

Braiding our past, present and future:
Understanding treaties and embodying settler
responsibilities through engagement with community arts

by
Kelly King

supervised by
Sarah Flicker

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Abstract

This major research project looks at how community arts practices can inform and engage on themes of treaty responsibility, settler colonialism and Indigenous histories of space. By looking at two different examples of community arts projects, this paper investigates how both personal reflection and larger collaborative education can lead us to greater understandings of history and responsibility, as well as stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The first example of community arts practice is a multi-season research engagement with my personal settler history. Through spending time with extended family in Nova Scotia, I was able to utilize existing genealogy records to further my investigations of settler-colonialism through an auto-ethnographic lens. By conducting interviews, visiting historical sites in Nova Scotia, and ultimately creating an art exhibit called *Unsettling the Homestead*, I was able to ground myself in some of my own settler history before I extended the work into the next community arts project. My second example is *Talking Treaties Spectacle*, a large scale outdoor performance which was developed over several years with hundreds of collaborators. This arts engagement aimed to educate people about Indigenous histories of Toronto and settler responsibilities to treaties through both the creation of the project as well as the finished performance. This community arts practice invited people to reflect on their own positionality, as well as their knowledge of place and history – or lack thereof. Braids were central metaphorical and structural pieces to both *Unsettling the Homestead* and *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. Extending this metaphor helped me to think about the links between past, present and future, both personally and in relation to greater social movements of Indigenous resistance and settler solidarity.

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Foreword

This research focuses on creative ways of informing Settler-Canadians about treaty relationships, our responsibilities to them and to the colonial structure of Canada. By engaging in artistic methods of embodying these treaty agreements, we can see past the historical facts and look to how they can transform modern relationships. If we can make treaty agreements general knowledge, we can begin working towards stronger foundational relationships between Indigenous and Settler-Canadians. Through two different case studies, this research aims to educate non-Indigenous people living here about our responsibilities to land and to the profound agreements our presences here have been founded upon. So, how do we talk about complex, politically engaged, sensitive subjects in meaningful ways? How do we start conversations around treaties that are accessible and engaging?

I believe that the answer to this questioning lies in how we introduce these topics and through which means we begin conversations. Art, in its multitude of forms, can be an approachable medium to open dialogue and promote connection between diverse communities. Depending on how art is created, and whose voices are represented, these processes have the potential of being a catalyst for formative change. By engaging with topics such as treaty relationships and settler-colonialism through a community arts discourse, we can illuminate these issues in new ways and critically analyze the history of this land we collectively call home.

The three main themes of this research have been treaty relationships, settler colonialism and the use of community engaged arts as education. These topics have allowed me to investigate my personal settler identity while engaging with other people about the history of this land we reside on. Three of the main learning objectives in this research were to gain an understanding of the treaties I am personally accountable to, critique my own position within the structure of settler-colonialism and learn ways in which I can take this learning into community engaged arts practices.

These learning objectives allowed me to make connections to the diploma in environmental and sustainability education. By connecting notions of environmental justice with understandings of social relationships and the historical contexts of them, this research has been able to investigate different ways in which sustainability can be defined. Sustainability does not solely lend itself to our relationships with land but also pertains to the ways in which we conduct ourselves on the land and with others who share this space. It is clear that in Canada we are not involved in processes or relationships that are viable for the long run. In fact, these practices have been dysfunctional for hundreds of years and are intimately tied to settler-colonialism. We cannot move forward into more balanced relationships with land or other people if we don't understand the whole picture of how we came to be in the situations we are in now. This research outlines how, by rooting ourselves in the history of this land and our own relationships to it, we can better understand how we can change our actions today to create stronger, more sustainable relationships in the future.

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Introduction

I am a settler on these lands. My mother's side is of Polish and Latvian descent. They arrived in Canada several generations ago. My father's side is English and Scottish; this lineage extends much further. To say I am a settler here holds a lot of weight. This identity acknowledges that I benefit from the structure of settler colonialism, which continues to permeate this country through abusive policy, continued ignorance and the purposeful erasure of Indigenous histories. Canada was founded through violent processes of settler-colonialism which aimed to erase sovereign Indigenous nations of this land through the stealing of land, separation of families and criminalization of Indigenous languages and cultures. Even through hundreds of years of active, fierce resistance by Indigenous nations all across Turtle Island, these aren't injustices of the past. Canada continues to exist and thrive through the ongoing impacts of these actions and most settlers continue to ignore this pervasive colonialism because, more often than not, we directly benefit from it.

It is important to discuss, within conversations of settler colonialism, that people of varying backgrounds interact with this structure in very different ways. When using the term settler, myself, I am referring to the fact that I am a descendent of Europeans who immigrated to Canada multiple generations ago. This is obviously a more standard concept of the identity settler and doesn't reflect every non-Indigenous person's identity who is living in Canada. People with mixed heritage, new immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, people living without Canadian citizenship, Indigenous people from other parts of the world, and a multitude of other identities, all relate to the Canadian state in drastically

different ways. While these perspectives are incredibly important to honour, reflect on and discuss, this paper will focus on how I may acknowledge and critique my own settler identity through personal reflection and community arts engagement.

This identity profoundly affects how I interact with the world around me and therefore how I engage in relationships and in research. The historical context of my ancestors, and therefore me, needs to be acknowledged in my writing and in my work because, considering this positionality, I cannot exist, or create, without biases and assumptions about my environments. Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux writer, Margaret Kovach (2009), states in the introduction of her work *Indigenous Methodologies* that engaging with this kind of foundational writing serves a bridging function for the reader to understand the rest of the work and where the writer is coming from. In this case you, the reader, must know that I am a settler on these lands, engaging in conversations around treaty, Indigenous histories and settler-colonialism from a very specific perspective.

In the last two years of work it has become increasingly clear to me how situating ourselves in our personal histories is the only way to understand how we have come to where we are. We must always look back to understand our present location and to be able to imagine what possibilities a future may hold. Admittedly, I have a lot more searching to do. This research is only the beginning of an on-going process of engagement with my positionality and acknowledgment of how it affects my day-to-day life. In my genealogical research, I have only looked at one quarter of my family tree and even within that branch, there is a lot more to discover, unpack and critique. I am also only beginning to understand

the historical contexts and modern implications of colonial structures, which violently imposed themselves in the creation of Canada. There are still large gaps in my knowledge about what it means to be a settler on Indigenous land and personal reflection can only take us so far. We must take these kinds of reflections into conversation, creation and action with other people. In this paper I will outline two community arts projects which did just that. With an overview of the educational possibilities of both independent art installation and community based theatre, this research outlines how these kinds of investigations allow us to embody and understand treaty relationships by inviting us to physically engage with these histories through community processes.

