Survivance Stories:
Indigenous Resistance and Cultural Labour in Canada

by

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ABSTRACT

How do Indigenous cultural workers, practicing in Canada, think about their labour? Cultural work includes a broad array of activities: making art, writing, teaching, organizing programs, and other community projects. In this thesis, literature by Indigenous authors foregrounds ways of thinking about the meaning and function of cultural contributions, with support from complementary non-Indigenous scholarship. Interviews with three cultural workers and thematic analyses of transcripts and pre-existing texts show how cultural workers create living archives; by giving to their communities through multifaceted practices, they imagine and will Indigenously-determined paths into the future. Findings are organized into three themes, representing three practices of cultural work: contribute, gather, and proclaim.
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This thesis positions archive as a transitive verb; an iterative and continual practice of maintaining and transforming memory, according to the needs and interests of the archivist’s self-defined community. This thesis emerges from the premise that archival spaces are thus living entities, transmuted and maintained through human thought and action. Gathering people together, Indigenous cultural workers share ways of thinking, contribute time and effort, and proclaim the histories and futures of Indigenous peoples. Through their initiatives, they create functional and meaningful archives, carrying the legacies of Indigenous resistance forward. Performance art scholar Rebecca Schneider turns us towards critically evaluating archival structures that value bones over flesh (2011); systems that prioritize the boundaries of defined records over the transformational potential in body-to-body memory sharing. In the following chapters, I address the colonizing function of static archives that continue to uphold the perceived permanence of bone over the decomposition and diffusion of flesh-based memories. In Chapter 6—Discussion, I will return to Schneider.

The narrative of this thesis will be mapped in three parts. First, theoretical entryways, through the words of writer and activist Leanne Simpson, and science fiction scholar Grace Dillon. Each author’s work is a strong path within immense and varied landscapes of culture produced by Indigenous workers. Second, a place of focus: the 2013 exhibition Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art. curated by Steven Loft at Ryerson University in Toronto. Entering this space, I was invited, through Loft’s curatorial choices and the works of each artist, to consider the many ways Indigenous cultural workers contribute to Indigenous resistance in Canada. Third, an overview of the project’s purpose and structure: ethics, influence, the use of language, methods, and the routes of subsequent chapters.

1.2 ENTERING THE NARRATIVE: TWO PATHS

Dillon and Simpson articulate two ways of thinking about Indigenous cultural labour that critically inform the argument of this thesis. Considering works of science fiction by Indigenous writers, Dillon calls us to consider time space as a continuum, in which all phases of time are
informed by one another, on a circular path. Simpson invites us to see individual acts of giving as meaningful and functional contributions to larger systems of resistance, and she illustrates this breadth by using the image of a reflection in pieces. Together, Dillon and Simpson position acts of giving as handholds through time, creating a strong path onto which cultural workers can journey, proclaim to others, and continue building.

Introducing the 2012 literary collection *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, editor Grace Dillon argues that images of the future, created by Indigenous peoples, are shaped by and woven with Indigenous histories. Together, these imaginings create fluid and challenging narratives Dillon calls *Native slipstream* (2012), in which colonial experiences are *part* of an extensive and whole chronology. “Native slipstream,” explains Dillon, “infuses stories with time travel, alternative realities and multiverses, and alternative histories” (p. 3).

The slipstream genre melds speculative fiction, fantasy, and history, but often falls “through the yawning cracks between categories,” according to science fiction author Bruce Sterling (“Slipstream”, 1989, para. 31). Writing for a 1989 issue of *Science Fiction Eye* magazine, Sterling positions slipstream as “an attitude of peculiar aggression against ‘reality’” (para. 25). Continuing, he explains how “slipstream books tend to sarcastically tear at the structure of ‘everyday life’” and “screw around with the representational conventions of fiction, pulling annoying little stunts that suggest that the picture is leaking from the frame, and may get all over the reader’s feet” (para. 27). Right away, Sterling sets us up to consider how slipstream evades the boundaries of both fiction (in its representation) and reality. He notes how historical figures are used in slipstream fiction in ways which outrageously violate the historical record. History, journalism, official statements, advertising copy...all of these are grist for the slipstream mill, and are disrespectfully treated not as ‘real-life facts’ but as ‘stuff,’ raw material for collage work. Slipstream tends, not to ‘create’ new worlds, but to *quote* them, chop them up out of context, and turn them against themselves. (para. 28)

Sterling packs his description with particularly vivid imagery, suggesting slipstream’s remixing roots, in which authors rework, retell and reform sanctioned representations of historical narratives, like "grist for the slipstream mill" (para. 28).
Turning readers towards Native slipstream, Dillon (2012) describes how the approach “views time as pasts, presents, and future that flow together like currents in a navigable stream. It thus replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time” (p. 3). This way of thinking is particularly meaningful because “it allows authors to recover the Native space of the past, to bring it to the attention of contemporary readers, and to build better futures” (p. 4). The memory-building capacity of the genre is quite unlike the process Sterling describes; not only are authors creating alternative histories, but also questioning the legitimacy of accepted narratives. Dillon shows how authors engage in recovery, gathering, and rebuilding; articulating and creating archives of Indigenous history through their work.

Activist Leanne Simpson turns us to the second way of thinking, which I then apply to cultural labour. She spoke with comedian and writer Ryan McMahon in 2012, on an episode of his weekly podcast Red Man Laughing. Reflecting on the themes of her 2011 book Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence, she shared the following words:

Sometimes I think of colonialism as that shattered mirror, and there’s pieces everywhere, and we’ve got to put that mirror back together. People have to pick up their own pieces […] I think if each of us sits down honestly and figures out what those skills and gifts are, then that’s the way to build communities […] language is incredibly important, rebuilding our political traditions is incredibly important, raising our children so that they can have the knowledge and the skills that they’re not getting in the public education system, to be leaders in our communities and in our nations—that’s incredibly important. But we all can’t be doing everything all the time […] recognizing that we have different skills and different gifts, and respecting that in each other is really an important part of it too. ("Episode 19", 2012)

Here, Simpson describes different ways people contribute to resistance—including teaching and caring for children—the challenges of developing, committing to, and sharing individual skills and gifts, and the importance of acknowledging and respecting each act of giving, in oneself and in others.

In each quotation, Simpson and Dillon attend to the importance of giving time and skills to a larger community network. Through the nonlinear storytelling practice of Native slipstream, Dillon notes a process of recovery and building, creating momentum through the past and into
the future. Using similarly productive imagery, Simpson’s metaphor of the shattered mirror unearths the labour involved in finding and repairing each shard.

Through their words, Dillon and Simpson have taught me. I am thankful for their continuing work, and for all those writers who helped me develop the ideas knitted up in this thesis.

1.3 CONTEXT: GHOST DANCE: ACTIVISM. RESISTANCE. ART.

Leanne Simpson and Grace Dillon underscore the importance of cultivating, acknowledging and respecting both the lauded and subtle skills and gifts involved in contribution. Author, curator, and artist Steven Loft draws our attention to the role of cultural workers. In the fall of 2013, Loft curated Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art at Ryerson University in Toronto. Featuring the works of one non-Indigenous and five Indigenous artists, the project “[...] examine[d] the role of artist as activist, as chronicler and as provocateur in the ongoing struggle for Indigenous rights and self-empowerment”, explains Loft in his curatorial statement. The exhibition positioned cultural labour as a multifaceted operation, in which workers organize, document, and incite others to engage. I chose Ghost Dance as an initial place of focus and data sampling—although it is not the object of study in this project—because of the emphasis placed on the significance of cultural labour in Indigenous resistance.

Emerging at the intersections between Leanne Simpson and Grace Dillon’s ideas, Loft (2013) alludes to continuity, specifically in Indigenous cultural work:

As a curator and art historian I would posit that Aboriginal art is innately political. It is the culmination of lived experiences, from pre-contact customary societies through the colonial enterprise. It is tied up in histories that include both pre- and post-contact epistemologies, narratives empowered by continuity, inextricably inter-linked, and it is the assertion of cultural autonomy and sovereignty. (para. 4, italics added for emphasis)

He accentuates both the time-space continuum, in parallel with Grace Dillon’s literary genre of Native slipstream, and the importance of cultural work in resistance, similar to Leanne Simpson’s imagery in which piece of effort form a whole body of contribution. Ghost Dance metadata, citations, submissions by contributing artists, as well as the project’s design by Loft, materially supported my aim to find a primary conceptual workspace for the early phases of this thesis, facilitating a challenging learning experience.
1.4 THESIS OUTLINE

1.4.1 PURPOSE, INFLUENCE, AND ETHICS

The purpose of this thesis is three-part. First, to push forward, in writing, the important work of Indigenous authors, artists, and activists, some of whom I spoke with, others whose words I read or listened to. One of the participants, Cheryl L’Hirondelle, discussed how meaningful it is for her to gather and travel forward with stories from a Nehiyawin (Cree) tradition; I would also like to position my work on a parallel path. Second, to become a resistant and politicized writer—taught by Indigenous authors who write against dominant history narratives—and invite readers to participate in this process. Third, to follow Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report recommendations, concerning the role of Canadians in service professions. The TRC recommends that students of law, journalism, and nursing study Indigenous histories and intersections with the ethics of their chosen professions. Information studies—including library and archives management and programming—is a path to a profession in selecting, collecting, and facilitating memory. It is important to acknowledge libraries and archives as complicit agents in Canadian colonial projects. In the same breath, there is an opportunity for supporting Indigenous ways of knowing, facilitating communion and conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and challenging histories that absent Indigenous experiences and contributions.

As I slowly developed the project, I listened to podcasts hosted by comedian Ryan McMahon, read back issues of kimiwan ’zine, Gerald Vizenor’s poetry, Thomas King’s children’s literature, and Wab Kinew’s memoir The Reason You Walk. Dr. Adrienne Keene’s Native Appropriations blog led me to other web publications, including lawyer and scholar Pamela Palmater’s Indigenous Nationhood, and Chelsea Vowel’s âpihtawikosisân. In each project, I was confronted with stories of Indigenous gathering, contributing, and proclaiming. I was also struck by themes of colonial violence: stolen land, mass incarceration, residential schooling, and the continuing implementation and use of the Indian Act.

Indigenous perspectives are shared throughout this thesis using quotations attributed to selected writers engaging with relevant topics. For example, some authors inform their work
from within specific ways of thinking, such as using words from a Cree language dialect, or sharing an Anishinaabe creation story to consider the significance of storytelling. While their work informs my own, as a non-Indigenous student I cannot write from within a specific Indigenous perspective, or extend specific perspectives to broader Indigenous perspectives, unless a quoted author explicitly indicates a connection. University of Victoria doctoral candidate Kelly Aguirre (2015) encourages her readers to consider the responsibility involved in embedding the words of another person into their own narrative:

> We must be mindful of what we invoke when drawing on the stories of others, what we bring into being with our words, because every word itself carries story, and they are never only ours. Although some words, borrowed or embraced, can nourish us, they may not fulfill our needs. (p. 188)

With Aguirre’s words in mind, it is important to situate my roots as a non-Indigenous author, before proceeding to pull from the stories of others. I am the first in my family to be born in Canada; my Greek father emigrated as a child refugee in the early 1950s from Germany, and my mother as a young adult from Croatia in the 1980s. With memories of trauma from war and Communism, my family taught me to always question the narratives of nationalism.

1.4.2 TERMINOLOGY

It is important to note the use of language in this paper, particularly when applied to classify people in the primary roles I chose to focus on in the analysis: Indigenous, and cultural worker.

Throughout the thesis, I choose to use the word *Indigenous* when referring to Aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit peoples living in Canada. Maori education scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) informed my decision; she explains how the term represents histories of inclusive and collective action:

> 'Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of the some of the world’s colonized peoples [...] an umbrella enabling communities and people to come together [...] to learn, share, plan, organize and struggle collectively [...] the world’s indigenous populations belong to a network of peoples. (p. 29)
Smith describes how *Indigenous peoples* is a term that gathers those who are committed to learning, sharing, planning, and organizing.

Stepping out from Smith’s vocabulary, I adapt Jolene Rickard’s (2013) definition for “global Indigenous art” when using the term *Indigenous cultural worker*. The phrase is intended to “encompass only those artists whose works show an acknowledgement of the ongoing conditions” of Indigenous experiences in the Canadian nation-state, “the continuing dispossession of land and resources, and an awareness of” Indigenous stories and ways of thinking in Canada “as part of the future of global cultures” (p. 54). Rickard emphasizes shared experiences of loss, recognizing how creative projects contribute to planning the future of Indigenous peoples.

Smith and Rickard define *Indigenous peoples* and *global Indigenous art*, respectively, using language that invokes both claiming land and proclaiming the future of Indigenous peoples, strengthened through the development of networks across nations.

### 1.4.3 METHODS

This thesis describes a qualitative and iterative learning process, in which I interviewed three established cultural workers—chosen as experts in their fields of work—and subsequently analyzed the resulting transcripts, in addition to 14 pre-existing texts, using a thematic approach. The methods pulled out three themes—contribute, gather, and proclaim—which are intended to underscore facets of cultural work that demonstrate active archiving, and show the continuum of Indigenous cultural work in the larger system of Indigenous resistance.

### 1.4.4 CHAPTERS

Chapter 4—Methods, details project mechanics, including ethics, design, and implementation. In Chapter 5—Analysis, I share the resulting story, through the use of three themes and a simple visual model. Finally, Chapter 6—Discussion, suggests further opportunities for study and notes project limitations, ultimately accentuating three resultant themes that point beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.5 SUMMARY
This chapter described the project as an iterative and qualitative study, exploring the role of Indigenous cultural workers and their initiatives, within Indigenous resistance. It provided a sketch of the textual and physical spaces from which the project’s conceptual framework emerged, and foregrounded ethical implications, including the use of terminology. Further in the thesis, I use the metaphor of trees as a visual tool for organizing the codes and themes resulting from analysis. However, I introduce it here, in order to illustrate how I intend for the ideas introduced in Chapter 1 to grow into Chapter 2, and stretch into Chapter 3. The first half of this thesis is concerned with knitting up and building out from the ideas first considered through the work of Leanne Simpson and Grace Dillon: the persistence of Indigenous cultural labour through time, and its essential work in propelling Indigenous histories of resistance.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter organizes selections of literature under the theme creating presence. Presence manifests in two bodies of work: the continuing struggle of Indigenous resistance, and the essential practice of claiming land. The following authors remember and carry forward these two facets of Indigenous presence: Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Jarret Martineau, Arthur Manuel, Kelly Aguirre, Mary Jane McCallum, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, and Keira Ladner. I choose literature from a variety of disciplines, building a network of references based on citations provided by each author, and the acknowledgements they bestowed on others. Collectively, the selected writers attend to the challenge of creating presence over representation, the importance of repeatedly sounding out histories, the immense value in understanding individual acts of contribution, and the extensive, perpetual, and complex histories of Indigenous resistance in Canada. I did not attempt to provide a succinct summary of these histories; constructing an overview would be ethically unfeasible, suggesting containment or completion. I choose instead to integrate tangible anecdotes, setting readers up for further study of ways of thinking about contribution and resistance, in Chapter 3—Theoretical Framework. The assembled narrative in this chapter is intended to offer a glimpse into the immense elasticity of Indigenous resistance projects.

2.2 CREATING PRESENCE: CONTINUING STRUGGLE

In the early 1860s, a young woman named Naaniibawikwe (Catherine Sutton) championed Indigenous land claims, particularly for women. She petitioned the British monarchy for access to her own land on the shores of Georgian Bay in Ontario. Naaniibawikwe fought for Indigenous title—inherent rights to land—throughout her life, until her death in 1924. Following confederation, the Canadian state codified systems of control over Indigenous peoples, implementing the Indian Act in 1876. The Act prescribed taxonomies of belonging—creating the exclusive entity of Indian—ruling to what extent Indigenous peoples had access to

1 Leanne Simpson, Niigaan Sinclair, Hayden King, Wanda Nanibush and Tanya Kappo
legal, political, economic, and social services. Indigenous governance scholar Keira Ladner (2014) elaborates, describing how the Act restricted “mobilization, organization, and travel: Indians could not legally leave their reserves, gather for ‘unsanctioned’ purposes, raise monies for ‘unsanctioned’ use or hire lawyers” (p. 231). Amendments in place from 1927 to 1951 enforced further restraints, creating what Indigenous political leader Arthur Manuel (2015) calls “a shameful period in Canada's history” (p. 9). “Our people”, he writes, “were, by Canadian law, virtually forbidden to leave our reserves without permission from the Indian agent, who now controlled almost every aspect of our lives, and the courts were effectively cut off to us as an avenue for addressing a land claim against the government” (p. 9). The amendments severely limited Indigenous peoples’ right to self-govern, structuring the relationship between the non-Indigenous state and Indigenous nations into a colonizer-colonized hierarchy.

However, notes Manuel (2015) “[...] repression did not extinguish resistance. It merely drove it underground. Communities met at night with travelling activists like Andrew Paull [...]” (p. 9). Paull created presence through numerous activities: organizing political projects, studying law, and managing an Indigenous lacrosse team. He co-founded the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, and later the North American Indian Brotherhood. “Because of the restrictions of the day, both organizations existed mainly in his briefcase,” (p. 9) details Manuel. “Paull, tirelessly criss-crossing the country to preach resistance,” he recounts, “provided the light in this period of darkness” (p. 9). A contemporary, Frederick Loft, organized another activist group in 1919, the League of Indians of Canada, beginning with his own Mohawk community of the Six Nations in Ontario.

In the 1930s, Indigenous women gathered to create Homemakers’ Clubs. First funded by the Department of Indian Affairs to fulfill a gendered mandate of assimilation, clubs were subverted by women in order to effect positive change in their communities; targeting poverty, developing education and supporting families. During this period, Indigenous groups from different regions reached out to one another, forming nation-to-nation relationships and

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2 For more information, see Mary Jane McCallum’s *Indigenous Women, Work, and History: 1940-1980* (2014). In Chapter 3, I will reference her analysis of the assimilation of Indigenous youth through gendered labour in Canada’s residential school system.
initiatives. By the 1940s, a global network of “Indigenous People’s Project[s]” was underway (Smith, 2012, p. 129), participants connecting over grievances and planning strong futures.

Arthur Manuel (2015) shares a story from his father’s extensive legacy of resistance. George Manuel led the National Indian Brotherhood, forerunner to the Assembly of First Nations. During the 1950s, when he began organizing politically, Indigenous peoples had to find each other again. Organizing meant taking a collection at a local meeting, travelling long distances, and sleeping in their cars [...] these men and women [...] led us back out of political wilderness and fought for our rights in the national and provincial capitals, in the courts, and when necessary, by demonstrating in the streets. (p. 10)

Manuel’s language draws attention to the importance of spaces in Indigenous resistance projects, which frequently involve land claims. For example, Indigenous peoples “had to find each other again”; “local meeting”; travel long distances; “sleep in cars”; “political wilderness” (italics added for emphasis). Here I underscore words that particularly engage dynamics of closeness and searching: find, local, long distances, wilderness. Manuel’s description also alerts readers to the time and effort involved in these projects, far from home and far from family. Finally, he pinpoints three environments in which Indigenous resistance has taken place: in the capitals, in the courts, and in the streets. These spaces represent political, judicial, as well as daily social and economic systems vital to all communities. However, these spaces are often exclusive when a community has been structured as a colonizer-colonized network.

In addition to political grievances—including self-governance and representation—people campaigned for access to education, improvements in healthcare, and changes to other social services. In her study of Indigenous women’s labour histories in Canada, Mary Jane McCallum (2014) details some of the critical needs spurring Indigenous resistance throughout the twentieth century, “including limited access to education, discrimination in the workplace, and state policies that severely limited career options” (p. 21). McCallum notes how Indigenous women, from the 1940s to the 1970s, engaged in activism through professional activities, in order to support the needs of the communities in which they worked. For example, “Aboriginal nurses, who confronted racism both in school and in the workplace, even forged an association that aimed to document their concerns and to work with the state in order to address them” (p. 139), creating the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (ANAC) in 1975.
For Leanne Simpson (2012), the strength and pluralism of contemporary Indigenous activism grows directly from these and other extensive histories; collectively, ongoing activism is the “direct result of 400 years of resistance—which is the longest running social movement in Canadian history” (“Indigenous Perspectives”). Elaborating, she points to the continuation of local practices:

Nishnaabeg are still picking our wild rice. Haudenosaunee are still planting their corn. We are still making maple syrup, we are still holding our ceremonies and speaking our language and we are still fighting to protect our land. Those Clan mothers at Akwesasne and Six Nations are still engaged in their traditional governance.

Simpson’s repeated use of the word still suggests acts that simultaneously continue and remain. Still conveys both the endurance and the transformation of Indigenous communities, and the tenacity of resistance organizing. The imagery of planting and making food is also generative, illustrating processes that feed and grow communities.

And yet, note the Kino-nda-niimi Collective in their introduction to a print compilation of memories about Idle No More action in 2012 and 2013, “[...] these efforts often go unnoticed—even ignored—until flash-point events, culminations, or times of crisis occur” (2014, p. 21). Several of the authors whose work I selected for this literature review reveal how challenging it is to negotiate with non-Indigenous crisis-based governance, which responds only to declarations of states of emergency. For example, the northern Ontario community of Attawapiskat used this designation, in 2008, 2011, 2013, and April of 2016. In 2012 and 2013, former Chief Theresa Spence fasted for six weeks to bring attention to the infrastructure and housing crisis her community continues to experience. Too frequently, explains scholar Kelly Aguirre (2015), Indigenous activism translates as “precipitated only by immediate threats and as event-oriented, suggesting a limited reactive agency tied to the Colonizer’s initiative” (p. 187). Aguirre reminds readers how specific acts of resistance performed by Idle No More participants pre-date colonial relationships: “[...] acts of incursion, such as bringing the drum into Settler spaces imposed over Indigenous places [...] assert Indigenous presence” (p. 187). “As practices with and for the land,” she explains, “they’re in continuity with all other land-based practices” (p. 187). Continuity stands out as a distinct word, emphasizing the perpetual growth of Indigenous presence on land. Aguirre (2015) explains how remembering and doing acts of Indigenous
continuity are especially meaningful and functional antidotes; while they “expose colonial violence” they also “exceed the bounds of resistance alone insofar as they embody Indigenous ways of being,” actively proclaiming existence and generating a continuous archive of Indigenous resistance (p. 187). Similarly, Simpson and Ladner remember “the legacy of resistance,” not only for the purpose of informing others about Indigenous histories, but more importantly, “to demonstrate to future generations that they exist because of the responsibility, sacrifice, courage, and commitment of their Ancestors” (2010, in Simpson, 2011, pp. 101-102). Simpson and Ladner highlight the meaningful functionality of archiving.

Scholar Jarrett Martineau (2015) argues that Idle No More exposed “crisis-based mode[s] of governance by confronting multiple colonial temporalities and contexts simultaneously: the immediate (the imminent passage of Bill C-45), the historical (the abrogation of treaty and inherent rights) and the present (continuing forms of social suffering, colonial racism and violence)” (p. 241). The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (2014) provides a complementary cyclical narrative of Idle No More: “a watershed time, an emergence out of past efforts that reverberated into the future […]” (p. 21). “Most Indigenous peoples”, they continue, “have never been idle in their efforts to protect what is meaningful to our communities—nor will we ever be” (p. 21). Connecting past, present, and future, both Martineau and the Collective emphasize the significance of understanding Indigenous resistance beyond a colonial scope.

Critiquing Fritz Fanon’s proposed system of anticolonial resistance, in which “a self-aware leadership eradicates ambiguities or internal dissension to forward a single oppositional Native bloc capable of challenging the colonial order on its own scale, appropriating the Colonizer’s tools and aspirations to be redeployed against them,” Aguirre (2015) argues the process “can’t account for non-violent, nonhierarchical and many-sided mobilizations with diverse aspirations for diverse nations such as INM’s [Idle No More].” She continues, “It can’t acknowledge the full array of decolonial practices Indigenous people engage in beyond those overt ‘demonstrations’ of agency” (p. 189). Like Leanne Simpson and Grace Dillon—first introduced in the previous chapter—Aguirre sets us up to consider many ways of contributing. Referring again to the extensive histories of Indigenous resistance, Simpson (2012) writes on a close path: “Maintaining a movement for that long means you have to have a multi-pronged approach [...]
resistance isn’t just direct action and protest [...]” (“Indigenous Perspectives”). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes how Indigenous resistance in the mid-twentieth century “unleashed a whole array of activities and bursts of energy” (p. 140), “some of which are still unfolding. It involves a revitalization and reformulation of culture and traditions; an increased participation in and articulate rejection of Western institutions; and a focus on strategic relations and allies with non-Indigenous groups” (p. 134). Smith alludes to the significance of partnerships in Indigenous activism, and, through the word still, the commitment to continue.

