "imperial order." Markets, for Stiegl, flow through industrial audiovisual cultural production, tilting the social away from the biopower of the state. Stiegler emphasizes the ways that industrial audiovisual systems ground collective becoming for peoples. What he calls “the industrial conditioning of memory,” beginning with the photograph and the phonograph, inaugurates “a new mode and range of techniques for selecting, making, reading, and ordering memories—a new phase in the grammatization of experience, recollection, and consciousness” (Technics and Time 3, 41). The industrial cultural “fabrication of the present” produces what he calls “eventfulness” (Technics and Time 3, 138) through the synthesis of consciousness with audiovisual materials. The industrial production of memory through audiovisual technologies massively upheaves temporal and spatial conventions of the nation-state such as those in cities. Global and hegemonic audiovisual capitalism destroys diachronic synchronizations, or the synthesis of individual and collective meanings through lived praxis over time. Audience temporalities synchronize with the space-times of the market-driven audiovisual technologies. Cities’ aesthetic grammars, co-constituted by the state
form and capitalist markets, shift into the domain of audiovisual media consciousness. To some extent the state loses control over lived citizenship terms as Canadian society moves into a technical paradigm of audiovisual domination, and screens begin to hold constitutive power in civil life.

Stiegler’s media theory provides a way to describe Winnipeg’s settler colonialism beyond the state’s biopolitical forms. It does not describe Indigenous arts. Indigenous media grasps the opportunity of eroding state hegemony, while struggling against the power of audiovisual capitalism.\textsuperscript{18} Stiegler’s account of the mediatized markets and psychopolitical memory structures of memory is a Western post-humanist perspective, centering the ordering, or coding, of human technologies. His theory marginalizes Indigenous perspectives of reciprocal relationship between organic and inorganic beings. Still, Stiegler informs my view of settler colonialism in Winnipeg today, due to his focus on contemporary power that aims at controlling and modulating consciousness, through audiovisual media, over disciplining bodies or regulating life-processes, as in the history of settler governance processes.

French phenomenologist Gilbert Simondon, Stiegler’s mentor, understands technologies broadly as “retaining a margin for indetermination where the environment acts on the machine” (Simondon 13). For Stiegler, then, the environment has potential autonomy relating to technics, beyond human intentionality or consciousness. His poststructural framing is more ecological than Anderson’s above, and may even be

\textsuperscript{18} In discussing this thesis with my friend, journalist Whitney Light, she noted that Canadian political journalists today lament an unprecedented degree of hegemonic messaging from the government (under Harper) because new media has provided the Prime Minister’s Office with the option to concentrate on direct messaging (creating its own media channels) and avoid/obstruct dialogue with journalists.
somewhat in line with Indigenous theorizations of materialism. At the same time, Indigenous theorizations are far more developed on the topic of agential environments, and generate out of completely different contexts; for Indigenous methods, context, relationships, and location is everything.

The artists in my study, exhibited at Urban Shaman, reorder the city as construed through *ecological relationships*. Indigenous relationalities with the land produce the technical apparatuses mediating civic life for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous artists and theorists’ genealogies situate Stiegler’s technological account of Euro-American domination as Eurocentric and culturally specific. Indigenous media histories, as described in my introduction, emphasize land, space, and place. Stiegler’s notion of technicity correlates to settler colonial industrial capitalist media-based societies in cities. Land-based theories of mediality specific to Indigenous nations decolonize its Eurocentric and humanist universalism.

European technical processes, creating settler time, make Indigenous histories invisible. The land appears as exploitable property, towards settler wealth, and Indigenous peoples appear only as means towards making settler identity more secure in its “tolerance” and “benevolence” (Mackey). Memory, while Winnipeggers mobilize it to settler ends, is also an important stake in Indigenous contesting of contemporary colonialism, and it is critical to the formation of identity in relation to place. Critical settler geographer Sherene Razack argues, “to contest white people’s primary claim to the land and to the nation requires making visible Aboriginal nations … [and] the racialized structure of citizenship that characterizes contemporary Canada” (5). Indigenous modernities are land-based and spatial, and they contest dominant
constructions of civic space in Winnipeg. Making these modernities visible is an act of resurging Indigeneity.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the historical and theoretical context of my overall argument. Section 2.1 of this chapter conveys a post-contact history of the Indigenous lands of Treaty One territory, on which settlers built the city of Winnipeg, emphasizing an Anishinaabe perspective on Treaty One. This historical account shows the clear genocidal impetus of Canada’s federal government, at the same time enabling readers to imagine what the area could be like if settlers honoured our treaty agreement in good faith. In section 2.2 I outline a theory of translocal Indigenous citizenship relying on the terms self-determination, citizenship, decolonization, resurgence, Indigenous, and indigenize. These terms apply to relationships in urban spaces but they also define appropriate relationships in knowledge production as citizenship practice. Indigenous citizenship practice is based on Indigenous understandings of autonomy in relationship, including with the land and its history. The actions of liberal individuals in a white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist public sphere are anathema to it (see Chapter One). Sovereignty in the context of Indigenous citizenship implies both self-determination and Indigenous nationhood, both developing in praxis. Decolonization is a necessary consequence. Settlers must give up the stance of Euro-American arrogance in order to participate. Indigenous peoples produce Indigeneity through future-oriented praxis currently situated in a colonial context.

This conceptual foundation undergirds my analysis of artworks as translocal Indigenous citizenship and civic ecology on and with the land. In section 2.3, I described
settler colonialism in Winnipeg. This section presented Benedict Anderson’s argument that the nation has an “imaginary” that is produced through media technologies, abstracting citizens’ understandings away from lived experiences and interrelationships, towards the aims of the nation-state and capitalist market. Media technologies are central to how settler hegemonies organize material spaces in Winnipeg. French media philosopher Bernard Stiegler argues that audiences’ experiences, through the technical production of time, are synchronized with mass media, so mediated perception takes on massive social force. Indigenous theorizations of media’s significance center the land as the foundation of ontology, as opposed to the abstraction of time, generated by media. This difference highlights the need to understand Indigenous media art, and arts-based citizenship practices, through an ecological and land-based perspective. In section 2.4 I emphasize land-based histories in understanding Indigenous media arts. I relay a story, told to me by KC Adams, clarifying how these histories immediately inform what “Indigenous” means in art historical contexts. For Adams, her work’s significance is based on place-based relationships, as opposed to their position within a linear time-based history of Western art. In the context of new media art, sovereign Indigenous lands provide the material support for digital networks. Arts-based approaches to urban civic ecology are oriented through Indigenous relationships to land. These place-based cultural foundations (Nagam) relate to relationships of gaze, where Indigenous arts posit the priority of Indigenous land-based relationships against the concerns of Western viewers and theorists with time—time as attention, and time as work. Land is the centrepiece in Indigenous media arts, instead of time, both pedagogically and communally. This perspective decolonizes media theories of visuality, where the “capture” of an image, and
the capture of attention, are understood through arguments that fall along a spectrum opposing social construction to agential reading. Either way, these theories of visuality are concerned with time—that of the image production or capture, and that of the spectator’s perception or response. These theories do not attend to land as the space of relationship, or as an agent in relationships. Indigenous media arts approaches articulate land-based memory against settler ways of knowing as Indigenous resurgence and citizenship.

In Chapter Three I follow this discussion with my analysis of the work of four Indigenous artists. Artists Rosalie Favell (Métis), Scott Benesiinaabandan (Anishinaabe), Terril Calder (Métis) and Terrance Houle (Blood) portray Indigenous personhood in Winnipeg, and also Calgary and Toronto, decolonizing liberal individualism as the settler paradigm of civic personhood. These artists situate Indigenous genres of personhood in the city’s media archives, and the city as a collection of built, embodied, and land-based knowledge and histories. Each artist portrays a figure, usually but not always that of their own body, in places of downtown public space. They explore relationships between Indigenous individuals the city, and its archives, reorienting visions of Indigenous bodies in these spaces, and enacting translocal citizenship on and with the land.
Chapter 3

Media Archives and Civic Personhood in Indigenous New Media Art

In Chapter Three, I respond to Indigenous artworks positing city space as resurgent archive. These artists’ perspectives resonates with Anishinaabe understandings of treaty as renewing longstanding land-based relationships of reciprocity. Artists explore relationships between media archives and Indigenous belonging as citizenship in the city. Their work situates media and citizenship philosophy, responsive to historical context, within Indigenous theories, theorizing the evolution of Winnipeg city as a civic space through the lens of media technologies as “grounded normativity.” Their understandings frustrate settler attempts to frame history and citizenship in Winnipeg and other cities. In fact, they expose the coloniality of Western theories of archival technology, in that these theories emphasize the time-based processes of human beings, as opposed to space, or land, in both oppression and emancipation. These artists manifest Indigenous critical theories that orient through the land (or space, not time), Indigenous communicative agency, and the Indigenous land-based materiality of new media histories.

The works I discuss in this chapter resonate with Chapter Two’s emphases on Indigenous media art history, intersecting with the stakes of Winnipeg’s history, its present environment, and resurgence at Urban Shaman. I consider Indigenous theories of civic archive in the arts and from a political science perspective in section 3.1. This section reintroduces Indigenous concepts of land-based citizenship in relation to archives against liberal civility and possessive individualism raised in Chapter One. Indigenous archival framings from the ground up, especially those of artists and curators, convey decolonized practices and understandings pertaining to the artworks in the chapter. In
section 3.2 I consider Indigenous and settler archival theories in terms of materials, access, provenance, and interpretation. This chapter’s artworks resurge Indigenous understandings of archival legitimacy, delegitimizing liberal interpretation and knowledge towards, in, and as archives. Artists resurge against liberal paradigms and settler domination through artistic archival practices in urban spaces. Section 3.3 analyzes works by Anishinaabe artist Scott Benesiinaabandan and Métis artist Rosalie Favell. These artists portray themselves, their family, and friends in Winnipeg’s downtown. Their works engage traditional archival materials, especially early twentieth-century photographs. They both query and assert the role of Indigenous peoples in archival remembrance through self-portraits in Winnipeg spaces. Their portraits draw upon archival imagery, both public and private, as they relate to these spaces. These artists’ works combine and articulate archival memory and personhood in relation to their specific visions of the city. Section 3.4 emphasizes translocal artistic framings of citizen and archive across Canadian cities. Métis artist Terril Calder and Blood artist Terrance Houle portray Indigenous figures in city spaces in Toronto and Calgary in ways that resonate with the work of Favell and Benesiinaabandan. All artists have shown these specific works at Urban Shaman or in Winnipeg; with the exception of Houle, all works in this chapter were either created or exhibited in relationships with Urban Shaman as an institution. Houle’s piece in this chapter serves as an example of extensive practice, pressing the point that Urban Shaman is both a place and part of an extensive network of Indigenous urban resurgence. Favell (Métis) and Benesiinaabandan (Anishinaabe) in Winnipeg, Calder (Métis) in Toronto, and Houle (Blood) in Calgary enact Indigenous
personhood within the civic archive, unsettling Canada’s liberal settler ontology. Artworks in this chapter produce an Indigenous civic archive.

The works of Benesiinaabandan, Favell, Calder and Houle exemplify Indigenous civic archives in media arts. Benesiinaabandan created his photographic works at Urban Shaman, as a photographer, with his friends. His images portray Winnipeg city spaces surrounding the gallery that settlers have coded as Indigenous through a deficit-based lens. Benesiinaabandan takes pictures of his friends and he also poses in these spaces alone. He stands, in his series “Boy with a Fish,” in public spaces, restaging an image of a young Anishinaabe boy drawn from a Manitoban archives fond. Settler curator Sigrid Dahl showed this series in the exhibit *Unconscious City* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2008. This exhibit, blending the series seamlessly amidst a wall of “genuine” archival photographs, troubled the boundaries of archival legitimacy. This work was shown again in the exhibition *My Winnipeg* in Paris, France, in 2011.

Also in 2011, Favell’s work was shown as part of the “Close Encounters” exhibition, a partnership between numerous galleries in Winnipeg, especially Plug In and Urban Shaman. Favell’s work, projected on the screen of the Planetarium at the Manitoba Museum, suggests a Métis scope for the city through her portraits of herself and her grandmother, whom she resembles. The downtown skyline, alternating with wheat fields, runs along the bottom edge of the planetarium dome in 360 degrees around the viewer. Over the image of the night sky, Favell pastes memorial objects and imagery from her family’s life in Winnipeg and surrounding areas, giving priority to portraits of her grandmother in the early twentieth century. Throughout the duration of the piece, an image of Favell, dressed in a Golden Boy costume, hovers in the sky. The Golden Boy is
a gold gilded sculpture that is perched on top of the Manitoba legislative building; it is widely recognized as a symbol of the city. The Manitoba Museum connects these two works: Favell exhibited there; Benesiinaabandan drew on its archives. The museum is a central archival repository of Indigenous materials in Winnipeg. Both artists engage with themes similar to those found in the poetry of Marvin Francis (Cree), who, in his work *City Treaty*, focuses on being an Indigenous person in Winnipeg. Francis, namesake of Urban Shaman’s Marvin Francis Media Gallery, explored Winnipeg and Indigenous personhood in relation to the city, particularly the Main Street area where the museum is located. The media works in this chapter, like his poetry, make Indigenous claims on the city and its archives.

The works of Calder and Houle converge with Benesiinaabandan and Favell, extending the focus on the Indigenous person in the civic archive into Toronto and Calgary, cities that lie east and west of Winnipeg, respectively. Calder’s work *Repercussions*, shown at Urban Shaman in 2013, concentrates on Toronto, Ontario. She presents personhood distinct from the liberal proprietary subject, reframing mainstream views of Indigenous presence in the city as archive in Toronto. Her main character experiences a vision in front of the Toronto law courts building; this vision, emanating from the sidewalk, reveals her place within land-based Indigenous histories. Calder’s treatment of subjective states clearly opposes liberal subjectivity, as she presents her figure’s seeming passivity, the capture of her attention and subsequent captivation — which are anathema to liberal concepts of power or “empowerment”—as resurgence and creative contention. Calder’s multifaceted engagement with subjectivity and agency in Indigenous belonging reveals the land as an agential and relational Indigenous archive.
Houle, in his *Landscape* series, which employs photography, performance, and film, centers his own body as well as his friends and family in various civic practices, resurging Indigenous community and rearticulating the city as archive in Calgary. Houle critiques and asserts Indigenous presence across the imbrication of city and screen as an archival environment in Calgary. Houle, with the other artists in this chapter, reveal the civic archive’s importance in the formation of Indigenous belonging in cities across Canada.

These new media works resonate with the memory and aesthetic vision of Urban Shaman’s MFMG gallery namesake and Cree poet Francis and his work *City Treaty: A Long Poem*, dealing with Indigeneity in Winnipeg. Francis’ *City Treaty* has an Indigenous narrator, Joe TB, and a Native Clown who follows him around. Francis, in line with the artists I discuss in this chapter, conveys relationships between personhood and archive as embodied by the civic environment. Francis draws upon the archive of Western art history, as a “language of imagining” (Tuhiwai Smith 59), alluding to Shakespeare as well as the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello. Francis’ poetic narrative includes Pirandello masks, which they playwright used as symbols of the social fictions people wear to conform to social norms. If removed, according to Pirandello, these masks reveal the death of madness. Francis’ many-masked clown as interlocutor for his narrator, Joe questions the need for Indigenous citizens to adopt social fictions through Western aesthetic archives, in order to survive as a full person in the city. Francis particularly focuses on Main Street, which is the most brutal site of Indigenous poverty, homelessness, and drug addiction in Winnipeg. Benesinaabandan and Favell also negotiate with this Winnipeg area, reframing this site through their use of archival
photographs and embodied practice. Calder and Houle also clarify the “lie” of liberal personhood for Indigenous peoples in the city, presenting alternative visions, while dealing with the same civic issues, such as homelessness, or being passed out on the sidewalk, that Francis treats in his poem. All of these artists, including Francis, repudiate the need to adopt Western archival forms of imagination to belong in urban spaces. New media artists in this chapter relate their figures to structures of urban civility. They resubmit Francis’ thesis in City Treaty, in which an urban Indigenous narrator understands himself relating to Winnipeg’s environment through an Indigenous lens. City structures evolve out of an urban archival subjectivity as settler colonial mnemotechnics. These art works, against settler structures, indigenize these forms, from the ground up, emphasizing their belonging on their own terms.

3.1 Indigenous Theories of Archival Citizenship in the Arts

Indigenous artists and scholars theorize archives in a plethora of contexts including urban communities, often blurring boundaries between Western notions of archive, as designated material set aside for remembrance, and what artist and curators Dayna Danger (Métis) and Heather Igloliorte (Inuk) call “the notion of the ‘living archive’.” At the recent 2014 meeting of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective in City Quebec, titled iakwe: iahre or “we remember,” Danger and Igloliorte curated work that, they write, “consider[s] not only how ‘living’ knowledge has been removed from communities, but also how it should be returned, exhibited, and shared.”¹⁹ The curators write, in tandem with the conference themes:

The idea is that the survival of all cultures lies in the memory and action of the

¹⁹ I was scheduled to present at this conference with Daina Warren, but couldn’t due to my pregnancy. I am sorry to have missed this important meeting.
people, and is thus a living archive—an archive in action—that preserves important cultural traditions while also propelling our traditions forward for future generations.

Indigenous archival practices in the arts emphasize “living history,” the words Farrell-Racette uses to frame her Aboriginal Art History project described in Chapter One. The artists in this chapter dexterously illuminate how Indigenous archives concern both family histories and Indigenous peoples’ rights (Roy and Alonso 182). In this chapter, I respond to the work of artists who deal with Winnipeg archives, addressing histories of technological colonialism by indigenizing photographic and media technologies.

Anishinaabe scholar Julie Nagam discusses Indigenous contemporary art in the context of what she calls the “city as archive.” She argues that Indigenous artworks “perform cultural memory and… transmit…knowledge through the artwork; reading the land as a living and embodied knowledge; and understanding the city as a site of cultural collection and containment of knowledge” (19). Her understanding resonates with Ramirez’ Indigenous citizenship in cities as she sees the city archive as 1) praxis-based, not static, 2) based on gendered practices, not abstract categories of Western knowledge, and 3) relating to, and orienting through, the land and its histories. Nagam locates Indigenous archives in cities, and her perspective resonates beautifully with Ramirez’ citizenship framework and the works in this chapter. Nagam extends radical archive theory beyond the practices and holding of records centering the human to focus on the active production of archival material by artists in multifaceted land-based relationships.

Artists’ archival practice emphasizes the importance of citizen access to archival materials. Indigenous and settler citizens need to grapple productively with the stakes of
our shared history. This is becoming clearer in many contexts around the world that remain settler colonial. From my own perspective as a settler in Canada, I feel that the civic archive I’ve inherited degrades my humanity. Every aspect of my life as a settler is fundamentally tied to colonial genocide, which is ongoing. Israeli scholar Ariella Azoulay writes in the context of Israel,

The time has come for the second generation of perpetrators—descendants of those who expelled Palestinians from their homeland—to claim our right, our fundamental and inalienable human right: the right not to be perpetrators.

I appreciate Azoulay’s gesture as she goes on to write: “without a common study of the past, a shared future cannot possibly be imagined.” The works I discuss in this chapter make the past accessible on the terms of Indigenous artists. As a settler scholar, I understand myself to be developing genres of response to these artistic terms. Métis artist, theorist, and art historian David Garneau, of the University of Regina, writes of our shared history, that as Indigenous and non-Indigenous polities have never conciliated, it is disingenuous to create a frame of reconciliation as a shared goal. Instead of re-conciliation, Garneau argues, we need to conciliate in the first place (34). Artists producing Indigenous archives of Winnipeg create sovereign belonging and a shared space of experience of the city, mobilizing vision as one possible modality of conciliation. They mobilize capacious institutional, political, and historical meanings of the civic archive broadly construed.

3.2 Archival Provenance, Materials, Access, Interpretation: Juxtaposing Views

Section 3.1 shows Indigenous understandings of artistic and civil archives as distinct from those of settlers as they are relational with the land and coherent with
Indigenous peoples’ memory praxis from the ground up, well beyond state-sanctioned documentation. This section explores how these tenets apply to Indigenous archival provenance, materials, access and interpretation, against the settler archive, which is colonial.

The discipline of archival studies has begun entertaining juxtaposing views about how nation-state laws and practices controlling archival material function in situations of state-sanctioned genocide or transitional justice. As Ann Stoler writes, the colonial archive is grounded in “[w]hat constitutes the archive [materials], what form it takes [access], and what systems of classification and epistemology [provenance; interpretation]” are employed (87). These “are critical features of colonial politics and state power” (87). Michelle Caswell discusses anti-oppressive archival practice in transitional justice contexts such as during the TRC in Cambodia. Caswell shows that pervasive views of archive as a repository in the care of the nation state are obviously problematic in situations of regime change or state-sanctioned genocide. While she does not write directly of settler colonial contexts, her insights apply beyond the specific national locations of which she writes. However, her account disaligns with Indigenous concerns in the settler colonial context of Canada. Through an Indigenous lens, Canadian archives are fraught by many issues. These include 1) Western and Indigenous epistemological differences: Western archival knowledge relies on liberal humanist terms of reference, while Indigenous archive do not; 2) Indigenous citizenship is not state-based, and so instead of thinking about citizens of the state, as Caswell does, Indigenous citizens in the sense described by Ramirez are translocal citizens in multiple citizenship relationships; and 3) expanding the archive beyond written documentation. Indigenous
understandings of archive do not exclusively rely on text. Caswell’s work exclusively addresses written documents in a Western nation-state citizenship context.

Liberal strategies of accessing and interpreting settler archives are continuous with the logic of Canadian colonization centering rationality, interpretive distance, and self-reflection, or interpretation in isolation, autonomous from others. Government archives materialize this framework: I recall the isolated, forbiddingly silent tables at which I am permitted to delicately deal with the fonds when using Manitoba’s provincial archives, for example. Their material organization relies on the liberal common sense that one’s interpretation is proprietary to the self, and materials are the property of the government. This is how settler archival institutions organize access. Caswell, looking at access, suggests a non-governmental archive is a superior site for the custody of archival information in transitional-justice contexts. She argues that such a transfer of authority can inaugurate trust in “societies … undergoing transitional justice” and advance the citizenry as stewards of archival knowledge (116). For Caswell, stewardship means that:

archival material is viewed less as property and more as a cultural asset, jointly held and invested in by the archive and the community of origin…In contrast to custodianship, stewardship deems the physical and legal transfer of records as the first step in an ongoing relationship between archival repositories and stakeholders. (130)

I appreciate Caswell’s emphasis on citizen stewardship, against the mainstream liberal governance model of archive, which circumscribes access through centralized nation-state power and authority.

Indigenous archival practice exceeds Caswell’s citizen stewardship in that she locates the human individual at the center, whereas Indigenous artists’ conceptions understand the land and animals as autonomous agents holding expert archival knowledge. In distinct contrast with the coloniality of archives in Stoler’s discussion, Indigenous archival scientist Kimberley Lawson from the Heiltsuk nation describes:

Indigenous concepts that impact archival processes and description of Indigenous cultural heritage: memory, spirituality, protection of authenticity and trustworthiness, cultural concepts of truthfulness, individual and collective ownership, cultural survival, cultural concepts of privacy and openness, political conflicts, and conflicting juridical systems (qtd. in Roy and Alonso 182).

She goes on to say in her book *Precious Fragments: First Nations Materials in Archives, Libraries, and Museums*:

We’re not looking at an issue paper by paper or record group by record group. It’s a whole system of a way of life. Our knowledge systems don’t make sense without spirituality. We are asking for respect for a system of knowledge.

(57)

I appreciate Caswell’s stewardship framework as it relates to citizen, rather than state-sanctioned, memory practices. Lawson’s framework for Indigenous archives extends beyond the holding of records centering the human, to focus on the active production of Indigenous archival material in multifaceted land-based relationships. Caswell resonates with Indigenous perspectives when she differs from a liberal state regime of property, advancing the archive instead as a cultural asset defined by the community in question. Indigenous citizenship, in Ramirez’s sense, inflects this reframing by centering emotion
and relationships in the praxis of citizenship and knowledge. Caswell repeats the liberal logic of the state regarding the human provenance of archival knowledge, and its material forms as Western written documentation.

Indigenous archives emerge from re-articulating colonial archival records, but they also emerge in contemporary Indigenous knowledge of relational histories and material realities. New media arts practices communicate this contemporary knowledge. They are not bound to interpreting state-sanctioned archival material, though they do interpret this material. Ramirez’s Indigenous citizenship framework emphasizes forms of communal interpretation, Indigenous emotion as a legitimate lens—rather than as a problem from which to personally “recover” (Coulthard, Red Skin)—and interpersonal closeness, as opposed to separated autonomy, as legitimate ways to approach and produce archival knowledge. Lawson divorces archives from subordinating methods of the nation state and its liberal forms of provenance, materials, access, and interpretation, signaling archives contextualized within overarching Indigenous ontologies. I follow these scholars, as well as Indigenous artists and curators, in divorcing archive from government holdings, while admitting that some government records are important, for example to the work of the TRC in documenting Canada’s abuses. Ramirez’s Indigenous citizenship framework includes processes of interpretation of city spaces. Indigenous peoples in cities remember the spaces in terms of their own communities’ histories. Nagam describes these practices as archival, in relation to land-based animate relationships and knowledges. My reading of media art works focusing on archives understands them as process-based, relational, and developing through land-based compositions that include present materials reframing those of the past. That is, these records are held by
Indigenous stakeholders and artists materially produce them in the present.

3.3 Reframing Winnipeg’s Main Street: Benesiinaabandan and Favell

Urban Shaman began to focus specifically on new media art as a distinct component of its programming in 2005 with the opening of MFMG. During the same period, artists Favell and Benesiinaabandan have shown works that resonate with its mandate, framing archives, Indigenous personhood, and the city of Winnipeg. Benesiinaabandan and Favell both explore relationships of Indigenous belonging in the city, and in doing so, they juxtapose Indigenous and settler archival practice. They refer in part to a powerful public archive, that of the Manitoba Museum on Main Street, with which both Benesiinaabandan and Favell deal in their work. Winnipeg’s settler community codes a specific stretch of Main Street around this museum through an intense and racialized deficit-based lens; at the same time, the Manitoba Museum, housing tremendous Indigenous archival material, is not a hundred yards away. I am galvanized by these contradictions, and also inspired by Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore’s work Here, exhibited at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2014.
Figure 6. Rebecca Belmore. *Here*. 2014. Installation. 


Figure 7. Rebecca Belmore. *Here*. 2014. Performance. 


The photograph on the right depicts the interactive part of this work, a community bonfire that Belmore hosted on Main Street about a block north of the Manitoba Museum and just outside the Main Street Project, a transitional housing and detox centre that operates homeless outreach programs. On the left is a photograph of a simultaneous installation in the foyer of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, which received a live-stream video of the fire. In the gallery foyer, the fire was all viewers could see, though they could also hear some murmuring voices. *Here* shifted the location of legitimate artistic presence
from the Winnipeg Art Gallery to Main Street, embodying the artist’s vision of relationships between citizenry, artists, and public institutions. Relatedly and recently, Benesiinaabandan described to me what he sees as the intense coloniality of the Manitoba Museum. Benesiinaabandan, Belmore, and Favell question the legitimacy of settler institutions and their archives, making institutional relationships with contemporary Indigenous realities visible, and juxtaposing Indigenous archival art with Canadian liberal archives practice as each plays out in Winnipeg. When I say liberal archives, I am talking about a political philosophy that Canada as a nation state embodies, as do its official archives.

Benesiinaabandan and Favell’s works engage traditional archival materials, especially early twentieth-century photographs. Both artists deal with the Manitoba Museum, in Benesiinaabandan’s case drawing on their archival fonds, and in Favell’s case actually installing her work in the planetarium. Both artists query and assert the role of Indigenous peoples in archival remembrance of Winnipeg spaces through self-portraits, drawing upon public and private imagery to combine archival memory and citizenship in their specific visions of the city.

Benesiinaabandan and I discussed his photographic series from 2009, *Boy with Fish* and *Down Main*, in conversations from 2013-2015. These works, which he displays together on his website, are together comprised of eight images. Benesiinaabandan described to me how *Boy with a Fish* focuses on photographs he selected from an archival collection that he got ahold of as part of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission research project involving the Hudson’s Bay Company archive, the Manitoba archive, the Winnipeg archives, and the Manitoba Museum.
archive. His archival series of artworks mimic the original fond photographs as closely as possible. Curator Sigrid Dahl exhibited this series in the show *Unconscious City* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2008. She and Benesiinaabandan exhibited these images by blending his series seamlessly amidst a wall of supposedly “genuine” archival photographs, in order to trouble the boundaries of archival legitimacy in Winnipeg.\(^{21}\)

Benesiinaabandan named the series after an archival photograph of the same name; every image in the series orients around this photograph, though the series references other images. He stands alone in this series in public spaces, restaging an image of a young Anishinaabe boy drawn from a Manitoban archives fond. The right hand side of “Boy with a Fish” depicts a young Indigenous male standing in bright sunlight.

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\(^{21}\) Mohawk artist Jeff Thomas is an important antecedent to Benesiinaabandan’s practice, as is Cree artist Kent Monkman. While Thomas’ photographs of cities from an Indigenous lens create an urban Native visuality, Monkman’s paintings, restaging colonial landscape paintings such as those of Paul Kane, produce a counter-discourse of Indigenous/settler spaces of encounter.

He is holding a fish he has probably just caught; he smiles. On the left hand side is an image of Benesiinaabandan standing in front of a Manitoba monument to the legend of the White Horse Plain. Settlers erected the monument in St. Francis Xavier, a town near Winnipeg, in 1966. The site has been an Indigenous “gathering place” from time immemorial, where “dog feasts, sun dances and other celebrations” took place (Arnett Macleod). A retelling of the legend of the place is available through the Manitoba Archives online, though it was written by a settler woman in 1958, and as a reader the authorship is clear, to say the least. The writer calls white settlers the “saviors” of the Cree, for example, and explains that the settlers traded firearms with the Cree during the fur trade, allowing them to hold their land against Sioux peoples who wanted to take it in the late 1600s. The legend of the White Horse Plain concerns a beautiful Sioux girl who is said to have been betrothed to a Cree youth who offered her father in exchange, among other gifts, a white horse or “blanco diablo” from Mexico. However, another man, a Sioux youth, vied for her hand in marriage as well. Moreover, the Sioux medicine man did not think a Cree-Sioux marriage was appropriate given the past wars between the two peoples, and he set some of the Sioux people against the marriage. Thus on the day of the ceremony, Sioux warriors attacked the bridal party, and though the young Cree man and his bride fled on their horses, the white horse was, as they say, a dead giveaway. The warriors killed the couple, but the horse escaped. Many Sioux
people after this event supposedly felt the horse embodied the girl’s spirit.

