

Seeing Through Our Knotted Ties to Extractivism

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Abstract

Toronto is a centre of power for the international mining industry, where decisions about the lives of individuals, the future of entire communities, and the destruction of the more than human world are made behind the cold glass and steel of skyscrapers. This report and website confront mining industry strategies used to make themselves present and absent throughout the city. The website is a visual counternarrative that combines text with photography, photographic collage, and mapping. I use these strategies and methods to get at what is hidden behind the mining corporations' public profile and visually represent what is so often obscured from view or abstracted from reality. In this report, I argue that Canada's global extractive reach today is directly tied to the colonial logics at the root of justifications of mining, to the settler colonialism on which this country stands, and its imperial expansion globally. I demonstrate clear connections between the transnational operations of Canadian companies, the support they receive because of being positioned in Toronto and Canada more broadly, and their headquarters in the city. I argue that the industry produces acceptance and support for their activities and the violence these entail by individualizing the essential role of mining in our everyday lives, and that this represents a shaping of public memory. This project grapples with the uncomfortable truth that our world and lives are dependent on mining. While the mining industry uses this fact to garner support for their operations (no matter the costs), this project invites readers and website users to turn *towards* our collusion with extractivism so that we may see *through* our knotted entanglements in ways that allow us to imagine / debate / create worlds outside and away from extractivism.

Keywords: extractivism, colonial persistence, dominant myth creation, public memory, visual counternarratives

Foreword

I grew up in Sudbury – a quintessential centre of Canadian mining. My motivation for creating this project lies back there in my growing up, in the excitement presented by the stories we children were told about mining. But it also lies in the disillusion I experienced when I began to study the costs of mining to the earth and the living things in it at graduate school. At the same time, I joined the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN) in their work to highlight and resist the harmful practices of Canadian mining companies in solidarity with mining-impacted communities (MISN, “About MISN”, n.d.). This project emerged from my experiences in Sudbury, the knowledge I have gained through my pursuit of this Master of Environmental Studies degree, and from my time as a MISN member.

My plan of study has guided the various forms of learning pursued throughout this degree and is focused around three areas of concentration: resource extraction, settler colonialism, and collective memory. Each of these components root this project and report. I have used theories of colonial legacies, visual counternarratives and public memory to frame the way I speak about mining, and about extractivism more broadly. Canada’s settler colonialism, and the logics underpinning this system, remain the basis on which corporate mining, and Canada’s central role in this global industry, is justified. I use visual counternarratives to engage more closely with Canadians' entanglements (in different ways and to varying degrees) with extractivism, including how consent for further mining (and, by extension, associated violations) is achieved. I intervene in dominant myth creation’s influence on public memory by mapping mining presence in Toronto and the industry’s global reach, paired with a photo essay. By combining these methods, I was better able to explore and communicate the complexities, contradictions, and knotted ties that have come to define this exploration of extractivism, colonialism, and public memory.

Dedication

My work is dedicated to Marilynne Baird, Leslie Baird, and Joanne Steadman.

For you, with all my love and gratitude.

Acknowledgements

As I wrote about the settler colonialism of Canada and Toronto's central role in the global extraction of resources, people living in encampments were being violent evicted from parks in my neighborhood. In Tkaronto, on land stolen from Indigenous peoples, hundreds of police were sent to raid encampments and force people out of public space. I would like to highlight this incredible injustice and express deep gratitude and support for my neighbours living in encampments, community organizers, harm reduction workers, community outreach groups, and all those fighting for racial, social, and environmental justice in Toronto.

Honor Ford-Smith has been with me on this journey since the first day of my program. Honor has been wonderfully supportive, patient and understanding, while also elevating my work at every stage. Early on, Honor encouraged me to pursue that which I truly find exciting, and to try new things. This directly led me down the route of a major project rather than major paper and gave me the confidence to explore creative methods. The inspiration and encouragement I have received from Honor has made this experience so much more than I ever imagined it could be.

I would also like to acknowledge that this project is inspired by and builds upon the work of countless others. From the knowledge shared by mining-impacted communities, to resistance movements, to Canadian organizers, to academics, and so far beyond, this project is part of a "communal creation of knowledge" (Martínez Salazar, 2014, xi).

I am so grateful to be a part of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN) and I would like to recognize the incredible work of this group. I have learned so much from MISN members, and my experience organizing with them has shaped this project in fundamental ways.

I would also like to thank Eglá Martínez Salazar, who has shaped my life by suggesting I pursue this degree at York University, by fundamentally shifting my understanding of how colonization persists, and by sparking a curiosity and sense of responsibility in me to un/learn my position in this world.

Tim, the love I have for you and light that you bring to my life are endless. Thank you for always bringing warmth, joy, and a whole lot of fun to our days. Sandra, your energy and positivity are always great sources of inspiration, and I so appreciate the encouragement you have given me over the last two years. Thank you to Marlo for supporting me, from Ottawa to now. You're a wonderful person, and I am better for knowing you.

To Mom, Dad, Maddie, & Adriane: your love and support nourishes me every day. Nothing is possible without you all, and I can't thank you enough.

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Introduction

Oh, Toronto

Absence

in presence

on Bay Street
where the talons
of titans
are concealed and polished
by cold glass and steel
looming, at once blocking
from view
& reflecting
the world, around

Presence through

absence

in the public
where the talons
of titans
are removed, for celebration
myths and power
carved into steel and glass
offering us more
to we burry our memory

The visions of economic flourishing held by mining companies, their financial supporters, and the Government of Canada, both create and are themselves created by socio-environmental violence and injustice. Toronto is a centre of the global mining industry and is therefore entangled in harms on a transnational scale. Extractivism is both a way of looking at and engaging with the world; that is to say, it is “both a principle and a practice” (Willow, 2016, p. 2). Extractivism is a nonreciprocal relationship to the more than human world based on dominance and accumulation; it diminishes life in many forms to objects valued only so far as they support wealth accumulation (Klein, 2014, p. 169). This project takes as a starting point the fact that

mining is a form of extractivism, and so harms resulting from these operations must be addressed, understood, and resisted through mounting challenges to larger systems of injustice (Willow, 2016, p. 1).

My work focuses on Toronto as a site deeply embedded in transnational extractivism, confronting how the mining industry makes itself strategically present and absent throughout the city. I argue that this serves to promote and reinforce particular narratives about this industry in the pursuit of justification and support for their vision of the world. This project speaks to Canadian settlers and others living in the country by sharing information that fosters a critical uncovering of their implication in extractive harms by breaking illusions of our spatial and material separation from extractivism. It promotes self-reflexivity, with the aim of inspiring the imagination and creation of worlds apart from extractivism. This report lays out the principles informing my work on the accompanying website.

Motivations: The absent presence of extraction

i. Traces and knots, unearthed

I grew up in Sudbury, Ontario, one of Canada's largest mining communities (Kuyek, 2019, p. 69). From my bedroom window, I looked out on the Inco Superstack, the world's second tallest freestanding chimney at what is now Vale's nickel smelting facility (Vale, "Vale's Iconic," n.d.). I took elementary school field trips to Science North, an educational centre that has been widely funded and supported by mining corporations such as Vale Canada Ltd. and Glencore (Science North, "2019-2020 Annual Report," 2020). We visited the Big Nickel and took tours into a former mine at Dynamic Earth. The rocks in and around the city bear some of the most visible scars left by the mining industry in Sudbury.



Blackened rocks in Sudbury, Ontario. Source: Wikimedia, provided by ElatedCoder

Rocks throughout the Sudbury area have black rock coatings resulting from almost a century of smelting (Leverington & Schindler, 2016, p. 1-2). This is just one expression of environmental degradation resulting from these extractive operations (Bradley, 2015).

Slowly but surely, I remembered and uncovered some of the ways that the industry has appeared and influenced my own experience and childhood. In listening to the simultaneous absence and presence of the mining industry in my present, I began to unearth its presence and absence in my past, and no doubt that of others like me. Coming across these photographs in our family albums was unsettling. I had been researching mining influence in educational spaces in the present day, with only vague memories of the various interactions I had had with the industry as a child.



Yet, as these photographs and my conversations with family revealed, there were numerous connections between my childhood and the mining industry.

Kuhn, quoted in Tinkler (2013), writes that “photographs are produced as evidence of something, [and] to understand what they refer to the reader must look outside the frame, to the memories the photo is intended to preserve.” She argues that these narratives “shift between past and present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, historical moments” (p. 64). These images were meant to

preserve fun, memorable moments during outings at unique places. They also shed light on mining industry strategies for communicating their perspectives to the public. Finding these photographs allowed for a more personal, related exploration; here I can find traces of my own knotted connections with the relations of extractivism.

These knotted ties with the mining industry remained buried for me for many years. Mining has been a presence in my life for a long time. Yet, for me, these were looming presences. They were nearly absent, and mostly overlooked. The project *Mining Immigrant Bodies* is a “cross-cultural and intergenerational oral history project,” which focuses on the “varied experiences of postwar immigrant miners and their families [in Sudbury] to understand the visible and invisible effects that pollutants have had on their bodies” (“[Mining Immigrant Bodies](#)”). Discovering and exploring this project prompted me to reflect on how my distanced experience of the mining industry in that city was also deeply tied to my race, socio-economic status, and citizenship. While entangled in extractivism, I mostly experience the benefits of this industry through the luxuries of ‘modernity,’ which they have been critical in creating (Sheller, 2014).

Learning about the presence of the mining industry in the city which I had lived as a child ignited in me an interest in uncovering more about where the mining industry has strategically made itself present and absent. Yet, my focus on the Canadian mining industry in this master’s program stemmed not from this childhood connection but rather through my learning that the city of Toronto is a hub for the international mining industry. Despite the significant time I have spent in this city, I was unaware that many companies are headquartered in Toronto. This was a surprise, and it stuck to me.

