

Oh nisa'taro:ten? Learning how to sken:nen as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman

by

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B.A., University of Waterloo, 2014

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

School of Child & Youth Care

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**Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is threaded together with sken:nen, the radical practice of peacemaking. As a Kanien'keha:ka woman, I am responsible for finding ways of bringing our peace-full teachings, gifts and intellect into the future. This thesis braids together a resurgent ethic of sken:nen with Haudenosaunee knowledges, Indigenous feminisms and decolonial futurities by taking up the question: *Oh nisa'taro:ten? (What is the contour of your clay?)*, posed in Kanien'keha to situate me in relation to the lands I come from. I am taking this ancestral question seriously by exploring the relationships that make up the 'clay' of my contemporary Haudenosaunee Indigeneity as it is shaped by life in an active settler colonial state. Tracing the rhythmic gestures of my grandmothers' hands, I have created a patchworking star quilt methodology to gather fragments of my decolonial curiosities, weaving them into layered story-maps that capture constellations of my movements through settler occupied places. Through the assimilative policies of the Indian Act, quilting simultaneously became an act of survivance and resistance for my grandmothers; by picking up an intergenerational practice of patchworking as methodology, I am jumping into the ruptures of my contemporary Haudenosaunee identity, roles and responsibilities. Patchworking story-maps involves tracing genealogies of intergenerational trauma, rupturing geographies of lateral violence, overflowing either/or binary cuts of identity (non)belonging, and navigating the urbanized displacements of Indigenous peoples from lands, communities and relationships. In an effort to mobilize the knowledges and

practices of sken:nen, and to ensure that my work is accessible to a wider audience, my story-maps have been shared in a digital format using Instagram to stitch moments of Indigenous presence, memory and language (back) into the fabric of cityscapes that are riddled with the logics of settler colonialism. This thesis aims to create generative spaces to explore, transform and (re)imagine futurities of peacemaking that move towards more accountable and inclusive webs of relationality rooted in fluid traditions and (star)world building.

*Keywords: Haudenosaunee, Contemporary Indigeneity, Peacemaking, Patchworking, Instagram, Indigenous Feminisms, Indigenous Futurities, Resurgence, Decolonization*

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Throughout the many long years I have spent writing this thesis, my supervisory committee has stuck with me 'til the end. Sandrina, where do I even begin? I couldn't have done this without your terrifyingly hilarious NDN gifs, the cross-country iMessaging encouragement and your pessimistic Gen X feedback that will forever haunt my millennial whining! Woliwon for pushing me outside my comfort zone and challenging my writing in the ways that you do. Terri-Lynn, you have been so supportive throughout this entire process, and I am so grateful for you. I cannot thank you enough for all our coffee dates at Sipps, the opportunities you've opened up for me and for never giving up on all my urban NDN ideas. Nia:wen'kowa for being my rock.

Jordan, my Mi'kmaq who quite literally came stumbling out of nowhere! You have been a persistent photographer, incredible support, and my favourite human. I honestly cannot thank you enough for reminding me to eat, sleep and put my laptop away when I've completely lost track of time. Thank you for falling in love with every aspect of me (because I know the #MohawkFace is real), and for always sharing your contagious enthusiasm and laughter.

I could not forget my hilarious ihsten:ha, you have been so integral to this project too! Your fierce pride in me, made-up jingles, and constant encouragement to always wear my best lounge clothes has made writing my thesis a much more enjoyable experience. I couldn't have moved home without you. We'll need all the whiskey and partying now that I'm done.

And to the adorable grey donut-cat that is always curled up next to me, Bogily, you have been with me every step of the way (including two cross-country flights)! I cannot imagine my life without you and your sassy personality. Thank you for stepping on my keyboard, napping on my belly, and demanding all the chin scratches.

### Dedication

For my totas, Luella Mae Scero & Emma Pearl Maracle



I carry the namesake you both generously gifted to me; who knew it would take us this far.  
I hope this thesis makes you proud.

Nia:wen'kowa & konoronhkwa

**Ohen:ton Karihwatehkwen**  
*(the words that come before all else)*

Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
onkwe'shon:a  
*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the people)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
yethi'nisten:ha ohwentsya:te  
*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the land)*



### The Peacemaker's Spaceship

*I always liked to think that the Peacemaker<sup>1</sup> would return in a spaceship, a stone canoe reimagined by the star people. Arriving to our urban settlersapes, places where limestone, brick and asphalt crisscross lands and bodies, slicing through the spatialities of our belonging and*

*rearranging the constellations of relationality they left behind last time. Realizing that we're all just strangers living in crowded wastelands now. Then, like in the condolence ceremonies of the past, the Peacemaker starts brushing off these concrete NDNs with dandelion greens and weeds that look like overgrown kale because they couldn't find cedar in the city – but you can't be picky about medicine that somehow manages to grow between the cracks of cement and cinder stone. They brush down our bodies to try to clear the dust because they know we've travelled a long time through colonialism, but tears are dripping down their face because warfare has*



<sup>1</sup>I have written this story-map with the pronouns they/them for the Peacemaker, even though they are usually referred to as he/him. It was important for my decolonial futurities that all Indigenous peoples could see themselves in this story despite the imposition of settler colonial gender binaries. In accordance to Haudenosaunee stories, I will continue to refer to the Peacemaker as he/him for the rest of this work.

*been replaced with a slower murder called “reconciliation” and, like us, they start to wonder how to balance a peace that is simmering with 152 years of rage. They’re having a hard time clearing the dust that’s polluting our displaced and lethargic bodies. We’re trying to let those urban green medicine plants do their ceremonial work, trying to trust the Peacemaker when they say that we can still create futurities with our bodies, but we are sneaking peeks at that shiny white spaceship because sometimes this trauma is just too heavy to bear, and maybe leaving this physical place and time travelling somewhere else is the true condolence we really need. We tell the Peacemaker about this app called “Instagram” and how we’ve managed to find ways to manipulate the technology of settlers to build living digital worlds of #decolonization, #ceremony and #kin through tiny squares on the Internet. The Peacemaker doesn’t really understand, but that’s okay, because we’ve found ways to transcend the cuts and containments of settler colonial violence to transform our realities, to find our own spaceships and our own means of travelling through trauma. But that dust is still stuck to our clothes no matter how hard they try to brush it off our bodies.*

### **Time-Travelling Thesis**

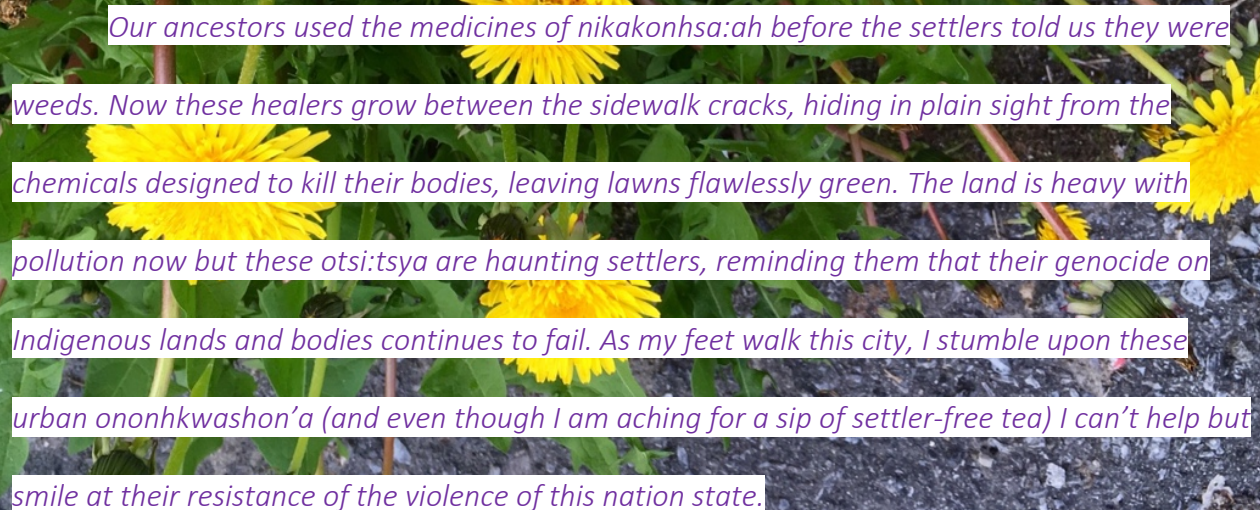
This thesis travels through an exploration of my Indigeneity as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman living in the urban context of Ka'tarohkwen, also known as Kingston, Ontario, or the hashtag airport code of #YGK. My Indigeneity is a patchworked bundle of relationships that I hold with myself (my identity, physical body and spiritual self), my lands (Haudenosaunee and Kanien'keha:ka homelands in the Mohawk valley, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory promise-lands on the Bay of Quinte, and Dish with One Spoon treaty territories which compose the city of Kingston) and various communities that I belong to (urban Ka'tarohkwen, band membership with the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and digital NDN kin networks), all of

which I explore throughout these pages. Through my patchworking methodology, I outline the various challenges I have encountered as a displaced, urban Haudenosaunee woman, and the ways that I have found to transform these realities into something more resurgent and generative. “Learning how to sken:nen” is an important ancestral responsibility I have picked up as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman. In Kanien’keha, ‘sken:nen’ can be roughly translated as ‘peacemaking,’ and this is the thread that ties the Haudenosaunee Confederacy together. The Peacemaker is an important figure in Haudenosaunee cosmologies – this star person came from Sky World to eliminate the bloodshed and warfare that ran rampant between our nations. I have started my writing with a reimagined urban futurity of the Peacemaker’s story because those knowledges of sken:nen are what ground my thesis. Peacemaking is radical, peacemaking is about building worlds, peacemaking is about moving forward. I may not fully understand what my practice, ethic and doing of sken:nen entails, but this research definitely tries to figure it out. In these ways, my thesis is a spaceship – a way for me to travel through Indigenous time and space, picking up hitchhiking star people and their fragments of Haudenosaunee intellect along the way, eventually touching down with a collection of material that I can spin together until it transforms into a ball of energy that is both collapsing in and exploding out. And repeat. Or not. Maybe I will go backwards, sideways, or upside down. My ancestors have taught me that time is not just the ticking hands on a clock – it is a patchworked constellation of the past, present and future continuously story-mapped together.

The Peacemaker’s story outlines our responsibilities as onkwehon:we (a Kanien’keha word that we use to describe ourselves as the ‘original peoples’) and our ceremonial protocols within Haudenosaunee nationhood. Before we enter ceremony, our bodies are brushed down with cedar – a way for us to shed the negativities, what-ifs or anxieties as onkwehon:we. The

contemporary dust on our bodies is composed of flecks of settler colonialism, racism and erasure – a sticky mess that has burned its own constellation into our flesh. This research will travel with me as I explore the complexities of my own Indigeneity as it is shaped by urbanization, displacement and settler colonial trauma: How am I thoughtfully questioning, exploring and transforming the impacts of settler colonialism in my life, lands and communities? What does it mean to be and live as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman? How can I explore and transform my Indigeneity through a matriarchal and intergenerational practice of creating story-maps through patchworking? To accomplish this work in the present, I must travel into the past and the future, finding creative ways to brush down this white residual dust off my body with the brilliance of my Kanien'keha:ha ancestors.

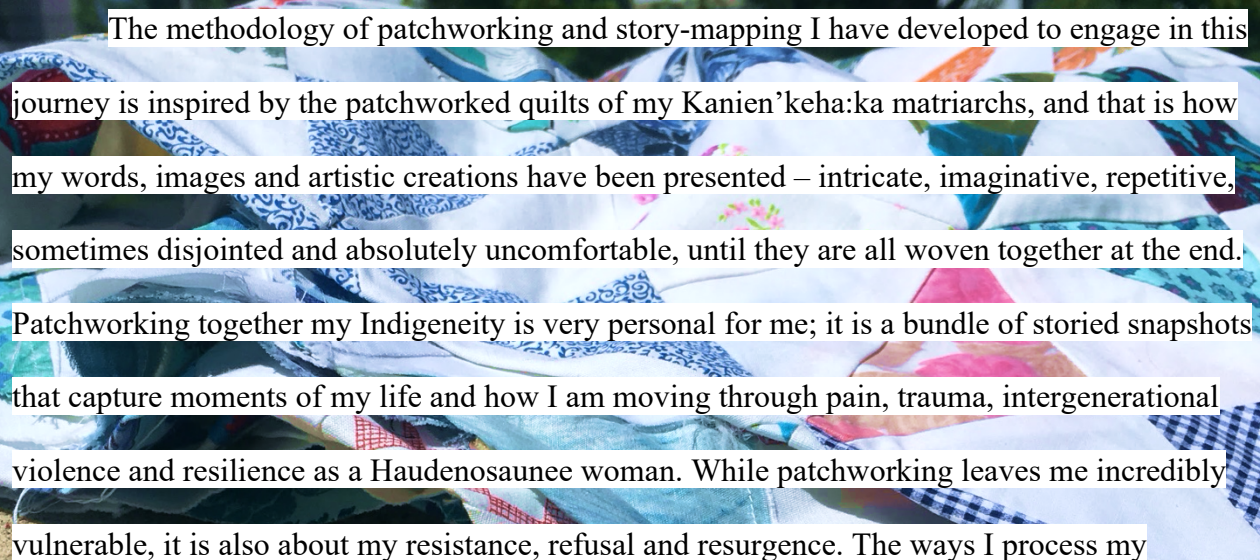
### **Dandelion Tea**



*Our ancestors used the medicines of nikakonhsa:ah before the settlers told us they were weeds. Now these healers grow between the sidewalk cracks, hiding in plain sight from the chemicals designed to kill their bodies, leaving lawns flawlessly green. The land is heavy with pollution now but these otsi:tuya are haunting settlers, reminding them that their genocide on Indigenous lands and bodies continues to fail. As my feet walk this city, I stumble upon these urban ononkwashon'a (and even though I am aching for a sip of settler-free tea) I can't help but smile at their resistance of the violence of this nation state.*

As a child, I was not allowed to learn about my Kanien'keha:ka culture. This story is not surprising or unique in any way, since many Indigenous peoples across the country currently called Canada share a similar experience of having their histories and cultural identities stolen, whitewashed, or conveniently forgotten. There is a legacy of shame and racism engrained into the very fabric of our society perpetuated through “national myths [that] delegitimize the very

real pain that is the legacy of abuse and oppression” (Vowel, 2016, p. 121) Indigenous peoples continue to experience. On Kenhte:ke (my reserve known as Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory), we see this intergenerational trauma in the lived aftermath of day schools (Federal Indian Day School Class Action, n.d.), in protests aimed at raising awareness for the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and trans folk (MMIWG2ST) (Jackson, 2014), in the lack of funding for Indigenous children overrepresented in the foster care system (Miller, 2017), and in police mistreatment of Indigenous peoples asserting our agency through protest (Roache, 2018). Local news archives from my own community are not an exception; as a federally recognized reserve under the Indian Act, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory is a microcosm that reflects broader systemic issues inherent to settler logics that span this country. Throughout Canada’s history, Indigenous peoples have been notoriously mistreated (Vowel, 2016), silenced and rendered powerless through tactics such as “deceit, manipulation, humiliation, and physical force” (Deer, 2015, p. xx), and unevenly “measured against a set of principles that require surrender to an assimilative colonial agenda” (Simpson, 2014, p. 6). This is why I was not able to truly start (re)claiming my Indigenous identity until I was 23 years old.



The methodology of patchworking and story-mapping I have developed to engage in this journey is inspired by the patchworked quilts of my Kanien’keha:ka matriarchs, and that is how my words, images and artistic creations have been presented – intricate, imaginative, repetitive, sometimes disjointed and absolutely uncomfortable, until they are all woven together at the end. Patchworking together my Indigeneity is very personal for me; it is a bundle of storied snapshots that capture moments of my life and how I am moving through pain, trauma, intergenerational violence and resilience as a Haudenosaunee woman. While patchworking leaves me incredibly vulnerable, it is also about my resistance, refusal and resurgence. The ways I process my

thoughts, emotions and spirit into written words on paper began to emerge as patchworked stars, stitching together the fragments of Kanien'keha:ka intellect, experiences and living memories I have collected throughout my lifetime. Yet this knowledge cannot be understood as linear or completely straightforward.

*To remain accountable to the NDN kin who have fallen into this work, I need to acknowledge the patchworked story-maps of my own Indigeneity: I am an urban, displaced, Bill C-31 Indian with white privilege. I have never lived on reserve due to Indian Act policies that enfranchised my grandmother. My Indigeneity was not honoured as a child because it was seen as shameful. And as an Indian with white privilege, you all know that it is easier for me to move in and out of settler colonial spaces. People see me as white and that is how they treat me: I am less likely to be followed in stores, subjected to racial slurs or targeted as a site for violence than my beautiful brown and black skinned kin. As much as I rebel against the settler colonial nation state, this system **does** privilege me in certain ways because I am white-coded. Being mistaken as white or being unrecognizable as an "obvious" Indigenous person is not marginalization. This does not make my life difficult. And I will not use my white privilege to justify the hurt I have felt from being told that "I don't look like an Indian" (because honestly, what does that even mean?! Sorry I left my buffalo at home). It is my responsibility to carry this privilege, acknowledge it, and work to dismantle the structures that whiteness and settler colonialism uphold. I have learned so much about my white-coded Indigeneity from @apihtawikosisan on Twitter over the years and I highly suggest you give her a follow for more brilliant Indigenous knowledge-bombs. I have written this thesis with the intention to explore my own complex Indigeneity, to trace the fractures of trauma that have erupted through the matrilineal genealogies of my Haudenosaunee ancestors, to*

*unsettle the permanence of settler colonialism in the spaces and places I move through, and to think with the futurities of what it means to be a good Mohawk. I hope the Indigenous readers here find some comfort in these purple letters that feel like wampum; written stories transformed into medicine. You know that we're all responsible for our own meaning-making, and hopefully your journey will be as patchworked together as the creative and intellectual story-maps on these pages. This one's for you.*

Simultaneously, these words might be triggering for settler readers; but I hope you don't give up that quickly. Reading the NDN refusal woven into these patchworking story-maps could be challenging for those who have inherited the privilege and benefits of settler colonialism. So, what do I expect from you? I need you to listen to these stories; truly listen to the intentions and tensions being explored and transformed. I need you to feel the uncomfortable feelings that could start bubbling up. You know those defensive, resistant, angry frustrations that are sitting hot in your belly? Acknowledge that they're there and keep going. I need you to remain open, to know that you are capable of holding a multitude of truths and perspectives. Are you struggling with how angry my words are? I highly recommend that you learn about tone policing (Robot Hugs, 2015). It is okay for Indigenous peoples to be angry, irrational and less than tactful (Todd, 2016) – after all, we have been targeted with settler colonial violence for centuries now. Do you feel unwelcome as you read through the story-maps presented here? I need you to accept that some decolonizing work needs to be done by just Indigenous peoples. Take a breath, take a step back, and remember the true history of Canada. You will make mistakes, you will probably offend

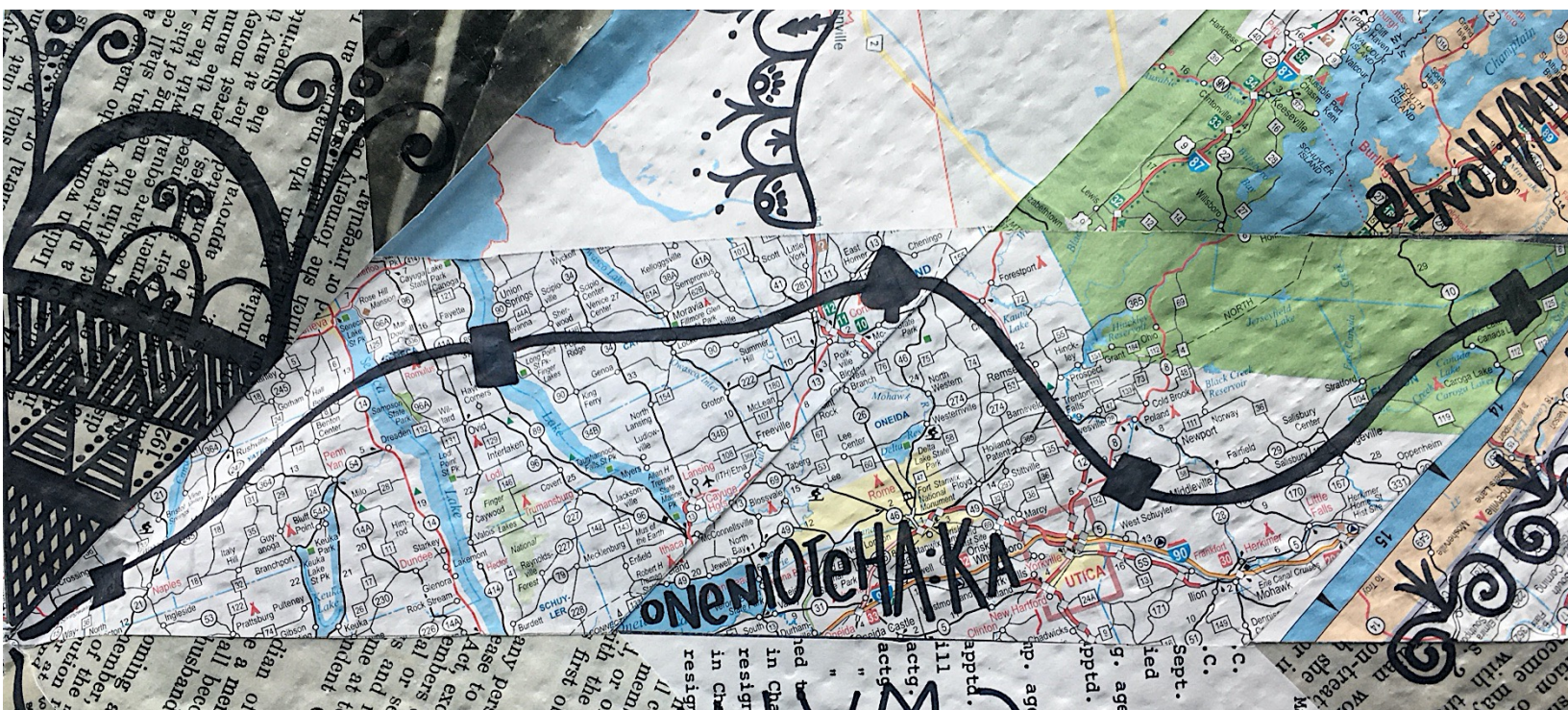
someone at some point, and you will be held accountable for your actions. And being held accountable is hard; it feels like you're being silenced. But it's not. We just never said that maintaining these honest relationships would be easy. In those moments when you feel like you're on the outside looking in, don't forget about your settler responsibilities. Keep educating yourself, keep having these tough conversations in your own circles, keep working to dismantle the systems of privilege and power that continue to marginalize Indigenous peoples. Because Indigenous peoples are fucking busy! We are not always going to be readily available to teach, guide or problem-solve for you, but that should never excuse you from your accountabilities as you live and work on stolen Indigenous lands. You ready? Let's go.

### **O'tara**

Oh nisa'taro:ten? What is the contour of your clay? What is your clan? In Kanien'keha, clay and clan share the root word, 'o'tara' – we do not differentiate between kin and land in our relationalities: “When one asks another what clan they belong to, the question literally translates to ‘what clay are you made of?’” (Hill, 2017, p. 5). These words are deeply entangled as we understand ourselves, our collective identities and responsibilities in relation to the land (Watts, 2013). As Kanien'keha:ka and Haudenosaunee peoples, our identities, cultures and languages are land-based – our knowledges are rooted in the lands we call home. As Métis-otipemisiw scholar Zoe Todd (2016) explains, “[w]ithout an understanding of who I am and what I owe to my home territory, I cannot position myself ethically in relation to the Indigenous legal orders, stories and laws of the territories I move through” (para 3). I am starting my patchworking by introducing the lands I belong to and am accountable to, because these are the relationships that compose my contemporary Haudenosaunee identity.