Unsettling the Homestead was a personal exhibit based in my own genealogical research of my settler ancestors of Nova Scotia. This work was the foundation to the rest of my major research, as it allowed me to situate myself within some of my personal settler history and gain a better understanding of how I came to be on the land that is now known as Toronto. While focusing on my own genealogy, the exhibit also invited others to enter this personal space to join me in questioning, reflecting and discussing settler notions of ownership, belonging and forging new homelands. *Talking Treaties Spectacle* was a community based project in a more traditional sense. This project was a multi-year community engagement that invited hundreds of people to create and witness an outdoor performance at historic Fort York. Audience members were invited to walk the grounds with a multitude of modern and historical characters to discuss Indigenous perspectives of treaty relationships, connection to land and settler-colonialism in Toronto.

While these two projects were developed with varying methods and interacted with community in very different ways, they represented similar themes and educational intent. Both of these works connected to notions of relationship, honouring of Indigenous histories, participation from audience members and education around settler colonialism.

Both projects also engaged in a process of praxis, which is “*reflection and action* directed at the structures to be transformed” (Freire, 1970, p. 96). To truly make foundational change in our understandings of ourselves or of larger oppressive structures we have to engage with reflection and action simultaneously. Community arts inherently engages us with this model. These practices invite us to work with others to consider personal perspectives, as well as collective identities, to come together and act on an issue or topic. By inviting people to contribute within the art allows the work to deepen and for people to tangibly collaborate towards a common goal with other creators. Praxis within community arts practices necessitates consistent awareness of our own biases, reflections on the needs of others and for an action to be generated. Both of these projects aim to exemplify how community arts can play a powerful role within sustainable educational practices by allowing us the time to discuss, absorb, reflect, and ultimately collaborate with the communities around us.

Unsettling the Homestead

Unsettling the Homestead was an exhibit that investigated settler colonialism in the Maritimes, my personal genealogy and the Mi'kmaq histories of the Stewiacke Valley. After several months of cross-seasonal research in Nova Scotia with family members and extended relations, the exhibit was created to artfully investigate oral histories and to incorporate my own genealogy into my ongoing research around Indigenous and Settler relations. My research began in August 2016 when I spent a month with my extended family in Nova Scotia, listening to the rich stories that have been passed down through multiple generations. These people, that I barely knew beforehand, welcomed me with open arms into their homes solely on the basis that we are family, and I was yearning to unearth some of my roots. Throughout my month on the East Coast, I investigated the origins of my paternal grandmother's side of our family and how our ancestors came to arrive in Mi'kma'ki, or what is now known as Nova Scotia.

During this month I began to retrace the steps of my ancestors, beginning with the ones closest to me and working my way back through generations. My initial curiosity began with the stories I heard growing up of my father's mother, Kelly Banks. She grew up in Stewiacke, Nova Scotia and passed away before I was born. My questions began with her, and as I learned more about her life from my family on the East Coast, my inquiries extended beyond her. I began to travel outside of my family's homes, to Stewiacke, Shubenacadie and the surrounding areas, where my ancestors began building their lives and families as far back as the 1700s. I visited the old Banks family farm, where Kelly grew

up, and I talked to the new owner of the property who had worked on the farm while my great-grandfather, Porter Banks, was alive. I walked the property with him as he told me stories of my ancestors from a very different perspective. He invited me into the farmhouse where my Grandma Kelly grew up and we sat at the kitchen table discussing our ancestors and the histories of Stewiacke. I also visited the local cemetery where I was reminded of the gaps in my story. As I walked the rows of headstones, last names stuck out to me as potential family members and I began to wonder what names were missing. I had heard stories of Mi'kmaq children who were buried in the same cemetery but could not find any reminder or marking for them. Their presence, and that of their own families, has been purposefully removed from the region through the violent and on-going colonial structures and policies encroaching on the land.

My month in Nova Scotia went by too quickly and, as expected, I returned home to Ontario with more questions than answers and a family tree that was expanding exponentially. Over the next couple of months, I reviewed my interviews, journals, photos and notes to gain a better understanding of how my lineage has displaced Indigenous peoples from Mi'kma'ki. Through investigating this information, I was able to trace my roots deeper into colonial New England and before that, Great Britain. Although these new discoveries began to paint a fuller picture of my ancestry, I still needed to work through how these findings fit into the structure of settler-colonialism in Nova Scotia. So, I returned to where my questions began to form and just before the end of December 2016, I travelled back to Nova Scotia to spend another week in my family's homes.

Given the nature of maritime winters, I spent most of this time at various kitchen tables, collecting stories of the Banks farm, the Stewiacke river system and the surrounding environments. I heard stories of the Mi'kmaq who stayed on the banks of the Stewiacke river during the time of my great grandfather, and the interactions my family had with them as far back as ten generations. Without the assistance of the Mi'kmaq of the region, or the land that they were granted by the Crown, my settler ancestors could not have thrived in the ways they did. But family histories, especially settler histories, have a tendency of being biased and “real resonance with the experience can only occur if there is some connection to the time, place and historical setting of the experience” (Muncey, 2010, p. 30). With this in mind, I felt it important to balance these stories with research around the colonization of Mi'kma'ki. Using autoethnography as a method to my research, I based these family stories into the historical context of settler colonialism in Nova Scotia.



Image 1:

The Shubenacadie river runs North-South while the Stewiacke river exits to the East.

The Banks farm is located just above the “T”, at a bend in the Stewiacke river.

Mi'kma'ki has been inhabited for time immemorial by the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people. It is a place of complex politics, treaties, trade relationships and deep spiritual connection to the land. There are thousands upon thousands of years of history situated in the land. But very few settler people know histories older than the founding of Annapolis Royal or Halifax harbour. On top of larger colonial narratives such as terra nullius and the 'doctrine of discovery', settler genealogy is more often than not void of the histories of displacement, attempted assimilation and extreme violence against Indigenous nations. The only reason I was able to access the firsthand stories and records that I did was because my family was never systemically fractured. My ancestors in this branch of my family tree were never violently removed from their families through state sanctioned policy and law. In fact, their ancestry, and the stories attached to them, were honoured and upheld through their connection to the colonial powers they emigrated from and the safety that this assured them. A large portion of my ancestors on this side of my family were New England Planters who were granted land in Nova Scotia to encourage new settlers to claim and homestead land in this supposedly new territory. They were mostly young, single men from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine, who were sent to Nova Scotia to 'plant' yet another extension of England.