Benesiinaabandan’s image on the left-hand side of the “Boy with Fish” diptych situates him in front of the settler monument to this legend. He stands, holding a plastic-wrapped fish set on Styrofoam, above his head. Benesiinaabandan described to me how his gesture intentionally mimics those of the Kanesatake warriors who opposed the expansion of the Oka golf course in 1990. The work conveys iconic imagery in the archive of Indigenous and settler relationalities on the land. There is the feminine signifier of the Sioux in the White Horse Plain, and the masculine signifier of the Kanesatake warrior, which Benesiinaabandan sets in dynamic visual relationship with one another. Drawing on the visual language of the Kanesatake resistance, he stands before the settler-built monument to a spirit horse.

The two juxtaposed images relate centrally to land in profoundly gendered ways. The “Boy with Fish” motif clearly refers to land and resources, such as fish, from which Canada has barred many Indigenous communities. The image also signals, in the same moment, settlers’ romantic appropriation of Indigenous stories or culture. The monument, as well as Benesiinaabandan’s mobilizing of the visual language of Kanesatake, speaks to settler appropriation of the White Horse Plain, as intrinsic to colonizing Indigenous peoples and lands. Native studies scholar Andrea Smith connects systemic appropriation of Indigenous spirituality, including myths, to the idea that Native bodies are inherently “rapable.” Appropriation of Native spiritualities is part of white/Western “taking [from Indigenous people] without asking” that assumes the “needs of the taker are paramount and the needs of others are irrelevant, [mirroring] the rape culture of the dominant society” (Smith 126) in tandem with the theft of land.
The monument register settlers as rightful inheritors of Indigenous knowledge, history, spirituality, and lands.

Whereas the atmosphere in the image of Benesiinaabandanan on the left is dark and foggy, creating an almost gothic landscape, that of the image on the right-hand side is glaringly bright. The original archival photo connotes a hot summer day, intimacy, wellbeing, and happiness. The photograph represents a coherent Indigenous world of living relationships, against the fixity and death in the right-hand image: dead fish, dead horse. Both dead animals are rigidly fixed in place by settler technologies of domination: the public monument to settlement, and capitalist food processes. Smith further describes how mainstream historical and cultural narratives require Native people to “play dead”: Indigenous people are either living relics or imagined symbols of a mythical past, which settlers can then ignore or appropriate the “memory” of as convenient. Smith’s point here about “playing dead” signifies strikingly in the decidedly dead animals and Sioux girl in the right-hand side of the artist’s image, which creates a sort of symbolic economy that Benesiinaabandanan rejects. His image of the present day, on the left, frustrates Western conventions of reading left-to-right. As the past image is on the right, and the present image is on the left, the sequence appears backwards. I suggest that, instead of being backwards, this image sequence presents Indigenous health, wellbeing, land and resources as recoverable. According to the diptych, this future develops out of the stance that Benesiinaabandanan takes in the left-hand image.

Benesiinaabandanan made the rest of the photographs in the Boy with Fish series in downtown Winnipeg. One of them is based on another archival photograph in the same
fond as “Boy with Fish.” Benesiinaabandan’s “Boy with a Fish on Main” pictures him in front of the former New Occidental hotel and bar, currently The Red Road Lodge, an arts centre for the community on Main Street.


The New Occidental, with lofty beginnings as a settler hotel in the late 1800s, became the most dangerous bar in the city by the mid-twentieth century. It is currently surrounded by rooming houses and the Salvation Army mission and detox centre, as well as some vanguard art galleries. Its Main Street location is a city space that settlers have coded as Indigenous through a deficit-based lens. Benesiinaabandan restages the archival photograph of settlers, perhaps visitors to the hotel, on that very corner. He
stands, holding the plastic-wrapped fish, looking forlorn. His stance in another photograph, with a wall behind him, is similar: looking to the side, looking forlorn, with the plastic-wrapped fish. The concrete landscape surrounds him; his gaze, looking away from the camera, is delicate and thoughtful, refuting stereotypes of menacing Indigenous men in downtown spaces.

Benesiinaabandan’s two other works in this series both negotiate archives and masculinity in Winnipeg. Here he stands in front of a long-distance semi-truck trailer with the name Mayflower spelled in all caps on its side.


Mayflower is the name of the first boat of English settlers to North America in 1620. The semi-truck sums up the industrial capitalism resulting across the entire continent:
the movement of cargo to facilitate capitalist consumption of resources. Benesiinaabandan raises differing masculinities in this image. I see Benesiinaabandan, an Anishinaabe man remembering traditional food sources, in visual conversation with men who drive truck—very often white, working-class men. While the artist’s intent is clearly to portray the aggressive steam-rolling of Indigenous ways of life, this image inspires me to imagine what could happen if settlers listened to Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and its land-based history. To me, recognizing Indigenous relationships with the land, and that settlers stand to gain by learning from Indigenous traditions, on Indigenous terms, makes this an image of potential conciliation.

The second of the two final images in the series also raises themes of capitalism, Indigeneity, and masculinity. This self-portrait is in front of a business called Noble Savage Interiors, located on Stafford Street in a middle-class neighbourhood of Winnipeg:
The words “noble savage” calls to mind romantic stereotypes of Indigenous peoples associated with the philosophical writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who idealized Indigenous peoples, specifically men. His philosophy provided a foundation for the romantic primitivist movement in nineteenth-century Western Europe, preceding many visual tropes in Western modernist art emerging out of romanticism. Both romanticism and modernism are Euro-American artistic movements that valourize nature and spontaneity, associated in Rousseau with Indigenous men. These artistic movements reacted against the ravages of an industrial capitalist society. Lynn Savage, the owner of Noble Savage Interiors, does not align her shop’s name with this history. Savage is a direct descendant of John Norquay, a Métis leader who played a marginal role in the Métis resistance in 1885, and a robust role in public life afterwards as a leader in the Métis community. When we spoke on the phone, I learned that Savage did not name the store with her family’s Métis history in mind. Rather, she had visited a shop in London, England, called Noble Savage Interiors, which she wanted to emulate in opening her own store. Although Savage did not intend any direct connection between Rousseau, the London shop, and her own store, Rousseau’s ideas pervade many discourses, including popular cultural ones, which have no ostensive connection to him. Savage’s furniture

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22 While this phrase is attributed to Rousseau, in fact it does not originate with his writings. It originally appears in John Dryden’s Restoration era stage play, *The Conquest of Granada* in 1672. Despite this, Rousseau did indeed idealize Indigenous peoples as providing him with an alternative to the ills of modernity.
store speaks to the city’s history, including the influence of racist theories such as Rousseau’s, within a broad understanding of civic archives. Her story complicates some of the questions that Benesiinaabandan raises in his work. Who but a descendant of a Métis leader should appropriate a racist European phrase towards her own success? That she did not intentionally appropriate the term in this way makes her story all the more interesting in terms of Benesiinaabandan’s themes of archives and access. Most people are simply not aware of the stakes of their city’s historical archive.

Benesiinaabandan refers again to gender and masculinity in this work. His figure, male, in front of the store, with the fish, troubles the notion of savage interiority. The furniture space is a gendered feminine space; it is not his interior. In two of the “Boy with Fish” images, he figures Indigeneity and femininity together in settler market and memorial framing: the White Horse Plain monument, and the furniture store as “noble savage interior.” Benesiinaabandan highlights that capitalist and settler transactions, despite their appropriations, cannot access or interpret his interior. These images speak against and defy the imagined Indigeneity in contexts such as Rousseau’s theories. As Métis scholar Erin Sutherland writes:

One recurring result of colonially-derived masculinities is a disconnect between traditional notions of Indigenous masculinities and contemporary stereotypes of Indigenous men. An increased rate of poverty, violence, suicide and poor health—all are issues that influence Aboriginal men in Canada. Indigenous men are therefore caught between representations as exotic and stoic warriors stagnant in a romanticized past (Rousseau) and contemporary representations of gendered violence and physical decline....While pre-contact Indigenous masculinities may
have been tied to community, land, and spirituality, connections that continue today, colonialism altered Indigenous worldviews in a way that also, in many cases, altered models of masculinity. European values carried with them beliefs about what constituted ‘authentic’ masculinities, which were invariably those identified with heterosexual, European and upper or middle class men. (59)

In the image with the Mayflower truck especially, I want us to note via Sutherland’s arguments that white, working-class men are also excluded from the “authentic” Euro-American masculinity; they are also emasculated by these discourses. This image opens a pathway to potential novel alliances against intersectional oppression of men along the lines of gender, race, and class—and in this sense it’s also an image that speaks to the potential of conciliation alongside its stringent anti-colonial critique.


Benesiinaabandan exhibits these works on his website alongside another series called *Down Main.* In our conversations he described how he photographed his friends as they visited with each other. Benesiinaabandan’s images show the ordinariness of their friendships, overturning stereotypes about menacing groups of young Indigenous men downtown. In our conversation about this work, Benesiinaabandan describes how these works portray “four young Indians in a room.” He describes these men as not “causing trouble…it is not how the suburbs understand community place within city centres.” In the two top frames of the polyptych, his friend Jason looks delicately at the table, touches his own face. In the right hand image, he drinks coffee, perhaps gathering his thoughts. The two lower images show the four men engaged in a conversation. The second work, a
diptych, shows a blurred motion image of a young man seated at a table. The perspective from below positions him powerfully looming over the camera. Yet, he is merely eating some soup, having a drink. Benesiinaabandan’s images convey Indigenous cultural processes that include meeting for coffee. His work transmits this understanding to his viewers’ sense of Indigenous cultures in cities, while he also asserts caring relationships. These visual statements align with Ramirez’ understanding of translocal native citizenship, as creating “hubs” or Indigenous cultural processes in specific city places. The images become part of a visual archive of Winnipeg that is officially unsanctioned, as does Favell in her work *Search For Life Beyond Our Planet.*

Favell’s work was shown as part of the *Close Encounters* exhibit in Winnipeg in 2011, a citywide Indigenous arts exhibition involving partnership between numerous galleries, especially Plug In and Urban Shaman, as well as the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Favell’s work, which was projected on the screen of the planetarium at the Manitoba Museum, suggests a Métis scope for the city.
The planetarium is a domed structure on which usually the night sky is projected, for educational shows that highlight a combination of Greek and Roman astrology and Western astronomy. In Favell’s video projection, the downtown skyline, alternating with wheat fields, runs along the bottom edge of the planetarium dome in 360 degrees around the viewer. Interestingly, Favell told me when we spoke on the phone about this work that the runner along the bottom is part of the standard planetarium show. Favell didn’t add it, but she found it perfect for her video.
In the establishing shot, Favell appears dressed in a gold lamé Golden Boy costume. Then, as though in a process of transition, an image of the Golden Boy statue appears next to Favell, and both figures are surrounded by butterflies, signalling metamorphosis and transformation. The Earth, as photographed from space, also appears, signalling the Western ocular project, the view from nowhere or God’s eye view of visual mastery. Over this image of Earth, a butterfly flutters—a living interruption to this seemingly static all-seeing gaze. In the sky above Favell is Louis Riel as the “Man in the Moon.”

Favell described to me in detail how and why she pastes over the night sky with memorial objects and imagery from her family’s life in Winnipeg and surrounding areas, giving priority to portraits of her grandmother in the early twentieth century, along with many pop cultural references. Initially, Favell foregrounds her family history, as her own creations along with her grandmother’s photographs fill the sky, hovering above the alternating city skyline and wheat fields below. This work calls to mind many metaphors about skies, such as “the sky is the limit” and “what’s on the horizon.” These turns of phrase are all future oriented, playing with expectations about the significance of images of the past. The open expanse of sky is, she pointed out to me, a powerful signifier for prairie geography. Favell’s use of the planetarium, supposedly a space of visioning the cosmos or galaxy, adds a science-fiction element to this work. In describing this video, Favell says that she “fills intergalactic space with images of my origins and family.” Different characters appear along with her family’s images, such as winged buffalo with neon wings, referring to her grandmother’s memories of bison on the prairies, as well as
Louis Riel as the man in the moon. In our conversation, Favell said her exploration of prairie sky recalls driving home to Manitoba from Ontario, and the film *The Wizard of Oz*, which is about trying to find your way home (Interview 03 May 2015).

Favell refers to herself as the Wizard of Oz in this work, as the technological wizard behind the curtain. In her other works, she told me, Louis Riel is the Wizard, and “instead of the yellow road [Favell] must follow the red road, the road back home to her Nativeness” (Interview 03 May 2015). Riel is the Man in the Moon, Favell described him to me as “on the horizon, as in, he’s who we look to, to give us our strength as Métis people” (Interview 03 May 2015). The reference to the Man in the Moon connects this work to European fin-de-siècle science-fiction, such as Georges Milies’ *Le voyage dans la lune*, an artistic movement highly concerned with the end of the world. Favell notes that she “adores the end of the world stuff”; She says of this work, “In the end, there’s Louis Riel and my grandmother” (Interview 03 May 2015).
Figure 16. Georges Méliès. *Le Voyage dans la Lune.* 1902. Film still.

All of the figures Favell references, including her grandmother, speak to her desire for role models. Favell told me she looks like her grandmother: both of them, in her words, “looked more Native than others” in the family. Favell told me she found herself attracted to her grandmother due to their physical resemblance, but also because her grandmother was a “very spirited, free, independent woman” who “had a flare and loved her family.” Her grandmother kept an incredible record of photographs, having twenty photo albums of her own. Favell told me she includes her grandmother’s photos in her work to “show her independence as well as what was around her.” The photographs, taken mainly through the 1930s to the 1950s, portray many iconic aspects of Winnipeg life, including a train called the “Moonlight Special” that young people took to dance parties at Winnipeg Beach. Favell tries to show Métis-ness in her grandmother’s images, noting that, on the one hand, Métis “look just like everybody else!” At the same time, however, Favell notes that part of being Métis at the time was trying to pass, and not wanting to be mistaken for a member of a First Nation. Favell sees her grandmother exercising tremendous agency in these photographs, in terms of how the picture was taken, what angle she was shot from, and how she is relating to her environment (Interview 03 May 2015).
Her sense of her grandmother’s agency resonates with her artistic practice. In her artist statement, Favell writes:

In all my work, I see the photograph as a performance space, where identity is constantly worked and reworked, represented, and perhaps hidden. I use the portrait convention to acknowledge the agency of the individual in bringing together, in a conscious and unconscious way, the numerous cultural and personal factors through which the sense of self is expressed. This idea applies to me taking pictures of myself, and others, who stand before my camera, seeing their selves revealed in the photograph.

Throughout the duration of Search for Life, an image of Favell, dressed in a Golden Boy costume, hovers in the sky. The Golden Boy is a gilded sculpture on top of the Manitoba legislative building, a prominent symbol of Winnipeg. The statue at the top of the
The legislative building was built to embody “eternal youth:” he is Mercury, Roman messenger god of trade, commerce, and profit (Interview 03 May 2015). Notice the connection here between the legislative building and the planetarium in terms of a Western political cosmology. The Golden Boy symbolizes the “Gateway to the West” idea of Winnipeg as well as agricultural prosperity through the symbol of wheat. For Favell, she explained to me, having lived away from Winnipeg, “it simply means home” (Interview 03 May 2015). The statue faces in the direction of Manitoba’s north, pointing towards the region to symbolize its importance as a provider of natural resources and economic opportunity. I have to say that this stance, relative to the ongoing material impoverishment of northern communities today, is disheartening. Favell, in her gold-lamé outfit, is a funny figure, deflating the triumphalism in the political and cultural stance symbolized in the Golden Boy’s statue. She holds one leg up, wiggling, trying to stand up and look at the audience. She refers to herself as “a regular girl trying to be the Golden Boy, to female it” (Interview 03 May 2015), and her figure is incongruous with the Golden Boy’s hard physique. Favell is both voluptuous and middle age. Her embodiment and appropriation of the most prominent symbols of Winnipeg, the city’s collective archive of imagining, loosens the supposedly static fixity of the city’s image, embodied in the hard body of the Golden Boy. In her words, she “females it,” relating it to her family’s archival images, her grandmother’s self-imaging practice, and loving Indigenous relationships that convey meaning about being a Métis person in relationship with city spaces and histories.

Favell, in *Search for Life Beyond Our Planet: Nanny’s Gold*, uses video to create a low-tech slideshow of memories, fantasy, and science-fiction perspectives on herself,
her family, and the city of Winnipeg. Favell blurs boundaries between herself, symbols of the prairies (sky, wheat, skyline), Winnipeg (Golden Boy), Métis-ness (Louis Riel, her grandmother). She crosses gender identities, and public and private domains. She reads and produces the city as archive in Winnipeg through praxis, emotions, relationships, and embodiment in relationships with art, the land, and the city. She performs empowerment in self-imaging, in ways that are distinctly gendered, reaching into the past to affirm these acts as longstanding archival praxes in her family’s Winnipeg history. She draws upon the settler city as archive as well as hegemonic pop culture symbolism to create herself, as a Métis person, both in her self-understanding—inextricable from land and city as archive—and in her relationships to others.

3.4 Repercussions and Landscape: Figuring Agency in Concrete Terms

Terril Calder, in her short film Repercussions, stages a similar archival practice through the ways in which she conveys the experience of her main character, a young woman in the city of Toronto. Calder’s stop-motion animation, using marionette puppets to convey Indigenous figures in psychic, historical, and material spaces, indigenizes the city as archive in Toronto. When we spoke about her work over skype, Calder told me about how she grew up in Fort Francis, Ontario, and went to art school at the University of Manitoba. She began to develop her artistic practice in Winnipeg before moving to Toronto as part of a group of artists called the Manitoba Art Lodge. Her work continues to be shown in Winnipeg through Urban Shaman, which showed this work at their annual event Reflecting Lives: New Works from Aboriginal Women, which involves presenting film and video at the Cinematheque, a theatre just down the street from the gallery in Winnipeg’s Exchange district. Through the figures in Repercussions, Calder conveys
Indigenous belonging, like Favell and Benesiinaabandan, in the context of the city. Her art orients the city’s archival materials, provenance, access, and interpretation as Indigenous through land-based agencies that capture the attention of her figure and viewing audience.

Calder’s archival methods in this work align with the work’s title, *Repercussions*, connoting unintended or unwelcome effects, or recoil after impact. Calder’s setting replicates the street in front of Toronto’s old City Hall, a law court in neoclassical style. She references both European aesthetic values and their imbrication with the law. In the video/film, a train chugs audibly in the distance, resonating in percussive repetition with the work’s title. The railway, as impetus and method in the colonization of Canada from east to west, suggests the settler nation-building project. Calder treats this context as an archive, or mnemotechnical composition, creating perceptual grammars composing settler environments. Calder’s screened city in *Repercussions*, in contrast, exteriorizes land-based Indigenous civic grammars.

The city scene in the film reflects both the colonial biopolitics of the state and the audiovisuality of contemporary life. A young woman walks out of old City Hall, a predominant civic nationalist symbol. Calder explained to me how important the law courts building is to the meaning of this work (Interview 10 Oct. 2013). She wrote to me:

*I was inspired by John Ralston Saul’s connection to contemporary judicial system as it mimics an Indigenous Fire council. How indigenous elements resonate through the colonial structures. Many people do not realize that modern cites are built on Native Cities. Many people do not realize that Native cities even existed or that indigenous people where less "primitive" than is*
perpetuated through myths, but the earth knows the truth. (Interview 10 Oct. 2013).

When I viewed the work, I thought it was important in at least two ways. To me the woman seems unsure of her step and vulnerable in the darkness of the night; her appearance initially suggests to me both her identity as an Indigenous woman and an unprivileged class location. Calder conveys how cities compose through settler biopolitical structures, as the effectiveness of this scene relies in part on audience recognition of the woman’s unprivileged or seemingly vulnerable situation. Out of this sequence flows an entire settler colonial biopolitics in Canadian cities. Calder pointed out to me that, in contrast to my reading, which reflects a deficit-based lens, it is equally likely that the woman works in the building (Interview 15 May 2013). This ambiguity engages viewers’ expectations. These opening moments follow the very beginning of the work, which presents archival stock footage, counting down to a broadcast. That Calder includes this stock footage countdown to the short film as a preface blurs boundaries between distinctly audiovisual spaces, those of media archives, and material spaces, those of the city, privileging the role of industrial audiovisual media in the grammatisation of civic environments.
Calder’s figure moves out from the station as Indigenous aesthetic traditions translate her experience. She walks down the station steps and a neon light flashes sound waves emerging from the ground, emanating into her ear, and marking, literally, an audio-visual captivation. The chug of a train has become the beat of the song “Electric Powwow” by A Tribe Called Red, an Indigenous music group of popular and critical acclaim in Canada and globally. A Tribe Called Red combines techno music and powwow, the latter of which is a North American Indigenous dance tradition, as well as a practice of translocal collectivity and spiritual cosmology. Calder’s film similarly conveys audiovisual translations of tradition making Indigenous environments in cities.

The figure’s fidelity to forces compelling her attention seems at first like dangerous passivity, as she lies down on the sidewalk. One doesn’t often think of lying on the sidewalk at night downtown as a particularly emancipated position, and it calls to mind clichés about urban Indigeneity. Calder in our interview describes aiming to
resignify how this state is culturally coded. The work makes a punning reference to the colonial ontological ground on which public space is built, emphasizing both its discursive and material foundations. Despite the concrete on the ground, grass grows up through the cracks in resistance.


For Calder, the scene is:

a cyber-fictitious space that’s been pulled out of archival or reference material.

The woman’s vision recalls a city within the ground that no longer exists. For me, it is important to create archival spaces and spaces from the past. I am creating a different space, in trying to approach [the archive] from a different angle. I am somebody who has been affected by it in a different way from that of mainstream understandings. So I am recreating a virtual space from my own experience as an Indigenous person. Historically what has been written has been not written from that perspective. (Interview 15 May 2013)
As Calder’s figure lies down with her ear against the sidewalk, twice she lifts her fist in the air and brings it down to pound the ground, bouncing her into another dimension. Music blares. The young woman has a vision in this environment, communicated by the land, or ground, in which she witnesses two scenes. First, a woman appears with a baby strapped to her back and dressed in skins featuring beautiful beadwork designs. A basket of berries sits in front of her, as she inhabits another space-time from the one on the sidewalk. The law courts door opens when the young woman emerges from the vision and lands back on the sidewalk. Light pours down from above. A figure emerges from the building wearing a shirt that bears the insignia of the Toronto Police. The police officer looks down from the top of the stairs as the young woman raises her fist again and hits the ground in a tense moment. The work then cuts to the second vision, in which silhouettes of Indigenous men in ceremonial regalia beat their drums underneath Roman arches, birch trees in the background, to the beat of the song. They fade in the foreground as the woman with infant from the first vision comes into focus, dancing. The face of the woman looks seriously and commandingly at the viewer, while behind silhouettes are running. This gaze is arresting and powerful; it does not brook a deficit-based lens.
Next, the image returns to the sidewalk, where it is revealed that the police officer and the woman from the vision are one and the same. The land communicates continuity in relationship with the women. The woman officer’s beaded earring returns this gesture. Her beaded earring, in traditional Indigenous style, presents a spot of color in the deep blue tones of the street side with which her uniform blends perfectly. When the police officer goes to lay down, the bead earring is the only break in the uniformity of the frame. This frame, in itself, visualizes how Indigenous aesthetics create epistemic breaks in what seems a uniformly dominant settler environment. This scene makes me think of the clichéd connotations of phrases associated with the women’s act. Hitting the pavement, associated with being “kicked to the curb” perhaps, or, “pounding the pavement,” to look for means or support, all of these connotations suggest an undesirable position. Calder works against these clichés, deconstructing civic scripts around Indigeneity through their explicit staging. They are recast, through an Indigenous land-based archive, “as evolving
states of freedom” (Chow 49), which are not enfolded into a seamless liberal project.

Indigenous personhood, in land-based relationships, will continue to grow, like the grass that grows through the cracks in the pavement, and the colour breaking the uniformity of dominant settler order.

Figure 22. Terril Calder. Repercussions. 2011. Film still. Courtesy of the artist.

*Repercussions* tells a story about emotional captivation or psychic capture by the agential land in Indigenous relationship. The captivation of Calder’s female protagonist presents as passivity, as she lay on the pavement of the city sidewalk for most of the short film. She “loses” what appear to be liberal forms of autonomy and normative, rational thought. She is faithful, instead, to the land’s force compelling her attention. Calder’s framing of subjectivity and agency reframes liberal ideas of what empowerment, and archival stewardship, looks like. Neither of these terms applies to the scene, in fact, as she decents the human. Her figures in *Repercussions* reach a stage of what seems like passivity in ways entangled with captivation in relation to the land and, simultaneously,
Indigenous resurgence. This work resonates with my theoretical emphases in Chapter Two. I argue that, unlike Western theories centering time in questions of both image capture and spectator captivation, Indigenous theorists and artists like Calder center the land, in this case as archive, capturing and captivating not only the figure in her film, but her film’s audiences as well. Her work discomposes hegemonic civility, recomposing Indigeneity as relationships with the land’s memories.

*Repercussions* juxtaposes Toronto’s settler and Indigenous archives. Calder contrasts Toronto’s old City Hall’s neoclassical architecture, recalling Winnipeg’s Banker’s Row in Chapter One, to the living reality of the land as Indigenous spiritual forces, mnemonics, and music emanating from under the surface of the pavement at the bottom of its steps. The land captivates her central figure in a seemingly passive state, until an unlikely figure joins her in solidarity. Together they lie on the ground: their vision transports them into another realm. Her figures wordlessly transmit their captivations, spiritual visions—or, as a liberal lens would perhaps frame it, “madness”—to one another through land-based psychic proximity. Their consciousness and interpretation of the city-as-archive is communal, not individual. These transmissions of captivation, including the viewer, oppose clichéd and oppressive deficit-based lenses on Indigenous contexts in the city. Calder elaborates what Rey Chow calls “the most painful entanglements, counter intuitively, as evolving states of freedom” in their transmission through the audiovisual (49). While Chow makes this point about the paradox of passivity as strength in twentieth century Chinese film, her statement takes a new and equally resonant meaning in Calder’s Indigenous context.
Calder’s reframing of archive resonates with cultural studies settler critic Rey Chow’s view of captivation as “the deranged remainder that is unassimilable to the metanarratives of freedom undergirded by liberal understandings of subjectivity” (52). Calder’s film does not understand subjectivity in liberal terms, nor is it a “deranged remainder:” her character’s state of captivation frames Indigenous agency. The land’s captivation of her character conveys Indigenous intergenerational pedagogy, centering the face of a baby in the ending, whose eyes emit a technological and otherworldly light. Calder notes:

With *Repercussions* the ground is timeless and tells of its past, present, and future. There is an alien element, otherness looking at us outside of time itself—I really like sci-fi alien observations of Indigenous culture but even within Native culture there is a realm that exists which is dream-speaking or the spirit world, and we coexist with that, and it is timeless and connecting everything together. Everything else is sort of trappings of issues. (Interview 15 May 2013)

These transmissions of land-based captivation, or ground, create a communal narrative relationally coding the city as Indigenous archive.

*Repercussions* treats the supposed settler origins of the civic archive and the ways in which it discomposes relationally with Indigenous resurgence. Calder’s figures wordlessly transmit their captivations or spiritual visions to one another. I see this as staging a pedagogical method of Indigenous narrative form, by emphasizing meanings in collective space, conscious immersion, and denying authorial ownership over knowledge.
biopolitical and industrial audiovisual grammars, and moving away from the epistemic foreclosures of settler coloniality.

Calder’s creative contention configures Indigenous personhood through practices of relating to archival environments. The Roman arches of City Hall combine with the living reality of the land’s spiritual forces, mnemonics, and emanating music as the ground on which it stands. This scene captivates its central figure, in a state, according to settler colonial understandings, which reads as self-destructive passivity: lying on the sidewalk. Calder, articulating agencies apart from those recognized by the settler formation, grounds civic archives in Indigenous domains of power and reframing imaginings of justice. Calder in these ways articulates self-determined conditions of archival perception with her audience. Calder’s works are consonant with the re-articulations of Blood artist Terrance Houle in Calgary, who lies himself down in front of the city sidewalk, in a staging of supposed failure similar to Calder’s seeming passivity. These stances are actually resurgence in relation to the land, through non-liberal enactment of Indigenous personhood.

Houle, similarly to Benesiinaabandan, Favell, and Calder, reframes many city spaces by advancing archival critique and resurgence in his 2007 series *Landscape*. Houle and I discussed this work via a skype meeting and subsequent email exchanges. *Landscape* explores practices of civic archive in Indigenous powwow histories, Indigenous peoples’ danced forms of collectivity and regalia conveying shared communal meanings, and Western archival traditions in photography, film, and video. Houle centres *himself* in all of the scenes in this series. Houle takes up dance in *Landscape* as a site of communal meaning and as a performative method specific to his work. Houle’s
interlocutors are firstly the Indigenous dance community in Calgary, who perform contemporary powwow. Powwow is a North American Indigenous dance tradition, as well as a practice of translocal collectivity and spiritual cosmology. Houle suggests that, as someone that grew up dancing all his life in “traditional and ceremonial ways,” he sees contemporary powwow as at times:

potentially detrimental in the sense that if we talk about representation, it’s surface. [Against] the idea that it’s an aspect of traditional life it’s a very modern dance often imbued with an elitist attitude that is not about collectivity [but] about [individualist] ego. (qtd. in Hill)

Houle suggests a relationship between this history of dance and the history of the land. He continues, “I want to express the subjugation of my people through the history of land. Canadian histories have been told through the eyes of the Western or dominant European culture, which has historically negated the histories of ‘Others’” (qtd. in Hill). Houle references, in part, the history of settlers naturalizing their occupation of Indigenous lands, prohibiting Indigenous dance and other forms of being with and on the land, and constructing Indigenous presence in terms of ethnic cleansing, resettlement, apartheid, and colonial economic restructuring. Houle’s staging treats the accrual of these policies, geographies, material effects, and violences in Calgary. Landscape critiques and offers an alternative to both of these possible liberal formations, those of personhood within certain aspects of contemporary powwow practice, and settler colonial framings of the land and its inhabitants. He treats Indigenous dance, land, and embodiment in the city as archive within the contexts of both the Indigenous community and the city at large, through the mediums of film, video, photography, and performance.
*Landscape* depicts the artist in everyday environments. With photographer Jarusha Brown, Houle explores Indigenous personhood, using regalia to perform and embody his conception of the power that landscape holds, in genealogies of landscape representation in painting, photography, and film, and in embodied Indigenous relationships to land “in territorial, political, and historical senses” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Houle conveys an archival relationship in terms of bodily form, in motion and in relationship to territory, while signifying a contemporary urban identity, wearing a short haircut and glasses. Houle, in each component of *Landscape*, wears a breechcloth that his mother made for him when he was nine and a bustle that his father had given him, well worn, along with a roach, some moccasins, and a choker breastplate. Houle means to convey “a simple, non-egotistical Aboriginal man” in wearing his regalia in this way (Interview 21 Feb 2013). Houle performs in this regalia by repeatedly tripping, falling, and lying on the ground, captured in performance, video, film, and photographs.