Soon after I learned about the significant presence of the mining industry in Toronto, I joined the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN). MISN is an organization based in Toronto, which educates around and resists the Canadian mining industry. They strategically use the fact that they are based in the same city as these extractive headquarters to work in solidarity with mining-impacted communities worldwide. I have learned so much about the mining industry and solidarity work through my time with MISN. This project reflects and draws on much of this learning,

and this project would not have come to fruition as it has without this group. MISN members inspire me in countless ways, and I strive to contribute to the work they do in solidarity with mining-impacted communities.

ii. A Polished Presence

Toronto is a core of the international mining industry, with 47% of all public mining companies are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) or the TSX Venture Exchange (TSXV) (Toronto Stock Exchange [TSX], n.d.). These two exchanges have raised \$44 billion in the past five years, or 52% of all global mining financing around the world (TSX, n.d.). Toronto's inviting climate for extractive business includes the concentration of professionals and business which bolster the mining industry, such as corporate lawyers, banks, brokers (Deneault & Sacher, 2012, p. 15). Toronto is also home to "several hundred mining supplies, consulting firms, and service providers" (Mining Association of Canada [MAC], 2020, p. 15).

As a centre of power for this extractive industry, decisions about the lives of individuals, the future of entire communities, and the destruction of the more than human world in particular areas are made within the city. As will be discussed later in this paper, creating physical spaces which are available for extractive operations is an incredibly violent project that often includes harm to communities and land. It also usually involves social, political, and economic disruption. The Canadian state has, in numerous ways, bolstered this extractive industry to maximize corporate profits. Support from the government also comes in the form of creating a permissive regulatory environment and favourable tax laws, which in part explains why Canada is a core for this industry (Deneault & Sacher, 2012). Canadian mining companies commit a myriad of injustices against Indigenous and marginalized people all around the world, and their actions are supported and enabled by the Government of Canada (Gordon & Webber, 2016).

In my work and research related to the mining industry, it became clear that a common and dominant narrative is often repeated in response to industry critiques. On repeat, in various forms, is the fact that despite any and all violence that results from

their operations, mining companies make the world as we know it possible. I was hearing the same story: we need the mining industry because we use, engage with, and benefit from products which exist because of extractive operations every single day of our lives. This narrative was being pushed by Canadian government representatives speaking at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) annual conference, in the industry-produced Mining Matters school curriculum materials, and at the ROM's mineral exhibit. At a base level, these are facts about the world as it is today. There are, however, significant corporate representations of truth embedded in this picture which are attempting to do profound ideological and cultural work.

It is a story on repeat: "accept industry practices and power because you need us, and do not be too critical because you need us." The industry and their allies often frame mining operations as essential and attempt to convince people of this through, for example, individualizing the matter. The relationship they create is between a person and the minerals; since minerals are in your toothpaste, you cannot live without them. Therefore, mining is good and necessary and must continue to operate as it is today. There is a clouding of the relationship we have with the rest of the world, and the responsibility we have to each other. It is an invitation to forget the significant harms that the industry has inflicted worldwide, and it is a strategic framing of the role that the industry plays in society. This is done by centring mining and capitalism.

The mining industry has invested in self-promotion through educational channels. Stuart Tannock has written about the mining industry's insertion of their money and values into numerous public education spaces within Toronto. His work outlines the strategic, sustained effort that the industry has made to intervene in educational spaces in ways that directly promote specific mining activities and broader sector interests. He contemplates the risks and influences gained when corporations and their agendas are ushered into these spaces (Tannock, 2009, p. 2). One method the industry has used to insert their worldview into public schools is through the Mining Matters program. Mining companies, the Canadian government, and various other institutions sponsor the Mining Matters program. Their elementary and high school curricula have reached many

public schools throughout the country (Tannock, 2010) and promote pro-industry and pro-business outlooks. This is a further embedding of the extractive view into educational spaces. The Mining Matters curriculum is an attempt to shape young people into pro-mining, capitalist subjects. As Kapoor (2013) states in reference to philanthropic donations, the holes made in state social funding as a result of neoliberal cuts are then able to be filled by corporate money, which is a problem as it means that decisions about the public become private and tied to business elites (p. 65). Mining Matters provides teachers with some valuable, engaging materials about science, geology, and more and can be understood as filling a gap in support and resources for educators.

Another way that the mining industry attempts to shape and polish its image is through the donation of money to various educational and social institutions throughout the city. In many cases, they are funding business, mining, or engineering programs to draw young people towards careers in mining and mining-related business. On the website created for this project I also focus on the mining industry's strong presence at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), where numerous mining companies have donated to the *Teck Suite of Galleries: Earth's Treasures*. This gallery displays meteorites, rocks, minerals, and gems and is also the site of the city's second *Canadian Mining Hall of Fame* (Royal Ontario Museum [ROM], "Teck Suite," n.d.; Mining Hall of Fame, "Plan Your Visit," n.d.).

Tens of millions of dollars have been donated to various hospitals and universities throughout the city, including York University. Many universities have taken money from mining companies and executives, often naming buildings, centres, and programs after them. Some have also been given honorary degrees. Corporate philanthropists can "maintain a certain distance and anonymity from the social impacts," of their businesses "yet at the same time benefit from a system that privileges individual effort, initiative, [and] philanthropy" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 64). These are some of the key ways that the mining industry makes itself visible in the city.

Ilan Kapoor (2013) draws on Slavoj Žižek in his establishing of the term "decaf capitalism" to explain philanthropy (p. 61). This term refers to how philanthropy allows

one to “balance out...ruthless profitmaking with charity work,” in ways that rationalize the socio-environmental harms caused by their operations (Kapoor, 2013, p.62). It serves to “purify corporate ills, acting as a countermeasure to socio-economic exploitation,” ultimately with the aim of allowing capitalism “to sustain itself while averting rebellion or crisis.” (Kapoor, 2013, p. 63). We can see that the donations made by mining executives and corporations throughout the city of Toronto are part of a wider picture of decaf capitalism, which ultimately serves the interests of powerful individuals and to maintain the capitalist order.

Of course, the celebration of donors is nothing new and is certainly not limited to the mining industry. We can also question where money can come from that is truly ‘clean ’or which is not ‘dirty ’in some way. Yet, the widespread acceptance of mining industry money, paired with the control and influence that this money can purchase, serves to shape a public narrative around the industry and its impacts. It also polishes the name of donors, and the money they give. It attempts to erase the various forms of harm that have made possible such an amassing of wealth.

iii. Project Description

The project website is entitled *Seeing Through Our Knotted Ties to Extractivism*, and it uses the ArcGIS Story Maps software to produce a visual counternarrative to the mining industry. By counternarrative I mean a story which challenges the dominant ideas in circulation about mining. This site explores the layered, complex meanings of extractivism and investigates where we see it appear in Toronto. This is done to more fully understand how the city and citizens are enmeshed in the uncomfortable truths of the mining industry.

There are many ways to engage this site (see “User Guide” in the Appendix of this report), which was designed not only as an expression of my own learning but also for people who want to engage critically with the connections that they have with extractivism. I hope it will be useful for students and researchers who are looking for more information about the Canadian mining industry and perhaps even the strategy/method of visual counternarratives. I also sincerely hope that this site can be

helpful in strategic research, education, conversation, organizing, movement building, and resistance undertaken by those opposing the Canadian mining industry and creating a future where extractivism does not exist.

The main navigation page of the website shows that there are 8 main sections:

- 1) *Introducing the Project*: this is a brief explanation of the main areas of focus of the website, and some of the guiding question which brought this project to life. I have also included the poem from the introduction of this paper.
- 2) *About this site*: I give a brief explanation of how to use the site, provide a link to my “User Guide” from the appendix of this paper, and provide three tips for using the website. I also provide a note on the visual methods that I used. When completed, and I will also include a link to this report in this section of the website.
- 3) *The Roots & Branches of This Project*: This section introduces the rooting concepts of this project and explains where these themes branch out to in this project. First, I give an overview of Tkaronto/Toronto, giving a brief statement on the Indigenous history and presence in this area, and then to a brief explanation of Toronto as the core of the international mining industry. I then define the key term ‘extractivism.’ Next, I introduce the common statement that we are totally reliant on mining. I explain that while this is true, it is not the whole truth and that this statement is also doing cultural work to shape our imaginations of what the future could be. Finally, I provide a brief statement on the creation and imagining of futures away from extraction and how this website brings us closer to our connections to mining.
- 4) *Starting in the Centre*: This section provides facts about Canadian mining to introduce viewers to the grand scale of this industry, paired with photographs of the TSX building. I highlight some of the reasons why companies might choose Toronto as a headquarters. Next are two interactive maps, one of which plots the Toronto headquarters of TSX-listed mining companies, and the other which plots the

headquarters of TSX Venture Exchange-listed mining companies. A photograph that I took of the building and basic company information accompanies each point on the map. Wherever possible, I have also included additional information about past and present issues, violations, and violence related to company operations. Links for further learning are provided wherever possible. Finally, I give an overview of some of the ways that mining is supported, including examples of government support for mining and lobby groups PDAC and the Mining Association of Canada (MAC).

- 5) *The Long Reach of Canadian Extractivism*: This section highlights the transnational reach of the Canadian mining industry, connecting this extractivism to colonization and Canadian imperialism. This section includes three interactive maps where users can click on a plotted point to learn more about the company and operations at that location. The first map focuses on the Canadian Venture Building at 82 Richmond Street East, where numerous junior mining companies are based. Their operations, primarily within Canada, are plotted on a map to show that many Canadian companies pursue extractive projects within Canada. The second interactive map focuses on the operations of Barrick Gold Corporation, one of the largest gold mining companies in the world. Plotting their international operations, this map and accompanying text highlights that Toronto is a headquarters of choice for truly global extractive operations that have significant impacts on communities and the more than human world. Finally, the third map looks at the operations of companies associated with the Forbes & Manhattan Merchant Bank, reiterating the transnational reach of these companies while also highlighting the fact that when it comes to junior mining companies, there can be many companies all tied to a single other business; Toronto is the centre of incredible power and influence. Finally, I provide a background of the Cerro de San Pedro mine in Mexico which has faced significant community opposition, has created significant social and environmental harms, and is operated by Toronto-based New Gold Inc. This case study exemplifies many of the central themes of this section.

6) *Philanthropy: Coercing Our Approval:* This section starts by explaining how donations and philanthropy can be tools used to do profound social and political work. An interactive map allows users to explore the city and learn more about where huge donations with connections to the mining industry have been made. Next is a focus on the ROM, which has an entire exhibit dedicated to mining and is sponsored by mining companies. Alongside photos taken inside the exhibit, I link to examples of harmful extractive practices ROM sponsors have been a part of and briefly considers how the ROM paints the mining industry in a very positive, polished light. I included extra information on the ROM to bring forward a consideration of the dominant narratives which surround extractivism in the city that are retold in educational spaces. This section also has a call to action, where I ask people to email me with any other places where donations connected to extraction have been made in Toronto to include them on this map.