The politics of colonization and conflict in Mi'kma'ki were extremely complicated at the time. Now known as Acadia, the French had significant control over the region and strong alliances with the Mi'kmaq, which further ensured their security in the region. Conflicts between British and French colonists in Acadia reflected the wars happening in their home countries but with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, conflicts

subsided and the French had to grant the British a significant section of the land. British powers, still having tumultuous relationships with Indigenous nations of the region, entered into a series of Peace and Friendship treaties with the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy First Nations. Due to their well-established alliances with the French, "Governor Dummer intended to prevent conflict between British settlers and local Aboriginal peoples by establishing trade relations with them and by acquiring their consent for British colonization in the region." (INAC, 2013). But Indigenous nations never actually consented to colonization. In fact, none of these negotiations of Peace and Friendship ever included the ceding of any Indigenous lands. They only laid the groundwork for peaceful and mutually beneficial relations in the region.

This implicates me in a history with the land that is inherently violent. My ancestors settled on land that was never actually theirs to settle. The Crown was never granted the right to divide and give land to incoming settlers from other colonies, but rather illegally granted title to people who could support their mission of complete colonization. The aim of *Unsettling the Homestead* was to disturb these notions of planting, homesteading and settling by investigating and critiquing my personal positions within these narratives. The drive behind moving the research into an arts-based investigation was to make this heavy, complex topic more approachable and understandable to others. By combining traditional English art forms with modern multi-media art forms, *Unsettling the Homestead* worked to braid stories and experiences from multiple generations to critique our ideas of what it means to clear land, homestead and settle.

The vision for the exhibit started with the desire to recreate the intimate feeling of the East Coast kitchens in which I spent so much time. I wanted to emulate the spaces I was learning these stories in, where I was experiencing the rich oral history of my family. I hoped to create a space where visitors could pour themselves a cup of tea, reflect on the stories they listened to throughout the space and make connections to their own histories and family spaces. By inviting people into this personal space, they interacted with the information not only as audience members, but also as participants. *Unsettling the Homestead* reflected multiple art forms traditionally present in settler homes. By repurposing pioneer crafts such as cross-stitch, braided rugging and quilting, the exhibit aimed to reframe these arts that have been passed down through generations, and interrogate what it means to be a settler on Indigenous land.

A major aspect of this research was looking into the creation of braided rugs in Nova Scotia. Braided rugs can be found in most maritime homes but their histories are much deeper than that of Nova Scotia. Settlers of New England began making them from old fabrics when confronted with the harsh winters of the 'New World'. They would weave heavy fabrics together out of necessity, economically keeping drafts out of their homes by repurposing worn out clothing and other fabrics. My planter ancestors would have brought this knowledge with them when they migrated to inland Nova Scotia.

I began the process of making one such rug to emulate a rug from our family cottage in the Kawarthas. My Grandma Kelly began making this braided rug after my Grandpa bought property to build a cottage for their family. She had been diagnosed with cancer at

this time and now she wanted to leave something to create a welcoming space for the grandchildren she knew she would never have a chance to meet.

We recently unwound several coils from the outside of this rug to allow it to fit in a smaller space in the cottage and I salvaged the old strands for my own work. To incorporate Kelly's fabric into my own rug took a lot of time. In December I began the long and arduous task of unbraiding her work, watching years of dirt fall from its weave, finding holes in the fabric where the rug became worn down by years of grandchildren, dogs, and summer activities. After hours of unbraiding, I was left with hundreds of feet of fabric strips, all with different textures, colours and stories attached to them. They came from Kelly's family, friends and neighbours, and took years for her to collect. After collecting my own fabric from family and friends, I realized that about a third of the fabric that I brought into the exhibit was from my grandmother's rug and that it would be woven together with her own grandchildren's clothing.



Image 2:
Unbraided
and washed
strips of fabric
from my
Grandma
Kelly's rug.

By unbraiding, washing, and re-braiding her fabrics, I was able to give much of it new life. It was a process of re-strengthening the fabric and, by extension, re-strengthening the stories attached to them. By folding and sewing Kelly's fabrics in new ways, they not only regained their strength, but they also became a metaphor to the re-telling, and re-strengthening of family stories. Due to my grandmother dying at such a young age, many of the stories around our ancestry were not passed on to my father and his siblings. By researching our genealogy and ancestral art forms, I have been able to fill this gap to an extent and am now the holder of much of this knowledge for my generation. I am finding the holes in our stories, folding and sewing them together, and ultimately re-strengthening them for the future generations of our family. Creating this one long braid became a process of weaving my ancestors with our current family members. The three strands represented the past, the present and the future, and this meditative work allowed me to process much of the deep history into which I was so wrapped in.

During the week that *Unsettling the Homestead* was installed I continually worked on braiding these fabrics together while people entered the kitchen and talked to me about the work. I suspended the long braid from the ceiling and regularly moved it throughout the space to reflect the recorded oral histories that were playing in the kitchen. It was a way of acknowledging the biases within these stories and how they slightly change depending on the storyteller, time and greater context. Oral histories have a tendency of moving and bending with their surroundings, impacted by the space they are within. I aimed to create a space you couldn't enter without being touched, both emotionally and physically, by the stories. By continually filling more of the open space with the braid

throughout the week, visitors interacted with the kitchen in different ways; ducking to read descriptions of artworks and sitting below the braid to listen to the audio recordings. By bringing this work into the exhibit space, it gave new meaning to the interviews and stories that were looped throughout the week. While listening and re-listening to these stories, I was able to put my reflections and thoughts directly into the weaving, combining modern stories with the older fabrics and deeper histories with fabrics from our current generation for the future.



Braid, fold,
braid, tuck,
braid,
find new fabric,
sew to end,
braid, fold,
braid, tuck,
braid...