2.3 CREATING PRESENCE: CLAIMING LAND

The nation-state of Canada exists because of treaty agreements with Indigenous communities. Similar contracts constitute the production of numerous colonial countries, permitting and encouraging the theft of Indigenous land for profit. Positioning global Indigenous relationships at the fore, Arthur Manuel (2015) describes how Indigenous activism transformed throughout the twentieth century, “from a group of isolated activists fighting for survival to a movement of more than 350 million Indigenous peoples from around the world working together to regain our land and dignity” (p. 10).

During the 1960s and 1970s, three actions by non-Indigenous governments in Canada informed Indigenous activism, according to Coulthard (2014): (1) the 1969 White Paper, which “inaugurated an unprecedented degree of pan-Indian assertiveness and political mobilization” (p. 5); (2) “the partial recognition of Aboriginal ‘title!’” (p. 5) in the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in the 1972 Calder case; and (3) the push for oil and gas development in northern Canada (p. 6).

In writing the White Paper, the federal government sought to abolish the Indian Act, and assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian economic, government, and information systems. Many Indigenous communities rejected the proposal, arguing their relationship with the Canadian government could not move forward without addressing living treaties, historical and ongoing social and economic inequalities, and abuse under the state’s care. The White Paper was never implemented into law.
Coulthard’s (2014) second example refers to the case of Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia, when Nisga’a elder Frank Calder sued the provincial government of British Columbia, arguing Nisga’a title was never lawfully dissolved by treaty. Both the BC Supreme Court and Court of Appeal rejected the claim, so Calder and other Nisga’a elders appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Court’s 1973 decision affirmed that Indigenous title existed prior to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, acknowledging inherent title before and beyond colonial law. Emerging from the premise of Indigenous title, the Proclamation assumed previous ownership, facilitating land transfer only through treaties. Its authors deemed that only the Crown can purchase land from Indigenous peoples and then sell to settlers, creating a legal relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples. However, the Proclamation was constructed without any input from Indigenous peoples, and with the intent to bestow ownership over Indigenous lands to King George III. As of 2016, in Canada no law overrules the Royal Proclamation. The following excerpt illustrates the assumption of Indigenous title:

      [...] it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds. (“Royal Proclamation”, 1763)

The Nisga’a did not win their case—three judges affirmed title, three argued title was extinguished through Confederation, and one dismissed the case on a technical point—but the Calder case is frequently cited as precedent, in Indigenous land claims across Canada.

Finally, Coulthard (2014) brings our attention to a period of immense oil and gas development in northern Canada. During the 1960s, commercial resource extraction was highly unregulated, and access easily obtained. In 1977, Osgoode Hall Law School professor Peter Cumming reflected on the recent circumstances: “Exploration permits for northern Canada were made available in the 1960’s on easier terms than anywhere else in the world, and without any prior land use planning or environmental regulation” (1977, p. 9). The open path to generating wealth continues to hinder the state’s potential for humanity; the bodies of Indigenous people are seen as obstacles to resource extraction.
Since the period Coulthard describes in his third example, Canadian government policies involving the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples became conventional practice (2014), responding “to increased levels of Indigenous political assertiveness and militancy by attempting to contain these outbursts through largely symbolic gestures of political inclusion and recognition” (p. 162). The state continues to react to Indigenous activism by creating symbolic agreements and conciliations, among other niceties. “Indigenous difference”, elaborates Aguirre (2015), “is registered by Settler desire as harmlessly folkloric when performed through practices such as dance and drum only as this suits” (p. 189). Recognition and representation, as a response, begin to mask and replace the potential for true presence. Creating presence involves challenging and acknowledging the treaty-based structure of the Canadian constitution and government system, ensuring access to infrastructure for Indigenous peoples across Canada, supporting Indigenous-determined systems of education, correcting mass incarceration and economic inequality, and addressing other major systems of violence that deny individuals their right to personhood and full contribution to community. The “Settler paranoia” of Indigenous presence, self-governance, and land ownership emerges “when the flow of Capital is disrupted,” notes Aguirre; “Look at State responses to demonstrations such as the Kanien’kehaka of Kanesatake’s stand at Oka in 1990, the Mi’kmaq of Elsipogtog’s in 2014 or even flash mob round-dances in retail centres” (p. 189). Coulthard and Aguirre remind readers that access to resources continues to define the colonizer-colonized relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

More than forty years after the White Paper, the Idle No More movement, which initially focused on restraints proposed through Bill C-45—“a particularly repugnant and undemocratic piece of legislation” according to Coulthard (2014)—transformed into what he calls a “full-blown defense of Indigenous land and sovereignty” (p. 161). Coulthard provides examples of other recent land claims, committed to preventing resource extraction: anti-fracking demonstrations in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick; resistance to oil sands development in northern Alberta; and anti-pipeline efforts by Indigenous communities in British Columbia (p. 165). These activities, argues Coulthard, show “Indigenous peoples’ continued resolve to defend their land and sovereignty from further encroachment by state and capital” (p. 165). Protecting land also involves building healthy communities. “[...] When we speak of rebuilding Indigenous societies
“and Indigenous economies”, explains Manuel (2015), “[...] Our goal is not simply to replace Settler Resource Inc. with Indigenous Resource Inc.” (p. 11), but to engage in practices that demonstrate a respect for continuity and change in the land. This way of thinking encompasses a view for the future—sees the future as a full possibility—for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. “Our Indigenous view”, he continues, including “air, water, land, animals, and people in a continually sustaining circle—is increasingly seen by both scientists and citizens as the only way to a sustainable future” (p. 11). Alluding to climate change solutions, Manuel underscores ways of thinking—and ways of acting—that are relevant to all peoples.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I provide a glimpse into the practice of creating presence, by illustrating how Indigenous resistance involves continuing struggle and claiming land. I began with the story of Naaniibawikwe’s efforts to ensure Indigenous title, and showed how later initiatives created precedent by claiming stolen land, and strengthening communities’ sense of self in these actions by proclaiming Indigenous histories.
CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter lays out a six-part theoretical framework, providing interconnected ways of thinking about how Indigenous cultural workers contribute meaningful and functional efforts to larger initiatives of Indigenous resistance.

First, I study four of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) 25 Indigenous projects. Next, I consider how cultural labour can effect change, through Gene Sharp’s (1973) theory of nonviolent action. Third, I explore the theory of Indigenous resurgence, developed by Taiaiake Alfred (2009), Leanne Simpson (2011) and Glen Coulthard (2014). Fourth, I focus on Gerald Vizenor’s (1994) survivance, an immense and guiding theory, which embodies the duality of continuation and transformation. Fifth, I turn to the work of Roland Barthes (1991), in order to expose myths and other trickery used to hide Indigenous histories in Canada. Finally, I arrive at the meeting places between education and cultural work, showing the potential for resistance and transformation, through the words of Paulo Freire (2000).

3.2 INDIGENOUS PROJECTS: ACTS OF DECOLONIZATION

Smith (2012) locates the continual production of an Indigenous research agenda in “[…] the decolonization politics of the indigenous peoples’ movement” (p. 14), which is “focused strategically on the goal of self-determination […]” (p. 140). Using “the metaphor of ocean tides”, Smith arranges the ebb and flow of self-determination into four phases: transforming, decolonizing, healing, and mobilizing (p. 137). “[M]ore than a political goal,” writes Smith, self-determination “becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains” (p. 140). Smith introduces readers

3 “From a Pacific peoples’ perspective the sea is a giver of life, it sets time and conveys movement […] Although there are many directions that can be named, the chart takes the Maori equivalent of the four directions: the northern, the eastern, the southern and the western. The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections and actions” (2012, p. 137).
to the idea that self-determination—a project of Indigenous resistance—manifests in different disciplines and practices. In its conceptual development, self-determination involves imagining into existence; further discussion in this paper will quote Grace Dillon’s (2014, *kimiwan* ’zine) use of *Inaendumoowin*, a term that encompasses the transformation from willing into being (see 5.7.4).

The Indigenous research agenda “is very strategic in its purpose and activities and relentless in its pursuit of social justice” (Smith, 2012, p. 159). The program includes 25 Indigenous projects, together forming “an emergent body of intellectual work being conducted across the world by indigenous and non-indigenous scholars” including lawyers, health workers, social workers, and policy analysts (p. 18).

Smith (2012) describes Indigenous projects as *decolonizing*. Rick Wallace (2013)—drawing from his involvement with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous activist partnerships, and also from Smith (1999)—notes how decolonizing involves “[...] foregrounding Indigenous voices and knowledge frameworks (epistemologies) and [...] shedding those deleterious elements of neo-colonial rule and mindset, culturally, economically, politically, and linguistically” (p. 14); in Smith’s words, the “divesting of colonial power” (1999, p. 98). A mammoth task, decolonizing requires immense commitment to change. The term is also charged, as it can position Indigenous resistance solely in the context of colonial histories, rather than as a continuing and circular practice, with no defined beginning or end (Barndt and Reinsborough, 2012).

In her editor’s note for the science fiction anthology *Walking the Clouds*, Grace Dillon (2012) approaches *decolonizing* from another perspective, delving into meaningful Anishinaabemowin terminology:

> [...] biskaabiiyang [...] ‘returning to ourselves,’ which involves discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world. (p. 10)

Citing Smith she writes, “This process is often called ‘decolonization,’ and as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) explains, it requires changing rather than imitating Eurowestern concepts” (2012, p. 10). Dillon presents a vision for decolonization that focuses on the importance of individual
contributions to a collective mandate. In this thesis, decolonization is understood primarily as a transformative practice, used to retell Indigenous histories and envision productive futures. Productive futures bring forth healthy relationships among individuals and nations, generating the growth of communities in social and economic terms, but also in the strength of their memories, which involves continually proclaiming futures.

Smith organizes Indigenous Projects into 25 categories, and four of these involve cultural labour: networking, Indigenizing and Indigenist processes, celebrating survival – survivance, and representing.

3.2.1 GATHER TOGETHER: INDIGENOUS NETWORKS FOR CHANGE

Networking is a distinct Indigenous project: “[...] a form of resistance [...] a process which indigenous peoples have used effectively to build relationships and disseminate knowledge and information (Smith, 2012, p. 176). Strengthening bonds and sharing information are key components of Indigenous networking.

Leanne Simpson also outlines the persistence of Indigenous networking. In her opening remarks to Alliances: Re/envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships (2010), she pulls the reader’s attention to the continuum of anti-colonial resistance organized by Indigenous communities across North America, and stories that tell and retell “the longest running social movement [...] on Turtle Island” (xiii). Acknowledging and understanding the endurance and perseverance of the resistance work of Indigenous peoples in Canada, throughout history and during colonial and current neocolonial eras, is necessary. Conversely, while iterations of Indigenous resistance must heed colonial context and experiences—because state-sanctioned greed, thievery, violence, displacement, and genocide are “...the common cultural markers” of these and other processes of Indigenous solidarity (Jenson, 1995, p. 112)—they form only part of an extensive chronology of struggle, resistance, change, and collaboration. (I first addressed

Turtle Island refers to the island continent of North America; borrowing from Steven Loft’s footnote in his introduction to Coded territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art (2014): “Turtle Island is a term used by several Northeastern Woodland Native American tribes, especially the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy, for the continent of North America” (xvii).
the complexities of using decolonization terminology in the previous section, 3.2). Indigenous peoples in Canada have always connected and gathered with one another in order to create change in their communities.

More than a thousand years ago, the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and later Tuscarora nations formed a confederacy. Keira Ladner (2014) retells the story: together, the Haudenosaunee nations produced an oral text called the Kayanerenkowa, or Great Law of Peace. A shared policy of self-governance, the Kayanerenkowa was the result of inter-nation cooperation; Ladner describes the process as a “peaceful revolution” in a period defined by “crime, injustice, international war, and political chaos” (p. 227). The Haudenosaunee story is an important and early path in an arc of continuing Indigenous mobilizations in Canada, built around the collaborative production of a text designed to support both the continuum of nations and the transformation of social, political, economic, and cultural relationships.

Remembering the Kayanerenkowa is also an example of Indigenizing, the second of Smith’s (2012) 25 Projects. One dimension of Indigenizing involves “a centring in consciousness of the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors and stories of the indigenous world [...]” in order to imagine a full theatre of Indigenous ways of knowing and thinking (p. 163).

Cheryl L’Hirondelle (2014) shares the memory of a parallel chronology; a history of Indigenous communication networks, which also supported community continua and transformation. Tying her argument to issues in Indigenous new media arts labour in Canada, she writes: “...we stake a claim here too [in “virtual domains”] as being an intrinsic part of this place – the very roots, or more appropriately routes.” (p. 152). Inviting all Indigenous readers to “remember our contributions and the physical beginnings that were pivotal in how this virtual reality was constructed” (p. 152), she maps a history of interconnected spaces and communications. Her Indigenous ancestors, moving “across ‘this land now known as Canada’ [...] passed through challenging terrain that had been revealed by our ancestor’s [sic] predecessors, who, similarly, tracked prey to water sources and sanctuary... [creating] well-known trails” (p. 152).

5 The term nation applies primarily to self-named Indigenous groups, such as in this context. However, the Canadian nation-state is also discussed; a material and ideological construction that post-dates the development of Indigenous nations.
this cyclical process, communities continually re-iterated “a lexicon of meaning forged by the elements themselves and directly related to the seasonal cycles of moving across the land” (p. 159). These were the “signals of survival”. As groups of Indigenous peoples renewed paths to create trade connections, they constructed systems of knowledge: “[W]e established networks and trade languages and built a knowledge base around what we knew about each other,” explains L’Hirondelle (p. 153). These information communication systems supported collaboration—in peace and in conflict—and, like the Kayanerenkowa, were important textual spaces where people shared signals of survival, contributing to and ensuring the future of and between Indigenous communities.

People, animals, and the land, connected through cycles of travel in time and space. Indigenous communities shared bodies of knowledge about the paths—including design and experiences—with early European settlers. For example, Indigenous women “acted as guides, interpreters, and diplomats in trade” throughout all phases of the fur trade (McCallum, 2014, p. 22). During the twentieth century, they were “essential guides, helpers, companions, and translators for white women who worked in the North as missionaries and nurses” (p. 22).

McCallum points out how the critical work of “helping strangers adapt to their territory” rarely emerges in histories of Indigenous peoples told by non-Indigenous cultural workers, specifically professional historians (p. 22).

Over time, continues L’Hirondelle (2014), networks of travel and information communication “became roadways [...and] [w]ith the advent of the telegraph and telephone, wire was hung along these thoroughfares...” (p. 153). Ultimately, “[...]the Internet would initially be implemented using the telephone lines that crisscross this land [...but] what is forgotten is the history of the location of the extended physical network itself” (p. 152). So while Indigenous cultural workers practicing in new media are “sneaking up and setting camp - making this virtual and technologically mediated domain our own” (p. 152), for L’Hirondelle this process also brings to the fore Indigenous “pre-contact ingenuity as inventors and technologists – experts in new media and avatars of innovation” (p. 147). L’Hirondelle guides her reader to see an immense and important epistemology, in which the roots of Indigenous cultural labour involving new media technologies are in the histories of Indigenous information
communication systems. Signals of survival – including natural patterns in the sun, clouds, wind, and stars, as well as “images carved or painted into stone” (p. 159) – were vital textual spaces for decoding and building networks of understanding, thus contributing to the continua within and between Indigenous communities.

The memory of these signals “became encoded into designs, stories, dances, songs, and language”, enmeshing histories of Indigenous communication networks, with histories of cultural labour (L’Hirondelle, 2014, p. 159), creating what Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew (2005) calls “a truly networked way of being” (p. 191). Like Smith, Maskegon-Iskwew frames networking as uniquely Indigenous, existing foremost in the animasphere: “…an interconnected anti-speciocentric constellation of the cosmosphere (astronomic and electromagnetic realms), the geosphere, the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the biosphere…each with diverse and overlapping delegates shaping worldviews among Indigenous cultures that form the foundation of their languages and identities” (pp. 201-202). Suggesting the long arc of Indigenous continuation and transformation—like Ladner and L’Hirondelle—Maskegon-Iskwew shows how “the macro and micro cosmos of contemporary Indigenous culture” is strong because Indigenous peoples continue to practice “the ancient process of successfully adapting to their worlds’ shifting threats and opportunities […] from a position of equality and autonomy within them” (p. 191).

3.2.2 INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL AND CULTURE: CELEBRATING AND REPRESENTING

Artist Dana Claxton created The Red Paper in 1996, presenting her installation piece at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The single channel black-and-white film retells the birth story of Canada. Two Indigenous actors undercut non-Indigenous representations of history, speaking of the “savagery” of colonialism. The persisting banal violence (Hannah Arendt, 1951) of colonialism lives in the form of a non-Indigenous actor who mutters repeatedly, “I did not know, I did not know.” Arendt’s banality of evil, a concept she first introduced in her 1963 book Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, is premised on systems of design and organization that willingly enact systems of violence. It is also premised on cycles of willing ignorance, inaction, and adaptation to these systems, normalizing far-removed fantasies of violence within
acceptable structures of hierarchy and propaganda. Ultimately, the evil Arendt studies is a project of absence; conversely, Gerald Vizenor's (1994) theory of survivance, further explored in the following section, is a project of presence.

Twenty years old, The Red Paper illustrates the third and fourth Indigenous Projects: celebrating survival – survivance, and representing. In celebrating survival, Smith (2012) applies Gerald Vizenor’s survivance to the work of Indigenous artists who “come together to celebrate collectively a sense of life and diversity and connections” (p. 162). These events focus on “active resistance” instead of “documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples” (p. 162).

Smith (2012) points out that non-Indigenous theories of the histories of Indigenous peoples tend to privilege a “historical descent into a state of nothingness and hopelessness” (p. 108). She proposes foregrounding Indigenous ways of thinking, through an alternative chronology that positions Indigenous peoples as active agents in the building of their future: “(1) contact and invasion, (2) genocide and destruction, (3) resistance and survival (4) recovery as indigenous peoples” (p. 108). The terms resistance, survival and recovery encompass a “sense of hope and optimism [...] often criticized, by non-indigenous scholars, because it is viewed as being overly idealistic” (Smith, 2012, p. 108).

Cultural workers who are engaged in representation, explains Smith (2012), “attempt to express an indigenous spirit, experience or worldview [...] proposing solutions to the real-life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront, and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous” (p. 169). The project of representation incorporates both the “political concept” and “a form of voice and expression” committed to retelling ways of knowing that maintain colonizer-colonized relationships (p. 167). Smith wrestles with the question of how to create difference through cultural work; referring to the very real economic challenges Indigenous communities face worldwide, “questions of imperialism and the effects of colonization may seem to be merely academic; sheer physical survival is far more pressing” (p. 23). Yet stories

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6 Arendt emphasizes that Eichmann was not a bureaucrat, but failed to think about any context other than the Third Reich, and his role in fulfilling an ideology.
told by governments and institutions “to deny the historical formulations of such conditions have simultaneously denied our claims to humanity, to having a history, and to all sense of hope” (p. 23). Thus, “to resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve ‘what we were and remake ourselves’ [...] all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope” (p. 23). Here, Smith delves into the tension between creating presence and representing. She ultimately concludes that false narratives continue to have real impacts on Indigenous peoples worldwide, and resistance must challenge their normalcy.

3.3 ACTS OF NONVIOLENCE

In the Politics of Nonviolent Action, Gene Sharp (1973) offers a second lens through which we may consider the significance of labour performed by Indigenous cultural workers. Sharp describes Six Classes of [social and political] Action in Conflicts: peaceful institutional procedures backed by threat and use of sanctions (violent and nonviolent), simple verbal persuasion and related behaviour, nonviolent action, material destruction only, physical violence against persons with material destruction, and physical violence against persons (Chart Two).

Advocating for nonviolent action as a legitimate and effective response to conflict, Sharp’s (1973) subtitle for the second chapter summarizes his theory: “Nonviolent Action: An Active Technique of Struggle” (p. 63). Sharp criticizes scholarship that contrasts nonviolent and violent action, arguing the comparison is unproductive because the two are examples of action in response to conflict, not opposites. Both are methods of struggle, but each depends on a very different process; violent action “bring[s] injury or death to persons, or threaten[s] to do so” (p. 609). In contrast, Sharp roots his theory of nonviolent action in an understanding of political power built in the tension between control and obedience. “Governments depend on people”, he writes; “power is pluralistic [...] and fragile because it depends on so many groups for reinforcement [...]” (p. 8). Like Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony (2000), in which the state operates through a political-civil model of activities, governance for Sharp (1973) depends on many interrelated networks: legal, judicial, educational, military, police, cultural, archival. This model rejects a static perception of power welded by one or a few individuals, and regards very seriously the agency of people who have experienced marginalization, violence, or other forms of oppression, and their capacity to resist or transform their circumstances.
Nonviolent action includes the category nonviolent protest and persuasion, under which Sharp groups various media and performance types: slogans, caricatures and symbols; banners, posters and displayed communications; records, radio, and television; displays of portraits; paint as protest; humorous skits and pranks; performances of plays and music; and singing (1973, pp. 125 – 149). Sharp approaches cultural work primarily as event-based action, affiliated, for example, with rallies or demonstrations. He does not assess how it might contribute more sustainably to long-term networks of resistance. Alluding to the research gap, he notes: “[...] the political implications and potentialities of nonviolent action, including for social change and for national defense, have also been left for separate exploration [...]” (1973, p. vi).

Two other examples parallel Sharp’s argument for the contributing role of cultural work, shared by T. V. Reed and Suzanne Staggenborg. In the final chapter of The Art of Protest, Reed (2005) outlines the “primary functions” of cultural work in social movements, including encouraging individuals to “feel the strength of the group”, enacting movement goals, telling and retelling movement history, and providing a space for joy and pleasure (pp. 299-300). Studying the history of women’s movements, Staggenborg (1998) argues that cultural work “may exist to provide services or to educate or entertain participants in the community” (p. 182); her example is a women’s music festival. Staggenborg and Reed identify overlapping functions for cultural production in social movement activities, demonstrating both unifying and challenging capacities: the potential to increase solidarity and support movement actions, but also to undermine oppressive hegemonic structures.

Sharp (1973) identifies three successful outcomes from nonviolent action, one of which is particularly notable. Conversion involves transcending conflict to the benefit of both oppressed and oppressor, who “has been inwardly changed so that he wants to make the changes desired by the nonviolent actionists” (p. 706). This outcome functions “not simply to free the subordinate group, but also to free the opponent, who is thought to be imprisoned by his own system and policies” (p. 707). Conversion is a transformative, productive and hopeful outcome that is forward looking. Further in this chapter, I study a parallel praxis, Paulo Freire’s (2000) theory of transcendence.
A useful way of thinking about cultural labour, and its potential applications in Indigenous resistance, Sharp’s theory of nonviolent action would be more functional and meaningful if studied in the context of continuing practices of resistance, rather than the solely event-based initiatives which form the foundation for his examples.

3.4 CONTINUING AND TRANSFORMING: ACTS OF RESURGENCE

Leanne Simpson (2011) and Glen Coulthard (2014) explore the practice and theory of resurgence. Their perspectives are notable for shared interests, and also for mutual recognitions of influence; Simpson refers to Indigenous governance scholar Taiaiake Alfred, and Coulthard acknowledges both Simpson and Alfred as highly influential writers and thinkers on resurgence.

“[...] At the core of his work,” writes Simpson (2011) of Alfred, “he challenges us to reclaim the Indigenous contexts (knowledge, interpretations, values, ethics, processes) for our political cultures. In doing so, he refocuses our work from trying to transform the colonial outside into a flourishing of the Indigenous inside” (p. 17). Through the use of flourishing and inside, Simpson shows how resurgence is about presence; a kind of growth and transformation.

Reflecting on Simpson and Alfred’s work, Coulthard (2014) notes how resurgence “[...] draws critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present” (pp. 154-155). For Coulthard, resurgence—a decolonizing practice and way of thinking—“builds on the value and insights of our past in our efforts to secure a noncolonial present and future” (p. 149).