## Braiding together the homelands, the promise-lands and the treaty lands

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy sits across the southern shores of Kanyatari:yo (currently known as Lake Ontario). Our Confederacy consists of five original nations that were united under an ethic of sken:nen (or peacemaking): Kanien'keha:ka (People of the Flint, or Mohawk), Onyota'a:ka (People of the Standing Stone, or Oneida), Onoñda'gega' (People of the Hills, or Onondaga), Gayogohó:nq' (People of the Great Swamp, or Cayuga) and Onöndowa'ga:' (People of the Great Hills, or Seneca), with the Ska:rù:re' (People of the Hemp, or Tuscarora)



joining later to form the six nations. Haudenosaunee understandings of land were based on relationships of caretaking, not ownership – our communities consisted of overlapping circles of responsibility: the clearings, the wood's edge, and the woods (Venables, 2010). The clearings were large areas of land that were strategically 'cleared' to create space to grow crops of corn, beans and squash. During the mid-winter ceremony, Kaientowa:nen (the Peach Stone Game) would be played to determine which clan was responsible for planning, planting and sowing the

fields each year (L. Brant, personal communication, November 27, 2019). The edge of the woods was an important space where Haudenosaunee peoples exercised their sovereignty, boundaries and relationalities. Any visitors to our nations would come to the wood's edge, light a fire, and wait to be greeted. Before they were welcomed into our communities, they would undergo a condolence ceremony where their grief would be lifted, and to ensure that their intentions were peaceful (Mohawk, 2004). The forests were where Haudenosaunee peoples would hunt deer, pick berries, and form pathways to neighbouring nations. Prior to European contact, the Haudenosaunee nations also made treaty relationships with the Anishinaabe peoples along the northern shores of Lake Ontario, forming Sewatokwa'tshera't (or the Dish with One Spoon treaty) – an agreement for all peoples to roam, trade and hunt in the woods without bloodshed. This agreement was mnemonically recorded with white and purple wampum beads but continues to be held in the minds and relationalities of both nations. All peoples under this treaty were responsible for taking care of the land, to share 'one bowl' of food that provided more than enough resources for all nations, and to avoid creating conflict over hunting for food. In a



conversation between Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) and Dan Longboat (Kanien'keha:ka), Dish with One Spoon boundaries are discussed as “place[s] where one needs to practice good relations” (Simpson, 2011, p. 89). As I learn my own Kanien'keha:ka teachings, I have come to understand that our conceptualizations of boundaries are very fluid, shifting with our sovereign movements across Canadian and American borderlines, borders or boundaries – places where we are in relationship with other nations to peacefully take care of the lands beneath our feet and “treat each other with care and caution” (Hill, 2017, p. 34). Through these shared treaty territories, the lands north of Kanyatari:yo hold a complex cartography of relationships due to the “international Indigenous economy” (Simpson, 2011, p. 89) developed through trade, sharing and networking. Within Haudenosaunee intellect, treaties represent our collective rights and they outline our maps of responsibility to each other, other nations, communities, and the land. The Dish with One Spoon treaty continues today, informing our contemporary relations to one another as Indigenous peoples and settlers. Even though these lands have been paved over with concrete, we are still accountable to that dish – ensuring it is never empty, making sure that we take care of the flora and fauna of these lands, and continuing to respect the governance systems, histories and cultures of each nation sharing these territories without interference. After all, as long as you are in North America, you are walking on the concealed geographies of Indigenous lands and treaties.

As part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Kanien'keha:ka territory stretches from Ioniatarakwa:ronte (Lake Champlain), through the Ratiron:taks (Adirondack mountains), along Nikahrhionhwa'ko:wa (the Mohawk River), reaching up towards Tiohtia:ke (Montreal, Quebec) and as far south as Skahnehtati (Albany, New York). The vast contours of Kanien'heka:ka homelands resulted in our territories becoming the space in which countless colonial wars played

out. During the American Revolution, the British and Americans spent several years fighting in Kanien'keha:ka territory, and this was the site of some of the bloodiest battles during this war (History, n.d.). Forced to choose sides, some Mohawk people allied with the British Crown (perhaps the lesser of two evils), with the promise that our homelands would be restored following the end of the Revolution. However, when Britain signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783 (The Library of Congress, 2018), they surrendered Mohawk homelands to the Americans – effectively exiling us from our ancestral territories. In compensation for our loyalty to the Crown, the Mohawk people were granted parcels of land in what would become “Canada,” as a new place to (re)form our communities. My ancestors chose to settle on the north shore of Lake Ontario, along the Bay of Quinte – known to us as Kenhte:ke – and in 1793, treaty 3 ½, also known as the Simcoe deed or Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, was signed (Rae, n.d.).

Within these settler conflicts, Haudenosaunee peoples were forced to make decisions that would ultimately separate and segregate our kinship relations. Today, Mohawk communities are spread across Quebec (Kahnawa:ke and Kanehsata:ka), Ontario (Kenhte:ke, Wahta and Ohswe:ken), and New York state in the United States (Kanien:ke, Kana'tsiohare:ke and Ahkwesasne – which sits on the border between Canada and the United States). Haudenosaunee sovereignty does not begin or end with the imposition of a settler colonial Canadian-US border that slices through our homelands, treaty territories and relationships.

**Haudenosaunee Sovereignty**



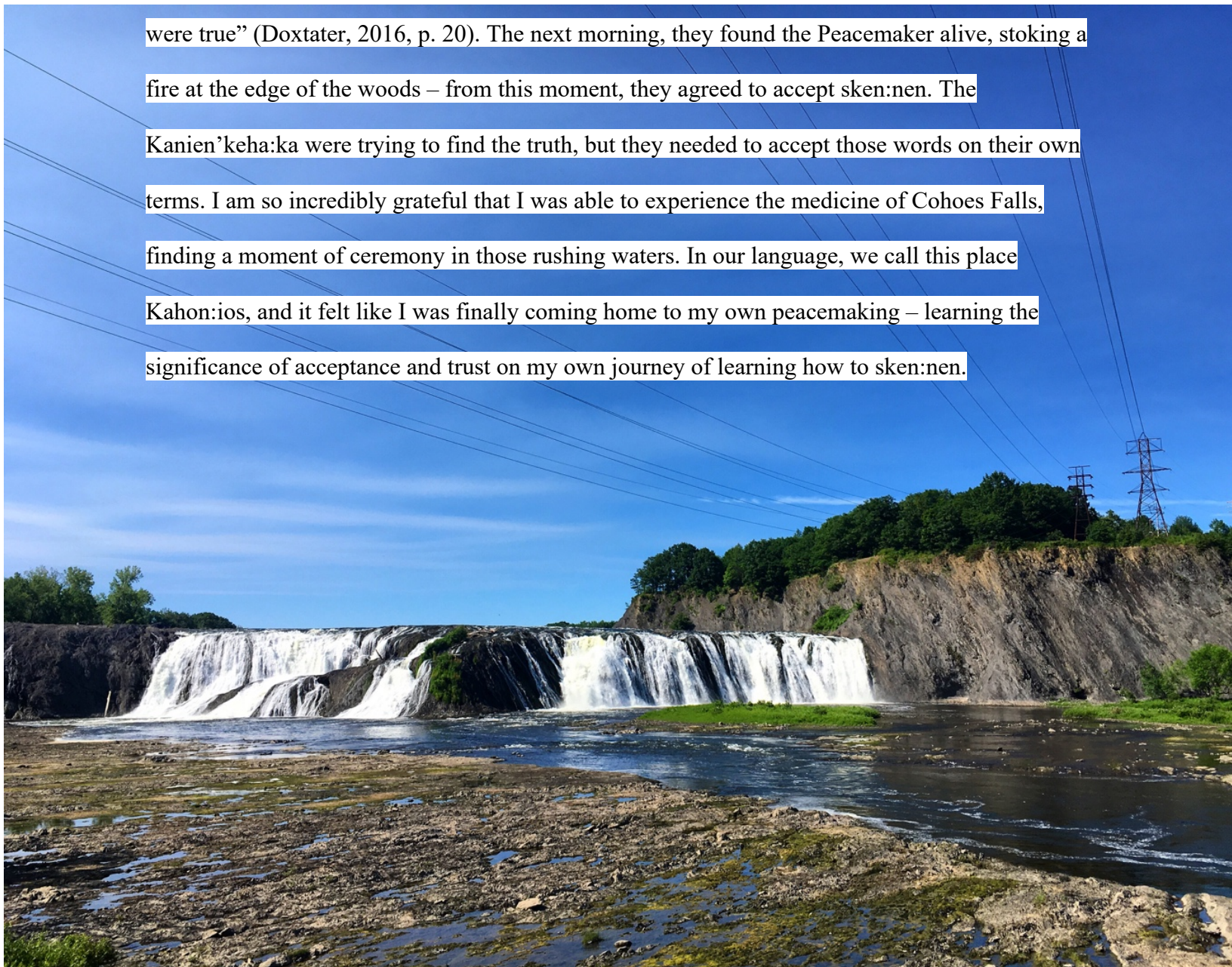
*Ya'senenneri:taien.*

**Yonki'nihsten:ha tsi ohwentsya:te**

I have walked my life on the outskirts of the promise-lands, but Kenhte:ke has always felt like home. In the face of colonial encroachment, my ancestors chose a beautiful contour of land, trading the Adirondack Mountains for Eagle Hill, the Mohawk River for the Salmon River, and flint for limestone. This is the place where my grandmothers walked, exercised their sovereignty under the settler colonial regime, and sang seed songs to the land. Kenhte:ke is known as the birthplace of the Peacemaker, but he was born into a family who found solace from warfare in these territories. This is where those first seeds of sken:nen were planted; the Peacemaker's mother and grandmother welcomed him into their lives, nurturing and trusting him as he left to spread a message of peace. It matters that this is the place we now call home – we can find so many teachings of sken:nen hidden in the geography of the promise-lands. Kenhte:ke holds memories of grief and forgiveness, the vulnerability of trust, and the spark of sken:nen that was eventually sent out across our nations. These are the waters, the shores of the Bay of Quinte, where the Peacemaker began a journey of peacemaking with a white stone canoe.



Earlier this year I was able to visit the Haudenosaunee homelands for the first time, and while I believe that my teachings of sken:nen are rooted in the knowledges that make up Kenhte:ke, it was a special moment to be able to drive through the Mohawk Valley. Cohoes Falls is the place where the Kanien'keha:ka accepted sken:nen. Yet in typical Mohawk fashion, we did not come to peace easily; we took the hard path. When the Peacemaker shared their message of peacemaking, the Mohawks did not trust him right away – after all, we continue to have a reputation as one of the most fierce, angry and stubborn nations (just ask any Indigenous person across Turtle Island). My ancestors then sent the Peacemaker over Cohoes Falls, assuming that he would perish in the rapids while agreeing that “if he survived going over the falls, his words were true” (Doxtater, 2016, p. 20). The next morning, they found the Peacemaker alive, stoking a fire at the edge of the woods – from this moment, they agreed to accept sken:nen. The Kanien'keha:ka were trying to find the truth, but they needed to accept those words on their own terms. I am so incredibly grateful that I was able to experience the medicine of Cohoes Falls, finding a moment of ceremony in those rushing waters. In our language, we call this place Kahon:ios, and it felt like I was finally coming home to my own peacemaking – learning the significance of acceptance and trust on my own journey of learning how to sken:nen.



The Crawford Purchase was a treaty agreement made in 1783 between the British Crown and the Mississauga Anishinaabe to “surrender land” spanning from Gananoque to the Trent River to make room for settling British Loyalists (Shanahan, 2018). This treaty makes up the territory of what would eventually become Kingston – where I currently live and where the majority of this thesis was produced. However, the Mississauga Anishinaabe understood that they agreed to share the land with settling Loyalists as far as a gunshot could be heard, which is why the Crawford Purchase is nicknamed the “gunshot treaty” (Lockyer, 2012). However, there was no written treaty agreement – only vague words spoken through a language barrier – and the only surviving documents of this treaty are handwritten letters from Captain William Crawford, who was acting on behalf of the British Crown (Lockyear, 2012; Shanahan, 2018). The Mississauga Anishinaabe entered into this relationship as a sovereign nation, yet the Indigenous peoples of this place were immediately subjected to European law and jurisdiction. The Mississauga Anishinaabe were denied access to their lands, rights and any treaty “benefits” that they had agreed to. As one of the earliest treaties in Ontario, this unevenly compromised settlement set the precedent for what other treaty negotiations would look like under Canadian rule – unethical, painful, and dishonourable.



**Ka'tarohkwen**

Oh nisa'taro:ten, Kingston? What is the contour of your clay? Kingston was the first capital of Canada (Our History, n.d.), where “the proclamation of Confederation and the formation of the Dominion of Canada occurred” (The Kingston Public Market, n.d.) on July 1, 1867. This place is heavy with reminders of settler colonialism – limestone walls, pointed church steeples, and statues of old dead white men around every corner. I am exploring the clay of



Kingston in more detail, exposing the colonial history of this place and adding my own Haudenosaunee perspective to the materiality of these lands. My experiences of living in Kingston have been challenging as I have experienced first-hand the hodgepodge of Indigenous peoples that make up this urban community and how we seem to exist in ripped-seamed pockets scattered across the city. Since the defunding and eventual dissolution of the Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre in

2013 (Kennedy, 2013), our community has felt fractured. While my aim here is not to further pathologize the Kingston Indigenous community, it is important to acknowledge that there remains a lot of unresolved trauma and pain manifested in the form of lateral violence and vicarious bullying. While there are a multitude of efforts to bring culture and community to the Indigenous peoples living here, it often feels as if our relations quickly fall flat, dissolving into

fight on Facebook, uncomfortable tensions, and an ongoing hesitation to continue participating in community events at all. The Native Women's Association of Canada (2011) outlines lateral violence as a "learned behavior...result[ing from] colonialism and patriarchal methods of governing" (p. 1), causing Indigenous peoples to direct toxic behaviours towards their own peoples instead of toward the settler colonial system in power. Navigating these unsafe spaces has brought me to this thesis project that attempts to rupture YGK-scapes, exploring the places where land and community have split open – marshlands burping up garbage, Indigenous peoples colliding over reconciliation and decolonization, remnants of territory resources extracted, exploited, and depleted for expansive settler development. I have found myself peering into these stress(ful) fractures, seeking to transform and de-settle the colonialities that so proudly sit on top of Indigenous knowledges, and (re)presencing (Simpson, 2011) the Indigenous relationships that live here instead.

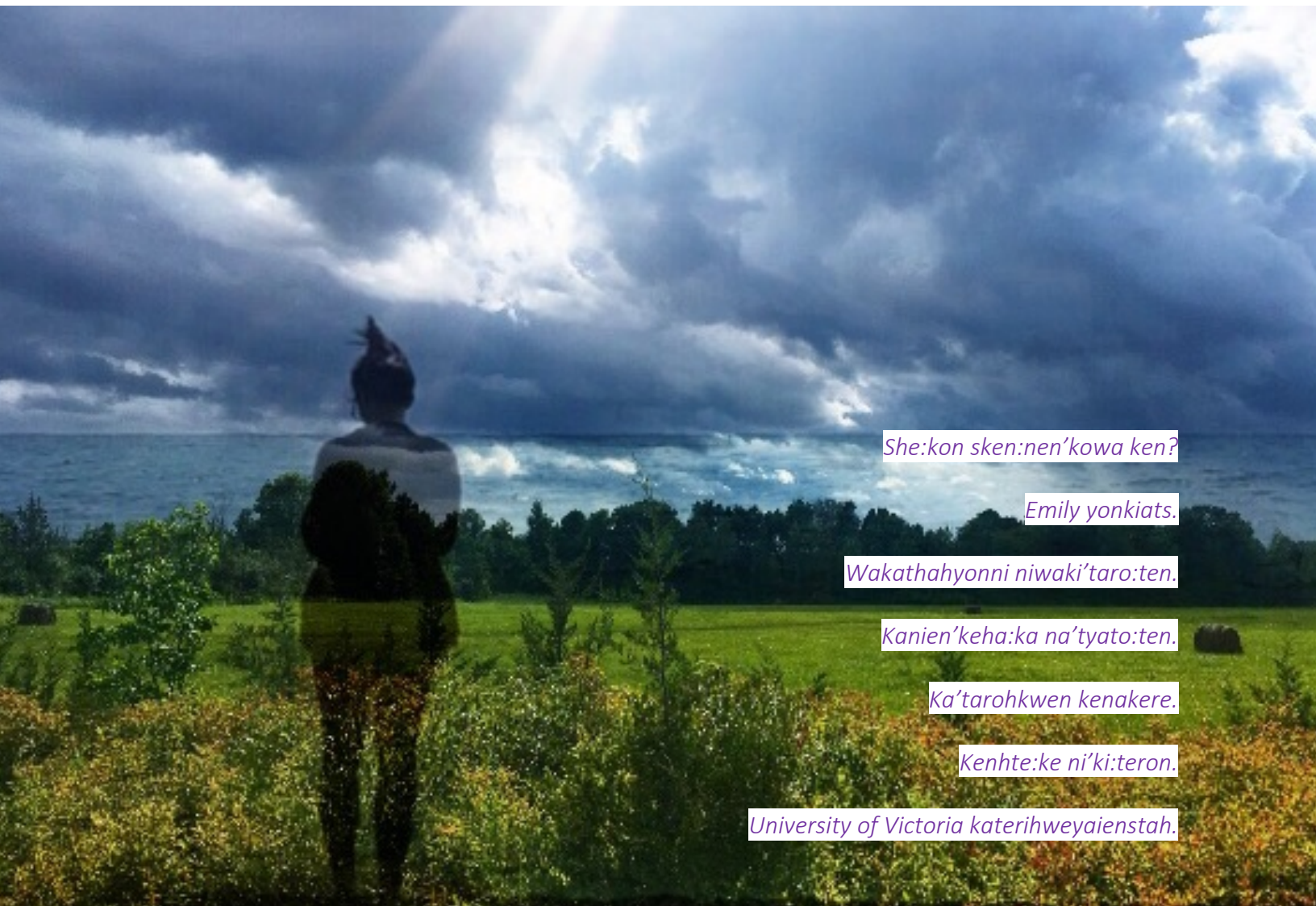
### **Oh nisa'taro:ten?**

What is the contour of *my* clay? I am a bundle of displaced resiliency and patchworked teachings. My lands are ruptured with Indian Act policy, international borderlines, diasporic promise-lands and an aching heart for the Mohawk River. Yet, I know that "when my heart craves the peace of the land from which I come, I close my eyes and imagine the land as a quilt, wrapped around me tight" (Lucchesi, 2016, p. 53). I may be a ghost in my homelands, but I can still hear my ancestors singing to me from the valley.

As I learn how to patchwork together sken:nen, I am moving through lands, communities and healing. I am tracing my relationships and leaving traces of those relations behind me. I'm searching for ways in which settler colonialism has seeped in and infected my life because this entire structure has made it really hard to be Indigenous. Ruptures of lateral violence,

intergenerational trauma, marginalization, displacement from lands, and ongoing erasure are cracking open beneath my feet when I least expect it. Being Indigenous is scary sometimes: Am I going to get hurt? Am I doing it right? Why do I feel all alone? Am I being a good human to all my relations? Am I making my family proud? I don't want anyone to get me wrong either though; being Indigenous is really fucking awesome, too! I'm learning how to be a good Mohawk, I'm learning how to sken:nen, I'm learning what it means to practice peacemaking in my relationships across lands and communities. I'm learning how to be a good ancestor in a contemporary context – through urbanization and mobilization. I'm learning how to reclaim my Indigeneity in the midst of environmental degradation, ongoing erasure and marginalization. I'm learning how to rupture the permanence of settler colonialism as I work to make safer spaces.

### **#AllMyRelations**



*She:kon sken:nen'kowa ken?*

*Emily yonkiats.*

*Wakathahyonni niwaki'taro:ten.*

*Kanien'keha:ka na'tyato:ten.*

*Ka'tarohkwen kenakere.*

*Kenhte:ke ni'ki:teron.*

*University of Victoria katerihweyaienstah.*

Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
ohneka'shon:a

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the waters)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
ohonte'shon:a

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the plants)*



### **Indigenous Feminisms + the Indian Act**

Indigenous women are not just passive subjects of colonialism – our lives are overflowing with strength and determined spirit, weaving together our kinship relations with care and compassion. Yet the generations before me are fraught with sexualized and gendered settler colonial violence, and I needed a way to be accountable to the ancestors who made me. Picking up an ethic of Indigenous feminisms has been a way for me to work through and transform the intergenerational pain and grief that I carry in my body. In my aim to (re)center the stories and agency of my matriarchs, I hope to not reproduce the strict gender binaries that uphold the internalized cis-heteropatriarchal systems that work to marginalize and silence Indigenous voices. I will address my understanding of Haudenosaunee matriarchies, but first I need to explore the impact of colonialism on gender roles in order to highlight the importance of Indigenous feminisms in response to that violence.

Through my own experiences, I have bumped into several Haudenosaunee stories, roles and teachings that feel contaminated with an underlying thread of settler colonial either/or binaries of identity that only serve to slice through the complexities of our Indigeneities. It has been challenging to seek *otherwise* spaces and perspectives that do not fit neatly into those dichotomies. Through the encroachment of euro-western people into our territories and longhouses, colonial gender binaries – as a tool of settler colonialism – were introduced into our cultures through religion, day schools and other Indian Act policies to ensure the eurocentric patriarchal control of our people, specifically women (J. Hill, personal communication, December 4, 2019; Horn-Miller, 2005). The matriarchal societies and values of the Haudenosaunee peoples have been well-documented by white settlers who encountered our nations. The women in our Confederacy are known for their important political positions, their

inherent right to pass down Haudenosaunee citizenship through matrilineal clan lines, and their ceremonial importance of carrying seed song knowledges, among many other crucial roles. As Kanien'keha:ha scholar Kahente Horn-Miller (2005) explains, when settlers encountered “women [who were] the foundation of Haudenosaunee society, the strength and centrality of [their] role had to be destroyed to facilitate colonial efforts [of] assimilat[ion]” (p. 59). Haudenosaunee women, under the colonial gender binary, were targeted as sites for physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual violence. During the “Indigenous feminist power panel” at the University of Saskatchewan (2016), Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson spoke about the importance of centering Indigenous women in our analyses to examine the ways in which we have been targeted with violence and banished from our territories, have lost our property rights and have been subjected to various forms of gendered dispossession.

I want to acknowledge my lack of teachings here and hope that other Haudenosaunee peoples can hold me accountable because I know that a gendered lens is just one reading of our stories, histories and knowledges. I am trying my best to embody an ethic of Indigenous feminisms that works to interrogate the colonial heteropatriarchal influences on the shared cultures of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. I have begun an exploration of my own gendered experiences through Indian Act policy, the rigidity of gender roles, the dominance of men's authority in our communities, and the lack of recognition for Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and trans folks' voices and agency. I am working through the violences my grandmothers endured, exploring the places where trauma tore our family apart, and am holding up the resiliency, strength and resurgence that they embodied. Like the space opened up by Audra Simpson (USask, 2016), Indigenous feminisms allow me to ask deeper questions of politics, place and privilege that are evident in the stories being shared here of my matriarchs and myself.

In my world building, I want to make sure that I am centering diversity, a fluidity around our identities and holding up knowledges that reject the ways settler colonial cis-heteropatriarchy has influenced our communities. Indigenous feminisms generate responsibility and a critique of white settler power – the stories of my matriarchs help me be in good relation, and they inform the ways in which my family has always resisted the settler colonial nation-state.

I understand my grandmother's stories as Haudenosaunee feminist texts and as intellectual Indigenous theories (Goeman, 2013; Simpson, 2014; Tuck &ocollet, 2016). I am using these knowledges to inform my own Indigeneity as I work towards creating decolonial spaces that are oriented towards an Indigenous future. Indigenous feminisms, and the sharing of my grandmother's stories, are not exclusive to only those who are woman-identifying, as Haudenosaunee concepts of gender spin on a multidimensional axis of balance, not binary (Freeman, 2015; Hill, 2016; Sunseri, 2011). Haudenosaunee communities and cultures are built on ethics of gender balance and reciprocity. In her research, Kanonhsyonne (J. Hill, personal communication, December 4, 2019) has found that as onkwéhon:we, we are human beings, not gendered peoples – and however we choose to present ourselves is how we will be accepted. This sense of balance seeks out the plurality of connections and relationships that exist within Haudenosaunee lives, instead of resting on the hierarchal nature of binaries.

