

Decolonizing Public Places and Public Memory: Kingston Ontario

By

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## ABSTRACT

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Since the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, municipalities are increasingly addressing reconciliation in their practice, including new engagement with Indigenous heritage and public memory. Municipal perspectives of heritage are frequently colonial and result in Euro-Canadian commemorative landscapes that reinforce official national narratives of history and identity. These landscapes limit the expression of Indigenous heritage and reinforce settler-ignorance. If the goal of creating reconciliatory spaces is to foster dialogue, interaction, and opportunities for conciliation, current municipal heritage practices are insufficient. This research uses Kingston, Ontario as an opportunity to explore municipal heritage practice in the context of reconciliation, and learns from Indigenous peoples what new places of public memory might look like when created from decolonial perspectives. It indicates that there is a need not only for the modification of current colonial commemorative landscapes, but also for the creation of new places of Indigenous public memory that are dynamic, emphasize dialogue and community, and that might create opportunities for conciliation. Decolonizing municipal heritage practice will require a willingness to experience discomfort and vulnerability, the redress of settler-ignorance, and a commitment to creating new relationships with Indigenous peoples.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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IRSSA: Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement

KFPPD: Kingston First Peoples: Purposeful Dialogues

KNFC: Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre

RCAP: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

## INTRODUCTION

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In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report, and made calls to action with the goal of advancing reconciliation in Canada. The TRC report was directed at individuals, institutions, and all levels of government, including municipalities. Since the TRC there has been increased national engagement on reconciliation, yet many Canadian individuals and organizations have little understanding of what reconciliation might mean to them. ‘Reconciliation’ as it is predominantly performed in Canada is colonially conceived (Garneau, 2012). The dominant narratives of reconciliation address colonial guilt by emphasizing the perceived pastness of wrongdoing, while failing to grapple with responsibility, reparation, and redress (Dean, 2013; Rymhs, 2006). Instead, focus is shifted to the victimhood of Indigenous peoples, who are asked to heal and forgive despite continuing and pervasive structural inequalities and colonial oppression (Rymhs, 2006). This performance of ‘reconciliation’ allows the nation to re-imagine itself and pose its colonial history within new national narratives in which the nation appears humbled and morally beneficent, yet does not truly engage with guilt and responsibility, or address contemporary oppression (Rhymes, 2006). Indigenous peoples are increasingly troubling the term reconciliation, offering instead the terms conciliation, decolonization, or liberation, in an attempt to convey different imaginings of the future of Indigenous-settler relationships in Canada (Garneau, 2012; Simpson, 2008). Though Indigenous peoples might be abundantly clear about the necessary shifts in thinking, forms of engagement, and action required to create opportunities for conciliation, most of the nation is not aware or is unwilling to participate. Instead, Canada continues to frame reconciliation within a culture of redress that ignores the needs of Indigenous peoples in favour of symbolic amends that support national notions of virtuousness (Henderson & Wakeham, 2013). Since the TRC was

released, narratives of reconciliation have made their way into the operations of institutions and governments and many function with an unclear understanding of reconciliation. Nonetheless, they push forward, integrating reconciliation into their practice in ways that focus not on truth, decolonization, or building relationships, but rather on participating in settler-colonial conceptions of ‘reconciliation’ that maintain settler comfort and hegemonic power.

This research engages with an evolving body of literature exploring public memory, Indigenous representation, settler-ignorance, and reconciliation. Geographers have studied the connections between public memory and landscape, the deeply political nature of commemorative practices, and the way national identity narratives and official histories are created and communicated (Dickenson, Blair, & Ott, 2010; Gillis, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1984; Knowles, 1997; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012; Osborne, 2001). Related to this, there has been much interdisciplinary study of the ways in which Indigenous peoples, histories, and contemporary realities are obscured within the nation so as not to discomfort settler narratives of identity, belonging, and place (Dean, 2015; Francis, 2011; Mackey, 2002, 2012, 2016). There has been a deepening awareness of settler-ignorance, and a desire to understand how and where it might be addressed (Applebaum, 2015; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Godlewska & Bednasek, 2010; Schaepli, 2018). There is a growing body of literature concerning Indigenous ontologies, pedagogies, and resurgence (Alfred, 2009; Asch, Tully, & Borrows, 2018; Kimmerer, 2014; Simpson, 2004, 2008, 2011). Concurrently there is an expanding literature exploring decolonization and aesthetic action, which also considers the places existing and imagined that might be created for Indigenous being, expression, and conciliation (Garneau, 2012; Robinson & Garneau, 2016). Public memory and commemorative practice has been studied in the context of the TRC and reconciliation, and research has highlighted the dynamic nature of Indigenous

heritage while exposing the coloniality of current Canadian heritage practice (Cooper-Bolam, 2014, 2018; Dean, 2015; Henderson & Wakeham, 2012; Murray and Carl, 2016).

Kingston Ontario, a mid-sized Canadian city with a strong Loyalist heritage and a deep Indigenous history offers an excellent opportunity to explore the interactions between places of public memory, municipal heritage practice, and settler ignorance. Kingston has a prevalent commemorative landscape with numerous plaques, statues, monuments, and place names that highlight the city's history with a strong emphasis on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is a tight focus on Sir John A. Macdonald: the Bellevue House museum at his previous home; his grave in the Cataraqui cemetery; a large statue of his likeness in City Park; the 'Spirit of Sir John A.' locomotive outside of City Hall; and numerous streets, businesses, and buildings bear his name throughout the city. From Confederation Basin, to Battery Park, to the Martello Towers, military history and narratives of Canada's colonial founding are commemorated on plaques and memorials throughout the city. In City Hall, an overburdened room, aptly named Memorial Hall, contains plaques, portraits, and photographs that emphasize the political and military history of Canada's Anglo-colonial founding, including the required photograph of Macdonald lying in state in the room after his death. Notably absent from this commemorative landscape are any significant mentions of women, French history, immigrant history, Indigenous peoples, pre-colonial history, or 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

I undertook this research in Kingston on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. Kingston has a rich Indigenous history, and a growing Indigenous population, and yet settler ignorance prevails in the Kingston community. For those who are unaware of Kingston's Indigenous history there are very few opportunities to learn. Walk around the city and you will find few reminders in the landscape of Indigenous history or contemporary presence. In that

sense, Kingston is the norm in Canada. Most Canadian cities have heritage landscapes that construct official histories and support national identity narratives. These landscapes often obscure Indigenous peoples, histories, and realities, as they reinforce dominant conceptions of the nation and identity. Because Indigenous narratives unsettle comfortable settler-Canadian narratives of history and identity, they are often obscured. It is perhaps for this reason that the TRC's calls to action include sites of public memory, dialogue, and commemoration. Municipal heritage practice is of particular interest in this context yet, as institutions and governments are faced with the task of implementing the calls to action, they often default to practices of remembering and commemoration familiar to them in the way they create public places. Municipalities control the heritage landscapes of cities, which often reinforce colonial narratives of history and national identity. Within cities there is the potential for the creation of new places and narratives in response to reconciliation. In this research I focus on how municipal heritage practices engage Indigenous heritage, and the potential for change in their practice in the context of reconciliation. The questions that arise are multifold: How does municipal heritage practice create places of public memory from a colonial Euro-Canadian tradition? How are municipalities addressing or maintaining current colonial heritage landscapes? From what understanding of reconciliation does municipal heritage operate? What places of public memory would best serve the needs of Indigenous peoples? When new places of public memory are created, what is the role of Indigenous people in creating these spaces? How might new places of public memory be created to address settler-ignorance and create avenues for conciliation? I do not answer all these questions, but I hope that this work can contribute to a larger dialogue surrounding the role of public memory and its relationship to settler-colonialism in Canada, while shedding light on the current conceptions of municipal reconciliation in response to the TRC.

## CHAPTER 1

### Kingston and reconciliation

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“As I look across the crowd here this afternoon, I see Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples standing together. And what a great picture that is, of the relationships that we are building here and locally, and modelling what true reconciliation looks like”.

Kingston Mayor, Bryan Patterson, opened Kingston’s National Indigenous Day celebrations in 2018 with these words. He described a talking stick gifted to him, and identified two white beads with special significance— “There are these two white beads and they are parallel. And one of them represents our Indigenous community, and one represents our non-Indigenous community. And they are parallel on the talking stick because it speaks of how our two communities are to walk side by side, respecting each other as we walk into the future”.

These well-intentioned comments offer a promising narrative for a Canadian city in the Truth and Reconciliation era. In 2015, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) made 94 calls to action, many of which encourage the direct involvement of municipalities. Since then, many Canadian cities have begun to assess and deepen their legal, policy, and everyday relationships with Indigenous peoples (Goodbrand, 2018; Tembo, 2018). However, the picture that Patterson paints: of two equal partners walking together in full respect; of Kingston as a city of reconciliation, is a fantasy. Although perhaps the imagined future of the city, it is not the lived reality of Indigenous peoples in Kingston, nor is the City on a trajectory to attain this relationship given the way it currently approaches its interactions with Indigenous peoples around a multitude of issues, including heritage.

Heritage is always about identity. At its simplest level, it refers to what we inherit. We come to know ourselves and others through stories of our own, our families, and our societies' pasts. Who we are as individuals and collectives, is informed by the narratives we have adopted, consciously or not, about our historical geography. Such narratives inform our understanding of ourselves, our relationships, our beliefs, values, and attitudes, and how we have come to hold them. Understanding inherited (understood as both trans-generational and lateral) narratives is essential for bridging difference, by creating dialogue, understanding, and opportunities for conciliation and healing. Heritage has been central to nation building since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and public heritage narratives emerge from prevailing socio-political dynamics (Lowenthal, 1996; Nora, 2001). Canada and Canadians struggle greatly in acknowledging and engaging with heritage – especially when it comes to Indigenous peoples and colonial history. The truths and challenges heritage reveals, and the opportunities for conciliation, understanding, and the building of new relationships that it presents are significant. Heritage is of particular interest in imagining a new path forward for the settler-Indigenous relationship in Canada, and for truth and reconciliation in the creation of new shared futures.

There are many questions that arise when considering Canadian municipalities' relationship with Indigenous peoples. How can Indigenous peoples engage public memory and heritage in municipal spaces that have traditionally excluded them? What responsibilities do municipalities have in upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples? How should they engage the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? How should they be creating and maintaining respectful reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples? When is a duty to consult Indigenous peoples present, and how should consultation be undertaken? These are not

questions that are unique to the City of Kingston. Municipalities across Canada are beginning to look at the way they engage with Indigenous peoples.

### **Interpreting heritage**

Nationally, the way the past comes to be understood and communicated is informed by a heavily colonial conception of heritage, one focused on the material; archeological, tangible, or recorded. Working within this framework, municipalities often consider heritage only within the context of tangible heritage, which “includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future” (UNESCO, n.d.). However, cultural heritage is not confined to tangible materials but includes intangible heritage, which is far more challenging to conceive of in the day to day operations of municipalities. UNESCO has only recently formally institutionalized a working definition of intangible heritage:

‘intangible cultural heritage’ means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills- as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003).