7) *Photo Essay:* This photo essay has three sections called “Entangled Traces,” “Mourning Voids,” and “Mineral Skies.” “Entangled Traces” explores the harms, violence, scars, and lasting impacts that mining inflicts on the human and more than human world. It also considers what is sacrificed and taken to amass wealth and challenges the celebrations around philanthropic donations by Rob McEwen to York University. I focused on McEwen Mining’s El Gallo complex in Sinaloa State, Mexico. A 2009 Environmental Impact Assessment for McEwen Mining’s El Gallo mine at the time of exploration details the flora in the mine area, which this mine would impact. Using that list, I found three specimen photos of a very closely related plant from this region of Mexico. I then used Adobe Photoshop to create two images.

The first photograph is of McEwen’s El Gallo mine and uses opaque outlines of the three plant specimens to cover the mine site. The intention behind this photo was to bring what has been lost to the mine site through a visual haunting of what is no longer on that land. In this way, we can think about the permanent scars left by extraction. I took the second photo, which shows McEwen Mining’s downtown Toronto headquarters. I placed the same three plant specimens onto the building’s

glass façade of the building in a way that is meant to look like a reflection. While this is a fictional portrayal of what plants would look like reflected in such a massive building, this photo was created to bring the harms and scars of extraction to the centres of power which are so often removed from the operations they control around the world. It brings forward, to the city of Toronto, that which is so often externalized in the extraction process. Reflected into the city streets are the scars that these extractive corporations create in the name of increasing profit margins. No longer are we looking at a glass building with no knowledge of what happens within.

Next in this section is a brief description of Rob and Cheryl McEwen's connection to York University, and then moves to a series of three photographs which explore these same harms in connection to philanthropic donations. This series is called "Mourning Voids." I took all three photos outside of the Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building, part of the Schulich School of Business at York University. I brought a croton petra plant, which is of the same sub-family as the three plant specimens described above and the plants at the El Gallo site, to this building. The first photo shows the plant, with roots and soil exposed, sitting on top of a silver plant pot in front of the McEwen building. The second photo is similar, this time with a gold pot and slightly more zoomed out. The third photo shows even more of the McEwen building, and the plant is sitting properly in a black plant pot. I chose the gold and silver to reflect the two types of metals extracted at the El Gallo mine and exposed the roots to reflect on the ecosystems and lives, broadly understood, which are taken, damaged, unsettled, and extracted due to mining operations. It also felt important to show the roots and soil in a space which is so removed from the realities of where this donated money has come from. I see the final photo as bringing a sense of mourning to this site of celebration of McEwen's wealth. The plant in this section represents the true impacts of McEwen Mining's operations on local flora. It also represents the various forms of socio-environmental injustices caused by extractive projects more broadly all around the world. Traces of harm are brought to these spaces of power which directly benefit from forgetting all that has

been lost and taken. I chose McEwen Mining due to CEO Rob McEwen's connection to York University, which I detail at the end of this section. In 2018, faculty and researchers sent a letter of deep concern to the York administration about injustices related to McEwen's businesses. I included this letter in the project with permission from the lead signatory.

Finally, the section "Mineral Skies" attempts to visually represent the polished, fictional, and incomplete narratives that the industry and its supporters throughout the city push forward. I layered photos of various mining headquarters in the city with photos of minerals in the ROM's online collection. For each building photo, I found ROM minerals extracted in the same area as a Toronto-based company's operations. Using Photoshop, I filled the skies behind the buildings with these minerals, layering them to create a kaleidoscopic effect. Once again attempting to penetrate the glass facades which disguise such incredible power, these photographic collages mimic the otherworldliness and fiction of the narratives told, including the claim that we can mine our way out of the climate crisis. I have displayed these photocollages in two ways. First, I created a panel photo of all the photocollages that I made. Each photo was cropped and compiled to make a collection of narrow rectangles which sit side by side. I then go into more detail on five of the collages. Beside each of these five photocollages I have included maps that show both the company headquarters and the general location of the mineral extraction/company operations. I also include a picture of the ROM specimen and offer more information about the mine or company in question with a focus on controversy and harms related to their operations.

8) *Towards More for the Future:* This is the conclusion to the project and provides a reiteration of some key themes, with a turn towards starting to imagine and create a world outside of extractivism. I also provide links to other related projects and organizations for further learning. This project does not prescribe a set path or solution for the issues discussed within. Instead, I strive to provoke reflection from

website users about our deeply knotted, layered, and varied ties to the mining industry, its presence and impacts transnationally, and to the ideologies which underpin extractivism. The connections explored in this project, in addition to the industry narratives which point to the centrality of the products of mining in our everyday lives, should not be rejected out of hand or pushed away. Rather, we can *move towards* this implication, acknowledging that these systems may not be of our own making but that we nevertheless benefit from them (Davis, 2014, p. 16). We can then ask ourselves what becomes possible when we do turn towards this responsibility. What does this kind of serious implication, connection, and responsibility open up? This project concludes by discussing the *presence* of the mining industry in our everyday lives and the *potential* we have to create a world beyond extractivism.

iv. The Roots of this Project

Following the acknowledgments made by Merle Davis Matthews in their MA Thesis called *Researching Extraction, Refusing Extractive Research* (2018), I would like to turn to a note on my use of the words ‘we’ and ‘us.’ I designed this project to provide information and analysis to a wide range of people interested in these topics and speak to settler Canadians in particular. While I sincerely hope that many people will find this work helpful, it is also important to acknowledge that I use the words “we” and “us” throughout this paper and on the website. I did this in part as a way of acknowledging my own implication in these processes as a white settler. I also made this choice because I conceived of and created this work with settlers, and white settlers in particular, in mind (Davis Matthews, 2018, pp.11-13). I believe that white settlers have a deep responsibility to contend with and confront our entanglements with colonial extractivism, especially since white people are constantly invited to forget the innumerable past and present injustices that make our experience of the world possible. This website is an attempt to reach others widely to provoke reflection & action.

This digital story map provides a counternarrative to the dominant presentation of the mining industry agenda, made visible in part through the consideration of memory

studies in relation to extractive industries. An analysis of mining company presences and strategic absences, how industry narratives shape public memory and therefore horizons of possibility, and how these narratives intertwine with settler colonial imaginaries are explored. This project unearths what is omitted in our everyday seeing of these familiar places by pulling in left-out truths, expanding industry notions of leaving behind a destructive past, and complicating notions of implication and responsibility. I hope that it can be a small step towards creating a future outside of and away from extraction.

A rooting concept inspiring the production of this photo essay is that of the palimpsest. A palimpsest is “a parchment that has been inscribed two or three times, the previous text having been imperfectly erased and remaining therefore still partially visible” (Alexander, 2006, p.190). This process can also be understood as an “imperfect erasure” that makes visible a past (Alexander, 2006, p.190). This photo essay engages with the notion that traces of “historical processes provide a ghostly shape to the present, that must be interrogated to show its form” (Rowe & Tuck, 2017, p. 6). As this project engages both ideas around palimpsests and colonialism, it is important to note that “many recent analyses of settler colonial societies describe them as haunted by victims of genocide...even by ‘future ghosts’” (Cariou, 2006; Medak-Saltzman, 2015; Morrill, Tuck, & SFHQ, 2016; Tuck & Ree, 2013; see also important work on ghosts by Driskill, 2005, as cited in Rowe and Tuck, 2017, p. 6). In this photo essay I have tried to represent how mining “imprints an extractivist mindset on a physical landscape” (Willow, 2016, p. 11), and to write a counternarrative to this way of understanding the world. Palimpsests, ghosts, imprints, and traces bring to mind Christina Sharpe’s notion that the “past...is not past” (2016, p. 62). These concepts were crucial in the creation of this work.

The root and driver behind this project is the place-based connection that I have with this topic of mining industry presence in Toronto. This project traces pieces of a journey I have taken to uncover truths about the mining industry and truths about myself as a white settler. I am grateful to have the opportunity to live, study, and conduct this research on the territory of Tkaronto (Toronto), which has been care-taken by many Nations for centuries and whose current treaty holders are the Mississaugas of

the New Credit First Nation. The settler colonialism of Canada makes possible ongoing extraction on Turtle Island. Importantly, it also makes possible my own presence, and the presence of mining company headquarters, in Tkaronto. This settler colonialism and extractivism in turn allow for the imperialism that the Canadian government and extractive corporations are involved in, as outlined later in this paper (see, for example, Gordon & Webber, 2016). Un/learning so as to better understand how my presence in Tkaronto is directly tied to extractivism, settler colonialism, and imperialism brought me to this project.

Land, Myth, Memory, & Colonization

i. 'Nature' as a Tool of Erasure

According to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, colonialism and capitalism are built upon both extraction and assimilation (Willow, 2016, p.12). Extractive capitalism is “an economic system that engages in theft, borrowings, and forced removals, violently reorganizing social life as well as the land by thieving resources from Indigenous and Afro-descendant territories” (Gómez-Barris, 2017, p. xvii). Fictional logics of the capitalist system which state that there is a near-endless supply of what is being extracted are the basis of this process; if it runs out, it can simply be replaced with another extracted product (Klein, 2014, p.169). Extractivism is both a physical act of taking from the earth, but it is also a way of thinking which is very political (Willow, 2016, p. 2); “extraction is not just about mining and drilling, but it is a mindset [and] approach to nature” (Klein, 2013). A helpful elaboration on this point comes from Johnson and Zalik (2021):

Following recent scholarship that seeks to expand conceptualizations of extraction and extractivism (Gago and Mezzadra, 2017; Killoran-McKibbin and Zalik, 2016), we understand extraction to extend beyond physical harvesting processes to include sedimented oppressive power relations and logics (local but also global) which explicitly and/or implicitly maintain and secure the exploitative arrangements under which nature is appropriated, altered, or removed over time. (p. 386).

Colonial logics and practices inform conceptions of nature which are dominant today. Dominant groups often understand 'nature' as an "unproblematized, ahistorical 'object'" which can be *used* (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 5). The gaping wounds produced by this extraction, combined with associated destructive processes, result in irreversible health impacts to people in surrounding areas, have devastating effects on the ecosystems surrounding the extractive zones, and leave an enduring mark on the land. These projects "imprint an extractivist mindset on a physical landscape" (Willow, 2016, p. 11), and this is something that haunts people and land forever.