Like Dillon, Simpson also refers to bisaabiiyang (see 3.2); quoting her, Coulthard (2014) explains that resurgence does not

‘literally mean returning to our pasts [...] but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens.’ For Simpson (2014) this requires that we reclaim ‘the fluidity of our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism”. (pp. 154-155)

Fluidity includes both tradition and change. Simpson (2011) reminds readers about the extent of Indigenous resistance: “I think our communities know something about organizing, mobilizing, and strategizing [...] about living through the most grievous circumstances” (p. 16).
Illustrating this breadth of knowledge, Simpson refers to the many “theoretical conceptualizations of ‘resurgence’ within Indigenous thought” (p. 148). She offers one notable example called Maria Campbell’s Stone Throw Teaching, named after the author of Halfbreed: 

Métis Elder Maria Campbell explained this teaching to me in terms of resistance and resurgence. She told me that acts of resistance are like throwing a stone into water. The stone makes its initial impact in the water, displacing it and eventually sinking to the bottom. There is the original splash the act of resistance makes, and stone (or the act) sinks to the bottom, resting in place and time. But there are also more subtle waves of disruption that ripple or echo out from where the stone impacted the water. These concentric circles are more nuanced than the initial splash, but they remain in the water long after the initial splash is gone. Their path of influence covers a much larger area than the initial splash, radiating outward for a much longer period of time. (145)

Simpson (2011) retells the story of a system of resistance, rippling continuously into resurgence. This metaphor of reverberation represents a key way of thinking that informs this thesis: Indigenous cultural workers contribute, individually, to collective resistance. Each contribution “moves from being an individual act, vision or commitment, to one that functions on the level of a family [...] to a group of families, then a portion of a community, then a community, and so on” (p. 144). For Simpson, these practices manifest in Nkweshkgdaadiwin, “the art of meeting together” (p. 144): “[...] I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses. I have spent enough time taking down the master’s house, and now I want most of my energy to go into envisioning and building our new house” (p. 32).

Invoking resurgence, Simpson (2011) lays bare the inadequacies of academic social movement terminology. She shows how complex histories of Indigenous resistance stretch beyond the “cognitive box of imperialism” and calls readers to action: “We need to step out of the box, remove our colonial blinders and at least see the potential for radically different ways of existence” (p. 148).

Prior to reading Simpson, three ideas shaped my understanding of resistance, collected from disciplinary scholarship on the relationship between social movements and cultural labour: (1) a necessity for duration or continuation (Flacks, 2005 in Staggenborg, 2011), (2) networks of

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social movement communities (Staggenborg, 2011), and (3) the importance of preferences (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) in tandem with organized action.

According to Flacks, social movements are characterized by participant perseverance, of “…some duration” (2005, in Staggenborg, 2011, p. 8), in order to challenge oppressive institutions and create social change. The requirement suggests that persistence is a defining feature of social movement processes, rather than the brevity of temporally limited actions. Continuation defines the extensive chronologies of Indigenous mobilization efforts in Canada detailed by Ladner (2014), and the communication networks illustrated by L’Hirondelle (2014) in 3.2.1.

Indigenous resistance participants and non-Indigenous allies, some of whom work within formal structures of the Idle No More movement, or the Native Women’s Association of Canada, for example, also include “networks of individuals, cultural groups, alternative institutions, and institutional supports, as well as political movement organizations” (Staggenborg, 2011, p. 7). Staggenborg calls these networks social movement communities; one useful lens through which to explore the functions and contributions of social movement communities is the phenomena of social movement preferences.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) describe how social movements are produced through the activities of complex networks that include “…both elements of preference and organized action for change” (p. 1219). For an example, they point to social movement organizations (SMOs) in the American civil rights movement, which “held preferences for change aimed at ‘justice for black Americans’”; these SMOs connected their “goals with the preferences of a social movement” and attempted to “implement those goals” (p. 1218). In the context of Indigenous resistance, decolonizing practices and ways of thinking (Smith, 2012) are examples of preferences guiding the work of Indigenous participants and non-Indigenous allies in Canada. Proclaiming from within a Nishnaabeg perspective and language about Indigenous resistance, Simpson (2011) outlines “[...] processes we engage in to prevent Zhaaganashiiyadizi (our people from becoming colonized or assimilated). To me, that means we need to act against political processes that undermine our traditional forms of government, our political cultures, our
intellectual traditions, the occupation and destruction of our lands, violence against our women and children […]” (p. 53). Thus, preferences and actions merge in order to implement goals.

Closing this section on resurgence, a brief aside into how three selected authors consider the work of performance artist Rebecca Belmore. Simpson (2011) notes Belmore’s work in the Peterborough-based Mapping Resistances, curated by Wanda Nanibush. The project was part of events to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1990 Mohawk Crisis at Kanehsatake.

“Nishnaabeg and Indigenous artists like Belmore,” she writes, “interrogate the space of empire, envisioning and performing ways out of it. Even if the performance only lasts twenty minutes, it is one more stone thrown in the water. It is a glimpse of a decolonized contemporary reality; it is a mirroring of what we can become” (p. 98). In this quotation, Simpson refers again to Maria Campbell’s stone throw teaching: one more stone thrown in the water.

Belmore’s work also inspires curator and study participant Steven Loft. In a 2012 presentation on the previous 20 years of Indigenous art histories, Loft (2012) addressed her influence, providing the example of Belmore’s “protest performance” in support of the Lubicon Cree Nation, challenging a museum exhibition supported by Shell Corporation. Laundering her work, Loft called the event “a telling and powerful response” (p. 18); Belmore performed outside the museum without the institution’s consent, holding a sign identifying her as artifact “#617B”, the title of her piece.

In their anthology on art and reconciliation in Canada, Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall (2015) foreground how cultural work can bring attention to conflict. Belmore’s performance work during the Mohawk Crisis “[…] frames barricades as places of creativity and community, and asserts a role of art and artists as sites of dissent between Indigenous people and the settler colonial system” (p. 1). Extending beyond, L’Hirondelle Hill and McCall use language that positions art-making as work that challenges, when discussing the potential for Indigenous cultural work: discomfort, disconnection, disruption, disturb, activate.

3.5 SURVIVING AND RESISTING: ACTS OF SURVIVANCE

Gerald Vizenor’s (1994) theory of survivance embodies the active process of resistance, representing both continuation and transformation; suffix –ance indicates an active state, but
also a larger condition of existence. Vizenor primarily considers survivance in the playground of literary production, where Indigenous authors are “postindian warriors [who] encounter their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evinced on horses [...] they create their stories with a new sense of survivance” (p. 4). Pulling out a reiterating narrative, Vizenor connects contemporary cultural workers with their ancestors. He explains to his readers that decoding history is a necessary undercurrent in acts of literary survivance, situating Indigenous literary production as part of a resistance continuum.

Journeying through literary networks, Vizenor (2009) alludes to the close connection between survivance and ways of speaking, suggesting it “could be the fourth person or voice in Native stories”; survivance privileges multiple ways of knowing and rejects the “monotheism” that represents singular, non-Indigenous ways epistemologies (p. 103). The fourth voice embodies challenging and alternative narratives that can counter dominant and oppressive stories. For Vizenor, survivance is “[...] presence over absence” and “the continuation of stories, not a mere reaction” (p. 85). Creating presence is the root of survivance. Storytelling is an immense survivance act, because the tumbling and knitting up of stories provides an opportunity to create shared spaces where writers can eschew static narratives, more closely reflecting both the changes and anchors in the lives of the Indigenous communities to which they belong. Survivance involves both action and reflection, but “[t]he theory is earned by interpretations” (p. 89). Interpretations form through literary production, in which theory and practice function cohesively: representing survivance, and being survivance. An intellectual force, survivance lives in the productive tension between theory and practice.

Discussing the theory and practice of Indigenous futurisms, Grace Dillon (2014) embodies the process of survivance in the following quotation: “[...] dreaming ahead into our possible futures, and to the multiple senses of futurism that remain interwoven, tied, and ultimately freed by the embedding of our pasts and presents as well” (p. 6). Dillon illustrates how dreaming into being involves collecting, knitting up, and unravelling: interwoven, tied, and ultimately freed.

The following story illustrates how survivance grows in Indigenous networks of information communication. In February of 1964, the first radio program produced by Indigenous workers, concerning Indigenous current events and culture, Indian Magazine, was broadcast in Canada.
The event created a new iteration of information communication networks, like the “signals of survival” studied by Cheryl L’Hirondelle (2014), in Chapter 2—Literature Review.

Host Brian Maracle called Indian Magazine, “the first major effort to let Native people tell their own story to the Canadian public” (CBC Digital Archives, 1984). One of Indian Magazine’s early projects involved documenting and proclaiming stories of Indigenous activism; in 1965, the program reported on a protest of more than four hundred Indigenous members of the Kenora, Ontario community, who marched on the town hall and made appeals to the municipal government. In subsequent years, Indigenous communities across Canada organized similar actions. Indian Magazine—later renamed Our Native Land—became a national program in 1968, and continued to document Indigenous perspectives on resistance. By its final episode in 1985, each individual involved with the program contributed to a media archive documenting and declaring Indigenous presence.

3.6 DEMYSTIFYING MANIFEST MANNERS

Manifest manners erase Indigenous presence and experience. These “treacherous and elusive” (Vizenor, 1994, p. 8) practices and ways of thinking reduce histories of colonial violence to one- or two-line false narratives of polite engagements in nation-building. “[H]ow ironic”, writes Vizenor (1994), “that the most secure simulations are unreal sensations […]” (p. 8). Vizenor derives simulations from two sources. The first is Jean Baudrillard (1994), who wrote about tactics of deception; in the sphere of manifest manners, these are deployed under the pretense of truth, justice, and good governance. The second is manifest destiny, a belief that structures the superiority of non-Indigenous settlers above Indigenous peoples. This belief, argues Vizenor (1994), “would cause the death of millions of tribal people from massacres, diseases, and the loneliness of reservations” (p. 4).

Non-Indigenous cultural work supported agendas of annihilation. Quoting from American literary scholar Larzer Ziff’s Writing in the New Nation, Vizenor (1994) observes how “[…] masters of manifest manners in the nineteenth century, and earlier […] used words to replace rather than to represent Indian reality” (p. 8). For example, the word Indian: “[…] a navigational miscalculation, an unintended maritime invention, but the irony becomes a political simulation
of the thousands of distinct Native cultures [...] strengthened the notion of Natives as an absence” (Vizenor, 2012, p. 31-32). Through literature, film, photography, and memories institutionalized in archives, cultural production perpetuates absence: “[...] the surveillance of the social science and the invention of the other concealed the genius of natural reason, the ironies of tribal imagination, and the shimmer of survivance stories” (Vizenor, 1999, p. 168). Manifest manners replaced “[d]ynamic Native cultures, the crucial economic experiences of continental trade routes, the diplomatic savoir faire of the fur trade, and the mastery of trickster stories and other creative narratives that anticipated postmodern literary discourse [...]” (Vizenor, 2012, p. 26).

In Section 3.7, I elaborate on the violence and potential healing of education, but it is important to discuss the role of academic predecessors who built the institutions in which I learn and from which I benefit. Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony (2003) includes a network of political and civil activities designed to coerce populations under their rule. Gramsci points out how systems of education reproduce state-sanctioned cultural narratives, portraying this work as serving a “positive educative function”; thus the oppressor can position itself as a benevolent educator (p. 258). Vizenor (2012) addresses how universities support and produce manifest manners: “[...] the mundane drivel of untold numbers of scientific studies, structuralist models, dubious empirical documents, federal reports [...] thousands of doctoral dissertations dominated the interpretations and considerations of Native cultures. This putative archive has engendered simulations, perverted Native epistemologies, and generated a historical absence of Natives” (pp. 26-27). Vizenor addresses the archival function of education systems, and brings our attention to projects of absence. Emma LaRocque (2015) emphasizes how imperative it is to counter archives of absence: “[...] as long as all the racist and dehumanizing archival, historical and literary portrayals continue to circulate in our library and publication systems”, writes LaRocque, “we are put in a situation of having to continually address this materially, especially as each new generation of students enter our classrooms [...] we are not in a position to ‘resist no longer’” (p. 20).

LaRocque, Jason Edward Lewis, and Smith explain that imagining the outcome of struggle requires presence. “Our absence from the future imaginaries of the settler culture should worry
us,” writes Lewis (2014); “Absence implies non-existence, or, at the very least, non-importance. A people that are absent in the future need not be consulted in the present about how that future comes about. A culture that is assumed not to be important one hundred years from now can be discounted now, for what are the consequences?” (p. 58). Imagining the outcome of struggle is particularly important when reflecting on the vision of the colonial project. Smith (2012) identifies imagination as a crucial element: “Colonialism was, in part, an image of imperialism, a particular realization of the imperial imagination. It was also, in part, an image of the future nation it would become” (p. 43).

During the nineteenth century, non-Indigenous simulations of Indigenous peoples blossomed in the cultural imagination of North America; these tactics of deception (Vizenor, 2009) persist. For example, Canada’s origin story continues to grow from a dubious cultural narrative, the white settler colony myth (Abele and Stasiulis, 1989, p. 269). The myth re-presents national development with a story of social and economic progress, built from white male settler labour; first in the fur and lumber trades, and eventually through industrialized systems of production, including farming and manufacturing. These efforts culminated in a period between the late 1860s and the First World War, which Abele and Stasiulis (1989) note is often referred to as a “key formative period of Canadian development […] the ‘age of classical monopoly capitalism’” (pp. 243-244).

Digging deeper into this portrayal of Canada’s growth, Abele and Stasiulis (1989) remind readers how the narrative excludes the experiences and contributions of Indigenous workers, as well as other non-Indigenous or non-Anglophone immigrants, including women and children. “Few workers match this image in any society, and certainly in Canada at any period” (p. 169). Even more troubling, is the erasure of Indigenous survivance stories:

Seeing Canada as a white settler colony denies, first, the significance of the very long period of Native occupation, before Europeans arrived. It does not provide, either an accurate description of the early contact period (which lasted at least three hundred years). Few of the first Europeans were settlers. They came with the commercial objective of harnessing Native labour power for profit, and there was a long period of struggle over the terms of this commercial relationship […] Native labour and Native resistance were crucial for early class and state formation. (p. 268)
The *white settler colony* myth drags a harmful and persistent Canadian history, in which Indigenous experiences and histories are presented as optional and *other*, rather than as legitimate, challenging, and productive. The myth is also an economic narrative, minimizing contributions of Indigenous workers in building the Canadian nation-state. Thus, Canada’s economic growth is detached from the work of Indigenous peoples, who are portrayed as hindering economic development.

The *age of classical monopoly capitalism*—a period presented in non-Indigenous histories as one of immense political and economic growth—coincides with legislation produced to suppress and regulate the actions and identities of Indigenous peoples: the *Indian Act* of 1876. A consolidation of earlier documents, the Act culminated in the codification of Pre-confederation methods. The *Indian Act* prescribed the naming and identification of Indigenous peoples and the governance of Indigenous communities; later amendments controlled education, relocation, cultural practices, and many other facets of gathering, contributing, and proclaiming Indigenous ways of being.

McCallum (2014) addresses concerted efforts in her own discipline to *create* Indigenous absence, in particular ignoring Indigenous labour histories: “Until recently, imperialism and Canadian nation building have been understood as two distinct projects, often distinguished by the world wars” (p. 10). History developed as a discipline from a nationalist imperative; “[…] the idea that Canadian history should fashion, foster, and defend the Canadian nation and the identity of Canadians is foundational to its existence as a profession” (p. 236). This process, circling around the imaginary nation-state, “[…] subtly and unsubtly presents […] Canadian history, as not the project of Aboriginal people and non-white people more generally” (p. 236). The history McCallum critiques is a project of absence; “it is always easier for historians to find proof of absence than of presence when it comes to Native people,” she writes, “and especially when it comes to Native women.” Calling other professional historians to action, she declares “[w]e must be careful not use absence as a method and a foundation of our work” (2014, p. 10). McCallum introduces absence, not only as a facet of historical narratives, but also as a practice. The antidote is to build memory from presence.
Myth, rooted in the work of Roland Barthes (1991) is a type of speech, constructed and imposed onto a cultural text in order to manipulate its perceived meaning. Destructive transformation is a critical aspect of the process; myth is “depoliticized speech” (p. 142; italics added for emphasis). Barthes’ declaration suggests the first sign is ultimately political, bearing purpose and persuasion.

Myths are especially deceptive in their trickery. For example, reflecting on the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Arthur Manuel (2015) explains how the document emerged from concerted efforts to denounce

 […] the innocent-sounding doctrine of discovery, which was the tool—the legal fiction—Europeans used to claim our lands for themselves […] The Americas were first portrayed as terra nullius on European maps. But in almost all cases, Europeans were met, at times within minutes of their arrival, by Indigenous peoples […] the doctrine of discovery remained because it was a legal fig leaf they could use to cover naked thievery. (p. 3)

Manuel’s use of legal fiction, fig leaf, and naked thievery highlight how the use of story facilitated and normalized violence. In his guest editorial for the Canadian Journal of Native Education, Taiaiake Alfred (2011) writes about the myths produced by colonial nation-states, and the antidotes available to Indigenous peoples. Describing contemporary colonialism with words and phrases such as deceptive, cloaks, double-speak, and politics of distraction, Alfred argues that education can dismantle stories supporting the continued dispossession of Indigenous peoples (p. 7).

Alfred and Manuel show how myth loses its complicated history, becomes difficult to decode, and achieves disturbing and “blissful clarity” (Barthes, 1991, p. 143). This accomplishment diffuses potential interrogation, debate, and change: “[…] In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts […]” (Barthes, 1991, p. 143), reducing power structures to a simplified progression of normalcy. Barthes unearths the challenging crux of decoding any myth, namely the blithe assuredness in its presentation; the way a myth slips easily into bodies of shared knowledge through apparent naturalization. Myth does not simply point to or suggest – it is; exists, enmeshed in the original sign without betraying any sense of its intrusion: “…its function is to distort, not to make disappear” (Barthes,
Myth commits fully to the invisible transformation of the sign; still, semblances of grotesque masquerade loom heavy. Through “native humanistic tease” (Vizenor, 2009, p. 85), Indigenous cultural workers can subvert narratives such as the white settler colony myth (Abele and Stasiulis, 1989). Starting from Indigenous historicity, workers can rebuild stories that are meaningful and functional, rejecting “the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained representations of Native American Indians” (Vizenor, 1994, pp. 5-6). For example, Vizenor’s (2012) use of the term “[...] postindian reduces the significance of the word indian by a simple prefix that indicates ‘after in time,’ or after the invention of the indian and the simulation of Natives” (pp. 31-32).

3.7 TRANSCENDING OPPRESSION: ACTS OF TRANSFORMATION

This section delves into the work of Paulo Freire (2000), who developed his ideas from studying systems of oppression in Brazil during the mid-20th century. First, I navigate Freire’s oppressor-oppressed contradiction. Oppressors initiate violence, begetting and bearing the weight of building a toxic oppressor-oppressed contradiction, produced from a constant “desire [...] for the necessity of conquest” and subsequent objectification of peoples they deem inferior (p. 139). Their actions involve only dehumanization; they are not capable of subverting the binary.

Freire (2000) asks whether oppressors can support resistance causes led by peoples they oppress, but concludes that oppressor involvement tends to emerge as paternalism, or “false charity” (p. 140). To effectively support resistance participants, oppressors must engage in continuous self-reflection in conjunction with practical contributions. Only people who have experienced oppression can transcend the oppressor-oppressed hierarchy, once they “discover themselves to be ‘hosts’ of the oppressor” (p. 48). Through the process of “discover[y]”, people educate one another about the false binary. The potential for resistance is always possible, writes Freire, resting only with peoples who have experienced oppression and objectification.
As Smith (2012) points out, Freire’s study of the struggle and transformation of oppressor-oppressed hierarchies involves a very personal process of discovery “...when people learn to read the word (of injustice) and read the world (of injustice) they will act against injustice” (p. 212). Connecting with the work of Maori scholar Graham Smith, she suggests that conscientization, resistance, and transformative action “may occur in any order and indeed may occur simultaneously” (Graham Smith, cited in Smith, 2012, p. 213).

In Freire’s framework, acts of resistance are never forms of violence, because they are ultimately productive acts that seek to re-humanize their own condition, and restore humanity to their oppressors’ condition. Acts of resistance are acts of love towards the oppressor-oppressed binary, supporting transformation and leading to transcendence. In this system—oppressor and oppressed, violence and love—love is the distinct purview of peoples who have experienced oppression.

Oppressors use education to legitimize power and violence; normalizing their place through a system of banking education, they “attempt to deny individuals the ability to see themselves in the world”, and to see the world as transforming. They also “attempt to destroy in the oppressed their quality as ‘considerers’ of the world” (Freire, 2000, p. 129). Considering suggests reflecting and engaging; the capacity to continually act and reflect is a critical component of Freire’s theory of humanization: “Human activity is praxis; it is transformation of the world [...it] is theory and practice; it is reflection and action” (2000, p. 125).

Oppressors are incapable of fully realizing these dynamic and productive systems. Denying these iterative processes—theory and practice, reflection and action, continuation and transformation—is the praxis of domination, in which oppressors deny peoples “the right to say their own words and think their own thoughts” (Freire, 2000, p. 126). Banking education creates a system of “[...] immobilizing and fixating forces”, which “fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings [...]” (Freire, 2000, p. 84). Freire’s theory enmeshes Gramsci’s cultural hegemony (2003) and Barthes’ myth (1991); Gramsci details how the educative function of the state essentially maintains and fulfills the desire for control, while Barthes exposes the role of myth in creating seamless propaganda. Maskegon-Iskwew (2005) underscores the harm by citing Freire, explaining how a colonizer-colonized culture creates “exclusionary conditions
[...and] systematically submerges issues of race beneath a colourless version of liberal democracy... aggressively limiting cultural specific dialogue” (p. 196).

Two examples illustrate recent incidences of banking education. Artists Jackson2Bears and Renee Nejo share memories of colonial grade-school education. 2Bears is a scholar and multimedia artist; he contributed to the *Ghost Dance* exhibition, and his work will be studied in Chapter 5—Analysis. Nejo is a video game designer whose work is featured in *kimiwan* ‘zine, a publication focused on Indigenous culture; her work will also be studied in Chapter 5, along with other selections from *kimiwan* ‘zine.

In his personal essay *My Post-Indian Technological Autobiography*, 2Bears (2014) recalls an experience that continues to haunt his work:

> This is ‘Indian week’ [...] our classroom is vulgarly decorated with [...] a virtual dog’s breakfast of ‘Indian’ paraphernalia: teepees, totem poles, headdresses [...] Being the only ‘Indian’ in my class [...] I will lead the group through a series of demeaning actions to the tune of Mother Goose’s ‘Ten Little Indians’. (p. 13-14)

In this quotation, 2Bears illustrates how educational institutions participate in colonial violence. In Indigenous arts and culture zine *kimiwan*, Renee Nejo (2014) remembers the absence of Indigenous stories in the classroom:

> When I was young, and we were starting to learn about Manifest Destiny in school, I couldn’t wait. This was a subject that I actually knew a little about outside of school. It was part of who I am. I felt like my little heart had a lot to offer to the conversation, but when it came time to read in class, that’s all we really did. There was no discussion, no real interaction [...] [t]his is what set the tone for me with regard to my identity: ‘nobody cares’. (p. 27)

Nejo identifies the banality of her educational experience, in which the institution denied its own humanity by excluding the history of the state that enabled its existence.

Freire deciphers manipulations by oppressors, much like Barthes’ theory of myths. Previous examples provided in the thesis, selected from writing by Vizenor, Manuel, Abele and Stasiulis, and Alfred, show how storytelling can support and smooth the presentation of power; shifting and twisting to maintain stability. Keira Ladner (2014) offers a useful comparison: “In the past the government of Canada employed the brute force of the state and legislatively destroyed
and obliterated Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous structures of governance” (p. 230). Similar to Aguirre and Coulthard’s illustration of crisis-based modes of governance in Chapter 2—Literature Review, Ladner shows how conciliatory policies loom large today; “acting as though its genocidal dreams have been realized […] the state refuses to acknowledge or deal with any of the remnants of these structures […]” (p. 230).

Educational institutions were deemed one of the most effective structures in which to absent Indigenous peoples. In 19th century Canada, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and Christian missionary churches jointly organized non-Indigenous education of Indigenous children. The Indian Act granted the DIA control over the education system, including the power to open and operate schools, and mandate attendance for Indigenous children. McCallum (2014) emphasizes how “[e]ducation, in schools devised and controlled by non-Native people, had always been a factor of the civilizing mission in Canada.” Continuing, she explains that, “[a] main goal of federally controlled Indian education has been to reorient Native children away from community, family, and culture towards the state and Canadian status quo citizenship” (p. 28). The system was thus destructive, designed with the intent to pull community apart.

The Canadian nation-state manipulated education as an extensive vehicle of control, producing a system of myths reinforcing a colonizer-colonized set of hierarchies, denying Indigenous histories, and the hope for continuation. The state designed and implemented school systems to service the aims of a white settler colony made in the image of its British imperial predecessors. Forced into residential schools, children were, to borrow from the writing of Paulo Freire (2000), “integrate[d]’ into the structure of oppression” (p. 74). Freire also delves into “the myth of the industriousness of the oppressors and the laziness and dishonesty of the oppressed, as well as myths of the natural inferiority of the latter and the superiority of the former” (p. 139); these myths were also at play in the production of residential schools, integrating Freire’s banking education with “a paternalistic social action apparatus” (p. 74). False but powerful support systems, these myths were reinforced through violence, including the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of students; the implementation of curricula uninformed by the histories, spiritualties, or cultures of students and their families; restrictions on Indigenous proclamations, including bans on speaking languages from home, forcing religious
conversion, and breaking family networks through the mandated removal of children from their families to attend non-Indigenous schools.