In Canada, institutions have largely considered Indigenous intangible heritage only through the lens of intellectual property rights and issues surrounding appropriation, in places such as museums, and through perspectives that emphasize safeguarding (Bell & Napoleon,

2008; Marrie, 2009). Historically, a preservationist approach to Indigenous heritage has been the predominant perspective of settler societies, linked to the myth of the ‘vanishing Indian’. Beginning with the work of early explorers and anthropologists who documented and appropriated songs, dance, ceremonies, and traditions, in their effort to ‘save’ them from what they perceived as a disappearing people, the exoticization and desire to delimit intangible heritage is a perspective that endures today (Stefano, Davis, & Corsane, 2012). The settler approach to Indigenous heritage is often problematic because conceptions of property, ownership, and heritage are framed as separable from embodied and social experience (Bell & Napoleon, 2008). For Indigenous peoples in Canada even UNESCO’s thorough definition of intangible cultural heritage is insufficient to adequately describe Indigenous heritage, which is often living heritage. Though UNESCO does recognize intangible heritage as living heritage (UNESCO, 2003) the organization’s directive frames this heritage from a safeguarding perspective that limits its ability to fully understand living heritage as dynamic and evolving. Though it is important that intangible/living heritage be recognized on international platforms such as UNESCO, these definitions are not adequate to describe Indigenous living heritage as an embodied experience of knowing, learning, and becoming. In Indigenous ontologies heritage is not a static object or practice, it is based on relationships, and it does not involve the separation of individual and culture or the strict embedding of experience in the material. Rather, it is a part of Indigenous intelligence, a way of coming to know, a way of being- past present and future, that is both individually and collectively experienced, interpreted, and communicated (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bell & Napoleon, 2008; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013; Morin, 2016; Simpson 2004, 2011). In using an understanding of heritage that often does not account for

intangible living heritage, municipalities limit their ability to engage with Indigenous heritage and Indigenous peoples.

### **Consultation and heritage**

Whether or not they are aware of their responsibility, municipalities must consult with Indigenous peoples in matters where Indigenous right or title may be affected, including high-level strategic decisions. In Canada the duty to consult and accommodate rests with the Crown, can be delegated to lower orders of government, and arises when there is knowledge of the possibility of impact on Aboriginal rights or title (INAC, 2011; Lambrecht, 2013; Newman, 2009). Duty to consult and accommodate is invoked in instances where Aboriginal or Treaty rights might be adversely affected, and governments are obliged to minimize these impacts (INAC, 2011). The form consultation must take is unclear in Canadian law and shaped to some extent by competing ideologies and interests. Some settler perspectives hold that the duty to consult is centered on the ‘honour of the crown’, and that the Crown must so function to demonstrate virtuous dealings. Some focus on negotiation as a process more favorable than complex litigation and capable of reconciling the interests of all parties. Some see the principle of consultation as providing an avenue to reconciling Aboriginal presence to Crown sovereignty (Newman, 2009).

In the context of legal practice, consultation emerged and was refined through Aboriginal right and Treaty right cases. Notable cases that developed current understandings of consultation include *Haida Nation v. British Columbia* (2004), *Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia* (2004), and *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada* (2005) (Newman, 2009; INAC, 2011). These cases all developed understandings of Crown responsibility, the conditions that

trigger duty to consult, and some exploration of the meaning of sufficient engagement. However, as concepts surrounding constitutional law and Aboriginal right and Treaty rights can evolve quite rapidly, there frequently remains a degree of legal and political uncertainty surrounding the requirements and responsibilities of consultation (Beuret, 2012; Newman, 2009).

Land use planning, and development projects that involve Indigenous territory, or which might have environmental impacts on Indigenous territory, build on this national and legal level perspective on consultation. Often, conflicts and legal cases that reach a significant level of national awareness focus on environmental and land use issues. In conflicts such as the Oka land dispute in 1990 surrounding the development of a golf course on a Mohawk burial ground, the Keystone XL Pipeline protests focused on environmental and territorial concerns (2017), or the conflict surrounding property and consent between Wet'suwet'en First Nations and Coastal GasLink (2019-), the local and on the ground context, the ability to see the tangible impacts of these developments, often makes it quite clear where Indigenous right or title might be adversely affected. What is less clear, are the influences of political multilevel decision making and how these decisions affect Indigenous rights. In response to a growing awareness of the responsibility to consult, professions have encoded consultation into their expectations with guiding documents, especially in fields such as engineering, resource development, and planning (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013; Newman, 2014). The duty to consult and accommodate is present not only in 'concrete' development projects with direct physical or environmental impacts, but also in "high-level strategic decisions" (INAC, 2011, p. 1). In some contexts, the duty to consult is clearer than in others, and difficulty in interpreting the duty is particularly challenging in high-level strategic development in urban settings (Steinke, 2015). This confusion is especially relevant to municipalities called upon to act as representatives of the Crown on matters of

consultation and accommodation but who are uncertain of how to integrate consultation into their practice.

Canada's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the possible adoption of legislation that would align Canadian law with UNDRIP, mean that responsibility to consult may extend to matters of Indigenous cultural heritage. Indigenous self-determination has always presented a significant challenge to settler identity in Canada, and accordingly Canada has long assumed contradictory positions with respect to Indigenous self-determination and cultural integrity. It's response to UNDRIP is typical. According to Article 4 of UNDRIP, "Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous affairs" (United Nations General Assembly, 2007, p. 8). In May 2016, nearly ten years after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, Canada removed its objector status from UNDRIP. Though Canada first "endorsed" UNDRIP in 2012, this endorsement did not bring meaningful change for Indigenous peoples in Canada. The Canadian government made clear the limitations of its endorsement: "the Declaration is a non-legally binding document that does not reflect customary international law nor change Canadian laws, our endorsement gives us the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to continue working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples in creating a better Canada" (INAC, 2010). Canada's endorsement was hollow as it did not have legislative power to create meaningful change for Indigenous peoples in Canada. In 2016 a private member's bill, Bill C-262, proposed that UNDRIP be adopted into Canadian laws (Christie, 2018). After a good deal of public and political pushback, the bill was passed in the lower house in April 2018. Though the final reading was stalled and the adjournment of Senate prior to the

2019 federal election signifies the probable death of this particular bill, aligning Canadian law with UNDRIP continues to be present in political discourse and campaign promises. It is likely that Indigenous rights as outlined in UNDRIP will become increasingly relevant to the responsibilities of all levels of government in Canada, including municipalities. All levels of government will be under pressure to align their practice to allow Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, and cultural protection and expression. Canada continues to evade responsibility for Indigenous self-determination and it is not yet clear how Canada will align its legislation with UNDRIP (Lightfoot, 2017; Morales & Nichols, 2018). The country has a complicated relationship with Indigenous rights and self-determination, and reconciling Canadian law with UNDRIP will require a decolonization of practice and thinking.

On the matter of social and cultural development, there are two articles in UNDRIP of particular interest to municipalities, Articles 3 and 31[emphasis added]:

Article 3: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, **social and cultural development.**" (United Nations General Assembly, 2007, p. 4)

Article 31: "Indigenous peoples have **the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions...** They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions". (United Nations General Assembly, 2007, p. 11)

Over half of Indigenous people in Canada do not live on reserves but in cities, and this number is growing (Statistics Canada, 2017). What then are the obligations of cities and municipalities in

protecting such Indigenous rights? Beyond the right to self-determination, UNDRIP has significant implications for cultural heritage. If Indigenous peoples have a right to maintain, control, and protect their cultural heritage, knowledge, social development, and traditional expressions, should Indigenous peoples in Canada not have the right to determine how their heritage is represented in public spaces in Canada? Should they not have the right to create spaces for Indigenous cultural expression? For urban Indigenous peoples, should municipalities alter how they navigate their relationships with Indigenous peoples to allow for their full and free agency over matters of Indigenous heritage?

### **Municipalities and consultation**

When their activities infringe on Aboriginal rights, municipalities must act as the Crown in matters of duty to consult and accommodate. What is required of them in the practice of consultation is often unclear “at least until a municipal development triggers the Crown’s involvement... these triggers are most commonly found in the Environmental Assessment Act (1990), the Ontario Planning Act (2005), and the Heritage Act (1990)” (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013, p. 8). In everyday municipal function, this duty to consult might occur in regional development such as the creation of new neighborhoods, projects with environmental impacts such as industry development, and matters of heritage related to land use planning such as construction that has an impact on a historical site. The 2001 Municipal Act declares municipalities responsible for delivering municipal services to their communities. This definition of community includes Indigenous peoples and, as urban Indigenous populations continue to grow, they are becoming more influential in negotiating the delivery of municipal services (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013). Indigenous peoples will include those whose traditional

territories overlap with the municipality and those who may come from farther afield. The urban Indigenous experience has been challenged by models of self-determination that are based on geographic nationhood and limit the political influence individuals and small collectives living outside traditional territory can have (Abele et al, 2015; Heritz, 2018). However, given that urban Indigenous populations are growing rapidly, it is important to consider how urban Indigenous peoples are politically represented in cities (Heritz, 2018).

There is a considerable distance between the minimal legal requirement of consultation adopted by the Crown and what Indigenous peoples consider appropriate inclusion (Fawcett, Walker, & Greene, 2015; Youdelis, 2016). Just as the responsibility to consult and accommodate rests with the Crown, so too does the power to decide the form of engagement taken. A relationship with an Indigenous community can take many forms, and different models of engagement connote different power structures in those relationships. Engagement often results in an absence or illusion of power when decisions that will impact Indigenous communities are simply communicated to them with limited or no opportunity to provide input or to have final decision-making power (Bergeron-Martel, Bellemare, Coninck, & Kaine, 2016). Relative power can result from engagement in the form of cooperation or negotiation, where communities are in dialogue with project proponents and whose views may be represented, but power is still unequal (Bergeron-Martel, 2016). More effective types of collaboration include consensus building and collective action, where communities are in positions of authority and are able to have equitable partnership or complete power over decisions and actions taken (Bergeron-Martel, 2016).

Municipalities all engage in consultation with Indigenous peoples in their own way, and this often results in situations of unequal or relative power rather than true collaboration and meaningful dialogue. Aboriginal advisory boards have emerged in some cities as a way to

connect urban Indigenous communities and those in government as a form of consultation (Heritz, 2018). The issue is that consultation frequently occurs from the perspective of Canadian federalism where Indigenous peoples are seen as subsidiary federal responsibilities, rather than full and equal partners on the basis of nation-to-nation government (Alcantara & Spicer, 2016; Heritz, 2018). A further limitation is who is represented in these forms of local collaboration. Indigenous-municipal partnerships are frequently structured around developing relationships between those who reside outside but nearby a municipality, rather than including urban Indigenous peoples (Heritz, 2018). Increasingly First Nations communities are rejecting the overly flexible concept of consultation as it is defined by governments, and creating their own terms of engagement that better fit their desire for sustained and respectful working relationships with municipalities (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013).