*My akhso'tha, Emma,*

*The stories our family holds of you are some of the most phenomenal and badass that I have ever heard. And I am in awe of your refusal and resilience during the most dehumanizing policies of the Indian Act. I heard that you used to gather with your sisters around a dimly lit kitchen table, Red Rose tea dripping down brown chins, sharing gossip, laughing loud and telling stories of survivance. I like to think that these were secret meetings of wolf clan matriarchs – Kanien'keha words spoken in whispers, reverberating between teacups and paisley playing cards – outside the prying eyes of nosy Indian Act agents. I found a picture of you in the basement of your old house – you were wearing pants, tota! What year was it when you pulled those “men's” pants onto your body and zipped them up? Our bodies as Indigenous women continue to be gendered and*



*sexualized, but you are smiling so big in that picture. Defying all colonial regulations of your female NDN body. I heard that you smelled like Jergens hand lotion (the cherry almond scent), and made the best fry bread in Tyendinaga. I heard stories about how you used to yell at white people in parking lots. I'm pretty sure you'd be proud of me because I think they should get off our land too. For some reason it's comforting to know that making*

*settlers uncomfortable is intergenerational. I heard that the Indian Agents burned down the church to try and destroy our genealogies – using flames to engulf and extinguish our existence. But they didn't know what it meant when we said we were Kanien'keha:ka, people of the flint. The ones who spark the fire. They didn't know those flames were our resistance. They didn't know those embers would simmer in your body, and four generations later begin to smoulder in mine. I am your namesake after all. I see you wearing those pants, tota – teaching me defiance and refusal, how to be unapologetic af. Teaching me how to breathe life into those embers and (re)ignite the fires of resistance you so care-fully nurtured for me.*

*Konoronhkwa*

*Everyone called you Lou, but I've only known you as Nan.*

*I didn't get a lot of time in this world with you, but I like to think you know how much you've influenced my life. You gave birth to six children, one died, and you adopted one more as your own. You maintained a family of eight, and I know that was no easy feat. You fought for your love and married Pa in 1964 – even though his family was racist, and you were enfranchised under Indian Act policy, throwing your entire family into poverty. It wasn't your fault, and I don't blame you for a second for that choice. It was yours, and it was honest. I've spent a lifetime learning how to listen to my heart knowledge, how to follow in your footsteps. You made the best out of everything though – you sewed every single piece of clothing your family wore, you canned your own food, and put your incredible crafting skills to work. You made your life a home despite the forced displacement from your community and your status rights. You were a rock, Nan. You held your family together,*

*raised the kids when Pa was at work, handled the finances, and always made sure that everyone had a gift on their birthday. You smelled like Chanel no. 5, loved going out for date night on Saturdays, played the piano, and didn't blink an eye when your child told you they were gay – you held so much care for your family. You went through a lot in your fifty-five years here, and I know your life wasn't what you wanted it to be, but I'm trying my*



*best to pick up the gifts you left behind. You remind me of the strength of my femininity, Nan. How to care for others, how to love, how to get back up when life knocks you down, how to carry determined strength, and how to do all of these things with grace. Like Sky Woman, you've taught me how to endure disruption, but through your diabetes diagnosis you also showed me what it meant to accept care from others – even in the tiny moments of having someone else brush your hair or cook you dinner. I'm carving out space for ceremony now, and I hope that by beginning to untangle all this trauma, I can gently comb condolence into your hair too.*

Konoronhkwa

My purpose here is to highlight the ways that the Indigenous women in my family have been specifically targeted by settler colonialism through the heteropatriarchy of the Indian Act. By sharing snapshots of their stories, I hope to bring attention to how “[t]he experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous women [have been] hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years” (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2012, p. 14). Understanding these stories and histories not only allow me to transform the intergenerational trauma and divisions within my family, but also keep me accountable in creating decolonial futures that do not repeat these mistakes. Indigenous feminisms help me open up spaces for those who have been specifically targeted by the violences of settler colonial policies and practices – generating safer spaces for all bodies. The stories of my grandmothers make Haudenosaunee intellect visible, reveal the “stuff” that makes up Kanien’keha:ka identity, and informs the ways in which we move forward.

A few years ago, I found a copy of the 1927 Indian Act in my great-grandmother’s basement. It is this piece of legislation that has riddled my family with settler colonial trauma. The Indian Act was the reason my grandmothers attended day schools on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory – where white education was infused with physical abuse and humiliation to eliminate the Kanien’keha language. The Indian Act was responsible for controlling and criminalizing the movements of Indigenous peoples – day passes to leave the reserve, rationed food stamps, and an inability to drink alcohol, gamble or gather in groups. The Indian Act enfranchised my grandmother in 1964 under section 12(1)(b), for marrying a white man. The Indian Act stripped my grandmother of her Indian status and treaty rights, kicked her off the reserve and alienated her from her family, nation and culture. The Indian Act was the reason why my mother had to apply for the reinstatement of our Indian status under Bill C-31, which was aimed to remove

gender discrimination against women in the Indian Act. But since I'm registered under subsection 6(2), I am still a lesser status Indian and am unable to transmit status to future generations. The Indian Act has been amended 33 times (I counted), more than any other piece of legislation in Canada, and remains as the colonial nation state's most racist and gendered policy to this very day.

My grandmother's face in the photo below reminds me of Nēhiyaw queen, Erica Violet Lee (2015), whose selfie went viral after she stuck her tongue out at Alberta Premier Brad Wall. Lee spoke with Rosanna Deerchild (2016) about the importance of "Indigenous women refus[ing] to be invisible" and finding ways to challenge settler colonialism, even if that means sticking out our tongues as a form of resistance. It is never a good idea to piss off a Mohawk woman (we have a reputation for a reason), and yet centuries of intergenerational rage flows



through our blood (Flowers, 2015). My grandmothers and I are unimpressed with all of the settler colonial bullshit in this country, and everyone reading this should know that I never said my peacemaking was complacent. As an Indigenous woman, I have decided to be "inappropriate," sticking out my tongue, giving no fucks, and re-mapping the stories of my grandmothers as strong onkwehon:we.

The Indian Act has fractured my family – layering the fabric of our genealogy with physical, emotional and sexual violence, displacement, enfranchisement, gendered and patriarchal discrimination, injustices and racism. But these are not our only stories. My ethic of Indigenous feminisms has brought me to explore and reclaim the “feminine” knowledges of my grandmothers, which is why I have picked up the quilting practice of these matriarchs, and am using that knowledge to cut, rearrange and deface Indian Act fragments into patchworked story-maps of Haudenosaunee memory and presence. Learning with the patriarchal knowledges of my Mohawk grandmothers has taught me the most about my roles and responsibilities as a Haudenosaunee woman. Through their brilliance, I have been able to expand my understanding and practice of Indigenous feminisms, reminding me of both my and their acts of survival, resistance, refusal and resilience. They remind me to heal, to build community, to care for others and myself. They remind me to be practical, to be vulnerable and generous, and to carry my knowledges no matter how heavy colonialism gets. My grandmothers found ways of turning the recycled fabric of their poverty into beautiful patterned quilts that kept their kin and clan safe, quietly refusing the clutches of Indian Act policies. Indigenous feminisms allow me to (re)centre and radically re-imagine their women’s “work” of quilting by writing on the paper that tried to rip our family apart and telling (new) stories of the strength and embodied sovereignty that Haudenosaunee women have never given up.

### Wrapping Myself up in Ancestral Knowledges



In Haudenosaunee culture, art has always been practical – found in the raised beadwork of our moccasin vamps, the etched designs of our clay pottery, the smooth beads of our wampum belts or the intricate quilts sewn together with the worn clothing that children have outgrown. My methodology needs to be accountable to the Haudenosaunee knowledges being generated – rooted in relationality and drawing inspiration from those who worked to radically transform worlds before me: Sky Woman (intention, gratitude and ceremony), the Peacemaker (sken:nen,

kanikonri:io and kashastensera), and my grandmothers (intergenerational matriarchal knowledge of Indigenous feminisms). I have physically wrapped myself up in ancestral knowledges – carefully stitched, woven and threaded into the colourful and recycled fabrics of my grandmother's patchworked quilts.

Haudenosaunee knowledges do not flow exclusively through our intellect but are multi-dimensional and engage all of our senses to contribute to our knowing – they are felt, incorporeal, aural and ancestral. Collected from cosmological stories, the land, knowledge carriers and language speakers, Haudenosaunee knowledge transmission is gathered through experiences – participating in ceremony at longhouse, listening to the stories that live in wampum beads, shuffling our feet to the rhythms of our social dances, tending to kin-clan responsibilities, speaking the *ohen:ton karihwatehkwen* (the words that come before all else), and embodying *sken:nen* in our everyday activities. Haudenosaunee scholars have explained that “[g]aining knowledge in a Haudenosaunee context often involves experiential learning, storytelling, and interacting with the land” (Freeman, 2015 as cited in Whitlow, Oliver, Anderson, Brozowski, Tschirhart, Charles & Ransom, 2019, p.564-565), knowledge-making practices that are reflected in the shared ceremonies and cultures of the Confederacy.

There is a disconnection that exists today – settler colonialism has divided up our communities, families and lands into easy dichotomies of (non)belonging: urban/rural, on-reserve/off-reserve, status/non-status. Those everyday teachings and embodiments of *sken:nen* are no longer easily accessed by Haudenosaunee peoples when we are dispersed across cities, borders and territories, when language is spoken in fragmented words, when “traditional” knowledge is only recognized as belonging to elders. Knowledge transmission has evolved and looks different now. It is found in YouTube videos, Kanien'keha language apps and online

dictionaries, Instagram hashtags, in written versions of the Kayanere:kowa (the Great Law of Peace), and in beautifully illustrated children's books that share the Peacemaker's story. My knowledge of what it means to be Haudenosaunee is in itself, patchworked together – disjointed teachings and practices I've gathered and woven together over the years, wrapping up my body with experiences and relationships that inform my sken:nen. This patchworked Indigeneity is no less authentic, valid or cohesive than someone's Indigeneity who regularly goes to ceremony, attends longhouse, speaks fluent Kanien'keha, or has strong families rooted in their knowledges. My contemporary Indigeneity has room for growth, ongoing accountability, re-imagined teachings, new experiences, and complex knowledges to seep in between the places where I've stitched myself together. I hope that this expanded Indigeneity can begin to not just articulate the complex ways that I carry and internalize the colonialities present in my life, but also work to transform and alter these realities.

As you will find inside these pages, Indigenous knowledges do not exist in isolation – they are held within a knotted nest of relations (Wilson, 2008). The intellect within my thesis does not just belong to me, since our stories “require a telling and a listening that is intense, and intentional. Giving, receiving, giving – it makes a complete circle of Indigenous truth” (Brant, 1994, p. 19). I have been held accountable by several community members to ensure that my work is ethical and appropriate; Lynn Brant is a Kanien'keha:ka knowledge carrier from Kenhte:ke, and Barbara Hooper is an urban Cree grandmother with adopted Kanien'keha:ka family from Ka'tarohkwen. I have maintained communication with many community members, specifically those who travel in and out of the urban Indigenous circles we have created in Kingston, to uphold the ethics that knit the threads of my contemporary Indigeneity together.

These kinship relations have encouraged me to write *with* the ups-and-downs, inside-outs, circular orbits of my kinetic-aural-oral patchworking methods. Their words remind me of how waves crash onto shorelines, how the moon waxes and wanes, and how leaves twirl around in the wind – inspiration that the flows of this thesis follow in those repetitive and patchworked rhythms. Lynn and Barbara remind me of the safe spaces I'm seeking to create: the importance of holding tension in our relationships, of asking difficult questions, of laughing until our bellies hurt, of the magic that singing brings, and to maintain honest methods of respectful communication that generate creative webs of inclusivity.

### **Contemporary Haudenosaunee Materialities**

I was not able to predict how my writing and creative processes would unfold once I picked up an (art) practice of patchworking. My methodology was not even the first knowledge I was able to stitch together. I started by creating three large creative art pieces: (1) drawing Haudenosaunee Sky Domes and wampum designs as graffiti onto a settler map of Kingston; (2) collecting tourist pamphlets and brochures from around Kingston, cutting them up, re-arranging them and pasting them into a Sky Dome quilt; and (3) creating a multi-layered map of Kingston that exposes the differing cartographies of relationalities that exist in this cityscape: the physical contour of the land without settler interference, a layer of Kanien'keha words, and a herringbone pattern of significant places that I mapped out with sticky red glitter as a reminder that Indigenous presences will never truly go away. These three creative works helped me (re)think my movements and intentions on this land as an urban Kanien'keha:ka woman; they helped me (re)think the ways that Haudenosaunee knowledges, memories and stories dwell in the cityscape; and they helped me (re)think the shifting relationships I hold with my body, my communities and these lands. Folded paper maps, black Sharpies, Japanese silk paper, Elmer's quick-dry glue

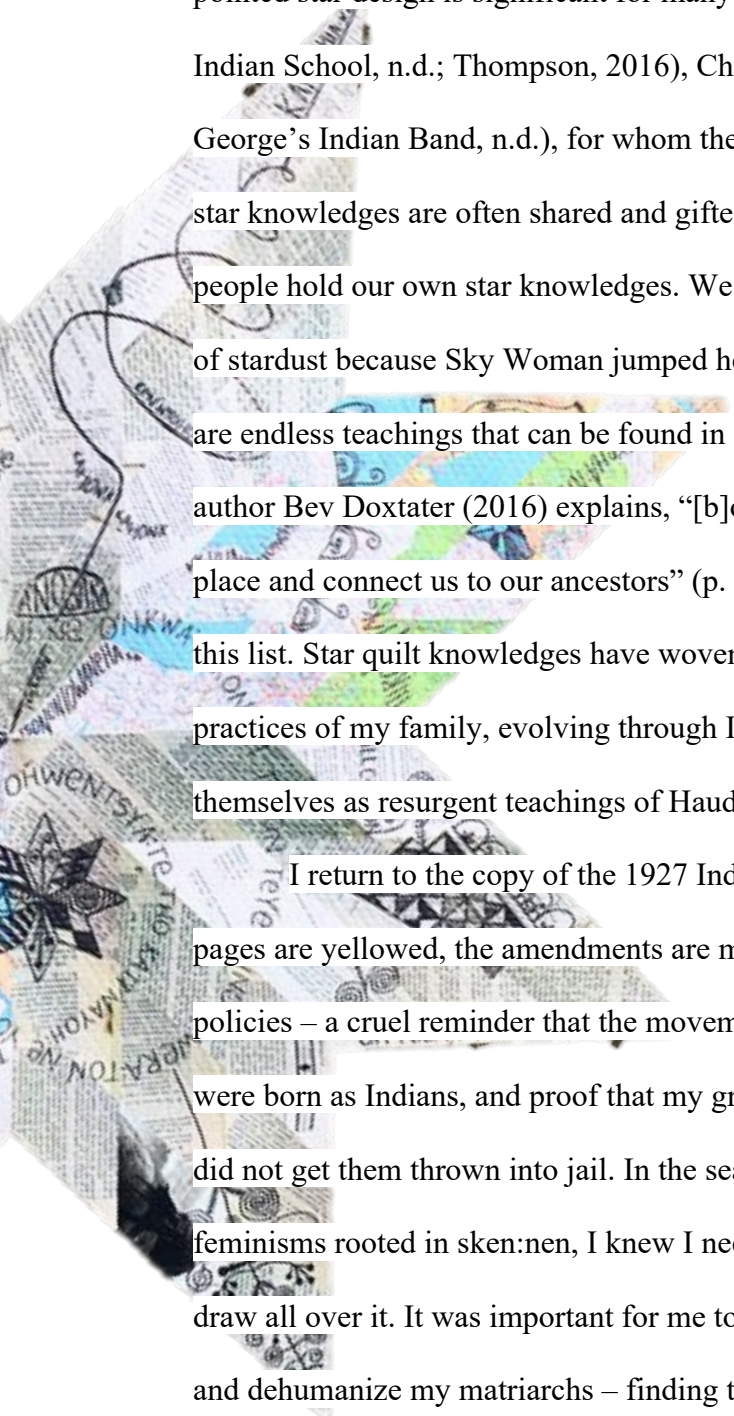
sticks, glossy cardstock, kitchen scissors, Bristol board from the dollar store, a precision knife, informative brochures, and red glitter are the materials that I entangled together to form these artistic creations featured throughout my thesis, embedded with and through my story-maps, that patchwork together contemporary constellations of my Indigeneity as I practice a resurgent peacemaking on occupied Dish with One Spoon territories.

### **Patchworking Methodology**

Growing up, my mother held a collection of unfinished quilt tops that had been sewn together by my grandmothers, but never quite finished. One in particular was of an endless eight-pointed star: hundreds of tiny parallelogram pieces stitched together to form a cascading patchworked star pattern, a chaos of coloured, patterned, and textured fabrics melding together, generating one of the most beautiful quilt tops I had ever seen. While this particular heirloom was gifted away over time, the memory of this quilt has stayed with me. At some point along my thesis journey, I ended up weaving a patchworking methodology that traces the rhythmic gestures of my grandmothers' hands as they stitched together beautiful (star) quilts. As I pick up this intergenerational (art) practice of patchworking, I am opening up space to gather textured fragments of decolonial curiosities, care-fully stitching together past-present-future stories of Indigenous presence and weaving new constellations of contemporary relationality. As we live in an active settler colonial nation-state, we cannot cling to the ways in which things have always been done. My practice of patchworking challenges static notions of Indigeneity, complicates the permanence of settler colonialism and leaves traces of resurgent peacemaking and Kanien'keha:ka brilliance behind me.

Otsistoh (Star) Quilt Knowledges



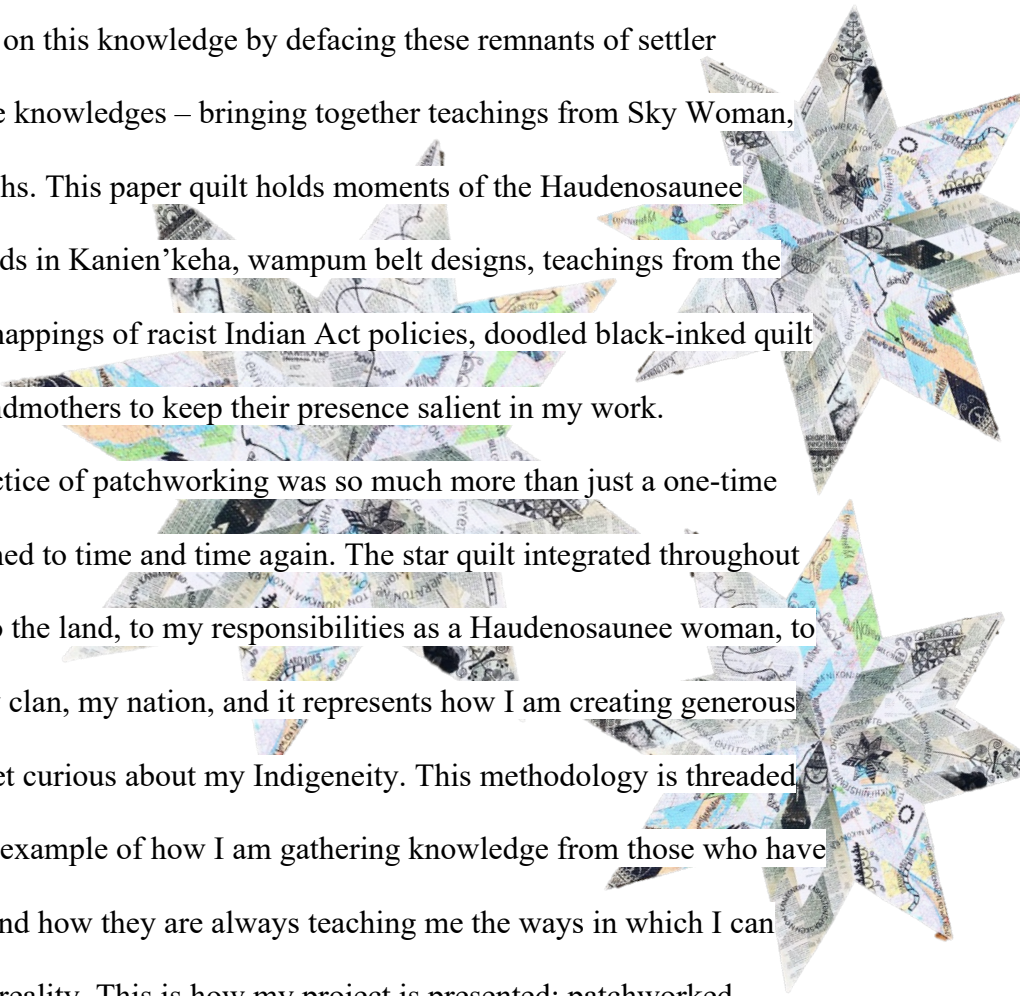
A collage of images is positioned on the left side of the page. It features a star quilt with various patterns and colors, a map of a region, and a document with text, possibly a historical record or a legal document. The collage is layered and partially overlaps the main text.

While the star quilt I made may not inherently be a Haudenosaunee design, the eight-pointed star design is significant for many Indigenous nations, such as the Lakota (St. Joseph Indian School, n.d.; Thompson, 2016), Cheyenne (Lucchesi, 2018), and Mi'kmaq peoples (St. George's Indian Band, n.d.), for whom these patterns and blankets representing their respective star knowledges are often shared and gifted to others. Nonetheless, I know that Haudenosaunee people hold our own star knowledges. We believe that we come from the stars, we are made up of stardust because Sky Woman jumped here, we return to the star world when we die, and there are endless teachings that can be found in our stories for constellations. As Kanien'keha:ka author Bev Doxtater (2016) explains, “[b]ones, clay, cornhusk, leather; they all hold a significant place and connect us to our ancestors” (p. 7), and my work adds patchworked paper star quilts to this list. Star quilt knowledges have woven themselves into the memories, stories and (art) practices of my family, evolving through Indian Act-induced poverty, and materializing themselves as resurgent teachings of Haudenosaunee sken:nen for me to carefully pick up.

I return to the copy of the 1927 Indian Act in my great-grandmother's basement. The pages are yellowed, the amendments are missing, and there are stars penciled next to certain policies – a cruel reminder that the movements of my ancestors were criminalized because they were born as Indians, and proof that my grandparents tried really hard to make sure their actions did not get them thrown into jail. In the search to flesh out my own ethic of Indigenous feminisms rooted in sken:nen, I knew I needed to cut up Indian Act policy, re-arrange it, and draw all over it. It was important for me to trace the policies that attempted to destroy, displace and dehumanize my matriarchs – finding the words that left intergenerational trauma etched into my skin, and transform them as an act of my ongoing Indigenous resistance.

This is the moment when my patchworking star quilt methodology blossomed – I gathered pages from the Indian Act, Bill C-31 policy, and settler maps of the Haudenosaunee homelands, promise-lands and treaty lands. Using a paper cutter, I physically cut through the very things that sliced my Indigeneity apart, and after a lengthy process of repeatedly laying out and re-arranging the parallelogram pieces of my soon-to-be star quilt on my kitchen floor, interrupted by the curious paws of my attention-deprived cat, I re-mapped those papers into a meticulously scotch-taped-together, eight-pointed star quilt inspired by the brilliance of my Mohawk matriarchs. I expanded on this knowledge by defacing these remnants of settler colonialism with Haudenosaunee knowledges – bringing together teachings from Sky Woman, the Peacemaker and my matriarchs. This paper quilt holds moments of the Haudenosaunee Creation Story, Sky Domes, words in Kanien'keha, wampum belt designs, teachings from the Kayanere:kowa, physical over-mappings of racist Indian Act policies, doodled black-inked quilt patterns, and pictures of my grandmothers to keep their presence salient in my work.

This methodological practice of patchworking was so much more than just a one-time method; it was a comfort I returned to time and time again. The star quilt integrated throughout my work holds my connection to the land, to my responsibilities as a Haudenosaunee woman, to my communities, my family, my clan, my nation, and it represents how I am creating generous space to explore, question and get curious about my Indigeneity. This methodology is threaded into my entire thesis process, an example of how I am gathering knowledge from those who have transformed worlds before me, and how they are always teaching me the ways in which I can build (star)worlds in my current reality. This is how my project is presented: patchworked, sometimes nonsensical, deeply meaningful, nonlinear, repetitive and overflowing with



Haudenosaunee knowledge – it just may not be completely apparent to those who do not carry those teachings with them, and I'm coming to learn that that's okay.