Detailing the dark intersections between institutional education and organized labour, McCallum (2014) reveals that, "[...] Indian residential schools were fully dependent upon the manual labour of Indian students" and details "the clear function that Indian affairs played not only in the training, but also in the recruitment, contracting, disciplining, and regulation of Native labour" (p. 236). McCallum points out how manual labour in residential schools had a gendered educative function tied closely to the civilizing violence of colonialism: "Manual labour education was strictly divided along gender lines, reflecting broader ideologies in Canadian society in which 'suitable tasks' were supposedly innate according to gender" (pp. 28-29). As he writes, "outdoor work was reserved for men, whereas women were confined to the indoor domestic sphere" (p. 236). The state used education and child labour to build and reinforce the new colonial nation. Indigenous children were educated in the mechanisms of low-wage and gendered labour, and attempts were made to assimilate them by denying Indigenous histories and ways of being.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report (2015) remembers how Indigenous families tried to change a system of violence. In a section called Resistance: 'I am the father of this child', Justice Murray Sinclair retells these histories:

Collectively and individually, parents and students did resist the residential school attack on Aboriginal families and communities. On occasion, they won small victories: a child might be discharged; a day school might be built. However, as long as Aboriginal people were excluded from positions of control over their children’s education, the root causes of the conflict remained unresolved. (121)

Children escaped from schools—one of the most common ways to evade the system—supported other children, and created safe spaces in the school; barricading a room to prevent staff from entering, for example (2015, p. 121). Some attempted to burn their schools down. Parents kept children at home, often risking jail time and forsaking one of the only formal education opportunities available, even if they wanted otherwise (p. 119).
Freire (2000) challenges banking education with problem-posing education, which “[…] involves a constant unveiling of reality […] strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” and “takes the people’s historicity as their starting point” (pp. 81 and 84). Problem-posing education is relevant in this thesis, because it “affirms men and women as being in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality”, valuing individual contributions to collective action (p. 84). Extending outward “[…] people develop the power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world […] come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 83). Further in this thesis, in Chapter 5—Analysis, I will show how one of the participants considers Indigenous creation stories precisely as a way to view the world as a constantly transforming entity, and to understand the roles of individuals within larger systems. Freire’s theory of problem-posing education parallels Vizenor’s theory of survivance, and Simpson’s theory of resurgence, in which the continuation and transformation of Indigenous cultures is a meaningful and necessary way of thinking.

According to McCallum (2014), Indigenous history should “[…] challenge central debates in professional history, including the nature of national narratives and ‘advocacy’ and ‘objectivity’ […] Aboriginal history can and should radically alter the entire course of Canadian history itself” (p. 237). Emma LaRocque (2016) discusses the importance of presenting Indigenous histories in Canadian educational institutions, specifically alluding to economic histories:

[…] there needs to be an acknowledgement that Indigenous cultures were coherent, cohesive, and purposeful […] how First Nation and Métis and Inuit people have lost and continue to lose their lands and resources, and the devastating impact this has had on them. […] how racism is instrumental to colonialism […] and how Canadian society has benefited from all this. (144)

LaRocque (2015) also shares the history and continuing purpose of Native Studies in Canada, an academic discipline she instigated in the 1970s and 1980s: “[…] central to Native Studies is the manifold task of challenging the resettler text and repositioning the place of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian (and international) history and society” (p. 9).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Red Power era, writers Harold Cardinal (1969) and Emma LaRocque (1975) called cultural workers to action. These decades marked periods of immense
and meaningful collective Indigenous resistance, across Turtle Island. Dakota-Anishinabe author Brian Wright-McLeod illustrates the activism of the period in graphic novel *RED POWER* (2011). Cardinal and LaRocque informed readers about the reciprocal dynamics between Indigenous resistance and cultural work; promoting Indigenous-led governance and change, and championing the empowering potential of cultural labour in Indigenous resistance projects, particularly to transcend oppressive structures endorsed through *manifest destiny*, for example.

In *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians*, Cardinal argues that social change must originate within Indigenous communities and organizations, and include cultural labour. Supporting Cardinal’s call for self-determination through cultural work, LaRocque (1975) marks both the oppressive and empowering educative functions of culture. In *Defeathering the Indian*, she advocates for supportive and productive educational systems for children and youth, rooted in the results of cultural labour: “Beyond people, there are books, poems, and works of music and art created by Native people. These things should also be used as resource materials” (p. 14). LaRocque argues the importance of learning about histories of Indigenous resistance in order to inform collective identities in the present and for the future; “Native people must define themselves”, she writes (p. 13). Forty years later, she reflects on her experiences participating and learning through Indigenous resistance movements:

> Our presence in the culture and politics of Canada can no longer be dismissed or ignored. We are always surfacing. And what may be called ‘resurgence’ today is actually a continuation of Indigenous resistance and resilience. Take the 1970s. How well I remember reading Harold Cardinal’s book *The Unjust Society* (1969) as a university student. It had a revolutionary effect on me. As did the many protests held by various Native (both First Nations and Métis) communities in northern Alberta. In that era, I witnessed and was part of the political awakening of Aboriginal peoples across Canada. (2015, p. 18)

Resurgence exists “[...] because of previous generations who refused to give up, who believe in the value of who they were/are, and who took their aspirations to the streets, to the courts, and to the cameras for all Canadians to see” (2015, p. 18). Reflecting on her own work as an educator, she writes, “Some of us took to schools and scholarship” (p. 18).

Thirty years after LaRocque published *Defeathering the Indian*, scholar and curator Steven Loft (2005) co-edited *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and*
Digital Culture, a valuable collection on Indigenous cultural labour in Canada involving the use of new media. The anthology features a reprint of Maskegon-Iskwew’s seminal essay “Drumbeats to Drumbytes: Globalizing Networked Aboriginal Art”; in it, he reflects on attending the eponymous 1994 gathering at the Banff Centre in Alberta, where Indigenous cultural workers articulated shared principles and visions “for the development of Indigenous networked art production” (Maskegon-Iskwew, 1994, in 2005, p. 208).

These articulations included “a commitment to honouring the diversity of perspectives, stories, and experiences of Aboriginal peoples” (Maskegon-Iskwew, 1994, in 2005, p. 208). Continuing, Maskegon-Iskwew writes, “[…] To govern ourselves means to govern our stories and our way of telling stories […] We can determine our use of the new technologies to support, strengthen and enrich our cultural communities” (p. 208). Maskegon-Iskwew links hope, determination and possibility with ongoing and historical action: “Indigenous digital artists around the world […] provide important contributions to interdisciplinary and cross-community dialogues about cultural self-determination […] and reveal the creative drive that is at the heart of Indigenous survival” (p 191).

For Maskegon-Iskwew (2005), enacting networked art “requires a commitment to persist in the too often one-way process of cultural and etymological translations between colonized and colonizer…” (p. 208). He points out how persisting colonizer-colonized systems of culture, society, politics, and economics do not dissipate into a neutral and inclusive online landscape. Rather, “[t]he development of digital networks and new media production has been accompanied by the sometimes controversial, divisive, and often globalizing dominance of contemporary culture” (Maskegon-Iskwew, p. 192), and, citing Kali Tal, “these constructs spread their cultural ‘neutron bombs’ and ‘nerve gases’ into the online arts realm” (Tal, 1996 in Maskegon-Iskwew, p. 195). However, exploring the empowering facilitations of online spaces: “[…] their openness and flexibility has also encouraged autonomous spaces and recognition for self-determined, culturally distinct and diverse sources of creativity, exchange, and community building” (p. 192). Similar to L’Hirondelle’s narrative of the chronology of networked communication in Indigenous community histories, Maskegon-Iskwew explores the potential
for resistance online: “Networked art practice is becoming a crucial framework for the emerging recognition and empowerment of Indigenous cultures around the globe” (p. 192).

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter briefly addresses six ways of thinking about the role of cultural labour in Indigenous resistance. Rather than representing a static list of characteristics, the six sections—Indigenous projects of self-determination, nonviolent action, resurgence, survivance, challenging manifest manners, and transformation—show how cultural workers continually negotiate multiple facets of giving. In the following chapter on methods, I detail how I developed a plan to ask cultural workers how they think about different aspects of their labour, including community work, activism, teaching, and other roles.
CHAPTER 4  METHODS

4.1  OVERVIEW

This chapter explains the study’s design and implementation in three parts: planning ethical research, choosing a field, and selecting data. Data preparation, coding, interpretation and the writing process are detailed in Chapter 5—Analysis.

4.2  ETHICAL LEARNING, RESEARCH, AND WRITING

4.2.1  Theories of Ethical Research

Smith (1999; 2012) provides a theoretical foundation that can be applied when considering the ethics of research design in her seminal book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. As described in Chapter 3—Theoretical Framework, Gerald Vizenor (1994) attends to the histories of colonialism in academic institutions. Smith (2012) further explains how academic research has been complicit in colonial projects, consumed with “defining legitimate knowledge” (p. 191). Keeping her observations in mind, it is worthwhile to note the limitations of this thesis, due to its brief scope and length, and my position as a non-Indigenous researcher studying Indigenous resistance. With the purpose outlined in Chapter 1, this study makes no attempt to build defined or exhaustive knowledge. However, Smith (1999) reminds readers that

> Researchers are in receipt of privilege [sic] information [...] They have the power to distort, to make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions, based not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgements, and often downright misunderstandings. They have the potential to extend knowledge or to perpetuate ignorance. (p. 176)

This short study is not immune from these practices, as it involves selecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. However, by selecting literature by authors who identify as Indigenous and engage with themes of resistance, memory, and cultural labour, and considering very closely the kind of language they use and, subsequently, the language I choose to apply, I strove to challenge the inevitability of the argument presented above, while acknowledging project limitations.
4.2.2 The Ethics of Access

From the beginning, I planned a multi-methods approach, analyzing both pre-existing materials and transcripts of interviews conducted as part of the project. Before contacting any potential participants, I earned approval from the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Board (REB). Sourcing pre-existing materials mainly from online spaces in the early phases of data collection, I did not obtain consent from authors or the REB to enter these spaces or to cite from the work produced and published. I also did not ask for permission to cite from other published works, including books and articles. While these omissions are common scholarly conventions, it is important to acknowledge how university ethics procedures prescribe very specific parameters for circumstances or use of materials requiring ethical approval.

4.2.3 Participant Interactions: Communicating, Interviewing, Following-Up

I contacted five potential participants via email, inviting them to contribute to the thesis by taking part in an interview. I chose electronic communication as the primary method of recruitment, as all five potential participants maintain a professional online presence, providing contact information publicly on portfolios, blogs, or affiliated websites, such as the Canada Council for the Arts. I briefly summarized the purpose of the study and how information shared in the interview would be incorporated into the final paper. Introductory emails (please see Appendix A) included specific information about a potential participant’s public projects and how their work has been meaningful in the learning process.

All five responded with interest and enthusiasm. In February of 2015, two participants confirmed their interest in contributing. Interviews were conducted in May of 2015, via online video call, as per participants’ requests. In the fall of 2015, when renewing ethics approval, I indicated the study status as final analysis in progress. However, after carefully considering the dynamic between analyses of pre-existing documents (14 in total) and interviews (2 in total), an imbalance between the two groups emerged as a notable research gap; recruiting additional participants addressed the need for another voice to respond directly to questions. In the spring of 2016, I therefore reached out again to two participants I had connected with in the first round of recruitment. Both responded and expressed their interest in contributing. One
participant confirmed, and the interview took place in April of 2016. In sum, three interviews occurred.

Throughout our early electronic communication, participants were encouraged to contact me at any time, via telephone or email, and ask any questions or express concerns. I provided electronic copies of the Participant Information and Consent Form (see Appendix B), detailing the consent process and further information about the use and storage of information. Signing and returning the form, participants demonstrated understanding about their roles in the research process, and their consent to the following: voluntary participation, withdrawal from the research process at any time, request to have any information provided during the research process removed and destroyed, audio recording by the researcher, and attributed quotations in the final paper.

Approaching participants as experts in their field, I chose semi-structured interviewing to allow for some flexibility and ease in our conversations. Informed by Braun and Clarke’s (2013) definition, I understood qualitative interviewing to be “[…] a ‘professional conversation’, with the goal of getting a participant to talk about their experiences and perspectives, and to capture their language and concepts, in relation to a topic that you [the researcher] have determined” (p. 78). This reciprocal vision of research reflects the study’s aims: to make a concerted effort to learn terminologies specific to the text under analysis, to acknowledge the limitations of my authority, and ultimately develop and articulate one perspective on the contributions of Indigenous cultural labour to resistance in Canada. I asked participants a series of questions about professional activities and community involvement, rooting questions in specific examples from each person’s work. Appendix C provides the Interview Guide. Each interview resulted in approximately one hour of recorded material.

I provided participants with an electronic transcript of the interview within one week of our conversations, and invited comments, requests for omissions, and corrections. One participant responded regarding the spelling of a name, and the final transcript reflects the change. Two participants requested, during the interview, for selected material to remain privileged. I honoured these requests, excluding the information from the final transcript, indicating the omission within the given time frame. Providing participants with transcripts demonstrated that
all requests were honoured. I also sent examples showing how I planned to edit quotations for use in the final thesis. Planning minimal manipulation, I removed fillers, repeated words, and false starts. However, these are nonetheless modifications. One participant requested copies of the exact quotations used in the final thesis, in advance of the study’s close. I provided all three participants with a complete draft of the thesis in advance of its submission to the University of Toronto, and invited participants to my defense.

It is worthwhile to note the communication listed above marks the extent of participant involvement in the production of the thesis. Participants were selected for their expertise and knowledge in a chosen field, but they were not consulted while I prepared the interview guide, asked to give input on the theoretical framework or to select scholarship, or invited to approve the themes drawn out during the analysis phase.

4.3 THE FIELD

Networks drove the project’s initial objectives in the fall of 2014. Using the term as Maskegon-Iskwew and Smith present it—distinct Indigenous projects connecting communities through flows of information—I was keen to learn about four tied spheres of work: Indigenous new media art, communities facilitating this cultural production in Canada, connections to Indigenous resistance, and Indigenous new media art histories. I searched primarily for writing by Indigenous cultural workers on these topics. Initially, I explored work produced by Indigenous cultural works and shared online, considering intersections between art, activism, and technology. Sourcing web-based primary documents to begin understanding shared routes and connections, I designed subsequent interviews in order to gauge the perspectives of leading Indigenous cultural workers.

Artist, curator and thinker Ahasiwi Maskegon-Iskwew’s theory of networks aligned with my interest in studying multi-part cycles of production: influence, production, and reception. These cycles are significant, because they shift and transform “the locus of analysis from the psychology of the oppressor to the experiences of the oppressed” and make a “new paradigm of knowledge” (Rickard, 2013, p. 57). Networks of people, spaces and projects support and influence Indigenous cultural labour in Canada. Examples include curators Steven Loft and
Tania Willard, the Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery in Winnipeg, and the annual ImagiNATIVE film festival in Toronto. The results of cultural labour emerge in the form of completed works. Users and audiences access and review texts through secondary materials such as interviews and articles.

Indigenous artist-run centres are notable networks of influence, production, and reception. Urban Shaman, established in 1996, exhibits and discusses contemporary Indigenous art by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultural workers in Canada. Online projects include the institutional website (urbanshaman.org), an exhibit (stormspirits.org) and a journal of contemporary Indigenous arts and aesthetics, which ran from 2005-2008 (conundrum.ca).

Maskegon-Iskwew was involved in numerous web-based Urban Shaman projects, as well as initiatives with other Indigenous artist-run centres. He co-founded the Sâkèwewak First Nations Artists’ Collective Inc. in Regina in 1991. Maskegon-Iskwew’s early online projects include Ayapihkesak (Speaking the Language of Spiders), to which one of the study participants, Cheryl L’Hirondelle, contributed. Other contemporary web projects in the early to mid-1990s include Inherent Rights, Vision Rights by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptan, and In-X-Isle by Edward Poitras, hosted by the Soil Digital Media Suite at the Neutral Ground Artist-Run Centre and Gallery in Regina. In 2001, Live from the Tundra streamed “sights and sounds from a Baffin Island outpost camp”. The trilingual initiative—English, French, and Inuktitut—“offers fresh content daily over a five-day period comprised of a journal, photos, video, and audio clips. Site visitors can also interact with participants at the outpost camp via a chat forum.” In his essay “Drumbeats to Drumbytes: Globalizing Networked Aboriginal Art”, Maskegon-Iskwew discusses its significance, as “[...] perhaps one of the most stirring and inspiring projects I have yet seen” (2005, p. 214).

Indigenous cultural workers continue to build immense cyber landscapes with art, essays, exhibitions, interviews, blogs, and more. Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace—a group of artists, scholars and technologists based in Montreal—acknowledge arts collective Nation2Nation as their “direct ancestor” in this work (“Projects”, AbTec website).

Founded in 1994, Nation2Nation emerged from the collective efforts of Skawennati, Ryan Rice, and Eric Robertson. The name comes from Iroquois teachings about the Kahswenthà Two Row
Wampum, a treaty embodying “respect for a peoples’ customs as one nation to another” (“Nation2Nation” website); continuing, they explain, “We use the phrase [Nation2Nation] to express the idea of dialogue between people” (“Nation2Nation” website). The collective created exhibitions, organized performance-based events, and facilitated workshops. In the mid-1990s, the group instigated a series of web-based projects called CyberPowWow, a virtual safe-space inviting Indigenous and some non-Indigenous artists to contribute web-based art and writing. CyberPowWow was an online community chat space; visitors logged into The Palace software, and explored rooms of art and writing created by Indigenous artists specifically for the project. At four mixed reality events, artists were virtually present to discuss their work; gathering sites were set up at galleries and art centres for participants to meet one another, and log on. CyberPowWow remains as a web archive, with a library of text-based works, and a gallery of selected visual works.

Exhibitions—meeting spaces in the cycles of influence, production, and reception—provide useful structures in which to explore research questions. I looked to recent initiatives, including Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture (2008-2014), Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art. (2013) and Decolonize Me (2011-2014). Beat Nation was the first sampling site, selected for several reasons. First, it began as a web-based project in 2008, illustrating Maskegon-Iskwew’s theory of Indigenous art networks. Second, it was organized by Indigenous curators and artists Skeena Reece and Tania Willard. Third, it toured the country as a travelling exhibition, enabling workshops, performance, and other public events that engaged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. Fourth, it was interdisciplinary, featuring works of contemporary Indigenous artists remixing various media, and celebrating Indigenous histories and futures, languages, urban life, dance, art, and music. Fifth, it received considerable review and analysis by Indigenous and non-Indigenous web-based news media and online publications, contributing secondary materials to the conversation. Entering the online Beat Nation space, I explored artist statements, project descriptions, biographies, and other materials. I noted references to other exhibitions, artists, publications, and more, and then further explored these routes. An iterative search process thus unfolded.
I chose to ignore many significant and interesting themes that emerged through the discovery process, in order to narrow the scope of the project. For example, I evaded overt techno utopian sentiments or techno skepticism; surface binaries—concerning, for example, traditional and new elements in creative work produced through remixing techniques; and themes of Indigenous specificity, as I could not ethically analyze these works. Ultimately, I chose *Ghost Dance* as a sampling site, because of its small scale, and its focus on the significance of cultural labour within ongoing Indigenous resistance in Canada. Steven Loft also built his curatorial vision around themes of survivance, which connected closely with literature I was reading by Gerald Vizenor, Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, and Cheryl L’Hirondelle.

4.4 DATA SAMPLING AND SELECTION

Prior to this study, I had limited knowledge about Indigenous resistance in Canada, the potential role of Indigenous cultural labour in resistance, or the influence of Indigenous authors quoted in this thesis. Combined with minimal research experience, I chose to carry out a highly iterative project, continually reviewing and reflecting in each phase of learning.

In addition to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and all other literature read during thesis development, two resources on qualitative research methods supported the process: Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke’s *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (2013) and Sarah J. Tracy’s *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (2013). Braun & Clarke (2013) and Tracy (2013) encourage four key considerations when embarking on qualitative research, and I followed these throughout: critical thinking into the meaning and use of *qualitative*, self-reflection on the researcher’s role, serious planning to ensure an ethical and thoughtful research process, and attention to practical concerns in the planning and execution of methods. Offering guidance by way of helpful strategies and comparisons, Braun & Clarke and Tracy root their advice in relevant literature and personal experiences as qualitative researchers; the latter include reflections on failures *and* successes, emphasizing a process of learning, iteration, and improvement.

Throughout data collection, I documented and organized materials: annotating selected texts, bookmarking and filing web-based projects into virtual folders, saving webpages as PDFs, and
printing and filing paper copies. The process resulted in electronic and paper files in three categories: people, projects, and places. Collected materials included statements, catalogues, interview transcripts, blogs, essay, reviews, articles, and more. I coded all files for shared terminology and themes, such as community or collaborate, preparing for initial analysis.

In order to develop a working list of potential research participants, I combined two sampling methods: “purposeful” (Tracy, 2013) and “criterion” based (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involves “…choosing data that fit the parameters of the project’s research questions, goals, and purposes” (Tracy, 2013, p. 134) and criterion sampling focuses on “review[ing] and study[ing] all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2002, p. 238).

I developed the following criteria for selecting and recruiting potential research participants:

2. Through their work, attends to issues (self-determined to be) relevant to Indigenous communities in Canada.
3. Communicates an Indigenous identity in the context of this work; for example, through an artist statement.
4. Performs numerous roles, such as artist, teacher, curator, community organizer.

Table 1 and Table 2 introduce the participants who contributed to the study, and list all materials selected for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Biography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skawennati</td>
<td>Skawennati is a Mohawk artist and curator from Kahnawake, Quebec, who lives and works in Montreal. She co-directs Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC), a network of technologists, artists, and academics who consider and create Aboriginally-determined futures and virtual spaces, through video game projects, workshops, lectures, and writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl L'Hirondelle</td>
<td>L'Hirondelle is a Métis/Cree singer-songwriter, net.artist, writer, teacher, consultant, and programmer. Her creative practice explores intersections between Cree world views (nehiyawin) and contemporary time and space. She has worked in spaces including the Canadian independent music industry, Indigenous artist-run centres, education institutions, the Canadian prison system, First Nations bands, tribal councils, and governmental funding agencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steven Loft

Loft is a Mohawk of the Six Nations with Jewish heritage. He is a curator, scholar, writer, and media artist. He is a Trudeau Fellow, and completed a visiting fellowship at Ryerson University in 2013. He has served as curator-in-residence of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Canada, and director of the Urban Shaman Gallery in Winnipeg. He co-edited two anthologies of Indigenous new media art, in 2005 and 2014.

Table 1. Introducing the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[Interview A]</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
<td>Skawennati and Eva Athanasiu</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Interview B]</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
<td>Cheryl L’Hirondelle and Eva Athanasiu</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[Interview C]</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
<td>Steven Loft and Eva Athanasiu</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indigenous Futurisms mixtape</td>
<td>Online MP3 playlist</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>TimeTraveller™</td>
<td>Machinima web series (9 episodes)</td>
<td>Skawennati</td>
<td>2008–2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Why I Love WWWriting</td>
<td>Personal narrative essay</td>
<td>Skawennati</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>uronndnland (wapahta óma iskonikan askiy)</td>
<td>Land art intervention</td>
<td>Cheryl L’Hirondelle</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land)</td>
<td>Web-based audiovisual project</td>
<td>Cheryl L’Hirondelle</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>TELL: Aboriginal Story in Digital Media</td>
<td>HorizonZero Issue 17 eZine</td>
<td>Cheryl L’Hirondelle and Candice Hopkins</td>
<td>September/October 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Type/Description</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Interventions on the Imaginary</em></td>
<td>12 digital Indigenous interventions on Euro-Canadian paintings</td>
<td>Sonny Assu</td>
<td>2014-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Construction of the Imaginary Indian</em></td>
<td>Personal narrative essay</td>
<td>Marcia Crosby</td>
<td>1991; republished 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Ghost Dance</em></td>
<td>Curatorial statement</td>
<td>Steven Loft</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><em>My Post-Indian Technological Autobiography</em></td>
<td>Personal narrative essay</td>
<td>Jackson 2Bears</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>Heritage Mythologies: O Kanata Day</em></td>
<td>Live video remix</td>
<td>Jackson 2Bears</td>
<td>2015; performed 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>Cyberskins: Live and Interactive</em></td>
<td>Personal narrative essay</td>
<td>Buffy Sainte-Marie</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. *Introducing Materials Selected For Analysis*

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I detailed how I implemented a research process designed to be respectful of Indigenous communities, the participants involved in the project, and the authors of pre-existing selected texts, by carefully considering the selection of language, the subsequent use and placement of words, cited literature, and the project’s purpose and intentions. I also explained how I chose a field for research, and created criteria for data selection and collection. I discussed the path taken to arrive at the final group of materials, and introduced each with a brief description.
CHAPTER 5  ANALYSIS

5.1  OVERVIEW

This chapter brings together the materials I selected for analysis—interview transcripts and pre-existing objects—by considering shared themes. First, I summarize the content and context of each object. Following, I explain how methods of data preparation and coding supported a thematic analysis. I also describe how I constructed a three-part narrative and simple visual model, to organize and communicate three themes: contribute, gather, proclaim. Themes are organized around the energy and labour required for cultural work. An overview precedes further study of each practice. Throughout, I use the first names of project participants, first to differentiate their direct involvement in this thesis, from the quotations selected from pre-existing secondary sources, and second, to better reflect the immediacy and intimacy of the interviewing process. I close the chapter with a brief reflection on the findings.