### **National identity and heritage**

When most Canadians speak of Indigenous self-determination they tend to think about land use and environment, especially in the context of resource development projects. Self-determination and cultural heritage are largely absent from popular discourse. What discomforts national identity narratives tends to be silenced. Canadian Studies scholars have long worked to untangle the nation's conception of itself, often referring to Canada as in a perpetual state of 'identity crisis' (Nimijean, 2005a). The perceived distinctiveness of Canadian national identity is important politically, economically, and socially (Anderson, 1991; Mackey, 2002; Nimijean, 2005b). National myths have become deeply entrenched in national beliefs, values, and attitudes both as a matter of political strategy and in the vernacular experience of daily life and 'being Canadian' (Mackey, 2002; Nimijean, 2005b). Key myths at the foundation of Canadian identity

narratives include Canada as an unconquered wilderness landscape; a nation built and defended with a northerly masculine righteousness; and a ‘mosaic’ society built on an ethic of tolerance (Atwood, 1996; Francis, 1997; Mackey, 2002; Rankin, 2012). Underlying these national mythologies are the core assumptions of Canadian sovereignty, honour, and legitimacy. Politically, “there is a need to show that the specific conditions of the Canadian experience have produced a unique set of values: sharing, tolerant, respectful of diversity and difference, and definitely ‘not American’” (Nimjjean, 2005b, p. 29). The shadowed realities of colonial Canada do not fit comfortably within these national mythologies. Recognizing that Canada is built on a foundation of violence, appropriation, and cultural genocide profoundly challenges reassuring national identity narratives. Indigenous self-determination is viewed as a threat to Canadians, in terms of sovereignty, land restitution, and overturning comfortably held beliefs at the centre of Canadian nationalism (Mackey, 2016). Canadian national understandings of Indigenous self-determination often involve a rights discourse that understands Indigenous peoples as minority citizens with particular rights within an already colonial framework. In contrast Indigenous theorists conceive of self-determination as independence and power outside of colonial frameworks (Alfred, 2009; Coulthard, 2014). To recognize Indigenous self-determination beyond the politics of recognition, is to realize that Indigenous peoples will not fall comfortably within power structures that render them powerless (Coulthard, 2014). Embracing Indigenous self-determination counters the image of a unified Canada and is very unsettling for those who want to ignore the realities of Canada’s past and who see Indigenous peoples as assimilated or soon-to-be assimilated Canadians. It is this national uncertainty and discomfort that informs municipal practice, and results in a perspective of consultation and heritage where Indigenous histories and realities are made invisible in everyday landscapes.

At the heart of the settler-Indigenous relationship in Canada is the land. For Indigenous peoples land is far more than settler conceptions of property and control: “In Indigenous traditions, ontology and epistemology are inseparable. The way of thinking about the land and the experience of relating to it are essentially the same” (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 49). This thesis focuses on one very important aspect of the relational nature of land: heritage, which is inherently a place-based, identity-driven, way of knowing the past, present, and future. Indigenous place-thought is central to how Indigenous histories and identities come to be known and communicated (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Kimmerer, 2014; Simpson, 2011). Being in place and connecting to the land is deeply relational and central to accessing Indigenous knowledge and memory (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014). Arguably creating new avenues for Indigenous people, especially urban Indigenous people living in predominantly settler spaces, to create places for community, connection, memory and culture is important for Indigenous resurgence and the everyday wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, as Indigenous peoples begin to reclaim land, systems of governance, and engage new pathways of resurgence, they weave counter-narratives that transform national identity narratives. Places of Indigenous public memory can facilitate moments of bridging and dialogue, address settler-ignorance, and aid progress towards more open respectful relationships. The experiences of detachment, invisibility, and alienation that Indigenous peoples have every day must be addressed immediately. It is vital that all levels of government, including municipalities, address issues of sovereignty, development, and land use. Furthermore, they must address the municipal-Indigenous relationship in regards to their rights to control and freedom of heritage, culture, and social development.

## **Municipal heritage practice**

Most municipalities' approach to Indigenous heritage does not respect the duties outlined in Canadian law and UNDRIP. In most municipalities, Indigenous peoples have very little control over the way Indigenous heritage is represented. While nearby communities with territorial claims might be consulted in a limited capacity, urban Indigenous people have even less influence over municipal heritage decisions. Heritage disputes across Canada demonstrate the incapacity of current heritage and consultation models to properly account for Indigenous heritage, in particular intangible heritage. For instance, a recent industrial and corporate development of the sacred Akikodjiwan site in Ottawa has proceeded on unceded Algonquin territory, despite years of protest and the importance of the site to Indigenous cultural heritage (Akikodjiwan, 2019). Consultation in this case proved insufficient and divisive, providing no significant decision-making power to Algonquin communities or urban Indigenous peoples. While the Ontario Heritage Act states that Indigenous peoples must be consulted concerning Indigenous heritage, its frame of reference is limited to concrete physical heritage. The Ontario Heritage Toolkit, designed to assist municipalities and planners in matters of heritage conservation, defines places of worship as "an inclusive term that includes churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, chapels... shrines, meeting houses or other places of assembly for religious purposes" (Ministry of Tourism and Culture, n.d., p. 5). Many sacred Indigenous sites, even supported by written and oral documentation, will be deemed unworthy of conservation by a heritage system that recognizes only built structures. This monotheistic and materialist approach to the sacred is only one of the limitations in current Euro-Canadian understandings of Indigenous heritage. The Akikodjiwan site is not exceptional. Similar failures to follow UNDRIP and respect Indigenous right to reject development are evident in the loss of culturally significant

First Nations locations in the Peace River Valley (BC Hydro Site C damn) (Hume, 2015) and in the Supreme Court Ruling in favour of a ski resort development on Ktunaxa Nation sacred land (Platt, 2017).

The heritage approaches followed by Canadian cities are often deeply colonial. They focus on the static nature of perceivable, concrete, and recorded settler, European and to some extent immigrant understandings of history. In fact, heritage practice is so deeply colonial that Indigenous literature about place meaning, memory, and the act of remembrance rarely uses the word 'heritage'. Instead, it favours discussions of heritage as framed within more holistic discussions of Indigenous memory, ontology, and being. Attempting to define Indigenous heritage from a limited colonial perspective of heritage is problematic because it is deeply European and does not encompass Indigenous memory and place relationships. Indigenous heritage, in accessing ancestral memory from the body and land, is an embodied place-based way of coming to know, not only the past, but the present, and in creating the future (Kimmerer, 2014; Mitchell & Burelle, 2016). It is both individual and collective, it is a connection of past and present in which both can co-exist, it is internally felt yet can be externally performed/enacted, it can be spoken and also cannot be articulated in speech. Indigenous heritage practice transcends colonial forms of learning, and focuses on processes of knowing and coming-to-know as part of the embodied experience of being Indigenous (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bell & Napoleon, 2008; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013; Little Bear, 2000; Simpson 2011). This is not to say that tangible heritage is unimportant to Indigenous peoples, or that Indigenous tangible heritage is not a part of Indigenous memory, but rather that Indigenous heritage practice engages a more multidimensional approach that is very different than colonial conceptions of 'fixed' heritage. Because of these differing understandings of heritage, this

disjuncture presents an additional challenge to open and free discussion when municipalities take a possessive ownership position in relation to heritage. Though city administrations might know to open discussion with nearby Indigenous communities if a project is going to touch upon a burial ground, it might not occur to them to consider Indigenous community views in relation to the high level strategic decisions that will affect the Indigenous community's ability to participate in intangible heritage practices.

### **Places of Indigenous public memory**

Settler-colonialism works to eliminate Indigenous culture and ways of being, and replace them with settler narratives as part of the process of assimilation and obfuscation (Wolfe, 2006). In Canada, assimilatory legislation and structural racism have separated Indigenous people from their communities, culture, and ways of being. Places for cultural expression and unrestricted Indigenous being are vital for the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Heritage is an important part of cultural expression and the “protection and repatriation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage is viewed as important for the revival and continuity of cultural knowledge, practices, laws, and ultimately, cultural awareness, identity, and self-esteem among peoples” (Bell & Napoleon, 2008, p. 18-19). When Indigenous peoples gather to participate in moments of storytelling, ceremony, testimony, (re)memory, performance, dialogue, and celebration, a place of public memory is created. In these spaces there can be a deep engagement with Indigenous memory, an opportunity to reconnect to culture, reclaim identity, and to create spaces of ‘sensitive sovereignty’ as: “an assertion of Indigenous presence, epistemologies, and practices, a carving of a sovereign space of self-representation that operates in realms that exceed western legal definitions of sovereignty and centers instead on Indigenous forms of knowing” (Mitchell &

Burelle, 2016, p. 43; Robinson, 2015 as cited in Burelle 2016). In this way, places of public memory and the communication of Indigenous heritage are not only important culturally, but can be powerful sites of decolonialization, healing, and reconciliation. When places of public memory are created in spaces that are also accessible to non-Indigenous peoples, they provide the potential additional benefit of unsettling settler narratives, providing the opportunity for settler Canadians to be confronted with their own ignorance about Indigenous peoples, histories, and realities (Dean, 2015; Taunton, 2011). Places of public memory are exceedingly valuable for the wellbeing and resurgence of Indigenous peoples, yet there are often significant barriers to their creation. It is especially difficult for urban Indigenous peoples to access and create places of public memory in the face of municipal heritage models that do not recognize this type of Indigenous expression as part of heritage. To truly serve the needs of Indigenous peoples, cities must shift their heritage objectives from ‘what can we preserve’ and ‘how does this fit into the dominant narrative and branding of our city’, to ‘how can we facilitate deep engagement and participation in heritage so that it is representative of the needs of this community? What are the heritage needs of the Indigenous community in this city? How can the city assist in the creation of spaces that will facilitate engagement with Indigenous heritage’?

Though the protection of tangible Indigenous heritage, such as historic sites, objects, and archeological remains, is essential and important, a reclamation and protection of Indigenous living heritage is equally important. Any and all possible reconciliation will require recognition that colonization is a traumatic attack on Indigenous culture and an erasure of Indigenous ways of being, and that the severing of Indigenous peoples from their land, communities, culture, and ways of knowing must stop. One small element of this is reclaiming Indigenous heritage to provide opportunities for healing, reconnection, and resurgence (Asch, Tully, & Borrows, 2018;

Simpson, 2004, 2008; TRC, 2015). Municipalities have a responsibility not just to consult in matters of tangible heritage, but to consider how strategic decisions that impact intangible cultural heritage must engage with Indigenous communities meaningfully, to change the very meaning of consultation.