Houle emerges, in performance, into the performance space, trips, and falls—not unlike the young woman in Calder’s video. Houle, rather than dance for his audience, uses his body to dismantle the prevailing choreography attached to both his body and regalia as signifiers, choosing instead to “just lie there” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Viewers of this performance are uneasy and sometimes offer to help Houle at this point, concerned that he has accidentally hurt himself or fallen ill and needs medical attention. A video projection behind Houle live-streams a street where people are walking and cars are driving by. Houle suggests his body becomes a landscape, through which he complicates viewers’ understandings of the urban choreography on the screen, and the archive of bodies remembered in the contemporary city that is driven by capitalist and
state-based configurations of mobility. Houle’s body at the same time troubles his live audience’s expectations in using visual signifiers of Indigenous dance. Houle’s staging of screened and embodied choreography in the city as archive draws upon the concept of the Contrary, an Indigenous concept of opposing the status quo (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). The Contrary is also understood as a clown, as in Francis’ City Treaty. Houle embodies the Contrary to create a tension between himself and his audience, which contributes to his representation of landscape as Indigenous body. This tension embodies the dissonance of Calgary’s landscape, the area of which, according to Blackfoot culture, is made of an Aboriginal man lying down, “that we’re living on top of” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Houle’s fallen body also conveys homeless Aboriginal peoples in urban areas. He connects discursive scripts overlaying Indigenous citizenship in Canadian cities to what permeates below the gaze of urban people and their knowledge of history—the living land. An irreconcilable tension also prevails between his staging of an Indigenous male body in regalia, fallen, and viewers’ impulse to physically help this man. This dissonance conveys both a failure to perform, on the part of the dancer, and a failure to respond appropriately on the part of the viewer.
The video monitor behind Houle continuously plays the choreography of feet along the sidewalk, suggesting surveillance, the coercive quality of civic choreographies in concert, and the surveilled Indigenous man as ethnographic subject. Differential surveillance is, of course, a significant aspect of the audiovisual construction of the settler city. This work may be seen as a kind of sousveillance, or watching from below, wherein the subject of ethnography undertakes a counter-vision. Only feet walking by are visible on the screened sidewalk, suggesting a kind of anonymity. Houle asks, “Do people care? Does anyone really give a shit as I’m lying in front of this video? In this created scenario,
there’s no way that you can tell these people to look” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Houle’s durational, multidimensional performance space capaciously holds a multivalent perspective, one that remains visibly voiceless in relation to the street. Houle, staging his body “trapped in this little scene” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013), becomes his portrait of a landscape encompassing Calgary’s streetscape choreographies.

Houle’s work further implicates the fact that many of Calgary’s streets have been named after Blackfoot people, including the Deerfoot Trail, a main thoroughfare in the city. Despite these place-namings, or mnemonic signifiers for Indigenous presence, citizens are mostly unaware of their meanings. Deerfoot, after whom the thoroughfare is named, was given his name because he was a fast runner and aided his people, and he was ultimately murdered in a jail cell (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). People enact their everyday choreographies upon the bow and the elbow of an Indigenous man composing the landscape, and drive down a thoroughfare named for an Indigenous man killed by colonialism. Houle’s screendance is conveys the seeming absence of continuous Indigenous history, presence of marginalized Indigenous citizens and settler citizens, and failure of response on the part of Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens. Houle reveals the continuous and uniform movement of the feet on the sidewalk, contrarily, as stasis and immobility in terms of the Landscape Houle screens. Houle engages the Contrary “to critique Native society” and ground “acknowledge[ment] of both the positive and the negative” as they are relationally composed in Calgary as the city as archive (Interview 21 Feb. 2013).

Viewers respond to this work in various ways. Viewers have accused Houle of being drunk, or a dead body, and some have balked at what they see as a negative
representation of urban Indigenous peoples. Houle suggests, in response to these perspectives, that the Contrary equalizes Indigenous peoples. Houle told me that while powwow actually had contrary dances, the form has been lost and with it the vital function of transformation and critique (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Houle’s screenings pose a new form of Contrary dance within the everyday. His bodily performance in regalia configures Indigenous land-based archives, while viewers’ responses highlight what viewers bring to the work’s animation of the civic archive.

The film *Landscape*, separate from but related to the series of photographs, is shot in Nose Hill in downtown Calgary, which is an inner city natural landscape and a sacred place for Indigenous peoples, a frequent site for ceremonies and teepee circles. Houle positions his Super 8 film camera so that viewers can’t see the city around him. Houle, as a “lumbersome fearful” Indian in this green park, dramatically runs in slow motion. He lumbers nearly naked through the park in partial regalia. His belly sways freely until eventually he falls down in the grass—it appears that someone off camera has shot Houle in the back. Eventually the “shooter” appears in the frame: it turns out that his own daughter, dressed in a cowboy costume and riding a toy horse, is the one who has felled him. Houle reprises filmic archives; cowboys and Indians are both Indigenous people playing intergenerationally with the signifiers of historical oppression. A father and a daughter play a game in civic space and make a home movie. The embodied restaging of gender, power, and relationship in the choreography of this scene reframes the hegemonic visibility of cowboy and Indian signifiers, as well as masculine and feminine presence on film, and Indigenous presence in the city. The Super 8 style of the video suggests family archives, like the photographs of Favell’s grandmother. Houle centers himself and his
daughter in terms of their mutual perspectives in play, choreographing an alternative to the “cowboys and Indians” mythos central to Calgary as a Western stampede town. He also reclaims technologies in resurging Indigenous selves within a rearticulated civic archive.

Photographs shot in inner city Calgary accompany this film. Houle’s photography treats the mnemotechnical conventions of prairie photography that represented the archive of Indigenous peoples “living out on the plains” for settler audiences. Houle notes, “the rise of technology has paralleled itself with our image which still circulates today” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). Houle uses Indigenous traditions along with those of photography to rearticulate the “emplacing” of Indigenous identities, asserting a communal relationship to the land and its histories, including ongoing dispossession. Houle sets the civic photographic archive in self-determined and land-based relationships with city environments.

The first photograph in the series depicts two women having a picnic in a park. Houle lies face down in the landscape in front of them. The women are seated like visitors to the area, lounging on a blanket at the top of a hill. Houle’s body, at the bottom of the hill, face down, blends into the ground. This work again addresses what Houle calls “the conflict of non-response,” wherein settlers in Calgary enact entitlement to civic space, indifferent to the violence that accrues through their belonging. The image reveals that the women’s leisure is founded upon this Indigenous body, or ground, on which they sit and gaze outwards, conveying mastery in their casual gaze and spatial emplacement. The second photograph is of Nose Hill. A group of powwow dancers stand gazing at the camera; Houle is lying facedown again, to the left of the group. In this photograph Houle
conveys “beautiful Aboriginal peoples in a stereotypical manner,” which is to say “the photograph is very exotic, playing up to the imagery of what non-Aboriginal peoples think” Aboriginal peoples are (Interview 21 Feb. 2013). His inclusion in the frame queries this perspective, asking, what do celebratory visual framings exclude? There are many images like this in the photographic archive. Houle’s body interrupts a visual and performative register in which positive visions of Indigenous identity have been superficially commoditized.

Houle’s third image shows Houle lying on the ground, face down, near a baseball diamond in a park. Houle’s site suggests “looking only at the positive and not the reality” for many Aboriginal peoples. Sports have a strong discursive tie to Indigenous peoples, be they mascots or symbols of modern conquest, the narrative of which contributes to the valourizing ethos of sport. Houle describes how his friend, Trevor Freeman, a Métis artist and coach, coaches an all-girls children’s team in this very field (Interview 21 Feb 2013). The image treats the violence of settler coloniality in North America as genealogically celebrated in choreographies of sport. At the same site, intergenerational practices of empowerment are ongoing in Indigenous communities. These photographed sites, considered together, produce a partial narrative of how and why Houle’s figure is in that position. Houle’s figure seems disempowered, face down lying on the ground. In fact, he occupies a powerful position of critique.

Viewers of these images might read Houle’s staged body as a dead body. Hence, Houle’s performance stages the idea that citizens are, according to Blackfoot understanding, living on an Aboriginal person’s body, one that is lying down and giving the occupants life. Houle prompts his audience to question, is that understanding dead? Does anybody notice that it is dead or that it exists? Houle asks, “I grew up in the city, is it only reserves that are Native spaces?” (Interview 21 Feb. 2013) His question signals the land as civic ground in this work, and that land is key to citizens’ understandings of who they are, and how they relate to the past. Houle’s body highlights a cliché or deficit-based lens on Indigenous peoples in the city, as does Calder’s protagonist in *Repercussions*. Also like Calder, he repudiates this lens, by lying down on the ground, in land-based archival relationships.
Each aspect of this work activates Indigenous presence and absence as significance elements of the city archive. Calgary is a self-aggrandizing “stampede city” which reproduces an Indian village during the annual Calgary Stampede, a nationalist tourist event, along with powwow and teepees. Houle uses his choreography of failure, similar to Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin (Kiendl 16), to ask: by framing “successful” representations in these terms, do these portrayals animate stasis, staging a specifically liberal presence coherent with capitalist nationalism? Houle uses urban space to replicate non-urban spaces within an urban space, what he calls “little reserves,” or hubs, in Ramirez’s terms. Landscape refers to archival repertoires of media production and reception. Houle advances a process of reconnection and regeneration with the land-based archive of Calgary, an Aboriginal man’s body. Houle’s aesthetic form of contention is an act of Indigenous citizenship that simultaneously discomposes the social body formed through settler coloniality, and its archive, in Canada. Houle, through video, film, performance, and photographs, composes an indigenized conception of Calgary.

Conclusion

Artists Benesiinaabandan, Favell, Calder, and Houle focus on the relationship between personal belonging, archives, and the city. They assert Indigenous archives through their embodied practice as artists relating to their environments and communities. They center the land as an agential source of archival knowledge, decentering the human as well as settler definitions of legitimate archival document. Settler misunderstandings regarding what constitute legitimate archives and citizenship convey profound condescension and ignorance. Indigenous art relates to broad domains of civility. The works in this chapter decolonize settler understandings of personhood, eschewing the
Benesiinaabandan’s series *Boy with a Fish* and *Down Main* explore Winnipeg’s downtown. He draws upon archival images and monuments taken or erected by settlers, looking specifically at the city as collection of archival knowledge. He interrupts his viewer’s gaze upon memorial structures, such as the monument to the White Horse Plain, enacting Indigenous priority, perspective, and embodied presence. He situates his body in front of memorial structures in Winnipeg not conventionally read as archival, such as the Mayflower semi-trailer, the New Occidental bar, and the Noble Savage interior design store. His images reveal the diffuse nature of civic archives in Winnipeg, questioning what counts as a legitimate archival document. Many of these objects, creating civic memory in the city streets, are influential in ways that fond photographs are not.

Benesiinaabandan also images his friends in city spaces, connecting archival photographs of Main Street with contemporary relationships both with friends and with animals, such as the plastic-wrapped fish, to criticize colonialism and affirm and remember Indigenous relationships in specific city spaces. Benesiinaabandan’s images also rely on gender for their meaning. In “Boy with a Fish” and “Noble Savage Interiors” he locates his male body in front of Indigenous and feminized structures that settlers feel comfortable appropriating for their own. Benesiinaabandan interrupts this sense of entitlement, taking ownership of the city as archive, as Anishinaabe. Finally, he reorders the archive temporally, while blurring boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate images. In his “Boy with a Fish” diptych, the Indigenous past, pictured in the original archival fond photo, becomes the future, through Benesiinaabandan’s stance of resistance in the right-
side image. He draws upon the visual language of the Kanesatake warriors expanding his register into a broader civic archive of symbols and images.

Favell restages civic memorial objects by literally embodying them, such as in her gold lamé Golden Boy outfit. Favell’s voluptuous embodiment of the Golden Boy, as the symbol of Winnipeg itself, recasts its triumphant fixity as a settler dream, making this vision wiggly, uneasy on its feet, and unable ultimately to stand. Her female body resonates with her grandmother’s in archival photographs of Winnipeg’s history, centering Indigenous womanhood as predominant in the city’s identity. Her grandmother’s agency in the photographs relates to Winnipeg monuments and what are now historical landmarks. Favell’s science fiction emphasis in the planetarium reorders time, as does Benesiinaabandan. She centers Métis genealogy in a cosmic purview; as she says, “in the end there is Louis Riel and my grandmother.” Favell’s locating of her grandmother’s photo archive on the planetarium screen, along with bison stickers with neon wings, personalizes the city, as they hover over the downtown skyline alternating with wheat fields. This view of the city—its skyline—tends to seem abstract and impersonal. Favell, personalizing it, highlights embodied relational knowledge of Métis history on the land. Finally, she takes control of the planetarium in the Manitoba Museum as a problematically colonial site of Indigenous archival materials. The monumental sky in the planetarium, a site usually devoted to ancient Greek and Roman mythology, screens the partial foundations of Western modernity as mobilized since the Enlightenment, as I discussed in Chapter One. Favell’s embodied practice as artist, as the “Wizard of Oz” who uses a kind of magic to convey realizations about home, draws on broad civic archival symbolism. I relate to this, as I watched *The Wizard of Oz* more
times than I can count as a little girl growing up in Winnipeg; in fact, I watched it over
and over again at my grandmother’s house. Favell’s *Search for Life Beyond Our Planet: Nanny’s Gold* offers a low-tech treatment of Winnipeg from a Métis lens.

Calder’s films deploy Indigenous aesthetic traditions to translate her figures’ experiences. Calder centers the land in relationships of subjectivity and agency, decolonizing mainstream liberal framings of free choice, autonomy, individual agency, and personal responsibility, all based on liberal property in the self and the land as separate. *Repercussions* stages freedom from that order, again, in relation to the ground and the histories that emanate from it. Liberal perceptual grammar has transformed into a hardened or heightened neoliberal conception of the self, centered in mainstream screened and audiovisual settler cultures. These cultures trace lines of continuity through the dominant epistemic forms of settler biopolitics that precipitated the domination, exploitation, and destruction of Indigenous peoples and their lands. Calder’s stagings in *Repercussions* negate these epistemic framings by indigenizing media cultures. In these ways, the land and the self are understood in Nagam’s terms of Indigenous city as archive, evading the reach of settler colonization. Calder engages settler mnemnotechnics, recasting the monumental Old City Hall, Toronto’s neoclassical law courts building, in terms of the land’s memories of continuous Indigenous traditions. The shadows of men beat drums, run, a woman dances, picks berries, cares for a baby. The land remembers these histories, and hails Indigenous citizens to come closer, and remember together. Calder’s figures read the land in an embodied praxis of relational archive. Calder raises the land as animate and agential, with expert archival knowledge, below the pavement that tries in vain to cover and erase it. Calder’s figures, lying on the
sidewalk, embody self-knowledge, together, through relationship with the land below.

Calder engages the audiovisual realm of civic engagement, treated by mainstream media theory. Her archival broadcast countdown at the beginning of the work, and her sampling of A Tribe Called Red, refer to the audiovisuality of contemporary civic life. She draws on powwow music, consonant with Houle’s use of regalia. She theorizes media and the city through the lens of an Indigenous land-based ontology.

Houle highlights the city sidewalk as a paradoxical scene of Indigenous belonging in Calgary. Houle, like Calder, locates his Indigenous body in almost seamless intimacy with the land, or what is “below the pavement” in his words. He locates his audience’s perspective, from this stance of intimacy, against the dominant surveillance of city streets. The hegemonic gaze means to capture Indigenous bodies supposedly out of place, threatening private property, as in the perspectives of Lorri Steeves in Chapter One and the blogger I reference in Chapter Two. Houle’s body, conveying failure according to this gaze, flips the gaze to assert belonging through refusal and critique of the usually invisible settlers who his video streams obliviously walking on the pavement. In Landscape, Houle lies facedown in front of the sidewalk, like Calder’s figures in Repercussions. Each artist interrupts the clichés that accrue around this image. Calder and Houle present figures of passivity, captivation, and pain, wisdom, and joy in paradoxical framings. Houle, by recreating Indigenous civic scenes in ways that do not correlate to the liberal imaginary, composes what Ramirez calls hubs as acts of Indigenous citizenship. Houle queries and exposes the conventions of prairie photography and Indigenous dance, as these forms pertain to Indigenous citizenship in Calgary, critiquing liberal forms of empowerment. His body and the landscape, an Aboriginal man lying
down, are one, creating a relationship between the self and the land grounded in Indigenous knowledge and experience.

In this chapter I analyze Indigenous media artworks conveying the city as archive in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Calgary, in relation to Urban Shaman in Winnipeg. In 3.1, I present the work of Indigenous artists, curators, and scholars, looking at Indigenous theory of archive in urban spaces. Nagam’s theory of the city as archive in Indigenous contemporary art complements my understanding of these works through Ramirez’s translocal citizenship framework. In Nagam Indigenous art is archival praxis, embodied citizenship practice as archival knowledge, and the city, the land itself, is a manifold archival collection. Artistic resurgence in the city as archive negotiates the liberal order framework of Canada and its genocidal processes. In 3.2 I introduce archival studies understandings of liberal government uses of archive. I interpret archival studies arguments that advance socially just archives in transitional justice situations, showing how even these need to be decolonized in terms of Indigenous conceptions of archival provenance, materials, access, and interpretation. Indigenous conceptions in the artworks in this chapter do not rely on nation-state based models. I eschew the government’s liberal principles of interpretation such as distance, autonomy, and rationality, instead orienting my understanding of artists’ archival practice through Ramirez’ Indigenous citizenship: as land-based praxis, embodiment, and relationships. In 3.3 I discuss the works of Benesiinaabandan and Favell, who draw on archival photos, blurring the boundaries between public and private visuality in relation to important landmarks of the city of Winnipeg. The artists’ versions of portraiture create visions of personhood and belonging or citizenship in relationships with the city as archive. In 3.4 Indigenous artists
Calder and Houle’s works in this chapter compose city as land-based archive. Calder and Houle present figures of supposed passivity, captivation, and pain in powerful strengths-based framings. Both Houle and Calder assert bold priority in relationship with what is underneath the settler ground, the suppressed foundation, if you will (the grass through the cracks in the pavement; the man lying down as the landscape of Calgary) of Winnipeg and Calgary. They diagnose failures to read: to read Houle’s figure, or to correctly read the identities of the two women in Repercussions. Against these perceptual failures, they affirm intergenerational relationships, that of Houle and his daughter, and the spirit woman, police woman, and the young woman on the street in Calder. Artists, through these methods, indigenize conceptions of the self in relation to the city to decolonize the liberal archive.

Chapter Four focuses on media art exhibits at Urban Shaman that extend my discussion of Indigenous archival belonging in this chapter to present Indigenous civic ecology as multifaceted relationships with animals and land. This chapter shows how the art works in my study extend Ramirez’ human-focused discussion into civic ecology frameworks against those of liberal property ownership. Chapter Four exceeds and builds upon my argument in Chapter Three by extending Indigenous land-based vision and critique into broader material domains, emanating outward from Chapter Three’s specific personal contexts of the individual person in the city in relation to mediated and land-based archives. In 4.1 I look at Indigenous artists’ theoretical challenges to liberal civic ecology in the specific context of cities. I contrast Indigenous media arts relating to animals and land against art historical theories of new materialism in 4.2. Section 4.3 analyzes Norris and Myre’s installations exploring animal relationships in terms of
gender; media technologies; ceremony and ecology; continuity and relationality; and the figurative and literal. Section 4.4 connects their themes with Terril Calder’s work treating private property in relation to the land and Jordan Bennett’s work as transpecies archive. Calder and Bennett decolonize relations to land and animals based on property, and create relational land-based archives. The chapter contends that Norris, Myre, Calder, and Bennett’s works convey relationships with animals and the land between artists, viewers, communities, and participants in Winnipeg at Urban Shaman. These works envision social ecological systems that are not founded upon the exclusion of animals or land from the political community, as settler private property. These artists’ understandings compose in the relational ontologies of their Indigenous nations.
Chapter 4:

Indigenous New Materialisms and Civic Ecology

Chapter Four analyses the works of artists Jude Norris (Cree), Nadia Myre (Anishinaabe), Jordan Bennett (Mi’kmaq) and Terril Calder (Métis). I have chosen specific exhibitions, either media art or multi-disciplinary with media art. I chose them for the ways they mobilize new media to present Indigenous civic ecology as multifaceted relationships with animals and land. As I argued in Chapter Two, the materiality of Indigenous routes through the land of North America materially founds digital travel, or the internet itself (L’Hirondelle). All of the component parts of the internet are created with Indigenous materials, along the routes created by Indigenous peoples. These routes are ongoing from time immemorial; they are incredibly ancient and durable into the present. They are also based on dynamic relationships with the land and animal nations. These pathways are Indigenous; only someone with the weakest possible sense of history could think otherwise. In this way also, a framing through the term “Indigenous,” when applied to media art, necessitates the multifaceted materiality of, and relationships to, the land and animals as fundamental. For this reason, I discuss Norris and Myre’s multimedia exhibits to look at the seeming totality of their visions of media in the city—rather than isolating media as separate from animals and land. Artistic perspectives translate media arts in liberal citizenship and civil society orders, subsuming these views on new media into visions of Indigenous civic ecology and materialist relational practices. Winnebago theorist Renya Ramirez emphasizes emotion, relationships, care work, and vernacular understandings of belonging as gendered aspects of Native citizenship exceeding and troubling liberal logic. The artworks in this chapter
extend Ramirez’ human-focused discussion into civic ecology frameworks against those of liberal individuals and property ownership. These media artworks develop Ramirez’s theory of translocal Native citizenship in an Indigenist materialist vein (Kalbflieisch and Robinson 52), at the same time querying how new materialist theories in art history may be settler colonial when they do not center Indigenous knowledge.

These artists indigenize new media through Indigenist materialist philosophy conveyed in their works. In section 4.1, I engage Indigenous theoretical challenges to liberal civic ecology in the specific context of cities. I contrast Indigenous media arts relating to animals and land against art historical theories of new materialism in section 4.2. Indigenous new media theories and artworks that I consider in this chapter reveal the liberal humanist themes operating uncritically in new materialist theories as well as related scholarly projects of animal studies, biopolitics, and settler colonial studies. Section 4.3 analyzes Norris and Myre’s installations exploring animal relationships in terms of gender; media technologies; ceremony and ecology; continuity and relationality; and the figurative and literal. Section 4.4 connects their themes with Bennett and Calder’s work treating land-based relationships with animals through an Indigenous trans-species archive. These works broaden the land-based archival framework I laid down in Chapter Three, decolonizing property-based relations to land and animals through the creation of relational land-based and trans-species archives. The chapter contends Norris, Myre, Bennett and Calder’s works enact relationships with animals and the land between artists, viewers, communities, and participants in Winnipeg at Urban Shaman. These works envision social ecological systems founded upon the exclusion of animals or land from
the political community, as settler private property, using new media to translate these dominant forms by composing the relational ontologies of their Indigenous nations.

4.1 Indigenous Relational Materialism and Civil Society

Relational Indigenous ecologies are anathema to mainstream settler abstractions or separations of identity and citizenship, land and animals. Indigenous cosmology emphasizes relationality over separation: “in Indigenous cultural domains relationality means that one experiences oneself as part of others and others as part of the self” (Blaser et al. 8). While phenomenologists and ecologically oriented scholars have contended similar points, some of which I discuss below in considering theories of urban ecology and animal studies, I feel it important to recognize the pre-eminence of Indigenous thought on the topic. Indigenous relational ecology has been ongoing for many thousands of years within specific epistemic and ontological conditions. These conditions, while changing over millennia, arise from different genealogies than those of Western thought. In making these distinctions, I cite Zoe Todd, a Métis PhD candidate at the University of Aberdeen, who writes of her dismay at the “new ontological turn” in critical theory in a blog post titled “An Indigenous Feminist Take on the Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ is Just Another Word for Colonialism.” In this blog post she writes:

My point here is that Indigenous peoples, throughout the world, are fighting for recognition. Fighting to assert their laws, philosophies and stories on their own terms. And when anthropologists and other assembled social scientists sashay in and start cherry-picking parts of Indigenous thought that appeal to them without engaging directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars, we immediately
become complicit in colonial violence. When we cite European thinkers who discuss the ‘more-than-human’ but do not discuss their Indigenous contemporaries who are writing on the exact same topics [and have been for decades, while their peoples have also been studied for centuries by the same Euro-American institutions of knowledge production] we perpetuate the white supremacy of the academy.

I attend to Indigenous knowledge on themes of ontology and the “more-than-human” through the new media works in this chapter. I note Indigenous artists’ connections between worldviews, while my discussion never offers a wholesale understanding of any Indigenous nation’s epistemology or ontology.

Indigenous artworks delineate specific relationships. Cree curator Daina Warren writes of Cree artists’ ways of articulating space and place on the land. She foregrounds what she calls the “relational” in Indigenous cultures that connect with, or “relate to” their environments (“Cree Cosmologies” 13-14). Indigenous aesthetic formations articulate these fields, evoking the actual experiences of individuals and communities. Warren writes, in terms of these artistic projects, that “individual Native contexts” are important to audiences “based on the ways that each artist provides access to their particular cosmological environments” (“Cree Cosmologies” 2). Warren suggests that Native artists hold “differing philosophies developed through the artist’s personal experiences and a variety of responses to surrounding environments, sometimes […] with overarching Indigenous cosmologies” (Cree Cosmologies” 2). She frames citizenship in terms of Indigenous place as a cosmology, in which a cultural “self” emerges out of the relationship between self and space, articulated through stories told by and about that
“self,” and its relation to all the components that make up “place” (Cree Cosmologies” 90). Warren’s view of cosmology does not provide a direct definition, as she follows the examples of elders in choosing not to speak directly about the topic in the Euro-Canadian sense. Instead, she defines it contextually in her discussion of Cree media artworks. For Warren, cosmology is about “abilities,” “accounts,” and “guiding cultural knowledge informing relationships” that are 1) spiritual, 2) land-based, and 3) including other beings (“Cosmologies” 1). For Warren they are “underlying cultural knowledge systems to form art and mix with situations to produce a project” (“Cosmologies” 1). Indigenous artists produce relations and environment, configured through cultural knowledge—an aesthetic ecology. For Warren, these philosophies generate relationships that compose, in her argument, Cree artists’ experiences through media artworks. I build with and diverge from Warren’s framework, looking specifically at how Indigenous media artworks centre animals and land in ecological or land-based understandings of citizenship. These translate settler hegemonic understandings of cities into Indigenous landscapes.

Settler and Indigenous understandings of the citizen differ, as I discuss in chapters one, two, and three. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes that within liberal settler regimes, the liberal citizen holds psychological, political, and phenomenological relations of dominion through private property extending in civic ecology (32). The citizen mobilizes instrumental rationality, or reason, as the perceptual emphasis and strategy by which to extend liberal dominion (Smith 32). The liberal person’s proprietary relationship to the self and to land governs the public sphere with instrumental rationality. At the same time, recent structural changes in capitalism, as noted by media theorist Bernard Stiegler in Chapter Two, have reoriented citizenship towards consumption practices. For
theorist Teresa Brennan, this position argues citizenship is now based on emotion and consumption rather than reason and production. She points out the continuous logic of capital and the consumability of the world, which continues today through emotions and consumption. These logics developed out of the historical specificity of the reason–based approach to Western citizenship. Indigenous media artists, working through different though intersecting genealogies, articulate civic ecologies through Indigenous citizenship as practices of land-based belonging, including emotions and care work, with animals and land. These practices are anti-capitalist in the terms set by Coulthard in Chapter Two.

Indigenous contemporary art articulates these relationships in cities.

Contemporary cities are specific ecological locations in which Indigenous perspectives augment and produce distinct situations of citizenship. Social theories of cities are now emerging which advance the concept of civic ecology through concepts of stewardship and resilience. Marianne Krasny and Keith Tidball, directors of the Civic Ecology Lab at Cornell University, explore ecological understandings of civic life. They describe civic ecological stewardship as practices that “interact with the people and other organisms, neighborhoods, governments, non-profit and business organizations, and ecosystems in which they take place” (xiv), offering “frameworks for understanding the role these practices play in larger social-ecological systems” (xvi). Civic ecology binds “traditions of engagement in civil society and of a land ethic based on humans’ deep connections to nature” (xv). Civic ecologists realize these traditions by engaging in hands-on restoration and ongoing stewardship of land, life, and community.

Through such caring actions, civic ecology stewards develop an ongoing relationship with the rest of nature that contributes to their own and their
Their theory advances terms of enlightened self-interest, centring human beings and, indeed, the liberal citizen. This supposedly “new” relationship to nature may be genuinely new in the context of settler cities. My supervisor Susan Lord pointed out to me how this framing of cities resonates with “creative cities” discourses. May Chew writes that these discourses convey cities as “playgrounds of consumption peddled through evangelisms about self-actualization, “organic” communities and “authentic” experience” (Florida qtd. in Chew, 57). Chew goes on to say that “[t]he fantasy of the “good life” and its ill-fated pursuit—which Lauren Berlant terms cruel optimism—effectively dissimulates various socio-economic and political inequalities produced through neoliberalism” (57). Ecological citizenship pushes citizens to accept the offloading of responsibility from their public institutions to their own individual practices, gutting public institutional responsibility. At the same time, individual agency always remains a site of self-determination and meaning in excess of these structural oppressions.

Indigenous perspectives in the works I study are equally critical of these contexts while differing from the accounts offered by these authors. Indigenous peoples’ links between nature and collective life reflect a profound continuity across space and time for peoples who have stewarded the environments now called North America for tens of thousands of years in traditions of continuity and change. Krasny and Tidball describe stewardship “actions [that] embody a longing for—or perhaps a collective memory of—nature, place, and community” (xiii). Their insight can be deepened to an unfamiliar level by Indigenous ecological relationships extending beyond all of Western history since
antiquity. Indigenous peoples in North America act on memories that are not accessible to settlers. Krasny and Tidball seek to “explor[e] new thinking about our relationships with the rest of nature, about stewardship and civic engagement, and about ecosystems and the ways we govern ourselves” (xiii). While this is a useful framing, Indigenous nations relate to ecosystems in their systems of civic governance in relationships of continuity, both as stewards of nature in city locations and as participants in an animate world wherein agencies exceed the human.