In creating this conception of *nature*, people and culture were erased from the narrative. Colonial logics wrote "a genealogy of 'nature' as the absence of culture," and this served to "destabilize claims of authority that are built on this absence" (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 12). Land could then be appropriated into a new space of the nation (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 12). In this way, colonial constructions of nature as having clear 'natural' uses and values mean that it both preceded and was external to the presence of Indigenous peoples, and that the true destiny of the land could only be realized through the capital processes of the colonizers (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 14). History in these places was only just about to begin (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 18), which is to say that according to these logics, only now was memory possible.

The continuous attempt to erase Indigenous peoples, done in part by "transforming 'nature' into a tool for the promotion of social injustice" (Willow, 2016, p. 2), as it "thrives through the manipulation and continual (re)creation of political inequality" (Willow, 2016, p. 12), is the basis of colonial capitalism. People who are Indigenous to lands where extractivism has taken over are widely, violently disregarded as having real knowledge of the land (see Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 210, on epistemic violence). Yet as we know, Indigenous peoples have long lived on these lands, and that "these lands in fact are connected to deep Indigenous cosmologies and relationalities" (Gómez-Barris, 2016, p. 91). For the success of the colonial project of extraction, the dispossession of land and attempts at the erasure of entire Nations was necessary because, as stated by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "how do you extract natural

resources from the land when the peoples whose territory you're on believe that those plants, animals, and minerals have both spirit and therefore agency?" (2014). These were concerted acts of erasure in order to achieve political and economic ends, with "so much [Indigenous] history...deliberately obliterated as part of the land grab" (Mojica, 2012, p. 235).

ii. Colonial Attempts at Memory Obliteration

It is widely known that when Europeans colonized Turtle Island and other parts of the world, there was a claim to be 'discovering' land, falsely stating that the land was empty and could therefore be taken and exploited (Willow, 2016, p. 11; Morgensen, 2011, p. 66). Bruce Braun writes the ways landscapes were represented visually made both Indigenous peoples and the land itself either completely or nearly absent, essentially painting people to the backdrops or outside of the frame of their land (2002). Attempts at erasures through the visually evacuated landscapes made possible these ongoing colonial projects. *Un-known* land, not just unknown to the 'discovering' colonizers but unknown to anyone, means that anything feels possible: wiping minds, clearing the land. Discursively creating open spaces that can be settled, or open spaces primed for extraction, necessitates erasing the possibility of a past and of beings who can remember. The "emplaced" memories of Indigenous peoples have been, in many ways, deeply impacted and, in some cases, destroyed by the processes of colonial extraction (Willow, 2016, p. 6).

Attempts at eliminating lives and bodies from the land are also attempts at the eradication of memory. Removing Indigenous peoples from the land allows governments to "acquire and maintain sovereignty over land because this not only removes physical resistance to dispossession, but it also erases the political orders and relationships housed within Indigenous bodies that attach...bodies to [the] land" (Simpson, 2017, p. 42). The breaking apart of communities through the destruction of land is also an attempt to eradicate memory of other ways of doing/being beyond capitalist colonialism;

the taking of land is also the taking of much of the history of Indigenous peoples (Mojica, 2012, p. 235).

Memory has always been central in resistance to colonial extraction. Indigenous peoples and other caretakers of the land are, of course, still present around the world and have deep memories and knowledge of the land. This knowledge of and relationship with the land is also critical in understanding the subtle and grand changes taking place due to extractive capitalism. Importantly, “memory...provides the means to ensure that past and future injustices do not go unnoticed, and, hopefully, unchallenged” (Ballvé, 2007). Honor Ford-Smith also notes that people may be compelled to fight in the light of legacies of past injustices, making “memory and mourning...an emancipatory political act” (Ford-Smith, 2017, p. 275). Indigenous movements, led by those most impacted by gender-based colonial violence, live and resist ongoing colonialism, often doing so not by remaking the colonial state through small changes or reforms, but rather through the creation of something else entirely (Gómez-Barris, 2017, p. 136). Memory, then, may be central in creating new paths which allow each to walk alongside the other.

Monique Mojica (2012) shows how remembering is a way of resisting colonial oppression, and they state that in embracing their responsibility in “seeking Indigenous futures,” they are “compel[led] to remember things that [they] never knew and restore them to consciousness (p. 221). Gomez-Barris' (2017) book is rooted in what the author calls ‘submerged perspectives’, which is a relational term connected to decoloniality which centres renewed perceptions of the world (p. 3). This is about documenting forms of living and being *otherwise*, which are not just about “destruction or mere survival” (Gomez-Barris, 2017, p. 4) but about imaging futures that are possible through the mobilization of memories which have been suppressed. For non-dominant social groups for whom archives are not made accessible, memories may hold information and experiences which counter and refute dominant and so-called official histories; memory is an important component for structuring other ways of knowing (Ford-Smith, Sept 17, 2020, “Performance:”). When embodied by non-dominant groups through song, stories, and ceremonies, they tell stories that have been marginalized from the perspective and

experiences of colonized groups (Ford-Smith, Sept 17, 2020, “Performance:”). In these ways, memory is an important site for instigating social change, as what we remember, individually and collectively, shapes and impacts what we are able to desire and demand for the future (Ford-Smith, Sept 17, 2020, “Performance:”).

Bringing the continuity of these colonial logics and practices to the forefront of this project is necessary because to consider colonialism as a relic of the past without “tracing the way that streams of the past still infuse the present” (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 3) would be to accept the colonial logics which attempt to produce themselves as so natural and intuitive that they disappear from our minds. To do so would be to accept the “invitation to forget” that colonial logics are always presenting us (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 10). We must “renovate our conceptions of historical time,” shifting away from colonial times as a unified time frame which exists in the past and of which we have surpassed” (Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 4). The ongoing nature of these systems means that we can disrupt linear notions of progress which claim that histories of colonialism are past. This can be done by asserting that what we have now is not only made possible by colonial arrangements but is still fully dependent on these formations and necessitates their constant reinscription. Canada’s global extractive reach is an example persistence of these old logics of colonialism and how they have moved into the present through imperialism. These are Canada’s transnational investments, which they prioritize and protect.

Continued colonial logics: Canada’s Global Extractive Reach

i. Canadian state-corporate imperialism

The formation of economies based on extraction over the past 500 years has been structured by the colonial conquests of Europe (Acosta, 2013). An examination of extractivism cannot be contained to the socio-environmental violence produced through their operations. Instead, we must endeavour to build connections between the “extractive imperialism” (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014) of today and settler colonialism that has been taking place over centuries. Canada’s settler colonialism is intimately tied to

past and ongoing extractivism, including mining. Moreover, the incredible global reach of the Canadian mining industry, combined with the significant support that the Canadian government has offered extractive corporations, has led many to describe Canada's role in these operations as imperialist (Engler, 2012).

Deneault and Sacher (2012) argue that Canada "stands out as a judicial and financial haven that shelters its mining industry from the political or legal consequences of its extraterritorial activities by providing a lax domestic regulatory structure that it seeks to export through international agencies, diplomatic channels, and 'economic development projects'" (p. 2). As of 2019, Canadian mining companies were working in 96 other countries around the world, and mining assets held by these companies account for around two-thirds of the value of all Canadian mining assets (Government of Canada, "Canadian Mining Assets," 2021). Gordon and Webber (2008) note that since Canada, an advanced capitalist state, functions within a "hierarchy of nations operating within the global capitalist economy," that the "activities of Canadian mining companies and the Canadian state...must therefore be analyzed within the broader dynamics of global capitalism, and, in particular, the relations between countries of the global North and those of the global South" (p. 64).

Not only is Canadian capital central to the global resource extraction industry, but the Canadian government has, in many ways, shown incredible support and backing for this industry (Weisbart, 2018; Veltmeyer, 2013; Deneault & Sacher, 2012; Engler, 2012). Veltmeyer (2013) offers a list of some key ways in which the Canadian government supports mining corporations:

aggressive lobbying and diplomatic support of the efforts of these companies to obtain concessions to explore and social licenses to operate in the host countries; deployment of the Department of Foreign Affairs' considerable resources in diplomatic and even financial support of Canadian mining companies; partnering with other governments in the design of a global Mining Policy Framework, and actually writing the mining legislation for some countries; sponsoring a series of provincial round tables on the resource extraction industry; substantive support for the UN's corporate social responsibility agenda, which is explicitly designed as a means of securing from host governments a license to operate in socially-and environmentally-sensitive areas and highly contested terrain," and finally through

“Canada’s program of international operations, run by CIDA, [which] has been turned into an agent of financial support for Canadian mining companies in their overseas operations. (p. 85)

An update to this quotation is needed; CIDA is now folded into Global Affairs Canada, and the Department of Foreign Affairs is also publicly designated as Global Affairs Canada.

Around the world, extractive projects “put colonialism’s disregard for those who reside in the path of coveted lands and resources on open display” (Willow, 2016, p. 11). The creation of spaces for extraction very often involves the “forceful and violent reorganization of peoples’ lives as they are subordinated to the whims of capital” (Gordon & Webber, 2008, p. 63). The incredible violence that communities face in connection to these extractive projects is breathtaking. In *Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America*, Gordon and Webber (2016) use the term “militarized neoliberalism” to describe the extractive model of capitalism on the rise in Latin America, which is “advanced...with the active support of Canada” (p.29). This model “necessarily and systematically involved...militarized neoliberalism: violence, fraud, corruption, and authoritarian practices on the part of militaries and security forces,” and in Latin America, this has involved “murder, death threats, assaults and arbitrary detention against opponents of resource extraction” (Gordon & Webber, 2016, p. 28).