### **Kingston’s relationship with Indigenous peoples**

Kingston is a small municipality (population of ~120,000) with a significant Indigenous population. Kingston stands on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. There is evidence of sustained First Nations presence on the land now called Kingston for over 5,000 years (Archaeological Services Inc., 2010; Brennan, 2015). During European arrival in the early 1600’s and ensuing settlement, Katarokwi became a site of trade (Archaeological Services Inc., 2010; Brennan, 2015; Osborne & Swainson, 2011). As in other places in Canada, land surrenders were ‘negotiated’ as part of settlement and Kingston is part of the land surrendered in the 1783 Crawford Purchase (Archaeological Services Inc., 2010; Murray, 2018; Osborne & Swainson, 2011). First Nations peoples in Kingston, and those who have since come to live here, were similarly affected by Canada’s history of colonial policy and legislation that sought to assimilate and eradicate Indigenous peoples and culture. Today, the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte-Teyendinaga are recognized within the Kingston region, as well as other “identified political affiliates... including High Land Waters Metis Community Council, Ardoch First Nations and Allies, and Shabot-Obaadjian- First Nation” (Brennan, 2015, p. 15). As a result of this history, the City has a clear duty to consult these communities when city activities might trigger consultation, but consultation must extend beyond these officially recognized communities. The Indigenous population in Kingston is composed of a diversity of Indigenous peoples, including

those whose home communities might be from anywhere in Canada (Brennan, 2015, p. 26). Half of the Indigenous people in Kingston identify as First Nations, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> are Metis and 1/10<sup>th</sup> are Inuit, with the remainder not self-identifying (Brennan, 2015, p. 15). Over 7,000 First Peoples live in Kingston (Brennan, 2015, p. 25). Unfortunately, Kingston has struggled in developing strong working relationships with the full diversity of its Indigenous population. In the last decade it has begun to become more involved with acknowledging and engaging with the local Indigenous population and is therefore an interesting site in which to explore these dynamics of consultation, heritage, and settler-Indigenous relations.

When it comes to tangible and intangible expressions of Indigenous being, there are no official consultation protocols in Kingston. The City frequently does not consult Indigenous communities in meaningful ways on policy matters that affect them. Currently the City has no formal structures in place, such as an Indigenous advisory council, that would allow for the creation of new relationships. Though an advisory council is not necessarily the venue through which Indigenous peoples in Kingston would like to communicate with the City of Kingston, the lack of any formal relationship allows the City to avoid its responsibility to engage with the Indigenous community in its diversity. Although those working on city portfolios sometimes approach Indigenous individuals for advice in an informal capacity, and though these acts of consultation are not ill-intentioned, the lack of formalization of these processes is problematic. Generally the individuals consulted by the City on matters of policy are not elected representatives of neighboring communities, nor are urban Indigenous people given an opportunity to engage. Those consulted may be active in the Kingston community and/or they may be known to individuals working for the City. This informal consultation of select individuals raises questions of representation, knowledge, authority, and responsibility to the

community. What are the contexts that warrant community consultation beyond the individual level? With whom? On what topics? What occurs in instances of significant disagreement? Does the consultation of “friendly” individuals silence opposition, dissent, or the frank expression of views? If consultation is to be more than a colonial tool within a politics of recognition these are the questions that must be answered (Youdelis, 2016).

### **Kingston and settler-ignorance**

Kingston is a community that is beginning to bridge fragmentation, but that is still struggling to connect. Nationally, Indigenous people experience racism with detrimental effects to their overall wellbeing (Reading & de Leeuw, 2014; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). Indigenous peoples in Kingston have noted a sense of invisibility and disrespect in their relations with settlers in the city, and struggle with fragmentation within the Kingston Indigenous community and experiences of lateral violence (Brennan, 2015). Settler unawareness of Indigenous people is a known and considerable problem. Kingston, like other cities across Canada, struggles with predominant settler unawareness of Indigenous peoples, histories, and concerns both nationally and locally. Epistemologies of ignorance reinforce intentional not knowing through Canadian institutions (Schaepli, 2018; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). As settler-Canadians are often unaware of Indigenous history, geography, governance, culture, and current events, their awareness of Indigenous presence in Kingston is likely to be similarly limited. City officials, elected or not, are for the most part settlers with little or no education about Indigeneity or colonialism in Canada. The underlying settler ignorance is compounded by the way, in cities like Kingston, that public space is constructed to obscure Indigenous presence. The heritage narratives that Kingston communicates are predominantly settler-focused, and obfuscate

Indigenous histories, realities, and contemporary presence. They focus on Loyalist settlement, confederation, and the life of Sir John A. Macdonald, while ignoring pre-colonial history and Indigenous people's experiences of colonialism. Arguably, public spaces in cities provide a place where ignorance can either be reinforced, or alternatively where Indigenous realities can be communicated and settler-ignorance addressed.

While culturally diverse, the history Kingston presents in its places of public memory is far from representative. It has a long and forceful history of colonial memory building, and there is a predominant heritage landscape with a strong focus on the roots of early Canadian settlement, military history, and narratives focusing on the contributions and honour of Sir John A. Macdonald. There are a large number of commemorative places in the city, plaques, statues, parks, and buildings, that make Indigenous histories and realities invisible, while prioritizing colonial narratives (Murray & Carl, 2016). For instance, visitors to the downtown core might take a walk around the grounds of City Hall and Market Square. In this short walk alone they would see the Martello Tower, Confederation Basin, The 'Spirit of Sir John A.' locomotive, and walk along Brock Street (named after a Major-General Isaac Brock from the war of 1812). What they would not be aware of is the traditional territory they stand on, the generations of Indigenous presence along the shore of Lake Ontario, Indigenous perspectives and experiences of settlement, Market Square as a site of gathering and trade, or Macdonald's legacy as the father of the residential school system. It is only upon venturing inside City Hall to the Sir John A. Macdonald room that visitors will find a small sign acknowledging the traditional territory on which Kingston sits. The creation of places of public memory in Kingston falls in line with relatively narrow settler conceptions of heritage, and what is important. The city has a deeply static heritage landscape that it works to maintain, "with its diligent focus on the material, the

rectangular, and the individual, the Heritage Committee works to preserve traces of those who bought land, built on it, and stayed on it or sold it" (Murray & Carl, 2016, p. 64). Even its slogan, 'The Limestone City', represents its strict ascription to the concrete and the tangible. This heritage landscape is deeply alienating to the diversity of Kingston's population, especially, but not only, Indigenous peoples. The dominant focus on Sir John A. Macdonald's legacy continues to alienate, insult, and traumatize Indigenous people. Macdonald's legacy, not only as Prime Minister but as the minister of Indian Affairs, includes policies of starvation, violence, and the creation of assimilatory strategies including the residential school system (Daschuk, 2013). Highlighting this history within a narrative of national greatness denigrates Indigenous experiences of this history, and Indigenous presence in Kingston. It promotes Indigenous invisibility, and perpetuates settler-ignorance about Canada's colonial past and Indigenous histories.

### **Spaces for Indigenous expression in Kingston**

While Kingston presents an official heritage landscape that is predominantly colonial and focused on tangible heritage, the Indigenous community is struggling to create space for cultural expression in the city. The story of this struggle must begin with efforts to maintain a Friendship Centre in Kingston. For many urban Indigenous peoples, Friendship Centres function as a lifeline and provide a significant number of social, economic, and cultural services (Brennan 2015; Heritz, 2018). From 1992 to 2013 the Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre (KNFC) provided a space for services, community programming, and cultural events. The KNFC was not a perfect organization, the community it served was diverse and there was some conflict in the community surrounding its goals and function. As has been true in numerous urban centres, for

some members of the Kingston community, the KNFC's focus on at-risk demographics and limited programming did not make it an inclusive social hub or community gathering space (Brennan, 2015). Despite its limitations, it was an important centre and provided essential services to many Indigenous people in the city. In 2013, the KNFC was defunded and it discontinued its operations. The Kingston First Peoples: Purposeful Dialogues report noted in 2015, just two years after the closure, that the loss of the KNFC had left a void in the Kingston community.

Currently, the spaces Indigenous people use for public Indigenous expression in Kingston are not formal, often occur on private property, and are usually fleeting. The Queen's University Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre has a strong presence and creates opportunities for Indigenous expression and connection at the University and in the community, but operates within the bounds of private institutional space. University spaces are often used for events such as art exhibitions and visiting speakers open to the broader Kingston community, yet they frequently have a student focus. Programs like the Native Language Nest Program and the Katarokwi Grandmother's Council often use space at the Kingston Community Health Centre for gatherings, and the Kingston branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association also facilitates community events. Larger public events such as pow-wows or National Indigenous Peoples Day are held at a variety of spaces in the city, from the grounds of the Royal Military College to Confederation Basin. Grassroots organizations and informal gatherings have found space in churches, school gymnasiums, and residential properties. This is not an exhaustive list of the many programs, communities, and activist groups creating important opportunities and experiences for Indigenous expression in the city. However, they suggest the challenge that the

Kingston Indigenous community often experiences in accessing central urban spaces for Indigenous expression.

### **The Kingston First Peoples: Purposeful Dialogues report**

For a number of years there was limited effort on the City's part to address the needs of the Indigenous community. Cultural Services is a department under the Community Services branch of the City of Kingston. According to the 2010 Kingston Cultural Plan, Cultural Services is responsible for developing strategies to achieve a variety of cultural objectives, including the cultural enrichment of residents and visitor; the development of new cultural experiences and innovative creative product; audience development; arts and heritage education; broadly distributed opportunities for all residents to participate in cultural activity; planning for new cultural capital investment and a thriving arts and heritage scene that attracts cultural tourists. (Cultural Services Department, 2010, p.8)

Cultural Services' production of the *Kingston First Peoples: Purposeful Dialogues (KFPPD)* (2015) document, marked a significant moment for Kingston as the report provided an overarching picture of Indigenous people's needs and desires in Kingston. Previously the City lacked, or had not considered Indigenous people's needs and desires. Inspired by conversations with Alderville First Nations about developing relationships with First Peoples in the Kingston region, the Cultural Services Department wanted to understand the current Indigenous community and its relationship with the City of Kingston. The community interview process informing the document began in 2014, coming at a time when the local Kingston community struggled after the loss of the Friendship Centre, while truth and reconciliation gained traction prior to the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015.

Indigenous participants across the region, and a smaller selection of participants identifying as settlers or allies, were interviewed in the creation of the report to create “a baseline understanding of local First Peoples recognition, voice and knowledge within the Kingston story” (Brennan, 2015, p. 11). The report included a series of strategic goals on a ten-year timeline to address its recommendations and incorporated the voices of Indigenous people from across the Kingston regional community. The Kingston regional community is defined here as inclusive of urban Indigenous peoples, those whose home territories might be anywhere else in Canada, and those with ties to Tyendinaga Mowhawk Territory and Ardoch Algonquin First Nation.

The KFPPD explored a number of community needs, including the need for specific services and programming related to wellness and security, cultural awareness, and increased collaboration with the City of Kingston (Brennan, 2015). One major finding of the report was the need for central cultural space. The report identified "open, safe, welcoming, inclusive community space; [a] centre for fellowship, sharing & feasting" as a primary need of the Kingston regional community (Brennan, 2015, p. 28). It recommended the establishment of “temporary inclusively diverse cultural space for social gatherings, traditional feasting, healing and wellness drumming and singing circles, as well as language reclamation” (Brennan, 2015, p. 38) as a 1-to-3-year goal. Furthermore, it recommended the creation of a new Friendship Centre or other permanent and inclusive self-governed community space as a 4-to-6-year goal. Five years later (April 2019), there is no permanent space in the city that meets this description. Although the KFPPD report was seemingly the first part of a multiphase project, there have been no subsequent reports furthering the project of public space for Indigenous expression. Yet, the

desire for central community space is still present in the Kingston community as has become evident in subsequent projects.