Moving through the complexities of my Kanien'keha:ka history is difficult. My family has been displaced from our homelands and the promise-lands. I wanted to map out all of the fractures of territory that my ancestors have walked on, and those they have been unable to walk on, due to settler colonial law. My methodology includes map fragments of ancestral Haudenosaunee homelands, significant place names in Kanien'keha, treaty lands, the promise-lands and urban communities – showing the ways in which Haudenosaunee nationhood and sovereignty transcends these colonial borders of containment and displacement. I soon started presencing my Indigenous body in the very places across southern Ontario and upper New York State that I had started disrupting on paper, focusing primarily on Kingston: Kahwennodi:io (Belle Island), Kanyatari:yo shorelines, Springer Market Square, the crumbling walls of Fort Frontenac, Prison for Women, places memorialized by Johnny Mac's legacy, Indian Road, Old Fort Henry, my kitchen table and the hardwood floors in my hallway; but also mobilizing my contemporary knowledges to the promise-lands with multiple visits to Kenhte:ke, and the homelands, where my partner and I drove along the Mohawk River, gazed at the Adirondack Mountains, and made a special visit to Cohoes Falls. As embodied methods, I tried to find the places where Indigenous relations were haunting, and haunted (Tuck & Ree, 2013). I sang songs, I graffitied my body, wrapped myself up in ancestral quilts, laid down Tobacco, spoke Kanien'keha, crafted corn husk dolls out of fabric scraps, loomed beadwork, followed bumblebees, took pictures, picked cedar, left sassy hashtags on Instagram, wrote down my grief, drummed on walnut-dyed deerskin, digitally overlaid images on top of one another, and practiced moments of Haudenosaunee ceremony with every new place I visited.



### Story-Mapping Methods

As a multimodal methodology story-mapping emerges from and is deeply entangled with my artistic doing of patchworking. My story-maps are presented in a deliberately nonlinear, patchworked, back-and-forth approach throughout the thesis because they uphold the fragmented, chaotic, embodied give-and-take of my relational Haudenosaunee ethics that compose the fabric of my methodology.

In Haudenosaunee cosmological stories, “narratives and maps help construct and define [our] worldviews, they are not determined and [are] always open for negotiation” (Goeman, 2013, p. 25), which is how an entangled story-mapping practice helped bring my urban and contemporary Kanien’keha:ka Indigeneity to life. Story-maps can stand alone, can be braided together, could form the entirety of this project. Since my thesis is a spaceship, story-maps hold space for me to travel through different dimensions of time; they are how I am assembling and sharing those movements through space. Yet, story-maps seem to exert their own agency: materializing as bursts of ideas at midnight, creative photoshoot adventures, purple stories and red-lettered accountabilities that render mnemonic histories visible in the cityscape. Story-maps “produc[e] decolonized spatial

knowledges” (p. 11), encouraging me to explore the stuff that makes up my patchworked Indigeneity, searching for clues as I expand my peacemaking, getting curious about my roles and responsibilities, moving through the ebb and flow of grief and condolence, experimenting with Kanien'keha words of ceremony, laying bare the threads of my anger, hurt and resilience, rupturing the history of YGK-scapes, and finding a way to leave traces of my contemporary Indigenous presencing for others to pick up, discard, or care for. These gestures are all geared towards a transformation of reality, moving ahead with futurities. Story-maps are how I am piecing my story together, mapping the geography of those relationships, layering together land and language and travelling across the contour(s) of my clay, refusing settler cartographies outside of the colonial gaze of genocide and violence.

My patchworking together of story-maps borrows from the concept of '(re)mapping' written about extensively by Seneca scholar, Mishuana Goeman (2008; 2009; 2011; 2013). I acknowledge that there are a multitude of practices and expressions of (re)mapping that have emerged from her scholarship. There was a community-based project undertaken by the Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (n.d.) in which local Ka'tarohkwen members created and shared their own, personal digital stories. *Mapping Indigenous L.A.* (2015) and *Carrying Our Ancestors Home* (2019) are two ongoing research projects rooted in Goeman's research that also explore aspects of decolonial cartography and story maps in community settings. While Indigenous communities, stories and knowledges are often rendered invisible in cityscapes, these projects work to expose the “rich and multiple notions of place created by indigenous peoples” (*Mapping Indigenous L.A.*, 2015, para. 1). My love for Goeman's work, coupled with an online Instagram presence, also led me to connect with Annitta Lucchesi, a Cheyenne scholar; we promptly began to “nerd out” over Indigenous cartography and matriarchal star quilt mappings.

Her master's research (2016) also attends to the brilliance of (re)mapping, and how Indigenous maps "can map an infinite number of stories, experiences, histories, narratives, and all the ways they overlap, despite differing temporalities" (p. 8). While I have found my way to a practice of patchworking, it has been necessary for me to acknowledge the power of our Indigenous stories in "the struggle against colonialism and empire building – yet [our stories] are fragile and need tending" (Goeman, 2013, p. 39). Our bodies, lands and relationships have been fractured and dissected through the ongoing structure of settler colonialism. Our existence is delicate, and we need to make sure we are not neglecting our responsibilities as onkwéhon:we.

Goeman's (2013) work proposes that "(re)mapping is not just about regaining that which was lost and returning to an original and pure point in history, but instead understanding the processes that have defined our current spatialities in order to sustain vibrant Native future" (p. 3). Goeman's (re)mapping projects resonate for me as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman working towards transforming worlds. As Indigenous peoples exist within an active settler colonial reality, we tend to grasp at traditions that have been preserved through the ongoing genocide of European invasion for over 500 years. Yet we cannot cling to the ways in which things have always been done; we are no longer pre-contact people and we cannot return to a pure, static, pre-colonial past; our cultures, languages and practices have always adapted and grown with us. Story-mapping as a method holds space for our evolving Indigenities since "[m]aps do not have to adhere to linear notions of time, or Western ideas of space and storytelling" (Lucchesi, 2018, p. 8). I have seen these static cultural practices turn into troublesome traditionalisms that only end up excluding and further marginalizing targeted bodies, specifically women, Two Spirit and trans folks. Through Goeman's (2013) work, (re)mapping becomes a gesture "toward[s] spatialities of belonging that do not bind, contain, or

fix our relationship to land and each other in ways that limit our definitions of self and community” (p. 10-11). Our Indigeneities and cultural practices need to be expansive, open, inclusive and safer for all bodies under the current settler colonial regime. We need to acknowledge that sometimes our teachings do not fit for everyone; we need to become curious about our own knowledges and create ways of bringing our stories into the future; we need to find ways to hold generative space within our ceremonies that take into consideration a multitude of perspectives, intellects and identities. I wanted to make sure that my methodology could carry me through this journey, rooting me as I nourish the stuff that makes me Haudenosaunee, while still allowing space to challenge dogma that has become exclusive in our practices.



@katarohkwen



Story-mapping has also led me to a different form of patchworking, resulting in my nurturing the Instagram account @katarohkwen. My intentions for this social media profile started out as means to mobilize the contemporary Indigenous knowledges being generated and to hold that intellect accountable within a nest of digital relations. I was not anticipating for this platform to transform into the main source that prompted my writing fragments – decolonial visuals threaded together with nonlinear, yet very intentional captions, structured as square boxes on the Internet, its own patchworked story-map composed of a multitude of story-maps. The chaos of my thesis thoughts that used to rush along the axons in my brain, firing chemicals into synapses before getting stuck somewhere between my neurons and fingertips,



have finally been launched into the generative possibilities of cyberspace – Instagram has become an extension of my storytelling practice. As “[v]isual culture is becoming more accessible to Native youth” (Goeman, 2011, p. 7), it has been important for me to ensure that my creative work is practical – taking pictures on my iPhone SE, layering photos using the free Piclay app, and sharing images on Instagram – creating a “decolonial commons” (Cornum, 2017, para. 15) that can be picked up, preferably, by any curious Indigenous person seeking to explore their own complex Indigeneity and can be molded to suit their own desires and needs. While this social media platform is primarily intended for an Indigenous audience, I have also tried to bring in prompts that encourage the learning of settlers by “increase[ing] Indigenous visibility on...occupied Indigenous

lands” (Reis, 2019, p. 70), reminding “Canadians” that the history shaping the contours of this country have been smoothed over with niceties, and that there are alternative Indigenous stories working against the imposition of “colonial geographies [used] to eliminate or eradicate or absorb that which is Native” (Goeman, 2013, p. 30). @katarohkwen embodies the ethic of Indigenous futurities and feminisms that focus on relationship-building and fluid traditions, maintain my responsibilities of peacemaking that involve accountability, but also works to provoke, radically inspire and uphold others.

While mainstream sources of media tend to reproduce problematic narratives and tropes of Indigenous peoples – dead or dying Indians, Indians wearing headdresses, at-risk Indians, protesting Indians – the digital machinery of dominance is troubled when living Indians start to manipulate the technology of the colonizers. But as diasporic Diné writer Lou Cornum (2015) explains, we need to understand that “technology is not divorced from or forced upon land, but develops in relation to lands and the many beings land supports” (para. 7). As someone from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, I am able to see our cultural “wampum belts as hypertextual technologies” (Haas, 2007). The physical materialities of our living Indigenous intellects have been encoded into and retrieved from purple and white quahog beads since before European contact. Through artifacts such as wampum, pottery, clothing, or patchworked quilts, Indigenous peoples have found ways to use technology as “a tool of [our] resilience, cultural continuity and a conduit for storytelling” (Igloliorte, Nagam & Taunton, 2016, p. 11). Instagram, Twitter, and other forms of social media are simply contemporary manifestations that hold, map, generate and communicate Indigenous stories – building digital worlds with “[d]ecolonial aesthetics [that] gesture towards creative, desirous futures” (Recollet, 2016, p. 93).

Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
otsi'nonwa'shon:a

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the insects)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
otsi'ten'okon:ha

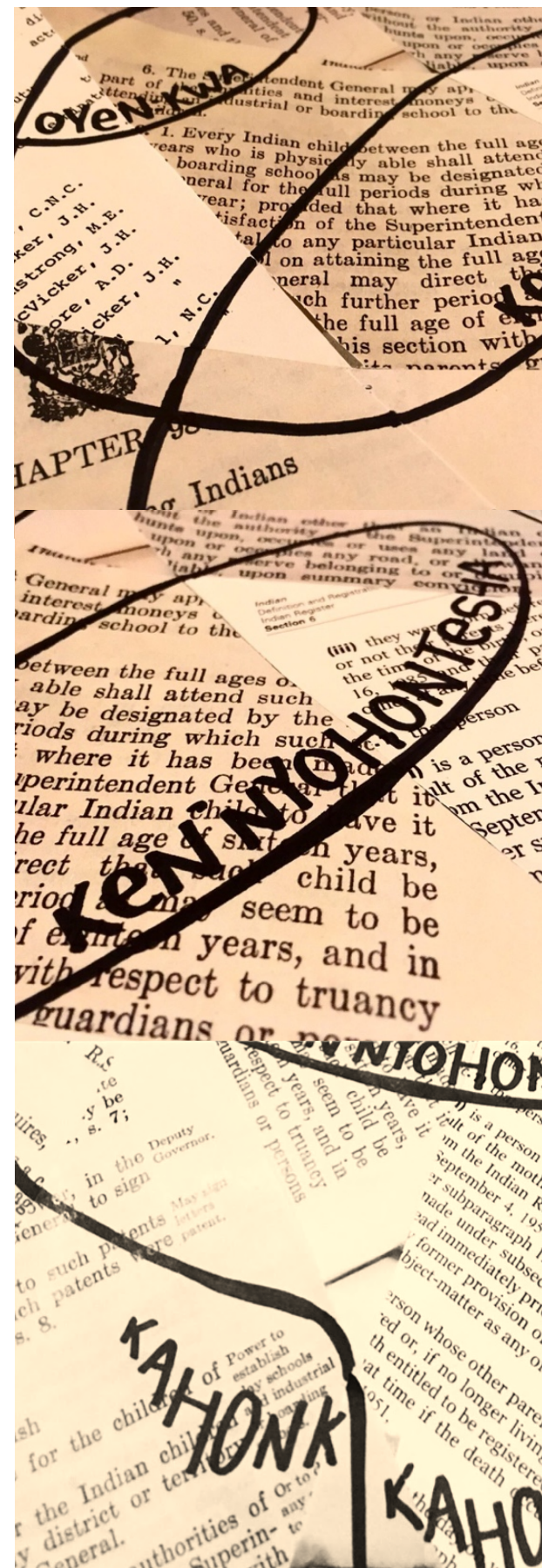
*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the birds)*



## Mapping Haudenosaunee Sovereignty

*Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon  
teyethinonhwera:ton ne yonkhi'nihsten:ha tsi ohwentsya:te.*

Sky Woman's story has a few different beginnings – some say she fell, some say she was pushed, but I like to think that she jumped, because nowhere in her story am I led to believe that she didn't know who she was or what she wanted. Sky Woman thought for herself, she was independent and unapologetic in her choices, and, in that moment, her agency and curiosity swirled into the transformation of this world. As she jumped, maybe she hesitated, panicked, had a moment of doubt (because who wouldn't when physically falling feet first into the unknown of disruption), and in that fraction of a second she reached out and grabbed two medicines on her way down: *oyen:kwa* (tobacco leaves) and *ken'niyohontesha* (strawberries), bringing gifts from Sky World with her. I think about the animal kin that looked up in the sky and saw her hurtling towards them, long hair swirling, bright light streaming in behind her. And instead of choosing fear, they found ways to support her – the *kahonk'shon:a* (geese) flew up to catch her, the *a'no:wera* (turtle) offered their shell so she could rest, and the *ano:kien* (muskrat) managed to dive deep



enough to gather the mud that would stretch over this earth. With the care of those kin, Sky Woman danced and sang this land into existence; her gratitude and intentions were transformed into the earth we walk on today. Sky Woman is our first constellation, her skin a collection of stars from the Milky Way, bringing galaxies into this place and teaching us how to shuffle as generations of contemporary Sky People.

Sky Woman is my favourite teacher. I have been taught that within Haudenosaunee cosmologies the listeners of stories are active participants in their own meaning-making. The Creation Story is our first story, it maps out our responsibilities and roles as onkwehon:we. I am Sky Woman's great-granddaughter, and the telling of her story always helps me learn about my own. When her body danced across the turtle's back, she made sure that as Haudenosaunee people "we are extensions of the very land we walk upon [and] we have an obligation to maintain communication with it" (Watts, 2013, p. 23). The blood, bones and spirit of my body are an extension of my matriarchs – my mother, grandmothers, and Sky Woman. A multitude of

women's intentions compose the fabric of my life. Throughout Sky Woman's story, it becomes clear that healing is what moves her life forward (Horn-Miller, 2016). She is teaching me how to move through grief and disruption, how to fall into the possibilities of uncertainty, but she is also teaching me how to transform that

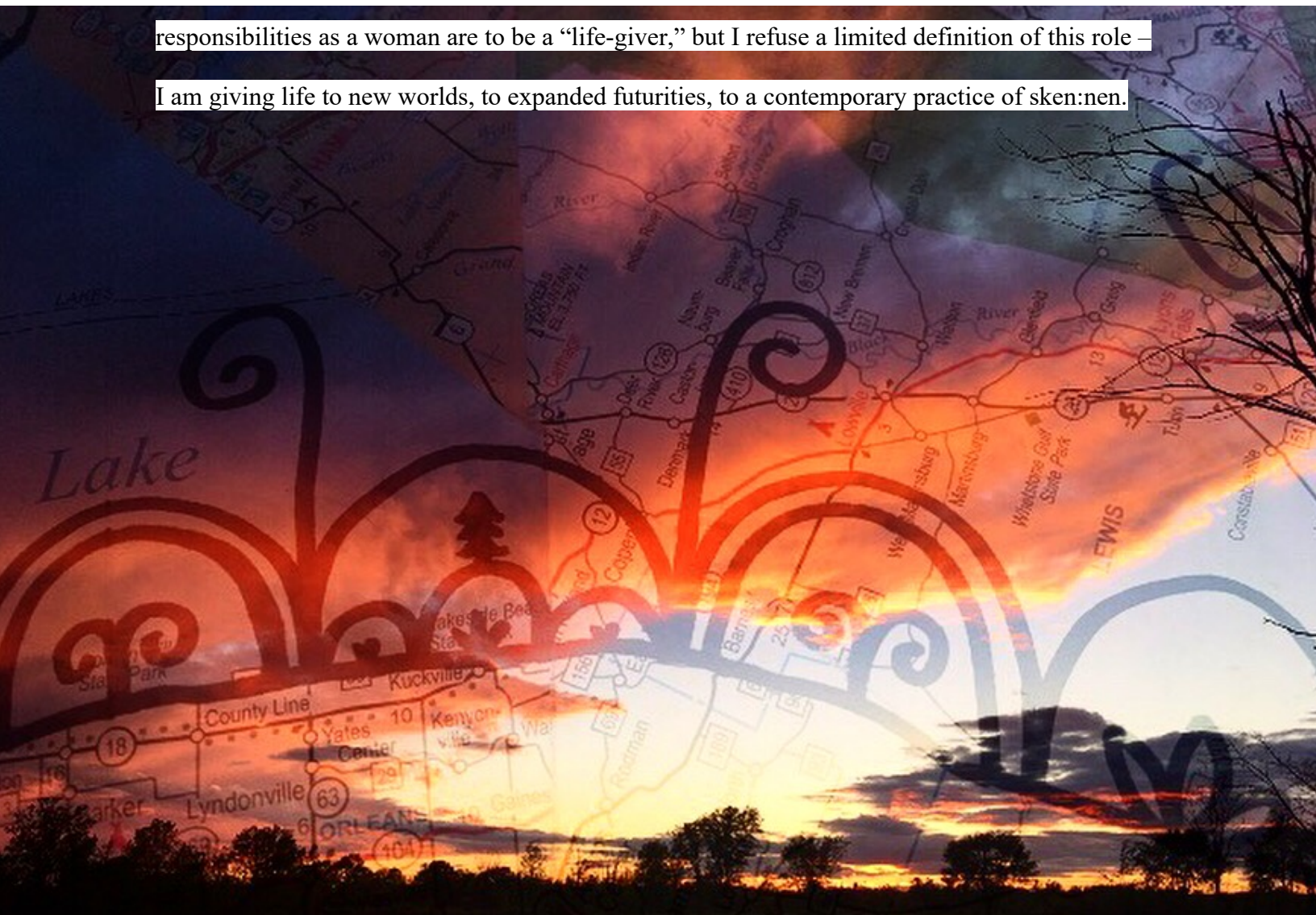


pain into healing, how to forgive, how to grieve, and how to walk my path with gratitude and ceremony. She is teaching me about the importance of my body to transform space and build worlds. She is teaching me that our movements have the ability to map Haudenosaunee sovereignty. She is teaching me that my very existence is medicine. She is teaching me that life is a process of balancing, teetering between boundaries, and trusting myself enough to jump into the ruptures of my life in order to propel my healing forward. Sky Woman is my favourite teacher, showing me the way, and supporting me through the chaos and uncertainty of transforming worlds as a Haudenosaunee woman.

Yet the Creation story is not a static relic of the past: “creation is a constantly occurring and recurring process” (Hill, 2017, p. 17) in our lives as onkwehon:we, and we reproduce creation every single day, but not just through childbirth. I have been told repeatedly that my

responsibilities as a woman are to be a “life-giver,” but I refuse a limited definition of this role –

I am giving life to new worlds, to expanded futurities, to a contemporary practice of sken:nen.



**Otsiskwa**

*I'm thinking about blood-soaked moss, corn mush and the full moon hanging heavy in the sky. I can feel my body preparing my own moon, the tides of my body's waters swelling with hormones, fibrous tissue and contracting pain (and waiting for those waves to crest and subside). I am thinking about my responsibilities as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman, how I need my identity as a "life-giver" to be about more than birthing and mothering a child. I need it to be more than the totality of my uterus, ovaries and vulva that supposedly compose my identity as a woman. Because I know that I am more than these organs and I'm trying to find a way to belong to my own body despite the either/or cuts of non-belonging that settler colonial gender binaries have carved into us. I am thinking about the physical pain my body experiences each month and how I know it's slowly progressing even though settler doctors don't believe me when I tell them that something is wrong. But they don't understand the centuries of violence that my body holds. They don't understand the generations of trauma my uterus is grieving as I shed another layer of myself. I'm*

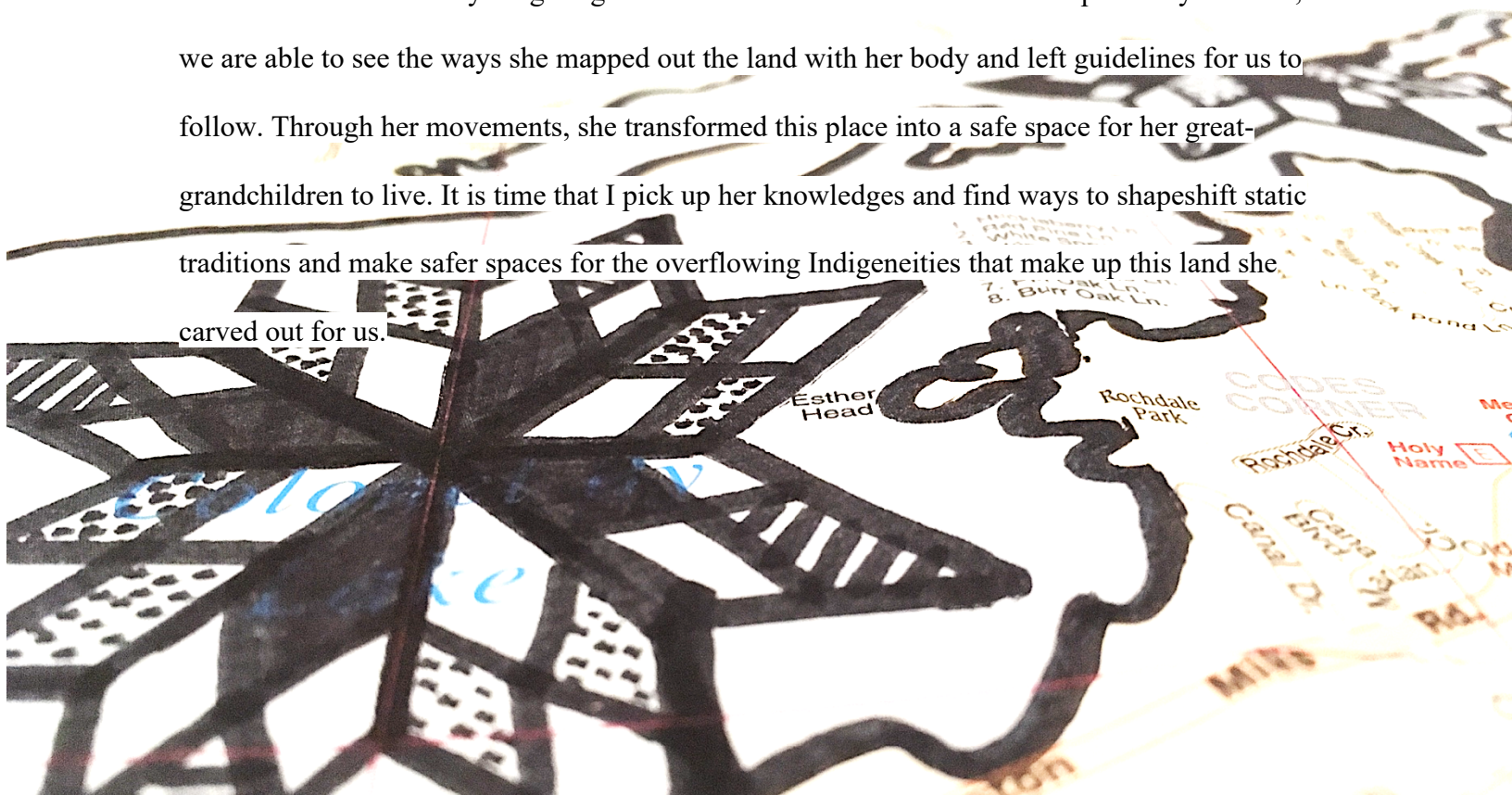


*thinking about my great-grandmother who didn't want kids, yet somehow ended up with a daughter. I'm thinking about my grandmother who carried six children then died at the age of fifty-five. I'm thinking about the traces of marital rape, sexual abuse, coercion, pain and blood that dot the genealogy of my matriarchs. I'm thinking about #MMIWG2S and the colonial gender-based violence that sits heavy on our minds and anxiously in our bodies. I'm thinking that it's time we stop clinging to traditionalisms – the ways we wrap female bodies up in skirts (Simpson, 2011), the ways women are excluded from ceremony in the name of tradition (Todd, 2016), or the ways that moontiming bodies are shamed for touching medicines.*

My journey through this thesis has also jumped into the rupture of colonial gender-based violence that has ripped through the fabric of “Canadian” soil and the bodies of those targeted: Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit and trans folks. It is important that I attend to the settler colonial cis-heteropatriarchal ways in which this country is structured and controlled (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2012; Usask, 2016). It is important that I trace this trauma through my matrilineal genealogy and examine the intergenerational scars that it has left on my relationships and identity as an Indigenous woman. Feminine and female-identifying Indigenous bodies are being physically erased and eliminated in this country; Canada has produced and promoted a systemic “issue” where Indigenous peoples are going missing, being kidnapped, raped, sexually assaulted, physically attacked and brutally murdered (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). As Simpson (2014) explains, these problems are direct symptoms of settler colonialism and “they work very efficiently to remove Indigenous peoples from our territories and to prevent reclamation of those territories through mobilization” (para. 9). Canada is still determined to get rid of their “Indian problem” (Facing History and Ourselves, n.d.), and is doing so in systematic ways that physically erase Indigenous peoples

from the land – the ongoing epidemic of #MMIWG2ST in this country has now been called a “Canadian genocide” (Barrera, 2019, para 1; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). As Tuck and Yang (2012) state, “settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital and [this] disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence” (p. 5), which is deeply implicated in and generative of colonial gender-based violence.