5.2  OBJECT SUMMARIES: CONTENT AND CONTEXT

Tables 1 and 2 introduced the participants and objects selected for analysis, including titles, media, author names, and dates of production or publication. Table 3 provides further details on the selected objects, briefly addressing content and context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title.</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[Interview A]</td>
<td><em>Interview A: Skawennati and Eva Athanasiu</em> occurred in two parts, on May 20 and 26, 2015, via Skype. Each conversation lasted approximately 45 minutes, with 60 minutes total recorded material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Interview B]</td>
<td><em>Interview B: Cheryl L’Hirondelle and Eva Athanasiu</em> was conducted on May 25, 2015 via Skype. The conversation lasted approximately 90 minutes, with 65 minutes of recorded material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[Interview C]</td>
<td><em>Interview C: Steven Loft and Eva Athanasiu</em> was conducted on April 12, 2016 via Skype. The conversation lasted approximately 60 minutes, with 45 minutes of recorded material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5  **Indigenous Futurisms mixtape**  
Produced in collaboration with issue 8 of kimiwan 'zine, Lindsey Catherine Cornum and Jarrett Martineau created the *Indigenous Futurisms* mixtape, distributing via Revolutions Per Minute, an online platform and project committed to sharing contemporary music by Indigenous peoples worldwide. The mixtape includes excerpts from the zine read aloud by their authors, recordings from NASA sound archives, music by Indigenous artists, and samples from AfroFuturist influences and inspirations including SunRa and King Britt.

In addition to the mixtape, a text-based introduction to the project, shared on the RPM.fm website, has also been selected. I quote the following contributors: Elizabeth LaPensée, Waziyatawin and Legends & Lyrics, and Jason Edward Lewis, in addition to referencing particular moments in the mix.

6  **TimeTraveller™**  
Collaborating with Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, Skawennati created machinima web series *TimeTraveller™* in the Second Life platform. The nine-episode story introduces viewers to Hunter, a young Mohawk man living in Montreal in 2121, longing to connect with his heritage and history. Hunter travels back in time using edutainment software *TimeTraveller™*, visiting significant Indigenous historical events, including the 1862 Dakota Sioux Uprising and the 1990 Mohawk Crisis. During his travels, he meets Karahkwenhawi, a young Mohawk woman living in Kahnawake during the early 2010s, eager to learn about the paths travelled by Indigenous peoples. Together they explore histories, and create their own future.

7  **Why I Love WWWriting**  
In *Why I love WWWriting*—online essay and statement for her first CyberPowWow project in 1997—Skawennati considers distinct Indigenous histories of technology, and the use and transformation of new technologies by Indigenous peoples.

8  **uronndnland (wapahta ôma iskonikan askiy)**  
*uronndnland (wapahta ôma iskonikan askiy)* by Cheryl L'Hirondelle is a land art intervention, included (through photographic documentation) in *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture*. Photos show L'Hirondelle arranging stones on a shoulder of the TransCanada highway, running through the Stoney Nation reserve in Alberta. The formation reads "wapahta oma iskonikan askiy", meaning "look at this leftover land" (project statement). Using the language of the Stoney
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land)</th>
<th>nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land) is a web-based sound mapping project. L’Hirondelle reimagines Vancouver’s downtown, by sounding out the landscape in Cree, tagging the space with nêhiyawêwin words. Recording herself singing and talking as she walked through the city, L’Hirondelle also captured surrounding sounds; for example, she paid city residents living on the street, to contribute or listen to her performances. The project currently exists as a participatory site and database. Audio clips are organized into 16 categories (one for each Cree tipi pole teaching, including respect, kinship, and faith) and ambient sounds are represented through the animation of a glowing flame. Visitors can listen to different sounds and arrange their own remix, using the Cree language to build a shelter and warming fire.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>TELL: Aboriginal Story in Digital Media</td>
<td>Storytellers and artists explore intersections and interactions between Indigenous storytelling and new technologies in eZine TELL: Aboriginal Story in Digital Media. Between 2002 and 2010, in collaboration with Culture.ca Gateway for Canadian culture, the Banff New Media Centre produced eZine HorizonZero, focusing on Canadian digital art and culture. TELL, one of 19 issues, is available for viewing online as a text-based eZine and as a multimedia Flash-based project. Of the project’s numerous contributors, I refer to Guest Creative Director Cheryl L’Hirondelle and contributor Candice Hopkins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Interventions on the Imaginary</td>
<td>An ongoing initiative by Sonny Assu, Interventions on the Imaginary features digital visual interventions—Northwest Coast formline symbolism (ovoids, u-shapes, and s-shapes)—into Euro-Canadian representations of Northwest Coast peoples’ landscapes, including works by Emily Carr and Paul Kane. Assu shares his project through an online gallery on the Flickr platform, and an Instagram account, @decolonialgram.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Construction of the Imaginary Indian</td>
<td>In his statement for Interventions on the Imaginary, Assu explains how he adapted the title from Marcia Crosby’s essay Construction of the Imaginary Indian, first published in 1991. Crosby reflects on her experiences as a student of art history, fine art, and English literature in the late 1980s. She challenges non-Indigenous representations of Indigenous histories and cultures, and academic institutions’ “Imaginary Indians”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ghost Dance: Curatorial</td>
<td>In addition to the interview transcript, I also analyzed Steven Loft’s brief curatorial statement for Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art. In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>it, Loft details the purpose for the exhibition, the theoretical premise, and addresses the role of cultural workers in resistance.</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>My Post-Indian Technological Autobiography</strong></td>
<td>In his personal essay, new media artist and scholar Jackson 2Bears reflects on the role of education in promoting and transmitting harmful representation of Indigenous peoples, absenting Indigenous experiences. He cites Gerald Vizenor’s theory of <em>Manifest Manners</em>, in which cultural simulations erase and replace Indigenous peoples. 2Bears considers how his work interrogates media archives by exposing, transforming, and releasing colonial simulations that continue to “haunt” Indigenous peoples. Through live video performance—interacting with audiences—he creates presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Heritage Mythologies: O Kanata Day</strong></td>
<td>2Bears created <em>Heritage Mythologies: O Kanata Day</em> in 2010, re-releasing the project on his Vimeo channel on July 1, 2015. In the 10-minute work, he critiques the cultural slew of Canadian national identity—including origin myths, songs, colours, and cultural institutions—juxtaposing those elements with images of Indigenous resistance, such as protests against the 2010 Winter Olympics on unceded Coast Salish Territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Iron Tomahawks 2014</strong></td>
<td><em>Iron Tomahawks 2014</em> is a 90-minute video shared in three parts by 2Bears on his Vimeo channel. The videos feature simulations of Indigenous peoples in cinema and television, including reductive portrayals of Indigenous leaders. 2Bears challenges absence with presence, with excerpts from music videos by Indigenous hip hop and rap artists, scenes of Indigenous resistance and protest in Canada, and footage showing leaders in the American Indian movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><strong>Cyberskins: Live and Interactive</strong></td>
<td>In her personal essay <em>Cyberskins: Live and Interactive</em>, Buffy Sainte-Marie reflects on her experiences at the Banff Centre’s 1994 <em>Drumbeats to Drumbytes</em> think-tank, where Indigenous artists gathered to discuss connections between Indigeneity, art, and technology. Sainte-Marie—artist, singer-songwriter, activist—emphasizes the presence of Indigenous peoples, both in their use of new technologies and engagement in educational and cultural work, continually informed by different Indigenous perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. *Descriptions of Materials Selected for Analysis*
5.3 PERFORMING ANALYSIS: PREPARING DATA AND INITIAL THEMATIC CODING

5.3.1 Preparing Data for Analysis

In order to arrange the selected materials for analysis, I assembled text-based copies or adaptations. For example, I printed Skawennati’s online personal narrative essay *Why I Love Writing* directly from the CyberPowWow website and photocopied Cheryl L’Hirondelle’s project statement for her land art intervention *uronoondnland (wapahta ôma iskonikan askiy)* from the exhibition catalogue for Vancouver Art Gallery’s exhibition *Beat Nation*.

For several of the projects based in audio-visual media, I constructed text-based supplements. For example, I transcribed conversations with project participants: Skawennati, Cheryl L’Hirondelle, and Steven Loft. Further details on research involving materials produced with participants were discussed in the previous chapter, section 4.2—Ethical Learning, Research, and Writing. I also transcribed the nine episodes in Skawennati’s machinima web series *TimeTraveller™* and noted themes and imagery. I used a similar method with the audio-based *Indigenous Futurisms Mixtape*, and Jackson 2Bears’ live remix videos *Iron Tomahawks* and *Heritage Mythologies*. In sum, over 200 pages of material, including text-based supplements, were assembled for analysis.

5.3.2 Thematic Manual Coding

The methods described above—resulting in physical text-based adaptations of each object—facilitated manual coding. According to Tracy (2013), manual coding is “especially valuable among those new to qualitative analysis and for anyone who is attracted to touching the data physically and seeing it” (p. 187). Tracy’s emphasis on the benefits of tactility reflected my interest in looking at, organizing, and physically connecting data together for learning, comparing, and considering. During brainstorming activities—collages, idea networks, and other visual mapping techniques—Tracy’s explanation particularly applied to my limited experience in academic research.

I applied two types of thematic analysis: inductive and theoretical. Themes emerging in the data inform inductive analysis, and themes sourced from theories presented in Chapters 2 and 3
inform theoretical analysis. Applying inductive and theoretical analysis creates multiple layers of meaning: productive tension between perspectives introduced in each work selected for analysis, and the arguments learned by reading different works of literature. Subsequently, the coding framework paralleled Jennifer Attride-Stirling’s (2001) definition for thematic analysis; she too encompasses the potential for integrating two approaches, “[...] on the basis of the theoretical interests guiding the research questions, on the basis of salient issues that arise in the text itself, or on the basis of both” (p. 390).

I also used Tracy’s (2013) suggested technique of primary, secondary, and advanced cycles of coding, which encourages reiterating, revising, and refining throughout phases of theory development, data collection, and analysis, in order to build a meaningful story.

The coding process involves tagging each object with numerous short codes (single words or short phrases). Figure 1 shows examples of initial coding, including tagging and text-based supplements. As mentioned above, I marked each supplement, using the hashtag or pound key symbol. Choosing codes involved enmeshing both the perspectives expressed in each piece of data, and themes presented in the guiding literatures. After initial coding, I gathered tagged quotations, images, and marginalia together, cutting and pasting into themed groups. This process reduced 200 pages of material to approximately 75. Coding supported the growth of a flexible thematic narrative; open to changes, challenges, and contradictions.
5.4 WRITING THE ANALYSIS: ORGANIZING AND UNDERSTANDING THEMES

Structuring relationships between initial codes and final themes, I organized all tags into flexible “thematic networks”; simple visualization models suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001) to address “the need for tools in qualitative analysis”, particularly in the context of thematic analyses (p. 385). According to Attride-Stirling, thematic analyses “seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (p. 387). Following initial phases of primary, secondary, and advanced coding, five practices emerged: tell, create, transform, educate, and contribute.

Figures 2a and 2b show two examples of the five initial thematic networks, produced following the first iteration of primary, secondary, and tertiary coding. Adapting Attride-Stirling’s terminology, I created the visual metaphor of a tree, in order to structure growth and
connections between each level of coding. Attride-Stirling distinguishes between global themes, (reworked in Figures 2a and 2b as roots), organizational themes (represented by branches), and basic themes (phase three, the leaves). According to Attride-Stirling, global themes are simply articulated themes; organizational themes structure global themes into multiple categories; and basic themes outline specific elements within these categories. Basic themes are most closely related to the initial selection and application of primary codes.

The visualization in Figures 2a and 2b structures the coding process in reverse chronological order to Attride-Stirling’s three part system, growing from roots to leaves, instead of basic themes to global themes.

![Visualizations of coding process](image)

Figures 2a and 2b. Initial phases of primary, secondary, and tertiary coding

After subsequent iterations, five practices changed into three: tell became proclaim, to include both telling and claiming; create, transform, and educate merged into contribute; and gather remained in place, addressing connections between people, ideas, and larger projects of Indigenous resistance. Contribute, gather, and proclaim work together to support continuation and transformation. First introduced in Chapter 3, Gerald Vizenor’s survivance embodies the project of continuation and transformation. Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, and Taiaiake Alfred provide a parallel way of thinking through their writing on resurgence.

Emerging at the interplay between inductive and theoretical analysis, the resulting three-part narrative—anchored by Cheryl’s story of the roots of Indigenous cultural labour in Canada—represents only part of the complex and varied thematic threads I learned by performing data
selection, organization, and analysis. The central argument focuses on the contributions of cultural labour; I coded the final themes as verbs, showing how cultural labour actively supports both the process and the representation of continuing and transforming. The initial divides are intended to provide space and attention to noteworthy facets in the range of work performed by each interview participant, and the varying outputs of expression studied in each selected object. Further analysis shows how the practices of proclaiming, contributing, and gathering overlap and intersect to form a whole.

Simplifying the visualization first shown in Figures 2a and 2b, I chose to imagine the themed narrative in the form of two tree rings, shown from above in a cross-section plan (Figure 3). The central ring represents output of Indigenous cultural labour, selected and studied in this project. The outer three-part ring represents the public practices of this labour: proclaiming, contributing, gathering. The relationships between the three practices form a whole project of continuation and transformation, to which other activities can always be added.

Figure 3. Final visualization, representing tree cross-section, viewed from above
5.5 CONTRIBUTE

5.5.1 Overview

During our conversations, I asked Cheryl, Steven and Skawennati if they saw themselves as particularly strong givers in activism, education, or community. I also invited them to self-define all three terms. Generously, they shared their perspectives and experiences. In this section, I note language used by each participant, and in each pre-existing text, which evokes unique methods of contributing. I choose the term contribute, because it suggests a diverse array of giving; making art, curating, lecturing, activism, teaching, volunteering. Through these initiatives, cultural workers contribute time and labour, projects and perspectives to different Indigenous communities in Canada, strengthening resistance.

It is worthwhile to note that participants spoke about numerous ways of giving: calling cultural workers to action, and reaching beyond to other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada. They considered how their work can be meaningful today, and expressed the challenges and hopes of creating legacy. Early in our discussion, Steven drew attention to Indigenous ways of thinking about giving. He cautioned against settling into non-Indigenous theories that “separate these things out, ‘this is teaching’, ‘this is making art’, ‘this is governance’ […] those kind of taxonomies of what roles and responsibilities are”. Advocating for recognition of the overlap between methods of contributing, Steven’s words influence how I structure this chapter, addressing shared facets of giving: unique and personal manifestations, places and spaces of context, legacies of knowledge, roles and responsibilities, and challenges.

5.5.2 Contribute: Personal Experiences

When I asked Cheryl if the term activism resonated in her professional practice, she hesitated to refer to her own work as, what she called “capital-a Activism”, associating that project with formal involvement in parties or movements, and commitment to “political rigour”. She then qualified the definition by focusing on her primary purpose: “[…] I consider myself an activist in that there’s a lot of things I want to endorse, and there’s a lot of voices that have been left out of the picture that I want to make sure are there.” For Cheryl, activism involves pushing forward marginalized voices. She explained that she is particularly engaged by activism informed by
Indigenous perspectives, often embodied through the use of Indigenous languages. She described how her own activism is “[...] so deeply rooted in the worldview and the teaching, and trying to do what I think is right.” For Cheryl, activism involves connecting with and professing ways of knowing and ways of speaking that have carried previous generations into the present. Further in the thesis, I detail how she connects doing right with Indigenous ways of thinking about the future.

Cheryl talked about connecting with Indigenous resistance in Canada, through the proclamations of female leadership. “I listened to the first videoed teach-ins that happened in Alberta”, she explained, “with the four women from Saskatchewan, plus Tanya Kappo from Alberta and Pam Palmater [...] Sylvia [McAdam] from the Idle No More Movement was talking about this old word, which I’ve heard in Cree [...] okihcitâw iskwêwak [...]” Cheryl taught me the fullness of the phrase cannot be fully realized in English, but explained why the uttering okihcitâw iskwêwak is so important to her: “[...] She [McAdam] was talking about resurgence [...] I got really excited because I knew that word, and I knew what she was talking about, and the history she presented around it.” Cheryl recognized, remembered, and understood. These are three phases of connection constituting the kind of activism she wants to be a part of: emerging “from a really deep place”, and making itself known through language. Indigenous proclamations of resurgence informed Cheryl’s point of belonging.

Steven did not see himself as an activist, deferring to and separating his work from “certain artists, community agitators, warriors within our communities.” Continuing, he explained how “the authors of change” include artists and community members who teach Indigenous languages to young people, who advocate for prison reform; “That’s a much different practice than what I do”. In this quotation, Steven differentiates himself from people he perceives to fulfill the role of activist, and provides examples of individuals who fit the criteria. However, he also discussed the limitations of contributing, and the importance of respecting different ways of giving: “[...] I can acknowledge how important their role is, because we can’t all do it. We don’t all do that.”

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Skawennati identified closely with the term activism, framing her relationship in terms of continuity. She presented her relationship with the practice as an early sense of self, an important facet of her youth and growth, connected with the need to fulfill a purpose: “I’ve been an activist since I was really quite young. It’s just sort of something I was born doing”. In addition to creating art, Skawennati detailed the many ways she contributes, including organizing Indigenous education programming for her children’s schoolmates, and connecting this work to larger systems of Indigenous resistance in Canada: “I’ve got these different things I’m doing that I think I should be doing [...] I saw this need at my kids’ school [...] I’m seeing Idle No More, and I’m seeing these horrible comments that people are writing, and it’s from such ignorance. It starts at childhood, in elementary school. We need to start getting people aware, and so I did that, and I feel that is activism”. Skawennati emphasized the work that lies ahead; “There’s so much to do”, she repeated to me twice over the course of our conversations. Further in this thesis, I explore the challenges of contributing, including the time and energy involved.

In her essay on speculative fiction for kimiwan ‘zine, Ambelin Kwaymullina (2014) writes about the importance of remembering all contributions: “One of the lessons taught to me by the lives of my ancestors is that defiance can be a series of small, secret acts rather than a single grand gesture” (p. 34). The issue’s Guest Editor Elizabeth LaPensée illustrates how the smallest component of Indigenous cultural work supports the continuation of Indigenous perspectives, “shift[ing] perspectives and reinforc[ing] ours” (p. 21). “As we root ourselves to grow into this future”, she writes, “every game we make, every design we sketch, every conversation we have contributes to what has been unfolding since time immemorial” (p. 21).

LaPensée addresses the purpose of the magazine’s theme and title, Indigenous Futurisms: to shine a light on “[...] what is/was/has always been underway” (p. 3). Using the forward slash symbol, LaPensée suggests interchangeable mutations between each form of existence: past, present, future. Listing numerous influential people and projects to illustrate her point—curator and writer Candice Hopkins, initiatives by collective Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace and Skawennati, the song writing and activism of Buffy Sainte Marie, and publications including Coded Territories—LaPensée shows how Indigenous cultural workers “reaffirm ourselves and walk paths of biskaabiiyang, returning to ourselves” (p. 3). I first introduced the
Anishinaabemowin word into the paper in Sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the Theoretical Framework, drawing from the work of Grace Dillon, Leanne Simpson, and Linda Tuhwai Smith. These authors emphasize how biskaabiiyang involves both moving forward and pulling from the past, in a continuous cycle; returning to ourselves.

In Episode 3 of Skawennati’s machinima web series *Time Traveller™*, the young protagonist Hunter learns about the Mohawk Resistance of 1990, and the contributions of Indigenous cultural workers. Character Lance Thomas teaches Hunter and the group behind the barricades, about the commitment of the man who designed the Mohawk Warrior Flag:

[…] a warrior’s job is to protect the people and the territory. The great artist and thinker Karoniaktajeh Louis Hall, the man who gave us the design for this flag [he gestures to the Warrior Flag, hanging on the Treatment Centre], also wrote about being a warrior. *Think right, so that you shall do right. And be right*, he wrote. *For only the purely justice-minded can achieve peace and happiness for all.*

Thomas encourages the group, “with those 2500 troops facing 50 of us […] to think right.” Thinking right involves “remember[ing] why we are here. We are protecting our territory.” Another character, Elder Mabel McComber, reinforces the continuity of Indigenous resistance, especially efforts to claim and shelter land: “This is not the first time we have to protect these pines.”

Jackson 2Bears and Renee Nejo, who share memories of school systems that denied Indigenous experiences (see Chapter 3), discuss how they counter absence with presence, through their work. Writing for *kimiwan* ’zine, Nejo describes her video game *Blood Quantum* as “my little experiment in educational gaming [...]”. Nejo explains how Blood Quantum refers to an arbitrary quantity of Indigenous blood; a colonial classification system designed to organize and control Indigenous identity. In the game, players interact with characters called Drawplets, supporting their wellbeing to create strong communities. The death of a Drawplet is irreversible, slowing community spirit and development. “I am interested in showing”, she writes, “(even in its smallest measurement) what it feels like to have what you understand and love ripped away from you.” Continuing, she explains, “[t]o anyone who has some knowledge in North American history, you can probably see the parallels. I don’t want to give that information, I want to show
it.” Nejo shows how she sees her work as an opportunity to challenge understandings of North American histories about the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Jackson 2Bears includes footage showing scenes of Indigenous resistance in both Iron Tomahawks and Heritage Mythologies, confronting Indigenous absence in Western genre films, the latter of which he also samples. Juxtaposing Indigenous resistance with non-Indigenous simulation, 2Bears (2014) aims to “[...] deconstruct and mash up these virulent simulations of our peoples that had been sustained within the lexicon of various media archives” (p. 23). In his personal essay My Post-Indian Technological Autobiography, 2Bears (2014) explains how remixing the nursery rhyme Ten Little Indians—which describes and counts down the deaths of ten Indigenous young men—subverts “the disappearance of the ‘Indian’ in the lyrics” into “the (re)appearance of an Indigenous subjectivity that stood against the manifest manners of colonial mythmaking and hauntological legacy of this music” (pp. 21-22). Quoting Vizenor, 2Bears positions his live video remixes and performances to “hover over the simulated and aestheticized by-products of what Vizenor called the manifest manners of domination” (p. 24). Ultimately, 2Bears hopes “[...] to stage a mythopoetic insurrection about our re-appearance as a vital, living, and continuing people” (pp. 23-24).

In her web essay Cyberskins: Live and Interactive, Buffy Sainte-Marie discusses different ways Indigenous activists from the Red Power resistance movements of the 1960s and 70s continued to contribute to their communities: “[...] in Canada we went into every field; but in the United States, where things were far more dangerous, those of us who were not killed, imprisoned, put out of business, or otherwise sacrificed to the uranium industry, went into education.” Sainte-Marie’s quotation echoes Emma LaRocque’s (2015) attention to the role of Indigenous scholarship in universities, and Leanne Simpson’s (2011) imagery for different ways of contributing; both the immense waves, and persistent, subtle ripples in the water.

5.5.3 Contribute: Passing Knowledge Forward

Cheryl and Skawennati both take pride in passing skills and knowledge to younger generations, viewing this work as meaningful and important.
Skawennati addressed the significance of professing Indigenous histories, and engaging others, through her work with arts and technology collective Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace: “We have a rich history. We have many stories and a rich culture, for us to drawn upon. Part of what we want to do is instill pride. One of the reasons we’re not doing very well [...] as peoples, is that we lost our pride.” Discussing her educational programming initiatives with collective Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, Skawennati reflected on experiences organizing and leading video game production workshops, connecting children with Indigenous histories: “By showing these kids, by pairing our rich history—which they don’t necessarily have pride in—with this exciting thing, which is video games [sic], I think they start to get it. I feel I’ve seen that. I’ve heard kids say to me ‘You make me want to learn about my culture.’ And I get goosebumps, it just makes me so happy.” In this quotation, Skawennati illustrates the reciprocal benefits of contributing; the joy in others also brings her joy.