Instead of embracing the calls to action in the *Kingston First Peoples Purposeful Dialogues*, the City of Kingston shifted the ground of the debate to terrain it could manage. It abandoned the KFPPD, arguing that more research needed to be done. It reframed its focus to fit the self-congratulatory mood of the Federal government's sesquicentennial celebrations. This shift achieved a number of things for the City: it took the focus off the main and challenging aims of the KFPPD's concern with creating accessible public space and refocused them on "deliverables" that the City felt it could comfortably achieve. Finally, it brought the City into consonance with the self-congratulatory mood of the country and its Canada 150 celebrations. This eliminated the critical dimensions of the KFPPD report, provided access to Federal funding, and gave the City access to 'reconciliation' without much focus on truth, justice, or the greatest needs of Indigenous communities.

### **Shifting focus**

In September 2016, the City began a project entitled *Engage for Change: #YGK Reconciliation Journey*. This project was related to the City of Kingston's sesquicentennial programming as funding was sourced from the Canadian Heritage Celebration and Commemoration Program— Canada 150 Fund and the city's sesquicentennial budget (City of Kingston, 2018c). The aims of the first phase of the project were to:

- Support the formation of an Indigenous community council/committee that would work with the City of Kingston to explore issues of shared concern and prioritize initiatives to be supported;

- Develop an actionable plan that would lead to the creation of a community-led Indigenous gathering space in Kingston; and
- Continue to support Indigenous-specific cultural education and engagement initiatives, and training within the City of Kingston. (City of Kingston, 2018c)

This first phase concluded in March 2018, and a report to City Council noted that “while the Engage for Change initiative was well received and the majority of the deliverables were achieved, it has become apparent that much more work is needed to strengthen relations with Indigenous peoples in Kingston” (City of Kingston, 2018c, p. 43). The initial phase had a focus on engagement and education surrounding reconciliation and the second phase was set to “focus on working with the local Indigenous community more directly to hear their needs, foster discussion and identify priority areas for action” (City of Kingston, 2018c, p. 43). Despite the statement that many deliverables were achieved, it is striking that the objectives for the second phase of Engage for Change are identical to the aims of the first phase. The first phase resulted in community initiatives around reconciliation and targeted programming, but not one of the three core aims, including a community-led Indigenous gathering space in Kingston, was achieved. It is possible that funding structures caused the divergence from these stated aims. The funding provided by the Canadian Heritage Celebration and Commemoration Program was “earmarked to support ten community-based talking circles as well as an inquiry-based project for Grades 7 and 8 students who were challenged to explore the issue of reconciliation and its meaning over a number of months” (City of Kingston, 2018c, p. 47). These talking circles were facilitated by an Indigenous consultation firm and reached 315 Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. As well, phase one included a curriculum project that reached 220 middle school students exploring the theme of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (City of Kingston,

2018c). Interestingly, the funding set aside for the first phase of Engage for Change was directed not just to Indigenous led events such as National Indigenous Peoples Day and the Katarokwi Indigenous Community Powwow, but to the celebration of First Capital Day, and Canada Day (City of Kingston, 2018c). A digital presence including educational blogs and videos, and the support of Indigenous arts, were also an element of the first phase. This focus on the ‘goal of reconciliation’ and exploring reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is important, but even more important is addressing the core issues that the KFFPD identified as important to the Indigenous community. If Kingston hopes to move toward reconciliation it needs to embrace it’s duty to serve the needs of Indigenous people traditionally marginalized by colonial structures (Heritz, 2018). This begins with listening to and addressing the expressed needs of the community rather than evading meaningful action by continually shifting focus and strategy.

In a moment of introspection, the same report to City Council noted that “as the talking circles progressed and the community conversations unfolded, it became increasingly clear the development of a relationship protocol was not the most pressing concern for the local Indigenous community” (City of Kingston, 2018c, p. 52). The needs expressed in the talking circles supported those originally identified in the KFPPD report: the desire for an Indigenous community council, the need for Indigenous community gathering space, cultural education and engagement in the city, funding and City support to facilitate cultural events and community programming, and more inclusion in City-run events. Clearly, some in the City were aware that the original goals of the KFPPD were being ignored and the Engage for Change project was not addressing the core needs of the community. Nevertheless, phase two of Engage for Change will continue into 2019 with much the same goals and the same processes as phase one, except that

limited funding has been made available for Indigenous facilitators for talking circles. As well, the City of Kingston has committed limited funding to community-led programs and events that centre on the sharing of Indigenous culture (City of Kingston, 2019a). Without the Canada 150 funding, there has been a steep drop in resources to address the stated aims of phase two. This is part of a broader trend towards the neoliberalization of heritage redress, where funding is available only to particular projects which ascribe to particular narratives, ones that are often focused on “a sanitized field of official remembrance created to tame the past’s politically disruptive potential” (James, 2013, p. 36). Phase two of Engage For Change is likely to result in limited programming, not produced by and for Indigenous people, but focused on supporting an illusion of reconciliation and inclusion. The City seems to be committed to a limited form of consultation: hosting a few facilitated community meetings, with little publicity and awareness, while continuing to ignore the previously stated concrete and actionable needs of the Indigenous community.

### **Avoiding discomfort**

In August 2018 the commemorative landscape of cities became a heated topic as national dialogue was sparked surrounding the de-accession of statues, difficult history, and a specific interest in the legacy of John A. Macdonald. As the nation debated the merits of removing a statue of Macdonald outside Victoria City Hall, the City of Kingston again shifted its approach. The City continued to ignore the original calls to action of the KFPPD in favour of grappling with a controversy some feared could harm the City’s fabric and sense of itself. In September 2018 Cultural Services began a project called *Your Stories: Our Histories* to

contribute to the development of an updated Cultural Heritage Strategy for the City of Kingston to be used to guide the development of exhibits, programs and events offered through the Cultural Services Department.... [and] contribute to the development of an inclusive and balanced historical narrative for Kingston. As part of this engagement, specific themes, stories and histories will be discussed – including a facilitated engagement on how we tell an inclusive story of Sir John A. Macdonald and his legacy today. (City of Kingston, 2018b, p. 23).

The cautious tone and limited focus of the project is evident. It expresses settler fear that addressing Indigenous realities and perspectives on Canadian history will destabilize and unsettle a comfortable urban unity: “It is important to note that the intent of this community process is to collect input related to the Sir John A. Macdonald debate locally and to be able to share this input with the public. The intent is not to try to erase local or national history or to remove elements related to this history.” (City of Kingston, 2018a, p. 139). Settlers fear the erasure and removal of history, yet it is Indigenous heritage that has been erased.

The *Your Stories: Our Histories* project invites the public to provide their input into the representation of Kingston’s heritage and John A. Macdonald. Participants could leave their written comments through an online portal anonymously or not, or by leaving a comment card in the John A. Macdonald room at City Hall (City of Kingston, 2019b). It is primarily settler fragility that emerges from this public forum. Contributors argue that Macdonald was a ‘product of his time’, that ‘he didn’t act alone’, that ‘you can’t judge him for one mistake’, and that ‘we can’t re-write history’. Settler discomfort over counter-narratives that might undermine the understandings of heritage, place, and belonging encourages a whitewashing defense of the man and his legacy and defensiveness of traditional colonial history. The process of opinion

collection embodies a majority rule value system that must inevitably favour dominant settler voices. Although framed as consultation, this forum does not value Indigenous voices. There is no overt recognition of Indigenous peoples as stakeholders representing Indigenous heritage in this process. The majoritarian approach appears to consult equally while silencing Indigenous peoples' engagement in their urban culture and heritage. Though the online portion of the project will be followed by public meetings of an ambiguous nature into 2019, there is no clear evidence that there is commitment to hear Indigenous community voices in a manner suitable to them, nor that the results of the project will address spaces for cultural expression.

### **An illusion of inclusion**

Threatened by a challenge to its colonial hero, the City of Kingston has abandoned any commitment to the pressing needs expressed by Indigenous peoples and has quickly reverted to a colonial model of consultation. That colonial model favours work with select people in a limited capacity, while decision making power rests with the municipality. Overwhelmingly, the concern behind colonial approaches is to maintain the settler-Canadian status quo based on ignorance of Indigenous peoples and of the City's responsibilities. Kingston's heritage landscape is similar to that of many small towns in Canada. It is a heritage practice driven by the creation and maintenance of official histories used in the projection of place creation and city branding to both residents and newcomers. Kingston is either unaware of its responsibility, or unwilling to extend meaningful consultation to Indigenous peoples on matters of heritage. Instead, the City offers talking circles and retains the power to create community space and opportunities for cultural expression while the need for Indigenous spaces of cultural expression remains.

Kingston is undertaking some laudable initiatives. That Indigenous issues are ‘on the table’ is a step forward when considering the City’s past. It is also commendable that the City has hired Indigenous consulting groups to complete the engagement processes associated with these projects. Yet, even as the City appears to seek opportunities for sharing, it prioritises settler voices. The City has a duty to consult, but the way it consults is of the utmost importance. The heritage landscape in Kingston has the power to address settler-ignorance, and to begin changing the local relationships. Consultation, in and of itself, does not constitute a relationship. Real and functional relationships allow dissent, conflict, negotiation and the possibility of choosing entirely new directions. Changes to this heritage landscape cannot come from colonial perspectives where Indigenous voices and power are subverted. If the City of Kingston’s understanding of reconciliation is that of the Wampum teachings, equal partnership and two parties walking side by side into the future, Kingston must undergo substantial transformation.

## CHAPTER 2

### Rethinking places of public memory

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Though we may walk by them every day without paying much attention, places of public memory are central to the way that people come to understand their city, themselves, belonging, and others. In Canada, places of public memory also influence the way that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people interact. Places of public memory inform settler-Canadians about Indigenous peoples, and shape their beliefs and attitudes towards them. Frequently, places of public memory are colonial sites that present settler national identity narratives to obscure Indigenous experiences and reinforce settler ignorance. New spaces for public memory, if created outside the Euro-Canadian commemorative tradition, have the potential to become powerful places of opportunity for education, dialogue, and the creation of new relationships.