An example of this comes from Guatemala. Inco, the mining company which owned the Sudbury, Ontario Superstack that I saw every day throughout my childhood, is an example of a Canadian corporation that has benefitted from “genocidal state terror and corruption” in Guatemala (Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 200). After the 1954 military coup, supported by the CIA, Inco “and its subsidiary Exmibal became notorious in Guatemala for manipulating the country’s political instability to their benefit, and for effectively condoning the state violence and killings” taking place at this time (Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 200). This was a coup against a democratic government, yet Canada remained silent (Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 200). In her analysis of this case, Martínez Salazar writes that “since the formal end of direct, European, colonial rule in Latin America, the heirs of the colonizers, in alliance with North American powers, have

dictated the meaning of democracy” (2014, p. 200). Canadian mining companies and the Canadian government are deeply entrenched in imperialism around the world.

ii. Transnational entanglements and nationalist myths

These truths about Canada’s imperial project are very different from the state’s own narratives. By the Government of Canada, this nation is often “framed as an ethical and multicultural democracy whose bountiful resources are responsibly extracted for the welfare of the nations” (Davine, Lawhon & Pierce, 2017, citing Sandilands, 1999; Baldwin, 2009). We hear, ‘this is not us’ when terrible things happen in Canada. These discourses were informing my life through the educational system, political, and media channels. The narratives I was hearing were directly connected to the framing of this country as being made up of moral giants; many dominant groups have seen Canada as “defenders of international peace and moral noble principles” (Deneault & Sacher, 2012, p.1), separate and above the colonial, heteropatriarchal, and racial injustices of other nations. This nationalism serves ideological ends.

Some may argue that Canada is no longer seen as a peacekeeping nation in the ways that it once was, and that the country is now diving into its own truths about settler colonialism and genocide. While there is some truth to this, the Canadian state has only recognized Indigenous rights, identities, and worldviews where doing so does not threaten “the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship” (Coulthard, 2007, p. 451, as cited in Davine, Lawhon & Pierce, 2017, p.432). We can also reflect on how recognition of harm can itself do significant work to shape public memory. For example, how does the recognition of the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Stueck & Woo, 2019) relieve settler consciousness? How does an acknowledgement of past harms create a diversion from the fact of ongoing settler colonial violence and racism against Indigenous and Black people in Canada?

Separations between people, contexts, and injustices made on nationalistic grounds, reinforced through state narratives often taken as truth by dominant groups,

“create...misrecognitions... that is, a deliberate and ideological forgetting” (Grewal & Kaplan, 2000). This is where the concept of transnationality becomes crucial, as it allows us to understand the “impact of global forces such as colonialism, modernization, and development on specific and historicized... practices that create inequalities and asymmetries” (Grewal & Kaplan, 2000). Through this transnational lens, we can better grapple with the fact that global complexities and interconnections arise from the fact “that contemporary racisms, nationalisms, and gendered oppressions have been produced together, not separately” (Grewal & Kaplan, 2000).

These entanglements are also related to what has been called time-space-compression, or the increasing domination of movement and mobility in connection to globalization (Massey, 1991). The flows and connections of people, information, and more are tied to a ‘power geometry’ whereby certain groups and individuals have more control over this time-space-compression, and can manipulate it in ways that increase their own power (Massey, 1991, p. 26). Most often, the profits amassed through extraction outside of global centres of power are “repatriate[d] to their home economies” (Gordon & Webber, 2008, p. 69). Wealth moves around the world through “hops and skips” (Ferguson, 2005, as cited in Davis Matthews, 2018, p. 4); the capital raised in Toronto to operationalize mining projects elsewhere often ends up back in this city and country (Davis Matthews, 2018, p. 4).

This time-space-compression and what it allows for in terms of natural resource extraction, mass production, and more, is a significant contributor to making and “reproducing the daily lives of the comfortably-off in First World societies” (Massey, 1991, p. 26). However, as is addressed in this paper and project, this results in “environmental consequences [and] constraints which will limit the lives,” and “undermine the power” of others (Massey, 1991, p. 26). Of course, in the context of this project, those benefitting from global extractive operations hold significant amounts of this power. In addition to environmental impacts, extractivism is made possible through political and economic conditions which further limit and restrain those in proximity to extractive operations (see, for example, Gordon & Webber, 2016). The loss and harm

caused to people in extractive zones, oftentimes necessary in order to create spaces available for extractivism (Gordon & Webber, 2008, p. 63), means that people in extractive zones are all at once entangled in the growth of this time-space-compression and, in many ways, constricted by it (Massey, 1991, p. 26).

Mining in Canada has “fenc[ed] off and fragment[ed] Indigenous territory into islands of extraction and development” (Yellowhead Institute, 2019, p. 26). This process was critical to the creation of capitalism as we know it today. In many cases, Indigenous peoples have not seen the material benefits that result from the extraction taking place on their land, and there are many accounts of how these processes have massively harmed Indigenous communities in social, political, economic, environmental, and spiritual ways (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). Indigenous peoples have been at once wrapped up in and profoundly impacted and constricted (Massey, 1991, p. 26) by extractive capitalism.

iii. On Violence

While militarized neoliberalism “fundamentally attempt[s] to demonize social movement opponents as criminals, narco-traffickers, or terrorists (Gordon and Webber, 2016, p. 28), there is, and has always been, resistance to Canadian extractivism by impacted communities and those working in solidarity. In the face of predatory extractivism, creative community organizing, resistance, and social movements are saying ‘no’ to mining and the commodification of natural resources (Gordon & Webber, 2008, p.72). There are countless ongoing struggles and resistance efforts in support of life in many forms, and this has been occurring since colonial, capitalist extractivism was first imposed (Martínez Salazar, 2014). Important to note is that not only have there been large-scale movements and rebellions against the commodification of natural resources (Gordon & Webber, 2008), but that everyday actions which reject these systems and create worlds beyond extractivism should be seen as resistance (Scott, 1992). Going further, in particular reference to Indigenous peoples of Guatemala, Eglá Martínez Salazar (2014) writes that there is “the desire for, and the practice of, individual and collective decolonial resistance, even if at times this resistance can only be

expressed through bare survival in the face of a predatory, global order” (p. 234). People continue to “liv[e] with hope amidst despair” (Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 192), caused by centuries of heteropatriarchal colonial extractivism. To examine extractive violence without also highlighting these various forms of resistance would be a further erasure.

In addition to the points above, we must reckon with the fact that multiple forms of violence are perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, in relation to extractivism. Examining colonial and capitalist extractivism must take into account intersecting experiences of gendered violence, and that “multiple patriarchies... may overlap and feed into one another as they wreak havoc on Indigenous women’s lives” (Richards & Morales, 2018, p. 40). The alienation of land, central to the colonial project, “must also be understood through gender dynamics, which are instrumental to how land loss and dispossession unfold and impact people’s lives... [and] to the ways in which the right to consent is denied to Indigenous peoples” (Yellowhead Institute, 2019, p. 26). Moreover, The Yellowhead Institute’s *Land Back Report* states that there is “evidence linking extractive industries to conditions that lead to gender-based violence,” and environmental harms caused by these operations have gendered impacts on health (p. 32). Engaging with the complex ways these systems differently impact people and groups is crucial in critiquing and resisting extractive capitalism.

Colonial logics are upheld through various state and societal institutions, as well as dominant cultural practices. A main argument in Eglá Martínez Salazar’s (2014) book *Global Coloniality of Power in Guatemala: Racism, Genocide, Citizenship* is that:

“violence consists not only of the ‘extreme’ acts that we commonly deem exceptional, cruel, or irrational (or indeed all three), but also of the many ways in which cruelty is rationalized and sanctioned through law, religion, education, and economics. The destruction caused by ongoing and ‘extreme’ violence is multi-dimensional and unquantifiable, especially its individual-social long-term impacts.” (p. 6)

This is colonial, capitalist violence. These forms of violence can be understood as bureaucracies of death, “machineries... [with] the main goal [of] the dehumanization of those invented and treated as politically and socially expendable” (Martínez Salazar, 2014, p. 193). It is important to understand the plurality of ways in which violence may

be enacted. The stories that dominant groups tell about violence is central to shaping how the public understands, accepts and approves of violence.

Dominant narratives, Myths, and Mining

We must evaluate the necessity for mythmaking for maintaining the power of dominant groups in society to better understand how mining is represented. This will also help to make sense of these common industry narratives. Particularly, we must turn towards this myth creation in relation to the formation of public memory. Before continuing further, I would like to note that the use of the term myth should not be taken to mean that the lived, material impacts of these narratives are not very real. The term *myth* has been defined by Richard Slotkin (1998):

Myths are stories drawn from a society's history that have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing that society's ideology and of dramatizing its moral consciousness – with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain. Over time, through frequent retellings and deployments as a source of interpretive metaphors, the original mythic story is increasingly conventionalized and abstracted until it is reduced to a deeply encoded and resonant set of symbols, 'icons,' 'keywords,' or historical clichés. In this form, myth becomes a basic constituent of linguistic meaning and of the processes of both personal and social 'remembering.'”
(p. 5)

In his classic essay “Ways of Seeing” Berger points to the fact that the mystification of the past is brought about through attempts by the dominant ruling, privileged minority, who strive to shape and create a history that can justify their presence and role in the present moment (1974, p. 11). Berger states that this “mystification is the process of explaining away what might otherwise be evident” (Berger, 1974, p. 19). This point intersects with key arguments made by Joan Kuyek, who has written about the myth-creation in which the Canadian mining industry engages. Crafting narratives about the necessity of corporate mining to both the public good and to various levels of ‘development’ both in Canada and around the world, the industry then finds ways and places to retell and reinforce these myths until “until fact submits to fiction” (Kuyek, 2006, p. 205). Kuyek (2006) notes that while mining

companies benefit from significant amounts of power and influence, the actual economic influence and contribution to the public good is actually far below the standards they claim (p. 205). The constant retelling of this story about the necessity of corporate mining is strategic, and industry is subsequently seen as having justification for their in/action. I believe that this strategy is deployed throughout Toronto and can be understood as dominant myth creation.

This corporate mythmaking, bolstered by the Canadian government, presents strategic framings of extractive industries to significantly shape the ways that they are understood, and their actions remembered. These narratives are also an attempt to justify increased self-regulation, government support, and free rein to take and make a resource out of the more than human world, wherever the minerals and ores may happen to be. These are stories that mining companies pay others to tell about them, so as to polish their records and keep their operations clean in the minds of settler Canadians. Endless statements about the centrality of mining to our everyday lives serve as much to implicate and therefore pacify people as they do to celebrate the industry. These narratives offer up the selective forgetting of harms and violence fused to everyday products, and by extension, serve as a justification for the unrelenting, unrestricted expansion of this industry.