When I asked Cheryl if she sees herself as an educator, she said she never intended her work to be pedagogical, but mused “[...] as I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized that I’ve shifted from wanting to be everybody’s friend, as a point of sharing, to wanting to just share what I know.” In her current phase of work, passing knowledge forward is a meaningful process, and one that shapes the way she questions her own responsibilities and approach to work: “[...] how can I consolidate some of this information, how can I write about it, how can I teach about it? How can I share it and move it on?” In particular, Cheryl wants to help others pass on the legacies of knowledge she has learned, gathered and held on to, and continues to integrate within her work. “If it sticks,” she reflected thoughtfully; if others find resonance in the work, “then I’ll just keep working with it.” For Cheryl, benefit to others is a critical aspect of her work, because that instigator will propel ways of thinking forward that have been meaningful to her. She shared with me how she hopes her work “will be of some merit, benefit, and meaning” and others, so that stories she was told and stories she tells “can continue to be told, by future generations, such as yourself.” Cheryl generously included all young people within the group she hopes will carry stories forward.

Earlier I observed how Steven did not identify as an activist, but that he reflected on the influence activists have on the way he positions the purpose of his own work, which “[...] is
always intertwined with them […] because it’s always been informed by them.” Like Cheryl and Skawennati, Steven describes a reciprocal relationship in which he feels obligated to push forward the work of others, through his own different skill set.

Steven explained how he seeks to inform creative visions for the future with knowledge of past resistance: “I look at it in retrospect, and I’ve tried to make sense of those things, and I try to posit potential futures, based on that.” Understanding trajectories is thus a highly important facet of his work, one that guides his desire to build connections between different phases of time, through the use of creative work and shared ideas.

Steven did not identify as a teacher—a role he views mainly to be a product of non-Indigenous institutions—but explained that he sees his work “[…] as part of a long history, of knowledge maintenance, knowledge gathering, and knowledge transmittal, that is core to our being as Indigenous people.” Steven explained how important it is to honour songs, dances, teachings, the work of storytellers and elders and caregivers and activists; deferring first to the responsibility of those instigators, he placed himself in a long line of work: “I see myself as one of the ones who amplifies their voice […] presents their voice […] conceptualizes their voice, and I think it’s very important, that we honour them every day.”

Several of the words Steven used stood out, describing a multi-part process of moving voices forward: first, looking at and making sense; second, amplifying and presenting; third, imagining potential futures; and finally, calling others to honour their work.

Concluding My Post-Indian Technological Autobiography, Jackson 2Bears (2014) honours the contributions of family members: “Thank you, Grandfather, for all your stories […].” Continuing, he explores his vision for a legacy that connects the past with stories, pushing into the future: “Like you, I wish to speak to the people, and to ‘all my relations,’ and tell new stories that can confront new situations we face as Onkwehonwe [First Peoples] in our media-saturated world” (p. 27). Quoting scholar Leroy Little Bear, 2Bears explains how he chooses to fulfill this goal through his art, “in a way that respects the ‘sacredness, livingness and the soul of the world’” (p. 27). 2Bears addresses the sense of responsibility he feels to work in a way that is respectful to
all beings, and the challenges of implementing this vision; the stories of previous generations motivates and guides his work.

5.5.4 Contribute: Roles and Responsibilities

During our conversations, participants discussed the roles and responsibilities of cultural workers, including the need to be inclusive.

Cheryl noted how her singing voice became one of the first tools she used to connect with and include other people: “[...] I’m a singer, and I’ve noticed that when I sing, people usually want to sing along [...] I think you have to realize at some point that, maybe your gift is something else, and your gift might actually be to get people to participate [...] you have that natural ability.” For Cheryl, this process was somewhat unexpected, as she initially approached her musical career as a type of giving that grew from her efforts and travelled outwards. Developing a reciprocal understanding for the possibilities of her work, she returned to an idea that continues to push her projects: “[...] coming from my background as an Indigenous person, knowing historically how we’ve been excluded from so many things, I didn’t want to have my work contribute to something that could be seen as exclusionary.”

Reminding me that our conversation took place on Anishinaabe land, she referred to the Seven Fire Teachings, or Seven Grandfather Teachings. The teachings detail a system of longevity, in which benefit to others dictates responsibility:

[...] you never do anything that’s just to benefit you. You have to think in the future. How will this benefit the future? A whole bunch of other values come in [...] try not to lie. Try to be very honest, try to be truthful. Try to have integrity [...] It’s like a post that you put in the ground that might just have solid enough footing that it’s gonna be there for a long time.

Using the imagery of a stake in the earth, Cheryl illustrates a vision for a supportive foundation, in which a set of behaviours and values carry communities forward. Ultimately, these are systems for creating healthy communities, which prioritize the needs of all members.

In contrast, colonialism manifests mainly through consumer culture and waste production, explained Cheryl: “It’s quite a thin veneer, the colonial project. It’s been going on for a long
time, but at this point in history [...] is very much around turning everyone into rampant consumers [...] That’s as thin as the cellophane that covers a lot of things.” Cheryl pierces the transparent trickery of contemporary colonialism, and encourages others to see through current manifestations: “The more we educate ourselves, the more we become aware, and the more that we learn to question, and really be critical, and look beyond the veil.”

Writing for eZine issue TELL: Aboriginal Story in Digital Media, Creative Director Cheryl described how storytelling carries ways of Indigenous knowing forward, including “the laws of nature” [and] “how communities must work together”. Calling cultural workers to contribute to this meaningful work, she writes, “It is our role and responsibility as artists to use, develop, and share this information appropriately, for the survival of all”. Again, Cheryl draws our attention to the necessity for benefit to others to dictate responsibility.

Steven addresses the role of cultural workers, positioning their work within the changing continuum of Indigenous stories, and differentiating their roots from the histories of other creative traditions:

Assimilation, violence, attempted genocide [...] we changed, based on them, but who are does not change. These ideas of resistance, ideas of activism, are survivance in that sense. This is just a new adaptation. These are our stories. Sometimes they are old stories too, because stories never disappear. They don’t go away. They exist. The networks, and the relationships we have [in] them, are ours to maintain, to explain, and that’s in very real ways, what I think many Indigenous artists do. That is the continuum that they’re on, and that’s what also separates them from other art histories.

Steven values the maintenance of stories, but also deliberate transformations, shifting according to the needs of the community.

In TimeTraveller™, Hunter and Karahkwenhawi travel through time to learn about different events in both Indigenous histories and Indigenous futures; they also struggle to reconcile their respective belonging in different time periods, and how to simultaneously merge the past with the future. When I asked Skawennati about the significance of this duality, she responded by emphasizing: “It’s so important for our community to be doing this.” She continued, “for a long time [we have been] looking at our past, and that’s great. I think it’s important and interesting and there’s gold to be found there”; she laughs. “There’s a richness, there’s a strength, and
there’s a healing by looking back and finding this stuff.” Bringing history into the present draws the strength, richness, and healing of Indigenous ways of existence forward; guides for the future.

Elaborating, she explained, “We’re recovering things that we feel we’ve lost, individually and as whole groups. A terrible sense of loss has occurred in the Native community. It led to a terrible sense of disempowerment, and that is with us right now. I think it’s changing, I truly do, but [...] the statistics are still the same. We still have the highest incarceration rate, and it’s rising [...] more Native kids are now in foster care than ever before, even in the residential school system. It’s awful!” Skawennati notes the continuing impacts of residential schools, of the foster care system, and of mass incarceration, and how all three deny the future of Indigenous peoples by severing the social and economic connections among families, friends, and communities.

Returning to art, she recalled interacting with the representation of Indigenous peoples in the early 2000s: “When I thought about it, I saw no images of Native people in the future! Nothing. No, Onkwehonwe robots or spaceships, or even us on a computer”. A personal call of action emerged from this experience, and she decided to contribute by proclaiming her own Indigenous future: “So I thought, what can I do? How can I help? [...] I’ll contribute some pictures of Aboriginal people in the future! So that really became something I wanted to do”. Skawennati created Imagining Indians in the 25th Century, a digital paper-doll project she called “my first real imagining of us in the future”.

Skawennati uses the imagery of technology as a metaphor for imagining Indigenous peoples in the future. For example, tying stories and characters together by depicting the TimeTraveller™ edutainment system in the eponymous web series “[…] was a way for us to see ourselves in the future”. Like Cheryl, Skawennati extended her call to action to other cultural workers, including managers, writers, and producers: “We need more books written by us. About us. We need more Aboriginal territories, in cyberspace. And Aboriginally-run institutions.” She stressed the necessity for Aboriginally-determined proclamations, initiatives, and leadership.

Similarly addressing roles and responsibilities, Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace Co-Creator Jason Edward Lewis calls cultural workers to action, asking them to consider how the past
informs their work, and how their work can contribute to a healthy future Speaking in the Indigenous Futurisms Mixtape, he asks: “Whose pasts are you building upon? Whose present are you taking for granted? And who, is included, in your future imaginary?” Lewis frames responsibility in terms of inclusion.

### 5.5.5 Contribute: Challenges

Cheryl, Skawennati, and Steven discussed the labour required when contributing, and the limitations of cultural work.

Reflecting on extensive activism during her teenage years and early adulthood, Skawennati shared the challenges of maintaining an activist practice: “[…] I got burnt out. I was doing that for four or five years […] so I stopped, I quit, and I took a break, because I didn’t really feel like I would change anyone’s mind […] in one conversation. I felt it was a much slower process […]”. In this quotation, Skawennati also illustrates how her understanding of activism changed, from an immense and concentrated practice, to a more complex, nuanced, and sustained process of giving in numerous areas of her personal and professional life. Sharing the different ways she contributes to her communities—including volunteering in educational programming at her children’s school, and supporting initiatives promoting inclusivity in Kahnawake—she said, “I think there’s so many levels of activism and I’m trying to do a few too many of them at the moment [laughing]”.

Cheryl talked about how one of the central tenets of her work, which involves pushing Indigenous stories and language forward, requires intense commitment: “[…] the whole notion of ‘re’ […] I also like to think about it as regarding […] when you get an email, and it’s ‘re’, it doesn’t say ‘do it again’, it actually means regarding this subject […] an elaboration, a labouring with emphasis or effort. I think that’s where there’s the rigour and passion in the work. Keep telling that story. Because it’s regarding this thing, which is really important.”

When I asked Steven about creating Indigenous presence, he discussed the challenges in finding meaning and the potential to facilitate change, through cultural work: “As much as I love the fact that we will be announcing at the Canada Council in a very short time, a very increased commitment to Indigenous artists, organizations, and communities, which we’re very
proud of and is a definite movement [...] But then having to read the newspaper like everybody else and know that there’s a community in such crisis that eleven of its young people tried to kill themselves this weekend”. Referring to income inequality and resulting drought in mental health services in Attawapiskat, Steven notes the tension between creating presence through cultural work, and creating presence through economic and social reform. Writing on a parallel path, Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew (2005) provides one effective way of contributing, advocating for art practices that engage in a process of reflection and action, “between individual and social self-awareness in a continually redefining communal historicization” (p. 206).

5.5.6 Summary

This section detailed different ways Indigenous cultural workers contribute, and see themselves as givers: through integrated practices of teaching, activism, leadership, and other inclusive and participatory systems. Steven, Cheryl, and Skawennati discussed shared tenets among their work: recovering, bringing together, and pushing forward stories of Indigenous resistance. Selected quotations addressed the topic of responsibility: the role and potential functioning of cultural workers in a larger sphere of giving. They also discussed the challenges of contributing: the labour, time, and effort involved.
5.6 GATHER

5.6.1 Overview

Cheryl, Steven and Skawennati connect people and transformative ways of thinking, through their initiatives; contributing—one project at a time—to larger practices of Indigenous resistance in Canada. In this section, I highlight language shared by each participant and in each pre-existing text that evokes practices and ways of thinking about gathering.

5.6.2 Gather: Personal Experiences of Finding and Making Community

I asked participants about the meaning of community in their lives. Generously, they shared multiple manifestations of the word. Participants discussed how community holds multiple meanings, and materializes differently in varying facets of their lives.

For example, Cheryl discussed the importance of acknowledging and respecting communities of the moment, of change: “Sometimes community is just where you find yourself to be”. Further in the chapter, I detail Cheryl’s personal experiences.

Skawennati talked about her involvement in numerous Indigenous communities: “I have always been active in many Aboriginal communities. There’s my reserve, there’s the Native Friendship Centre where I used to work, the urban community [...]”. In her online essay Why I Love Writing, she reiterates the idea of multiple communities of belonging: “Every one of us belongs to several communities: family, reservation, circle, newsgroup, city…”

She shared one understanding—“groups of like-minded people”—suggesting individuals who share similar ways of thinking, but also emphasized the significance of other characteristics, including professional ties, or physical proximity. Skawennati included colleagues with whom she interacts daily, her workspace at Concordia University, as well as the “physical space” and bonds of friends and family in her community at Kahnawake.

For Skawennati, one of the most meaningful communities includes “other Native artists”. Explaining, she continued, “When I’m making my work or thinking about the people that I wanna be with, and talk to, that’s who I’m thinking about [...]”. Skawennati also noted the
reciprocal benefits of connecting with community; the self-care and nurturing that grows from it: “[...] it’s also supporting myself […] taking advantage of those moments when we can have face-to-face conversations, which are so precious.” Reflecting on her cultural work, she positioned her CyberPowWow initiative with collective Nation2Nation as “a curatorial project, a community project”: “[...] I was trying to get my peers to play with me, and to make this gathering site, this place on the internet, where we could get together and talk.” Interpersonal communication, fostered through the practice of gathering, is an integral component of building community for Skawennati.

Steven also discussed his membership in numerous communities, including his professional community at the Canada Council for the Arts in Ottawa. Extending outward, he said “I think we all have a lot of communities […] we have these networks that we call our communities”. Using the word network, Steven suggests the importance of bonds. However, “[...] there’s a big fundamental difference,” he continued, “between conceptions of community by the mainstream, and for Indigenous people”. Elaborating, he explained, “I think for Indigenous people, we also think of the connection that we have to our ancestors, and to the land. That becomes a community as well, which is a more conceptual thing”. Steven illustrates how community can involve both a gathering of peoples with a shared purpose or interest, and also a way of thinking that emerges from the history of a group. For example, Steven shared two understandings of all my relations, an Indigenous way of thinking about community and networks: “[...] in one sense, a very easy and simple kind of relationship with all things that have consciousness”; Steven draws our attention to the connection between all things in the natural world. “But in another”, he continues, “it’s a very complex set of networked relationships that go beyond […] that speak to the past, and the present, and the future”. Here, he alludes to the crucial element of the continuum.

Elaborating and echoing Cheryl’s imagery concerning actions that are motivated by benefit to others, he explained, “We talk about our prophecies and our teaching around the Seven Generations. We have a responsibility to seven generations in the future, and this idea of a continuum […] every next generation has that responsibility to the next one, while those ones are still taking place […] a very interesting confluence of ideas of time, ideas of space and
presence.” Steven addresses the duality of the Seven Generations way of thinking, in which the past, present, and future exist simultaneously: the past informs the present, the present exists for the future, and the future will be shaped by both present and past and all three, through the gathering of peoples to build and share living bodies of memory.

Gatherings offer opportunities to learn and connect with one another. In TimeTraveller™, Episode 3, Hunter connects with his heritage, through teachings shared by other participants in the Mohawk resistance: “It was like summer school behind the barricades. We got lessons in geography, politics, history; The Iroquois Confederacy, The Warrior Society, treaties like the Two Row Wampum.” Hunter’s learning experiences emphasize collaborative events in Indigenous histories; the scene cuts to elder Frank Natawe, wearing a ribbon shirt and holding a wampum, explaining the significance of the Two Row Wampum: “A policy for mutual respect, for each other’s sovereignty”.

5.6.3 Gathering with Purpose: Making Change and Envisioning Indigenous Futures

Buffy Sainte-Marie begins her essay Cyberskins: Live and Interactive from the premise of a gathering, introducing Drumbeats to Drumbytes: “In the Canadian Rockies, Indians carrying portable computers trudge through a herd of elk and into the Banff Center for the Arts […].” Sainte-Marie and Cheryl both attended Drumbeats to Drumbytes, and Cheryl explains how the gathering of cultural workers propelled her to carry ways of thinking about Indigeneity, technology, and the arts, into other groups; to collaborate and to contribute. At the close of the gathering, “[s]ome of us went back to our communities, to our ceremonialists, to our Elders [to ask] ‘What does this mean?’ I certainly did […]”.

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9 Taiaiake Alfred shares the history of “The Kanien’kehaha Kaswentha (Two-Row Wampum) principle: [...] the Kanien’kehaka who opened their territory to Dutch traders in the early seventeenth century negotiated an original and lasting peace based on coexistence of power in a context of respect for the autonomy and distinctive nature of each partner. The metaphor for this relationship—two vessels, each possessing its own integrity, travelling the river of time together—was conveyed visually on a wampum belt of two parallel purple lines (representing power) on a background of white beads (representing peace). In this respectful (co-equal) friendship and alliance, any interference with the other’s autonomy, freedom, or powers was expressly forbidden. So long as these principles were respected, the relationship would be peaceful, harmonious, and just” (Alfred, 1999, p. 52).
Cheryl discussed how colleagues and friends instigated collaborative projects, and their influence on her work. For example, Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew created the net.art project *Speaking the Language of Spiders*, to which Cheryl contributed, along with 13 other artists. Reflecting back on her own creative work, she explained, “[...] when I first started getting into net.art and making my own net.art works, was with all of this as background, this desire not to be exclusionary.” Repeating the purpose for the work she does (see Section 5.5.4), Cheryl introduces the use of technology as a tool for inclusiveness; a platform through which further participation could be forged.

When I asked Cheryl about what community means to her, she talked about the joy of belonging: “I think it’s wonderful to be able to be part of something”. She also pointed to her own experiences of transience and change: “I have become accustomed and satisfied with a community of the moment. Even if it’s not going to last for a long time.” Elaborating on the tension between the comfort of stasis, and the inevitability of change, Cheryl believes the desire for community is constant: “There’s always this longing to belong, to be part of something.” Longing to connect is a meaningful instigator in Cheryl's work; she spoke at length about the importance of producing projects that facilitate inclusion, participation, or collaboration, in order to help others feel a sense of belonging too:

If I can somehow contribute to somebody’s sense of belonging in any small way [...] [can] give somebody an idea, to make something new that continues this notion of communication [...] of this repeating transmission. Eventually it touches people and it makes them realize that they’re not alone, and that none of us are alone, and that there’s something in that story, there’s something in that song, there’s something in that transmission, there’s something in that energy, that vibration, for all of us.

*Treaty Card* is one of Cheryl's interactive web projects, inviting participants to create virtual *Indian status cards*. Status Cards are identification cards issued by the Canadian Government and showing proof of registration under the *Indian Act*; card ownership does not extend to Métis and Inuit peoples, as they are not deemed “Indians” under the Act. Like Renee Nejo’s Blood Quantum game, Status Cards are another example of arbitrary identity classification schemes with very real consequences.
For Cheryl, one of the most important phases in the project’s life cycle is when someone sounds out their existence, marking their presence in cyber landscapes by creating a card. Relating to her audience also brought unexpected understanding, demonstrating the potential for reciprocal contributions, as she illustrates in the following quotation:

It became meaningful in ways I would have never expected [...] when I present the work in an artist talk, I show cards that middle-aged Native men have made, who never went to the exhibition [...] somehow on the internet, they typed in the word[s] Treaty Card, maybe because they always wanted one, maybe because they were disenfranchised [...] they found the site and made themselves Treaty Cards. Those for me, became the pivotal reasons, ‘wow that’s why I really made this project.’ It was cool, it’s got cachet, there’s a real political statement, it’s interactive, it’s Indigenous, it’s provocative [...] but those moments when I discover those gentlemen, it’s so heartfelt and so touching, because I know that generation of disenfranchised people.

Cheryl also reflected on how Treaty Card offered a cyberspace in which she could connect virtually with participants, where she could “look online from anywhere in the world and find people who were participating with the project.”

Steven and Cheryl shared their intention to create spaces that offer points of connection for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to learn and challenge their ways of thinking.

When I asked him about his curatorial work for *Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art*, Steven ascribed the process of connecting as a meaningful element of the project: “Ghost Dance was just meant to [...] give people who may not be as cognisant of these kinds of issues, an entry point [...] art can be that place of connection. It can be a bridge. It can be a mirror. It can be a denunciation [...] a way for people to connect with people, ideas, issues, that may not be part of their own lived experience.”

Cheryl told me she wishes for her creative projects to function as safe spaces for individuals to recognize their responsibility: “I don’t need to be confrontational. But I think there’s ways to phrase things to sort of create an inclusive environment, where we all need to own our stuff. To be present. And share the load.” Inclusiveness is a method of facilitating gathering that incorporates both responsibility and recognition; recognition of both self and others, and the responsibility present in maintaining an existing relationship.
For speculative fiction writer Ambelin Kwaymullina, creating scenes of gathering are one of the most important facets of her work: "Impossible things occur in my novels [...] and something else happens that some might say is yet more impossible than any of this. An alliance of good-hearted people come together to change their reality for the better. Some of these people are among the privilege [sic] of their society, and some among the oppressed, what they have in common is a desire for a world where all life is valued and valuable. I do not believe this alliance to be impossible [...] humanity is now living in the times that will define the future of our species.” Kwaymullina situates the success of her future imaginary firmly in the now.

Like Buffy Sainte-Marie’s essay, machinima web series TimeTraveller™ draws viewers in on the premise of Indigenous gathering. At the opening of Episode One, Hunter shares his longing to belong: “I figured a little visiting with my ancestors, a little recon with my role models, could do me some good right now. Give me a new perspective. Go ahead. Call it a vision quest.” In Episode 3, Hunter reflects on his experiences participating in the Mohawk Crisis of 1990, emphasizing how the struggle brought many different Indigenous peoples together: “It was a victory, even though almost everyone was arrested. The pines were left alone, and we, not just Mohawks, but all Native people, felt stronger, more connected.”

Gathering is also a metaphor for the strength of Indigenous presence in Episode 4 of Time Traveller™. Heroine Karahkwenhawi travels to 2112, and lands in a bright crowd, celebrating the Manito Ahbee Pow Wow at the immense Winnipeg Olympic Stadium. Host Luke Mithoowaastee shares a story about a history of Indigenous absence: “Do you know, my grandmother told me that one time, her grandmother told her, the Pow Wow was outlawed!” The crowd cries out in anger, as Mithoowaastee alludes to Indian Act amendments in place until 1951, prohibiting Indigenous gathering. “They didn’t want us Indians to get together in public!” he continues. “They didn’t want us to get together because we’d talk. We’d plan.” Then, Mithoowaastee explains how this was transformed by 2112 into the strength of Indigenous presence in public spaces. “So, what did we do? We got together in private. We got, busy. As record numbers of Indian babies were born in the 21st century, the pow wow grew and thrived with more dancers, singers, and drummers, bigger shows, larger audiences, and worldwide broadcast rights.” Grew, more, bigger, larger; these words are synonymous for strength. The
imagery of strength in numbers is a metaphor for the continuation of Indigenous presence and resistance; the resurgence.

In the final episode, Karahkwenhawi narrates her experiences travelling through time using the series’ eponymous real-time immersion edutainment software, connecting with Indigenous historical figures including Pocahontas and Sacagawea. “But the best stuff,” she says proudly, “is the future.” Searching for events related to Indigenous Sovereignty in the TimeTraveller™ database, Karahkwenhawi sees Indigenously-determined futures across Canada, made evident by strong gatherings:

Indigenous peoples everywhere have made incredible advancements. It starts when Quebec finally separates from Canada. The Cree promptly separate from Quebec, and form a confederacy with their cousins to the west. The Haudenosaunee soon follow. Then the Anishinaabe, then the Blackfoot. I guess all our hard work finally pays off.

This is both a joyful moment for Karahkwenhawi, and a moment in which she reflects on the challenges of giving, and the importance of providing and creating hope through the imagination of Indigenous futures.

5.6.4 Gather: Challenges of Connecting

Earlier, I quoted Steven’s discussion of the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, including “the connection that we have to our ancestors, and to the land.” He also discussed impacts of colonial violence on Indigenous communities, including in his own life: “I, like many Indigenous people, was cut off from that sense of community, for a good deal of my life, more most of my early life [...] did not have access to that community.” Disconnecting Indigenous peoples from Indigenous communities was part of colonial projects, like in residential schools. Thus, proclaiming acts of Indigenous gathering, or what Steven called “[...] to reassert that community” is a method of proclaiming Indigenous ways of knowing. Steven explains how connecting with a community can be ideological, because “For many of us, the act of reconnecting with that particular community, which is part of who we are, aids in our recognition and our realization of our place as sovereign peoples [...]”.