An additional insight of Krasny and Tidball’s concerns the concept of resilience, defined as “the ability to adapt and transform, as individuals, communities, and ecosystems, in the face of change and even hardship” (7). These authors would seem to identify a key trait of the Indigenous art community and Indigenous nations in Canada. However, artists in this chapter distinguish between the current touting of “resilience” by organizations like the World Bank, World Health Organization, and the United States government, and that which could be used to describe Indigenous communities. The terms of resilience described here coopt Indigenous sovereignty into the strategies of global neoliberal governance. As Mark Neocleous writes, “the mainstream emphasis on resilience in governance discourses leads to a heightened expectation that individuals will subjectively cope with the ravaging uncertainty and instability of contemporary capitalism as well as the insecurity of the national security state.” He writes, “Good subjects will survive and thrive in any situation: when citizenship is figured through a neoliberal lens, belonging is understood in terms of resilience as the new technology of the self.” Artist Candy Chang’s poster, photographed in New Orleans, insists: “STOP CALLING ME RESILIENT. Because every time you say “Oh, they’re resilient” it means
you can do something else to me. I am not resilient.” These deployments of resilience to which Chang refers contrast with to the stewardship acts of many Indigenous peoples, who see sovereignty, resilience, and citizenship in terms that are not about bootstrap individualism. The artists in my study articulate sensibilities about new media, animacies and location that retain a radical autonomy from the entire genealogy of (neo-) liberalism, while engaging in constructive critique, or battle, of and with the same formation.


Indigenous artists’ use of new media technologies in specific places relationally externalizes the artist’s experience in technology, articulating Indigenous relationships of responsibility to perceptual worlds. In Indigenous ecologies “humans interact with rather than upon non-human others” (Horton and Berlo 22), such as spiritual entities such as Tricksters or Windigokhan, or in shamanic practices, or in collaboration with animal
nations in creating artworks, as some examples. Theorizing community in terms of Indigenous conceptions of land-based relationships translates the impositions of global markets and settler-state framing of place in relation to Indigenous community.

Artists produce Indigenous materialities. Tahltan artist Peter Morin stages Indigenous ecologies of place that conceptually produce translocal Indigenous citizens. Morin, theorizing his own performance art work, argues that his people are “people in motion on the land” that “share stories of travel with each other” creating “fluid organizational structures.” Morin centers Indigenous subjectivity and cultural practice in-relation to these “fluid systems of organizing knowledge,” and asserts “a creative process, connected to Indigenous-based objects and knowledge structures that tells the history of Native communities.” For Morin, Indigenous artists become “the historians of these ways of knowing.” He writes:

Artwork is the history of our people. We are philosophers. We understand that History and Philosophy are closely aligned. We have thought about the theoretical components of ceremony and applied material production. This supports the spiritual well-being of the community. Land, History, Identity, Story, Singing, and Drumming create Ceremony. Ceremony is well developed. The objects that support history become prayers for the survival of our community. This knowledge about the process to create these objects is often missing from the western museum. Ceremony is our Museum. Ceremony interrupts colonization. This is significant.

Morin conceives of ecologies within Indigenous methods. Warren also argues that contemporary Native artists are “deterritorialized” not so much “by the settlers or
confluence of governmental pressures to leave their traditional territories but through their own interests and goals” (50). Artworks translate settler civility in new media artworks that convey translocal Indigenous cosmology.

4.2 Euro-American Materialist Theories: Biopolitics, Animals, and Land

Indigenous precepts are conversant with aspects of the recent “material turn” in mainstream art history. Indigenous artists’ materialist framings, at a glance, seem to resonate with mainstream foci on material rather than discursive conditions. Benedict Anderson describes the Euro-American nation state form as an imaginary based on linguistic or discursive constructs (Anderson). As I will show in the following pages, art history’s new ontological perspectives, nuancing and even opposing the emphases of discursive criticism such as Anderson’s, like Anderson does not challenge settler colonialism. Indigenous nations, then, resurge against these Euro-American theories of materiality.

Australian political theorist Jane Bennett argues for an animist approach to the material world, identifying and empathizing with objects. A materialist approach, focusing on materiality rather than hermeneutics, displaces binaries between hermeneutic and empirical foci. Bennett eschews liberal framings in some ways, arguing for “active powers issuing from non-human subjects” (ix), and troubling liberal figuring of agency solely through the individual. Bennett, looking at the material world as “assemblage,” claims that it is in one’s best interest to support the overall assemblage. She argues for an enlightened, self-interested, perceiving subject to take action, reiterating a liberal political stance on environmentalism. Her argument, understanding agency distributed across the assemblage, still centers the perception of the human subject, so that the world is
organized by human cognition—a Kantian tradition that also locates responsibility (ie. judgement) on the human. Bennett writes “a careful course of anthropomorphism can help reveal that vitality [of matter] (117).” She extends affective relationship into an overall “live” assemblage as a foundation for new political community. Indigenous community formations are ongoing, not new, and they do not express any settler philosophy. Bennett’s imperative to newly feel the world through animistic perception seems helpful in moving away from worldly relationships based on private property. I am troubled, though, that in an Australian context Bennett is not self-reflexive about writing as a settler. Bennett’s work clarifies how settler materialisms do not engage with Indigenous understandings of animacies, agency of objects, animal-human relationalities, or the land. For Elizabeth Kalbfleish and Dylan Robinson “a return to the object also invites inquiry on the nature of Indigenous worldviews and systems of knowledge, assertions which may compete with rather than complement art historical initiatives” (52). I read this claim to mean that while aspects of Indigenous artworks may seem to resonate with the new materialist art history, they take place within Indigenous relationalities instead. Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson writes that some Indigenous artworks are “sovereign voices that speak firstly to other-than-human publics as a re-affirmation of our relations. This is their primary work” (3). Artworks in this chapter articulate who and what gets included in the political community, and in what ways. As Aileen-Moreton Robinson writes of Indigenous sovereignty:

Our sovereignty is embodied, it is ontological (our being) and epistemological (our way of knowing) and it is grounded in complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land. In this sense, our
sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on a social contract model, the idea of a universal supreme authority, territorial integrity and individual rights.

(Moreton Robinson qtd. in Rickard, “After Essay” 59)

The new media artworks in this chapter understand relationship between humans, animals, and land as ecological stakes in Indigenous citizenship.

Indigenous relational ecological art practice translates liberal humanist citizenship and property regimes through an Indigenous lens. I follow settler scholar Elizabeth Kalbfleish and Robinson, then, in using their term “Indigenist materialism” to describe their work. Norris’ artistic work presents the continuity of Cree cosmology. She collaborates with caribou and moose, constituting Cree ontology in contemporary city environments. Myre approaches spaces of civic modernity, layering advertising language, print media, digital photography, city streets, and animal metaphors set in relationship with multiple scars figuring femininity, embodiment and trauma. She translates settler discourses of animality that marginalize Indigenous femininity and womanhood under the Canadian settler regime. Bennett draws upon the remembrances of animal ancestors, staging a trans-species archive. Calder figures an Indigenous woman, killed by settler men and their microbes, with the lively land in front of her, and the bison emanating from behind. The land, as animate entity, remembers.

Settler animal studies discourses in North America include animals in theorizing the social and thereby align with new materialities that expand biopolitical theories beyond the human. Animal studies theorist Colleen Glenney-Boggs points out how Georgio Agamben’s theory of biopower excludes animals within its Eurocentric and
ahistorical framing, recapitulating the very structures of sovereignty that it would
critique. His framework does not include animals or land, in contrast to Norris’s and
Myre’s works. Animal studies, in contrast, troubles “who [and what] counts as a subject”
by centring animals in this question (Glenney-Boggs 168). Animal studies asserts that
subjectivity isn’t always human, through a) animal rights discourses, where animals have
subjectivity and deserve rights, and b) poststructuralist animal-human relationality
undoing the autonomous liberal subject. Glenney-Boggs aligns with the latter stream,
thinking biopolitics, following Roberto Esposito, as affirmative or constitutive relations
between “bodies, forces, technologies, disciplines, and institutions” (50) in liberal
capitalist modernity.

I both align and dissociate my argument in this chapter with those of animal
studies. I align insofar as Indigenous artworks allocate and compose subjectivity through
human-animal relationalities that translate settler-colonial humanism, citizenship, and
cities. I dissociate myself from the field’s centring of subjectivity per se. While animal
studies’ treatments of subjectivity are valuable, the works in my study reframe civic
ecology instead. These works, instead of centring any subject or its undoing, animal or
not, present a much broader ontological field through Indigenous cosmologies. These
fields are precise contexts requiring more specificity than theories of biopolitics or
liberalism can provide.

23 While Georgio Agamben does not take up animality in his theory of biopower, as
Glenney-Boogs correctly critiques, his work The Open: Man and Animal (2013) does
explore the distinction in Western philosophy and political theory between man and
animal. In this text, Agamben historicizes these relationships in the terms of a genealogy
of Western philosophy.

24 Glenney-Boggs discusses these two streams at length in her introduction to Animalia
Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity.
Roberto Esposito’s expansive framework falls short for me as it does not account for the work of liberal dominion on the land in settler-colonial contexts, which, through an Indigenous lens, is first-and-foremost a matter of land (Coulthard, *Red Skin*). Suneri Thobani focuses on the land in Canada’s biopolitical composition, arguing Canada envisions the landscape as “*humanitas nullius*” (50), denying the existence of Indigenous nations. The liberal law establishes racial violence on the land. Critical settler geographer Mark Rifkin extends this insight that nation-state sovereignty “relies upon a prior geopolitical mapping” of the land (91). Canadian mapping communicates that a proprietary individual owns the land, and that this person matters most in the political community. Sovereignty, appropriating the land as “the biopolitical ‘body’ of the people relies [firstly] on the geopolitical territory of the nation, displacing claims of other political formations as *bare habitance*” (92). In this vein settler historian McKay writes, perhaps the piece de resistance of the Canadian liberal order was to carve upon the map, in lines that majestically remind us of Euclidean geometry and panoptical state power. This quadrilateral demonstration of panopticism was the molecular checkerboard of quarter-sections and individual properties contained within the new province's boundaries—a social ideology set down on the land and hence made part of everyday western experience. (638)

These critiques, when brought together, support the work of Indigenous artists and theorists. I bring these accounts together in relation to Indigenous lands, however, to show that political theory continues to colonize them when it reproduces colonial foundations centring the individual person, or when it does not centre Indigenous relationships to the land.
Canadian dominion over the animals and the land geopolitically mapped Indigenous peoples as objects of liberal knowledge, so that Euro-American individuals could freely exploit land and animals. This mapping delimits the potentials of life within both space and time. Eradicating Indigenous nations also relies on excluding animals from the political community. The new media artists in my study oppose these genocidal processes. The Indigenous artists in this article “reclaim a territory for their voices” (Townsend xii) as peoples in sovereign land-based relationships. Their practices shape constitutive relations of Indigenous civic ecology.

4.3 Land-Based Animal-Human Relationalities in Indigenous Media Arts

Norris and Myre’s media arts relate with animals by centering the relationship in a land-based cosmology. Relationships unfold between artists, viewers, communities, and participants, the land and urban space. The works assert Indigenous ecological constitutions, making land-based human and animal relationships visible. They express translocal Indigenous citizenship and its imbrication with the land. Media is important to these artists due to its centrality in contemporary life. A robust Indigenous ontology grounded in contemporary lived experience centres the use of media technology as citizenship. These artists use new media technologies in relation to other forms— such as painting—to emphasize the ways in which new media is located in, and indeed, composed of, Indigenous material relationships (L’Hirondelle).

In the work of artist Jude Norris, Cree cosmology grounds relationships between animals and humans in a form specific to the Plains and the history of her people. “Affirm/Nation,” the title of Norris’ 2005 exhibition, suggests affirmative constitution of nations, both in settler colonial and Indigenous framings. The rhetorical device of
“affirmation,” suggests a specific sort of semantic or linguistic content as well as embodied practice. Norris’ practice brings two domains often considered separately, as in Anderson’s argument that language and media found the nation, together. This titular doubling recasts relationships between representation and embodied practice.

Norris organizes her exhibit in concentric circles. On the outer walls hang large rectangular paintings of vertical scars or slits. Each painting is a different color, and together they form the installation’s outer circle. The next innermost circle consists of caribou, deer, and moose antlers on which Norris has written textual affirmations as well as binary computing code. Among these antlers is a refashioned shopping cart, on the bottom of which rests a DVD player, and inside, an iPad screening bison lowing and grazing in a field. At the centre of the installation are four television screens, playing video of the artist beading on a continuous loop.

The outer paintings, which Norris calls the *Scar Series*, are teal, red, yellow/green, dark brown, and orange. Norris describes each scar painting in this way:

These are works on canvas in which the canvas itself is ‘wounded’ and then ‘healed.’ This is done by making cuts in the canvas and sewing them up with sinew stitching. The canvas is then painted, accentuating the resulting ‘scar,’ which is either left as a stark and simple central element, or embellished with carved sticks that pierce the canvas’s surface for the length of the sinew seam. These sticks are a recurring element of my sculptural work. They are small and carved so that both ends are pointed. In the scar wall pieces, the sticks can be read in a number of ways. They may represent elements of repair, security, trial, or adornment.

I first began carving these pointed sticks intuitively, and using them sculpturally—being almost compulsively drawn to them as processes and objects. I found out after some years of this that the practice of using very similar painted sticks as ceremonial offerings was once widespread in Cree territory, and still continues with some people today.

Piercing the canvas as they do, the sticks also look like the pegs used to seal the front surfaces of a tipi. These ‘scars’ may also be read as seams—helping create structures which provide shelter and/or safety. Spaced down the length of
the scar, they have also been said to resemble a backbone—perhaps another subconscious reference to safety and stability. (2)

These paintings convey a complex bundle of meanings, of homes, wounds, repairs, and Indigenous women’s bodies. They remind me of the words of an elder at Urban Shaman during the 2014 *Walking With Our Sisters* installation, a memorial to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This elder discussed the importance of wearing a floor-length skirt when entering ceremonial space or the lodge. She described how part of the skirt’s significance is that the woman’s body, thus adorned, is shaped as a tipi, representing her embodiment as a home for herself, her children, and the foundation and stability of her community’s thriving. Norris’ scars as sites of healing gain a resonance that speaks to the present moment of her community while also continuing ceremonial practices of offering. The positioning of the scars/sticks as an outer circle or enclosure for her installation further confirms a notion of tipi, home, or structure in which gendered activity plays out. Norris’ iconography also refers to the works of modernist painter Rothko and the pre-contact aesthetic traditions of Arapaho clothing (Norris 4). These two references combine painting, as an autonomous, masculine, freestanding object, with clothing, associated with embodied and feminine activity. Norris sets masculine and feminine energies in collaboration, creating a healing environment.

The next outermost circle of the installation, bounded by the *Scar Series* paintings, displays the animal content of the exhibit. Norris uses sculpture and screens as distinct media conveying this content. As sculptures, six antlers, both caribou and moose, painted, array the outer edges of the installation space resting on white display boxes. She has written repetitive affirmations on each antler in small print to completely cover their
surfaces, which are painted dark metallic grey, gold, red, white, and blue. Affirmations such as “I am brave. I will be braver,” “follow your instinct,” “I will survive,” and “make every step like a prayer” repeat, covering each antler completely. These sculptural animal components resonate with animal studies’ critique of an ontology that distinguishes proprietarily between humans and animals. Norris, in contrast to such a frame, writes, “I’ve approached the creation of this series as a collaboration with male individuals from the Deer, Moose, and Caribou Nations, whom I consider to be great artists.” She writes that “these animals may be seen as teachers—not just in their behavior, but in their ability to create objects that are not only superb tools, but are also aesthetically stunning” (8). She writes that she sees this collaboration as gendered male and female, bringing different gendered ways of being together across species towards healing.


Norris includes wall mounted, "coded" antlers, melding sculpture and screen, on
other iterations of this exhibit. Norris combines Plains Cree tipi pole teachings with her antler aesthetics, asserting the tipi teachings’ cultural values. She encodes these teachings in a radically innovative way. The antlers’ surfaces, similar to her affirmations, are covered with the teachings. These works translate each teaching into binary code, or computing language, the basic language of digital media. Norris, in a juxtaposing strategy, handwrites the code on the antlers. Binary code is both a computing language and used for divination in ancient Africa. Norris notes that she enjoys the “tribal” effect of the numbers when handwritten.

The first gesture here, towards computation, references the traditions of rationalism and logical empiricism that characterize computing epistemologies, emerging out of the same philosophical foundations as the settler state. Terry Winograd, philosopher of computer science, identifies an important consonance in the logic of computation with that of the rational liberal tradition overall. What he calls the “new patchwork rationalism” attempts to abstract and separate logic from the context of situated knowledge. This approach, obviously resonating with Tuhiwai Smith’s critique referenced above, reflects what Wingorad calls “the depersonalization of knowledge” (214). Winograd writes:

When a person views his or her job as the correct application of a set of rules (whether human-invoked or computer-based), there is a loss of personal responsibility or commitment. The _I just follow the rules_ of the bureaucratic clerk” reflects how the individual is not committed to appropriate results (as

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25 This work was exhibited at Woodland Cultural Centre at Six Nations, Ontario (2007), Grunt Gallery in Vancouver (2007), and Harcourt House in Edmonton, Alberta (2008).
Winograd regards this lack of responsibility as a pernicious outcome of patchwork rationality. In computing, the programmer who creates the “rules” has no direct relationship to the situations in which they will be used. The computer user similarly does not perceive any responsibility for the operations by which a computing system creates an “answer” or “solution” to their task. The set of relationships characterizing computation systems are fragmented, thus affirming the individualist and rationalist, decontextual thrusts of liberalism. This decontextualized and abstracted application of “procedures” further resonates with Norris’s treatment of “affirmations,” as the pat application of an “answer” to various challenges. She has also written of affirmation practices as a kind of degraded and commodified attempt at finding spiritual meaning (5). This one-size-fits-all stance reflects the abstractions with which settlers in Canada aim to replace Indigenous ways of knowing. Norris treats them in a decolonizing way. As she puts it, “[t]aking something so heavily associated with Western digital technology and (re)infusing it with an organic quality becomes an entwined act of wry/playful decolonization or ‘reverse appropriation’ with an emphasis on the relationship between nature and technology” (7). This ritual and contextual Cree practice makes these practices, paradoxically, local and situated knowledge. She positions them within an ecological understanding of the civic as that which includes animals and land.

Norris also uses digital technology (reliant on the very code languages discussed above) to portray bison through a reconfigured shopping cart called Buffalo Basket. The cart is freestanding on the left-hand side of the space. Norris has woven red willow
through the metal slats of the cart to create a basket. A DVD player sits on the bottom, and the top part, hide-domed, is fashioned to resemble both a carriage and, for the artist, a sweat lodge. For me the design also connotes both a baby carriage and a settler covered wagon. Inside the carriage/basket/wagon is a nest made of moss, in which she has placed a small screen streaming footage of bison grazing. Norris writes that *Buffalo Basket* was inspired by the phrase “the bison was the supermarket of the prairies” prior to settler colonization (3). The bison in shopping cart, in my view, elaborates both affective and material economies. First, the work conveys a notion of the biopolitical subject of Western modernity in terms of her constitution as consumer. Norris conveys the machinery of consumption. The shopping cart is literally part of that machinery at the supermarket. Norris also embeds the machinery of media consumption, screens, with the frame of the cart as a whole. This fashioning references the genealogy of settler colonialism in its “covered wagon” visual trope, perhaps also referencing Western films. All these threads come together in the *Buffalo Basket* shopping cart. The nested screen within the carriage, which displays bison and calves grazing, figures the embodied practice associated with these objects in terms of colonial domination and the alienation of Plains peoples from what were constitutive relationships with the bison. A more emancipatory reading emerges, however, when read in tandem with the centrepiece of the installation.


At the centre of the installation, a set of four video monitors faces outwards in a circle. The monitors sit on a circular table, and they are surrounded by a blue, beaded band, six metres long, that is supported by twigs, almost like a fence. Soil covers the surface of the table on which the sticks are propped. A repeating phrase on the beaded band reads, “The most beautiful things are now happening to us”—surrounding the screens like a mantra. In her artist statement Norris says, “the beaded English text forms a screen through which to read the oral culture on video. The beaded strips convey ‘no signal’ blue of TV screens,” perhaps functioning as impenetrability, or a non-representational quality. The video shows hands handling the beads: “the beaded screen divides the work into two spheres, inscribed with different languages. The blue screen [that is the] writing is easily penetrated.” The video installation reveals the process of artistic production and community reflections on these undertakings. Images in the video loop include hands fiddling with sewing kits, and mouths speaking about the value of Indigenous women’s practices. Norris’s installation, beyond creating an object for viewing, creates multiple ongoing space-times. Norris writes, “The very activities which produced the work being included as a real-time element of the same work creates a ‘reality loop’—at once actual and indicative of the circularity of things—especially, in this case, creativity” (4). This beading practice conveys women’s work, communicative acts, and community practices in constitutive formation with animals.
Norris’s surrounding animal iconography is one of the most significant aspects of her portrayal of recursive human activity in the centre of the exhibit. Freestanding painted caribou, deer and moose antlers, as described above, surround the main station of the installation. Inscriptions of repeated mantras cover the surface of the antler. The video of grazing buffalo, bulls, cows, and calves, in the carriage, from which the sound of lowing emanates, sits with a light streaming through a hole in the top of the hide dome. Ceremonial paintings of scars and slits, made of sticks, encircle these elements, creating synthesized discourses of healing, ceremony, femininity, sociality, animality, trauma and recovery.

Norris reframes media technologies in “Buffalo Basket.” They are not merely hegemonic, market-driven mediums. She does this through a specifically Cree and
gendered relationship to animals that clues viewers in on this re-articulation. The shopping cart is gendered female, part of the embodied practices of domestic economy and conveying a baby carriage, or women’s care work. The labour of shopping is also gendered under liberal capitalism, and this care work is diminished, or devalued compared to paid labour in the patriarchal “public sphere.” The hide-covered dome of the “carriage” conveys the labour of Plains women as members of their traditional communities, articulating an anti-capitalist continuity advanced through tradition. The use of code languages (rational, gendered masculine) to portray the buffalo on the screen again reconciles the binary of male and female codes, or representations, and practices.

Norris’s work reframes the theme of care as work in the gendered civic practices of Indigenous women. She enunciates continuity between animal-human relationality in Cree practices and Indigenous practices of civic ecology in contemporary urban spaces. Norris claims that this piece is “a remembering” of the relationships between her people and the bison in terms of material practices, but also a “strong spiritual connection” to the Buffalo nation. She writes, “[t]he piece remembers how even though we no longer rely on the bison to anywhere near the same degree for food and shelter, this spiritual connection is still strong and fundamental” (3). The figurative affirmation and the literal animal antler rely on each other for their meaning, and trouble binary distinctions between opposing Western epistemological categories. This work asserts Cree animality and rhetoric in both ceremonial and ecological relationship, decolonizing settler binaries of figurative and literal. As Norris writes:

I can start out covering the “indian world” in words, but at some point the words become part of the physical object or whatever they cover. They are
as much imbued with the energy and life of that thing as it is changed by the meaning of the words. (5)

Her method composes Cree ontology in city spaces, the exhibit as meeting place, as well as the media, shopping, and the creative spaces that the installation commingles. The composition records linguistic and interpersonal communication, including beaded and spoken affirmations, on beaded bands and audiovisual recordings. These more properly semantic components, all uttered or encoded by women or girls, signify Indigenous women’s traditional care work and creative production, such as beading. This show’s multimedia works bring together different actions, objects, and relationships that are major components of Indigenous civility on the plains over time. These elements include grazing buffalo, nests, shopping carts, beading and video screens.

Nadia Myre’s exhibit “The Want Ads and Other Scars” delineates some similar themes to “Affirm/Nation,” emphasizing the materiality of seemingly disembodied and discursive media forms. This exhibit does not emphasize new media in the ways the other works I discuss in this chapter do. Still, I discuss it because Myre’s work provides a context for the other new media artworks in this chapter, by revealing the Indigenous materiality of state discourses described by Anderson, who lays special emphasis on newspapers and print media. Myre updates her emphasis on print and a seemingly bygone public sphere through her street photography in this exhibit. Street photography, while a practice that has been ongoing for much of the twentieth century, takes on new significance as part of new media cultures today. Digital street photography composes the civic archive, in the work of visual culture scholars such as Ariella Azoulay, in a public
sphere that is digitally mediated. Myre stages this media genealogy from her Anishinaabe perspective.

The invite card design for Myre’s show is a diptych. The words “SPREAD EAGLE SEEKS GOOD WOLF ON FULL MOON” on one side resonate with the language of the newspaper want ad. The other side portrays a scar which, to my mind, easily suggests the word “slit” and thereby vaginas. These two juxtaposing images raise the gendered violence of settler framings of Indigenous women’s sexuality through the discourse of animality, in the specific context of national imaginaries pace Benedict Anderson, which the newspaper reference “Want Ads” overtly raises. The scars resonate visually with Norris’s scar paintings, and with her overall exhibit, which contains discursive forms within a boundary of scars conveying femininity, teepees, home, safety, and ceremony.

Myre’s exhibit displays many ads. Her ads cite the genre of newspaper personal advertisements. In doing so, I find the work signals the role of newspapers in the formation of the nation state. Advertising in newsprint reflects the ways that capitalism is imbricated in print media and the state. For Myre, desire or want also accrues in these discursive spaces, as per her title: “The Want Ads and Other Scars.” Many of the exhibited “ads” reference urban encounters, in transit or dwelling, across public and private spaces: “I SAW YOU ON THE BUS”; “I WANTED TO KNOW YOU”; “762-916 W. BROADWAY, V5Z 1K7, X”; and “SLEEPING BEAUTY LOOKING FOR VOYEUR.” Playful phrases accompany many of the scar paintings, which are coloured various tones of flesh. Myre stitches scars in her painted canvas. The exhibit explores what might be called language wounds or scars. The most evocative “ad” conveys desire, reversing the passive metaphor of “SPREAD EAGLE.” While lying on one’s back is often seen as a position of vulnerability, Myre’s grammar recodes the position as active. An eagle in active voice is predatory or even threatening, certainly majestic. Canada’s national parks protect eagles as endangered species, as part of a settler-sanctioned nature, in contrast to abject or bare habitance forms of nature. Myre reframes agency through “passivity” and “animality.” Similarly to Terril Calder’s figure in Repercussions in Chapter Three, she eschews liberal subjectivity in desiring and producing a voice. Myre situates the animal of her phrase in a number of ways.
This particular phrase touches on “the domain of animality whose complicated sociocultural history is deeply rooted in colonialism, slavery, and sexism” (Glenney-Boggs 33), where “animality” figuratively creates literal socio-political locations for individuals. Settler discourses of animality framed Indigenous peoples, opposite the human, to structure colonial civility on the basis of legislating these distinctions (51). Western hegemonic terms understand Indigenous peoples as anathema to cities, civil society, and “human” rights. Agamben’s notion of “abandonment” is useful here only in understanding the framings of Indigenous women and girls as not only bare habitance but also opposite the human through animal connotations. I associate Myre’s treatment of these themes with missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The “want ad” we’ve been discussing, for settler critic Stacey Abramson, makes reference to Vancouver’s Lower East Side neighbourhood, where Myre was living when she created these works. This area was home to many of Robert Pickton’s victims, many of whom were Indigenous women. Myre’s treatment of Indigenous women’s sexuality and the national imaginary, particularly in the reference to newspapers, underscores how, as Carrie Rohman writes, “The coherence of the imperialist subject often rests on the abjecting of animality” (69). Myre uses animality to articulate an empowered interests-bearing subject within the rhetoric of print media or settler nation states, thereby

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26 Robert Pickton was a serial killer of women in British Columbia and is now serving life in prison. Many of his victims were Indigenous women from Vancouver’s Lower East Side. A Commission of Inquiry on Missing Women found that the Vancouver police and RCMP severely bungled the investigation of ongoing disappearances of women from this area over the course of many years. These women often were Pickton’s victims. The Commission found that institutional racism and sexism were prevalent causes for the lack of commitment to finding these women and bringing their killer to justice. For more on these cases and their structural relationship to numerous other missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada, see Métis filmmaker and scholar Christine Welsh’s documentary film Finding Dawn (2006).
frustrating the misogynist binaries of racist settler-colonial modernity.

Myre brings the bifurcated discourses of animality and print media together in a gender-specific decolonizing way. Her conflation merges the domains of the corporeal and the representational. Myre conflates scars, on the surface of the body, or in this case the painting, and text in the newspaper through animal metaphor. She resignifies the figurative language of settler colonialism and critiques its material effects. She gestures at the same time towards invisible animals, or the memorial or testimonial function of a scar, as a bite for example. Just because we can’t see an animal doesn’t mean that it wasn’t there. Scars can gesture towards animal presence that is otherwise invisible. This is key to Myre’s treatment of her themes in the visual register. The scar, as a now-stronger boundary between inside-and-outside, a firmer skin that testifies to now invisible harm, marks communal acts of witnessing Indigenous histories in cities. This stance ratifies what settler critic David Gaertner argues is “the decolonizing potential of a witnessing that is contingent on community, rather than the possessive individualism of the Western ‘eye witness’.” Myre explores how relationships to animals unsettle settler cities making way for Indigenized civic formations. Many of the works in “The Want Ads and Other Scars” reflect a graffiti-like style in cities. Myre spray-stencils the words “SPREAD EAGLE” on the sidewalk, photographs it, and includes the image in the exhibit. Myre’s semantics of civility engages sexualized animal bodies and indigenizes them as ongoing Anishinaabe articulations.
Myre raises, with Norris, the disjuncture of figurative and literal and the complicated commingling of agencies therein. *Hover, Baby, Hover,* another work from the “Want Ads” show, suggests a perpetrator hovering over a victim on the sidewalk, or perhaps spectators gawking at or over the bodies or discourses of sexually brutalized women. The painting’s materiality suggests a literal wound, emphatically corporeal. The work’s title, inviting the gaze, interpellating viewers, draws attention to what Abramson calls the “mess” of “breaking skin” and “wrapping of gauze for protection.” This work, in conversation with the other works in the exhibit, suggests the healing or protective quality of language or text that can protect, as well as a fresh wound not yet healed. Myre’s authorship of this work troubles the idea that the open wound is Indigenous women’s social location in Canadian nationalism, and how it plays out in cities, on sidewalks, in the newspaper, on bodies. As a viewer, I think perhaps my consciousness has become “an open wound,” with the possibility of healing held out as a potential to be realized in the future. For me, this painting, along with the other scars, arouses discomfort.
that remains unresolved and in sophisticated tension with the sexualized and animalized “Want Ads.”