The process of braiding does not warrant hasty action. Each crossing of fabrics must be thoughtful, gentle, and yet firm: calculated yet inquisitive. Each fabric must complement the ones it is being weaved into and they all must stagger in a way that looks seamless. I found the process to be simultaneously meditative, frustrating, and addictive. With each passing fabric colour I felt a sense of gratitude and mourning. I would spend up to an hour

with each fabric before sewing in a new colour and this gave me time with both the older and newer fabrics. I would reflect on where they had been, who they came from, or creating these stories if I was unsure of a certain fabric's origin.

With each motion I became more confident in my ability to complete the arduous task and learned more about my ancestors. There's a gentle strength in braided rugging, both in the creation as well as the end product. There's a calmness in the action but a durability in the time that the process demands.

Braided rugs are indicative of a time of growth and change. Traditionally, they would be made when children outgrew old clothing, or household fabrics became worn out. This is reflective of my own time collecting fabrics and braiding them into the rug. I began this project at a time when much of my family had growing children, I was gaining new connections in my own life and clearing out some old clothing from my own closet. Past the material aspect of this project though, the creation of the rug also came at a time when I was longing to learn how I became the namesake of my Grandma, when I was yearning for a stronger connection to my ancestors and also critiquing what it means to be a settler on this land.

I learned about Kelly through this process in a much more intimate way than I had expected. With every step of my own rug's creation I learned a little more about her: how she collected materials, why she chose certain processes, cuts and stitches, and how much time and strength she devoted to such a task. And through Kelly's work, I learned more

about my female ancestors before her. It seemed to be a trend in this branch of my family that men would often die young and the women would be left with 5 to 10 children, as well as a new homestead to care for. I learned about what it took for them to survive in what they would have perceived as a new frontier and the amount of resourcefulness that was paramount to this survival. I also learned about what it means to pass on that inventiveness, the art form and the stories to the next generations. I learned how women will gather in their resilience to maintain these familial connections and generational knowledge.

On top of the creation of the braided rug, I also incorporated cross-stitching and quilting into the exhibit. To create the cross-stitch, I found examples of older samplers and designed my own by planning my image around the foundational aspects of traditionally designed cross-stitched samplers. I noticed in these samplers that they were almost always dated, displayed the name of a location, had some kind of flowered border, and showcased a form of European settlement or presence. From these traditional samples, I designed a cross-stitch pattern to emulate the layered histories of the land where the Banks farm stands. Through conversations with my family I learned about historically significant items actually being found in the land around the Banks farm. My great-grandfather, Porter Banks, would often find arrowheads while tilling the land, many of which my family still have. Neighbours of Porter in Stewiacke also found stashes of Acadian coins around their homes. These coins were purposefully buried in strategic places within the farmland just before the Acadians' violent expulsion in 1755, in hopes they could one day return to their savings. Layering these histories vertically in the cross-stitch, I began with a row of arrowheads followed with a row of Acadian coins and stars. These items not only

exemplified the physical layers of history of the land, it also represented waves of communities pushed from the land through processes of colonial imposition.



Sediment or Settlement

Counted Cross-stitch

11 x 20"

Kelly King

2017

The next layer of the cross-stitch is the word *Sipekne'katik* meaning 'the place where the wild potatoes grow'. It's the name of the Mi'kmaq political district where Stewiacke now stands and stretches through a large portion of inland Nova Scotia. Sipekne'katik is a very significant meeting place, trade route and negotiating region due to its proximity to the Shubenacadie and Stewiacke rivers. This river system is the only tidal river system in Nova Scotia that runs directly from the Bay of Fundy to the Atlantic Ocean, clearly making it

an ideal place to hold political negotiations, trade, hunt, fish and gather with other communities. Instead of stitching the name Stewiacke or Shubenacadie (its anglicized version), the Mi'kmaq word is displayed as the true title to this land. The layers above this are layers of the Banks farm. Here, horses, cows, corn, and a replica of the Banks farm is represented with the date 1881 stitched at the top. This is the year my Great-Grandfather Porter Banks was officially signed as the owner to this land that was actually never the Crown's to grant in the first place. The Stewiacke tidal river is represented in front of the Banks farm as a prominent fixture in both Indigenous and settler relationships and dependence to the land. Lastly, the flowered border of the piece is that of the s'gepn, or the wild potato plant, after which the territory was named. The wild potato was a key staple in Indigenous peoples' diets and still grows in marshy regions of the Shubenacadie tributary today.

The third and last artistic element to *Unsettling the Homestead* was my great-Grandmother Gussy's quilt, hung with a number of family photos displayed among its gridded pattern. Gussy was Kelly's mother and the photos included display images of my Grandma Kelly and her sisters, as well as the generation above Gussy, my Great, Great Grandmother, Mary Ann MacPhee.

I attached black and white photos of my ancestors to the quilt with one small alteration, the land in each photo was animated with colour. I wanted to show how if you actually unsettled the homestead, the land would remain virtually the same. It's also a comment on who is missing from the images. Narratives of terra nullius were prominent in

both North America and Europe at the time which means that there was legally a false claim that declared this “new land” empty of inhabitants before colonial powers encroached into the region. It was the lawful and violent beginning of the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples from the land that is now called Canada. To give the land its agency back also warranted the inclusion of plants that were so integral to the area. Once again, s’gepn was represented in this work, weaving its way up the settler home and along the Stewiacke river. Its image turned into a symbol of the histories that are profoundly more rooted in place than those of my ancestors.



Examples of colour-edited photos displayed on the quilt in *Unsettling the Homestead*



People engaged with the artistic reflections throughout *Unsettling the Homestead* in ways I didn't expect. While sitting in the corner, adding to the long braid of the rug, people came and sat with me to discuss their own ancestors, and the implications of settler-colonialism in their lives. Some people came from similar settler narratives and could easily relate to the art forms I represented in the kitchen, tying them back to experiences in their own family homes growing up. Other people commented on how differently their ancestors were impacted by colonialism and how they had been expelled from the land that my ancestors then thrived on. In this way, I braided in the stories of others as well. The braid holds these memories, weaving them into my own ancestral stories and fabrics from several generations of my own family. Over the week that *Unsettling the Homestead* was up, the space grew a life of its own. With every day I returned, it felt more like home. A space where I could create, reflect and ultimately host and hold space for guests and discussion.