Steven considered the challenges of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships in Canada: “How can we relate to each other. Can we?” Steven questions whether the relationship is
possible, and asks what it would mean, arguing a response is “the defining issue for the nation we know as Canada [...] if it’s to truly become a state, in its own sense of its being [...].” Pointing to the injustices occurring throughout Indigenous experiences in Canada, Steven brought attention to the continual challenges of this project: “We only have to see what’s happening in Attawapiskat, to understand the immense task, that this implies. We only have to look at the justice system, and the number of incarcerated Indigenous peoples.” In this quotation, Steven illustrates the continuing colonizer-colonized hierarchy organizing non-Indigenous and Indigenous relationships, which positions the control of Indigenous bodies by non-Indigenous institutions, as a primary objective. Prison is one form of state-sanctioned coercion; currently, more than a quarter of peoples incarcerated in Canada are Indigenous, while Indigenous peoples represent just over four percent of the country’s total population (Howard Sapers, in CBC News, January 2016; Statistics Canada, 2011).

Both Cheryl and Skawennati generously shared their complex relationships with community. Skawennati spoke about the challenges of navigating links with her reserve community of Kahnawake, where she is not officially accepted as a member, but maintains close bonds with friends and family, and engages in resistance projects. In the previous section, I retold Cheryl’s experiences with continually changing communities, which first emerged as a pattern and way of life during her early years.

Several kimiwan’zine contributors also write about the challenges of connecting with community, and imagine possible antidotes. In his poem Time Traveller, Peter Morin uses the metaphor of time travel to explain why and how an individual needs to connect to their communities; past, present, and future: “the time traveller has lost their connection to the land, lost their connection to family, lost their connection to culture.” Time travel is a process in which the individual is “attempting to bridge those losses.” Thus, the purpose of time travel is to enable and rebuild connections that are always already in existence. Similarly, Skawennati introduces a still from TimeTraveller™, called Epiphany (Feeling Skyworld). The image shows a moment from the series, when Karakhwenhawi struggles to decide whether to remain with Hunter in the future, or return to her family in Kahnawake, circa 2010. Pausing in Montreal’s “Musée du Future”, Karakhwenhawi stands before Hannah Claus’ installation piece cloud (2010),
digitally re-presented by Skawennati in Second Life. “She heads to the museum”, writes Skawennati, “seeking comfort in art and old things. It helps her to find her answer.” As Karahkwenhawi deliberates, a place that binds both the history and future of Indigenous cultural work brings solace, and supports her decision to move forward.

Skwennati addresses both virtual and physical spaces of connection in her essay Why I Love Writing. Writing about the challenges of building and maintaining community when colonial violence is presence, she explains: “Even though we know that First Nations always had contact with one another, our communities, until very recently, were isolated by a certain regionalism, one that was perceived as much as it was physical, because, I think, in our collective mind we felt restricted by the reservation system.” She goes on to extol the potential for virtual communities to connect individuals across vast distances, and incite them to gather in-person; to communicate, share ideas, and organize.

Cheryl also heeded the challenges of maintaining community among Indigenous communities in Canada: “We know the statistics of people leaving rural communities, reserve communities, language loss, in one generation, there’s just so many, unemployment rates on reserves, why people need to move to cities, hence the language loss […]”. Continuing, she explained, “We knew we were dealing with this [sic] continual colonizing factors that was going to separate the next generation from the source. The source is the land, and the source is the Elders and our language.” Cheryl noted creative experiences with technology, and how technology can be a useful tool for facilitating knowledge transmission between younger and older generations, between rural and urban community members, or across vast distances. “There are so many different ways”, she said during our conversation, “that we could all start to, encourage our communities to use this Internet, as a way to find ourselves there […]”. Cheryl intersects technology with a sense of place, inviting other Indigenous cultural workers, young people, leaders, and all community members to find themselves there.

5.6.5 Technology: Tools for Indigenous Gathering

When I asked participants about using technology creatively, all three considered how technology can be a useful and meaningful tool, facilitating Indigenous gathering across vast
landscapes, and proclaiming knowledge. Several authors use the language and imagery of technology as a metaphor for the thriving and adaptation of Indigenous peoples throughout history, and into the future. In this section, I explore intersections between technology, community, and cultural labour, in four parts: personal experiences, Indigenous histories, and the challenges and responsibilities of using new technologies.

5.6.5.1 Technology: Personal Experiences

Cheryl, Skawennati, and Steven expressed their early affinity and joy for working creatively with technology, and how different communities—family, school, artist-run centre—provided entry points for access and use.

For example, Steven talked about his involvement with an Indigenous artist-run centre in the early 1990s: “[...] that speaks to kind of how I started off in this [...] like a quarter of a century ago [...] I was incredibly fortunate to come across an artist-run centre in Hamilton, called the Native Indian Inuit Photographer’s Association, which was the first Aboriginal artist-run centre in the country [...]”. He reflected on the questions that interested him the most during that period, and continue to engage his work: “[...] it was a really fascinating time to be working at issues such as technology. What could that mean for Indigenous self-determination and resurgence? What place does art play in that? And what does technology say about our adaptability [...] this is ancient, and it’s not new in that sense, but the hardware is new, and so what does that mean [...] for Indigenous presence in this place called cyberspace”.

Cheryl explained how she uses different media to thoroughly explore different facets of the same issue: “[Working creatively with technology] keeps extending itself outwards. It’s really about this process of engaging with the material with the sense of rigour, and with a sense of inventiveness”. “I think I came by it quite naturally”, she continued, sharing an anecdote: “My non-Indigenous Dad was an inventor [...] I think I learned to solder by the time I was three or four years old [...] capacitors and diodes, onto a breadboard.” Cheryl explained how both her parents “raised me not to be afraid to touch things or break things. That’s really important, because I think it’s sometimes in those accidents where interesting things happen”. Speaking about her work in Ghost Dance, Cheryl talked about transforming an existing project into the
result curator Steven Loft envisioned: “Why The Caged Bird Sings is a song writing project [...] but it was a wonderful challenge [...] to create something immersive. I have a history in new media and new media seemed to be the most obvious way to make those songs come to life and become very sort of participatory.”

Skawennati also connected closely with technology, beginning with her fine arts degree at Concordia University. “I was in my 20s when I was doing CyberPowWow”, she reflected; “I was just an early adopter and I liked it. I loved it. I loved being online.” Recalling an earlier experience, she described attending a talk where she first encountered the Palace software: “Studio XX, feminist production studio [...] had these evenings, which they still have, called Femmes Branchées or Wired Women, salons. I went to this one, and the woman was showing the Palace. I was hooked. I saw that, and I’m like ‘This is what Native artists need, to connect across our vast country!’” Skawennati primarily viewed The Palace software as a useful tool for communication, facilitating community by providing a space for users to gather and share creative projects, such as in CyberPowWow.

5.6.5.2 Indigenous Histories of Technology

Reflecting on her essay Codetalkers Recounting Signals of Survival (first introduced in Chapter 3), Cheryl emphasized how “[...] I think Indigenous people need to realize that we have a claim to cyberspace all along.” Elaborating, she said, “[...] we know from the birth of the internet, that the early packets of information were sent along telephone lines. All of a sudden you start to realize, ‘What’s the source? Where did this all come from?’ [...] It happened on this land. Of course we have a stake in it.” The imperative to push claims forward is an essential aspect of Cheryl’s practice.

Echoing Cheryl, kimiwan ‘zine Guest Editor Elizabeth La LaPensée (2014) stresses the continuity of technologies—tools that have been created, used, and transformed by Indigenous peoples: “[...] what we have access to now”—she begins, referring to new technologies used to create video games—“are simply tools that are playing at the immensity of traditional Indigenous technology that is around us and with us always” (p. 3).
Further in the *Indigenous Futurisms* issue, artist Barry Ace introduces his practice. Ace combines Anishinaabe beadwork techniques with recycled computer parts, and reflects on the significance of technologies in his own Anishinaabe (Odawa) culture: “Our ability, as Anishinaabeg to adapt to complex social, cultural, environment [sic] and technological change reveals our strong sense of cultural tenacity and innate strategic desire to overcome even the most adverse conditions imposed on us” (p. 41).

Both Barry Ace and Skawennati discuss technology as a metaphor for Indigenous continuation and adaption. In her essay *Why I Love WWWriting*, Skawennati also considers the constant transformations of technologies by Indigenous peoples: “Native people have always been interested in new technologies. From the stone flints and clay pots of neighbouring First Nations, to the steel pots brought by the newcomers, we have integrated important inventions into our cultures”. Skawennati draws attention to gathering in her quotation, by framing the use of technologies through both Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships: *neighbouring First Nations, and newcomers*.

“We have always perceived the connectivity between all and life in many dimensions”, writes Elizabeth LaPensée in her article for *kimiwan* ‘zine, on the topic of video games. She also speaks these words in the *Indigenous Futurisms* mixtape. LaPensée emphasizes how games are a creative tool: “Video games are a path for passing on teachings, telling our stories, and expressing our ways of knowing”.

The idea of technology as a path for connection emerges in other ways through TimeTraveller™ episodes. For example, In Episode 4, which takes place in the year 2112, Manito Ahbee Pow Wow host Luke Mithoowaastee exclaims, “[...] and for all of you watching on the net, we are broadcasting, nearcasting, and podcasting live, from the Winnipeg Olympic Stadium.” Here, technology is the hinge for an immense network of connectivity among Indigenous peoples, opening into an immense, Indigenously-determined gathering.

Skawennati also writes about the importance of foregrounding resistance and gathering first, and technologies second, discussing the 1990 Mohawk Crisis in *Why I Love WWWriting*: “[...] Native people came from across Turtle Island to support the Mohawks, knowing that they were
showing solidarity with people with whom they had the most important of issues in common. Since then, a new community has been forming, one whose membership criteria is self-determined, not imposed by colonialist guidelines. This community doesn’t have a territory, because it doesn’t need one: it has the infinite expanses of cyberspace”.

5.6.5.3 Technology: Challenges and Responsibilities

Cheryl, Skawennati, and Steven all deliberated over the responsibilities of using technology, illustrating disconnects between participating in and projecting idealism surrounding the capabilities of new technologies, by highlighting issues of accessibility, and power structures.

In our interview together, Cheryl reflected on her experiences participating in the Drumbeats to Drumbytes think tank on Indigenous art, futures, and technologies at the Banff Centre, and the impetus to proclaim Indigenous presence in cyberspace: “How do we take claim of this? I think many of us took it to heart […] [w]e all realized we needed to think about this”.

Cheryl discussed how she negotiates the challenges of using technologies that exploit and falsely represent and leverage Indigenous knowledge and identities for profit, with the impetus to create Indigenous presence. Reflecting on her experiences at the Drumbeats to Drumbytes think tank at the Banff Centre, she quoted the words of attending guests and scholars George Baldwin and Randy Ross. Cheryl repeated a phrase the two men had shared, “[T]hey used it in the Indigenous community in the States before they came up to Canada. They would say to their communities, “[w]e don’t want to end up roadkill on the information superhighway.’ That was a way to encourage Indigenous communities not to push the technology away, but to use it to create presence.” Cheryl’s quotation frames one position concerning personal responsibility when engaging with technology: using it as a tool to generate presence. She shared the names of two individuals who forged cyber imprints: Paula Giese and Mike MacDonald. Giese created an educational website in the early 1990s called Native American Indian Resources; MacDonald created net.art projects including Butterfly Garden, through which he shared Indigenous knowledge of flora and fauna. Cheryl called these “the earliest websites” shaped by Indigenous workers and informed by Indigenous ways of knowing.
For Cheryl, the development of Web 2.0 meant that “we could actually, go to a website, and enter some information, and forever change that website, and in doing so, mark our presence, on the Internet.” Marking presence, she explained, is part of “this notion of survivance. To raise awareness with allies and colleagues, so that they can be on the same page as us, sooner and faster, and they weren’t reading a book yet again, that wasn’t from the source.” Like Skawennati, Cheryl also views technology as a tool facilitating networks of communication that have always existed among Indigenous peoples, and with allies, but enables groups to come to shared ways of thinking “sooner and faster.” She explained how, in her work, “[...] technology has always been very practical. Even if I really engage on a conceptual or philosophical level about it. I know, eventually, I’m going to be passing this on.” Cheryl views her expertise in using technology creatively as a skill to pass forward to younger cultural workers.

However, writing for TELL eZine, Cheryl addresses the colonizing potential for new technologies, and concerns surrounding their by Indigenous cultural workers, including “[...] intellectual property and cultural appropriation” and “factors related to rural and remote location, modernization, and connectivity” which “continue to place us on the ‘have not’ side of the digital divide”. She discusses how media technologies have been used as colonial tools, to misrepresent Indigenous peoples for profit, and further non-Indigenous power. Much of new media technology is produced primarily from a non-Indigenous world view, language, history, and perspective.

In our conversation together, Cheryl also touched on the tension between proclaiming Indigenous presence, and protecting Indigenous knowledge:

[…] maybe we should all opt out, because then in that way we’re not going to become part of the data that’s owned by the data barons […] we’ll retain a sense of autonomy. But we’re back at this not becoming roadkill on the information highways […] we need to think about, is there ways [sic] that we can own our own data? Our data needs to be there, somehow. Because, what probably could happen again is that history gets rewritten—there’s this notion of revisionism—and we’re excluded one more time. That can’t happen again. Because it’s really imperative. So if not, my activism really just comes out of that imperative. There’s an imperative of a birdsong. There’s this imperative of transmission.
In her 1997 essay *Why I Love WWWriting*, Skawennati observes how the internet is morphing into a marketplace for buying and selling, and advocates for a different mandate: “[...] let’s do it right. Let’s make it content-rich [...]”. Continuing under the subsection *World Wide Wal-mart?*—alluding to the commercial bent of the internet—she writes: “We can use the WWW to present our stories, to inform people about our issues and to explore solutions to some of our problems.” Skawennati presents the Internet as a platform for gathering, and forging betterment; reflecting some of the idealism of the period. However, Skawennati is not presenting the Internet as a revolutionary platform, but rather as an extension of always existing Indigenous resistance.

Addressing a different challenge, Buffy Sainte-Marie and Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew discuss issues of access. “Although our potential at the moment exceeds the extensiveness of our community computer usage,” writes Sainte-Marie in 1994, “our projects are already bearing fruit, we expect to prosper and contribute, and we will defend our data.” She illustrates already functioning issues of growth, development, and protection. In his essay for *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art*, Loft cites Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew’s curatorial statement for Storm spirits: Aboriginal new media art: “New media”, writes Maskegon-Iskwew, “while still far from meeting standards of equitable access to production and presentation, is providing many more communities world-wide with tools for international expression, activism, recognition, and networking.”

5.6.6 Summary

In this section, I considered how Indigenous cultural workers think about ways of gathering: connecting with different communities and with different ideas. I began by asking each participant about their personal experiences creating and engaging with community, and how they understand the term to function in their lives. They shared their challenges with community, and the ways their positioning with community has changed. Steven discussed philosophies of community that differentiate Indigenous from non-Indigenous ways of thinking about gathering. Cheryl and Skawennati talked about the ways in which technology can be used by non-Indigenous interests as a platform for leveraging Indigenous identity for profit, but also as a tool facilitating connection and gathering among Indigenous peoples. Gathering is a
generative image, in which individuals bring sets of skills and experiences to support the health and wellbeing of others. Throughout this section, images of Indigenous futures are peppered with visions of gathering; on the current side of the path into that future, grouping together is a metaphor for Indigenous survivance, and a tool for community growth.
5.7 PROCLAIM

5.7.1 Overview

Steven, Cheryl and Skawennati proclaim Indigenous presence. During our conversations, two participants used the word *proclaim* to embody both claiming space and telling stories. Influenced by their insights, I draw attention to language used by each participant that evokes different ways of proclaiming, following a similar method for each pre-existing object.

Proclaiming contributes to larger practices of Indigenous resistance. By dreaming and sharing how Indigenous communities will live in the future, cultural workers share and provide hope, strength and energy. They envision futures directly informed by actions and stories of the past and present. Thus, proclaiming is a reciprocal and cyclical: looking back and listening; looking forward and creating.

5.7.2 Proclaim: How to Tell Stories

Cheryl, Skawennati, and Steven discussed the significance of storytelling, and the most meaningful facets: repetition, using Indigenous languages, threads of adaption and transformation, and the ability to provide context for one’s role in the larger community and world.

For Cheryl, repetition is an essential part of sharing stories: “[… the reason we tell them over and over and over, is there’s always going to be something you’re going to note […] but that might mean that you’re missing out on another part of the story, which means you need to hear the story again […] that’s how stories work.” Further layers of meaning develop through repetition; stories transform. Changes in each presentation of a story reflect in the interplay and reciprocal relationship between listening and telling. Stories are thus a key to transmission, because they create meaning, and move Indigenous ways of knowing forward.

Some of the texts incorporate Indigenous histories, languages, creation stories, or memories, proclaiming the strength and continuity of Indigenous existence.
During our conversation, Cheryl explained why repeating stories from a Nehiyawin tradition is important:

If I can keep telling those stories over and over and over, then there might be something in a story or a piece of our history, or a piece of our point of view, our worldview, our cosmology, that might stick with somebody that it becomes meaningful to them.

Explaining the repetition in process in different ways throughout our conversation, Cheryl’s use of language stood out to me. Incorporating words such as pushing forward, marking presence, staking a claim, taking ownership, stick, and tag, she enmeshed the practice of telling stories with the history of Indigenous presence on the land “now known as Canada” (L’Hirondelle, 2014, p. 152).

Skawennati prefaced her story by explaining that she has “been listening to a lot of stories since AbTeC began, really listening”. She gave two examples of books informed by the Iroquois perspectives of their authors: And Grandma Said...Iroquois Teachings: As Passed Down Through the Oral Tradition by Tom Porter (2009) and Creation and Confederation: The Living History of the Iroquois, by Darren Bonaparte (2006). Continuing, she noted, “I’m just learning a lot about the oral tradition in general. And what I’ve realized [laughter] is that […] there’s not one creation story. It changes. And it reflects what’s going on in the times”.

She expressed her vision for carrying the Iroquois creation story forward, sharing plans for a future project: “[...] I would like to write the creation story of the future […] I want a postcolonial, post-race, post capitalist future. Can I imagine being there, and how does that change the creation story as I know it? […]”. Ultimately, “What I’m trying to say,” she explained, “in our own past, we have the future.” The past provides a map of shared understandings and guiding principles that can build a future, one that can transform according to changing needs.

Steven also explained why creation stories are important, as they facilitate a connection with community history, and support understanding about an individual’s larger role in the universe: “[...] those first understandings of who we are, as beings, within the larger” he began—“it really does mark a very different way.” Continuing, he explained, “If we look at our creation stories, if we look at our attempts to see ourselves within a much larger, noble and ignoble, mutable but
immutable, sense of history being future.” Steven drew connections between Skawennati’s work in TimeTraveller™ and Indigenous creation stories: “[...] they’re doing the same thing. And that’s the continuum. These ideas of who we are [...] doesn’t change. The events around us change. Things change and we adapt. That’s the idea of survivance [...] it’s a beautiful phrase in that way. And he [Vizenor] uses it in that way. This idea that we are here, we continue to exist, we continue to adapt, we continue to change, as we would.” Steven negotiates the challenges of articulating the idea of continuing and transforming by turning to Vizenor’s language, but also by illustrating connections between cultural work and circular ways of thinking. “I often look to our creation story as the first articulations of an Indigenous art aesthetic,” he said during our conversation. “One of the key elements about an Indigenous aesthetic and art history,” he explained, “is this idea that we do think, in a large sense, in a much different way, and this is articulated, in a lot of things, in a circular way of thinking, as opposed to linear. This idea of communing with the ancients, on an ongoing basis—that we exist with our pasts, with our present, and with our future [...]”.

*kimiwan* ‘zine contributors explore and transform facets of fantasy and science fiction to consider very seriously the interconnection between past, present, and future, and the ways in which the former two critically inform the latter.

Guest editor Elizabeth LaPensée (2014, *kimiwan* ‘zine) reflects on the interrelation between past, present, and future: “Indigenous futurisms involves a simultaneous return to our pasts and active presence in the current moment, the continuous motion of our stories and teachings, all that we are constantly transforming” (p. 3). Continuous and transforming are complementary processes: related and integrated. LaPensée suggests that Indigenous peoples transform their futures through the continuity of stories and teachings that emerge through their sharing and passing on throughout Indigenous histories.

In his CBC Massey Lecture, and book, *The Truth About Stories*, Cherokee writer Thomas King explores the challenges and continuities of storytelling. Writer and curator Candice Hopkins opens her article in the eZine *TELL: Aboriginal Story in Digital Media* with a quotation from King’s work, describing his words as both “calculated and “revealing”: “There is a story I know [...] each time someone tells the story, it changes [...]” But in all the tellings of all the tellers, the
world never leaves the turtle’s back. And the turtle never swims away.” King opens every chapter of the book with the same story, weaving a story in which an endless stream of turtles supports the birth of the world. Each time, a different listener asks the same question: how many turtles? The person changes, but the story stays the same, and so does the questioner’s reaction: grasping to understand the endless structure of the story, and laughing at the comfort of its circularity. Reflecting how King illustrates the changes and continuities in each telling of a creation story, Hopkins considers how “reading across these contradictions [...] reveals a worldview: one in which truth is considered apart from fact, where originality coexists within the copy, where change is an inherent part of tradition”. She continues, “Change keeps them [the stories] alive [...] a continuation of what Aboriginal people have been doing from time immemorial: making things our own.”

In her poem “Verses from the So’ Hogan”, published in *ki mi wan* ’zine’s *Indigenous Futurisms* issue, writer Lindsey Catherine Cornum points to creation stories as vehicles Indigenous communities can use to carry history into the present, and the present into the future. She extends the Diné creation story into outer space: “The creation story is a spaceship/and we have always been/intergalactic travelers” (p. 19). Imagining the imagery of *intergalactic travel*, Cornum suggests that Diné peoples have always been moving and exploring, transforming and continuing, carrying ancient ways into the present. However, “We have always known the way home”, she writes suggesting continual connections to the past.

Similarly, introducing the *Indigenous Futurisms Mixtape*, writers consider how “The creation story can also be a song; so we can sing our way to the stars”. The act of storytelling sounds Indigeneity into space, creating and transforming paths into the future.

5.7.3 Proclaim: Challenges, Roles and Responsibilities

For Cheryl and Steven, proclaiming is an essential part of creating Indigenous presence.

Cheryl discussed the necessity for Indigenous peoples to proclaim their stories: “We need to take ownership of the information that’s there, so that it’s not other people saying, ‘This is who Indians were’, because that’s how we very often are romanticized, that we don’t exist anymore.”
Steven deliberated over how to create presence within Canada, a colonial map superimposed over Indigenous nations: “How do we proclaim space and territory, within a polity that we are a distinct minority [...] attempts have been made to erase who we are, in these places.”

Steven suggests that proclaiming Indigenous histories—including visual histories—are extremely important facets that help us to understand the differences between Indigenous nations: “Here, it’s now about recognizing that there is a different art history that predates the state. It’s about recognizing the arts and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as distinct Indigenous groups, and not homogenizing them.”

Cheryl explained how the more Indigenous peoples proclaim their worldviews—through language, the continuation of practices, the gathering of communities—“[...] the better it’s gonna be for future generations [...] to state it quite plainly, it is survivance. Continuing to invoke a Nehiyawin [...] it translates quite well, and still lives in this contemporary continuum. It’s wonderful to use new media as a way to prove that.”

### 5.7.4 Proclaim: Indigenous Presence in (Outer)Space

During our conversation, Cheryl emphasized the relationship between proclaiming and claiming space, illustrating how, as a cultural worker, “[t]he artistic signpost is part of that survivance [...] that notion that says ‘I was here’”. Continuing, she explained the importance of creating a foundation to support the future: “We may, over a long period of time, forget your name, forget my name, but there’s gonna be something that we’ll look back, and we’ll know [...] I think it’s really important to mark things along the way.”

Writing for kimiwan ‘zine, Grace Dillon (2014) explains how the theory and practice of Indigenous Futurisms encourage both the knowledge of languages, and “the transformation in thinking accrued by understanding our nations’ languages” (p. 7). For example, *Inaendumoowin*, a term first introduced in this thesis in a discussion of self-determination in section 3.2 “suggests simultaneously thinking, imagination, and will” (p. 7). Digging deeper, she reveals connections between representing and practicing: “I was taught this wording complemented and underpinned the importance of our dreaming—dreaming as imagination as WILLED into being” (p. 7). Concluding, she writes, “So, in that sense, the process of imagination is highly
regarded as are the dreams we share and the art we create and express the futures we already carry within us” (p. 7). Proclaiming the future is a project that involves willing that future into being. The future will exist in Indigenously-determined spaces and outer spaces; the *Indigenous Futurisms Mixtape* rumbles to life with sounds from NASA audio archives; from 00:00 to 00:26, countdowns and liftoffs propel listeners into Indigenously-determined outer-space(s). The mixtape proclaims Indigenous presence, sounding out millennia-old journeys forward into space and time. “Whether you are traveling back in time to talk to ancestors”, offers the introduction, “or warp speeding forward to herd sheep in the outer galaxies, this is the mix to take you there.” These words emphasize the significance of the continuum, connecting history with the future: “It is the soundtrack for a liberated future drawn deeply from our collective pasts.”