Also in this exhibition, Myre showed *The Scar Project*, for which she worked with community participants in many cities to produce scars with sewing on material. The sewing was a way to work through their own scars. Myre draws on translocal Indigenous citizenship practices of scarring and sewing, which resonates with women’s beading in Norris. Walls of scars surround animals, languages of affirmation, feminine city practices and creative work in both Norris and Myre. These scars are protective.
Myre’s ecological framing, like Norris’, unsettles liberal civility’s established ontology and articulates Indigenous civic ecology. Collaboration with animals as well as embodying animality in paradoxical emancipation convey ecological formations in the city. Both women artists translate city environments, gendered communication, and “pat” or clichéd language: that of personal advertising and that of the affirmation. Both point out how these are embroiled in the nation-state form. Myre’s register emanates outwards, towards “the stranger,” connoting the city in modernity through the modality of the visual. Norris’s phrases are often directed inwardly, as a part of personal practice, gesturing to a neoliberal milieu of self-control of –responsibility for individual wellbeing. Her phrases, set in the context of women’s work—both care work and creative labour—emphasize the relational quality of the Indigenous women’ selves in their nation (“The most beautiful things are happening to my people right now”). She encircles and entrenches, by collaborating with caribou, moose, and buffalo, continuous traditions of gendered labor within relationships with other animals and lands. The textual enunciation in Myre, more obviously part of civil society tradition in liberal understandings, interestingly renders the animal invisible, though the hegemonic gendering in part through animality, of Indigenous women is at the fore. Making the invisibility of animals visible in what, at first, looks like a cheeky participation in straightforward capitalist public sphere is a powerful paradox. Myre surrounds this discursive work with scars making the juxtaposing power even stronger. The imprint or “presence” of the animal-human relationship is there, even as it is absent, as with a scar from a dog bite years ago. Myre combines the extreme gendered violence of liberal discourses of animality with the empowering alignment of animal agencies with feminine desire. She registers these
themes through photography, text, and painting. These two artists, then, powerfully stake their claims for the continuity and genealogy of Indigenous women’s nationhood in new media formats that reframe that foremost site of modernity: the city.

4.4 Resurgent Animals on the Land: Bennett and Calder New Media Memories

In 4.3 I discuss how artists Norris and Myre compose resurgent animal-human relationalities in their new media works, while I did not focus explicitly on the land as the basis for these relationships in cities. While Norris and Myre’s works take up settler media codes, such as those of computing and newspapers, in terms of Indigenous-animal relationalities in cities, neither artist fleshes out the material dimensions of settler law pertaining to Indigenous relationships with land. In 4.4 I consider the work of Bennett and Calder, setting these in conversation with settler discourses specifically relating to Indigenous presence on and in relation to the land. Bennett’s “Skull Stories” exhibit conveys a trans-species archive remembering land-based relationships. Calder’s film work *The “Gift”* screens an Indigenous woman’s death, out from whose figure the ghosts of bison stream, running across the plain. Both artists’ powerful confluence of community, animal, and land, against the genocidal force of settler understandings and practices as these are carried out in law, resurges and remembers the full ecological materiality of Indigenous nationhood. These media artists’ works extend beyond and resurge against Euro-American theories of biopolitics, animal studies, and new materialism. Their Indigenous new media frameworks for understanding settler oppression and Indigenous collectivity on the land posit non-liberal communal and trans-species memories, traditional relationships with animals, and particular lands as Indigenous through these relationships, against the settler policies applied towards them.
Mi’kmaq artist Jordan Bennett, in his 2008 exhibit at Urban Shaman, “Skull Stories,” also stages practice of Indigenous civic ecology through animals, technology, and land, revisioning an Indigenous translocal genealogy that remembers land-based relationships. Bennett writes about the work:

This work is a sculptural, sound, and video installation that explores the idea of tapping into the memories, spirit, and history of a once animate creature. The work consists of a series of cast animal skulls, and each skull has a planted USB drive where the spinal cord was once attached. The videos for the piece portray key moments in the animal’s past, snippets of video and sound that will imitate moments from the perspective of the animal. The work plays on the ideas of tapping into the animals’ memories, their energy and their connections to our ancestors. The work comes from thinking about our connections and “Link” to the past and although it may seem as though these animals did not influence us directly as we now have access to mass produced consumables, they indirectly aided in allowing us to be where we are today as our ancestors depended deeply on these animals to give their lives so they could have nourishment to carry on another day. (2012)
Bennett draws upon animal perspectives, memories and energy in this work. His projected video shows animal memories of hunting, foraging, and resting on the land. The work treats trans-species perception as knowing subject in Indigenous social and political community. Visitors to the exhibit connect with animals by plugging the USB key into their skull, accessing their memories. His installation counters settler ideology by reframing the civic archive as trans-species. “Skull Stories” presents the question, “What happens to the animal voice when it finds expression through human representation?” (Glenney-Boggs 164). The work is an example of identities and communities developing through trans-species communication, where bonds with animals articulate Mi'kmaq genealogies.

This bond raises important differences between Western and Indigenous forms of
witnessing as they concern the law of the land. These differences bear on what counts as meaningful history in a visual register. These meanings pertain to how the community defines itself. Settler critic David Gaertner writes, after consulting legal archives in Canada, that “a Western definition of “witness” is [dependent on] “line of sight,” which connects the subject to the event. In a Canadian court of law, “[a]ny evidence that is offered by a witness of which they do not have direct knowledge” cannot testify to “the truth of what was contained therein.” Such a view conceives of event as that for which a witness must have visual confirmation. He writes, “Once sight has been established, then, and only then, can testimony be balanced inside the binary of true and false.” Bennett’s outlook completely contradicts this idea, visualizing animal memory and eschewing the notion of “direct” human-based knowledge in defining land and nation. Instead, he focuses on trans-special collective knowledge of the land.

This work also interrupts settler teleologies of individual human development vis-à-vis animals. Liberal pedagogy has figured animals as central to teaching individuals to be “the good liberal subject” by showing animals’ “kindness” and “tolerance.” This attitude towards animals viscerally inflects a liberal policy of “recognition” in Canada, one that centers white settler subjectivity (Coulthard). The pairing of “good affects” and real violence in animal/human relationalities also resonates with those of settler/Indigenous structures of feeling and material effects. As Glenney-Boggs writes, animals elicit dramatically positive affective responses, while at the same time, Western civilization undertakes overwhelmingly intense, systematic violence

27 John Locke’s foundational liberal writings on pedagogy advocated the use of animals to teach children correct empathy and attitudes of care. See Glenney-Boggs, *Animalis Americana*. 

towards them …[this] iconography links colonialism and neoliberalism through strategies of infantilization and depiction of children and animals as subjects in the making.” (145)

A liberal perspective infantilizes animal-human relationships, as though children learn to be good to other people by interacting with animals as children, in a preliminary stage to the full personhood of rights and responsibilities in a political community that includes only human beings, distinctly separate from an overall ecology or animals for that matter. Bennett, against this disingenuous framing of benevolent tolerance, presents ecological origins of Mi'kmaq nationhood, unsettling the constructions of civility organized by settler biopower. The work articulates a trans-species civic body. Loosening the borders between animal and Mi'kmaq collectivity is an important way to think about inheritance other than through individual or private property. Calder’s short film *The “Gift”* theorizes Métis communal inheritances as they relate to land-based animal-human relationalities, in direct confrontation with genocidal settler policy.

Urban Shaman screened *The “Gift”* in Winnipeg in March 2012 as part of the "Reflecting Lives: New Works from Aboriginal Women" program at Cinematheque, hosted by Urban Shaman and Winnipeg Film Group. Calder’s title, in colonial script, frames our encounter as spectators with the staging that follows. The title shot’s background is a snowy screen reminiscent of a television with no signal, as though to highlight opacity, and distortion of a visual field reflexively within the purview of televisual media and mass-culture spectatorship. Calder locates her narrative within a decidedly contemporary form of visibility, and perhaps thus far a space of “bad reception.” This site of bad reception mirrors Norris’ blue “no-reception” bead screen.
The reception improves following the title screen when a marionette-puppet figure in a prairie landscape becomes clearly visible. The transition between shots blurs, like the gaze of someone with a fever. The figure, a Métis woman, sits in the grass with a Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) blanket.

_The “Gift”_ focuses on the “gift” of the HBC blanket from settler to Indigenous peoples in the eighteenth century, and the familial context of desire, emotion, economics, and betrayal in Métis society. The Métis involvement with the fur trade involves the trade of blankets and other goods for furs, while the blanket represented a kind of currency value through the number and colour of stripes, or “points” on the blanket itself. The HBC store in Winnipeg testifies to this history. Today it sells numerous items reminiscent of the original blankets, including jackets, scarves and a replica striped blanket. The mnemonic subordination of the object to Canadian capitalist nationalism testifies to the persistence of colonial visions of nation and value persisting within hegemonic settler imaginaries in the city. The blanket, and its histories, look very different in Calder’s work. An additional perspective is one held by Steven Loft. In a 2012 interview posted on Youtube, Loft is pictured standing beside the Bay building in a Bay blanket jacket, outside of a display of objects in the same theme. He describes artists’ work taking up the blanket, and suggests that the object testifies to the strength of Native peoples, gesturing towards the multivalence of the object as a component of the civic archive. Calder’s figure performs a historically inflected identity in _The “Gift”_ with the multivalent object, which also, to Calder, signifies her perception that intentional transfer of small pox-infested blankets was a method of extermination in the political struggles between the settlers and the Indigenous nations for the land.
In her description of this work for VTape, its distributor, Calder writes:

Our history reads like a moth eaten quilt with gaping holes where complete tribes have been erased. Oral history needs elders to pass on our traditions and stories. Astonishing numbers of our people, young and old, were infected and died by European diseases. This act of chemical warfare was just that, warfare. Is it noble to impale your foe with a sharpened flag pole bearing a white banner? The means of spreading the disease is the predominant symbol in this animated short. The woolen blanket represents all of the broken promises that are interwoven in our history. The deceptions run so deep that we still see evidence of it to this very day. It represents the abandoned native “Country Wife” used for her gifts and knowledge of the land. Her white husband like the blanket held promises of security, novelty, warmth and protection. Almost all of these early “marriages” were only to provide comfort to the European male who would later reunite with his European wife, taking with him the skills taught to him, leaving behind his
children and the mother disconnected from their people. Understanding the underhanded nature of the “gifts” explains a historical distrust. Reading a log kept at the HBC fort would lead you to believe that our people hounded those men for food and relied on the company for provisions. Given that our people were completely self-sufficient prior to the arrival of the company, this makes no sense unless our own hunters had fallen sick putting our people in a desperate situation. The repercussions of this truth must be taken into account when looking back at history. The depleted population of the tribes had a huge impact on decisions being made at that time. Understanding this betrayal is an excellent illustration to help make sense of where we are now and what we need to do in future. The denial of the “Small Pox Blankets” use does nothing more than to fortify the deception and makes it the gift that keeps on giving.

Calder’s figure stands in the plain with the wind blowing the grass all around her. In the foreground, the moving grass casts a lengthy shadow over the fields behind. Calder denaturalizes the landscape as the clouds and grass move in fast-motion, signaling multiple temporalities. I imagine the intimacy between this woman and an HBC trader, who abandoned her, and her impending death. I am also aware of the contemporary timeframe of the video work, my own spatial and temporal location as a settler spectator, and that of the televisual broadly, signaling a new stage of imperial globalization. The land is constant in all of these domains, as the grass shimmers, lively and animate, in the foreground of the screened scene. Calder introduces the figure who stands, then unfolds a blanket on the ground and wraps it around herself. The camera zooms in as she does, to focus on the blanket in close proximity. She faces the camera and her eyes gaze out at
viewers. She stands in the centre of the screen, and then the scene cuts briefly to a handwritten letter, which reads in the distorted voice of a colonial officer. Calder has distorted the voice like the voice of a confessor or informant on a TV crime show, when their identity is hidden or protected. The voice, quite difficult to hear, describes to an unnamed interlocutor the practice of disseminating smallpox infested blankets, with the aim to “extirpate,” that is “to root out and destroy completely.”

Figure 45. Terril Calder. The “Gift”. Film still. 2011. Courtesy of the artist.

The woman, wrapped in the blanket, turns from our gaze and from behind her emanate the ghosts of bison, while this voice speaks. The bison, both the cosmological ground of Indigenous life in the area as well as its economy, whom Norris relates to in “Affirm/Nation,” flee across the grass as ghosted figures in an empty landscape, emanating out from behind the woman’s figure. They are shadows like those cast by the grass on the plain, figuring an ontological ground as ecological archive. Now a heartbeat
begins to pound as the voice continues to whisper, and with each beat it grows louder. The scene becomes blurred for the viewer, like a fever, and then comes back into focus. Then, the figure turns to face viewers again. The letter, which interrupts this mise-en-scène, ends on the words “that vermin,” figuring Indigenous peoples as animals to be exterminated in the eyes of settlers. The shot fades out onto the face of the woman, as Calder’s camera focuses on her eyes gazing out from between the blanket wrapped around her head and body. Then, she turns away a final time, and the camera focuses on the surface of the blanket once more. Her head drops down and the video fades to black.

Figure 46. Terril Calder. *The “Gift”.* 2011. Film still. Courtesy of the artist.

On the diegetic level this video work ostensibly stages an Indigenous woman’s murder via the “gift” of imperialists, imbricating visibilities that signal the material, imaginative, and affective genealogies associated with the land, its histories, and the contemporary production of these visibilities through audiovisual technologies. The work
is not a simple portrayal of the past. Temporal splitting occurs in numerous moments of the diegesis, thus Calder avoids locating the gift within a linear history. I see the violence extending beyond the figure that is the focal point of my gaze, through Calder’s self-reflexive use of televisual audio-visual cues. The sound of a beating heart accelerating and growing louder through the end of the video also fails to locate solely in the woman’s figure. I imagine fever and contagion emanating beyond her terrible ending. What kind of fever? What kind of contagion transmits from the figure to the viewer? Calder’s work stages an ontological rupture in the splitting between at least two temporalities, in terms of the visibility of civic genealogies and shared histories. I suggest the fever is a gift of capture, within the constant of Indigenous land. I understand the fever capture as what Brian Massumi calls an affective abduction towards reimagining and reconfiguring the interactions of the past in the present, and confronting “the odd temporality of a lost but now recovered intention from the past” (Harootunian 50). When we spoke about this work Calder reflected to me:

the idea of contagion, for me, connects to biological warfare—that people are saying would never have happened…I’ve read a lot of company logs, and you have to know that the people were desperate because of disease—their storytellers, their children, the way the tribe functions, all of this is lost.

(Interview 14 May 2013)

As “a history of dissonant rhythms,” Calder’s decolonizing lens articulates a “continuing and never completed conjuration of the past in the present” (Harootunian 52) wherein she restages capture so that fever can function as a life-giving force, burning out the residues of a civic sickness, founded in genocide, towards new forms of collective ecological life.
The work’s treatment of the HBC blanket, animate plains grasses, and the ghost bison, highlights the structures of identification that pertain to these archival genealogies. Calder’s experimental video work *The “Gift”* articulates a different vision of land-based relationalities from that of the settler archive and the citizenship forms that it entails.

![Figure 47. Terril Calder. *The “Gift”.* 2011. Film still. Courtesy of the artist.](image)

The work begins its treatment of citizenship with self-reflexive archival footage that temporally locates the work as twentieth century, like a Western archival document. Archival footage is ambivalently situated between public and private viewing spaces, as archival footage such as this was screened in theatres as well as televisually in living rooms or basements. Sources such as the National Film Board of Canada also distributed these archival reels. Calder’s visual reference signals nation-state audiovisual production and archive prior to the ever-more-totalizing dominance of globalized capital. The fluidity of the archives’ significance between audiovisual capitalism and nation-state domination exposes how a liberal private-property regime undergirds both. Calder notes that she “plays around the filters so it looks like 70s footage, not adhering to one aesthetic
but kind of jumping around looking at the same issue from different times, just to give
the viewer kind of a different lens to see the same issue” (Interview 14 May 2013).
Calder’s work suggests a feverish burning out of the spatialized, yet temporally-based,
colonial archive. This archive, lived in both public and private spaces, is ontologically
unstable, as Derrida suggests in his theory, archive fever. For Derrida, this:

name [archive] apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle
according to nature or history, there where things commence—physical,
historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle according to the law,
there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are
exercised, in this place from which order is given-nomological principle. There,
we said, and in this place. How are we to think of there? And this taking place or
this having a place, this taking the place one has of the arkhe. (9)

Calder’s theorization flips Derrida’s point of view on the origins of place in archive,
where it occurs in the temporal relationship produced between the human psyche and
archival technologies of recording. As I described in Chapter Two, Indigenous theories
emphasize the land, not the processes of time, on which settler theories predominantly
rely. Calder’s theorization is responsive to Derrida and later theorists that emphasis
technology and media, such as Steigler. She looks at the superficiality of these
predominantly temporal archival approaches in terms of technology, while centering their
genocidal intent. The inscription, written on paper, contrasts with and does not occupy
the same frame as the woman, buffalo, or the land. The colonial archive attempts to write
over, but cannot ultimately replace or erase the bodies of Indigenous women, their land,
or the animal nations through settler place making activity. Calder’s works reasserts
relational ecological origins that do not refer to the textual place where “things commence,” where authority and social order is exercised, the “taking place” of the arkhe. “Taking place” is an important aspect of translocal Native citizenship in the sense of retaking spaces. The land has autonomy; it is not for the taking as a human-centric view of “place” implies. The artist discusses this archive in terms of the affective investments in her home community through The “Gift,” staging the libidinal ecology of Métis fur-trade society in Fort Francis, deeply resonant in Manitoba. Calder suggests that as a nation we are very confused, and it is really an issue of family. Calder explains:

There’s a lot of resentment—I grew up in Fort Francis and not many people leave. Métis have been there for a hundred years. I see our histories as, in part, heirlooms of issue and resentment. It is an issue of family betrayal because the women (Métis) used to adorn themselves in Tartan blankets, to signify they belong to a white man. Then they were betrayed by their husbands. Very few mixed families went on to have children and settle. For example in my family, the original Calder went back to Scotland and we were all raised by Native women. So there is betrayal, the disease, the blanket, all in the mixing of the two communities. The anger or resentment is like inheritance; we all feel like we got the bad deal. (Interview 14 May 2013)

Heirlooms of issue and resentment suggest that structures of feeling within community become materialized in the psychic and collective becoming of the group. This work moves towards an ontological transformation of archive in order to revise the law and points of origin, showing the superficiality of settlers. Insofar as space signifies a discursive-relational production or reception of knowledge, a spatialization of the time
made through mnemnotechnical composition, the production of space in Calder’s work deconstructs settler epistemic boundaries around these affective genealogies, asserting land-based Indigenous ones instead.

Calder’s work conveys “heirlooms of issue or resentment” within a larger context coalescing varying structures of feeling, those of her home community, those of her viewers, etc., in urban sites of reception such as Winnipeg. This work’s screening is a practice of translocal Indigenous citizenship through media technologies, through the centering of emotions and relationships. Calder articulates the ways in which these stakes are embroiled in the mediatized context of civil society, reframing the issues to produce a decolonized enunciation. Calder writes:

I start working in a larger scale to consume the viewer or overpower them. This film taught me that this medium is just not moving images it is truly submersive it behaves more like a journey. I like to use "low-fi" effects like neo-German expressionist theater, to show my means by pulling people out the illusion, to break the cinematic veneer. Perhaps it is a space that exists beyond our tangible realm. (Interview 15 May 2015)

Unlike German expressionism, the aesthetic theory of which relies on a responsive liberal hermeneutic agent as viewer, the “gift” of archive fever implies affective contagion as a rupture in relation to citizenship in an industrial audiovisual context, through a process ecologically, as opposed to humanistically, distributed. The contagion through which, as in music, I enter into a stream of affective cognition inaugurated by the pounding heartbeat, the perpetrator’s voice, is similar to infection by an organism, where combat for life takes place. This response of contagion and abduction as opposed to liberal
agency connotes accessing a part of the self that is unconstrained by volition. Force surfaces in response to Calder’s work reflecting the power and strength of what she discussed with me as “a change happening with the youth—reflected in the electro-powwow of indigenous DJ collective Tribe Called Red, headed by DJ Bear Witness, whom Calder sees as “great cultural ambassadors for change” (Interview 15 May 2013). Contagion as the music and the affects that it raises has a life of its own; it impacts me in ways I do not control. This condition of contagion differentially bears across settler and Indigenous civil society, times and places, making land-based connections across time, spreading tremulously like an audiovisual infection, offering a fascinating treatment of “gift” economies by drawing upon the power of affective force. Within contemporary Indigenous worldviews, the gift functions as a “system for creating and maintaining communities, extending beyond interpersonal relationships to all my relations” (Kuokkanen 2). Calder’s work exemplifies archive as an Indigenous cultural asset, praxis-based, and relational with animals and then land, as opposed to private property. It reframes the visual as relational with land and animal agencies, rather than centred in the sight of the individual. Calder’s Indigenous new media processes are gifts for existent civic grammars, expressive and productive of collective Indigenous resurgence.

Conclusion

The new media art exhibits and video I discuss in this chapter concern relationalities composing Indigenous civic ecology. Artists’ understandings include citizenship: their formations, while consonant with the work of Ramirez, exceed human-focused paradigms and expose the logic of private property, emanating from the humanist self, inherent in component parts of settler hegemonies including art historical new
materialism. The artists’ works also exceed the vectors of biopolitics, animal studies, and settler colonial studies because they centre Indigenous knowledge. The new media works in this chapter reveal the shortcomings of all of these discourses as they variously retain the very liberal humanist understandings they purport to critique. Norris, in “Affirm/Nation,” mobilizes televisiual, digital, and computing screens and codes, almost as a genealogy of screens, to emphasize self-determined relational Cree nationhood, despite near extinction of the buffalo on the plains and the capitalist territorial possession of the same ground. She locates these technologies within an overarching Cree installation of manifold formats. For Myre, digital photography of animal metaphors sprayed on city sidewalks speak the invisible violence against Indigenous women in the mediated public sphere, as women are figured as inadequate “individuals” available for the kinds of abject domination that settler regimes impose on insufficient “persons.” Bennett’s animal memories, transferred by USB spinal cord, form part of the Mi’kmaq nation’s history, opposing their silencing through settler norms, and offering perspectives towards renewing understandings of the land and shared histories. Calder’s film figures the land as a living being remembering both the bison herds and the people that were lost. These artists’ exhibits concern relationalities composing Indigenous civic ecology, translating liberal settler civility, and decolonizing settler theories of urban ecology.

The works also resonate with the work of theorists such as Jane Bennett, who use new materialist philosophies to explore ecological valences in contemporary art. While these philosophies mirror in some ways the Indigenous traditions of materiality that I discuss here, it is important to distinguish between settler theories, that respond to
questions and problems defined by settler interests, and Indigenous realities that emerge out of distinct sovereign contexts. As one example, the question of “interests” emerges in Bennett’s ecological theory in ways substantially different from notions of value and motivation in the four exhibits in this chapter. Norris and Myre ironically reframe the actions of the so-called “interest-bearing subjects” in civil society by playfully teasing out the continuity of Indigenous women’s traditions and desires, within what are resolutely contexts of modernity—the supermarket, the city sidewalk, the newspaper, the screen. These artists articulate Indigenous visions of media ecology. Bennett and Calder use screen technologies, and draw upon reformulating visual traditions, such as the archival film, to communicate memory that belongs to animal and land, defamiliarized from the interests of the so-called subject.

Norris and Myre emphasize continuous relationships with the natural world, with new media, as fundamentally collaborative and specific to their sovereign nations. They draw upon various aspects of their life worlds in visions claiming upon specific histories intersecting and critiquing, but not flowing from, Euro-American traditions. These artists’ visions of belonging compose through ecological relationalities in contemporary cities in Canada. They convey insights that exceed critiques of biopower and liberalism. Norris, in “Affirm/Nation,” emphasizes the near extinction of the buffalo on the plains and the capitalist territorial possession of the same ground. Myre’s animal metaphors sprayed on city sidewalks speak the invisible violence against Indigenous women, while her want ads announce desire from a place that renegotiates passivity/activity, animal/human, male/female, and public/private from a powerful and elegant Anishinaabe aesthetic voice. These formulations are vectors of Cree and Anishnaabe relationalities. Their translations
radiate rigorous translocal praxis throughout numerous domains: material, aesthetic, and intellectual.

Bennett and Calder delineate a trans-species media archive. Bennett’s new media exhibit and Calder’s film ecologically assert Indigenous relational animacy against the primacy of the human. Each artist shows the violence as well as the superficiality of Western concepts of witness and archive, as well as decolonizing the ways in which visual media functions in the production of legal truths. Bennett’s work lays bare the Eurocentric bias of the eye-witness, relying on animal memories to understand the land’s past and present. For Bennett, vision is trans-species. Calder, alternatively, highlights the land as knower who remembers the bison and the people. Every flick of the grass resonates with the movement of ghosts streaming across, as though in the wind. Calder asserts the land as archival knower. While the Western text-based origins of the violence her film portrays does exist in relation to the land, it cannot paper over it: these textual origins are just that, paper. Unlike the Western expressionist sets, self-reflexive, to which Calder’s work refers, her ground is alive, and its screening through the archival film preface restages what national film traditions mean when the land is the emphasis, and not time, or media, as the human-centred foundations for memory.

In Chapter Five, I discuss exhibits of Indigenous artists Jason Baerg, Rebecca Belmore, and Scott Benesiinaabandan. These exhibits respond to globalization through artistic methodologies including traditions and conceptual frameworks in Anishnaabe, Cree, and Métis cosmologies. In this chapter, I focus on the entwined aesthetics of media abstractions and blood memory in these artists’ works, and the ways in which the works maintain these longstanding epistemologies and values. Anishinaabe artists Belmore and
Benesiinaabandan and Cree/Métis artist Baerg use a confluence of aesthetic forms to assert what Baerg calls “travelling traditional knowledge” in the contexts of their specific works and exhibits on a global scale. In 5.1, I describe the concept of media abstraction by centering Indigenous knowledge, particularly the lens of Indigenous blood memory (Mithlo; Benesiinaabandan; Linklater). In 5.2, I discuss how settlers including settler artists have and continue to appropriate and mobilize these foundations, and how these appropriations coalesce with media histories in North America. I analyze how the discipline of cultural studies considers abstraction as a facet of globalization (Appadurai) (Canclini). The artists in this chapter show that, contrary to these theoretical framings, contemporary abstraction is not the sole provenance of Euro-American modernists and media following global capitalism. In 5.3 I consider how artist Jason Baerg enunciate Indigenous contexts on a global scale through “travelling traditional knowledge.” In 5.4, I discuss Benesiinaabandan and Belmore’s techniques to reclaim media abstraction through arts practices bearing forth contemporary Indigenous blood memory.

There is power in the blood
--Buffy Sainte Marie

In Chapter Five Indigenous new media arts produce abstractions to convey blood memories of globalization. In doing so, artists consider Winnipeg’s “grounded normativity,” and its relationships with other cities, within a global citizenship frame.

While Chapter Four affirms translocal Indigenous citizenship in materialist ontologies in cities, Chapter Five’s artists advance Indigenous concepts of global citizenship that reject the abstract universality of mainstream cosmopolitanism, as in the UN declaration of human rights, where “human” is figured as a singular universal form (UN Declaration). The artists bring global citizenship within Indigenous traditions of blood and abstraction as a differentially weighted triangulation of forms not often associated together. Artists use new media as one language of global citizenship, drawing upon global social literacies, such as computation and video. These artists, against the discourse of globalization as cosmopolitan citizenship and rights, against abstraction as universal, reclaim abstraction as fundamental and particular to Indigenous communicative agency, while figuring this agency within Indigenous histories of blood memory.

Chapter Five discusses how Indigenous artists Jason Baerg, Rebecca Belmore, and Scott Benesiinaabandan respond to globalization through longstanding Anishinaabe, Cree, and Métis practices of abstraction. Section 5.1 focuses on how principles of abstraction and blood memory maintain epistemologies and values. I consider the work of Indigenous elders, artists, and art historians, all of whom assert abstraction, within Indigenous blood memory, as communicative agency (Mithlo “Blood Memory”; Benesiinaabandan; Linklater). Section 5.2 expands the purview of this discussion with
cultural studies paradigms considering globalization through mainstream patterns of abstraction. I interrogate lenses that apply to abstraction in contemporary art from perspectives that centre Euro-American histories, while I approach these histories through the lens of Indigenous contemporary art and critical theory. In section 5.3 I discuss how Jason Baerg’s new media art reclaims abstraction in material relationships with urban Indigenous communities through video, lightboxes, screens, and code. Additionally, I relay Baerg’s perspective on how his paintings contextualize his new media practices. His works, tracking his experiences in specific cities around the world, highlight relational abstraction on a global scale within his Indigenous traditions and memories as well as those of the communities with whom he works. Baerg’s exhibitions for Urban Shaman, “The Plain Truth: RYWB” (2008), “Returning,” and “Relations” (2014), through digital, sculptural, new media, and painted means, embody traditional Cree practices, making global connections. Baerg abstracts his Cree and Métis cosmologies in new media artworks. His art conveys his stance opposing global capital by connecting histories of abstraction in economics and mainstream art history. Baerg’s composition of “The Plain Truth: RYWB,” “Returning,” and “Relations,” as well as his related “Urban Footprints” series, reflect geopolitics through abstraction.

In section 5.4, Belmore and Benesiinaabandan posit blood memory as a way of relating, conveying what Baerg calls “travelling traditional knowledge” about Indigenous priorities within geopolitical contexts. Belmore’s The Indian Factory, blood in the snow, and Fountain, and Benesiinaabandan’s “Psychic Histories/Blood Memories” series rely on blood history and memory in installation, video, and computing arts. Belmore and Benesiinaabandan practice abstraction and blood memory in art as ways of relating.
Euro-Americans, conversely, employ abstraction and blood as methods of separating and
disembedding, while conveying these forms as universal as in abstract universal rights.
Belmore and Benesiinaabandan stages what Linklater and Mithlo call Indigenous blood
gamesthey and memory, connecting blood’s figuration as an abstract universal of Western
humanity to forms of visuality consonant with processes of resource exploitation and
settler genocide of Indigenous peoples. Their conceptual treatment of blood reveals the
material and imaginative violence of Western genealogies of abstraction. Mainstream
liberal Euro-American thought and polities centre universality as a condition of the
human, erasing Indigenous specificity and disenfranchisement, and unfettering capitalist

Jason Baerg inspired my interest in Indigenous abstraction in new media art in
2014. I was attracted to his artistic method which we have discussed at length on
numerous occasions. I would describe Baerg’s work as community expression from the
ground up using media art technology, especially programming code. That same year, I
began a conversation with Scott Benesiinaabandan about his work “Psychic
Histories/Blood Memories (2014), an intensely abstract immersive media installation.
Benesiinaabandan and I have co-presented on this work in 2014. This work, like Baerg’s
“Relations” series (2014), uses new Indigenized programming code to visually capture
what is in its environment. The code in each work creates visualizations on screens: in
Baerg, the code creates digital portraits of individual sitters, while in Benesiinaabandan’s
installation, the code captures everything that was ever in the space, visible though no
longer in its original form. The program in each work records and remembers in animate
relationship with visitors to the space. I began to consider blood an important theme
through Benesiinaabandan’s emphasis.