Indigenous peoples, communities and nations have lived on the lands that make up Canada before the arrival of settlers, and we share these knowledges through our various Creation stories. Within Haudenosaunee intellect, onkwehon:we hold a “relationship with the soil as cultivators and sisters to the food plants” (Doxtater, 2016, p. 58), where land is our kin, not property or a resource to be extracted, exploited or developed (Goeman, 2009). My work aims to raise up Indigenous peoples, specifically those being targeted as sites of violence from the settler colonial nation-state. Our bodies need to be held now, the scars of violence that crisscross our relationships need to be cared for, and my roles as a contemporary woman needs to be about more than my lifegiving abilities. When we follow in the footsteps of Sky Woman, we are able to see the ways she mapped out the land with her body and left guidelines for us to follow. Through her movements, she transformed this place into a safe space for her great-grandchildren to live. It is time that I pick up her knowledges and find ways to shapeshift static traditions and make safer spaces for the overflowing Indigenities that make up this land she carved out for us.



### **You can find me at the waterside, singing love songs to the land**

I am a singer, drummer and song carrier – I hold a significant relationship with the walnut-dyed deer-hide hand drum I was generously gifted in 2014. I have been reflecting on the fact that this Drum has nestled herself comfortably inside my life, and her reverberating drumbeats always pull me into a place of calm and safety. I often struggle to move from my head

to my heart, but when I am holding Drum in my hands, I cannot be stuck inside my own thoughts because that's when song words falter and stutter inside my mouth, or a steady (heart)beat is suddenly dropped. Drum and I have a long history now – she is how I came to find my voice.

Before we learned how to be in relationship, I was quiet, tentative, and wavering in my Indigeneity. Her heartbeats are



my medicine, and singing has become my ceremony. Through the Indigenous community in Ka'tarohkwen, I have had the pleasure of meeting Lynn Brant, a strong Kanien'keha:ka woman who carries a wealth of ancestral knowleges. Lynn has taught me a few Haudenosaunee seed songs, which are traditional songs Haudenosaunee women would sing to the seeds as they

gardened. Terrylynn Brant, a seed keeper from Ohswe:ken (Six Nations), explains how seeds “hold...memor[ies] of our past and create our future” (Mohawk Seedkeepers, n.d., para. 4), indicating the significance of seed knowledges for Haudenosaunee peoples. Lynn has encouraged me to continue my singing ceremony in Kanien'keha, and each time I sing those seed songs I am reminded of the responsibilities Sky Woman mapped out for me: to practice intentional gratitude for creation, to trust the unknown possibilities of jumping into rupture, and to continue transforming worlds with some seeds, some songs and my contemporary Haudenosaunee body. Singing seed song knowledges has helped root me in my ethics of peacemaking. When I need to be in relationship with the land, I pull out my drum, my horn rattles, and my voice – as I know that this is the strongest medicine I carry.

### **Wildflower**

I cannot remember when, or how, I met Barbara Hooper, but she is a knowledge carrier who sits at the heart of my relationships in the Ka'tarohkwen community. Barbara is one of my favourite humans, and she and I have shared many conversations about our Indigenities – how to be in good relationship, how to walk with sken:nen in everything that we do, and how to honour our contemporary bodies in an urban community. I am so grateful to know this incredible woman and be able to share space with her, as I had been singing her song years before I even met her. Many years ago, the song “Wildflower” came to Barbara in a dream. Since then, Wildflower has reverberated across the world – those vocables being sung by Indigenous peoples from all walks of life. Wildflower is a beautiful song that honours the strength of women and the relationships we hold with the land (B. Hooper, personal communication, 2019, March 11), it is particularly significant for me as this song could be considered as originating from Ka'tarohkwen, itself. As a singer, I have found that (heart)beats, songs and rhythms will ebb-

and-flow with me as I move through different lands and seasons of my life. Through my research, Wildflower has been one of those songs that came hurtling out of nowhere and tumbled



off my tongue, time and time again. As this thesis has been a nonlinear process of cycling through grief and healing, Wildflower has felt like medicine. This song starts as a slow, melodic lullaby for two rounds, until it rushes upwards into a powerful crescendo, those vibrations lingering as visceral medicine wherever

it's sung. I take seriously my responsibility to hold care for the land, and to meet the land where it's at (Konsmo & Recollet, 2018). When I drum and sing, I know that medicine is speaking to the land, holding care for her exhausted, desecrated body, and for the restless ancestors that stir there.

Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinohwera:ton ne  
ohtehra'shon:a

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the roots)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinohwera:ton ne  
ononhkwa'shon:a

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the medicines)*



## I'm probably a pre-Confederacy Mohawk, but I'm learning how to sken:nen anyways

This thesis is a place for me to learn, question and get curious about my roles and responsibilities as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is threaded together with sken:nen (peacemaking), kanikonri:io (a good mind) and kashastensera (collective strength) – these are the ethics that sustain our nations and inform our movements as



we walk through this world. Our stories map out the ways in which we need to embody Haudenosaunee sovereignty, and through this knowledge, we are transformed into everyday peacemakers – building more inclusive and just worlds, condoling our

grief, lifting our minds off the ground, moving towards healing, nurturing the individual gifts that we each bring to the fabric of Confederacy, embracing the strength of our diversity, and moving with compassion, understanding and justice. Peacemaking is radical, especially for a people that hold fire in their hearts – but it also has to be practical (Mohawk, 2010; 2004).

Peacemaking can never be static; it is always overflowing and in motion as we negotiate the complexities of our worlds and find ways to create evolving practices of sken:nen in our current realities. Learning how to be a peacemaker means picking up my political and ceremonial

responsibilities – taking the briars off the bodies of those who stumble across my path, weaving wampum, and embracing the power of my words as I transform and patchwork together (new) worlds brimming with peace, good minds and healing.

It is important to note that when I speak about Confederacy, I am referring to the union of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy – when the original five nations were united under an ethic of sken:nen around 1142 A.D. (Johansen, 1995) to eliminate the widespread warfare, bloodshed and anger that was ripping our nations apart. Soon after I moved to Ka'tarohkwen, I started saying that I was a “pre-Confederacy Mohawk” because at the time I was walking with a lot of grief in my life: I was grappling with anger, an inability to understand forgiveness, and what it meant to move through disruption. As a Kanien'keha:ka woman born into the matrilineal wolf clan, I have full citizenship as a Haudenosaunee person, but I did not hold any teachings or knowledges about what that meant. Early in my graduate studies, I was fascinated by the emerging concept of decolonial love that many Indigenous peoples were embracing and practicing (Belcourt, 2015; Simpson, 2013; Yamashiro, 2015), but it never seemed to fit into my own ethic of what it meant to be Haudenosaunee. It wasn't until I was speaking with Kanonhsyonne Jan Hill, a turtle clanmother from Kenhte:ke, that I realized love was never at the centre of our Confederacy, it was peace. This conversation completely uprooted the trajectory of my Haudenosaunee Indigeneity; this is when I started learning how to sken:nen. Even though I now work very hard to think with the peacemaking ethics and practices that make me Kanien'keha:ka, I still like to say that I'm a pre-Confederacy Mohawk – not because I continue to hold onto anger, trauma and resentment, but because I continue to move through disruption and grief in a settler colonial context. My learning of how to sken:nen is an ongoing practice, and my negotiation of what it means to be a Haudenosaunee woman in a contemporary reality is never fully knowable, forever

evolving and continually stretching to adapt to the colonial ruptures that burst through the fabric of my life. The phrase, “I’m probably a pre-Confederacy Mohawk, but I’m learning how to sken:nen anyways,” speaks directly to my journey as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman living in the active settler colonial nation-state called Canada. I am seeking out sken:nen in everything that I do, but I am also complicating the teachings that feel static or outdated. My Indigeneity is not an either/or binary, and I do not believe that I have to pick and choose whether I am fully pre-, or post-Confederacy when we are fully impacted by the violences of ongoing settler colonialism.

### **Urban Indigeneity**

Urban settings remain challenging spaces to navigate for Indigenous peoples. The creation of reserves through Indian Act policies introduced a clear demarcation between civilized settler spaces (cities) and primitive Indian spaces (reservations) (Goeman, 2013; Johnson, 2013). The ongoing project of settler colonialism works to “flatten...land with property, a process that contains Indigenous bodies and land into colonial categorizations” (Hokulani, Arvin, Goeman & Morgensen, 2015, p. 96), creating more dichotomies of un/belonging to contain, control and monitor Indigenous peoples. Yet the creation of urban/rural spaces, or reserve/city spaces, was not enough – Indian Act policies were also designed to prohibit the movements of Indigenous peoples from reservations through a pass system that was monitored by Indian Agents. The mobilization, freedom and agency of our communities were confined to the reserve, as “urban spaces [became] exclusively settler spaces” (Johnson, 2013, p. 218). Kingston, as a city and urban hub of Indigenous community, has often felt hostile and isolating. Due to ongoing erasure, marginalization and powerlessness in this city, urban Indigenous peoples seem to struggle over resources, knowledge and power – stepping over one another to better their own survival in the

city. In my time here, I have been rejected from ceremonial spaces because I was gently asking questions about traditional dogma, I have been alienated from community groups because I did not agree with their ideas of reconciliation, I have had my intellectual knowledge stolen and exploited, I have had to deal with people claiming clans, ancestral names and Indigenous nations even though they are white settlers, I have been silenced repeatedly through physical means by people who claim to be “elders.” Exploring my urban Indigeneity has been significant for me throughout this thesis work because, as a third-generation Bill C-31 Indian, I do not necessarily feel displaced, less authentic or alienated in settler cities. I have developed a strong sense of my patchworked Haudenosaunee Indigeneity and am rooted in my Kanien'keha:ka teachings. I am unapologetic in my refusal to be alienated from the city. I am determined to take up space as an Indigenous person, even though sometimes it is downright terrifying. As a young, educated, white-coded Indigenous woman, I hold a lot of privilege, and it is important that I am accountable and transparent to this. Urban Indigeneity is a complication of sken:nen, where the conditions of pre-Confederacy life have been replicated in urban cities with layers of settler colonialism and lateral violence.

### **Tracing Paper Transparency**

Learning how to sken:nen as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman means transforming my peacemaking into a practice that is able to sustain a diverse Indigenous future. Through my teachings I have found that this process must begin with condolence – brushing down my body, caring for my trauma, moving through pain, re-igniting my fire and lifting my mind off the ground. Through this thesis project, I have started jumping into the geography of fractured un/belonging that I have encountered in my urban community. I have found ways of hanging up my grief with tracing paper transparency. I have repeatedly come back to the actions of

Ayonwatha, the one who teaches the Haudenosaunee people about the importance of healing, where “condolence has been used to lift people from the[ir] grief” (Hill, 2017, p. 40).

Along their travels, the Peacemaker encountered many individuals who helped bring the message of sken:nen into existence: Ayonwatha brought teachings of condolence, Thatatatho taught us the importance of perseverance, and Tsikonhsaseh showed us the importance of women within the Confederacy. Commonly known as a trickster within Haudenosaunee cosmology, “Thatatatho was said to have a crooked body; his hair and his mind were twisted and tangled, and he appeared as though he had snakes in his hair” (Doxtater, 2016, p. 25). Thatatatho was the embodiment of warfare, darkness and injustice before Haudenosaunee confederation. In this urban context, warfare has been replaced with complex layers of colonial and lateral violence.



Contemporary

Thatatathos have disguised themselves as bullies with fragile egos and insecurities. Our relationships within this urban place are fractured, heavy with tangled minds and twisted bodies. The

traces of intergenerational trauma run rampant in this community, millions of spider lines of hurt chiseling away at our relations, deepening and exposing the raw fear we experience from centuries of settler colonial violence. As Doxtater (2016) explains, “[f]or generations our people have been told how our culture, languages, and treaty rights make us an inconvenience...Often

[shame] comes from mainstream society and modern culture but it is also our own people who remind us” (p. 4). Disguised with vague truths, harsh words, complacent nods, intimidation and anger – just a few “ways in which Native people absorb genocidal violence and refract it back on one another” (Lucchesi, 2016, p. 78) – Thatatatho has manifested into a new form of darkness and control that frays our knotted connections of relationality.

### **Hanging up my grief**

In the Peacemaker story, Ayonwatha was overcome with grief after Thatatatho murdered

his daughters – his mind was on the ground and he felt as if his personal fire had been extinguished. In his darkness, Ayonwatha created some wampum strings that he used as “mnemonic devices to carry messages of condolence” (Hill, 2017, p. 32), reminding him of his strength, his purpose and responsibilities. Following his intentions, I strung my own wampum to help me work through the grief of lateral violence I have experienced in the Ka'tarohkwen community. I wrote down everything I wanted to say to the



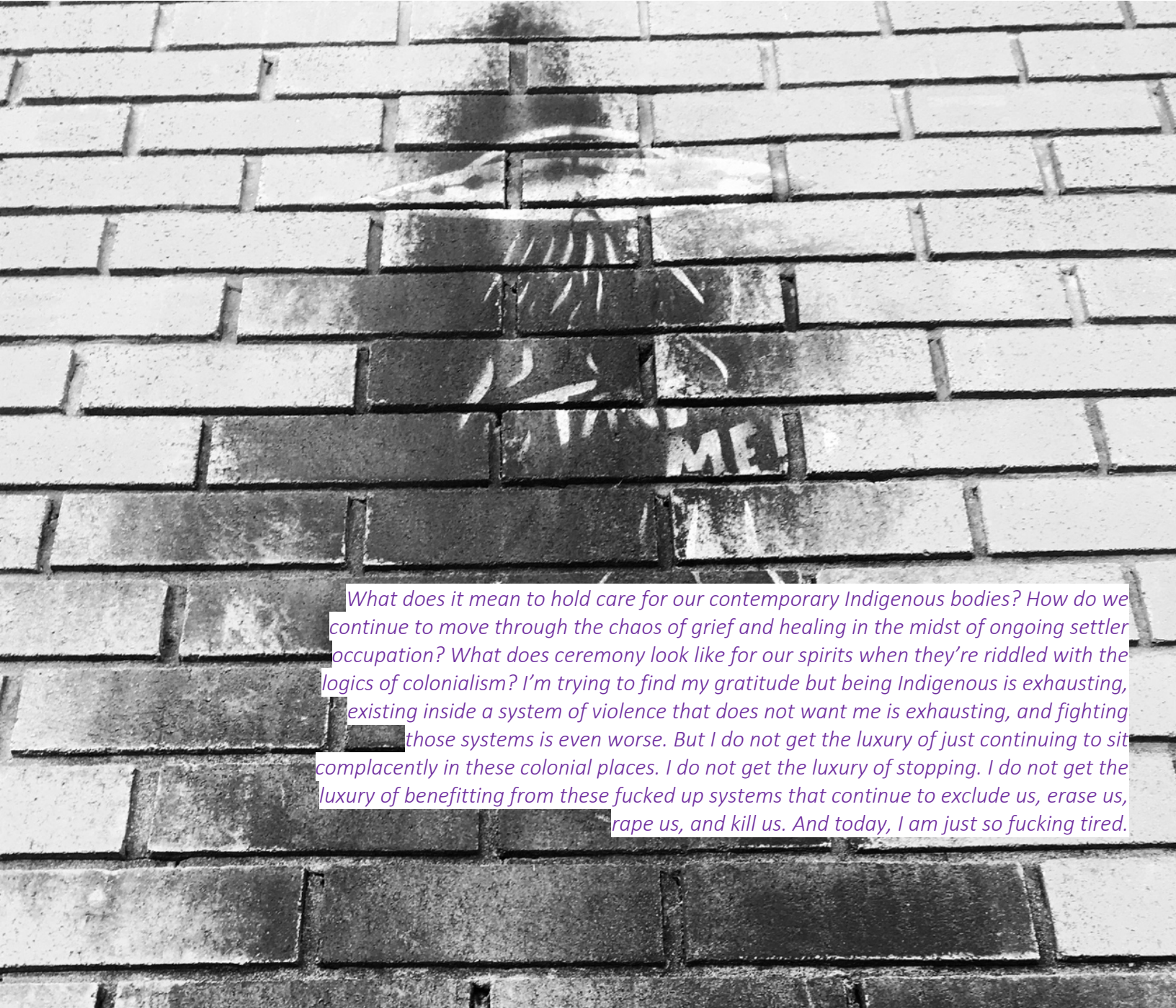
people who had hurt me. I wrote my grief on tracing paper to signify the lack of accountability in this community and our need for transparency as we negotiate our relationships. After sitting with these emotions, I rolled up my thoughts until they became paper beads I could string together. I strung four strings of paper wampum to represent the four years I have been a member of this community. I tied the strings to a bundle of entwined sticks I had found in the forest and was struck by the physical appearance of my wampum – twisted, crooked and tangled, a perfect visualization of my grief in this community.

As a community, I know that we are each trying to weave our own tentative webs of healing and connecting, but we often forget the goal – that we are here to take care of each other and these lands. Feeling empathy for lateral violence is heavy, but my ongoing relations with community members that are tangled in darkness are heavier. This life is a continuous cycle of moving through disruption and healing, lifting our minds off the ground to patchwork together new practices of belonging. Through my emerging sken:nen praxis, I know that peacemaking starts with condolence – feeling the felt memories of unbelonging, the dissections of lateral violence, and accepting that I live in a place where community has only been found in pockets of creative kinship. I am moving with my grief, hanging it up, whispering words of condolence to my wounds and remembering my responsibilities as a Haudenosaunee woman. I am choosing to focus on futurities, cleaving open safe spaces where we can untangle our hurt and build new worlds of belonging that are overflowing with peacemaking and caring, inclusive relations.

My intention with this work is not to say that I am whole and healed, that I do not continue to struggle when I see certain faces in the crowd, or that I have invited toxic people back into my life. This work is ongoing, and it is difficult for me to continue being in relationship with community members that have hurt me, but I try my best to remember my

empathy. To remember that these humans are grappling with their own internalized shame and trauma. To remember that their behavior towards me is not always a reflection of me. Learning how to sken:nen in these situations is tough, because I am responsible for my own healing – for feeling all of those uncomfortable emotions in my body, writing down my thoughts, and (in this case) hanging up those words to transform them into wampum strings as reminders of my pain and resilience, of my forgiveness and movements through this community.

### Settler Colonial Sken:nen

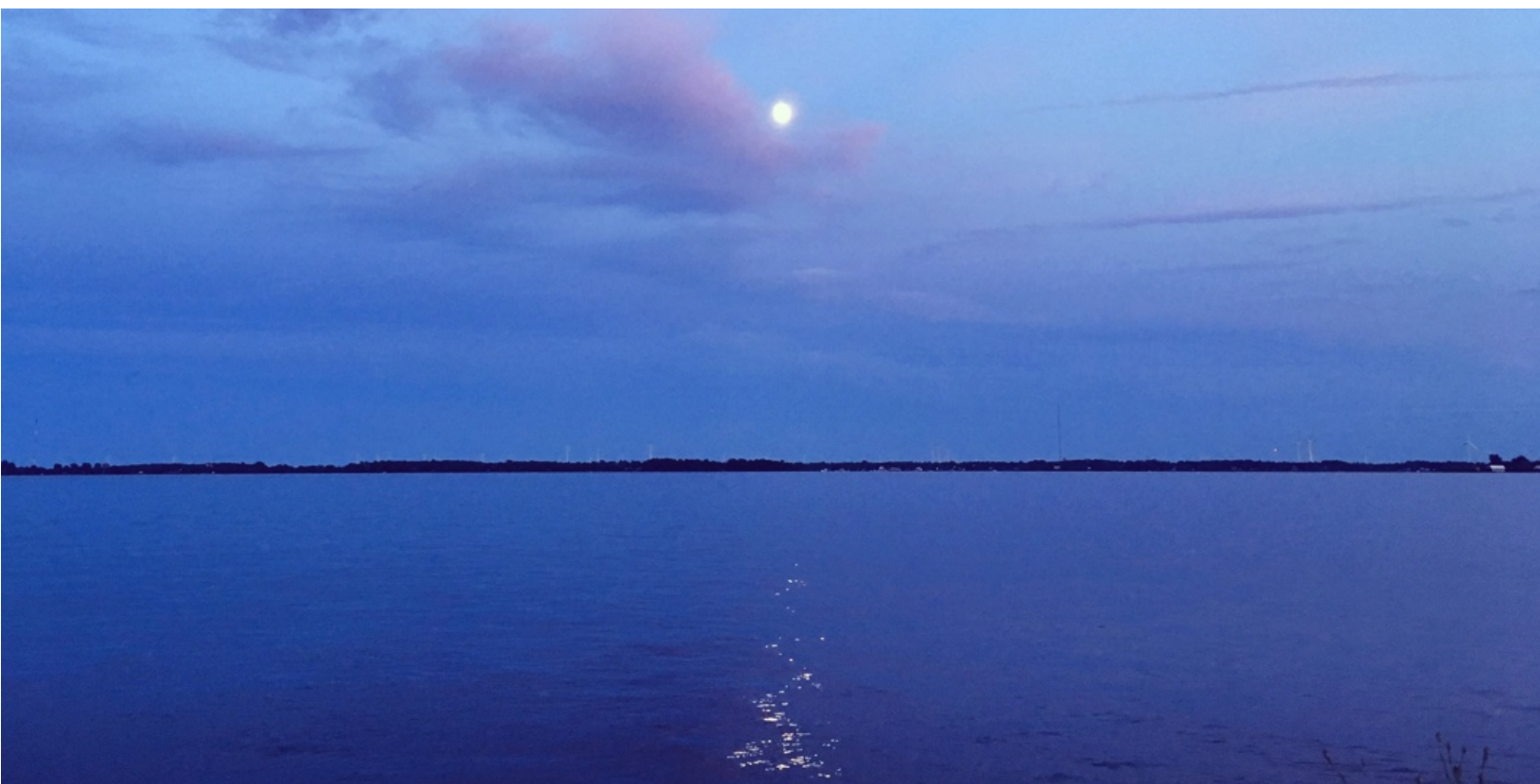


*What does it mean to hold care for our contemporary Indigenous bodies? How do we continue to move through the chaos of grief and healing in the midst of ongoing settler occupation? What does ceremony look like for our spirits when they're riddled with the logics of colonialism? I'm trying to find my gratitude but being Indigenous is exhausting, existing inside a system of violence that does not want me is exhausting, and fighting those systems is even worse. But I do not get the luxury of just continuing to sit complacently in these colonial places. I do not get the luxury of stopping. I do not get the luxury of benefitting from these fucked up systems that continue to exclude us, erase us, rape us, and kill us. And today, I am just so fucking tired.*

Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
shonkwahtsi'a tiehkehnehka karahkwa  
*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the sun)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
yonkhisotha ahsonthehnehkha karahkwa  
*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to grandmother moon)*



**#P4W**

Kingston's Prison for Women (P4W) was Canada's first prison for women, opening its doors in 1934 across the road from Kingston Penitentiary, the first prison ever built in Canada (Schwartz, 2013). P4W has a notoriously degrading and inhumane legacy – including unethical

administration of LSD (Pate, 1998), invasive strip searches done by male officers (Pate, 1996; openminded13, 2012), high use of segregation and generally poor treatment of inmates (Hansen, 2018; Pate, 1996). Soon after its opening, P4W came under fire in the media for its mistreatment of inmates (Correctional Service Canada, 2000; Hansen, 2018). When P4W closed its doors in 1993, the government of Canada attempted to rectify these injustices by opening

five more prisons for women across the country (Correctional Service Canada, 2000), which served to only further the violence being perpetrated against Indigenous women behind bars.