Conceptions of national identity and belonging inform the creation and interpretation of places of public memory (Blair, Dickenson, & Ott, 2010; Hayday & Blake, 2016; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012; Osborne, 2001). The narratives communicated in public places in the Euro-Canadian commemorative tradition are associated with the nation and nation-building processes. Settler-colonialism is intrinsically connected to this place-making process, as settlers and their governments struggle to assimilate peoples and their lands into the nation, and create place narratives that maintain hegemonic understandings of the nation through the strategic representation of difference (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Francis, 2011; Mackey, 2002, 2016; Osborne, 2001). The challenge today, in light of truth and reconciliation is to make the presence of Indigenous peoples and histories known, within a nation that has sought to marginalize and disappear them (Dean, 2015; Francis, 2011). In Kingston, Indigenous peoples experience a deeply colonial and alienating commemorative landscape that obscures Indigenous

histories and realities while glorifying foundational stories of Canada's creation (Murray & Carl, 2016). Indigenous pre-colonial histories, their experiences of settlement, and the impacts of contemporary colonialism are absent, while the city venerates Loyalist history and Kingston's status as a military hub and the first capital city of Canada. Kingston provides an interesting opportunity to explore the tensions of Euro-Canadian commemoration, settler-ignorance, and the possibility of new places of public memory that better serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

### **Public memory**

It is vital to make a distinction between history and memory. While history is a reconstruction and attempt to analyze the past, memory is embodied, and as such is living and continually evolving (Blair, Dickenson, & Ott, 2010). Memory is both individual and collective. Public memory is public because it "situates shared memory where it is often the most salient to collectives, in constituted audiences, positioned in some kind of relationship of mutuality that implicates their common interests, investments, or destinies, with profound political implications" (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010, p. 6). It consists of perceptions of the past that are understood in the context of the present and thus public memory cannot be static (Blair, Dickenson, & Ott, 2010; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012). Memory is not a preservation of the past, but a consideration of the past that brings value to the present: it is continually transformed and adapted to meet the needs of the one remembering (Lowenthal, 1985, 1996; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012). Public memory narrates shared identities, and is used in creating senses of connection and belonging, especially significant for creating and strengthening the imagined connections upon which nationalism relies (Anderson, 1983; Mackey, 2012). Understandings of the past can be

unconsciously and consciously manipulated and contested to construct shared identities and to facilitate feelings of belonging. To be shared, public memory must be articulated, and this communication happens through a range of practices, spaces (imagined and real), texts, artefacts, acts of remembering, narratives, and in the abstract entanglement of social life and human communication (Blake & Hayday, 2016; Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, 2010; Gillis, 1994; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012; Osborne, 1998a). Public memory has significant power to shape the perspectives of society. Because it is deeply political, public memory also has the power to marginalize people not in power and who therefore cannot direct the ways that memory is manipulated (Blake & Hayday, 2016; Henderson & Wakeham, 2012). This potentially marginalizing function of public memory is of particular concern to Indigenous peoples, who continue to struggle with the ramifications of Canada's colonial past, contemporary settler-colonial society, racism, and the fight to attain power within the nation.

### **National identity and useable histories**

Nationally, public memory is vital in creating a sense of national unity, belonging, identity, and the very understanding of what 'Canada' is. Canadian national identity is particularly challenged by the struggle to define what makes Canada and Canadians distinct, and the perception of shared values (namely tolerance quixotically paired with anti-American sentiment) is especially important in fostering a perception of unity within the nation (Nimijean, 2005a). Deep discomfort and uncertainty underlies Canadian national identity: that the very existence of the country is predicated on injustice, violence, threat, and denigration of the cultures of others is a difficult truth to face for generations taught that Canada is a multicultural, just, tolerant, and caring society (Francis, 1997; Mackey, 2002; 2016). Canadian institutions and

settler-Canadians are reluctant to recognize colonial roots as well as the continued inequalities and settler colonialism of contemporary life (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). Contemporary Canadian national identity relies heavily on a rhetoric of pluralism. A recognition of the historic and ensuing traumas of colonization destabilizes this concept (Lowman & Barker, 2015; Mackey 2002, 2016). To an amnesiac nation, the very existence of Indigenous people is, on some level, a national threat (Bannerji, 2000; Francis, 2011; Mackey, 2002). Those who identify with the Euro-Canadian telling of Canadian history and identity may feel that their belonging in the nation is threatened by the existence of the ‘other’ (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey, 2002). As a result of many interlocking, and competing policies, including a prolonged assimilative assault on Indigenous peoples and shifting immigration policies, this ‘other’ is comprised of a vast number of diverse minorities. While many of these minorities fall within other narratives surrounding security, immigration, and the multicultural myth, Indigenous peoples and Indigenous histories unsettle comfortable narratives of Canadian ethical achievement and belonging (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey, 2002, 2016).

The historical and contemporary presence of Indigenous peoples in Canada undermines core facets of Canadian national mythology. That Canada was not an uninhabited wilderness landscape destabilizes closely held myths of wilderness, terra nullius, and the honourable and courageous settler (Francis, 1997; Mackey, 2002, 2016). The colonial violence of settlement brings comfortably held stories of European superiority, technology, and expansion into question. Canada’s deep and enduring investment in assimilation provokes moral horror, and unsettles the pluralist rhetoric that Canada has embraced since the 1970’s (Nimijean, 2005b). Realizing the ongoing realities of structural racism and inequality, continued violence, and the current challenges that Indigenous people face, makes settlers understand they are the

beneficiaries of continuing colonial oppression. These realities are not ‘useable histories’ for the project of nation building (Francis, 2011, Gillis, 1994). To recognize the past from a non-nationalist, indeed from Indigenous and pluralist perspectives, is to allow narratives counter to the popular myth, the national ethic of honour, and the sovereignty of the nation. Recognizing these realities, and one’s implication in this historical geography, by virtue of living in Canada today, is to realize the need for action: action that will discomfort comfortably held national conceptions of identity and place. Settler ignorance and unwillingness to consider uncomfortable non-settler narratives, have made Indigenous people and Canada’s colonial past “public secrets” (Francis, 2011, p. 55). This is not to suggest that no one is aware of Indigenous history in Canada, rather, Indigenous histories are marginalized. These public secrets exist in history, but the full truth of experience, and traumatic or difficult events that complicate hegemonic narratives, are not acknowledged within official histories and public consciousness. It is not part of the past that everyone knows. Places of public remembering have a particularly important role in the maintenance of official histories. Frequently designed to perpetuate meta-ignorance that allows for the defence of settler innocence (Applebaum, 2015), where places of remembering do recognize Indigenous peoples and histories, it is in a limited or misrepresented capacity that does not undermine the legitimacy of the nation or official historical narratives.

### **Settler-ignorance**

There is a crisis of settler-ignorance surrounding Indigenous histories and realities in Canada. Settler-Canadians are those who, though not responsible for the historic settling of Indigenous lands, are complicit in and benefit from the ongoing processes of contemporary colonialism that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples today (Applebaum, 2015; Robinson,

2019; Lowman & Barker, 2015). Ignorance in this context is not simply the passive lack of knowledge, though this too is important, but rather is a deliberate social and institutional ontology that defines what can and cannot be known, and which manipulates and oppresses particular bodies in reinforcing hierarchical power (Applebaum, 2015; Francis, 2011; Schaepli, 2018). Ignorance is reinforced through education systems that teach us a version of Canadian history, geography, economics, law, and society that is substantially void of Indigenous peoples and colonialism (Godlewska et al., 2019; Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010; Godlewska, Schaepli, Massey, Freake, & Rose, 2017; Schaepli, 2018). Settler ignorance perpetuates Indigenous invisibility (Francis, 2011). Looking beyond the formal education system, ignorance is also reinforced daily for citizens by the media, government, museums, public events, and commemorative places that in a variety of ways employ official historical narratives to subdue or silence Indigenous voices and realities. This settler ignorance has deeply negative consequences for Indigenous peoples today. Indigenous invisibility perpetuates the racism and structural oppression felt everyday by Indigenous people in Canada. It minimizes the loss of communities, culture and lives perpetrated by ongoing settler dispossession, it denigrates the suffering of men, women and children devalued by state policies, and it allows settlers to play ugly blame games with Indigenous lives. As colonialism focuses on assimilating and destroying Indigenous culture and connections, reclamation and awareness of Indigenous histories and realities is vital for the individual and collective health and wellness of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

## **Places of public memory**

Commemorations are invented traditions (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1984), that “attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past in order to reassert a threatened social cohesion, to legitimize institutions or status, or to inculcate beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behavior” (Knowles, 1997, p. 7). From this perspective, history is a site of struggle, in which both the control and purpose of symbolic tradition is by and for the hegemon (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1984). It is important to note that commemoration is also vernacular, and there may be tensions between official representations of the past and the public’s interpretation of it (Beaton, 2017; Bodnar, 1992). For instance, there have been many moments of Indigenous resistance that have created counter-narratives to commemorations and called into question official narratives (Anderson, 2016). However, as commemorative landscapes are predominantly created by and for settler-Canadians whose ignorance obstructs both the creation and vernacular awareness of counter narratives to official histories, it is suitable to consider Canadian commemorative practices in this more strict sense of hegemonic invented tradition. Commemorations, as enactments of invented tradition, accomplish political agendas (Beaton, 2017). They seek to source, and fix as ‘fact’ a reading of the past that can be used for the needs of the present. These particular readings of the past both are informed by, and inform, official national heritage narratives. Nations use a variety of methods to communicate official heritage narratives. Public memory is enacted through traditions such as parades, holidays, celebratory days, memorials, vigils, ceremonies, and speeches; it is communicated through the use of symbols, flags, and other iconography; encoded into public knowledge through education systems and institutional narratives; and reinforced in everyday landscapes by the creation of physical emblems such as statues, plaques, and monuments (Blake & Hayday, 2016; Dickinson, Blair, & Ott, 2010;

Osborne, 1998b). Though many places of public memory exist in both populous and remote areas, cities are particularly important sites for the communication of official histories. In representing local identity, and supporting national memory narratives, cities can dedicate spaces that support dominant conceptions of public memory. Most Canadian cities have museums, buildings, statues, plaques, and other expressions of public memory that contribute to a particular place narrative, embedded in the city but which speak to a local, regional, national and sometimes global narrative. The creation of these places is often the responsibility of heritage committees, who regularly regard public memory as commemorative. Rather than considering public history as living, transferable, evolving, and adaptive, a commemorative approach seeks to fix and concretize memory and to represent official historical narratives in ways that provide one reading of the past (Beaton, 2017). A commemorative approach is fatally limited as memory, landscape, population, and place are not static or timeless: places of public memory can only be understood in the context of the present (Davidson, 2014). So, a once meaningful memorial may be increasingly ignored, understood differently, or it may be vandalized to draw attention to the problematic legacies of the individuals and histories it represents. As contemporary values change and as the population changes, so too does the way residents and visitors consider these objects and the histories they represent. Everyday landscapes do not have to be structured by national narratives that reinforce settler ignorance. Instead they can be powerful places to address ignorance by encouraging sharing and dialogue. It is possible to resist, subvert, and redirect such narratives through public space.

I prefer to use the term ‘place of public memory’ to describe events, physical constructions, or delineated areas, used for witnessing, testimony, and the (re)production of memory, and which might be a physical emblem or a place of gathering. In using this language, I

am marking this research out from a concern with monuments and commemoration. The focus on monuments is inherently limited by its fixation on physical objects in the landscape. Commemoration too implies a static approach. Also problematic is that the literature around monuments and commemoration tends to conflate and confuse the two because commemoration can be both object and practice. Writing about commemoration tends to focus on events perceived as historically important, while the term memorial is used to describe an object or place that focuses on narratives of pain and loss. Commemoration is limiting because it does not allow focus on the interpretive process of being in space, and thus cannot encompass Indigenous heritage, as dynamic, integrative, and embodied. 'Place of public memory' is a more comprehensive term that better allows an exploration of dynamic and evolving meaningful places, and their interconnection with individual and collective memory.