My sense of the keywords blood and abstraction in Indigenous art globally strengthened during conversations before my panel with Benesiinaabandan at Congress 2014. My friend and colleague from the University of Sao Paulo, Jamille Pinheiro Dias, also on our panel, shared news media images of Indigenous activists in Sao Paulo, who threw “blood” upon public monuments to settlement. This led me to consider the work of Rebecca Belmore, which often involves her throwing or otherwise engaging with blood. What does the blood in Belmore, as a kind of recurrent abstraction, convey, assert, or demand? How does it link to Benesiinaabandan’s computing abstraction, or Baerg’s, as each of the three artists uses blood to respond to histories of globalization? Baerg does not discuss blood as a central concept in his practice. However, he does engage with blood. Baerg’s media art, centering traditional knowledge, responds to global resource development on Indigenous lands, specifically what are called blood diamonds. All of these artists, then, relate these entangled themes in their new media works: blood, abstraction, globalization, and citizenship. The works in this chapter extend Ramirez’ theory of citizenship into global domains where translocal Indigenous citizenship is interpretation and ascription of meaning.

This chapter considers new media through the lens of “communicative agency” identified with Steven Loft’s theorizations in Chapter Two. My sense of the importance of communicative agency in relation to blood memory was inspired by these artists but also by Anishinaabe lawyer Aimée Craft. Craft sent me the proceedings from the Consumer’s Association of Canada report on the Keeyask Dam decision in fall 2014. This report details the Crown corporation Manitoba Hydro ‘consulting’ Indigenous
communities regarding hydro development on their territories. In this decision, hydro development has been secured in Manitoba to the ongoing great disadvantage of Indigenous communities. While this process of consultation considered Indigenous traditional knowledge, the lawyers and consultants for Manitoba Hydro, as Craft narrates it, did not know what do with this knowledge. In her words, the “heartbreaking” response of Manitoba Hydro to the assembled elders’ knowledge was “thank you very much for this”—now we’ll set it aside in a filing cabinet and get back to business (Interview 05 Sep. 2014). I understand this to be the business of abstracting value from Indigenous lands and waters. In this report, I read elder Linklater’s words, quoted in Section 5.1 below, on blood memory. His words cemented the importance of Indigenous blood memory as communicative agency as a pressing need in this place and time, that is, Winnipeg 2015.

The Indigenous new media artists and activists I cite in this chapter agree, and globally advance this conception—blood memory as communicative agency—through artistic modalities of visual abstraction in new media relationships. New media relationships in art are relationships between the artist, new media works, places, and communities. While the artists in this chapter create new media artworks, activists convey these meanings in the digital public sphere through photographs of their actions that circulate online. I understand all of these acts as translocal Indigenous citizenship on a global scale. Baerg’s abstract, global, and community-based new media art forms correlate, in their philosophical approach and anti-capitalist diagnosis, with the blood-oriented works of the other two artists. Communicative agency in these works sets their new media components into global dialogues. At the same time, not every work in this
chapter is solely a work of standalone new media art. For example, in order to understand Belmore’s video installation *Fountain* for the 2005 Venice Biennale, I describe her performance and installation pieces *blood on the snow*, *The Indian Factory* and *No More*. I am following Baerg’s lead, as he presents his new media works in relation to previous traditions of painting. Art historical continuity is a centrepiece of Baerg’s media art practice. For him, viewers cannot understand his contemporary Cree screen-based works without understanding the ways that painting precedes them art historically. Belmore’s act of throwing blood onto the video screen, as well as her use of water in *Fountain*, relate to her practice articulating a politics of blood across mediums.

Artists Baerg, Benesiinaabandan and Belmore practice abstraction as an artistic form of relating, engaging historical phenomena through blood memory. They assess economics within Indigenous experiences of globalization, while framing new media art abstraction as Cree, Métis, and Anishinaabe. They know their abstractions are fundamentally different from those of settler colonization. All three artists’ abstract forms critique concepts and contexts embedded in the realities of Indigenous communities today. They also convey Indigenous relational ontology globally through the tropes of blood memory and traveling traditional knowledge across different media terrains. Belmore, Baerg, and Benesiinaabandan treat abstraction as aesthetic, conceptual, and material, entwined within Indigenous cosmologies, orienting against the logic of contemporary global capital. Their works, conveying blood memory, present the different levels of mediation, or abstraction, composing local and global ecological and geopolitical domains, gesturing towards the dominant functions of global abstraction and how it articulates in Indigenous visions.
5.1 Blood Memory and Indigenous Arts

Blood history is a kind of traditional knowledge, according to Cree elder Linklater, from Fox Lake Cree nation, and Chiracahua Apache art historian Nancy Marie Mithlo. Linklater advises readers of the Keeyask Report to consider it within situations of relationship. He speaks to the concept during a hearing concerning hydroelectric development in Manitoba:

…the Creator gave us blood history, through those customary laws and customary law principles that we get reminded, we never lose anything because of our blood history, and it is always there. And we must use what was given to us and apply it to things that make our lives difficult. And that is the purpose of that, why we are here, try and understand the art of listening and also the art of understanding [...] So it is important to try and understand our people and our laws…who we are and where we come from. (7)

Blood memory and history are central to communicative agency, “the art of listening and understanding,” as Linklater describes in both Indigenous and cross-cultural relationships including resource hearings. I would extend his position and apply it to art exhibits. In doing so I follow the work of Chiricahua Apache scholar Nancy Marie Mithlo, who similarly writes,

The iconic placeholder of “the blood” as an organizing principle is …a productive means of articulating the interior renderings of an indigenous aesthetic and recognizing the essential saliences of communal place-based logics and current political realities. (104)

Mithlo makes this argument in Indigenous art history, arguing settler frameworks distort
or confuse the significance of Indigenous arts. I aim to explicate her sense of blood as an organizing principle, as well as elder Linklater’s, in my responses to the works of Baerg, Benesiinaabandan, and Belmore below. The kind of distortion of which Mithlo writes pertains to abstraction in the arts.

Indigenous practices of abstraction in North America have been ongoing for millennia. Contemporary Indigenous artists’ abstractions convey their visions of globalization and modernity. North American settlers and artists have been attempting to theorize globalization and modernity on their own for some time, but Indigenous visions of and through abstraction are not peripheral to this context. They should be centred, due to the knowledge that Indigenous peoples hold in understanding globalization processes and accompanying aesthetics. As Tuhiwai Smith argues, “for Indigenous peoples fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism” for hundreds of years (28). Indigenous peoples have been theorizing the consequences of Euro-American abstraction for hundreds of years, on the front lines of its differential consequences. Baerg, Belmore, and Benesiinaabandan’s works suggest that their new media artworks’ provenance, as artists conveying Indigenous communicative agency, is a facet of blood memory, or what Baerg calls “travelling traditional knowledge,” through abstract forms in global contexts.

Belmore and Benesiinaabandan approach “blood memory” in many cities around the world, creating local nodes that demonstrate Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy, and are situated within a geographic and cultural system emphasizing Indigenous blood genealogy. Indigenous blood relationships according to Mithlo:

reference not only the common understanding of what is considered biological heritage or race but also, in an expanded sense, the internalized memories of
communal history, knowledge, and wisdom….This common tribal value of multigenerational remembrance runs directly counter to prevailing Western traits of individual achievement, lack of transgenerational memory, and transcendence of one’s genealogical fate and place of origin [abstract universalism]. (106)

In considering Mithlo’s arguments, I am sure that if I asked an Italian or Greek family about the importance of transgenerational memory and home/place, they would have much to say. I also believe that families who survived the Holocaust would certainly have varying responses to the idea of “transcendence of one’s genealogical fate.” I find it important to note that Mithlo is writing in the context of the settler colonial nation state context of the United States, where this exact capitalist framing of “hopes and dreams” to transcend where one comes from and make “something out of nothing” is a hallmark of the cultural imagination writ large. At the same time, I personally relate to Mithlo’s critique in the sense that I did, for a time, seek to transcend the marginalized aspects of my identity precisely through individual achievement. Actually, I still find it difficult to avoid this framing of personal fulfillment—even though I rage against its oppressive whiteness and its patriarchal and capitalistic ethos. Also, until recently I did not know anything about my family’s history on either side beyond my grandparents, and this information was not relevant to me until I started challenging myself to see the settler coloniality of my personal history. I feel that my approach to life was certainly culturally conditioned, along the very terms that Mithlo names as a dominant Western imaginary. This could be part of the reason her critique resonates with me, and part of why I am mistrustful of the very dominant art historical framework, embedded in Euro-Canadian culture as it is, that Mithlo posits against the Indigenous value of blood memory.
For Mithlo, using blood memory as an “approach to contemporary Native arts criticism by attending to the body, belonging and group memory in relation to place has merit due to its centrality in the scope of indigenous collective thought and political realities” (106). She also argues that when settler academics deny Indigenous understandings of blood memory, both material and conceptual, they devalue and delegitimize Indigenous knowledge. Studies of art reception have centred corporeality and the body; Mithlo calls for a distinctly Indigenous corporeal aesthetic.

Many perspectives on blood in politics and art, not unlike abstraction, centre a limited Euro-American history. Blood as a positive distinguishing value between peoples is a taboo subject within a Western knowledge economy. Blood memory, or group identity through blood relations, from this perspective connotes Nazi genocide, or wars of auto-extermination in Africa. This understanding of blood and politics secures a genealogy excluding other ways of framing blood such as those presented in the works of Indigenous artists. This Euro-American genealogy is foundational to a “universal” vision of humanity which centres Euro-American abstractions expressed in the discourse of human rights. Gil Anidjar writes against this logic, “Western political concepts, such as nation and emancipation, kinship and race, law and capital, sovereign and citizen, property, inheritance, and freedom, all are connected by blood”: as Henry James Sumner Maine, who writes “the history of [Western] political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions” (qtd. in Anidjar). Anidjar notes that contemporary thinkers committed to dismantling the structures of Western modernity, such as Donna Haraway, would like to eschew blood. He cites Haraway, who writes, “I am sick to death of bonding through
kinship and ‘the family’…ties through blood have been bloody enough already” (Haraway qtd. in Anidjar). Haraway wants to dismantle the Western system of blood affiliation as it contributes to class, race, and gender oppression. Anidjar notes that postcolonial intellectual Pheng Cheah disavows blood: “the decolonizing nation is not an archaic throwback to traditional forms of community based on the blind ties of blood and kinship” (Cheah qtd. in Anidjar). I disagree with Cheah’s emphasis on the archaic and racist valences of blood in decolonial contexts, aligning myself with Indigenous artists who elaborate the imperial nature of Western blood while firmly distinguishing it from Anishinaabe blood memory and history. Belmore’s and Benesiinaabandan’s works critique Western understandings of circulation, or the transnational movements of capital and bodies, in imperial modernity. They show how blood is imbricated with the historically ‘universal’ claims of Christianity and capital, understood against the particularity of ‘others’ (Smith 266). Indigenous blood identity, in this Western schema, makes Indigenous peoples other to the universal human. Belmore and Benesiinaabandan query this notion of the human, proposing, as with Baerg’s vision, Indigenous ways of knowing, through blood, in their abstract artworks.

5.2 Euro-American Abstraction and ‘Bloodless’ or Legitimate Knowledge

Many cultural theorists understand abstraction, or the making-autonomous of elements previously embedded in a specific context, to be the hallmark and underlying condition of modernity and globalization including in the arts. Cultural theory often

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28 At the same time, it is certainly up to every Indigenous community to define the parameters of their own group membership. Along these lines the notion of blood quantum for determining Indigeneity, as posited by the US government, must of course be rejected. Blood memory in the context of Indigenous self-definition is not to be confused with externally applied settler colonial boundaries on Indigenous communities.
understands abstract expression in the arts in these terms, where abstraction “makes it new,” to borrow a phrase from modernist poet Ezra Pound. I am interested in reflecting that Pound searched out newness in poetry by appropriating and orientalizing Chinese characters, as the basis for his “imagist” poetry movement. Pound’s Imagism relied on abstracting Chinese characters from their context, and refashioning them to suit the needs of British poetry as he saw them. Lawrence Grossberg calls this sense of abstraction “disembedding” (92), as with resource development processes of abstracting value from an ecosystem. Unlike these theorists, artists’ exhibits and performances I discuss in this chapter orient their visions of abstraction and autonomy within Indigenous aesthetic genealogies. The latter term, autonomy, can be understood in a number of ways: in Euro-American terms, autonomy refers to the right of individuals, firstly propertied males in Europe, to make decisions that shape their own lives, regardless of relationships or context (Blaser et al. 8). This notion of autonomy is based on the idea of separation from context: as Blaser, Coleman, De Costa, and McGregor write, “to speak about the environment in the way we do today is to presume to act autonomously upon that environment” (6). This notion of abstraction as autonomy, or separation, is a liberal settler concept supporting colonization against Indigenous ecology. Abstraction as an expression of relationship and continuity for Indigenous peoples in global contexts is very different, and relies upon conceptions of self fundamentally unlike the inside-to-outside autonomous Cartesian model of Euro-American individualism.

Media, universities, and what one might call a general societal common sense disseminate concepts and practices of abstraction through dominant explanatory frameworks centering Euro-modernity. Mainstream descriptions of modern Euro-
American art history elide millennia-old Indigenous forms from which artists such as the American modernist Jackson Pollock took their inspiration and iconic style. For example, Pollock was inspired by the practice of Navajo sand painting (Hatt and Clonk). I find it important to note that Pollock did not deny his artistic debt to the Navajo; the institutions that framed his work did. The prevailing notion of the *individual* genius modernist male artist, though well-critiqued by now, belies the *collective* Indigenous contexts through which modernist painters derived the stunning formal qualities of their works. These latter Indigenous contexts receive much less attention than the well-trod critique of modernism, which still centres white men even in repudiating them. Their artistic methods, taking an aesthetic wildly out of context, are very much in line with the capitalist ethos dominating these painters’ societies, which they supposedly oppose through their art.  

Discourses surrounding modernist artists in North America, disseminated through institutions such as the Guggenheim, do not cite Native American art as inspiration. This way of knowing erases, abstracts, Indigenous sources. Such conceptual violence to forms deriving from Indigenous ideas and practices of collectivity is liberal individualism expressed through framings and abstracted forms of modernist art. In a material situation of extreme economic marginalization for Native American communities, institutions such as the Guggenheim, or universities teaching art history,  

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29 The works of these painters must be distinguished from the remix cultures originating in communities of colour in the eras following. The issue of appropriation and theft needs to be clearly defined as an act by which a hegemonic group, in this case white European men, appropriate the cultural production of a marginalized and stigmatized community. White Europeans and Euro-Americans gain prestige due to their avante garde art—which is edgy or new precisely due to its proximity and contact with stigmatized peoples. This artistic act relies on biopolitical death of others, in order to enhance the prestige of the dominant group. Without the stigma accrued to the marginalized community, their cultural production cannot signify as edgy and avante garde in the work of the white male artist.
and not the Navajo, profit from the Navajo’s appropriated aesthetic. The marginalization of Indigenous peoples in art history resonates with processes of appropriating Indigenous land and ecological resources. This insight opens up another element of modernist abstraction, placing it within an Indigenized comparative view, one where abstraction, understood as autonomy, entails theft. Western aesthetic and conceptual abstraction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries result from capitalism. Foundational to this cultural worldview is the theft of land and resources as what Marx called primitive accumulation, culminating in finance capital that inheres globally today, and continues to mete out its most vicious consequences in the lives of Indigenous peoples worldwide.

Economics melds with aesthetics in modernist abstract art that expresses autonomy from capitalist systems of semantic and material instrumentality. Western citizens in modernity have had their lives increasingly governed by means-end rationality, supposedly leaving little room for imagination or freedom. Sociologist Max Weber famously called this society “one dimensional.” While these processes of subjectification have been augmented by affective consumer capitalism, as noted in Chapter Four, I would mark that for me as a neoliberal graduate student, the impetus to “lean in” to my career as a white woman, relying on instrumental rationality, renews the thrust of this historical trend. Euro-American artists aimed for abstract art to be a “useless” utopian site, ungoverned by instrumental logic, which settler artists critiqued. Cultural studies critic Fredric Jameson argues this gesture makes art the apotheosis of the very logic they aimed to criticize, in that these artists applied the disembedding process of capitalism in the most conceptually extreme way by setting their paintings apart as they did. This insight also inspired critical and conceptual performance artists like Fluxus
in the late 1960s prior to Jameson’s written criticism. Indigenous artists situate settler art history within their own epistemic priority and experiences of Euro-American systems of capitalist abstraction.

Liberal abstract aesthetics, within processes of disembedding and theft, are settler colonial. In tandem, Western capitalist abstraction in art, based on autonomy and self-reflexivity, centre the aims and experiences of the Western subject. Andrea Smith writes in her essay, “Unsettling the Privilege of Self-Reflexivity,” “the human is already a racial project, one that aspires to universality [which is itself] a project that can only exist over and against the particularity of the ‘other’” (265). The form of the abstract universal, formally enunciated as money, art, or humanity itself, has affirmed totalizing globalization consolidating specific Euro-American power. Self-reflexivity in abstract art (it references itself, and not an object “in the real world”) affirms and empowers Western forms of subjectivity. Rey Chow writes that self-reflexivity in practice “was long ago established by Hegel as the distinguishing trait of Western Man, his capacity to be aware of himself” (243). This transcendent overcoming of capitalist circulatory systems through autonomous mastery of the self, imputed to the art object, safeguards the Western subject as agential over and against others, people, places, and things whom he can effect, can be affected by him, but from whom he is autonomous (Smith 265). This consciousness aligns with capital and the “inalienability” of supposedly universal rights discourse.

Settler arts in the Americas have advanced the modernist imperative, to “make it new,” resonating with capitalist globalization while at the same time opposing Indigeneity. In a recent interview with Jian Ghomeshi on CBC Radio, Ghomeshi asked Belmore, as an Indigenous artist, “Do you feel like a pioneer?” She retorted: “No. No I
don’t feel like a pioneer. *I’m an Indian.*” This exchange highlights a tension across settler and Indigenous communities. Settlers value aesthetic newness, innovation, and progress, because these values support their history and economics, wherein they are centred as rightful inheritors of Indigenous lands. Indigenous artists, and communities, often value continuity, relationality, and tradition. Indigenous artworks in this chapter challenge framings of abstraction reflecting these processes of circulation. Each of the artists’ abstractions I discuss below conveys the material conditions of possibility for their art, and the Indigenous concepts that they centre in their new media works.

5.3 Jason Baerg: Travelling Traditional Knowledge

Baerg’s work elaborates many ideas that continue to inspire my reflections on this chapter’s topics. Baerg describes how his practice “investigates digital interventions in drawing and painting” that, in part, reflect the mainstream trajectory of abstraction in the modern arts from paint to programming code (“Invite”). When we spoke, Baerg told me that his first show at Urban Shaman, “The Plain Truth: RYBW,” reflects a specific conjuncture in contemporary art in Canada. As an artist, he was reflecting on the newly minted, first ever PhD in Art offered at Western University in London, Ontario. When considering this program, which he did not attend, he learned that it required a digital practice, which, for Baerg, meant the end of an already marginalized tradition of painting. He reflected, somewhat paradoxically to my ears, “This is a time to remember painting…a call to awareness and remembering and epitaph to Mother Earth—a call to action” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). Many have seen painterly abstraction, in the history I’ve just sketched, as Euro-American, masculinist and hardly associated with Mother Earth. Baerg finds that its materiality asserts her tangible reality. Baerg’s Indigenous
consciousness resonates across the Americas, where abstract painting in North America, and conceptions of Pacha Mama, or Mother Earth, in the legal constitution of the Indigenous peoples of Bolivia, for example, are consonant with one another, enlivened with material feminine power through an Indigenous lens. He muses, “This show is about painting. If it wasn’t for painting, petroglyphs—where would we be today? Furthermore, I look at media as digital archives—is winter coming? Are we preparing?” (Interview 14 Mar 2014) Baerg’s facility across these media highlights the capacious register that his vision offers, one that crosses, and interrelates, different histories of levels or mediations of space and time, aesthetic, conceptual, and material. He speaks at once to a desire to record, or archive, the past, and preserve it, and also to reframe its geopolitical totality through Cree Métis travelling traditional knowledge. Baerg emphasizes that his shows at Urban Shaman highlight his relationships with Indigenous communities and his heritage as a Cree Métis artist.

Baerg’s title for “The Plain Truth: RYWB” well reflects his exhibition content. Baerg references the plains, gesturing towards the history of Plains peoples in North America. The signifier “Plain” connotes a collectivity across distinct nations in this geographically specific area. Plain is also an adjective, meant to describe something unadorned or bare, simple or ordinary or clearly expressed. “Truth” commonly refers to an abstract concept, a type of claim to knowledge and substantive reality, also connoting telling or testimony, as when one is, by law, sworn to ‘tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.’ This kind of truth takes a central role in the Western or Euro-American legal tradition. What kind of “truth” is Baerg associating with Plains peoples in this show? “Plain truth” suggests a basic or fundamental reality unadorned by embellishment
or unfiltered by specific subjectivities. A universal claim to truth may appear counterintuitive in the sense that viewers may not be accustomed to reading a multi-media abstract art installation as a no frills enunciation or testimony, or the utterances of Indigenous peoples as framing a credible, or truthful, realist ontology. For Baerg, though, the forms of his communication in this work are no more embellished or constructed than any other style that settlers would advance as plain or neutral. Whether bold colours and starbursts are plain or stylized depends upon the styles that are conventional to the viewer, reader, or listener. “The Plain Truth: RYWB” grammatically suggests, through its colon, that these colors—red, yellow, white, and black—are equivalent to the concepts advanced in the first term of the title. These are medicine wheel colors. Their centrality in this exhibit reflects orientations in space and time, as well as values, specific to Plains peoples.

Baerg focuses on his viewers’ experience. He designed “The Plain Truth: RYWB” he writes, “to encourage a sense of engagement, reflection and empowered visioning” (qtd. in Maskegon-Iskwew). The work—commissioned for the Marvin Francis Media Gallery (MFMG), as part of Urban Shaman’s “stormspirits” project, an online exhibit curated by Cree artist and curator Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew for the Virtual Museum of Canada—spans paint-based, new media, and computing forms. Baerg claims the show engages the viewer in ways that enhance viewers’ agency in relation to the content. Baerg projected a new media video work on the far wall of the MFMG. Opposite, he hung large square abstract paintings (6 x 6 feet) that convey the cardinal directions in four colors: Red (South), Yellow (West), Black (East) and White (North). Baerg’s paintings contain starbursts and star motifs as well as bold colour abstractions.
Baerg told me in our conversation that these abstractions, referencing the sky, and depicting rain and snow, are “windows, an opening, where, hopefully, we are safe, a purification system, a safety blanket, our atmosphere, oxygen, and a metaphor for our intuition and psychological spaces” (Interview 14 Mar. 2014). The external elements in the exhibit combine with the interiority of the artist, as Baerg created the series after an Elder gave him his colours in ceremony. The installation, in part, reflects this psychic space. Baerg told me that if he was a dancer, he would use these primary colours to create his regalia, but instead, he added, “I’m a painter.” For Baerg the colours RYWB are foundational; in painterly abstraction, colour is a driving force. The colours are his artistic system, and it is almost as though the gallery space, governed by primary medicine wheel colours, full of skies, and thus wide and capacious, is a container or housing for the artist’s psyche, that he invites viewers to stand inside and look through, experiencing his Cree/Métis composition.

Viewers enter the MFMG gallery space facing another wall where Baerg has placed four lightboxes, conveying the concept of four directions, North, East, South, and West through medicine wheel colors that correspond to them (RYBW). Each lightbox is 4x4 feet. These lightboxes serve as middle ground between virtual space and the surfaces of the oil paintings. Baerg notes, “that work was my first foray into really thinking about colour and using colour as conceptual art practice. Really thinking about a palette from an Indigenous space as well—red, yellow, black, white.” Baerg explained to me that in preparing the work, he was considering “the curatorial implications of RYBW in space.”

The work explicitly asserts that this cosmology is the plain truth, the no-nonsense vision of a Cree Métis artist, related to other Plains peoples making sense of their environment. Baerg’s centres Indigenous abstraction over and above the authority of Western testimonial forms that claim to convey “only the truth.” Baerg’s understanding of the truth, however, comes through a Cree cosmology, and locates the truth geographically. Truth is not an abstract universal, disembedded from relationships. Baerg’s truth is embedded in specific ecological relationalities.
This exhibit’s lightboxes along the side wall of the gallery, installed between the painting, on the back wall, and digital video on a screen in the front of the room –facing the painting in the back, signal levels of mediation or relationship between the fixed materiality of paint, in the abstract paintings, and the dynamic ephemerality of code, based on gaming tech, in the digital video *Plain Truth*. Baerg conveys these levels of mediation as semi-autonomous domains. Together, the components of the work engage with contemporary geopolitics, and settler and Indigenous global histories, including those of electricity and energy infrastructure. For Baerg his curation of the pieces signifies transitions in the history of Baerg’s medium; he describes himself as a painter, emphasizing materiality, even in his digital and screen-based work. His artistic methods
comment upon stages in the history of capitalism in North America as reflected in the arts. His worldview in “Plain Truth” encompasses these stages and histories within what he calls, consonant with Tahltan artist Peter Morin, “ceremony.”

Baerg’s exhibit transforms the MFMG into an immersive environment that holds his references to Western conceptual and material genealogies. A related framework can be found in the description of stormspirits.ca. According to Maskegon-Iskwew:

The Storm Spirits premise arises out of Aboriginal concepts of the intersecting animist relations that inhabit the realms stretching from astronomy to meteorology, geology and down into microbiology, and offers them as new rhetorical designations of the relations that are evolving in the multiple streams of contemporary Aboriginal media art production.

Furthermore, he stresses the importance of “self-identification and location, a practice that anchors and credits the origin of statements but that also acknowledges and gives
respect to the differences in values and perspective arising from the context (the identification and location) of the listener.” This specific Indigenous way of framing location, commonly known as positionality, is, he writes,

a factor of animist cultures that honours their relations to their particular geo-cultural ecology and values those of others. Animist expressions root themselves in an egalitarian and interconnected web of nature and seek its teachings in a zoomorphic negotiation rather than an anthropomorphic and speciocentric hegemony.

This framing of Indigenous cosmology for the online exhibit echoes Baerg’s medicine-wheel format in his abstract painting, lightboxes, and digital video. The stormspirits project emanates onto the worldwide web in an online infrastructure that embodies its conceptual paradigm. APTN, NFB, and SUNTV planned to disseminate “Plain Truth” in part through the now cancelled interactive documentary Metroscope. This documentary, in Baerg’s words, was to be “about the psyche of the city…grounded in the artist,” focusing on “community, relationships between people on various levels, [and] common themes in Aboriginal work” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). Baerg’s abstract truth is different than that of Western paradigms, courts of law, or philosophical abstractions. His insistence on ecological and relational truth, that is geographically specific, centres an Indigenous worldview in civic contexts. He resituates Western genealogy in his medicine-wheel approach to vision.

The video component of this work, also titled Plain Truth, produces an abstract vision of Turtle Island (North America), figured as a planet of its own, or as a satellite of Earth viewed as a globe from space. This vantage point leads me to think of technological
advances in vision conveying a God’s-eye view or gaze of mastery. Baerg understands the global through the specific places of his location within North American Indigenous thought, decolonizing the abstract universal view from nowhere in mainstream globalization theory, ratified by the seemingly a-perspectival satellite image of Earth.

Baerg, using the Unreal Game Engine in 3D, a “suite of integrated tools for game developers” (unrealengine.com), produces the video with an initial inspiration drawn from the perspective of the passenger window view of an airplane.


*Plain Truth* begins “in action” as the visual conveys a turtle hovering in a white emptiness and lowering towards a landmass below. The turtle initially looks like a mask of reddish brown hue. This image also suggests global relations, as it reminds me of the
appropriation of abstract African masks in European modernism, as in Picasso’s
*Desmoiselles d’Avignon*, which Baerg referred to when we talked about his work.

Picasso’s painting is an abstract representation of European prostitutes featuring motifs
appropriated from masks of certain African tribes. The work speaks to European
degeneracy theory in which marginalized peoples were understood as biologically
degenerate and deserving to die. Picasso’s extremely violent appropriation in this work
takes up marginalized lives, transforming them into his own “avante gardeness” while he,
and his work, remain utterly free of the stigma of their social locations. This is how
modernist appropriation produces biopolitical death for marginalized communities,
colonial, race, class, and gender-based. Baerg re-appropriates the mask signifier. The
turtle floats in space above the “Earth,” near a giant gold umbilical cord, speaking to the
female foundations of life. This video also reflects the medicine wheel, as Cree curator
Daina Warren writes:

> The cosmology of the medicine wheel is important [to understanding this work] as it stands for several conceptual understandings of the world, which are broadly understood by various Aboriginal groups as follows: the four races of humanity; the four directions, the four elements, the four seasons, and the four sacred animals—butterfly, frog, eagle and turtle.[Sun Bear and Wabun qtd. in Warren] The representation of a turtle provides a link between Baerg’s digital virtual world and his cultural cosmology of the Cree culture. (“Cosmologies” 2)

The turtle in Baerg’s video references Turtle Island and Plains medicine-wheel
understandings. The umbilical cord descends into, and penetrates, the Earth below.

White surrounds the Earth, so abstract as to be empty of context—everything and nothing at once. This vision is in the vein of modernist Kazimir Malevich’s Suprematist painting, in which, conceptually, the artist abstracts painterly emotion completely from all other elements of existence. Baerg considers these modernist values in his extreme lack of visual context in the colourscape at the outset of Plain Truth. The perspective rises above the Earth onto a circular landmass reminiscent of North America suspended in space. The North American ground is a circle that is empty in the centre, through which one could presumably look down and see the “totality” of the Earth below. The landmass, circular and empty in the centre aside from the landing pad is almost like the borders of a camera lens or an eye.

It appears now to be upside-down or below the Earth, with evergreen trees and grass growing on its surface. On a couple of sites on the landmass, there are sets of screens raised out of the ground: four in each set, located on the outside circle of land. The viewer’s perspective “lands” on a central platform, with the mask and others like it. The mask now appears to be one of a number of turtle-planes of some kind, congregating on the platform. Once the first-person perspective arrives at one of them, suddenly it seems to be coming from within one, and it is taken along a track, reminiscent of a subway track, to the outer circle of the land. Text appears on the screen that proclaims “You are camping,” as the viewer’s perspective turns left, guided towards the first set of stations.
The word “camping” is paradoxical as it implies that “you” are leaving civilization for a constructed “wilderness,” and that these screens are the camping spot. Camping is typically a respite from urban screen culture. Baerg turns these binaries, which serve Western colonial spatial schemas of city and country, on their heads. The italicized words *Plain Truth* appear on the screen in white, overlaying the first of the screens upon which is one of Baerg’s paintings from the series *RYWB* located in the MFMG. The viewer interacts with four screens in this section, and there are three more stations of four screens each on the landmass. All of these pods contain visuals of Baerg’s abstract paintings. I wonder about these giant granite eyes, which look like the periscope of submarines: are they rock paintings? Abstract modernist reference? Hung paintings on
a slab of stone? Digital screens? Are they looking back at me? Lee Maracle (Métis/Salish) writes, “the ‘art’ of study…[is] to question the direction from which looking occurs, or to ponder the motive for seeing and studying, [without which] study becomes reactive, reproductive, and colonial” (57). The type of visual enunciation from the screens in the video is intentionally ambiguous and crosses these domains, amalgamating them. The video figures camping, usually an outside or “escape” from the pressures of modern life, referring to how settlers often understand camping similarly to Indigenous domains broadly. The submarine eyes suggest an animate returning gaze that surrounds the viewer. There is no ground on which to stand that isn’t ceremony, isn’t medicine wheel, isn’t sovereign Indigenous land and perspective. It is looking at you from every direction.