The centering of mining and colonial capitalist systems in these myths also attempts to limit imaginations of what a future beyond extractivism could entail. Presents and futures which reach beyond and away from the extractive view and towards something else are made to appear impossible. Instead of making “oddkin,” where we live in relationships based on the knowledge that “we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations” (Haraway 2016, p. 4), a polished set of extractive relations are presented to us. We are asked to take this relationship of the resource and the ruler as a given and to forget/ignore how we are “rendered capable by and with both things and living beings” (Haraway, 2016, p. 16).

Public Memory and its Remaking

Dominant myth creation is an attempt to manipulate public memory. Public memory is a view of the past that is shared widely by a community, and those in power attempt to present a “coherent picture of the past to impart a certain meaning to it” (Iriye, 1995, p. 89). Critical to this project is the fact that to define public memories is to “establish a connection between past and present, to ‘remake’ the community...by imposing a structure of meaning upon a vast array of private memories” (Iriye, 1995, p. 89). This is an attempt at control over what gets remembered, forgotten, and focused on by the public. When tales of the essential and sustainable nature of extractive projects are embedded into our collective historical and socio-political memory through these varied authoritative mediums, harms caused and predicted for the future may be more easily forgotten or never unearthed in widespread ways. These narratives shape settler society’s understanding of extractive industries and their role in our lives. They disentangle products from the meaning and impact that they hold. These are attempts to erase the traces of what it took to bring that material object to life. Instead, we are offered a polished item, free of socio-historical contamination. They implicate, so as to justify their actions as simply doing what needs to be done in order to offer us all modernity (which they imply we have all accepted, willingly and welcomingly).

The tactical practices of public memory production created by the industry work hard to shape what we see as possibilities for the future, thereby contributing to the narrowing of people into the limits of capitalist needs and production. Berger writes that “cultural mystification of the past entails a double loss” (1974, p.11). Both presence and absence are central to this picture. The presencing of a polished face of the industry in Toronto represents an attempt to leave the broader frame of destruction and extractive harm out of view. This project asks what we can make present by seeing the holes and the absences in this city.

Memory is an important analytical frame to bring into the conversation on extractive industries. Definitions of the term ‘memory’ are not as straightforward as they might appear and were previously primarily associated with things like canonical

traditions (Huyssen, 2003, p. 3). Yet what we hold as memory and, importantly, what we forget, are social and political issues of incredible consequence (Huyssen, 2003, p. 3). Connerton states that forgetting can also be coerced, and it can be understood as “repressive erasure” (2011, p. 33). While this can be done in overt and violent ways, repressive erasure can also be present in covert ways where dominant historical narratives are presented, and we are invited to internalize that which is being offered; this is about editing and erasing (Connerton, 2011, p. 42).

As Marianne Hirsch points to in their introductory chapter to the book *Women Mobilizing Memory*, memory can be deployed to “intervene against daily acts for forgetting” (2019, p. 7). This is the point of intervention that I aim at with this project. In considering the complex entanglements individuals have with extractivism, especially through the material objects we depend on, I began to wonder how I could represent these relationships in this project. Rather than turning away and dismissing industry narratives about the centrality of mining in our lives, how could I bring viewers of this project closer to that narrative, in order to consider how we may feel “caught in systems not of our own making, but from which we nonetheless benefit” (Davis, 2019, p.16).

The study of extractive industries through the lens of memory is also important because “we need both past and future to articulate our political, social and cultural dissatisfaction with the present state of the world,” and because “memory discourses are absolutely essential to imagine the future” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 5). As José Esteban Muñoz states, futurity is “history’s dominant principle” (2009, p. 16). Taken from Heidegger’s conception of historicity, Muñoz writes that “historical existence in the past allowed for subjects to act with a mind towards ‘future possibilities’” (2009, p. 16), and in this way the “past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 16).

Through developing an understanding of the central role that memory plays in the resistance to extractivism and other capitalist colonial violence, I began considering what contribution I could make by turning my work towards the impacts of corporate myth creation on public memory. I began by exploring the question of how I could

develop a visual counternarrative to power stories using these concepts. In considering the transnational reach and impact of this industry, I strived to represent a complexified notion of space, implication, and connection so that I could communicate the significance of the fact that Toronto is a hub for this global industry. These questions and concepts guided the production of this project.

Visual counternarratives

i. Writing/Creating Space & Time, Otherwise

As I began exploring the presence and absence of the mining industry, it became clear that this uncovering, both on a personal level and of unearthing through corporate research, could be told through a story. Visuality thus becomes an important component of this work, both through the photographic collages and with my choice of mapping mining presence in the city. I chose to create a counternarrative through visual methods, as doing so allowed me to explore and communicate the truths, complexities, contradictions, and entanglements that have come to define this exploration of memory, extractivism, and colonialism. Looking at the presence of these companies in the city of Toronto and at the world they make possible, users of the website are simultaneously invited to explore their own relationship with these violent and extractive processes and consider what other futures are possible.

A key concept of this project is the counternarrative, which is also important for imagining alternative futures based on justice. The counternarrative is a method and strategy for telling a story that offers an alternative to dominant stories in circulation. While counternarratives have been used to address various forms of injustice, many share common themes of confronting dominant and majoritarian views of history and events, centering and engaging with the experiences and perspectives of people of colour, minorities, and others (Blaisdell, 2021, p.3). Counternarratives often reveal truths about power, “deconstruct majoritarian narratives on race, serv[e] as a cure for silencing,” and can “foster activism” (Blaisdell, 2021, p.4).

Cultural memory is dynamic (Brockmeier, 2002, p. 32), and there are always tensions between official memories and counter-memories. Brockmeier says that this can be understood as the dialectic between power and counter-power, of “official discourse and its subversion” (2002, p. 32). Cultural memory remains contested and fluctuating terrain. In many cases, memory can quite easily be deployed for particular political ends, and so critical public practices such as counter monuments and public acts of countermemory which offer alternative narratives are very important (Hirsch, 2019, p. 10).

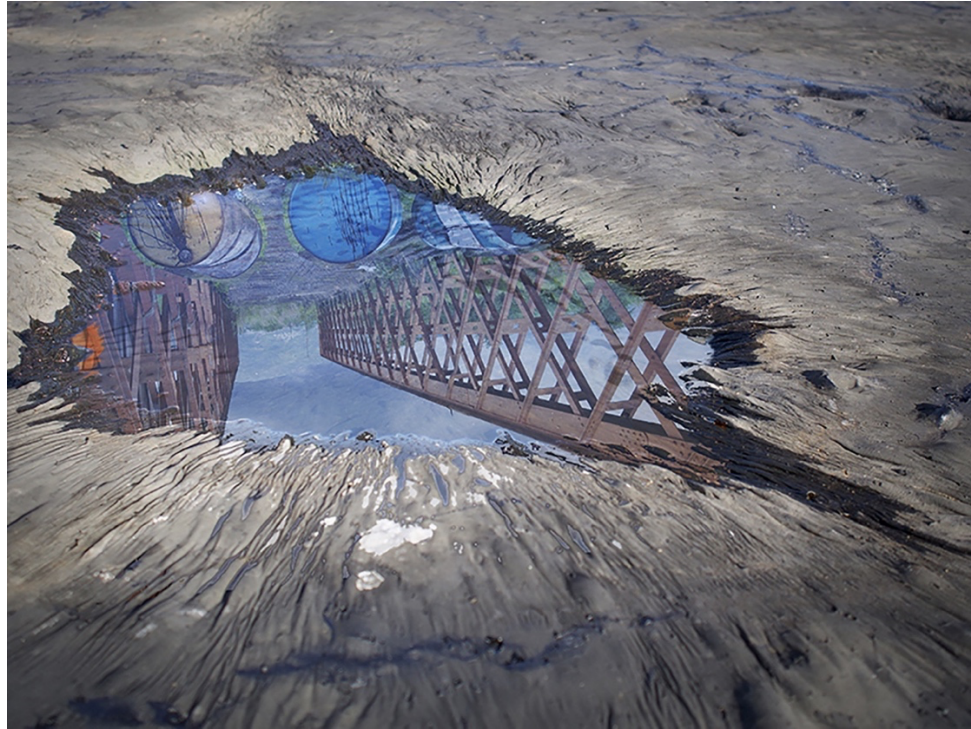
Counternarratives are not just about addressing and refuting what is presented by dominant cultural memories. They are also about imagining futures we desire, creating solidarities, and making space for the celebration of lives, memories, and cultures of marginalized groups, as has been demonstrated by The Movement for Black Lives (Woodly, 2019, pp. 227-228). Counternarratives and counter-memories, through their commentary on and resistance to dominant cultural memories change that which they are countering by the fact that they are presented at all (Brockmeier, 2002, p. 35).

Berger writes that “if we can see the present clearly enough, we shall ask the right questions of the past” (1974, p. 20). I would add that seeing the present more clearly, particularly through counternarratives, allows us also to see how the past lives on in the present moment. This project uses visual counternarratives to unearth what is omitted in our everyday seeing of these familiar places by pulling in left-out truths, engaging with industry narratives about the necessity of their operations, and by complicating notions of implication and responsibility.

ii. *Guiding Works*

Inspiration for the photographic collage method used throughout this project began when I came across Maica Gugolati’s *Floating Tropics*. Gugolati’s work for the *Extracting Us* online exhibition explores feminist political ecologies of extraction (Gugolati, n.d.), challenging what we see and do not see, what is there and what is not

there. This collection of digital collages focuses on the lands and waters of Trinidad and Tobago.



“Mirroring the Pitch lake” 2019. Created by Maica Gugolati.

Source: [Floating Tropics exhibition, part of *Extracting Us*, license \[here\]\(#\).](#)

Gugolati combines the photos of environmental spaces with photographs of extractive infrastructures, doing so in a way seamless way to create a fantastical, magical realism. The photographs “become a tropical paradise where desires, expectations, embodied knowledges, visual silencing and imposed gaze are show[n] (Extracting Us, n.d). These images invite viewers to consider presences and absences of industry and to “challenge visual omission” (Extracting Us, n.d).

Sammy Baloji is a Congolese artist who creates photomontages rooted in the fact that colonialism is an ongoing process and system. Their use of the photo montage has inspired my photo essay. Baloji complicates notions of linear time through the combination of extractive architectures as the backdrop and archival photographs of people, in black and white, from times of formal colonial rule (Baloji, 2021).



“Memory 21” photo by Sammy Baloji.

Source: [Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology at Harvard University](https://www.peabodymuseum.harvard.edu/exhibitions/memory-21).