Image 7: Panoramic shot of myself in the exhibit, *Unsettling the Homestead*

During this research I was able to forge new relationships with my extended family, and gain a stronger connection to the family that came before me. This research has been paramount to my larger investigations around settler colonialism, arts-based education and connection to land. The exhibit gave me the time and space necessary to work through some of these heavy questions and to reflect with others on how to move forward with this knowledge.

The colonial impacts my family directly and/or indirectly had on Indigenous nations within North America is much greater than what I have been able to explore within this research and warrants further investigations but this specific research has allowed me to reflect on how I am implicated in these structures of colonial power in the other places I consider 'home'. How do these narratives translate to the other places I have lived, learned and from which I have benefited? How does settler-colonialism permeate into our personal presence and our present-day? What are some ways of disrupting that narrative and structure and how do we move forward with this intent?

Talking Treaties

Talking Treaties is a community based multi-arts project that strives to open conversations regarding the buried, layered and Indigenous histories of Toronto, as well as historic treaties based in concepts of mutually beneficial relationships. In connection with Jumblied Theatre, it has been a project in the works for the last three years with a cumulative performance at Fort York Historic Site called *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. This project engaged with over 300 participants who have been involved in the research, documentation, script development, community outreach, arts and educational programming as well as large scale production and design. The project investigated how cross-cultural art spaces can invite people to creatively work through historical contexts of Toronto with other community members. Ange Loft, a multi-disciplinary artist from Kahnawake, began Talking Treaties and continued on to be the lead director, artist and writer of *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. Victoria Freeman has been the lead historian for the duration of the project and has also engaged as the other main writer. Coming from different disciplines and perspectives, they collaboratively lead the creation this performance. Over the last couple of years, Ange and Victoria have travelled across the city sharing their findings and inviting people to artfully reflect on Toronto's layered history.

Many of these educational workshops were conducted during the year leading up to the production of the show. Most of the creation happened at the community arts drop-ins at Jumblied Theatre. Weekly community arts drop-ins have been occurring at Jumblied Theatre long before Talking Treaties began. This is a space where members from the

surrounding Cityplace community can come to create no matter their age, experience or ability. There is great care put into these workshops to ensure they're facilitated in ways that are as accessible as possible.

The community drop-ins became an extension of Talking Treaties in March 2017, when focus shifted to creating art projects made specifically for *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. The multi-arts production of the show included generating symbols, sewing and decorating props, collaboratively creating poems, painting batik onto silk, embroidering details, braiding fabrics and a multitude of other creations. All of this creation occurred in a way that encouraged participants to reflect on their own connection to land, to treaty and to learn about some of the Indigenous history of Toronto. This project has strived to expand meaning, knowledge, and personal relationships to encompass the historical and contemporary responsibilities we all share as treaty people.

Although Talking Treaties has been in the works for over three years, serious development of the show only began in the fall of 2016 when a small collective began meeting weekly to discuss the development of the script, aspects of performance and the production of props. This main team was comprised of the artistic director, script writers, production managers and creators who, as a collective, decided how the show would be presented. I was fortunate to be welcomed into these processes and have learned an incredible amount by being privy to this work. These meetings translated historical research into the weekly community drop ins where Ange would decide what needed to be

made and brainstorm around ways in which the creations could be made accessible for all abilities.

It was through these meetings that common themes emerged from the multi-year research and workshop creations. This large body of work cumulated into concepts such as memory, dispossession, time, obligation, equality, value and relationship. It also centered conversations around what grounds us to this land, connects us as nations and what processes and agreements allow us to foster strong, ongoing relationships.

The re-centering of Indigenous systems of governance and treaty-making was a conscious decision for the show, as it is clear that European worldviews and perceptions of treaty have been overtly favoured in post-contact histories. To center Indigenous perspectives gives us an entirely different context to what a treaty and land “ownership” can actually mean. Although land and treaty do often go hand in hand, it is important to recognize that land ownership and treaty are not interchangeable concepts and that there have been treaty negotiations on this land long before there were European notions of ownership.

So why talk about treaties specifically? Well, treaties were foundational to the survival of early Settler-Canadians and they continue to be the dominant agreements that we have in place with Indigenous peoples of this land. Without the land, and without the agreements that allow for settlers to benefit from that land, Canada would not be the country we know today. But a lot of Canada has not been surrendered in treaty processes.

Ongoing processes, policies, and settler occupation, allow the government to maintain illegal “ownership” of the land. The Canadian government has been notorious for violating treaty, ratifying them without consent and dishonorably engaging in negotiations with no intention of honouring their commitments. With these historical and current circumstances in mind, *Talking Treaties* turned its focus on Toronto and was able to look to a number of treaties that exemplify both historical and modern relationships on this land.

Looking to treaties between Indigenous nations as well as Crown-Indigenous treaty negotiations, *Talking Treaties Spectacle* was able to outline ancient understandings of relationship and agreement as well as the unbalanced and corrupt policies of colonial rule. In early post-contact treaty negotiations, intentional and unintentional mistranslations were common and the foundational understanding of relationship was always varied between colonial powers and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous nations were often forced into agreeing to treaties that were only presented through European modes of communication and worldviews (Burrows, p. 165). Pre-contact treaties, on the other hand, were known as ongoing and sacred engagements between nations and other beings; they were understood as the foundations to strong relationships and mutual benefit. Indigenous understandings of treaty are first and foremost based in notions of relationship. To truly embody those agreements, they have to be repeated, returned to and re-negotiated on a regular basis. It is important to note that treaties were not exclusive to human to human relationships either. Indigenous peoples have always understood that humans are also in relationship to the animal, plant and spirit worlds, just as these entities are also in exclusive agreements with each other (Loft, 2017).

Indigenous nation to nation treaties were traditionally transmitted and renegotiated through oral tradition. Some nations, such as the Anishinaabe, Wendat and the Haudenosaunee, also use mnemonic devices such as wampum belts (Corbiere, p. 49). These treaties have terms of the agreements written on a belt of wampum shells through varying symbols. These belts would be passed between nations and cared for until it was time to re-visit the humans and non-human beings who were implicated in the agreement.