Emerging from the memory of colonial epistemologies paraded uncritically through her university experience, Marcia Crosby proclaims Indigenous presence in *Construction of the Imaginary Indian*. “The purpose of this paper” she writes, “is to refuse the prescribed space set aside for the Imaginary Indian […] [including] the spaces of the West’s postmodern centre/margin cartography. Exposing the self-serving purposes, and the limitations that such cultural maps impose on all First Nations people, is an act of confrontation and resistance” (2011, p. 277). Crosby introduces her mission using language focused on place: prescribed space, postmodern centre/margin cartography, cultural maps. Using these words, Crosby positions her writing within the histories of Indigenous physical displacement, showing how cultural work can both produce and destroy the context for thievery.

Crosby explains how her method of writing creates presence: “I also consider it an act of affirmation to speak in the first person singular, refusing an imposed and imaginary difference in order to assert my own voice” (p. 277). For Crosby, writing in the first person also connects personal experience with Indigenous community history: “[…] In this paper I speak and write as a Haida/Tsimpsian woman of my encounter with European art and theory” (pp. 277–78).

Asserting her identity, Crosby connects with the landscape of the Haida/Tsimpsian peoples, challenging the homogenization created in non-Indigenous literatures and commentary on Northwest Coast communities, art, and culture. Building her essay from personal experience,
she creates a path to challenge and undermine prescribed spaces reserved for learning about a one-dimensional *Imaginary Indian*.

Non-Indigenous scientific disciplines, manipulating space through their colonial gaze, created rules of perspective in order to construct imaginary spaces. For example, monarchies commissioned maps for the purpose of visually explicating territorial ownership, and subsequently, establishing museum collections in these very territories to collect evidence of Indigenous peoples, and their disappearance. These museums privileged tactile memories, and especially, the bones of Indigenous peoples, taken from families. Performance art scholar Rebecca Schneider literally embeds this skeletal obsession into her discussion of bone memories, in which the archival process privileges material remains, imprinting self-serving narratives to justify a particular power dynamic. Crosby exposes their continuing discourse in Canada. Sonny Assu creates a material response, intervening and transforming to create Indigenously-determined imaginings of space.

In digital art series *Interventions on the Imaginary*, Assu visually interrupts Euro-Canadian representations of Northwest Coast landscapes, including works by Emily Carr. “With the insertion of ovoids, s-shapes, and u-shapes into the images,” he writes—referring to Northwest Coast formline—the landscapes “become marked by the spectre of Native presence […]”. Titles in the series include *What a Great spot for a Walmart!*; *It was, like, a super long time ago that ppl were here, right?; Spaced Invaders;* and *Home Coming*. The language used in each title speaks to the tension between presence and absence;

In his project statement, Assu explains how his “interventions participated in the growing discourse of decolonization, acting as ‘tags’ to challenging [sic] the colonial fantasy of terra nullius […]”. Concluding, he summarizes, “I see these bold interruptions of the landscape as acts of resistance towards the colonial subjugation of the First People.”

The cover image for both *kimiwan* zine’s *Indigenous Futurisms* Issue and the *Indigenous Futurisms Mixtape* is *Medicine Rock Child*, a photography-based project by Wendy Red Star. The image is part of her *Thunder Up Above* series, which also includes *Stirs Up The Dust, Hoop In The Cloud, and Sits With The Stars*. Each work shows a figure standing in outer space terrain,
wearing futuristic imaginings of pow wow regalia. Headdresses cover faces, creating figures Red Star calls “[…] fierce ambiguous beings...someone you would not want to mess with” (2014, p. 28). The figures strike powerful poses: hands on hips, defensive fighting poses, or arms outstretched to the side; proclaiming, through strong body language, an immense Indigenous presence in outer space landscapes. “Each figure represented in the photographs”, writes Red Star, “stand as the First People (Natives) in the Final Frontier”. Red Star explains how she connected with the history of colonization when envisioning this futuristic landscape: “I relate this to the first contact of Europeans to the ‘New World’ and how strange they felt the Native communities were. Often disregarding Native people and culture as subhuman—or today—calling immigrants illegal aliens” (p. 28).

On the final page of kimiwan ‘zine, in a piece entitled Warrior Woman: Stop the Silence! writer Mary Longman transforms the “image and legacy” of her mother Lorraine Longman--who experienced injustice and violence as a young Indigenous woman--into Warrior Woman, “the Indigenized version of the Americanized Wonder Woman” (p. 56). “Stop the Silence!” is Warrior Woman’s call to action, proclaiming the genocide of Indigenous peoples, which “remains submerged and absent from educational history texts and government discourse” (p. 56). Longman’s family story becomes embedded in the figure of the warrior, who exposes misrepresentations of Indigenous histories in North America. Her ask manifests through “an international campaign for Indigenous Genocide”, for which Warrior Woman proudly displays “the tightly clutched red and white campaign ribbon, in the hope to raise awareness and bring justice to all those that perished” (p. 56). Through their work, Crosby, Star, and Longman negotiate and undermine non-Indigenous efforts to absent Indigenous peoples, in space and history.

In TimeTraveller™, spaces are critical storytelling tools; episodes are tied together by stories that consider Indigenously-determined spaces: creating, claiming, and protecting. For example, in Episode 5, Karahkwenhawi unexpectedly travels to the 17th century, meeting Kateri Tekakwitha, who also lived in Karahkwenhawi’s home community, Kahnawake. Kateri fostered connections between the spirituality in her community, and the introduction of Christianity. The
following exchange shows how Kateri asserts her identity, claiming space for Indigenous women, in a conversation with a priest, Father Pierre:

“There’s one more thing, Father […] [w]e wish to establish a convent for the Iroquois girls who do not want to marry”. Later, Karahkwenhawi questions Kateri’s decision:

Karahkwenhawi: I didn’t know you wanted to start a convent.
Kateri: Karahkwenhawi, we’ve been talking about it for ages. A place to practice our ceremonies in peace.
Karahkwenhawi: Ceremonies? I thought you were doing penance.
Kateri: That is what Father Pierre calls it.

Kateri clearly delineates between Father Pierre’s epistemology and her own practices. Working within the framework that existed in her community, Kateri seeks to create a space for young women in which they can gather and “practice our ceremonies in peace”.

Contrasting Kateri’s self-determination, *Episode 2* retells the Dakota Sioux Uprising of 1862. A group of Indigenous hunters are confronted and threatened by a non-Indigenous farmer, who invokes colonial dispossession through the following quotations: “Get off my land!”; “Nobody threatens me on my own land! Go back to where you came from!” Providing an antidote to scenes of violent displacement, Skawennati explained, during our conversation, what *Aboriginally-determined territories* means to her: “it’s mostly Native people that are determining what is happening in that space. That’s pretty important to me […]”

While she does not engage specifically with this episode in *TimeTraveller*™, Ambelin Kwaymullina (2014, *kimiwan* ‘zine) offers useful vocabulary for understanding the violence of these retold histories: “the tyranny of indifference” (p. 32). Reflecting on her work as an Indigenous speculative fiction writer, in *kimiwan* ‘zine, Kwaymullina shares an important narrative context: “The settler state origin myth forms and informs the first and most necessary tyranny of colonialism, the one that make possible all that are to follow: the tyranny of indifference” (p. 32). The tyranny of indifference supported the absenting of Indigenous presence in Indigenously-determined spaces, through the project Gerald Vizenor calls “manifest manners” (2009).
Cheryl physically tags Indigenous presence into the land, through her land art intervention, *uronndnland (wapahta oma iskonikan askiy)*:

This notion of tagging is so old school that it’s ancient when one recalls the repeating petroglyphs and pictographs that make their own trail across the land, and as I make my tag it too is imbued with the intent of saying something meaningful and symbolic. I inhabit this thin, dotted interstice where colonial and indigenous overlap as authentically as I can using the language that helps shape and guide my understanding of who I am and where I am from [...] A way of being grounded and experiencing the world that is gauged by and continues to engage with this beautiful land.

My work as an artist and as a musician is based in this need to pay homage, to take and make notes, to make a sound, to take a stand, and to make a mark commemorating the continued existence of whom I am and where I find myself, using this language that is as old and alive, resilient and ever-present as the stones I pick and stack.

In her project statement for *nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land)*, Cheryl writes again about the significance of proclaiming: “I mostly desired to sound into my environment with my voice, while riffing on some concepts I consider central to Nehiyawin – about resonance the sounding of a Cree worldview.” Cheryl explains how this project, as with many others, “is an homage to the legacy of those relatives and ancestors who have sung us the land so that we know who and where we are today, and is similarly dedicated to the voices, visions, and inroad the world has yet to hear and witness.” Here again, Cheryl enmeshes both telling and claiming, as she describes *ancestors who have sung us the land so that we know who and where we are today*. Describing her work with very specific language—pay homage, witness, sound out—she tasks her work with marking a point along the continuum, lasting through time. She practices the cyclical nature of this continuum; pulling from her history, and pushing forward.

In his video art remix project and live performance Iron Tomahawks, Jackson 2Bears juxtaposes images embodying Gerald Vizenor’s theory of *manifest manners* and *simulations* with excerpts from two songs by Indigenous hip hop groups. The first, by Team Rezofficial, rapping “Let me show you how a real Native go and do it” in their track Paper Music (15:15, Part 1), speaks to Indigenously-determined identity and action. At 17:57, hip hop group War Party sings “Try to get by, no word of a lie, we gotta try to restore pride” in their song *Feelin’ Reserved*, addressing the challenges of modern life on reserves, colonial violence, and other critical circumstances.
Both lyrics use active verbs to proclaim Indigenously-determined action: *Let me show you*, and *we gotta try*.

Four additional examples from the mixtape illustrate *proclaiming*. Video games scholar and *kimiwan* 'zine's *Indigenous Futurisms* issue guest editor Elizabeth LaPensée reads an excerpt from her writing in the publication: “A clear screen clouds over with pink-blue sheen like a sunrise over lake water. When I exhale, points form on a screen in patterns of constellations in a night sky. When they connect, they reveal syllabics. Our language is living, just as it always has and always will. Now dancing on the screen, awakened by breath” (Indigenously-determined games of the future, 5:00-5:41). LaPensée speaks about infusing and animating Indigenous languages into both cyberspaces and outer spaces, reminding readers of the intersections between Indigenous cultural work, technology, and histories. “We have always perceived the connectivity between all and life in many dimensions”, she says.

From 6:54 to 10:33, Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin reads Legend & Lyrics’ spoken-word piece “Speak to Me of Justice”. Repeating the title over and over again, suffixed by “when”, she suggests various scenarios involving the acknowledgement of Indigenous genocide, the return of stolen land, and the revival of Indigenous practices and ways of knowing. Waziyatawin proclaims that justice can only be spoken of when Indigenous peoples determine their future.

Scholar and AbTeC co-director Jason Edward Lewis quotes from his essay in *kimiwan* 'zine's *Indigenous Futurisms* issue, proclaiming the continuity of Indigenous presence: “Despite generation of deception, and betrayal, and violence, they are still the people of this place [...]” (43:11-43:39). 42:15-42:45 features an excerpt from *Star Wars: A New Hope*, dubbed in the Navajo Language, Diné. The Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona and Lucasfilm collaborated to produce the project; through the presence and use of the Diné language, the resulting work proclaims Indigenously-determined space travel and future imaginings.

5.7.5 **Summary**

In this section, I considered the practice of proclaiming. Proclaiming communicates histories of resistance. In our interview together, Cheryl emphasized the importance of repetition, of
labouring over stories in order to imprint and impart their meaning, and encourage others to take their own meaning from the listening experience. Proclaiming is one of the distinct responsibilities embodied through the initiatives of cultural workers; a method of tying the past into the future, of announcing existence, over and over, and of willing future paths of existence into being.

5.8 Summary of Analysis

In this chapter, I explored how cultural workers contribute to wider projects of resistance, through three interconnected practices: contributing, gathering, proclaiming. I shared what I learned about participants’ personal experiences with elements of these practices—community, storytelling, giving time and skills—and the challenges they face in their work. I learned how Cheryl, Steven, and Skawennati began using technology creatively, and how they position technology within the roles and responsibilities of cultural workers. In the following chapter, I extend my focused application of the practices of contributing, gathering, and proclaiming, on the selected materials, to three broader themes concerning Indigenous cultural labour.
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

6.1 OVERVIEW

Summarizing the findings in this thesis, this chapter reflects briefly on the research process and results. Focusing on three themes revealed by the findings, I also draw out opportunities for further study.

6.2 REFLECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through a highly iterative process, I had the privilege of delving into the work of artists involved in Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art, an exhibition built on the premise of the Indigenous cultural worker as a giver, and an activist. In my analysis, I too focused on action. Through Chapter 5, I created a space in which to consider how cultural workers, contribute, gather, and proclaim, through their projects. I looked at the public presentation of a cultural worker’s personal convictions about these projects, by interviewing three individuals involved in the Ghost Dance exhibition, and analyzing numerous pre-existing texts.

The interviews pulled the project in completely unexpected directions; responses that at first seemed tangential soon blossomed with depth and density after listening to each interview recording again, after reading transcripts over and over, and after spending time considering the context for each participant’s work. These unforeseen junctures testify to the limitations of this thesis, both in scope and length. The project travelled the length of only one of many threads spun through the research process, and running through each selected material.

Each participant drew topics to the surface that I chose not to pursue, ultimately excluding important issues from the project’s scope. These topics deserve much deeper inquiry into their significance. For example, Cheryl notably attended to the responsibilities of cultural work: caring for information that has been gifted and passing knowledge forward. She primarily defined responsibility through the use or transformation of knowledge in a way that benefits others, beyond initial use. Skawennati discussed Indigenous projects of art history; to document and create Indigenous archives of art history. Steven talked a lot about the tension between creating representation and creating presence, the former of which is often portrayed as a
cultural project; imagining or re-imagining; creating again. He discussed the difficulties in feeling that his work is making an impact, or whether it is relevant in the context of issues of survival. Steven’s words reminded me of Glen Coulthard (2014)—wrestling with the politics of representation versus the making and claiming of presence—and Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) attention to the value of cultural work, challenging ways of knowing that enable violence.

However, I will highlight three broad themes that emerged from the process of analysis.

First, the argument that cultural work is labour. It is involved, concerted effort, to explore many facets of an idea through multiple media. Each participant demonstrated this point extensively; Steven, Cheryl, and Skawennati contribute to their unique communities in many different ways. The labour and energy of cultural work is an important theme, because it brings the recognition of contribution to the fore; each act of giving a small but vital piece in a larger patched network of creating change. It also underscores the idea that cultural work is active practice, and not simply the result of practice.

Second, cultural workers are actively engaged in the process of creating memory. Through each proclamation, each utterance, cultural workers archive, a transitive practice I introduced in the beginning of this thesis. Skawennati and I discussed how Indigenous cultural workers author the archives of Indigenous art histories, a project that Steven is also immensely involved with, and considers to be a critical project in Indigenous arts communities. The following three examples show how cultural workers are building histories of Indigenous art through Indigenously-determined archives, giving to different communities through their initiatives.

In 2014, the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective’s annual conference was focused on the theme of Iakwé:iahre (we remember), particularly “the active and collaborative act of remembering, as applied to the contemporary idea of an archive from an Indigenous perspective” (“Conferences”, n.d.). The gathering involved cultural workers discussing “the creation of a Living Archive for Aboriginal Art so that we all may remember” (“Conferences”, n.d.). As part of their ongoing project Initiative for Indigenous Futures, Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace is developing what they call an archive of the Cyber PowWow project, progenitor to their work.
Scholar Julie Nagam is currently creating an online archive of Indigenous new media arts in Canada. These examples provide a glimpse into ongoing archival projects by numerous Indigenous cultural workers, and into the nuance of the practice: the living archive embodied in healthy relationships and continual acts of giving, and interactions with the results of defined initiatives, such as Nagam’s *Transactive Memory Keepers* project.

In our conversations together, Cheryl emphasized the importance of marking signposts along the way, connecting a previous generation to future voices. Performance art scholar Rebecca Schneider discusses the power systems involved in archival construction, namely how “the demand for a visible remain [...] would eventually become the architecture of a particular social power over memory” (p. 140). Continuing, she writes, “The document, as an arm of empire, could arrest and disable local knowledge while simultaneously scripting memory as necessarily failed [...] the archive became a mode of governance against memory” (p. 141).

Conversely, Leanne Simpson (2011) details how the histories of Indigenous communities emerge through memory created by action: “Indigenous cultures engages [sic] in processes or acts to create meaning [...] through engagement, presence, process—storytelling, ceremony, singing, dancing, doing” (p. 93). From this I extend the idea that contributing, gathering, and proclaiming, are acts that produce memories; connecting people and ideas together in a continual and changing search for meaning and understanding.

Schneider (2011) contrasts the evidence-based roots of the modern archive, with the potential for bodies to transmit memory: “In the archive, flesh is given to be that which slips away. According to archive logic, flesh can house no memory of bone. In the archive, only bone speaks memory of flesh. Flesh is blind spot. Dissimulating and disappearing. Of course, this is a cultural equation, arguably foreign to those who claim orature, storytelling, visitation, improvisation, or embodied ritual practice as history [...] performance does remain, does leave ‘residue.’ Indeed the place of residue is arguably flesh in a network of body-to-body transmission of affect and enactment – evidence, across generations, of impact” (p. 141).

Schneider explains that acting out memory is the only constant, if the belief in continuation and transformation of generations is strong; knowing and entrusting that people will know to share
and disseminate stories. Thus the process of proclaiming Indigenous activism and gathering, of contributing new stories, of gathering people together to listen and create, builds an active, living archive. For example, Cheryl L’Hirondelle’s narrative of Indigenous travel and communication is one instance of a network built on memory.

The third theme involves the slow process of contributing and making change, rooted in the importance of creating healthy relationships. Through their discussions of creation stories, and the essential work of passing information forward, Steven, Skawennati, and Cheryl show how creating presence is an intergenerational process; either creating or responding to the first splash in the water. Pushing empowering information across generations requires healthy and respectful relationships; beginning with individual acts and extending across communities to create sustainable systems of support for descendants. This continual process brings us back to Grace Dillon’s time-space continuum, represented in Native slipstream, in which the circularity of history, the present, and the future are tied by the acts of giving Leanne Simpson presents in her story of the shattered mirror. Restoring the mirror parallels the cycle’s continuity.

Opportunities for further study are numerous, both in method and perspective. For example, a larger participant group would provide a greater breadth of responses concerning community involvement, teaching, creative work with technology, and other methods of contribution. Participant diversity is also important to consider; individuals could be selected not only for their established presence as cultural workers, but also for their emerging contributions. Guided tours of selected creative projects, would create additional layers of meaning, in which participants provide descriptions of their work in their own words, in the context of our conversation together, by using language to walk through the pieces.

Further study could result in three completely different practices—contributing, proclaiming, gathering—depending on participant responses. Or, these three practices could be applied as foundational themes, to a larger study.

Additional perspectives for consideration include the economic implications of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous memory building, study into the gendered association of specific
methods of contributing, and further investigation into Indigenous science fiction narratives as important practices of creating Indigenous futures.

6.3 SUMMARY

In summary, this project was consumed with finding evidence of practice, integrating a way of thinking about archiving that is embodied through repetitive action: contributing, gathering, proclaiming. I was particularly interested in the practices of self-identified Indigenous cultural workers, how they understand this work, and how they perceive this work to fit in the larger contexts of their communities, their engagement with technology, their teaching work, and their future plans. With impetus from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations on the ethical implications of archival development, I attempted to balance a critique of the professional colonial production of memory with a demonstration of the active work performed by Indigenous cultural workers to cultivate, grow, and share Indigenously-determined memories. Cultural work is an integral part of Indigenous resistance, because it archives the process of resistance, and shares the process among both participants and non-participants, providing a healthy path into the future.
References


Appendix A

Contact E-mail Script

Dear [NAME],

My name is Eva Athanasiu and I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto, learning how internet art works produced by artists who identify as Aboriginal (or, but not limited to Native, First Nations, Indian, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous) can contribute to larger networks of resistance and empowerment, including social movement communities. I am currently focused on histories of new media arts projects, based in Canada. My project will culminate in a written master's thesis, and the current working title is Stories of Survivance: Aboriginal Networks of Resistance and New Media Art in Canada.

Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew’s idea of networked art practices, Gerald Vizenor’s idea of survivance, and your [work/writing/project] on [example] as well as [work/writing/project] in [example], have been very influential and meaningful in this learning process.

I would be honoured to speak with you and learn more about your [example], [example], and [example]. As part of this project, I am also speaking with [name].

If you would like to contribute to the project by participating in a one-hour interview, or would like more information, please let me know. I will share more details about the project, and provide you with an information sheet and consent form, so that you may make an informed decision. Please also contact me with any questions or concerns at eva.athanasiu@mail.utoronto.ca or 416-544-0199.

Thank you for your time! I hope this project will be of interest to you, and look forward to connecting with you.

Eva Athanasiu
Appendix B
Consent Form (2 Pages)

Research Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Please read the following. Signing this form will indicate that you have been informed about the research project, including your role in the process, and that you consent to participating.

Study name     New media art and Aboriginal networked histories in Canada

Researcher     Eva Athanasiu, graduate student, University of Toronto, Faculty of Information

Supervisor     Brett Caraway, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto, Faculty of Information

Project description
This research project involves learning how artists in Canada who identify as Aboriginal (or, but not limited to Native, First Nations, Indian, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous) are and have been incorporating internetwork art projects (or net art) into their interdisciplinary practices, and whether and how net art contributes to re-telling and re-imagining the histories and futures of Aboriginal networks of resistance and empowerment based in Canada; social movements are one example. The research project will culminate in a graduate thesis.

Participant role
You are invited to answer a series of questions about your work as an artist, including recent and ongoing projects involving the use of digital electronic technologies, and community engagement. The interview will last approximately 1 hour and will be audio-recorded.

Risks
Risks for participating in this study are minimal. You will be participating in an interview that may elicit emotions about your work. Significant social, psychological or emotional, physical or legal risks are not anticipated or expected from your participation in the research. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may choose to not answer particular questions, or to remove yourself from the research process.

Voluntary participation and study withdrawal
Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may choose to stop participating at any time, for any reason. Your decision to stop participating will not result in any negative consequences to your social, emotional or psychological, legal, or physical wellbeing.
Confidentiality
You will be interviewed on the topic of your work as a public artist. Your responses will be included as part of the researcher’s written thesis, and you will be named in the research, unless you request otherwise. You will be provided with an electronic transcript of the interview for your approval. If requested, any specific information you have provided in the process of research will not be used. Your decisions will be respected and honoured.

Data protection: handling, storage, and access
Throughout the study, any information you provide will be accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. The researcher will audio-record the interview, and may also handwrite supplementary notes. After the interview, the audio recording and any notes will be stored in the supervisor’s office at the University of Toronto. Here, the researcher will transcribe the audio recording and scan notes, saving the documents as password-protected files on the supervisor’s computer. You will be provided with an electronic transcript of the interview for your approval. Once transcription and scanning are complete, the researcher will erase the audio recording and shred any notes on paper. Electronic files will be retained for two years, and then deleted. You will be provided with an electronic copy of the thesis, within six months of its approval by the University of Toronto.

Questions
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Eva Athanasiu, researcher, at eva.athanasiu@mail.utoronto.ca or 416-544-0199, or Brett Caraway, supervisor, at brett.caraway@utoronto.ca or 905-569-4503. This research project has been reviewed by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto. You can contact the office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Authorization
I consent to participating in an interview with Eva Athanasiu, researcher and graduate student at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, for the purpose of her research on the work of Aboriginal artists in Canada. My signature below indicates my consent to and understanding of the following:

1. Eva Athanasiu can make an audio recording of the interview, supplemented by notes written on paper.
2. My participation in the interview is voluntary.
3. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.
4. I can request the removal of any information I provide during the research process.
5. I will not be compensated for my participation in the research process.
6. My responses to the interview questions will contribute to Eva Athanasiu’s written thesis, and I will be named as the author of my responses, unless I request otherwise.

__________________________
Name (please print)

__________________________
Signature

__________________________
Date
Appendix C

Interview Guide

Each interview participant was individually and purposively recruited to participate in this thesis, so the interview guides were also targeted to better reflect their work. However, I posed five questions to all three participants;

1. How did you come to contribute the exhibition *Ghost Dance: Activism. Resistance. Art.*?
2. What does community mean for you, and how do you connect with your community?
3. When and how did you start working creatively with technology?
4. What is the significance of activism in your community involvements?
5. What is the significance of teaching or education in your community involvement?