Baerg organizes each station through the medicine wheel colors, and each set treats all four directions and what Baerg calls “the four races of humanity.” Navajo/Dine curator Kathleen Ash Milby writes, “Each composition contains multiple icons, 22 in all, drawn from his Metroscope Project (2001-present), and represent his ongoing meditation on the urban experience.” His mediation, in my view, centres on abstract forms and their various stakes for the urban landscape and Indigenous ecologies, as contested understandings of abstraction, as disembeddings or ongoing relationships, globally.

Baerg treats what he calls travelling traditional knowledge in “Plain Truth: RYWB.” In Urban Footprints, a sister series to “Plain Truth: RYWB,” Baerg depicts abstract images of skyscrapers from around the world: the Metropolitan skyscraper in Tokyo (Yellow), the Hearst Tower in New York City (Red), the Gherkin building in London, UK (White), as well as the De Beers Building in Johannesburg, South Africa (Black).
Urban Footprints is, in part, about architecture, cities, and abstraction. Speaking about one of the paintings (an abstraction of a 16-pole Plains Cree tipi), Baerg said that the artwork “invites the audience to question their relationship to time, space, and worldview” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). Baerg focuses on the tipi as a way to consider the
equal importance of caring for mind, body, spirit, and community. In an interview, he
told me, “Tipi is a governance model, associated with values.” Baerg, bringing major
architectural masterpieces from around the world into conversation with the tipi, went on
to say:

In Yellow, which is Asia, I chose the Metropolis, a beautiful residential skyscraper. Black in Africa—at the time I wasn’t really thinking politically—really cutting-edge buildings, De Beers headquarters in Johannesburg. For the Americas, I did the 16-pole tipi, and I also did the Hearst building in NYC—that would represent red. White would be Europe, and I selected the Gherkin in London—that was really before the Attawapiskat escalation in the housing crisis. It’s De Beers that is on their land. They are pulling some of the hardest, purest diamonds in the world out of that land. In the one composition, in the Gherkin, there’s this diamond shape, and then I turned the diamond shape red—oh my gosh there is a conversation here about diamonds. (Interview 14 Mar 2014)

His paintings of urban infrastructure highlight the significance of architecture as compositions engaging with humanity. The paintings also signal capitalist property regimes in international relationships. Baerg explained to me that the motifs in the paintings are inspired by the tread of a shoe as the primary driving pattern of the series, suggesting his mobility in an empowered vein.

Kirkland and Ellis (commercial law) and Swiss Re (global asset management) own and commissioned The Gherkin in London. The Hearst Building, in New York City, is a media and information-management company whose clients include President Barack Obama. The Hearst building is central to US hegemony on the world stage. Baerg represents the Gherkin on its side, like a fish, with a blood diamond in the corner of the composition. These abstract paintings relate with one another and the unfolding global contexts of their referents.
Baerg’s portrayal of the DeBeers building refers to how DeBeers has long been known for mining in South Africa, yet they have also been mining on Attawapiskat First Nation, in Ontario, Canada, since 2006. In 2012, the First Nation in Northern Ontario declared a housing, infrastructure, and water emergency. Baerg’s abstract treatment of DeBeers headquarters connects Attawapiskat, Indigenous genocide in Canada, South


Africa, global settler colonialism and apartheid in one swoop. I furthermore note the connection to the Rhodes scholarship, created by Cecil Rhodes, a South African diamond capitalist, imbricating the economies Baerg references with those of knowledge production. Medicine-wheel relationality across time and space regards the DeBeers headquarters and profound ongoing negotiation around the value of the Attawapiskat land. Attawapiskat values the land and their traditional practices upon it in ways that are irreducible to settler frameworks of abstract value. While DeBeers has attempted to compensate Attawapiskat for its mining, the Cree have rejected this compensation as inadequate with repeated protests.


The company generates 400 million Canadian dollars in profit annually from the mine in Attawapiskat, and has created a finite $10 million trust for Attawapiskat (Ross, Pope &
Company LLP Chartered Accountants). Royalties from the mine go to the province of Ontario, not Attawapiskat, though DeBeers recognizes that the mine occupies Attawapiskat land. DeBeers plans further exploitation in this area. Tom Ormsby, De Beers’ director of external and corporate affairs, claimed that "the high quality of the Victor diamonds and the vastness of the Canadian Shield points to great potential for another diamond mine being developed in northeastern Ontario. The Canadian Shield has great potential to host diamonds" and potential in Canada “appears to be at least twice as good as what southern Africa has held for potential for diamonds” (Grech 10). Specific transnational architectural styles represent the exploitation of massive wealth from Indigenous lands by a British colonial-cum-international corporation. Baerg responds to capital as value wildly disembedded from the context of its production, abstracting it into a painting series that emphasizes tipi governance and values, and speaks against the hegemonic imbrication of architecture, aesthetic and capitalist abstraction. He posits architecture as a philosophical domain within these material and conceptual entailments. Baerg’s screened and digitally produced paintings highlight dynamics of capitalism and land in a colonial world system. The work raises key sites, worldwide, reflecting resource extraction and finance and audiovisual capital. Baerg’s abstraction draws on the history of capital, abstraction, land, and architecture as North American economies transition to finance capital. The medicine wheel lenses settler colonial spatial logics and architectural forms. On this topic Fredric Jameson writes:

in the realm of the spatial, there does seem to exist something like an equivalent of finance capital, indeed a phenomenon intimately related to it, and that is land speculation: something which may have found its field of endeavor in the
countryside in years bygone—in the seizure of Native American lands, in the acquisition of immense tracts by the railroads, in the development of suburban areas, alongside the seizure of natural resources—but which in our time is a pre-eminently urban phenomenon, (not least because everything is becoming urban) and has returned to the big cities, or to what is left of them, to seek its fortunes.

(26)

Baerg’s work highlights these spatial dynamics, focusing on “urban footprints” as digital and painted abstractions within an Indigenous cosmology of cosmopolitan skyscrapers. Baerg’s composition “RYBW” stages a mediation, lightboxes, between different layers of this composite lifeworld, the material and the ephemeral, with each existing in a kind of semi-autonomy from one another. This is also to say, the aesthetic “laws” or traditions of painting and those of digital video are not the same, and yet, each continues to have manifold consequences in relation with the other. In Jameson’s discussion of money, land, and architecture, he seeks to “establish a mediation…as a characterization of the economic determinants of construction within the city as much as it can offer directions for aesthetic analysis and cultural interpretation” (182). Baerg is also interested in mediation, or semi-autonomous levels, through which he can articulate these different stakes: for him, the medicine wheel, abstracted on at least three layers in RWYB, offers the perfect translation device for how these economic and land domains consort with the aesthetic. The medicine wheel offers a conception of time and space that does not align with that of settler colonial capital, instead centreing a plain(s) truth.
Critical geographer David Harvey describes land speculation, being fundamental to the settler colonial project of abstraction, as “fictitious capital…oriented towards the expectation of future value.” For Harvey,

Under such conditions the land is treated as a pure financial asset which is bought and sold according to the rent it yields. Like all such forms of fictitious capital, what is traded is a claim upon future revenues, which means a claim upon future profits from the use of the land or, more directly, a claim upon future labour” (qtd. in Jameson 184).

For Jameson, this formation of space, which privileges time, is “structural reorganization of time into a kind of futures market…the final link in the chain lead[ing] from finance capital through land speculation to aesthetics and cultural production itself” (185). For Jameson and Harvey, time and a new relationship to the future characterize the space of capitalist settler modernity. As I discuss in Chapter Two through Glen Coulthard’s theories of land dispossession, settler colonization is better understood through Indigenous land-based knowledge and experience, as opposed to the theft of worker’s time. Baerg’s use of the medicine wheel in his art centres land, with Coulthard, understanding global economic processes as settler colonial from an Indigenous lens.

Baerg interrupts the medicine-wheel colours in his digital prints with discontinuous lines of white paint, and frames them in white, mounting them on white walls. His canvases suggest permeability across surfaces, challenging where painterly abstract composition and architectural space begin and end. The paintings register a spatial set of relationships that negate capitalist abstraction’s temporal orientation towards the future. The work lends to the reorientation of the life world, in Plains terms,
Indigenizing globalized contexts within methodologies of abstraction that mediate these relationships.

The most important aspect of Baerg’s body of work is, in my view, relationships. “Returning,” Baerg’s 2014 exhibit at Urban Shaman, draws on three different bodies of work: “Relations,” begun during his 2014 residency in Winnipeg at the MFMG, and *Nomadic Bounce*, created as part of his residency through the school of art at Australia’s Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2012. In Urban Shaman’s third gallery space, AND, Baerg included a project created out of a weeklong workshop he led at Art City, an inner-city community art centre in Winnipeg. I saw Baerg teach children about abstraction in art for this exhibit, and describe abstraction as a way of relating. Words, he explained to them, are abstract forms that allow for relationship.

Baerg’s formal abstraction in this exhibit centres Indigenous knowledge by celebrating community in abstract portraiture. These relationships, and his heritage, create a collective provenance for the work, consonant with the erased Indigenous foundations of modern art in North America and Europe. Baerg told me that his works belong to community; he doesn’t own them or take credit for them. He credits the sitter with the content of the digital form in his abstract digital portraits in “Relations.” Baerg claims the work reflects relationships between technology and their nature, not Baerg’s individual creativity or talent. He creates immersive media environments and installations in “The Plain Truth,” “Returning,” and “Relations,” reflecting ceremonial spaces, which encompass global forms within Indigenous worldviews. Baerg revises customary forms of aesthetic knowledge into multi-media exhibition formats, critiquing the conceptual and material violence of Euro-American abstractions, while recognizing their formal beauty,
correctly attributing it, and transforming it in an Indigenous ontological register.

In “Relations,” these relationships include time and space, as the exhibit advances from the frameworks of Mayan, Hopi, Mohawk, and Tibetan prophecies vis-à-vis the year 2012. Baerg told me the Hopi’s is especially salient. For the Hopi, the year presents a fork in the road. In Baerg’s paraphrase, “we can either work together (all of the peoples, represented by the 4 directions of the medicine wheel), or we can go down a road of extermination” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). He frames the global through Indigenous cosmopolitical ground.

Baerg’s “Relations,” exhibited in Urban’s main gallery space, includes 13 tondos, or circular works of art, each of them one or two feet wide, of enamel on wood. His accompanying video work conveys immaterial tondos in an ongoing loop, again highlighting levels of mediation or autonomy. These levels are matters of relationship, which for Baerg must unfold “in a good way” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). He describes, underscoring the global logic of the exhibit, “My previous relationships have preceded journeys. When I’m travelling places, those relationships open doors.” He emphasizes, in the same breath, that this show highlights his relationships with local Indigenous communities and his heritage as a Cree Métis artist. His work with young artists at Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre in Winnipeg is part of this emphasis.

The section of the series “Relations,” shown in the MFMG, reflects Baerg’s work with community members at Ndinawé where he created digital abstract portraits consisting of each community member’s specific character, and not his creative intervention per se. Baerg recalled to me working with a particular sitter: “Every time I clicked for those random abstractions to appear, [digitally formed images of] birds kept
coming forward. I talked to him after, and he said he is a member of a Bird Clan.” He reflects, “The people who inspired the works and visitors to the show are now taking us into the future. [Indigenous community-based arts] are modes for reclamation and empowerment” (Interview 14 Mar 2014). Baerg’s work is collaborative, and the digital media that results from this process is collectively inspired and owned.

The second creation in “Returning,” *Nomadic Bounce*, was part of an Indigenous residency exchange program between the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the University of Lethbridge. Baerg notes that this work is also about travelling traditional knowledge. A Maori artist in New Zealand hosted Baerg, and this production context contributed to his transnational concept. Baerg’s *Nomadic Bounce* looks at, as he says, “running to and from everything we love and hate at the same time; from place, from people, returning to the same place and same people” (“Invite”). Baerg translates his experience into his laser-cut canvases. Urban Shaman showed canvases depicting two wolves. Baerg describes his process in *Nomadic Bounce* in this way:

Working from 33-second video clips, I would paint that 33-second video clip at the scale of 4 feet by 8 feet. I would then take the painting and they would be cut down to tiles. And then another layer of drawing would happen physically in cutting the work with the lasers—an 8-pointed star that references the cosmos. You would also see thunderbolts and these represent change and welcoming change through the work as well. Symbolism is a very important part of my process. Innovation through technology is part of my process; artists have a responsibility to move their discipline forward. (Interview 15 Mar. 2014)

For Baerg, the cosmos, translated into a wolf sculpture made up of abstract bits and
pieces, reflects the recursive process of movement between place and peoples, including animal nations, as a process of return rather than a teleological process of progressive abstractions forwards in time.\(^{30}\) Baerg’s work in painting, video and computing, affirms a non-linear organization of time. He reframes modernist painting in the process, keeping Utopia and losing masculinist individualism. He unearths collective and feminine genealogies of this form, making global connections. Baerg indigenizes contemporary mediation or the autonomy of aesthetic levels to convey his own values, against abstraction as exploitation and extraction. Baerg’s work shows these processes are not fundamental to the aesthetic form that arose out of Indigenous traditions.

Baerg charts colonial histories in the path of capitalist and liberal abstractions of Western modernity. Mainstream histories of abstraction flow along the vein of liberal nation-state formations, in the uneven spread of liberal capitalism around the world, including embodied practices of assumed universality governing the modern subject, and the fragmentation of life under capitalist regimes. They also traverse Indigenous histories of abstraction, as Western artists’ works plagiarize the erased foundations of North American modernist forms.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) See also Jolene Rickard’s Youtube video “abstraction,” in which she considers Indigenous abstraction in contemporary art, separate from Baerg’s work, as a returning.

\(^{31}\) There is tremendous scholarship on this history—much of it supportive and indeed defensive of artist’ right to appropriate. Susan Stanford Friedman discusses some of these positions in her essay “Planetary: Musing Modernist Studies:” Simon Gikandi has argued [in ‘Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference’ 2003], such discussions [of appropriation] often refuse to grant African art the position of aesthetic or formal innovation, instead reducing it to the fetishistic and psychological. In contrast to the appropriation model, a planetary approach to cultural circulation would stress how the agencies of African artists producing and being collected in Africa in the late nineteenth century were part of a colonial modernity, constituting a colonial modernism that Picasso and the cubists indigenized, that is, made native to Parisian modernism. The creative agencies of modernities outside the West circulated into the West as transformative
5.4 Belmore and Benesiinaabandan: Screening Blood Memory

Anishinaabe artists Belmore and Benesiinaabandan assert the bloody erasure of Indigenous peoples and knowledge by settlers, including their technologies of vision, and at the same time cite blood memory, both literal and figurative, as a foundation of Indigenous existence. Blood memory connects settler traditions of abstraction and autonomy to Indigenous traditions, where many of their aesthetic forms originated. Belmore and Benesiinaabandan broker this reconnection in art.

Belmore’s new media staging of blood in *Fountain* memorializes many events for different Indigenous nations in specific historical moments. Belmore, repeating themes, gestural, material, visual, and historical, treats the translocality of Indigenous experience in North America, as she has put it, “rendering the invisible visible” (Watson 28). Belmore’s works of art, with blood abstraction, stages translocal Indigenous citizenship across cities and continents, centreing blood memory as a form of literacy in the global civic archive. *Fountain*, along with Belmore’s preceeding works that I discuss as context, highlight industrial landscapes in which she figures her own body. Her work enunciates corporeality as a paradoxical kind of abstraction of Indigenous contexts, because her performances and installations abstract Indigenous knowledge through her body in performance. Her 2000 work *The Indian Factory* responds to the freezing deaths influences. Who, we must ask, is derivative of whom?” See "Planetary: Musing Modernist Studies," *Modernism/Modernity*. 17.3 (2010): 483. I agree with Stanford Friedman that African art should never have been “reduced to the fetishistic and psychological.” However, I wholeheartedly disagree with the notion that Europeans “indigeized” the forms. I hold to the term “appropriation” to affirm the artists’ violence and to keep an awareness of violence in the foreground of my discussions on these artistic acts. Belmore’s comment seems to align with Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.  

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of Indigenous men in Saskatchewan who were driven outside of the city by police, in what were called “Starlight Tours.” Police officers left these men in the snow to die near the Queen Elizabeth Power Station. Belmore recalls that the word “factory” came to mind when she saw photographs in the newspaper accompanying information about the deaths of these men (Belle and Blondeau). Belmore grew up in Northern Ontario, where industrial scenes like those in the photographs were common. She considers how Indigenous bodies are imbricated in resource extraction and development on Indigenous lands, figured as raw material for exploitation. The space of her performance conveys this landscape. The performance involves five scenes, which are abstractions of the newspaper’s description of events. Belmore firstly comes into the performance space, with her assistant Osvaldo Yero, wearing white overalls with feathers fastened to them. She sets down five buckets of water. On the wall, initially covered by a cloth, is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II in her youth. After Belmore takes a good long look at the portrait of the Queen, she goes to a washstand where she wets five shirts and places them beside each bucket. Yero mixes the water in the buckets to make plaster. Then, Belmore takes the five men’s shirts and sinks them into the plaster buckets. Once they are covered, she rehangs them on the wall, and begins to set lit candles in the wall above each shirt. Lynne Bell and Cree/Saulteaux/Métis artist and critic Lori Blondeau write, the “stiffening shapes of the white shirts invoke the (absent) presence of the five men.” The stiffening plaster recalls the freezing of bodily fluids that took place during these horrific deaths.

Belmore notes, “The very idea of men freezing to death outside an industrial plant that is named Queen Elizabeth II draws my attention to the treaties and the relationship between First Nations people and the Crown.” She and Yero then move to the other side of the gallery space where a fan blows a feather in the air, towards a sheet of white canvas hanging on the wall. Belmore repeatedly dips the feather into a pail of blood, and allows the blood to spatter on the wall. Both go to wash their hands; their overalls are covered in blood. Belmore conveys the prairie as a feather blowing in the wind, and her ‘painting’ with blood resonates on this score, seeing the landscape through the lens of blood, making visible the disavowed land-based Indigenous foundation of Euro-American biopower, and the site of Indigenous ecological memory that exceeds this genocidal tradition. She has also called this segment of the work a “blood blizzard,” commingling, through abstraction, Indigenous blood with the landscape or overall ecology of the land.

The third section of the performance has Belmore turn on a police light hanging from the top of a pole in the centre of the room. The pole is wrapped in signs that say “Danger Do Not Enter.” She dances, wearing a straw cowboy hat, to “The Fighting Side of Me” by Merle Haggard. Her dance, starting as a whirling reference to pow wow, an Indigenous appropriation of country music, turns into a sort of drunken, exhausted, staggering motion.

Belmore turns to a photograph on the wall of the buffalo rubbing stone at Wanuskewin (a First Nations’ heritage park on the outskirts of Saskatoon). She takes roofing nails and, totally absorbed, hammers the nails over the image of the stone until it is completely covered.
Then, she lays on the floor and Yero, who has been working with wet clay all the while, comes and leans over her, covering her in clay, as though to bury her alive. In Belle and Blondeau’s description, “Her clay-covered form moves up and down with the rise and fall of her lungs,” and when her breathing becomes laboured, audience members move to help her get out of the hardening casket. The clay outline that remains on the floor resembles an enlivened, police chalk outline, where those who would otherwise be dead got up and walked away, with help from the human community surrounding them. There are many elements at work in this performance, many aspects of semantic slippage going on simultaneously. These abstract conceptual moves highlight the embodied human
relationships Belmore stages in this performance. The organic material of the clay replaces chalk outlines for the dead figure on the ground, the police light stands in for a disco ball during her dance, the feather and fan replace the hand and brush, the nails completely overlay the stone. The photograph represents the rubbing rock, another absent presence, like the men that are gone. Belmore reflects the impossibility of hammering into a stone; as the bison rock is sacred for First Nations peoples, it resists industrial interference, though it can be all but hidden from view. For those who pay very close attention to this performance, Yero is costumed to suggest a police officer burying Belmore, as there are subtle red stripes on his outfit. Speaking of colour, Mohawk curator Lee-Ann Martin writes of:

> The prevailing symbolism of the color white as signifying purity, cleanliness, and goodness. She substitutes alternative associations from an Aboriginal perspective: white guilt, whitewash, white lie, and white-out …It is the red of ancestors’ blood upon whiteness: blood memories of pain because of white lies…” (57)

Belmore, in *blood on the snow* (2002), articulates these ideas with a white chair, surrounded by a white down comforter and covered, or upholstered, with the same material. The top of the chair looks dipped in blood, which is strange as it is upright, and thus almost suggests a tampon or something that stems blood flowing downwards. This work commemorates the 1890 United States Cavalry massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, where soldiers murdered 300 unarmed Sioux, mostly women and children, who lay frozen “under a blanket of snow” (Rickard 70). *blood on the snow*, the most minimalist of the works discussed here, uses abstraction to secure Indigenous histories in space and time, creating a gendered genealogy of what can be seen and said about these
events. The blood looks like something revealed that was hidden inside a woman’s body, something incredibly private and foundational to life itself. This visual reference to women and childbearing capacities suggests genocide in that it was a nation’s women and children who the soldiers killed in the massacre. The work also resonates with the gendered framing of North American land, understood to be “conquered” by the thrust of male imperialist power. Belmore made the work the year that Robert Pickton was charged in the serial killing of numerous women from the Downtown East Side of Vancouver. The silence that went on for years in response to the women’s disappearances resonates horribly with that of the falling snow upon the murdered Sioux. The abstraction, in the weirdly anonymous quality of the chair, connoting female blood, not only suggests “aloneness” in that the chair seems forlorn at the centre of what should be a comforting blanket, the colour of which is consonant with the pristine white walls of the gallery, but also connection across multivalent intimacies and vulnerability within the whiteness of industrial society, in ways that resonate with the work of Nadia Myre in Chapter Three, and the permeability of art and its surrounding spaces in Baerg above.

Belmore’s work Fountain, for the 2005 Venice Biennale, projects a video image through falling water, showing Belmore on Iona Beach, an industrial zone releasing Vancouver City’s sewage, as well as logging detritus, into the ocean. A fire burns nearby on the beach. Belmore takes a metal pail and, fully dressed, wades into the ocean to carry out pails of water. She approaches the screen after a long effort with the heavy water on the beach, and throws the water out of the pail at the lens: the water appears to turn into blood. She is still visible now but through a screen of blood. She stands, resolute, with a weird and difficult autonomy or self-determined stance. The image clearly stages global
relationalities based in Western abstraction, made visible through Belmore’s abstract forms.

Figure 64. Rebecca Belmore. *Fountain*. 2005. Video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Belmore, through Indigenous blood memory, responds to these processes in their specific forms as industrial economic exploitation, dehumanizing, ongoing genocide, and corporeal locatedness. Belmore conveys distinct and interrelated contexts through blood: the almost impossibly difficult work of decolonization, culpability towards the dead, environment as Indigenous blood (blood blizzard), red blood on a pristine blanket, mimicking the white walls of a pristine art gallery and women’s menstrual blood, blood spatter on a towel blowing in the wind, and perhaps ultimately, cleansing visions of Indigenous personhood through a screen of blood, blood memory as a screen through which to see the land, and its scenes. All of these works reframe Western forms of abstraction and autonomy, suggesting they are best understood in the lens of abstraction.
developed by Indigenous peoples’ blood memory. Belmore’s blood screens and blizzards onlooking industrial zones and Canadian winters; blood erupting in the white space of the gallery on a comforter, or against a backdrop of snow outside a human-rights museum, all signalling mass murder; these works insist on the relationship between blood memory and context in ecologically located Indigenous knowledges. The legibility of this work without the concept “blood memory” makes it resonant across audiences, very much like what David Garneau describes as “screen” objects. Garneau writes:

In Freudian psychoanalysis, screen memories are seemingly insignificant and incomplete memories that both suggest and conceal meaningful but repressed content. In order to satiate Settler cravings for the sacred objects of others, Maori, Haida, and every other Indigenous people produced trade goods specifically for visitors. Screen objects resemble the sacred things they imitate but do not include anything that might animate them. These sculptures, masks, and garments have the patina of the originals but none of the meaning, ritual, or context. They are cultural artefakes designed for others and give nothing essential away. The hope is that colonizers might settle for the appearance and leave the essential undisturbed.

Belmore work produces newly visible relationships to and in the situations described above; it is also doubled by the screen in the ways Garneau discusses: it signifies blood multivalently, while blood memory can never be “given away.”

Scott Benesiinaabandan’s installation series “Psychic Histories Blood Memories” similarly externalizes memories of bodies in space, or selves in relation to place, in the distinct cities of Winnipeg, Montreal, and Melbourne, Australia. The series began through a new media residency at OBx Labs in Concordia University, and continued in
different cities including Winnipeg and at RMIT University of Design and Technology in Melbourne. Benesiinaabandan considers hypnosis and dreaming as Anishinaabe methods, though for settlers they are associated with Western psychoanalysis. Benesiinaabandan first created *A Psychic History / Blood Memory of Home – 2:51 mins, HD, 2013, in Montreal*. He describes it as “[a]n examination of the inter-relativity of collective consciousness, history and the future, using scan technologies to bridge the distance between photography and video.” Benesiinaabandan describes *Blood Memories (Winnipeg) – Outdoor Loop*, as “generative video studies of specific geographies that seek to reveal the collective unconscious of a space” (benesiinaabandan.com). Benesiinaabandan created *Blood Memories (Winnipeg)* with Winnipeggers, projecting the work as a conceptual memory back onto itself over the course of hours.

This work opens this memory up to visibility and illustrates his vision of an Indigenous collective unconscious. While at OBx Media Lab, Benesiinaabandan began working with programmers to create code specific for his Indigenous arts projects. Benesiinaabandan has long been interested in Anishinaabe ways of knowing, having double-majored in psychology and religion and culture at the University of Winnipeg. In our conversation about this work, Benesiinaabandan shared with me that he is interested in blood memory as the assertion that Indigenous memory is never fully lost. He believes that Western science is only now beginning to catch up to Indigenous ideas about blood and the knowledge that it carries.34 Benesiinaabandan’s vision reframes Canadian civic

imaginaries that materialize genocidal translations of Indigeneity requisite to the settler
nation-building project. These civic imaginaries rely on abstract universalism. As in the
works of Favell and Baerg, who reframe visual relationships to the Earth as a globe seen
from space, Benesiinaabandan’s work relies on his contrast to realism and supposedly
objective and universal perspectives. This is why Benesiinabandan worked with
programmers to create a code that would visualize memories of any space in ongoing
abstract sequence. While the memories are always retained, and constantly in renewed
interrelation with one another, they are not laid bare for easy decoding ie. for all to see.
Viewers enter the space of the installation and the program “reads” their bodies in the
space, and then translates them into abstract visualizations that are continuous and
ongoing and that merge with new images whenever the program captures more data. No
component of the interaction in the space across time is ever lost. Benesiinaabandan
created the sequence of data composition with computer programmers to mimic his sense
of the processes of dreaming and unconscious collective memory, making Indigenous
consciousness visible through programmed visualization design. This process-based work
examines the idea of the Indigenous collective unconscious, evocative of the use of
hypnosis as a mechanism to re-program consciousness.

Benesiinaabandan’s Indigenous visibility, as an immersive environment within
global contexts, functions similarly to Baerg’s medicine wheel abstractions, situating
living modernity in an Anishinaabe lens. This is a decolonizing gesture in part because

settler identities compose through the production of disappearing Indigeneity. Dominant modern civilities articulate through liberal and neoliberal framings of the self in relation to place, in both biopolitical and industrial audiovisual dimensions of the nation state, as citizenship models. For the 2013 Australia Indigenous Arts Residency Exchange, he presented *Blood Memories*. Benesiinaabandan describes his process on his website:

These images capture “time-smears” using a slit-scan camera technique processing programs and webcam technology to create fields of images that record and capture the physical space they inhabit. A slit-scan camera technique creates not only a still of a moment but a time-based image that captures space in a unique “time-smear” capturing the space, time and movement within a singular customizable frame.

“Psychic Histories Blood Memories” treats the technological mediation of memory as a defining quality of civic ecology and Indigenous nationhood. These practices can be understood broadly as what Stiegler calls “the industrial conditioning of memory,” beginning with the photograph and the phonograph, inaugurating “a new mode and range of techniques for selecting, making, reading, and ordering memories—a new phase in the grammatization of experience, recollection, and consciousness” (41). Technologies are integral to the composition of Indigenous “collective unconscious,” and always have been, as with all human beings. Benesiinaabandan’s *Blood Memory* series continuously and creatively stages sovereign identities and communities through Indigenous visualization technologies that transform both liberal and neoliberal realist colonial grammars, and assert Anishinaabe visuality.
Benesiinaabandan’s accomplishes this through his combination of programming code and imaging technology to “stage” civic space. In my interview with him, Benesiinaabandan described this work in terms of “repurposing coding technologies of the everyday.” Benesiinaabandan, connecting these coding technologies to blood, both resonates with and extends a theoretical framework wherein biopolitical grammars facilitate relations between the biological and the technical. What hematological form forms the basis of Western programming code?

“Psychic Histories Blood Memories” layers data in a computing logic that visually mimics the psychic tangents of blood memory, wherein programming physically imprints Indigenous histories and meanings in a complex transindividual consciousness. This series of works attempts what Mithlo describes as blood memory: “consideration of the physical nature of people, their bodies, and their familial linkages to their ancestors.
through blood and their land—when taken as a totality” (105). Mithlo argues that

Indigenous contemporary artwork:

needs to be accessible on the level of experience; it must contain the depth of
generations of relationships and engage the senses of memory. It is the power of
blood, linkage to the land, and memory of painful histories of genocide that form a
synthesis of relationships between artist, participant, and viewer in decolonized
civic space. (105)

The physical skein of blood memory in Benesiinaabandan’s work, translated here through screens, engages the concept of the psyche and its material ground. My claim relates to the way that the sculpture creates, through code, a compositied set of innumerable overlaid images. Untangling each specific detail is impossible because of the incredible concurrence of images, in contrast with liberal hermeneutics where “art appreciation is often a matter of legibility” (Mithlo 105). All moments are present, if not conventionally legible, as the installation continuously retrieves and remakes itself in ongoing relationships. Wireless transmission technology visually resonates with dreaming, towards advancing Indigenous ways of knowing time and space. Benesiinaabandan’s hermeneutic technology does not depend on a liberal rational subject making meaning in a proprietary relation to the self. “Psychic Histories Blood Memories,” unsettling to the established ontology of liberal civility, as a site stages a specifically Indigenous form of cultural memory as both a retrievable and continuously elaborated location. In these ways the work is a proto-theatrical milieu in which the artist performs, envisions, and materializes Indigenous civic collectivity.