Between 1988 and 1991, seven women at P4W committed suicide – six of them were Indigenous (Facts, n.d.; Hansen, 2018). In Canada, Indigenous women account for 43% of all women admitted into correctional institutions (Malakieh, 2018), yet Indigenous people only account for around 4% of the entire Canadian population (Aboriginal, 2015). This is not okay.



We live inside a system of settler colonialism that aims to disadvantage Indigenous peoples. And I mean, we've all heard the statistics: overrepresented in correctional institutions, in child welfare systems, not to mention the high rates of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, sexual violence, substance abuse and suicide (to name a few). There is a clear lack of appropriate

services and supports for Indigenous peoples in this country. But does anyone ever wonder why these statistics even exist in the first place?

Kingston Penitentiary opened in 1835 (Schwartz, 2013), thirty-five years

before Canada even became a

country. Canada, your

institutionalized justice systems were

in place well before your

confederation. To accompany this,

the Gradual Civilization Act (which eventually became the Indian Act)

was passed in 1857 – a set of policies

designed to control and eliminate Indians for the benefit of advancing Canadian interests

(Hanson, 2009). The criminal (in)justice system was set up to trap Indigenous peoples, and the

Indian Act made sure of this – restricting our movements to federally-recognized reservations,

making attendance compulsory for our children at residential and day schools, arresting us if we

drank alcohol, prohibiting us from raising funds to acquire a lawyer, and enfranchising us if we



married white Canadians, joined the military, or attended mainstream Canadian schools. Canadian law has criminalized Indigenous bodies, and we see this in the statistics that “represent” our population. Yet these statistics are the very things that send people to jail – survival gives way to crime, leading to harsher sentences and an inability to post bail due to the circumstances of our existence. Canada, you have made it very clear, it is illegal to be an Indian in this country. How are you able to blame Indigenous peoples for being so angry when we are left to fend for ourselves in a world that is actively designed to fail us? And within these conditions, survival doesn't always adhere to the confines of colonial law. Settler colonialism is the problem here. The design and function of this system that upholds Canada is the problem. And it's time that you start remembering your responsibilities.

Within the city of Kingston, these sites of violence have become easy to exploit: federal correctional institutions have been turned into ‘potential’ for multimillion-dollar condo projects (Nease, 2018), venues for rock concerts (United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and

Addington, 2019), and sites to attract tourists (Parks of the St. Lawrence, n.d.). Yet the women that were locked behind the bars of these institutions – those who managed to survive, have been excluded from the majority of conversations about what should happen with these former prisons.



As the city of Kingston currently discusses what will happen to the site of abandoned P4W, Fran Chaisson, an Ojibwe kwe who served 18 years at P4W, declares emphatically that “these women were left behind, and they need to be remembered and respected” (Corrigan, 2018, para. 3). Chaisson further states that “the P4W Memorial Collective, a group founded in 2015 that advocates for the creation of a memorial garden at the dormant prison, wants to honour the ‘fallen sisters’ who died there” (para. 3). The cruel and inhumane history of their realities behind bars has been erased and quietly smoothed over, with even the inclusion of a memorial garden sparking controversy within the Kingston community. While attending a panel discussion for Prisoner’s Justice Day, organized by the P4W Memorial Collective (2019), I registered a common theme of healing, or perhaps, more accurately, a lack of healing. Emphasizing that their own experiences in these places were about anything but rehabilitation, these former inmates argue that current federal correctional institutions for women need to shift towards the direction of truth telling and healing.

### **Strong Women’s Song and Dolls**

In Haudenosaunee stories, corn husk dolls were given to the people to bring joy. Our dolls have no faces so that we don’t get too caught up in our vanity – our appearances never matter within the scope of our responsibilities to the Confederacy anyways. Instead, we are tasked with other concerns: Are we being good humans? Are we honouring our relations? Are we walking with a good mind? Are we practicing our peacemaking?



Canada, you are caught up in your vanity – worrying about how the hair of your prime minister looks, about enhancing the economic gains of your pipelines that destroy our lands and about ensuring the dominance of your settler colonial knowledge system. You have decided that your world is important, that no one else matters, and you have forgotten your responsibilities. You have forgotten your humility. You have forgotten that this country wouldn't exist without the graciousness and generosity of Indigenous peoples sharing our lands (which you then stole), and keeping you alive (until you actively started controlling, dominating and murdering us). Much like our “cornhusk sculptures [which are] seen only as souvenir items; all being viewed as unimportant, undervalued and almost forgotten” (Doxtater, 2016, p. 8), our physical Indigenous bodies are also left behind within the colonial gaze – we are a pest, something to be exterminated.

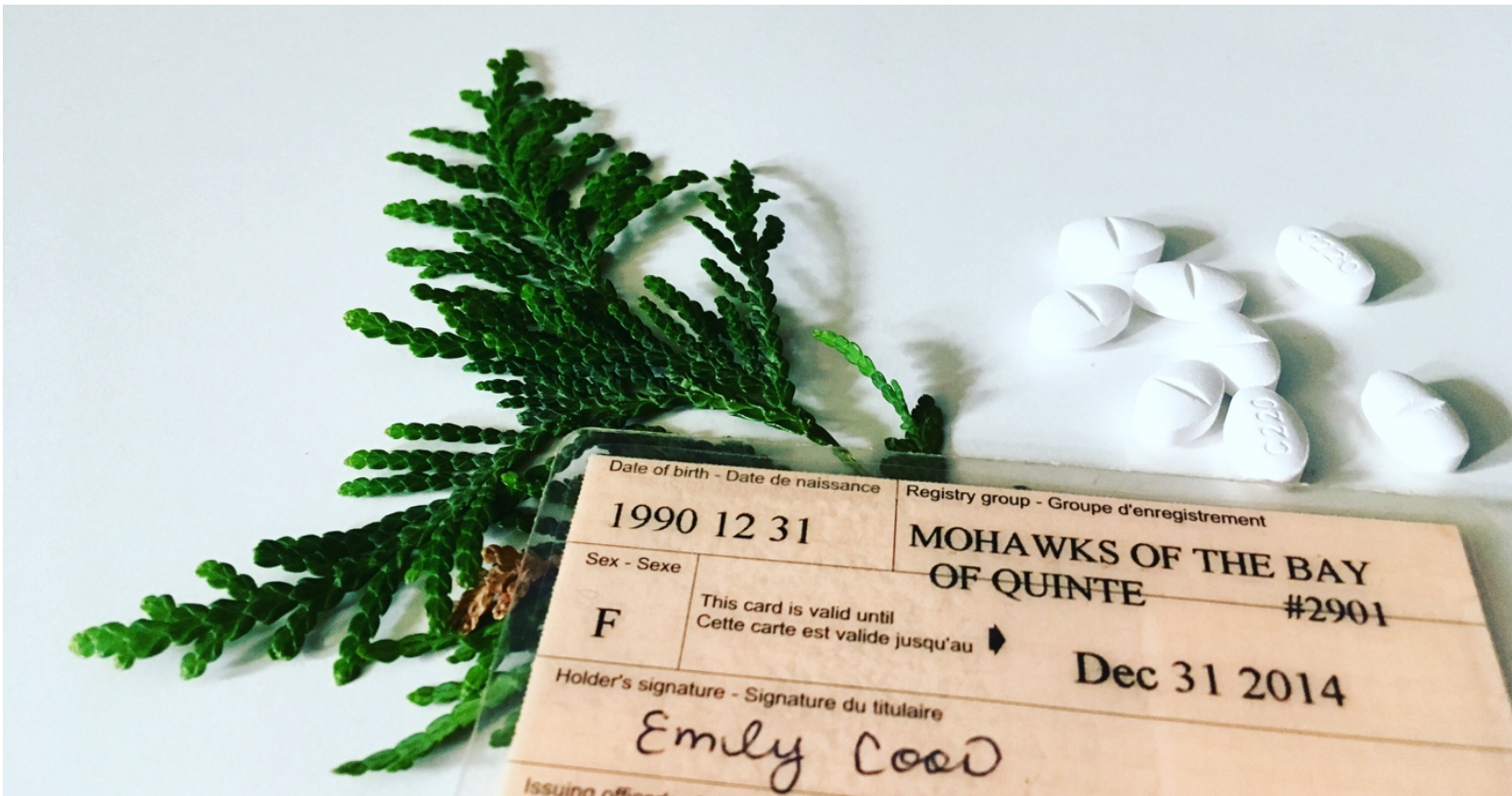
So, I am leaving these faceless dolls at P4W as a reminder. A reminder for you to look at the women you left behind bars. A reminder for you to remember the Indigenous women that took their own lives because the cruel realities of your prisons were so inhumane. A reminder for you to stop leaving Indigenous peoples behind, period. Indigenous women are overrepresented in your criminal “justice” institutions, and they are subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment in these spaces, left in solitary confinement, their bodies sexualized and degraded with non-consensual strip searches, and many even committing suicide to find a way out (Corrigan, 2018; Hansen, 2018; Pate, 1996). These women are people. How dare you have the audacity

and privilege to forget about them while the ruins of this building, Canada's first prison for women, haunts your settlerscape?

*To the women who lived here, survived here, died here, I want you to know that I see you. I am here to listen and do the work you need me to do. I am here to hold care for you, and I hope you hold me accountable. Until then, I made these corn husk dolls for you. I knotted together scraps of material that were once used as tobacco ties and formed these dolls, so you could have some medicine and ceremony too. I surrounded them with cedar, just in case, and sang your song –the Strong Women's song – in the shadows of this fucked up place. Don't worry though, I'm going to keep singing the healing vocables of this song wherever I go – reverberating its double heartbeats that came to all of you in the depths of solitary confinement. You didn't deserve the mistreatment that happened behind those walls, and I will never forget you.*



## Cedar + Cipralex



*I've been exploring the dissections of my life where trauma has seeped in, tracing the ways that grief has moved through generations and nestled itself beneath the contours of my skin. Settler colonialism works like a pathogenic bacteria that targets Indigenous bodies, hijacking our healing and damaging our lives, finding new and evolving ways to kill/displace/erase us, forever trying to resist our resistance. In the 1927 Indian Act a "person" means an individual other than an Indian. No wonder my body is tangled with anxiety. But I'm learning how to sken:nen anyways, and I know that work starts with me. With condolence and ceremony, whatever that looks like now – even if it is a fucked up cocktail of cipralex and roadside cedar. I'm learning how to lift my mind off the ground so I can function in this world again. But I always*

*forget that all that trauma sneaks up on me when I least expect it, and when it does, it saturates my entire being. Does grieving ever end when you're mourning the permanence of this settler colonial system? And how do I even begin the grieving of my colonized body when their binary cuts of (non)belonging are still slicing into my flesh? Raw wounds dripping with blood quantum and infected scabs of expired Bill C-31 Indian status.*



*It has been almost five years since I ventured into the ivory tower – a place where I am encouraged to think white, talk white, write white. Where whiteness is seen as a remedy for my NDNness. A place that is lonely and tiring because it mostly just feels like I'm drowning in whiteness, privilege and settler colonialism. And I am exhausted of not believing myself when I dare to think that I'm not okay here. Because academia doesn't have patience for an NDN who's not okay. But I somehow managed to cling to the promise of this thesis project that has evolved*

*with me as I learned how to swim, or at least tread water. This project has held me through meltdowns over academic jargon, and imposter syndrome. Crushing, gnawing teeth, aching bones and remnants of needles in my jaw that lasted for days. "You just need to control your stress" because existing in a world where you're not wanted is something they'll never understand. Fountain drink cokes and chocolate are two new food groups that sustain my body when anxiety turns my stomach into a bundle of knots, and that's all I can allow myself to handle. My grandmother died at 55 from diabetes complications leading to cardiac arrest, and my fears are that I'm killing myself in slow motion because no one taught me what it meant to take care of myself. It's painful to feel vulnerable enough to hold care for my body because no one wants us to survive anyways. And sometimes feeling is just medicated numbness and existing in an SSRI haze because I can't think too much about all those statistics without inducing a panic attack. This project has carried me through the marginalization of my knowledge, the 3am mornings of anxious thoughts when I couldn't remember the last time I slept, the complete meltdown of my mental health, lateral violence, unimaginable anger and unmoving fingertips on keyboard keys because why can't those words just come out of my head? I promise they're in there, and I haven't just been wasting the past four years of my life pretending to write my thesis, when really I'm just struggling to survive.*

*But I'm still telling myself to learn more, research more, read more about this settler colonial nation-state we live in, so that I can justify my work. Explain the nuances of colonial trauma as it lives inside my body and then lead a workshop on reconciliation where I leave heavy with the tears, guilt and anxiety of settlers – as if this labour wasn't already exhausting. I always have to prove myself, defend myself, know every academic detail about a structure that I actively*

*live through every single day. But I'm supposed to take your white hand and show you how to reconcile, like this! Or this! Or this! Because you can't seem to figure out how to google it yourself. And when I can't give you the answer you get upset. Mad. Furious even, that I dare unsettle the capital-T truth you've always known and then not provide a detailed and bulleted list of "how to reconcile." Even though I've already assembled this PowerPoint on #treaties, #residentialschools, the #IndianAct, #culturalappropriation, #whiteprivilege and #settlercolonialism. It is never enough. I haven't justified my knowledge sufficiently for your liking. And it's not professional anyways because I shared too much of my own story and you didn't understand how that was relevant. But you stopped listening around the part about boil water advisories because I raised my voice and got pissed off when I told you that Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory shares a border with the town of Deseronto and somehow they have clean drinking water when we don't. But you can't listen to an NDN when they're upset, irrational or angry anyways. You're so uncomfortable when I point out your privilege that you try to derail the point*

# THE INDIAN ACT

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AS AMENDED BY

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*of what I'm telling you so you can stay in control. So, you tell me that the past is in the past and I should just get over it because it wasn't your fault anyways, and what are you supposed to do about it? I suppress an eye roll and a groan, my jaw tightens up and I can hear my dentist telling me to just relax, and my counsellor telling me to just breathe into it, but I'm popping little white pills and trying to rub that cedar medicine into my skin because when does this ever fucking end?*

### **The Disruption**

Cedar and cipralex may knit this anxious body together, but I am more than my colonial trauma. Ceremony has evolved and stretched to fit all of our contemporary bodies – picking cedar from the side of the road, taking anti-anxiety medication to balance the chemicals in my brain, or patchworking these two (seemingly contradictory) medicines together to find healing. In our urban-displaced-contemporary contexts, Indigenous ceremony has not disappeared; it has been re-imagined in radically creative and expansive ways that reach towards desire (Tuck, 2009). As Erin Marie Koons (Métis) and Karyn Recollet, (Urban Cree) (2018) explain, “Indigenous people should be encouraged to nurture whatever medicines we can find, wherever we can find them” (p. 239) because medicine is medicine no matter what form we find it in.

I want to make it very clear that it is not the responsibility of marginalized folk to educate white settlers about their privilege (McIntosh, 1990; Morgensen, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Walia, 2012). The emotional labour of living a marginalized life is enough. I get the choice to decide if or when I want to engage in this work – carrying this burden in the interest of teaching, picking up nuanced bits and pieces to share when I am ready – but I'm also learning how to set boundaries and assert my refusal. Attending to white settler guilt and fragilities (DiAngelo, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012) will never be my primary intention. My interests do not always involve the internal deconstruction of the settler colonial nation-state; that particular work needs to belong to

the people who benefit from calling themselves Canadian. As I am implicated in this settler colonial system, specifically in academia, my work does attend to rupturing the realities of settler colonialism in my life, lands and communities, but I will always build my projects off my practice and ethics of sken:nen. After all, I am still here. I have not given up on writing my thesis, or finally getting my hands on that very expensive (and long overdue) Master's degree. I have had to create my own path, one that precariously balances all of these competing and intentional goals together. And this is where I have found that my responsibilities lie in Indigenous futurities, building better worlds, and transforming colonial realities into decolonial possibilities. Making sure that this place is a little bit less painful for those who come after me. And settlers need to understand that we are fucking busy. I am busy learning Kanien'keha, singing seed songs, sending decolonial memes in iMessages, writing stories with my body on Dish with One Spoon territories, presencing my contemporary Haudenosaunee sovereignty, eating corn soup, healing intergenerational trauma, patchworking together new constellations of inclusive Indigenous relationality, and trying to decolonize the fuck out of everything. I am busy jumping into the ruptures created by settler colonial either/or binary divisions. I am busy falling into the fissures that erupt when Indigenous knowledges collide with white Euro-Western hegemony (Coon & Land, 2019; Land, Gulamhusein, Scott & Coon, 2018; Coon, 2015). And even though we've been pushed to the margins, exist at the outer limits of colonialism, and our bodies-communities-lands are sites of rupture, we've turned those fractured places into ceremony anyways. Swirling into the unknown, feeling the heartbeats and gravity of those Indigenous knowledges tugging on us, reminding us that we can grow anywhere, even through the cracks of their violent displacement.

### Barbed Wire was for Cattle, not Indians



Fort Frontenac, Old Fort Henry, CFB Kingston, the Royal Military College (RMC) –

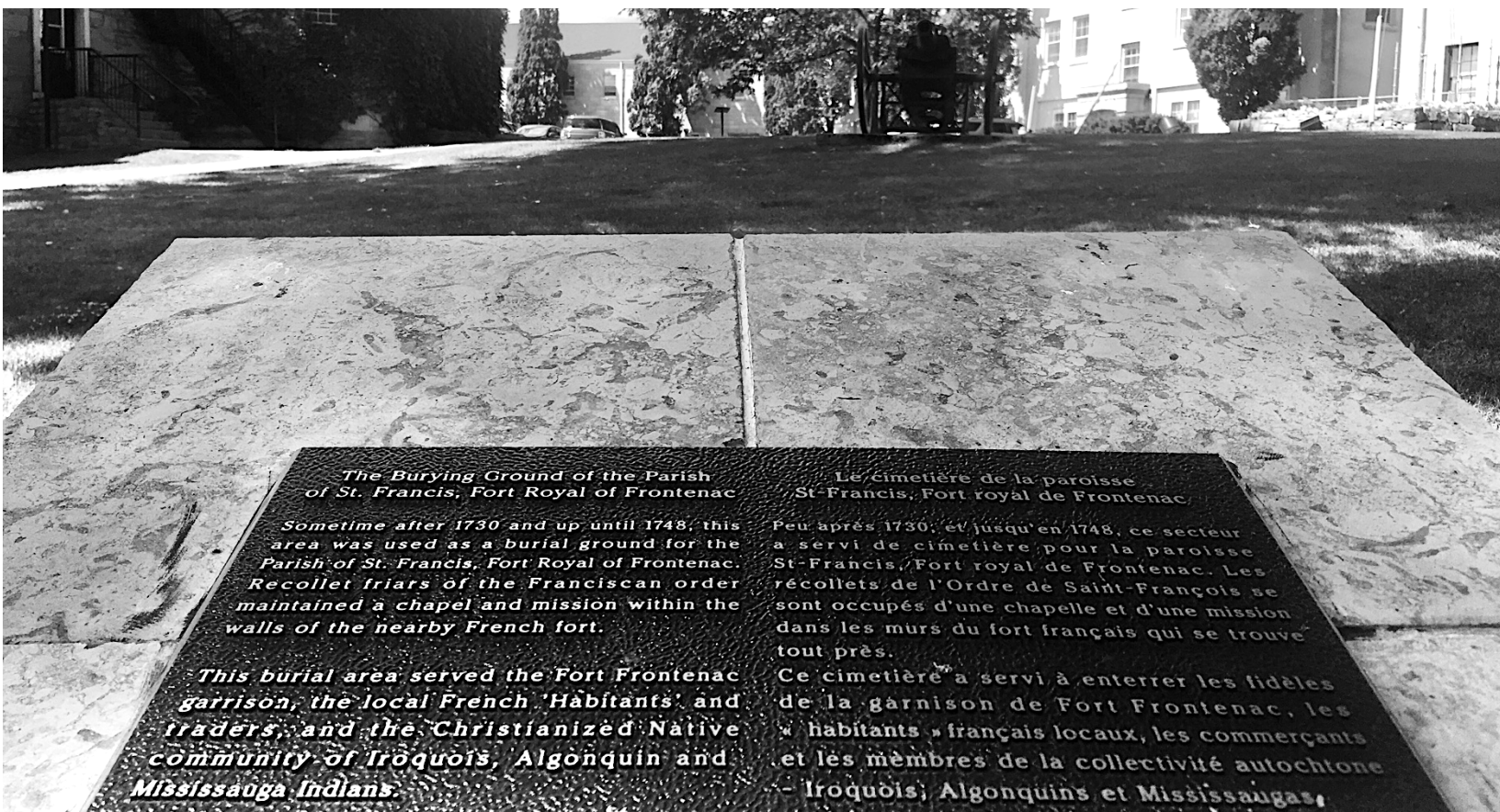
Kingston prides itself on its massive military presence and protracted military history. Today, the Canadian military continues to erase Indigenous sovereignty as it protects Canadian interests on stolen land (Mandate, 2018). The Canadian military is heavy with ingrained racism, dominance and control over Indigenous peoples and our activities on the land. While I lack confidence in the internal investigations of the military, internalized racism within the Canadian forces has recently made headlines after several high-profile incidents (Berthiaume, 2019; Burke, 2019). The Canadian military has layered this land with barbed wire fences, canons and no trespassing signs, ongoing reminders that Indigenous bodies are not welcome here. As Haudenosaunee peoples, we carry a centuries old resistance to Canadian occupation on our lands and control of

Indigenous peoples. For example, in two well-known contemporary situations, we have seen these ongoing tensions between the Kanien'keha:ka and Canadian military boil over during the Oka Crisis in 1990 (Carleton, 2019; Conradi, 2009) and the Culbertson Tract protests in 2007 on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory (CBC News, 2007). Haudenosaunee sovereignty is rooted in peacemaking (not peacekeeping), remembering our responsibilities to the land (not surveilling the land), and bringing our minds together to always begin with ceremony (not protecting Canadian interests on stolen territory). Haudenosaunee sovereignty is interested in the power of our words, in the quality of our relationships, and in building more inclusive and just worlds.

Fort Frontenac was originally built in 1673 for the French to gain control over the Haudenosaunee and to obtain a monopoly over the fur trade (Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation, n.d.; National Defence, n.d.; Wilson, 2013). Louis de Buade de Frontenac was celebrated for invading Kanien'keha:ka territory and having "great...force of character in dealing with the Indians" (Colby, 1915, para. 12). Fort Frontenac, saturated with over 300 years of Canadian military history, was designed to mislead, attack, capture, torture, enslave, displace and murder Indigenous peoples (Bunch, 2015). This violent history remains fresh on the shores of the St. Lawrence River with the remnants of memorialized artillery gunfire. It has been said that "Canada could thank Frontenac for keeping the Iroquois at arm's length" (Wilson, 2013, para. 16). Yet, the resistance and refusal of my ancestors is well-known. There are gossiped words between the Haudenosaunee people in Ka'tarohkwen that our ancestors "gifted" this particular parcel of land to the French because it was a swamp, and they knew that any structure they built here would eventually crumble over time. The irony is that the limestone walls of Fort Frontenac are currently falling apart, which has resulted in a \$5 million-dollar restoration project

to protect and restore the precious walls of fortification that sit along the St. Lawrence River (Ladan, 2019).