This notion of continually returning to agreements is best outlined in the treaties of the Covenant Chain. As discussed in Robert Venable's (2008) paper *Polishing the Silver Covenant Chain*, the chain was a metaphor of strong, ongoing relationships between nations. While rope can rot and iron can rust, silver is a material that, if polished, will only strengthen the links of the chain. In 1764 these ongoing agreements were extended to 24 nations and became the Treaty of Niagara, foundationally outlining how relationships and negotiations should be upheld between settler and Indigenous nations in the dominion of Upper Canada. At Niagara, "a nation-to-nation relationship between settler and First Nation peoples was renewed and extended, and the Covenant Chain of Friendship, a multination alliance in which no member gave up their sovereignty, was affirmed" (Burrows, p. 170). It's an interesting example of treaty because it displays a combination of two significantly different forms of treaty engagement. Written into wampum, the designs on the Treaty of Niagara belt display the year 1764, two people joining hands in the center, and a chain running through its entirety (Corbiere, p. 54). It is the first example of numerical writing being displayed on a wampum belt, and also represents an agreement that, initiated by the British, honoured both Indigenous ways of governance as well as the written word of

European governance. The signing of the Treaty of Niagara marked a significant turn in negotiations between Indigenous nations and settler people. Discussing the importance of the Covenant Chain with Victoria Freeman she stated “the interesting thing about the Covenant Chain is that it’s not a land treaty. It’s really about mutual coexistence, and how you live respectfully when you’re politically different. To me, that is what we’re still trying to do” (Freeman, 2017). The Treaty of Niagara symbolized peace, friendship and respect between these nations and marked a significant switch in how Upper Canada dealt with treaties between the Crown and Indigenous nations.

The Covenant Chain of Friendship is only one example out of thousands of revisited agreements between nations on Turtle Island but by being one of the founding documents outlining how settler and Indigenous peoples should co-habitat on the land, it became a centerpiece to the Talking Treaties work. It was these understandings of peace, mutually beneficial relationships and respect that we aimed to return to through *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. These themes were present throughout the entire performance with the presentation of multiple treaty agreements founded in this land. It showcased the trade goods used in the supposed ‘Toronto Purchase’ of 1787 through items made by community members at drop-ins. It outlined the confused boundaries of this supposed purchase by the use of a huge map displaying the layered history of Toronto. The performance also discussed the shift in viewing nature as currency through the fur trade and how pre-contact treaties were not upheld by European colonists. *Talking Treaties Spectacle* explored the history of The Dish with One Spoon treaty, another foundational agreement to this territory which outlined how agreeing participants must always share resources, embody

reciprocal relationships and take care of shared territories. The performance even displayed a staged scene between William Johnson and Molly Brant, two main negotiators in the Treaty of Niagara, on the morning of their departure to Niagara to negotiate and extend the covenant chain to 24 Indigenous nations of the region.

Talking Treaties Spectacle asked participants and audience members to become involved in these conversations through participating in and witnessing its creation. By presenting interactive art exhibits throughout the grounds of Fort York, participants were encouraged to consider their own position within the natural world, interpret their treaty responsibilities and situate themselves in Toronto's historical and modern landscapes. The main focus of my own research with Talking Treaties was on the creation of one specific exhibit called *Before All Else*. The exhibit was the culmination of dozens of perspectives over this multi-year project, all reflecting on what and who needs to be considered before anything else is decided.

This exhibit was held in the Blue Barracks of Fort York, a building that used to house soldiers during the establishing years of the city. Entering the building for the performance, audience members were presented with a room full of performers and a cylindrical braided structure hanging in the middle of the room. Audio recordings played throughout the space with voices of different interviews conducted over the last three years, discussing the things that need to be considered before all else. In one interview, Ed Sackanay describes how "before you make any decision, you consider the sky, the land, the plants, the animals, the fishes, the waters, and the humans before you decide anything. To take this and do that

with it...” (Talking Treaties Spectacle, 2017). Other voices of community members, historians, and traditional knowledge keepers were added to the audio piece and played within the space while dancers interacted with the hanging braids.

The braided structure in the middle of the room is representative of a tree’s root system, virtually situating the audience in the land and grounding us beneath the modern contexts of Toronto. Projections of condos rose up the walls commenting on how the space around Fort York has drastically changed over the last five years and how historic, modern and future presences on this land are all represented in the region. Condominiums have been developed at a rapid rate in what is now known as the Cityplace neighbourhood and given that they are being built on what was historically the bottom of Lake Ontario, there has been a multitude of issues with water seeping into the foundations of the buildings. It’s a prime example of how the historical context of the land we live on is not being acknowledged when considering environmental impacts of development. The tags with symbolic images reflected this presence by appearing inside the windows of the condo projections as well as dangling from the braided tree roots.



Image 8:

Examples of *Before All Else* tags created throughout multiple workshops and community drop-ins at Jumbliies Theatre

The symbols found on these image tags were created in workshops over the duration of the Talking Treaties programming. To generate these symbols, workshop participants were asked to reflect on what they take into consideration before collaboration or before they make any important decisions. In short, what they consider before all else. Some specific workshops conducted played with the ideas of treaty re-imagining. Groups read through text from various treaties of the Toronto region and changed the words or phrases into simple symbols. Images such as crowns, chains, council fires, the Dish with One Spoon and signatures were represented through these reflections. The symbols were then carved into small foam squares and made into stamps. Other symbols represented on these tags came from workshops with youth groups where participants could freely reflect on questions of consideration, respect and acknowledgment. These symbols are extremely varied and can be reinterpreted by anyone viewing or interacting with them. Represented on these tags are birds, roads, relationships, questions, homelands, water and land, all from a multitude of perspectives. Out of the hundred or so symbols produced over the previous couple of months, the production crew decided which symbols resonated the most and printed four of each to be incorporated into the *Before All Else* room.

To translate these participants' unique symbols into installation form, we printed more of each symbol on several tags to have repeating images. The image tags were then weaved into braids that community members also created which gave each braid a unique and personalized story. Through one activity held at the community drop-in, participants were invited to make their own "Before All Else" statements by reflecting on what they take

into consideration before collaboration or before important decisions. In a fill in the blank style worksheet, participants were prompted to “consider the _____ when we _____. I’ll always _____ to ensure we _____.” Once people wrote their *Before All Else* statements, they chose the printed images from previous workshops that they thought best showcased their reflections. It was an interesting exercise of repurposing other participants’ previous symbolic creations to speak to other participant’s personal considerations. It was during this engagement that people were able to reflect on their own acknowledgment process and how it might be similar to other peoples. In a conversation with Ange Loft about the significance of the *Before All Else* room, she outlined how it was a powerful reflective process for people engaging with the space. “You know where to start in this conversation, everybody does. It’s just that people don’t think that’s the important part to start at. Everybody knows where to start, you can talk about the rising condos, and come to treaty. You can talk about your mother, and come to treaty. All of these symbols lead back to treaty.” (Loft, 2017).