These figures of the past are placed into extractive landscapes of today, at once out of place and directly tied to one another. This work has expanded my understanding of what this method can allow for, and I have been inspired by how his work takes first “the lens of mineral extraction,” and results in “timelines and geographies collapsing” (Vistrup Madsen, 2019).

I also draw inspiration from the digital platform *Earth to Tables Legacies*, created by Deborah Barndt (Co-Director & Co-Editor), Lauren Baker (Co-Editor), and Alexandra Gelis (Co-Director) (Earth to Tables Legacy, “Co-Creation of the project”, n.d). This is an ongoing project which centres around food justice and food sovereignty. The site incorporates the voices of many diverse subjects from various social and geographic locations (Earth to Tables Legacy, “About.” n.d.). It includes different forms of writing and multimedia strategies into one website aimed at exchanging stories and knowledges. This pedagogical approach has been very important in shaping my understanding of what engagement with my project could entail.

Art and extraction are brought together in *EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Abyss*, a “multimedia, multi-venue, cross-border art intervention” that examines the socio-environmental harms that extraction in its many forms inflicts around the world (“Extraction: Art”..., n.d.). Exploring this project and the varied contributions included

within it has opened my eyes to the possibilities of merging artistic practice with an analysis of extractive operations. Finally, the project “Traces of Nitrate: History and Photography Between Britain and Chile, 1879-1941” by Xavier Ribas (Principal Investigator) and Louise Purbrick (Co-Investigator) shows how archival and historical data can be used to trace the impacts of extractive industries across time and space, and how this intersects with projects of colonialism ([Traces of Nitrate](#), n.d.). This is an example of work that brings the past into the present and shows that the two cannot be separated in clean, simple ways. This work also shows how research on extractive industries can be turned into exhibitions that are meant to be in public spaces and influence wider audiences outside of academia.

The artists and works above offer transnational perspectives and voices from different social locations on issues of extractivism, colonialism, imperialism, and the potential for a future that moves away from these systems. This broadened my understanding of how creative, multimedia projects may comment on and resist oppressive systems. Exploring these projects was also an important reminder to be cognizant of how my social location and identities were appearing in and shaping my own work. The fact that I have nearly exclusively *benefitted* from the products of extractivism, that I can *choose* whether to spend my time engaging these topics, and that I have *never faced* colonial, imperial, or extractive violence are just some of the ways my positionality and location are shaping my project differently than the work of those mentioned above.

iii. Photography: Getting at the Obscured

Many of the artists, activists, and academics mentioned above have engaged photography and photography-based art to tell a story and have greatly influenced my work. Photography is used throughout this project to produce a counternarrative. Rose quotes Becker (2001), who states that what photographs offer which text alone does not is that they can “lead you to believe that the abstract tale [the photographer has] told you has a real, flesh and blood life and therefore is to be believed” (p. 343). Photos,

then, can add and attest to the authenticity of the text (Rose, 2001, p. 343). The visual counternarratives of this project rely on these concepts in a few ways.

First, by showing photographs of office buildings attached to a marker on a map, I hope to bring the centres of extractive power to the forefront when normally they can sink out of our view and consciousness. A second way is through the creation of images that are beyond reality. I play with the impression that photographs reflect reality, act as proof that a given thing happened or existed, and that it appears as a more innocent and therefore accurate presentation of reality (Sontag, 1977, p. 9) through the creation of these photographic collages. John Berger states that “the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled,” and that “the way we see things is affected by what we know of what we believed” (1974, p. 4). Berger goes on to say that “we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (1974, p. 6). These collages are fantastical yet are engaging two or more very real images to create something beyond reality which tells the same story as the project text. My work explores how the relationship between text and image alters when photographs intentionally play different roles and offer unexpected ways of seeing. I hope that they invoke a complex seeing of our entanglements with extractivism.

Photography has long been deployed as a tool to call for social change, as through the act of looking at something previously unseen an affective link can be created for the viewer (Szto et al, 2005, p. c139). This method has long challenged and expanded our concepts of reality (La Grange, 2005). While photography and visual methods can be important tools, I should note that documentary photography has a long history of being used to forward colonial logics and the continued marginalization of people around the world (Rose, 2001, p. 20). I now turn to another visual method and strategy in my work: mapping & countermapping.

iv. Mapping, Countermapping & Memory

The second visual tool I use to express this counternarrative is the maps embedded throughout the website. I chose this method to enhance a place-based connection for viewers, and to highlight the spatial concentration of extractive company

headquarters. In both cases, this represents a counter to the industry myth-making which attempts to separate the corporation and the harms of extraction in many ways. Maps have been seen as providing avenues for social and cultural change, as they can be used in “deconstruction and/or revisualization” which “permits a ‘disidentification from the procedures of colonialism and other hegemonic discourses” (Huggan, 1989, p.128). Using maps within this counternarrative allows for highlighting the transnational reach and impact of these Toronto-based extractive companies and the disruption of the temporal and spatial disconnect enforced in industry myths.

Essential to consider here is how map making and cartography are tools of colonialism through the “reinscription, enclosure, and hierarchization of space which provide an analogue for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power” (Huggan, 1989, p. 115). Maps have been deployed as tools of authority, attempting to make representations of a particular world/view neutral, intuitive, and rooted in place. A critical condition for this claimed accuracy and authority is the “map’s apparently authorless condition, or the disappearance of the author, which ultimately “encourages us to forget that this is a picture someone has arranged for us” (Neocleous, 2003, p. 421). In numerous ways, and at various moments in time, the violent construction of space, and of states in particular, “have been sanctified through the project of the map,” or what some have called “cartographic violence” (Neocleous, 2003, p. 409).

Since the 15th century, maps have been used to identify potential sites of extraction, directly tied to the theft of land from Indigenous peoples, in attempts to secure European power (Kidd, 2019, 954). Map-making and geo-spatial instruments have played countless other roles in enabling extractive colonial capitalism. Through using a map for this project, I am in some ways reiterating colonial state shapes and territorial outlines. My hope is that through the calling to attention of capitalist extractivism and placing it on the colonial map, we may see further how the two are entrenched in one another. Further, I hope that this project reveals and reflects upon the entanglements one has with these processes.

Issues of mapping are also issues of memory. The legitimization of formal borders that mapping offers consequently naturalizes the violent political activities that formed these separations and the ongoing processes used to secure them. Through this naturalization of these formations, maps aid in the erasure of violence from memory, instead leaving behind simple, natural “facts of life” (Neocleous, 2003, p.421-422).

There is an interesting distinction between ‘mapping and ‘map making.’ Lassila (2018) discusses this distinction made by Ingold, wherein ‘map making’ is connected to a scientific model and involves the creation of a 2D map, different from ‘mapping’ which can take place through ‘way finding,’ as “a project revealed in the course of moving about and sharing information, memories and stories of the land. (p. 954). They explain that counter-mapping can take the form of a 2D map but is not confined to that format, and that through these countermapping processes, “land can be rendered as more than a commodity, more than simply a mineral-rich space, when it is represented and mapped in a holistic way, as a territory investigated and narrated socially in terms that are ontologically meaningful for local people” (Lassila, 2018, p. 3).

Indigenous Nations in Canada and those who work in solidarity with them have used countermapping as a tool of resistance extractivism and colonization (Kidd, 2019, p. 954). One example of this is the *First Story* app which allows users to explore Tkaronto’s Indigenous history, created by the Toronto Native Community History Project at the Native Canadian Centre and the Centre for Community Mapping ([COMAP](#), n.d.). Another important countermapping project is called *Native Land*. The main component of this project is an interactive map of the world which lets users explore a map through the categories of “territories, languages, and treaties” ([Native Land](#), n.d.). This organization “strives to create and foster conversations about the history of colonialism, Indigenous ways of knowing, and settler-Indigenous relations, through educational resources such as our map and Territory Acknowledgement Guide” (Native Land, n.d.). These countermapping strategies are forms of data justice. As Kidd (2019) notes, these strategies are not alone enough to produce change to colonial systems but can contribute to the other organizing.

Another project that does not use maps but engages and challenges urban spatial history and politics is Ogimaa Mikana: Reclaiming/Renaming. This project works to restore Anishinaabemowin place-names to various spaces in Gichi Kiiwenging (Toronto) to confront and transform these city spaces which often attempt to make Indigenous peoples invisible ([Ogimaa Mikana](#), n.d.). Finally, I would like to draw attention to another counter-mapping project which seeks to create an archive of stories and experiences which are often erased from official narratives by dominant groups. *Queering the Map* is a “community-generated countermapping platform for digitally archiving LGBTQ2IA+ experiences in relation to physical space” ([Queering the Map](#), “About,” n.d.). This project is a great example of how mapping can be used to show connections across time and space, and the possibilities that come with records of collaboration (“Queering the Map”).

Considering Ethical Complexity

Throughout my studies, I have sought answers to questions about how I can do research well and in responsible ways. This involves asking how I may engage with complexities rather than flattening or turning away from them. Following from the words of Amber Dean, I believe it is critical to engage with the fact that my socio-political and economic position means that I live very much shielded from the impacts of the colonial injustices I discuss in this work. As a white settler woman, I derive many benefits from the social, political, and economic systems that root and thrive through the colonial extractivism capitalism I consider here. I hope to bring something to this topic and these ideas despite my relationship and proximity to the issues at hand through a concerted engagement with my relationship to these complex contexts (Dean, 2015, p. 10).

As we know, there is “always a risk of colonizing anew in research” no matter our intentions (McGregor, Restoule, Johnston, 2018, p. 6). Eve Tuck (2009) has made clear in her often-cited work there is also violence involved in focusing on the pain, loss, or harm caused to an individual or community, and the act of documenting in research is

often done to bring about a political change or material gain in the vein of a particular theory of change (p. 413). The project is an attempt to move away from the popular “social science research...default theory of change,” which centres around “testifying to damage so that persecutors will be forced to be accountable” (Tuck, 2009, p. 414).

None of this should be taken to mean that individuals, corporations, and governments should not be held to account for various forms of social and environmental harm. Instead, it is an acknowledgment that these systems are designed to create harm to non-dominant group and the environment, and that our societies have been designed to rely upon the fact of these harms. As such, violations and violence must *also* be addressed through foundational challenges to systems and structures, confronting the colonial logics underpinning them, in pursuit of revolutionary change (Willow, 2016, p.1; Coulthard, 2007, p. 6). For white settlers, this also involves turning inward to understand and move forward from the fact of our inextricable ties to this violence and harm.