I trespassed on the grounds of Fort Frontenac – which is now known as the Fort Frontenac Officers' Mess (n.d.), operating as an exclusive “members only institution” (para. 3) welcoming military personnel visiting the area – as this place is not usually accessible to the public. This was when I found out that there *are* Haudenosaunee burial grounds underneath the manicured greenspace of this land. The bodies of Indigenous peoples have been “honoured” with an aging plaque and a canon-lined walkway to the water. The ruins of Fort Frontenac show how Indigenous histories and bodies have been physically hidden beneath the military presence in this city. Carrying this knowledge as a Kanien'keha:ka is unimaginably painful; this city remains steeped with racism and an intimidating military presence that remind me daily of the trauma and violence my ancestors endured here. So, instead, I am transforming the colonialities of this cityscape with Kanien'keha, (re)claiming space with our language and maintaining my sovereignty as a Haudenosaunee woman in Ka'tarohkwen.



### Shapeshifters + Limestone Kin

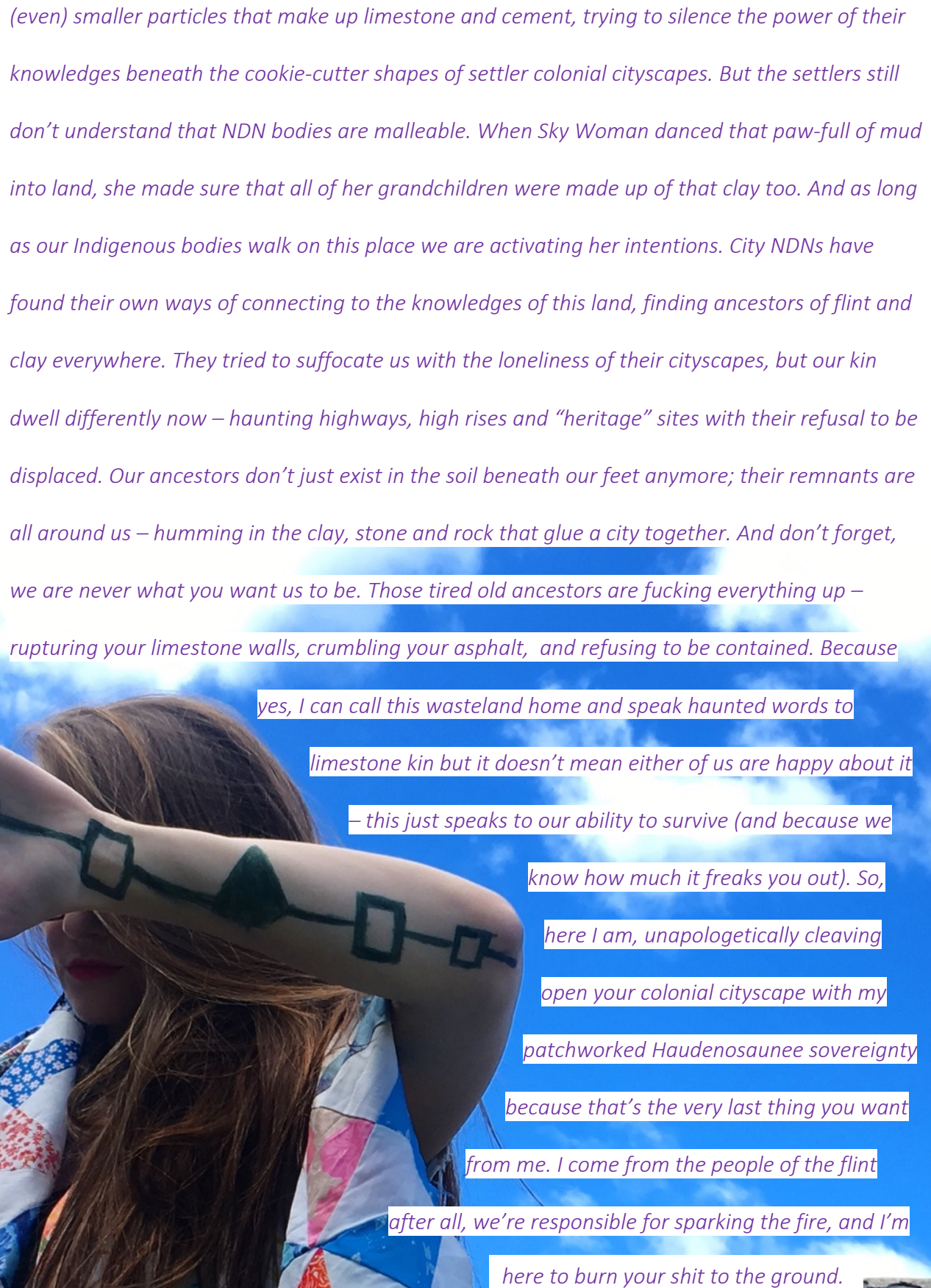
*I've been thinking a lot about rock – flint, clay, limestone, cement. Kanien'keha:ka are people of the flint, Ka'tarohkwen is the place where there is clay, Kingston is built with limestone, and my great-grandparents held treaty with cement as it sustained their livelihood in the 1930's. And then there's me, and I am in relationship with the fragments of all of these. My body is a patchworked story-map of rock particles. What does it mean to be kin with stone? As it turns out,*



*all those old rumours are true – there are ancestral burial grounds underneath Fort Frontenac. The earliest site of permanent European inhabitation in Ontario, a fort (re)built to specifically keep the Haudenosaunee at arm's length, and a building with over 300 years of violent Canadian military history. But when I think about your crumbling limestone walls I start to laugh because I know those sassy dead NDNs are rupturing open your settler colonial*

*institutions at the seams, leaking-rushing-overflowing out of containment (and costing you over \$5 million in repairs). You see, our ancestors are shapeshifters, their spirits caught in limestone blocks so violently cut from the land, in cement sidewalks that crisscross the city, and in hot black asphalt roads that stretch across the curves of the land's body. The bones, blood, memories and stories of our ancestors have been manipulated into something unrecognizable, broken down into*

*(even) smaller particles that make up limestone and cement, trying to silence the power of their knowledges beneath the cookie-cutter shapes of settler colonial cityscapes. But the settlers still don't understand that NDN bodies are malleable. When Sky Woman danced that paw-full of mud into land, she made sure that all of her grandchildren were made up of that clay too. And as long as our Indigenous bodies walk on this place we are activating her intentions. City NDNs have found their own ways of connecting to the knowledges of this land, finding ancestors of flint and clay everywhere. They tried to suffocate us with the loneliness of their cityscapes, but our kin dwell differently now – haunting highways, high rises and “heritage” sites with their refusal to be displaced. Our ancestors don't just exist in the soil beneath our feet anymore; their remnants are all around us – humming in the clay, stone and rock that glue a city together. And don't forget, we are never what you want us to be. Those tired old ancestors are fucking everything up – rupturing your limestone walls, crumbling your asphalt, and refusing to be contained. Because yes, I can call this wasteland home and speak haunted words to limestone kin but it doesn't mean either of us are happy about it – this just speaks to our ability to survive (and because we know how much it freaks you out). So, here I am, unapologetically cleaving open your colonial cityscape with my patchworked Haudenosaunee sovereignty because that's the very last thing you want from me. I come from the people of the flint after all, we're responsible for sparking the fire, and I'm here to burn your shit to the ground.*



**Canada isn't nice, and I want my land back**The background is a complex collage. It features a map of Canada, a person's face, and various social and environmental symbols. There are social media icons like Twitter and Instagram, a 'Kings' logo, and other text elements like 'more' and 'the'. The overall theme is one of social and environmental activism.

SETTLER COLONIALISM. TERRA NULLIUS. INDIAN ACT POLICY. TREATIES. PATRIARCHY. LAND THEFT. DISPLACEMENT FROM LAND. THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY. SMALLPOX INFESTED BLANKETS. BROKEN PROMISES. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS WERE A NEAT IDEA. UNETHICAL MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS. FORCED STERILIZATIONS. STARVATION. MALNUTRITION. WARDS OF THE STATE. GENDER BINARIES. HETEROSEXUALITY. NUCLEAR FAMILIES. FORCED CHRISTIANITY. ENFRANCHISEMENT. WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU DON'T WANT A PIPELINE THROUGH YOUR LAND? OIL IS SUPER EASY TO CLEAN UP. KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD. BILL C-31. THERE ARE SETTLER WOMEN THAT STILL HAVE THEIR INDIAN STATUS. THERE ARE INDIGENOUS WOMEN THAT ARE STILL FIGHTING TO GET THEIR INDIAN STATUS BACK. TYENDINAGA HAS NOT HAD CLEAN DRINKING WATER FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. BUT THEY SHARE A TERRITORY BORDER WITH THE TOWN OF DESERONTO. DESERONTO HAS CLEAN DRINKING WATER. WHY ARE THOSE INDIANS PROTESTING AGAIN? HUNGER STRIKES ARE FOR LOSERS. WHITE PRIVILEGE IS INVISIBLE NOW. SETTLERS WILL STAY HERE FOREVER AND EVER. RESERVES. SUICIDE. UNEMPLOYMENT. MOULD. POVERTY. HOMELESSNESS. BLOOD QUANTUM. DISABILITIES. FOSTER CARE. INCARCERATION. SEXUAL VIOLENCE. RAPE. GENOCIDE. MURDER. SETTLER COLONIALISM RELIES ON THE ERASURE, REMOVAL, SILENCING AND MARGINALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FROM THE LAND.

I present to you the father of Indigenous genocide (look carefully at the picture above)! Only I've fucked him up with Indigenous brilliance and a reminder of some things that Indigenous peoples experience on the daily. You're welcome.

Alright Kingston, we need to have a talk. You're probably wondering why I'm so mad about settler colonialism – what is it? How does it affect you? And what on earth does that have to do with your boy, Johnny Mac? You see, this country currently called Canada is built on a structure of settler colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012) – which basically means that white people came to these lands from Europe, and then y'all never left. But Indigenous peoples were already here, and I hate to break it to you, but our ancestors already had well-established, very complex political, social and economic systems across our respective territories. The thing is though, that Indigenous peoples were in the way of white sovereignty – we're *still* in the way of white sovereignty. At that time, our ancestors were in the way of you making this land your new home. So, what was (and is) the goal of settler colonialism? To remove and erase “Indians” from the land for settler benefits (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2016). Enter Johnny Mac – and no, I cannot call him by his proper name. As the first Prime Minister of Canada, this man helped set the example for what the relationship looks like between Canada and Indigenous peoples. You called us Indians and we ended up being displaced, sent to jail, sent to residential schools, sent to reserves, or sent to the grave. Canada was built on a profound system of violence, and this violence is “reasserted each day of occupation” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Indigenous peoples entered into treaty relationships with Canada as sovereign nations. Yep, you heard that

right. Indigenous peoples have our own sovereignties. And yet we all somehow ended up being controlled and governed under Canadian laws and policies. My point is, you are all still here. And you benefit from living here, while we do not. Indigenous peoples are still being displaced, assimilated, sent to jail, raped, and murdered (to name a few, and please don't make me reference any of those things – you can either believe me or google it yourself). Indigenous people are dying as Canada tries to maintain its facade of polite niceties. But Canadian history is splattered with Indigenous blood, and as the inheritors of this legacy, white Canadians need to be held accountable. Continuing to celebrate Johnny Mac, continuing to cherish Kingston as his birthplace, and bragging over the fact that Kingston was the first capital of Canada is an ongoing celebration of settler colonialism and the legacy that this man left behind.

At its very core, settler colonialism is about the land (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and while this “is something from the past for most Canadians, Indigenous peoples experience it as a system and a process in the present” (Simpson, 2018, para. 10). Canada, through the direction of John A. MacDonald, aimed to break the connection that Indigenous peoples held with their land, languages, cultures and communities. Displacing the Indians – sending them to residential schools, scooping up Indian children into the child welfare system, herding Indian bodies onto reserve boundaries that were often miles away from their traditional territories, starving them – were all ways of accomplishing the goal of elimination. Getting Indian bodies out of the way of the precious resources Canadians sought to extract from the land, eliminating those red Indian pests that interfered with Canadian sovereignty and white supremacy.

Today, the relationship that exists between settlers and Indigenous peoples follows the same path. In the years during which I've been writing this thesis, the silencing-erasure-displacement-nonconsensual relationship of Indigenous peoples and the settler colonial state has not slowed down. In 2016, the #NoDAPL movement went viral when a pipeline was approved to be built through Standing Rock Reservation – resulting in peaceful Indigenous land protectors being sprayed with high-power hoses, held in dog kennels, blasted with high-pitched sound cannons, strip-searched, and pepper-sprayed (NYC Stands with Standing Rock, 2016; Rabbit, 2018). Colten Boushie was fatally shot in August of 2016 by a white settler farmer; his murderer; Gerald Stanley, was found not guilty and acquitted of all charges (CBC Radio, 2019; Hill, 2019). On July 1, 2017, Canada celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> year of confederation (Government of Canada, 2018), or 150 years of settler dominance, control and genocide over Indigenous peoples (Carter, 2017). Early in 2019, Justin Trudeau approved the construction of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline (Tasker, 2019) to be built through unceded Secwepemc lands on Burnaby Mountain in British Columbia, forcibly removing and arresting peaceful #TinyHouseWarriors (The Tiny House Warriors, n.d.). The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) released their final report on the epidemic of #MMIWG2ST in Canada – once again showing that everything we've already known to be true has been statistically studied and documented by the settler government. To this day, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory continues to be under a twenty-year old boil



water advisory (Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, 2019). As depicted in the picture above, territory residents have to fill up jugs with clean water to bring back to their homes. In July 2019, Attawapiskat First Nation had to declare another state of emergency over the abysmal state of their water conditions (Barrera, 2019). As Cree-Métis theorist Chelsea Vowel (2016) states accurately, “[o]ne of Canada’s dirty secrets is just how bad the water situation is, and has been, for so many Indigenous communities” (p. 213).

It would be impossible to generate an exhaustive list that enumerates the violence endured by Indigenous peoples at the hands of the nation-states of Canada and the United States. The paragraph above is intended to provide a glimpse into how one of the architects of settler colonialism in this country, Johnny Mac, established precedents for how Indigenous peoples continue to be treated by settlers. Perhaps Romeo Saganash, a Cree lawmaker and NDP MP, demonstrates the endurance of such (mis)treatment in his recognition that current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau “doesn’t give a fuck” about our rights as Indigenous peoples (Guardian News, 2018).

I need Kingstonians to do better. Actually, I need white Canadians to do better. I need you to rewrite the relationship that Johnny Mac wrote, and that you embody. I need you to have respect for the Indigenous peoples that are still here. I need you to really think about how messed up Canadian history is, and how these injustices are still playing out in the present. And while we’re at it, I also want my land back. You need to transform the relationship that exists between settlers and Indigenous peoples – carefully tending to the racism and hatred and finding ways of removing that discrimination. As for me? I’m not going to stop being pissed off at this system of settler colonialism that your ancestors built and that you maintain. And I’m not going

to stop reminding you about it, because like it or not, you're living on Indigenous lands that were stolen from our ancestors. And I'm not going to stop rupturing your cityscapes, reminding you of the Indigenous histories, presences and futurities in this country. I am complicating the normalcy of settler colonialism that dwells here, and I'm



going to keep challenging the static notions of Indigeneity that keep Indigenous bodies on the margins. Peacemaking is radical, but my mind is oriented to justice and I will keep fighting for my Haudenosaunee sovereignty in this place – fucking up your history with my bossy and unapologetic Kanien'keha:ka presence and resistance.

**Still your Indian Problem**

“I want to get rid of the Indian problem...Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question” (Facing History and Ourselves, n.d., para. 3) were the words uttered in 1920 by Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, to justify the mandatory attendance and planned assimilation of Indigenous children at residential schools

across Canada. The term “Indian” is just a small piece of the troubling terminology assigned to Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government, reinforcing the fact that “various groups of Europeans used their own names for Indigenous peoples” (Vowel, 2016, p. 9). We continue to see this imposed terminology used by the Canadian government where Indigenous peoples are called Indigenous (in a general sense), are recognized under the Canadian Constitution as Aboriginal (as a broad, umbrella term), and then further broken down into three, more specific, categories: First Nations or Indians, Métis, and Inuit peoples (Government of Canada, 2017). But Indigenous peoples have their own ways of self-identifying. As explored previously, my self-identification terminology is rooted in the lands that make up my life – the Haudenosaunee homelands, promise-lands and treaty lands, and how I am in relation with those around me, specifically in urban communities. My personal introduction also includes my nation, clan, name and school (or the lands that school sits on), as these are all relationships that shape the contour(s) of my clay. Not a single one of those words includes “Indian,” unless I am poking fun at the ridiculousness of my Bill C-31 Indian status.

The term ‘Indian’ is racist. This is the terminology that was given to the Indigenous peoples living in Canada by white settlers, and this language was eventually adopted by the government of Canada. ‘Indian,’ and whether someone was a status or non-status Indian, are categories used by the government under the Indian Act, to determine and control the status, rights and rules of each group. Explained efficiently by Duncan Campbell Scott, the explicit goal of the Indian Act was to eventually assimilate Indians into the broader society of Canada. As Vowel (2016) explains, “Indian status is not a system created or enforced by Indigenous peoples themselves. Indian status is not the same as Indigenous identity. It is an administrative category created and applied by the federal government of Canada” (p. 25). Under Indian Act policy, I am

a Bill C-31 status Indian with band membership and am living off-reserve. This terminology denotes my eligibility to live on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory because I am an enrolled band member; my 'lesser status' Indian status is due to gender discrimination in the Indian Act, which determines whether I am eligible for any treaty benefits from the government because I hold federally-recognized Indian status. I am also an expired Indian, and have been for over five years now. In 2014, my federally-issued Indian status card reached its expiration date. The concept of "expiring" as an Indian continues to baffle me, because my treaty rights as an Indian do not expire. Indian status does not determine my Indigeneity; it does not take into consideration the relationships I hold with myself, my family, communities, nation, clan, land and Confederacy.

To speak back to the term 'Indian,' there has been a widespread use of the terminology "NDN," or "ndn" on social media platforms. While I personally prefer a bold, and in-your-face capitalized 'NDN,' Cornum (2015) articulates beautifully how "terms made to describe Indigenous peoples are always lacking" (para. 2); contemporary reclamations of this derogatory word that was imposed on Indigenous peoples better encompass the diverse relationships that Indigenous peoples hold with their complex Indigeneities. The term 'NDN' can be a way for contemporary Indigenous bodies to transform colonial realities, interrupt the permanence of settler colonial categories, confinement and control over our lives, relationships and lands, and turn these logics of diaspora and displacement into generative pieces we can use to build digital worlds and communities in the present, that are focused on the future. In doing this, Leanne Simpson's (2011) concept of presencing is something I have returned to repeatedly throughout this thesis journey as it describes our ability to draw other Indigenous peoples into a decolonized space where we can feel "powerful, free and inspired," (p. 97), losing sense of time and space to be our 'authentic' Indigenous selves, no matter what that looks like or feels like. Overlaying an

image of myself drumming on top of a picture of the Indian Road street sign in Kingston, shown at the beginning of this section, was a form of presencing for me; refusing Indigenous erasure, reclaiming my Indigeneity, and reasserting my very alive Haudenosaunee body in this violent settlerscape.

### SETTLER VOYEURISM 101!



• Join us as we leer at those exotic Indians when they chant in their costumes! (Even better, they love it when you appear from absolutely nowhere!)

• Help us ogle at their beads and braids!

• Experience the excitement of the aboriginals suffering without the danger of feeling any real pain at all!

• Enjoy your clean drinking water as you relax on stolen land!

• Don't worry, your privilege is a-ok with us! Keep spewing your positive racism on Facebook posts and in CBC articles, we love hearing your constructive feedback on #pipelines, #protests and #MMIW (if only they'd just get over it, right?!)

• Pretendians and allies are encouraged to apply!

(Please note: settler voyeurism is currently called reconciliation and cultural appropriation... errr, sensitivity! in popular Canadian discourses)

Many Indigenous peoples struggle with the language and rhetoric around “reconciliation” in popular Canadian discourses: it has become a buzzword, synonymous with an apology, and

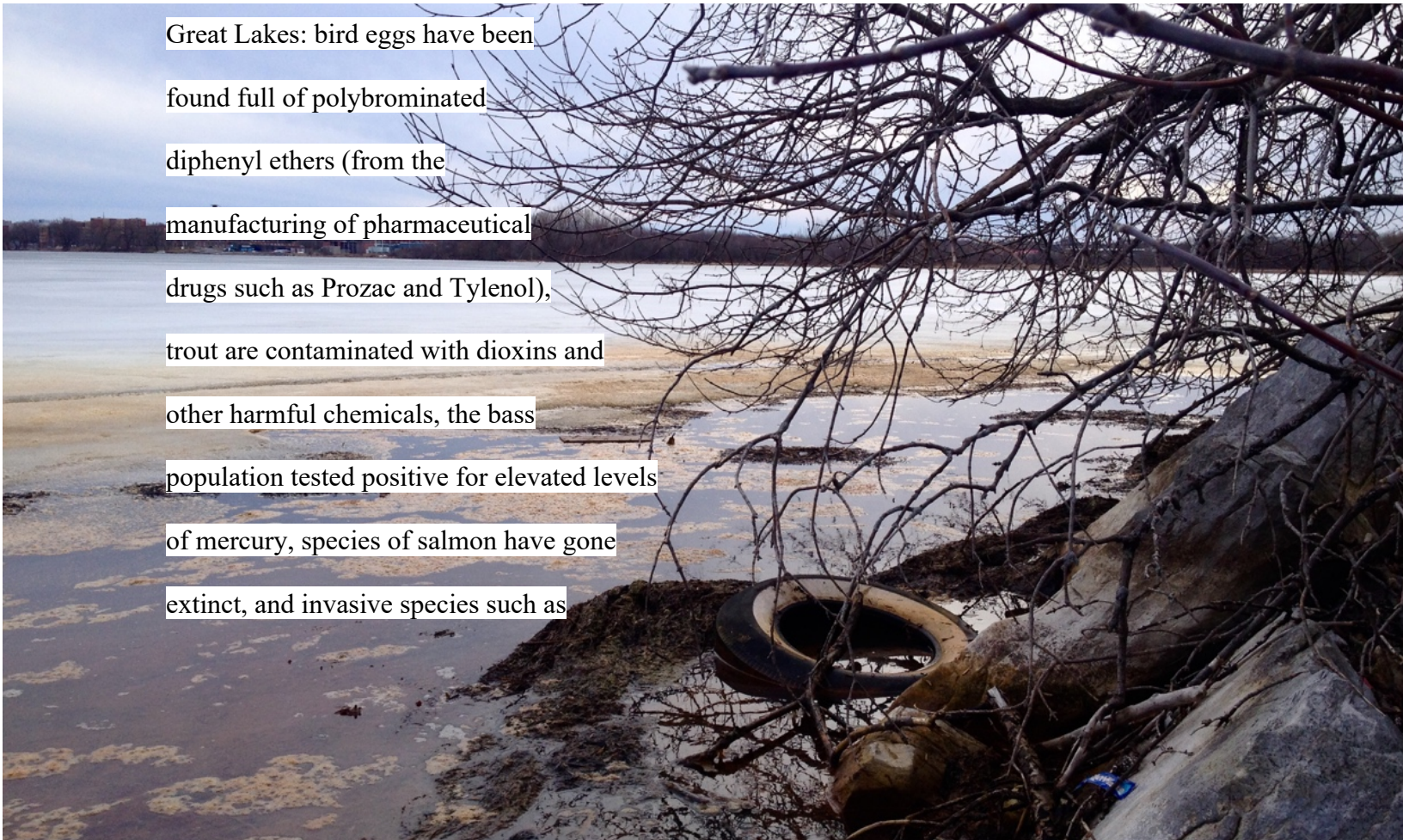
the foundation for the “nation-to-nation” relationship set out (and ultimately dismantled) by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Yet many of our conversations about reconciliation are not talking about the land that composes the current nation-state called Canada. If we are to take Tuck and Yang (2012) seriously when they say that decolonization is not a metaphor, then we have to start talking about the land. As Simpson (2018) states, “[l]and is an important conversation for Indigenous peoples and Canada to have because land is at the root of our conflicts. Far from asking settler Canadians to pack up and leave, it is critical that we think about how we can better share land. That’s a conversation we’re not having” (para. 17). When land is not at the center of our conversations about reconciliation and decolonization, settlers can continue to dismiss the responsibilities they have to the Indigenous peoples who continue to be violently displaced and erased from our homelands. As outlined in the “Violence on our lands, violence on our bodies” resource compiled by the Women’s Earth Alliance & Native Youth Sexual Health Network (2016), we need to better understand “[t]he relationship between Indigenous people’s bodies, Indigenous territories, and the systemic disregard that allows both to be violence” (p. 13). In our conversations about reconciliation, decolonization and the land, we also need to attend to the environmental violence that is at the forefront of these issues. While Indigenous peoples – specifically grassroots organizations spearheaded by Indigenous women, Two-Spirit folk and youth – have been at the forefront of environmental justice movements (CBC News, 2019; Great Lakes Water Walk, n.d.; Native Youth Sexual Health Network, n.d.), the violent degradation and exploitation of land is not just an Indigenous concern; it is a widespread problem that affects all people living on the lands currently called Canada. Canadian efforts towards reconciliation cannot be a one-sided endeavour or labour expected and extracted from Indigenous peoples, especially when our bodies and lands continue to be targeted by

violence. In asking, “how can we better share these lands?”, we need to pay attention to, and think about the detrimental climate change that is currently happening on the lands and environment impacting *all* of us.