### **Euro-Canadian commemorative practice**

Though scholars discussing memory and commemoration often recognize that public memory is dynamic and negotiated, municipalities frequently approach public memory through a commemorative framework that is static and unilateral. The task of municipal heritage committees is to commemorate: to select, define, preserve, and communicate. Furthermore, given that that composition of these committees is often predominantly settler-Canadian, there is a tendency for cities to create commemorations from a Euro-Canadian commemorative practice. Commemoration inspired by Eurocentric preoccupations and models, is informed by colonial ways of thinking. The Canadian commemorative tradition is underpinned by the values of ownership, production, and legacy. It tends to emphasize the glorified legacy of individuals, the static representation of historical facts, conceptions of permanency, and the material.

Commemoration also renders past, which is not beneficial to a discussion of Indigenous realities in which the intergenerational effects of these histories, and the continuity of colonial policies, are felt significantly in contemporary life. The political and singular nature of most commemorative practice means that what is remembered, how it is remembered, and what is forgotten is decided hegemonically (Francis, 2011; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1984). This commemoration takes on a powerful new dimension when in the context of settler states, like Canada; it emphasizes acts of forgetting and the particularly Canadian penchant for selective remembrance. Though all commemorative practice involves forgetting, the particular form that ignorance takes in Canada is shaped by its colonial past and the distinctly unique present state of settler-ignorance and settler-colonialism. I posit that Canadian commemorative tendencies are typical of static European commemorative traditions, but distinct in the settler tradition of intentionally obfuscating Indigenous history to maintain settler comfort (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Francis, 2011). Therefore, I refer to typical commemorative practices in Canada as Euro-Canadian. Euro- because it stems from European commemorative tradition, and is Eurocentric, and Canadian- because of the unique experience of colonialism and settler-colonialism that shapes the production and interpretation of commemorations in this place.

Breaking away from this Euro-Canadian approach to commemoration can be achieved best by turning to people who see place, the past, and the present from less colonial perspectives. Listening to the Indigenous voices in Canada provides an opportunity to consider how public memory practices might be adapted, transformed, and decolonized. To evolve the Canadian heritage model so that it can serve the diversity of peoples in Canada, we should move away from commemoration in its Euro-Canadian form, and towards understanding places of public memory as more adaptive, dynamic, and broad, as a term to understand places that include not

only commemoration but also contemporary dialogue, evolving relationships, and adaptive spaces.

### **Reconciliation and Indigenous commemoration**

For a number of years there has been a call for the creation of new places of public memory that highlight Indigenous histories and realities in Canada. The need for such places is not new. It has taken over 20 years for conversations started in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996 to enter urban awareness. The RCAP began to raise consciousness of how public spaces might “broaden awareness and understanding of Aboriginal issues” (RCAP, 1996, p. 86) and begin to address settler-ignorance in cities. Though many think the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was the first national call to action surrounding Indigenous issues, there have been a variety of similar calls for the creation of new places of Indigenous expression in multiple national documents from the 1997 *Gathering Strength- Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* to the 2005 *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* (IRSSA), and in many municipal documents. Though these documents made calls to action concerning the needs of Indigenous peoples, they are often overlooked and the TRC has re-sparked a somewhat forgotten public conversation about places of public memory.

In responding to the TRC, it is likely that many institutions will create new places of public memory. However as many of them have not thought through what that might mean, or have not worked with Indigenous people to shape these spaces, the results are partial and problematic. The TRC called for a collaborative approach to developing “a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration” (TRC, 2015, p. 340). It also highlighted the need to address current practices to include Indigenous narratives, an inclusive national

heritage and commemoration plan, a national day and monument, and an emphasis on collaborative practices and arts-integration (TRC, 2015, p. 292). The TRC's discussion of the potential establishment of places of public remembering is not limited to these elements. Chapter Five of the TRC also makes recommendations surrounding education, museums, and archives; institutions which are likely to create places of public memory in their response. It makes recommendations at the national and institutional scale to address commemorative practices as they relate to public memory, heritage, and Indigenous culture. However, only a few of the calls to action refer to municipalities specifically. Thus, it is possible for municipalities to conclude that their responsibility is to educate public servants about Indigenous history, adopt UNDRIP where they must, and assist the federal government in answering the calls to action in local matters, which requires no action on local heritage practices or public space. This is a cause for concern as cities play a central role in the creation of public landscapes of meaning both practically and imaginatively. As cities increasingly begin to consider how they might implement the calls to action of the TRC, and broader 'reconciliation' in their practice, it will be necessary for them to consider the perspectives with which they approach commemorations and the creation of new places of Indigenous expression.

In response to the IRSSA, funding was made available through the TRC for commemorative projects. Trina Cooper-Bolam studied the 144 commemorations produced with striking results. Many of the commemorations produced were monuments, likely influenced by the typical language of the funding guidelines. However, the form most commemorations took was not typical of Euro-Canadian commemorations (Cooper-Bolam, 2014, 2018). Rather than the static and concrete Euro-Canadian interpretation of commemoration centered on the creation of plaques, statues, and other fixed objects, these places were far more dynamic. Indigenous-lead

projects focused on creating places of community, connection, and healing. These were places where memory could be embodied and experienced, and that would continue to evolve (Cooper-Bolam, 2014, 2018). The places created were dynamic and took the form of public art, gardens, performances, ceremonies, and cultural gatherings (Cooper-Bolam, 2014). As Indigenous commemorative practices tend to prioritize witnessing, healing, and community connection, they often result in more dynamic forms of public memory. Dynamic places of public memory better engage Indigenous heritage, as a multi-dimensional, living, embodied, and placed-based, way of knowing and coming to know the past, present, and future (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bell & Napoleon, 2008; Doerfler, J., Sinclair, N. J., & Stark, 2013; Simpson, 2011). Indigenous communities, artists, and activists have long produced meaningful counter-narratives and counter-monuments in response to official narratives and “these forms of commemoration provide a forum for sharing authority and practicing heritage as a political action and corrective to monolithic or temporally constrained narratives” (Cooper-Bolam, 2018, p. 66).

### **Kingston’s heritage landscape**

Places of public memory are important because they are where Indigenous histories and realities can be communicated, misappropriated, or ignored. They are local sites where the nation can reinforce ignorance and create tangible histories to supplement a national imaginary that marginalizes diverse experiences. It is in these places of urban public memory that settler-colonialism can be cemented in the public imagination. At the same time, places of public memory provide an opportunity to create dialogue, present counter-narratives, and address settler-ignorance.

Kingston Ontario has a large Indigenous population and significant Indigenous history. Yet, it is a prime example of a heritage landscape that is dominated by Euro-Canadian commemorative practices. It is a city with a strong focus on colonial memory building, centered on early settlement, military history, and Sir John A. Macdonald. Where Indigenous places of public memory occur, they are limited and often temporary (e.g. National Indigenous Peoples Day). On paper, Kingston seems to be paying increased attention to its relationships with Indigenous peoples. As part of a number of recent projects surrounding Indigenous people and heritage in the city, the need for new places for Indigenous expression is beginning to enter municipal dialogue. However, there are significant drawbacks to the way that Kingston is approaching these relationships. The City-Indigenous relationship in Kingston is deeply colonial: from consultation models that do not provide true power to Indigenous peoples in matters of culture and heritage, to the lack of political agency for urban Indigenous people. Despite Kingston's colonial nature, the creation of new places of public memory is now 'on the table'. Such changes are not unique to Kingston. Across Canada as municipalities become aware of their responsibilities to consult on heritage matters that will affect Indigenous peoples, and as an atmosphere of 'reconciliation' continues to gain traction, establishing new places of public memory is likely to be a central part of official reconciliation efforts. However, without significant change in approach, new places of public memory established as part of national reconciliation efforts may simply replicate problematic national identity narratives, or tokenistic forms of redress. It is unlikely that places of public memory will create any meaningful opportunities for truth, reconciliation, or decolonization if they are created through Euro-Canadian commemorative traditions, rather than approaches based on the expressed needs of local Indigenous communities.

## **Methodology**

My research was driven by questions that the City of Kingston must explore and answer to an even deeper level than I have achieved in one year of research. These questions were: 1) would new places of public remembering designed to build community, dialogue, and witnessing in the city matter to local Indigenous people? 2) If so, what form would they prefer such sites to take? 3) What are the challenges of introducing such places in Kingston? 4) How might creating such places of public remembering contribute to (re)conciliation and could they begin to address settler-ignorance? Could the City move away significantly from Euro-Canadian commemorative practices?

In answering these questions, I conducted 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with Indigenous knowledge holders and settler-Canadians in Kingston. Ten participants were Indigenous knowledge holders, selected because they were elders, activists, community leaders, or otherwise were exceedingly knowledgeable. Some of these individuals asked to have their names associated with their comments, for others I have used a pseudonym. Three participants were not Indigenous, and were selected because they had experience working in city planning or in a field related to city planning. I would have preferred to have more current city employees in the study but they were reluctant to speak even anonymously. It is important to note that these categories were not mutually exclusive, and some Indigenous participants also had experience working with or for the City, and were able to offer insights into City operations. Though I used snowball sampling, participants did not know each other well, and I was able to talk with people from many walks of life. I returned transcripts to participants for verification. After several interviews the key themes of my findings emerged quite evidently.

## Claiming space

In Kingston, it has been very difficult for Indigenous people to access spaces in the city that might be used for expressions of public memory. Participants who had tried to find space for gatherings such as ceremonies, teaching circles, arts and language education, activism efforts, and celebrations, faced several barriers. The first was the availability of suitable spaces for Indigenous gathering in the city. The spaces commonly available such as church halls and school gymnasiums are often practically insufficient. For example, many of these buildings do not allow smudging, are not adjoined to kitchens for feasts, or lack outdoor spaces that can shelter large gatherings. Another key barrier was accessibility. Current spaces in the city available for public use are often not fully accessible as a result of poor public transit, inaccessible built structures, and outdoor spaces that are not conducive to comfortable mobility with assistive devices. Emotional accessibility was also identified as a barrier. Many of the spaces currently available in the city are housed within school, church, and government buildings. Institutional spaces are not always appropriate for the needs of Indigenous people who culturally, if not personally, have a history of trauma with these institutions. “[we need] creative ideas to make spaces more welcoming for Indigenous people, because so many of our people have intergenerational trauma” (Deborah St. Amant). Furthermore, participants felt that facilitating Indigenous expression, and the creation of new places of Indigenous public memory were not city priorities. “They don't want to be uncomfortable, they don't want to do the work, they don't want to spend any money on these things... it shows where their priority is” (Natasha Stirrett). Most felt that even if places of Indigenous expression were created, they would not differ meaningfully from typical Euro-Canadian commemorative practice.