Image 9:

Fill in the blank worksheet developed to encourage participants to reflect on what they need to consider ‘Before All Else’

Once these statements were created, participants took the four images and weaved them into long three or five strand braids. Using dyed calico, velvet and brown cotton, each braid was made to contribute to the larger installation of tree roots. It was also during the drop-ins that community members were taught how to create the three and five strand braids. Braiding became a common activity at the drop-ins with participants contributing to their creation over the duration of several months. We collectively made hundreds of these braids, which then went to contribute to multiple parts of *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. They were incorporated into the lost rivers level of the giant map, some of the costumes and of course the *Before All Else* room.



Image 10:

Performers interacting with the braids inside the *Before All Else* room at the Blue Barracks of Fort York

Some of the braids within the root system were also created with tags of found poetry. Found poetry was an exercise developed in community drop-ins and independent

workshops that had participants looking through cut up segments of text from previous interviews and treaty documents then piecing them together in a way that conveyed something they wanted someone else to know. Similar to the process of creating image based statements, the found poetry became a way for drop-in participants to collaborate with previous participant's contributions and reflect on questions they had regarding treaties and acknowledgments.

This part of the *Talking Treaties Spectacle* allowed for participants to distill notions of treaty into simplistic forms. It was an exercise to educate people on how simple these foundational understandings really are and how anyone can begin to engage in these conversations. Before moving on to the rest of the show the dancers slowly removed the statement braids from the root system and carried them out of the Blue Barracks. The braids were then carried throughout the rest of the performance, distributed between dancers, actors and audience members. People were encouraged to read the statements at multiple times during the performance, bringing other people's reflections to life through their own voices and interpretations.

In this way, the braids became a symbol of wampum throughout the *Talking Treaties Spectacle*. Having been created through a collaboration of several participant's reflections, they exemplified the culmination of varied foundational ideas on what we need to consider and acknowledge before we move forward with important decisions. Discussing this creative decision with Ange, she noted that "there's a sort of mystery when using the braids. If we're talking about interpreting symbols why would we explicitly show

wampum in the show? Your job as the audience is to interpret what it is... It's about where communal memory lays. It's about mnemonic devices and Indigenous based ways of retelling and coming together as groups to make sure the people remember something." (Loft, 2017). That's just what these braids did. They allowed people to come together in their creation, prompted us to reflect collaboratively and encouraged us to share these discoveries with each other over the duration of the Talking Treaties project. No matter the level of participation, people were able to interact with the braids either through making them, reading them or simply witnessing them. Like wampum, the braids were passed between participants of the show and readdressed throughout it. It was in *Before All Else* where the braids became the foundation to carrying stories of acknowledgement and responsibility through the rest of the show.

Although *Before All Else* incorporated dozens of symbols and reflections from community members, the performance was not able to fully convey every one of these perspectives. Throughout the show, the audience saw glimpses of the symbols and poetry but unless they were given one to carry throughout the show, audience members were not intimately witnessing the symbolic reflections within the braids. Given the short duration of this specific scene, and the dense information throughout the entire show, audience members were not able to understand the full intent of every symbol tag made in the community workshops. It is through this small example that we can see how *Talking Treaties Spectacle* was much more about the process of the creations rather than the overall outcome and impact of the performance.

The audiences that attended the performances at Fort York were only a small fraction of the people impacted by this project. Talking Treaties reached hundreds of people through the creative and educational workshops leading up to *Spectacle* and it was through this broad community outreach that most of the audience came to the final performances. They were community members who assisted with creating props, sang in the choir, provided reflections and engaged in conversations regarding our collective responsibilities to the treaties of this land. I believe that people gained the most insight into the topics of this project through the creation and education involved in these workshops. It was in these spaces where people were able to foster relationships, open dialogue, learn about different art forms and ask important questions about the histories of Toronto and treaty relationships. To facilitate these conversations in the relatively safe space of community arts only assisted in encouraging these personal and collective reflections throughout the project.

Talking Treaties Spectacle allowed people to take pause, look inward and consider perspectives they may not have heard before. It encouraged people to practice personal agency by creating something with their own hands and within a larger community of people engaging in similar questioning and reflections. By facilitating collaborations and discussion between community members, Talking Treaties was successful in creating spaces where treaty relationships were not only discussed but also renewed through practices of listening, cooperating and revisiting the foundations of respectful relationships.

Lessons Learned

Without both reflection and action, we cannot see transformative change. One cannot work without the other. We must collectively reflect on action and act on our reflections if we are to move forward in a dynamic and positive way. Therefore, I believe that we cannot have a sustainable future without first learning about the true histories of this country and, as Settler-Canadians, properly locating ourselves within these contexts. This comes from pedagogies based in anti-oppressive methods. Community arts necessitates the practice of praxis, in which we reflect on our histories together, and act on these reflections to work towards healthier relationships and a more hopeful future.

We're at an interesting juncture in the history of Canada. With this year marking the 150th anniversary of Confederation, there has been an outpouring of patriotism and celebrations around what Canada represents to Canadians. Along with these celebrations, there is a lot of talk floating around about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples but there's not a whole lot about truth. How can we look to the future when we refuse to acknowledge our past? How can we suggest forgiveness when most of us have no idea what we need to apologize for? There's a mythology about how Canada was created and how it continues to exist as a country. Most Settler-Canadians are ignorant of the true history of this land and the celebrations this year simply reinforce myths of a peaceful, diversified and accepting country. These celebrations do not acknowledge or extend to histories past 150 years. The superficial lens of these celebrations does not allow us to probe deeply into

the colonial context of this country, stories of Indigenous strength and resistance or the solemn obligations we have to the treaties that have allowed us to stay here.

Right now, we're having a lot of trouble imagining the future of Canada because we can't actually picture the past. As settlers, we largely don't acknowledge the histories of how we arrived on this continent and we surely don't talk about the immense violence this country was founded upon. But it's an active choice to only acknowledge partial colonial histories and completely disregard those who cared for this land for thousands of years before we arrived. It's an active choice to forget the sacred agreements we made with the nations that allowed us to stay. Forgetting kills our imaginations because if we don't know how we got to where we stand today, there's no way we can imagine ways of moving forward.