### **Belle Park is a Dump**

Belle Park is a small piece of land that juts into the Great Cataraqui and St. Lawrence Rivers just north of downtown Kingston, Ontario. From 1952 to 1972, the City of Kingston operated a municipal dump at Belle Park (McLaren, 2013), physically and permanently altering the contour of this place with settler garbage. Once the landfill was closed, this site was turned into a park and a nine-hole golf course (Visit Kingston, n.d.). The echoes of this environmental degradation were smoothed over with perfectly manicured golf greens for settler enjoyment.

However, there have been several environmental problems with the landfill leachate contaminating groundwater flows and surface discharges into the St. Lawrence River, which flows into Lake Ontario (CH2MHILL, 2006). As it is, Lake Ontario is the most polluted of the



Great Lakes: bird eggs have been found full of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (from the manufacturing of pharmaceutical drugs such as Prozac and Tylenol), trout are contaminated with dioxins and other harmful chemicals, the bass population tested positive for elevated levels of mercury, species of salmon have gone extinct, and invasive species such as

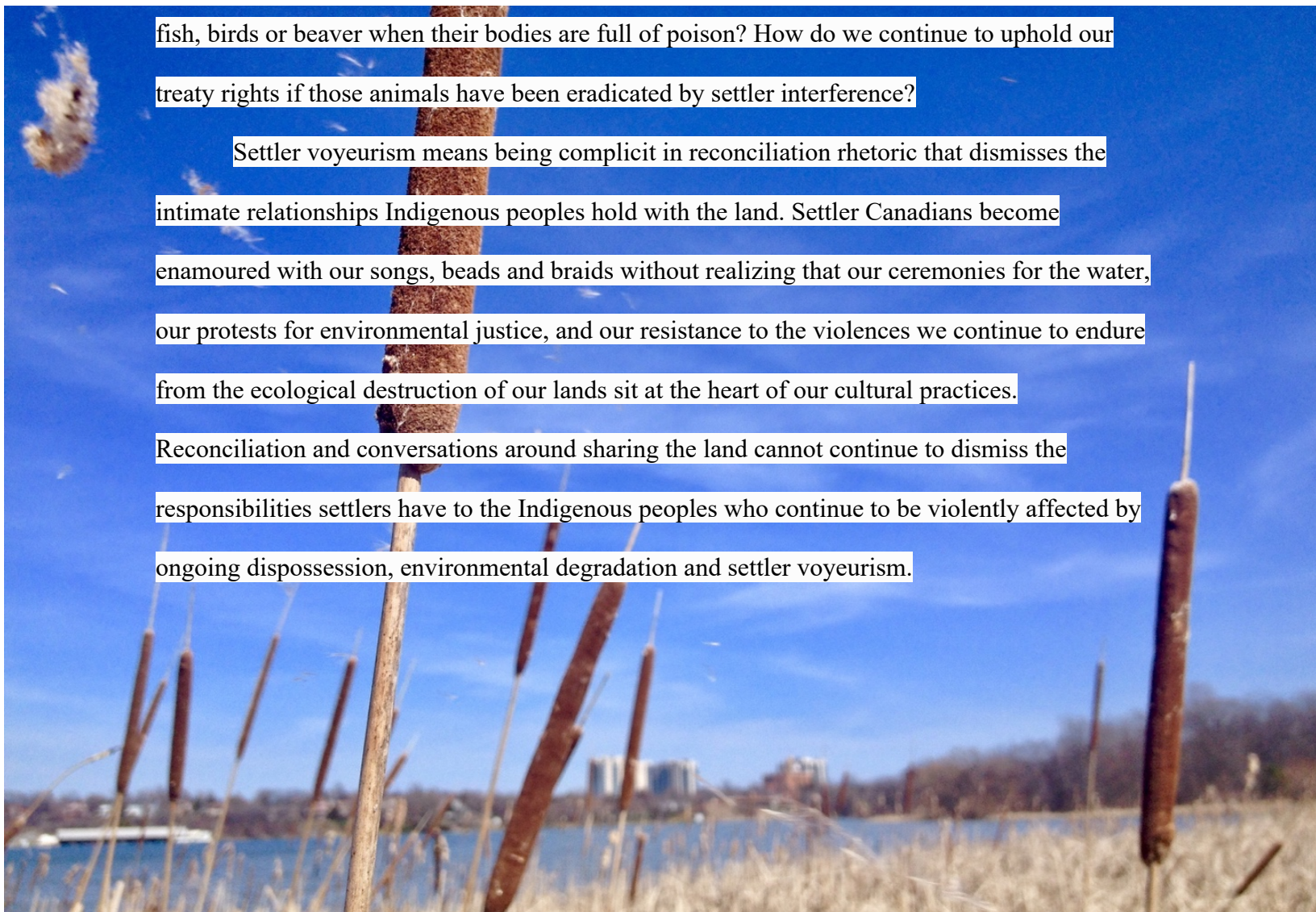
zebra mussels and lamprey eels (which are something right out of an apocalyptic nightmare) have extensively colonized these waters, displacing Indigenous species and food sources (Waterkeeper, n.d.; Zerbisias, 2011). The environmental degradation and ecological destruction of Lake Ontario and the waterways that flow into and out of the Great Lakes have had widespread and detrimental effects on the peoples living in these regions. Likewise, the Belle Park landfill has caused a significant impact on the quality of the environment and the health of animals and humans living in the area downstream from the landfill (CH2MHILL, 2006), further contributing to the ongoing pollution problem in Lake Ontario. The City of Kingston has been charged and convicted on seven counts of violating the federal Fisheries Act. It was fined \$150,000 for its role in polluting the environment, rivers and aquatic life (McLaren, 2013).

Conveniently, Belle Park just happens to be connected to Belle Island, a place that holds great significance for Indigenous peoples in the area. Belle Island, better known in Kanien'keha as Kahwennodi:io (Mohawk Nation, 2011), was a transient place for nomadic peoples before colonial invasion. Sitting in Dish with One Spoon treaty territories, it was a place where my ancestors came to hunt, fish and pick medicines. It was a place where we gathered clay to gently craft into pottery. It was a place where we decided to bury our kin who did not make it back to the homelands. This became a place where we practiced condolence. In 1988, "human remains" were found and desecrated when settler developers were excavating the area in an attempt to create a beach (Thurston, 2006). The bones of our Indigenous ancestors were upset and eventually removed for the sake of settler recreation. In 2000, after twelve years, the bones of these ancestors were returned to the land. Despite the repatriation (or rematriation) of our ancestors' remains, Kahwennodi:io was further appropriated for the development of the Belle Park Fairways golf course – a perfect spot for the fifth hole green. The local Indigenous

community, in consultation with several surrounding nations and chiefs, has been pushing for Belle Island to become a designated cultural site since the burial grounds were discovered. This proposal involved removal of the fifth tee from the Island, which sparked considerable tensions for many years between settler golfers and Indigenous peoples in Kingston (Ferguson, 2013). The Belle Park golf course eventually closed in 2017, due to the municipality no longer being willing to fund this service (MacLeod, 2017), but the hostile relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers has remained. Indigenous relationships with this place have been violated. Our ceremonial lands have been reduced to property and contaminated with toxic waste, and the lived territoriality of our lands and bodies have become disposable in settler eyes.

How do we continue exercising our sovereignty and cultural practices on our traditional lands and waters when they are contaminated with garbage and landfill leachate? How do we eat fish, birds or beaver when their bodies are full of poison? How do we continue to uphold our treaty rights if those animals have been eradicated by settler interference?

Settler voyeurism means being complicit in reconciliation rhetoric that dismisses the intimate relationships Indigenous peoples hold with the land. Settler Canadians become enamoured with our songs, beads and braids without realizing that our ceremonies for the water, our protests for environmental justice, and our resistance to the violences we continue to endure from the ecological destruction of our lands sit at the heart of our cultural practices. Reconciliation and conversations around sharing the land cannot continue to dismiss the responsibilities settlers have to the Indigenous peoples who continue to be violently affected by ongoing dispossession, environmental degradation and settler voyeurism.



**(star)world building***Tekatsistohkwaieronnonha:ton*

*When Sky Woman jumped here, she brought galaxies into this world. She transformed “empty” space into a home, her skin a constellation of stars splashed across the Milky Way. As her granddaughter, I’m following in her footsteps, bringing contemporary stars and galaxies into occupied, colonized places. I’ve been thinking a lot about*

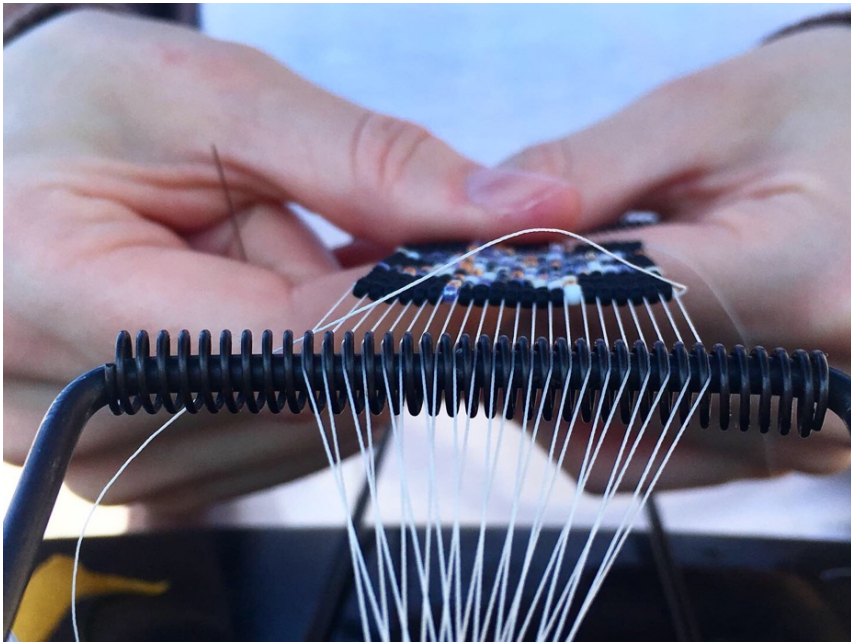
*space – not a lonely, white, landless space – but an otherwise space full of stars, planets, energy*

*and the stuff of unknowable dark*

*matter that’s overflowing with virtual particles and their limitless potential.*

*As someone who teeters on the edges of place, community and margins, I am learning how to be unafraid of space – displaced, floating through the digital, learning Kanien’keha on apps and recording seed songs on my iPhone – finding space to explore my Indigeneity*





*outside of the confines of settler colonial invasion. Haudenosaunee cosmologies are a chaotic and nonlinear web of space and time. Our stories, languages and memories are held in dirt, beads and words I've only ever touched in space. Today, I added a patchworked galactic star to the constellations of relationships I hold as an urban Indigenous woman in Ka'tarohkwen.*

*Expanding galaxies in places occupied by settler colonialism. Presencing NDN knowledges in the place where Canada became a country. Reclaiming space, asserting my sovereignty and weaving new constellations of Indigenous futurities and Indigenous feminisms. Beading the Milky Way into wampum, informed by my relationships to the land, but held in a digital space of intentional transformation, adding gravity to the swirling materialities of our (star)world building.*



### **Indigenous Futurities**

As I started out on this thesis journey, I was challenged on how I was going to transform tradition in a good way – making sure that I did not distort the stuff that makes our cultures “sacred” or “significant” into a pan-Indigenous or appropriated version. From my own experience, I knew that many traditionalisms did not fit with my contemporary Indigeneity – I do not need to be wrapped up in a skirt to sit in ceremony, and I do not need to avoid medicines if my body is in moontime. These practices are exclusive, gendered, cis-heteronormative, and christianized. Our bodies and relationships to spirit are different as we exist in this colonized context. Yet the intention of Indigenous futurities is exactly that: to be able to envision our bodies, relationships and Indigeneities in the future, and thereby, to be able to escape from the statistics of dead, dying, or displaced Indians. Returning to the dialogue of living Indigenous intellect which is “the seed of many [I]ndigenous technologies: the ability to continue and sustain ourselves against all odds” (Cornum, 2015, para. 11), we already know that our cultures are not static. We are constantly in motion. But how am I able to expand my embodiments of Indigeneity or generate safe(r) spaces without “activating further oppression” (Recollet, 2016, p. 100)? While reading Goeman’s work (2013), I was generously reminded to “move toward spatialities of belonging that do not bind, contain, or fix our relationship to land and each other in ways that limit our definitions of self and community” (p. 10-11) and I knew that this work was necessary. Dogmatic traditions can be very violent for Indigenous bodies, and as a white-coded, cisgender, straight woman, I carry a lot of privilege. It is important to me that I am accountable to my networks of relations, that I am putting in the effort to understand and unravel the uneven effects of settler colonialism in our lives, and that I am transforming the ruptures this system creates into something expansive, caring and overflowing with possibility. My intention here is

not to diminish the traditions that have been carried through generations or to discredit the protocols that worked in the past to keep people safe. However, as contemporary peoples, we also need to open up space to investigate whether our traditions have been influenced by the presence of settler colonialism in our communities. Where did the binary understanding of gender come from? Why did women wear skirts in ceremony, and how do these teachings hold up in our current society? With increased knowledge of moontime blood and menstruation, are we holding onto taboo knowledges that exclude bodies? Can we generatively sit with gendered teachings? How can we intentionally move into colonized spaces in safer ways? Are we making caring spaces for our Indigenous selves outside the watchful eyes of colonialism (or, sometimes, right in the middle of it)? While it is important that we hold onto our stories, we need to also nurture new stories alongside the old, mapping out the multimedia practices of “[d]ynamic traditions” (Cornum, 2015, para. 12) that shapeshift, survive and carry us into the future (Lewis & Fragnito, 2005). Indigenous peoples are already time-travelers, but now we are bending the linearity of chronological time with our bodies, relationships and ceremonies, bringing tradition into our contemporary realities, and looking to the future possibilities of our existence as we etch out digital spaces of belonging.

*Sometimes I think that settler colonialism works like a computer code, providing instructions to Canadian users on how to carry out a specific set of goals: assimilation, elimination and white supremacy. Perhaps the futurities of Indigenous relationality involve the intentional hacking of those settler colonial spaces? Hacker NDNs finding loopholes in your digital systems, using clever means to alter exclusive networks and infusing those spaces with temporal flashes of decolonial celebration. I mean, we're really just identifying malicious bugs in your*

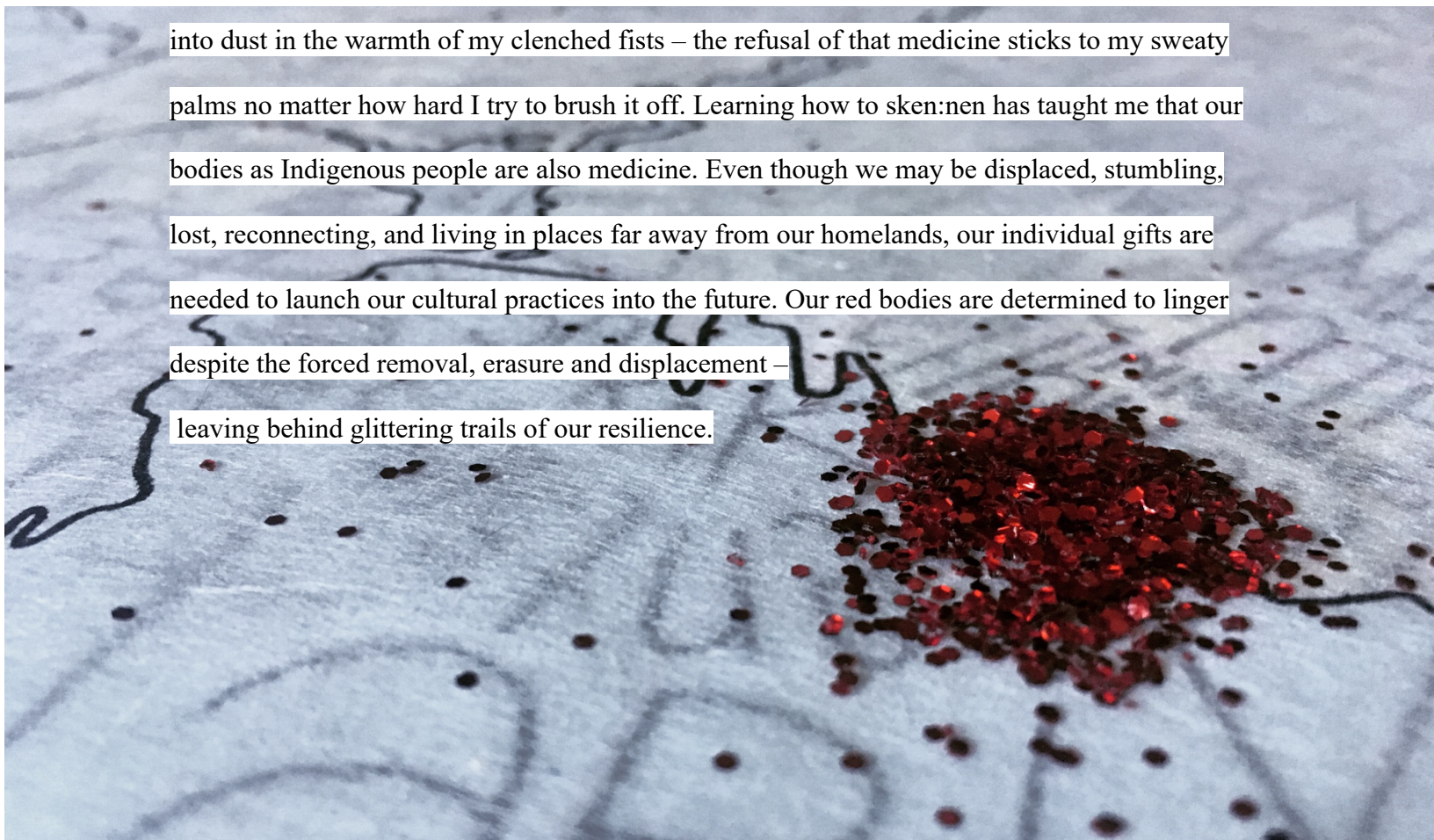
*programming – pointing out the errors that prevent you from achieving true reconciliation in your allyship application!*

*Indigenous peoples need safe spaces to just be Indigenous – to share our favourite Indigenous artists on Instagram (@blu\_hummingbird; @monique.aura; @soft.power), to show off the new black-on-black beaded earrings we just cannot take off, to listen to Jeremy Dutcher's new music video (2019) or watch "Leaks" by Leanne Simpson (Mumford, 2016) on repeat for the millionth time and celebrate all of our successes without interference (because I'm so sick of all this "at-risk" talk when our kin are THRIVING). I don't want to have to teach my culture to others, I don't want my ceremony to become a performance, I don't want to have to always justify my colonialism-induced anxiety. I need space to just exist as onkwehon:we, surrounded by the kin, clan and clay that make up my Indigeneity – trying to put those new constellations of (star)worlds back up into the skies, no matter what digital/urban/displaced contexts we move through.*



### Skennen'kowa ken?

When Haudenosaunee people greet one another, we will ask, “skennen'kowa ken?” – do you still carry the great peace? Peacemaking is woven throughout the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and I hope that I have carried my responsibilities into the written words and images of this text. I wanted to create a series of story-maps to document my movements through displaced territories, but I also wanted to create a living archive in which other Indigenous peoples could see a version of themselves. In taking seriously a decolonial commons, I also needed to physically map out Indigenous presences on the land – tracing the places where we have carved out community, where kinship relationships have been strengthened, where our Indigeneities have been celebrated, where we have sang to each other and the land, spaces where we are healing, found moments of ceremony in Anishinaabemowin or Kanien'keha, connected with ribbon skirts *and* leggings, where memories and grief have been held with care. Whenever hands have gifted me with tobacco, those fragile brown leaves immediately melt and transform into dust in the warmth of my clenched fists – the refusal of that medicine sticks to my sweaty palms no matter how hard I try to brush it off. Learning how to sken:nen has taught me that our bodies as Indigenous people are also medicine. Even though we may be displaced, stumbling, lost, reconnecting, and living in places far away from our homelands, our individual gifts are needed to launch our cultural practices into the future. Our red bodies are determined to linger despite the forced removal, erasure and displacement – leaving behind glittering trails of our resilience.



So, where has this work taken me? This project has been much bigger than a thesis – a compilation of five (or more) years in graduate school, moving back to Dish with One Spoon treaty territories, learning how to sken:nen, and exploring my contemporary Haudenosaunee Indigeneity has led me here. The whole point of writing this thesis was to try and make more generative spaces in community, to question the places where our teachings felt infected with settler colonialism, to hold space for those that don't "fit in." And I think that I have ended up holding safer spaces for myself. I have a better understanding of who I am now, I feel more deeply rooted in my Indigeneity, my relationship with the land is more intimate, and I have found ways of navigating toxicity to allow pockets of community to flourish because of the creative, artistic and embodied patchworking story-maps I have stitched together. I am in no way saying that this project is done – I do not get the luxury of wrapping this thesis up with a bow and saying I am decolonized – this is the reality of being an Indigenous person in a settler occupied country. The struggle continues outside the written words of these pages; this is only a series of fleeting Polaroid pictures showcasing the greater issues I grapple with on a daily basis – these moments captured and abruptly shaken into existence. Yet, I have found resurgent methods of peacemaking along the way, using the unique gifts I brought with me from Sky World, rupturing open settlerscales with my contemporary Haudenosaunee body, and weaving together a praxis that has grown with me as I've moved through geographies of urbanization, displacement and erasure. It may have taken me three years to submit my ethics, four years to write these words, and one summer to bring them together under the title of thesis; but it has taken me twenty-eight years to get to this point. No one could have prepared me for the difficulties I've faced throughout this academic journey – the silencing, the violence, the marginalization, the discrimination, the imposter syndrome and the letdowns. But I don't think I

could have ever prepared myself for how those experiences have led me down this incredibly unexpected journey and swirling trajectory of rupture. My work exists in walnut-dyed drumbeat reverberations, the echoes of seed songs, tears of failure and frustration, cartwheels in city hall, teaching my matriarchs how to swear in Kanien'keha and laughing those big belly laughs as we do, the purrs of a satisfied Bogily-cat laying on top of all my story-map creations, an extreme love for lyed-corn soup, NDN meme accounts, endless visits to the peacemaking waves of Kanyatari:yo, Indigenous feminist books in hipster coffee shops, ferry rides to Wolfe Island, and a sturdy pair of moose-hide moccasins.



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
ratiwe:rahs

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the thunderers)*



Akwe:kon enska entitewahwe'non:ni ne onkwa'nikon:ra tanon teyethinonhwera:ton ne  
shonkwaia'tison

*(let us gather our minds as one to offer our greetings and thanks to the creators)*



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