Because the spaces available in the city are predominantly temporary, participants expressed the importance of being able to claim permanent space in the city so that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people could see Indigenous narratives represented in the landscape. “We can all have ceremony at a pow wow ground every summer but the reality is people go home after two days...having and creating a space...strategically placed... is important” (Terri-Lynn Brennan). Having permanent space was seen by most participants as important not only so that Indigenous peoples in the city could see their histories and realities represented and so that they would have places to participate in community, but also to address settler-ignorance. “Most people want to do something around reconciliation, but they haven’t got a clue where to start. And they don’t want to feel like they’re offending anyone. So we need to create spaces that are safe enough for people to come in with humility and know that they would be safe to ask the... ‘stupid questions’” (Shannon Monk-Payne). It was important to my interlocutors that the representation of Indigenous narratives occur in neighborhoods with a high population of Indigenous people so that they could see themselves represented in their landscape, as well as in core areas, such as the downtown sector. This would have a positive impact on the experience of urban Indigenous peoples seeking to define community away from their home territories. “I think the downtown area is really important. But I think that the other part that’s really important too, is I think that in areas of Kingston where there is a high population of Native people. I think they should be able to see themselves, and be proud of who they are.” (Hannah).

### **Discomfort & vulnerability**

Though participants articulated the need for settler and Indigenous discomfort in different ways, it was present in almost every conversation. Whether it was termed ‘unsettling’,

‘uncomfortable’, or ‘uneasiness’, the experience of discomfort was cited as essential for meaningful change. “Discomfort teaches us a lot, because its within discomfort that we know how to be vulnerable, and its within discomfort that we learn how to love people... to connect. Being vulnerable and being uncomfortable is how you learn. And it’s through recognizing that you don’t know something, or that you don’t know how to react to something...” (Camille Usher). The relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers has often been abusive. Continuing state colonialism and supporting settler ignorance, combined with the traumas caused by the settler-colonial past, continue to challenge the building of this relationship. To talk meaningfully about this relationship is necessarily discomfoting, both for victims, perpetrators, and those who in their settler-ignorance consider themselves uninvolved. Beginning a dialogue about this relationship opens people to vulnerability, the willingness to expose themselves and their beliefs to scrutiny, to be challenged, and to introspect on why they hold certain beliefs values and attitudes. To be vulnerable, is often to also be uncomfortable. However, it is important to distinguish between discomfort and shame:

I think discomfort is absolutely important for learning because if everything’s comfortable, then we aren’t going to change anything. So we need to feel the discomfort and then move beyond that. I don’t think Sir John A.’s great great grandkids should feel ashamed... They don’t need to carry that shame... it’s not theirs to carry. It was passed on from someone else and we can move on. We don’t have to be stuck. (Deborah St. Amant).

Truth telling is often not easy, but is worthwhile. “Until all these truths come forward, how does anything change? It can’t, we stay stuck” (Betty Carr-Braint). Participants expressed a desire for new places of public memory that would allow the sharing of truths, for witnessing, testimony,

and to allow for this necessary discomfort. This means places for talking circles, community events, provocative art, performance, counter-narratives to colonial heritage, and other forms of dialogue and interaction. The creation of new places of Indigenous public memory might be uncomfortable for a settler population that has not previously been called upon to introspect. However, the creation of such places, the narratives they unsettle, and the dialogues they have the potential to create are necessary to begin a positive settler-Indigenous relationship. It is only by embracing discomfort that any meaningful ‘reconciliation’ process can begin. In creating new places of public memory with Indigenous peoples and reconciliation in mind, this element of discomfort must be considered.

### **Permanent space for impermanent dialogues**

Participants also expressed the need for permanent sites of public memory that could house impermanent and evolving dialogues. The trauma of colonization is ongoing in Canada. Participants seek places where the truth of the Indigenous experience in Canada can be told, not just as processes of testimony and witnessing for the healing of their communities, but also to reveal the truth of Indigenous experiences to settler-Canadians.

Settlers need to understand that their way of thinking... the way of being, the way of orienting on occupied lands that are not theirs... and the narratives they produce and discourse they internalize, and the lack of work they want to do, is abusive.

Indigenous people are in an abusive relationship. (Natasha Stirrett)

Beyond the desire for a heritage landscape that represents Indigenous histories, participants want places of engagement for contemporary issues facing their community. “The historical context is the tip of the iceberg; we still have so many things to do...” (Shannon Monk-Payne). Several

participants raised issues of contemporary importance such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, justice for Cindy Gladue, or the Colten Boushie verdict, and sought places where they could engage with these issues with both the Indigenous community and with settler-Canadians. In particular, participants wanted places that would allow Indigenous expression and ongoing community dialogue. “The key is I think, we have to keep settler feet to the fire. To keep having these conversations, because it can very easily be thrown under the rug... Like we’ve seen before for hundreds of years” (Robin). The creation of permanent, central place(s) of Indigenous public memory in Kingston would allow the expression of Indigenous heritage, and provide a place for Indigenous voices, addressing settler-ignorance, and the evolution of contemporary settler-Canadian and Indigenous relationships. Participants imagined many forms these places might take: gardens, pavilions, interactive exhibitions, gathering spaces, public art, multimedia displays, and built structures. In contemplating the creation of such places, municipalities might desire a universal design or best practices guide to understand what an ‘effective place of Indigenous public memory’ might look like. However, the only answer to this uncertainty is that there is no universal design that will work for all communities. Instead, municipalities must engage meaningfully with Indigenous peoples to understand what they would like to create in that particular place, context, time, and community.

‘Reconciliation’ is a troubled term for many participants. Many speak instead, of truth, decolonization, and the education of settler-Canadians, and frame reconciliation as an opening of new dialogues focused on the creation of respectful and equitable relationships leading to meaningful action. They consider the City of Kingston’s understanding of reconciliation to be one that regards it as a deliverable, a goal, and an endpoint. In contrast they conceive of reconciliation as an evolving relationship: “I don’t think reconciliation is an ending, I think it’s a

journey... We're reconciling all the time, and we do it over and over, and as more truth comes forward then we have to reconcile again" (Betty Carr-Braint). If reconciliation is to be a journey, new places of public memory in Kingston must house ongoing and evolving dialogues rather than static representations. This translates into a permanent place dedicated to Indigenous use, with the infrastructure to house temporary and evolving content: travelling exhibits, talking circles, performances, multimedia displays, and everyday discussion. As place is partly composed of narratives, the permanent place would evolve as the needs of the community evolve (Feld & Basso, 1996; Malpas, 1999). David Garneau imagines spaces of conciliation as an alternative to the troubles of colonially conceived reconciliation (Garneau, 2012). In these spaces, narratives would not be fixed, "because no master narrative could contain these events, the designers of these spaces elect to make room for the many truths to find their form and audiences. There is no definitive story and no conclusion; there must be room, over time, for everything and everyone" (Garneau, 2012, p. 37). An Indigenous-lead and managed permanent space is essential to Indigenous peoples in Kingston. If reconciliation is a journey and an evolving relationship, Kingston needs permanent space for Indigenous expression and dynamic and evolving dialogues.

### **Meaningful reconciliation**

Euro-Canadian commemorative tradition protects settler narratives, validates settler-colonialism, and perpetuates inequality. In Canada today there is renewed conversation about reconciliation, and cities are beginning to think about forming and renewing their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, such efforts often are mired in colonial perspectives. Commemorations, even new ones, when drawn from the Euro-Canadian commemorative

tradition, cannot engage the relationship-building of true reconciliation. Places of public memory have the potential to open avenues to reconciliation. Decolonial places of public memory require new forms of municipal practice; a rethinking of the City's autocratic role, a shift of power to Indigenous peoples so that they can control how they would like to see Indigenous realities in the landscape; and an evolution of Municipal-Indigenous relationships. In response to national and local directives emphasizing 'reconciliation', cities should hesitate to erect statues, commemorative plaques, or narrate official place-histories, and instead should engage with Indigenous people meaningfully. Rather than continuing colonial forms of consultation, which do not provide true power to Indigenous peoples, cities must evolve to place the power in the hands of Indigenous communities. Cities that address reconciliation with established strategic goals, completion dates and endpoints, are not participating in reconciliation. These are practices of empty redress that continue to empower settler narratives. Integrating reconciliation, as a journey rather than an endpoint, into municipal heritage practice will require willingness to experience discomfort and vulnerability, the courage to create new relationships, and a commitment to decolonizing Euro-Canadian heritage practices.

## CONCLUSION

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Kingston and other Canadian cities must radically alter how they approach the creation of places of public memory, begin to decolonize municipal practice, embrace the creation of new relationships with Indigenous peoples, and ultimately consider their position in the context of reconciliation. There is no doubt that public memory is part of a much larger dialogue surrounding the settler-colonial state and the nation's relationship with Indigenous peoples. However, these are going to be long conversations and, as a geographer, I argue that they must begin on the ground with the decolonization of City-Indigenous relationships and the opening of new forms of respectful reciprocal dialogues.

Canada continues to struggle to recognize and deal with its colonial and Indigenous heritage. In responding to the calls to action of the TRC and in the context of national dialogues surrounding reconciliation, municipalities are likely to create new places of public memory and potentially reconsider their current commemorative landscapes. However, municipal heritage practice, with its preservationist approach and limited colonial conception of tangible heritage, does not allow a full engagement with Indigenous heritage in its living and dynamic form. Municipalities often do not involve Indigenous peoples in heritage decisions that affect them. Instead, they either fail to consult Indigenous peoples on matters of heritage, or employ approaches to consultation that do not allow power to Indigenous peoples. To address this, municipal heritage practice must look to the ways they engage with Indigenous peoples, including urban Indigenous populations, and move beyond tokenistic consultation to create relationships that provide real power to Indigenous peoples. Municipal practice and policy must consider reconciliation not as a finite deliverable, but as the creation of sustained interminable relationships. When considering the creation of new places of public memory, municipalities

must reconsider both their form and content. Cities should no longer favour Euro-Canadian forms of commemoration that narrate official national narratives in static and concrete ways. Instead, they must work with Indigenous people to create permanent places to support the dynamic expression of Indigenous heritage and create dialogue, community, and opportunities for conciliation. Municipalities must both recognize and address settler-ignorance, which will require not just the creation of new places of public memory but a deep consideration and redress of current commemorative landscapes. The changes necessary for these new perspectives of municipal heritage practice necessarily unsettle colonial thinking. These changes will be discomfoting, but necessary, if avenues to true reconciliation are to be created.

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## APPENDIX A

### Research ethics approval

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April 01, 2019

Miss Elizabeth Nelson  
Master's Student  
Department of Geography and Planning  
Queen's University  
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

Dear Miss Nelson:

**GREB TRAQ #: 6023082**

**Title: "GGEOPL-245-18 Designing Spaces of Indigenous Expression and Reconciliation"**

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and cleared your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from April 3, 2019. Prior to the next renewal date, you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/>; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Completed Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. To submit an adverse event report, access the application at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/>; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form."

You are also reminded, that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. To submit an amendment form, access the application at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/>; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies."

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Tripp".

Dean Tripp, Ph.D.  
Chair, General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Anne Godlewska, Supervisor  
Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Chair, Unit REB  
Ms. Joan Knox, Dept. Admin.