With any kind of performance; action, embodiment and reflection are inherent in its presentation. *Unsettling the Homestead* and *Talking Treaties Spectacle* both implicated the audience in these processes at some point of their duration. Audience members weren't just viewers of the show. They were listening to overlapping voices, feeling braids, tasting tea, and embodying the kind of relationality presented throughout the pieces. The purpose of art is not to provide us with all of the answers. Its purpose is to help support and encourage us in looking for those answers ourselves. Both of these projects were able to provide people with some of the information and tools necessary to start or continue their own investigations into these topics.

Community arts inherently engage with praxis and therefore have the potential of foundationally altering our understandings of our positionalities, how we relate to other people and places, as well as how we can disrupt larger oppressive structures. Creations and conversations around personal location, treaty and relationship naturally lend themselves to education based in community arts. “When people create art it gives them a sense of agency and a sense of hope because it’s a creation. It’s making something that wasn’t there before and it’s making a change in your environment. You have acted to change your environment and I think that’s empowering... Community arts can give people that sense of agency and that’s very important. Then we can move in different directions. Whether it’s environmental sustainability or a treaty relationship of sustainability, it allows us to reimagine our future” (Freeman, 2017).

With education that starts with personal narratives as well as collective experiences, there is the possibility of creating more cohesive communities and deeper connections between people. Through both of these projects, people were able to embody some of the foundational agreements of this land. Sustainable relationships to each other and to the land need to be rooted in actions that promote self-sufficient systems. To have a sustainable presence on this land, we also need to address what is below the surface. Both *Unsettling the Homestead* and *Talking Treaties Spectacle* were able to metaphorically return to polish the covenant chain. People were able to come together in meaningful ways to once again discuss treaty relationships between Indigenous and Settler peoples and how to move forward with these responsibilities.

Although they held many similarities, it's the differences between each project that holds my interest. *Unsettling the Homestead* was about looking inwards. It was about how I connected with some of my own ancestors and how I could embody the stories I learned from my family in Nova Scotia. This very personal exhibit allowed me to look to my past in a way that engaged with who I am today and how I came to be where I am. And while the exhibit only engaged with a relatively small audience, this personal inquiry was necessary to feel confident in discussing with and educating other people about what it means to be a settler engaged with treaty. My work with *Talking Treaties Spectacle* connected me with other people who were also looking at how to bring these conversations to larger audiences. In the end, *Talking Treaties* engaged with hundreds of perspectives and supported me in continuing my search for deeper connection and reflection. Collectively, *Unsettling the Homestead* and *Talking Treaties Spectacle* allowed me to braid together my own experiences in ways I had not yet been able to. They allowed me the space to deeply reflect on my settler histories, critique my present positionality and imagine what futures on this land could possibly look like. These projects also provided other people with opportunities to enact processes of remembering and retelling through artistic means and therefore begin these conversations within their personal communities as well.

Community arts practices allow us to celebrate differences while also coming together in conversation and creation. Respect, compromise, active listening and collaboration are all necessary in community arts practices, making this a perfect location to discuss social and environmental issues, as well as harness stronger, more reciprocal relationships. To create a safe and welcoming space where people are able to share a sense

of belonging can have incredible impacts on individuals, communities and even our larger society.

The past will always influence the future and it is because of this that we must honour our own histories to inform us of who we are and how we can move towards better relationships with each other and to the land that supports us all. Community arts practices allow us to form stronger relationships with the people around us by collaborating and creating together. It is in these spaces where we can collectively learn, reflect and ultimately act in ways that allow us to weave important stories that are grounded in the past, address the current, and imagine the future.

Epilogue

It's the morning of the first performance of *Talking Treaties Spectacle* and I'm heading down to Fort York to prepare for the performance tonight. As I bike from my home in the Junction, I coast downhill towards High Park, rolling over sewer grates that cover ancient rivers such as Wendigo creek. Weaving south through the park's paths, I am overtly aware of the historical significance of this place. I bike by trees whose limbs have been purposefully grown in angular formations to direct historic travelers on these lands. I coast past pathways that are lined by ancient black oak savannah, which was intentionally perpetuated in the area through forest fires to create cohesive environments for hunting and travelling. This area, and much of the territory around it, was a system of ancient trade routes for Indigenous peoples residing in the Great Lakes region. The land that is now known as High Park, as well as the wider Toronto area, has tens of thousands of years of human activity steeped into it. Indigenous nations have been influencing and caring for this environment for centuries and as I bike across the rolling hills I reflect on how many people have travelled this same route before myself.

I rush downhill past Grenadier Pond and feel the air temperature change as I decrease in elevation. If I was here a thousand years earlier, I would now be on the bottom of Lake Ontario. It's a clear, sunny day and families are enjoying picnics and walks along the waterfront boardwalk. I head East along the water front and look south across Lake Ontario, and although it's a clear day the lake looks vast and impassable. I consider how Indigenous nations from this region would have travelled this body of water regularly for

trade purposes and I reflect on how many people directly crossed the lake to Niagara in 1764 to negotiate the extension of the Covenant Chain of Friendship. Continuing along the bike trail, it becomes more difficult to imagine what this landscape would have looked like, even a couple hundred years ago. Developments of the land and the waterfront have drastically altered the appearance of this region. After a few more kilometers I approach Jumbies Theatre and recognize that I'm entering the region that historically bridged the town of York to the Fort of York. Biking down Fort York boulevard I realize I'm on the edge of where the lake used to rise, with the Fort looming above me as a monument to the foundation of the city. Directly to the South would have been the Western point of what was a peninsula before it turned into the Toronto Islands. This historic land region sustained wild rice and fresh water salmon; key food staples for many Indigenous people of the area.

The landscape of Toronto has changed drastically over the past several hundred years and continues to with the increasingly rapid urban development of the area. At first glance it may seem like this land's histories have been buried underground but take a second look and you'll see that the Indigenous stories of this land are right there in plain sight. We just need to be willing to actually look, engage and critique our own perceived notions of this history. Our personal identities are much more interconnected to the history of the land than we may be led to believe. Whatever our positionalities, and however complex our genealogical histories are, they are intimately tied to the land and how we came to be where we are today. Community arts practices offer us one way in which we can critique these histories and allow us to gather with others in respectful and engaged ways

to discuss how we can create stronger relationships between each other as well as to the land that supports us all.

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