Indigenous civic archives articulate through computing in this work. Archives, and

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the computing epistemologies that undergird them today, are sites of knowledge production rather than retrieval. In this vein, the epistemology that governs Benesiinaabandan’s archive art, realized through computing, unfolds within an epistemic framing that advances the authority of Indigenous voice. Indigenous aesthetic objects and forms convey conceptions of nationhood, sovereignty, memory and authority regarding the civic archive. I look at Benesiinaabandan’s work as a constitutional component or piece of an Indigenous ecology, which I relate to nationhood. Settler peoples are in this constitution as participants in forming a decolonized transnational civil society that is composed of entangled transnational histories.

Computing languages embody this transnational history. Digital humanist Tara McPherson writes about how programming languages reflect and convey racialized discursive formations consistent with those in the US at the time that the UNIX operating system was created (“Fragment One”). These formations include writing code in such a way that each program in the operating system is unable to “see” the operations of any of the others. The operations of the overall program prevent each individual program from seeing the ways in which each co-composes with each other in an overall formation, very like the way that discourses of racism worked in the US at the time, where for example whiteness was not seen as relationally construed. “Psychic Histories Blood Memories,” against this framing of “clarity” as “modularity,” fragmentation, or autonomy, or abstraction, restages the principles of programming code, and the semantics of civility, through the trope of blood, dissembling liberal hermeneutics in Indigenous aesthetic ordering or archive.

Conclusion
Jason Baerg’s exhibits “The Plain Truth: RYBW,” “Returning,” and “Relations,” Rebecca Belmore’s The Indian Factory, blood on the snow, and Fountain and Scott Benesiinaabandan’s “Psychic Histories Blood Memories” series stage sovereign environments through abstraction, across self-determined levels of mediation. Settler theories of globalization emphasize Western concepts of abstraction as mediation and autonomy, meant as innovation and disembedding in settler framings that perpetuate conceptual and material violences. These reach their apotheosis in finance capital originating out of land speculation; industrial and resource development; colonial genocide; and, foundationally, appropriation of Indigenous abstraction into liberal political philosophy and art. In contrast, Indigenous artists treat globalization through travelling traditional knowledge, drawing on both abstraction and blood memory/history as ways of relating, as opposed to the notion of separation and self-reflexivity associated with Euro-American autonomy and processes of abstraction in the arts and in global modernity at large. They work through traditions and conceptual frameworks that assert blood memory/history as Indigenous ontological foundations that are not lost. Abstraction, continuous in Indigenous aesthetics, is founded in blood memory and history. Baerg’s exhibits traverse painting, new media, video and computing, organizing a time and space defined by medicine wheel cosmologies. His works, reflecting Indigenous epistemologies of modernity and globalization, reframe modernist painting and architecture, rearticulating its utopian gestures, and dropping its masculinist individualism to reveal Indigenous collective origins. Baerg, unearthing the collective and feminine genealogies of this form, makes global connections between Indigenous traditions and specific communities with whom he collaborates in creating these works.
Baerg uses new media to indigenize the mediation or the autonomy of aesthetic levels to convey medicine wheel, tipi, and community values in a contemporary art environment, starting from the outside to visualize the emplaced self.

Rebecca Belmore presents the history of blood as a central trope and material foundation for Western colonization, while she simultaneously stages what Elder Linklater and critic Mithlo call Indigenous blood history and memory. Belmore connects blood’s figuration as an abstract universal of Western Christian humanity with processes of resource exploitation and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Her conceptual treatment of blood lays bare the material and imaginative violence of this genealogical orientation. Her blood screens and blizzards onlooking industrial zones and Canadian winters; blood irrupting in the white space of the galley on a white down comforter, signaling mass murder covered over by guileless white snow, all insist on the relationship between blood and context in Indigenous knowledges, which she locates ecologically in specific land-based contexts.

Anishinaabe artist Scott Benesiinaabandan draws upon traditions of computation to frame Indigenous technological, visual, and embodied literacies that eschew liberal Western hermeneutics. Benesiinaabandan frames locations in space through Anishnaabe psychic methodologies that include hypnosis and dreaming. His programming code resonates with both Anishnaabe forms of cognition as well as visualizations of DNA, taking what, in normative computing, conveys liberal abstraction and autonomous levels. He visually produces an interconnected and Indigenous code epistemology and immersive environment.
Conclusion

This chapter began, in section 5.1, discussing Indigenous blood memory as a philosophical principle and method of art production and interpretation in Indigenous contemporary art. Section 5.2 discusses abstraction through Euro-American genealogies, histories of abstraction under capitalist modernity, as they are centred within a dominant settler tradition of historiography and cultural studies. Artists Baerg, Belmore and Benesiínaabandán reframe abstraction to serve Indigenous communities, eschewing its function in modernist art and theory as a privileged “outside” or “self-reflexive” autonomy in settler art ultimately serving Western hegemony. Indigenous genealogies of abstraction connect to conversations with Cultural Studies critics such as Lawrence Grossberg and Fredric Jameson, who talk about “semi-autonomy” or “embedded disembeddedness” in both economic and cultural domains. These latter theorists describe abstraction in terms of capitalist modernity, where the “levels” or discrete elements of cultures and economies are distributed primarily according to the dispensations of a capitalist world order. These conversations have largely taken place, as with those on artistic abstraction, on Euro-American terms that neglect to understand themselves as settler-colonial. Anishinaabe, Cree and Métis artists are looking at how these play out in Art Historical framings both in North America and globally, reframing abstraction in Indigenous aesthetic and economic terms, and centreing the abstract concept of blood memory as a way of relating, instead of separating, across both figurative and literal domains.

In section 5.3, I discuss Jason Baerg’s compositions in “Plain Truth: RYBW,” “Returning,” and “Relations.” Baerg melds masculinist painterly abstraction with Mother
Earth’s materiality as an Indigenized foundation for levels of mediation from paint to computing. His work, founded in a “plains” way of knowing and truth, is both situated and translocally significant, articulating ceremonial space through medicine-wheel colours. His media works resonate translocally across North American contexts on the plains, and also globally, in cities where colonial capitalist architecture mediates civic environments. He speaks across these domains to architecture and its imbrication with aesthetics and philosophy, using what he calls travelling traditional knowledge. This knowledge is not proprietary to the artist but rather created with and belonging to Indigenous community, for example children at Winnipeg’s Art City arts programming centre, or Indigenous youth at Ndinawe Youth Centre. Baerg’s work conveys its positionality within animist relations, encompassing architecture within a global purview through Plains tipi pole teachings that query the logics informing contemporary global relations of abstraction.

In section 5.4, I discuss the work of Rebecca Belmore and Scott Benesiinaabandan. Belmore’s blood screen, in her work *Fountain*, is a literal lens and form of visual literacy through blood. I look at the ways her works theorize the imbrication of genocide, murdered men, women, and children, and industrial exploitation and manufacture across this sample of her blood-oriented works. In her work *The Indian Factory*, as in *Fountain*, her blood blizzard shows how Indigenous blood and the land are thoroughly enmeshed, and make art together by employing automated industrial objects like a fan. She relates to clay and rocks with her body in embodied relationships, acknowledging her material relations. As I noted in Chapter One, describing our stance in shared protest at a Winnipeg Idle No More event, she mobilizes these relations in protest,
as with her blood blizzard, where the wind is a relational animacy. These animate agencies enact the permeability of art and its spaces, as with Baerg’s permeable boundaries between paintings and the architectural structures that house them.

Benesiinaabandan’s abstraction of blood memory is a way of relating, rather than separating, like Belmore’s. Benesiinaabandan externalizes bodies in space through Indigenous technologies mimicking dreaming as an Anishinaabe way of knowing. He visualizes the psychic tangents of blood memory against liberal hermeneutics of legibility. These include computing languages based on UNIX programming systems that rely on liberal abstraction logics of modularity. Benesiinaabandan theorizes this technological and global totality in an Anishinaabe way of knowing, visualizing, and Indigenizing the semantics of civility.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have investigated Indigenous new media artworks to pursue, with artists, some of the tenets of Indigenous resurgence in civil society in Canada. Indigenous artists’ resurgent new media works demand that settler citizens and scholars envision their relationships with Indigenous communities on terms that decentre whiteness and resurge Indigeneity. I considered new media artworks shown at Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery, works I encountered when organizing and digitizing the gallery archive. I have argued that these new media artworks, while set in conversation with other forms, enact translocal Indigenous citizenship in artistic practices through three overlapping tenets: the city through the lens of Indigenous archive, civic ecology through the lens of Indigenist materialism, and abstraction in processes of globalization through the lens of Indigenous blood memory. I responded to the lexicon of aesthetic values that these new media artists produce in relation to hegemonic liberal norms in Winnipeg, as these artists indigenize the civic public sphere on multiple levels: that of the self in the archive (Chapter Three), community in ecology (Chapter Four), and philosophical forms in global contexts (Chapter Five). These artists’ new media lexicon serves as a transnational Indigenous compendium treating notions of time, space, personhood, citizenship, inscription, embodiment, materiality, nationhood, art history, and globalization through theories of relationship. Each chapter understood these through Indigenous authority on the key theme of resurgence.

I have deployed feminist methodologies, aligned with Indigenous methods, in this dissertation, performing readings of Indigenous media arts as a probe for Winnipeg’s
civic ecologies. Specifically, I have engaged practices of standpoint epistemology, through self-reflexive and collaborative methods, and intersectionality as a lens, which I shared with artists through my process of research. These methods allowed me to care for “the process of research as a discursive site,” in itself, “for subject formation and potential restaging” (Aikens 7). This practice illuminated, for me, the terrain on which I was working with artists as broadly ontological and praxis-based. My experience speaking with artists and sharing my interpretations with them, in response to theirs, deepened my sense of our relationality and that of our communities. In this respect, my identity as a settler in conversation and relationship with Indigenous artists enacts a prefigurative politics of new relationships towards what David Garneau calls conciliation. Writing this dissertation also had the effect of loosening the bounds of a liberal identity in my own practices of learning and knowing: I do not act or know autonomously but in relationships. I consider this part of my own practice of decolonized citizenship, against the models supported by the settler state and academy. I have used these methods to add my voice, in response to those of Indigenous artists and scholars, to a shared decolonial history-in-the-making.

I would like to return to Anishinaabe writer Billy Ray Belcourt’s blog post I cited in my introduction. Belcourt writes on the topic of settler scholars in Native Studies:

No, I don’t think white people should be teaching Native Studies. This, I argue, would constitute an epistemic violence whereby whiteness is re-centered as the objective subject position, as the site from which indigeneity is rendered knowable. I call on white academics in Native Studies to question their own complicity in white pedagogies, in making the history of indigeneity a site of
whiteness. What brought you to Native Studies? What keeps you there? How does your tenure withhold tenure from Indigenous academics? Should you instead be talking about settler identity politics? Of settler colonialism and its discontents?

While I am not teaching Native Studies, I do teach Indigenous contemporary art and critical theory across many disciplines including literary, cultural, art historical, and media studies, and in conversation with many other works. I teach both settler and Indigenous students. I do not find that my pedagogical methods make “Indigenous histories a site of whiteness.” My teaching does create a space of conversation and relationality, one that strives towards conciliation while affirming the eternal irreconcilability of Aboriginal peoples to settler coloniality. My teaching, and my research, affirm the need for settler decolonization, by centering Indigenous knowledge in conversations about colonialism and Indigenous/settler relationships. While I attended to what brought me to this research in my introduction, I have yet to respond to Belcourt’s questions about what keeps me here, and how my tenure may withhold tenure from an Indigenous academic. I also need to respond to whether I should be talking about settler identity politics instead of Indigenous art.

While my future research continues to engage to a significant degree with Indigenous contemporary art, I am shifting the focus of my research to artistic responses to neoliberal globalization in Canada. In my postdoctoral research, I plan to write specifically of contemporary art, across media including novels and poetry, which responds to neoliberalism and the new realities following the North American Free Trade Agreement in Canada. These conditions threaten all life on this continent. As Taiaike Alfred joked at a talk I attended at Queen’s University in 2012, “I guess we’re all Native
now!” While of course we are not all Native, it is important to me to make clear the ways in which Native and non-Native peoples stand to gain from alliance against neoliberalism—as long as this alliance is decolonial, centering whiteness and affirming resurgent Indigeneity. My current focus still centers Indigenous knowledge and arts, but I will not be continuing to research Indigenous contemporary art as a sole topic for one of the reasons Belcourt cites: part of being a good ally is not taking up too much space. Also, I am embodying the value shared with me by Anishinaabe artist Mimi Gellman during a conversation we had in 2012: that of standing in my own shoes. Indigenous and settler peoples both respond to neoliberal attacks on life; our communities both stand to gain from alliance, as long as that alliance is always at the same time decolonial. In interdisciplinary research, I continue to ask: how do other research areas relate to Indigenous art? I find it important, as a settler scholar, to consider how Indigenous contemporary art calls for the transformation of all research on these lands.

I agree with Belcourt that settlers need to reflect upon their settler identities and politicize their understandings. White settlers on these lands need to acknowledge and interrogate their relationality with Indigenous peoples, and how this plays out in their knowledge production in academic contexts. This practice entails centering Indigenous peoples’ knowledge. Indigenous peoples are often at the front lines in terms of the impact of contemporary problems such as neoliberalism that everyone on these lands faces differentially. I aim for my postdoctoral research to respond to Indigenous theorist Jeff Corntassel, who explains that Indigenous peoples use the phrase “settler” as a demand for change. Indigenous peoples, due to their distinct positionality in relationship with neoliberal economics, as well as their longstanding ability to relate to animals and the
land in equitable ways, have unique and pressing insights that must be centered in confronting neoliberalism on these lands.

In the context of Indigenous and settler relationalities, Urban Shaman is valuable as an institution of Indigenous arts practices and urban ecologies both for local (Winnipeg) and translocal resurgence and appearance. As I have described in this dissertation, Urban Shaman, in terms of links between people, shows, and individual works, contributes significantly to shaping the “surface of appearance” (Foucault) of Indigenous art history. In the chapters of this dissertation I have described the works shown at Urban Shaman, discussing them in terms of resurgence, or active and embodied Indigenous self-definition and -determination, and resurgent Indigenous visions of civil society in Canada. Urban Shaman has provided a venue for new media artworks that assert these visions, while at the same time availing them to productive conversation with art shown elsewhere, or works focused on other cities, as in Chapter Two, with the works of Terril Calder, shown in Winnipeg at Urban Shaman but focused on Toronto, and Terrance Houle’s work, focused on and exhibited in Calgary. Urban Shaman also stages global conversations through single works, such as Scott Benesiinaabandan’s series “Psychic Histories Blood Memories,” a processual computing-based work that take places in many cities across the globe as well as Urban Shaman. I focused on new media art, which resonates not only with the Marvin Francis Media Gallery space at Urban Shaman but also with next steps that the gallery is taking to put its now-digitized archive online.

Indigenous art in the context of Urban Shaman is what Mohawk curator and previous gallery director Steven Loft calls a “cosmological mode of communicative agency” (175-176). Throughout this dissertation, I have described Indigenous new media
art in these terms, figuring new media art as archival sovereignty (Chapter Three), Indigenous materialist frameworks (Chapter Four), and blood memory responding to globalization (Chapter Five). I have learned much from the key themes of concern articulated by the artists in Urban Shaman’s archive. In terms of my own next steps as a settler academic and curator living in Winnipeg, I am currently working in each of these contexts: digital archives; co-curating art exhibits focusing on Indigenous materialist perspectives on settler-Indigenous relationships; and responding to artistic perspectives – always in relation to Indigenous knowledge – on globalization.

Archives

I plan, in my forthcoming work, to continue to work with archives as a Collaborator with the SSHRC-funded research project ArtCan2.0. This project, as I described in my introduction, plans to host Urban Shaman’s archive through the ArtCan.ca website, and then through the Virtual Museum of Canada. I plan for these processes to affirm principles from the exhibitions that I’ve discussed in this dissertation, reiterating the framework of resurgent knowledge and new media technologies. ArtCan.ca, locating Urban Shaman’s gallery archive at the centre of Canadian Art History “online for the world” holds the potential to significantly reframe the entirety of Canadian art history as it is currently taught and comprehended. Urban Shaman’s digital online archive will enable access to contextual histories of art production and reception, and will be a centerpiece, among others, in the conjuncture of Indigenous art historical scholarship and computing in Canada. Locating this archive at the center is part of settler citizenship of the settler collaborators on this project, who yield control of the framing of Canadian art online to key stakeholders in Urban Shaman’s programming history. This is a radical act
of decentering Euro-Canadian concerns in Art History.

Digital archives, and the computing epistemology that undergirds them, as I discussed in Chapter Five, are sites of knowledge production rather than retrieval, and herein lies their potential for productive de- and re-centering. Digital archives advance particular forms of vision. Many of the perspectives advanced by artists in my study reflect the epistemology that would govern Urban Shaman’s online archival site. In future work, I will work with key stakeholders of Urban Shaman’s history to consider how this can be realized through computing, towards situating Urban Shaman’s archive within an epistemic framing that advances the authority of Indigenous voice. In Urban Shaman’s digital archive, the form and system of classification, as well as the governing epistemology that these reflect, will compose according to the resurgent lens in Indigenous art history. As I’ve described in this dissertation, these operations, seizing the civic archive through Indigenous new media art, have been ongoing at Urban Shaman.

One additional project that I feel makes a fine example of this kind of archival citizenship is that of Mohawk artist Jeff Thomas, who held an exhibit called Pictures of Indian-ness at Urban Shaman in 2008. He re-exhibited these photographs, focused on images of Indigenous peoples in Canadian public spaces, in 2012. This latter show, called Father’s Day, involved members of the community co-creating these civic images.
The exhibition site for *Father’s Day* was Portage Place mall, a racialized city space in downtown Winnipeg, with heavy police presence. Many Indigenous peoples who live in the inner city spend time there and this is why Thomas chose to exhibit in that location. Community members, specifically youth, are pictured above recreating these “pictures of Indian-ness” in the city with him, redefining civic practice of identity and community.

Similarly, Urban Shaman’s forthcoming website, conveying the gallery’s digital archive, can expand the role of Indigenous art history in public life, contributing to communities of practice in the conjunction of digital and material experiences. I understand this forthcoming archive as an emerging composite form that decolonizes settler archival compositions, including the city space, and that will support Indigenous processes of social transformation and transitional justice.
Urban Shaman’s archive as it is now organized emphasizes the gallery’s histories in terms of community projects, exhibition histories, members’ shows, websites & newsletters, national and international shows, and artistic and curatorial talks. The archive also provides publication histories surrounding each exhibition and the gallery itself. The gallery itself, along with its ongoing and forthcoming archive and website projects, makes these dynamic interconnections visible and alive for interested users. The knowledge that emerges is embedded in the dispersed results of the collective practices of Urban Shaman’s contributors, whose oral histories of the gallery will guide the markup across the digital archive.

A site like the one we hope to build can present a sovereign Indigenous lens for interpreting genealogies of Indigenous arts. Urban Shaman's digital archive of contemporary Indigenous art similarly reaches into and rearticulates the contents of other archives within the walls of other institutions. Even an archive as specifically located as Urban Shaman’s is translocal and transnational, reaching across both time and space – all the more when it is hosted online. To me, this is a profound example of self-determination in the contexts of Indigenous arts in civil society. Accompanying this project will be a book, adapting this dissertation significantly. This book will also assert the stakes of the research on Indigenous art history in Winnipeg specifically at Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery.

Citizenship and Ecology: New Materialisms

Once again, Indigenous new media arts produce civic ecologies; in other words, they restage constitutive relationships that compose Canadian cities for Indigenous and settler citizens in terms of their human and non-human elements. On the one hand, these
works enliven the visibility of the Western cultural archive, in terms of the liberal political philosophy and its ontological enactment in Canada. One the other, they perform and portray—they resurge—Indigenous citizenship forms. As I have described throughout this dissertation, these citizenship forms disalign from liberal models in key ways. Artist Jude Norris specifically treats gender and civility from an Indigenist materialist lens. For artists Jason Baerg and Jude Norris the medicine wheel figures prominently as a determinant of social space. Mohawk curator and scholar Steven Loft writes “Aboriginal intellectual, communication, and aesthetic traditions contain clues to a long regard for a multiplicity of forms of societal engagement and communicative strategies” (172). The artists whose work I have discussed in my study enact civic environmental stewardship, drawing upon longstanding Indigenous forms of engagement and strategy.

This dissertation has shown that specific forms of citizenship and spatial practices are expressed and destabilized with Indigenous aesthetics at the center of urban discourses. New media art emerges as a significant form in relation to the city for the Indigenous artists exhibited in Winnipeg, as new media is the dominant communicative form in contemporary urban Canada. At the same time, “new media” is really a continuation of media use for Indigenous nations from time immemorial. As Steven Loft writes, in the context of pre-contact medias,

What these historical Indigenous practices and knowledge suggest is our ability to take account of vital information with the creation of a physical object and move beyond what has been oversimplified as solely orally centred transmission processes. The “object” is charged and embodies the interplay of processes between the oral and the written (notched/drawn) used to aid in its own retelling.
The combination of the oral testimony and the interaction with the object created becomes multimedia and/or an event. The object then, from the perspective of many Indigenous worldviews, literally becomes animate and alive.

(“Mediacosmology” 174)

The Indigenous artists in this study convey the media forms of Indigenous histories of collectivity in their work. As in the work of Jude Norris, they produce multivalent animate relationalities. Artists also connect Winnipeg to other places through the use of media. I have learned from the works in my study that it is important to decolonize the abstractions that separate the civic context of the city with that of the reserve, or so-called “rural” or “country” land. My forthcoming work attempts to more thoroughly trace these connections, while opposing neoliberalism as a settler citizen, in alliance with Indigenous peoples. While I oppose neoliberalism from the perspective of my own settler citizenship, I acknowledge the centrality of Indigenous knowledge on these lands in facing this problem.

My future curatorial work focuses on artistic responses to hydroelectric development by Indigenous communities in Canada and Brazil. With Cree curator Daina Warren and Indigenous/Portuguese curator Jamille Pinheiro Dias, I plan to co-curate the artistic collaboration of Indigenous artists from Canada and Cree, Anishinaabe, and Amazonian communities in Manitoba, Canada and Pará, Brazil. Northern Manitoba and the Amazon basin are key sites for hydroelectric megaprojects on Indigenous lands. While non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and Brazil perceive benefit from hydroelectric projects, the environmental impacts of hydroelectric development are becoming difficult to ignore. Settlers in both countries also face increasing pressure to adapt their
governance and resource development to reflect the recognized sovereignty of Indigenous peoples on the world stage. State governments in both Brazil and Canada apply hydroelectric development law on a varying case-by-case basis in brokering development deals with Indigenous nations. This divides Indigenous peoples by creating disparities across and within communities, depleting possibilities for integrating self-governance and economic wellbeing nationally and globally. In both countries the state acts as though it represents only non-Indigenous peoples, negotiating against Indigenous communities’ interests. As it stands now, non-Indigenous peoples in Southern Canada and Brazil are shaping the conversation. Therefore, it is important to show Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaboration in advancing the authority of communities most affected by these developments. We mean for this community art project, highlighting these transnational contexts, to strengthen Indigenous nations’ visibility in advocating on their own behalf, to affirm, strengthen, and promote both global Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous/settler collaboration through growing collaboration and discourse.

In our collaboration, Anishinaabe artists Scott Benesiinaabandan, Julie Nagam and Oji-Cree artist KC Adams will work with Indigenous communities to apply and communicate aspects of traditional knowledge that speak to hydroelectric development with their artistic practices. Co-curator Jamille Pinheiro Dias, PhD Candidate at University of São Paulo, Brazil, and Cree curator Daina Warren, will bring lived experience and academic expertise as an Indigenous-Portuguese scholar from Pará, and an Indigenous curator from Canada, to facilitate understandings of Indigenous cosmologies in Brazil and Canada. I undertake my curatorship through Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery (Urban Shaman), the largest Aboriginal artist-run
centre in the world, located in Winnipeg. Urban Shaman has overseen and pursued funding for the art project through Canada Council for the Arts’ Aboriginal People Collaborative Exchange grant ($30,000). We plan for our project to strengthen cross-cultural understanding, developing community-specific artistic responses to global hydroelectric development. We are undertaking curation in consultation with Anishinaabe, Cree, and Xingu communities, adhering to traditional practices and cultural protocols to reflect Indigenous agendas.

This project will disseminate through an evolving network linking news media, art galleries, universities, international arts networks, and Indigenous communities in Brazil and Canada. Nearing the end of production in Brazil, there will be panel discussions and artist talks on themes and subjects relevant to the interface of contemporary Indigenous art practice and globalizing hydroelectric development. The artist presentations will be open to the public, student body and faculty at the University of São Paulo. At this time, we will present the artwork at the Institute of Brazil Studies, University of São Paulo. Following this exhibit, in Winnipeg, the artists, curators and translators from the project will give artist talks and panel discussions coinciding with the opening exhibition at Urban Shaman in summer 2016. The resulting artwork, and talks, will be made into an interactive website hosted by the Virtual Museum of Canada. We will also curate online exhibits, in collaboration with communities and artists, for an audience beyond academe through ArtCan.ca.

The long-term impact of our project arises from the creation of stronger ties between Indigenous and settler communities in the Northern and Southern hemispheres, and in building sovereignty and solidarity appropriate to transnational contexts. Our
collaborative art project facilitates cross-cultural exchange as a reciprocal, two-way learning process in which Indigenous communities and artists in both countries will increase the international stature and impact of their knowledge and combine their strengths to co-create new knowledge about hydroelectric development on their lands. We will measure these impacts through indicators such as: strengthened partnerships; media coverage; social media; government responses; and scholarly citations.

Neoliberal Globalization

In conjunction with this curatorial endeavor, my post-doctoral research will respond to neoliberal globalization by tracking artistic engagements with these themes in Canada. At the centre of my research will be the artistic archives of Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore, who has sent me all of her personal archive to organize and digitize. She and I have agreed I am to write a book that is, in part, about this archive, though my book will not by any means be the authoritative text on her practice. My work will, however, revolve around her epistemic priority as an Indigenous artist from Canada, in relation to my settler research on neoliberalism, Canada, and home on these lands. While Dr. Mark Cheetham at the University of Toronto will supervise this research, Belmore has agreed to work with me on my writing focusing on her work. I will also work with Anishnaabe independent scholar and curator Wanda Nanibush. In the words of my supervisor, Dr. Susan Lord, I will track:

the brutal inoperability of international laws to land claims and environmental activism. [Neoliberalism has entailed] states abandon[ing] their citizens to markets and the lawlessness of accumulation, held captive by the IMF and World Bank. Unsettled land claims and landless persons have no government to which to
represent themselves or to claim for themselves a citizenship, a right to belong, we find ourselves, as Ariella Azoulay, Chantal Mouffe, Saskia Sassen and Tom Keenan differently describe, suspended between the law and justice. (2)

As a postdoctoral researcher, I will examine the interface of aesthetic knowledge and the political functions of anti-neoliberal discourse in artistic projects against law, policy, and media advancing neoliberal agendas. In my postdoctoral work, I will focus on the aesthetic and political functions of neoliberal globalization as it relates to understanding rights, territory, and authority across territories and countries in Canada.

The research program I propose has three objectives: 1) to describe how neoliberal laws and rights discourses currently mediate between peoples and the state in Canada; 2) to analyze multimedia art practices (video art, digital photographs, multimedia installations; poetry; novels): how communicative and aesthetic forms reorient notions of rights, territory, and authority in global contexts; and 3) to assess public responses to these artworks, theorizing how their reception allows for new understanding of responsibility, rights, and protections of citizens and environment. My theorizing of cultural production will reorient other scholars’ recent framings of the history of human rights as a series of aesthetic scenes, emphasizing the significant response in arts production to neoliberal discourses and claims of resistance for peoples in Canada. I will combine theoretical research with analysis of artworks and their contexts, including community consultation, art production, exhibition and dissemination. As this project is informed by critical theory I will engage a combination of Indigenous, globalization, and communications theories to study how this art production and its contexts are framed by the structures and discourses through which they are articulated. Such framings that are
relevant to my study include: post-NAFTA neoliberal policy and development practices; forms of communication initiated by communities in response to these practices; and global aesthetic forms that figure modes of rights claims, including photography, video, and digital media. I will contribute to knowledge by directing my description, analysis, and assessment to distinct publics in academic, policy, and public venues.

This study comes at an apt time in the study of resource development, neoliberal globalization, and Indigenous and settler citizen rights in Canada. I seek to understand how citizenship struggles coalesce with neoliberal globalization by considering the vital role of aesthetic experience as responses to these contexts. Neoliberalism, sovereignty, and globalization play varying roles depending on context, and they pose new challenges for current generations. The artistic rendering of their significant histories and visions of a just future will make long-term contributions to the politics of development and communities globally.

Conclusion

In “Repercussions: Indigenous New Media Art and Resurgent Civic Space” I have discussed media art works shown at Urban Shaman, interfacing them with resonant works shown in other contexts. I have looked at how these works create their focus on civic life in Canada by drawing upon a particular economy of Indigenous aesthetic traditions and new media technologies. While the Marvin Francis Media Gallery space, Urban Shaman as a whole, and its forthcoming digital archive operate as authoritative civic spaces and institutions of Indigenous resurgence (Chapter Three), relationality (Chapter Four), memory (Chapter Five), many of its shows draw their power through translocal relationships with other works in and about other cities, nationally and
globally. Indigenous artists and curators illuminate these connections through their work, as forms of translocal Indigenous citizenship. The civic ecology that these works enunciate opposes and confronts, while conveying positive content that is autonomous from, the hegemony of liberalism and neoliberal globalization as continued colonial dominance in Canada. These works, as I wrote above, advance a lexicon of aesthetic values, but they also embody critical Indigenous methodologies in ongoing relationships of praxis. This praxis stands as a decolonized form of Indigenous citizenship. Indigenous new media artists convey their epistemologies in cities far from their traditional territories, through exhibits that resonate across the distinct knowledge and experience of specific Indigenous nations. Indigenous new media art functions as, and through, practices of translocal Indigenous citizenship, reframing and restaging urban civic ecology, and maintaining and developing Indigenous epistemology and values in Winnipeg at Urban Shaman.

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