This question around the type of research I wanted to conduct, particularly around the documentation of harm, has been further complicated for me due to my work with the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN). Of course, my research is very much separate from the long-term grassroots organizing of MISN, which is rooted in relationship building over time, but what I have often seen in this organizing is requests by communities impacted by the Canadian mining industry for MISN to amplify and bring focus towards the incredible violence that they are experiencing and/or the environmental damage they are witnessing at the hands of these companies. While I knew that I would not be conducting firsthand research that gathered information about the harms done to a particular community, I nonetheless struggled with the inclusion and exclusion of information, even if from secondary sources, about harm and violence. As Tuck notes, there is a paradox when it comes to damage; “to refute it, we need to say it aloud” (2009, p. 417). How to explain why it matters that a significant number of mining companies are based in and bolstered by the city of Toronto and the Canadian government, without detailing the harm they have caused to communities and the

environment? How to invoke a turn towards nuanced, complex understandings of implication/responsibility without detailing the harms on which our lives/lifestyles are built?

In this project, I did not want to fall into a mapping of damage or the creation of a database of harm. Where possible I chose representations and symbols to allude to and evoke wider social and environmental harms. One example of this from the website comes from the “Photo Essay” section, where there is a photo series of a croton petra plant placed outside of York University’s Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building. This plant is of the same sub-family as plants removed in order to construct McEwen’s El Gallo Mine in Sinaloa State, Mexico (Servicios Industriales y Gestión Ambiental). This plant symbolizes not only the flora impacted by mining but also other forms of social and environmental violence caused by extractivism. In addition, the McEwen building represents more than this singular location of extractive wealth on display. It represents the power and influence purchased through philanthropic donations. It is a single space which reflects how wealth is taken from zones of extraction and then used to reinforce positions of control around the world. It reflects how our society is designed to erase the harms inflicted and instead celebrate the wealthy.

Tuck and Yang (2014) point to the need to “shift the gaze from the violated body to the violating instruments” (p. 241). These instruments do not disappear after any particular reveal of their presence, but rather must be understood as a structure that lives on and continually harms (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 241). My work aims to engage with the methods used by industry to frame their own existence and role in the world, moving beyond any one instance of extractive violence and towards an understanding of how settler colonial capital is deployed to foreground apparently neutral, deeply dehistoricized memories and practices of the Canadian mining industry within the urban context of Toronto.

There is complexity and contradiction around involvement with extractive projects all over the world, at both individual and community levels. It is important to

consider that these extractive projects often represent contested spaces. These nuances and complexities come very much tied to capitalism and colonialism, which make necessary personal engagement and participation in oppressive systems. For so many, this includes being employed by corporations with/about which one may have complex and competing ties, histories, feelings, and concerns.

Concluding Thoughts

By exploring my own connection to the Canadian mining industry stemming from my childhood in Sudbury, Ontario, I began to consider what form of intervention I could make into the narratives that I hear about the mining industry. Inspired by the work of many artists, activists, and academics, I chose to pursue a digital, educational resource that offers a counternarrative to these industry myths. This project incorporates corporate research and visual methods to tell a compelling story about memory, extractivism, and colonialism.

The large-scale, widespread, and irreparable damage that the Canadian mining industry has brought about, both in Canada and internationally, has been well documented (Kuyek, 2019; Gordon & Webber, 2016; Butler, 2015). Instead of focusing on incidences of extractive injustice and harm I have turned towards the companies themselves and the institutions within Toronto which support and enable the mining industry. Bringing into view the deep cultural memory work being done by corporations as they strategically maneuver around the city and create public narratives of their own history, reason for being, and role in the shaping of the future, this project aims at unsettling notions of separation and implication for those seemingly outside of extractive zones.

To understand how mining is represented, we must examine the necessity for mythmaking by dominant groups in society. Examining the dominant myth creation of the Canadian mining industry led me to consider how public memory is shaped and molded through these narratives. I focused on how these stories shape our understanding of the industry and how they attempt to pacify people by implicating

individuals in extractivism through their everyday reliance on the products of mining. The widespread presence of these narratives throughout the city of Toronto and around the world lend to more acceptance of industry presence, lax regulations, and distance from the harms that extractivism causes. They also serve to limit imaginations about what a different way of living may look like, or whether an alternative seems possible at all.

The impacts of these dominant myths on public memory are addressed in this work through a visual counternarrative, combining text with the visual methods of photography, photographic collage, and mapping. This strategy was used to get at what is hidden, visually represent what is so often obscured from view or abstracted from reality, and to offer a clear connection between the transnational operations of Canadian companies and their Toronto headquarters. It was also important to consider how colonialism's foundational myths live on and make possible present extractivism. This work considers the numerous ways in which memory is central to moving towards a different kind of future.

Rather than prescribe a solution to extractivism and the harms it creates, this project seeks to provoke reflection from website users about the ways in which we have knotted connections to extractive worldviews. I have strived to contribute to the literature on extraction by complicating the industry narratives through revealing complex layers of our knotted ties to the mining industry, to its ideological underpinnings, and to the political economy on which it stands. Individuals collude with this industry and extractivist mindsets more broadly, not only through our educational and cultural institutions but also because our daily lives are made possible through the material items produced by mining. White settlers have a particular responsibility to examine how our lives are entangled with hundreds of years of violence and oppression against Black and Indigenous peoples, other marginalized groups, and the more than human world. We have a responsibility to act and fight for liberation from these deadly systems of power.

The final page of this website offers a quote from Leanne Simpson: “the alternative to extractivism is deep reciprocity. It’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility, and it’s local” (Klein, 2013). By seeing through and with these knots, we may begin to imagine what other future is possible and move towards action. This website shows that confronting and transforming these harmful systems requires a project that is deeply, politically, and personally revolutionary.

This project is available by visiting: <https://arcg.is/1uXfT9>

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Appendix

A: User Guide

I designed The *Seeing Through Our Knotted Ties to Extractivism* website to be an educational tool which provokes a critical engagement on the topic of the Canadian mining industry by those who may be less familiar with these concepts and with the overall context. I took my own experience as a jumping-off point for designing this tool. I was interested in socio-environmental in/justice but was completely unaware that the city I was living in was a hub for the mining industry. This tool, therefore, tries to expose some of these truths for people in Toronto, within Canada, and outside of the country who may not be aware of the centrality of this city for the global mining industry. I have tried to tell this story in a way which first introduces concepts such as ‘extractivism’ and lays out basic facts about the Canadian mining industry to develop a base of knowledge for those who are new to learning about these concepts. I have also included resources for further learning and engagement. This was done with the hope that people may also be in touch with these organizations to support their work. Due to the scale of the issue at hand, this resource should be seen as a starting point for deeper, wider learning on these topics. The resources provided are a great place to start, but there is so much more available.

If this project is used by organizations more directly connected to and engaged with the Canadian mining industry or Canadian extractivism more broadly, it can be a facilitation tool not only for further learning on these topics but also to spark new approaches to their strategic planning for resistance and education. This resource could be discussed and engaged with during educational sessions, or as a resource linked on their websites so that people can learn more and in perhaps a new way about these topics.

When used in educational spaces, I encourage facilitators to approach discussion first using what the *Earth to Tables Legacy* resource calls generic decoding questions. This approach is designed through engagement with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who encouraged “‘decoding’ images through a process that begins with

description, makes both personal and collective connections, and hopefully moves into strategizing for action on relevant issues that arrive from the discussion” (Earth to Tables Legacy “Walking the Talk”, n.d.). Once again borrowing from the *Earth to Tables Legacy* Facilitation guides, some “decoding questions” may include: “What do you see/hear/feel” while using this resource and looking at these photos?”; “How does this story connect with your personal experience” with extractive industries?”; “What are the social issues/themes that emerge from our personal stories? Is there a common issue that is shared among us?”; “How did this come to be? What are the historical and social processes that created this situation?”; “What can be done? What can I/we do?” (Earth to Tables Legacy, “The Soil is Alive”, n.d.). This can be followed by a more in-depth discussion around specific questions and issues raised throughout the project. Depending on the experience and goals of any particular session, questions can then be further tailored towards the group’s particular aims.

This work can be engaged in numerous ways. It was designed to be read and explored from start to finish, and in this way a more holistic picture of mining industry presence in the city emerges. It is through this form of engagement with the work that all of the main themes come together to paint a single, complex picture. This tool can also be used to reference information and data related to the mining industry by using the navigation bar to jump to, for example, maps with information about TSX and TSXV-listed companies. I have included information about these companies and their operations, with the hopes that the tool can be used in this way. Similarly, one can jump to the donations and sponsorships section to use the information collected there to learn more about a particular facet of the larger picture. While a chronological exploration of this site could be beneficial, this is not a prescriptive project. Rather, it seeks to provoke self-reflexivity about our deeply knotted, layered, and varied ties to the mining industry, and to extractivism.

At all stages this project aims to create a sense of proximity in the viewer to the centers of extractive power. This project brings in the harms caused by extraction, but rather than focusing on the areas of extraction the project turns towards the city of

Toronto which plays a central role in these operations. This was done intentionally to bring questions of implication and thus responsibility to the forefront. Central to this project is moving beyond guilt or a sense of hopelessness and towards the possibilities for action that such an implication and proximity allows or opens up. There are individual, small steps that one can take to learn more and to be aware of how we engage with the mining industry every day, and I hope this will lead to a further support for, and engagement with groups and organizations which resist extractivism and support mining-impacted communities.

What happens if we move further *towards* our implication in extractivism and engaging with the fact that mining plays this central role rather than trying to just sweep it aside and stopping at disavowal? What opens if we consider what implication can mean? What if we sink into these complex entanglements, bypassing guilt? May this allow for a soaring towards something else entirely? These are the questions I hope that this project brings to light for viewers, and that discussions amongst those who are engaging with the work may begin to engage with and answer.

More broadly, this resource can be used to demonstrate how digital, visual methods can be used to tell stories and promote critical reflection for viewers. Different visual techniques were used throughout the project and could be explored by facilitators to promote the use of similar method. The same is true for the ArcGIS Story Map program that I used to create the site. I hope that in seeing how this free program was deployed to tell this story of mining presence in Toronto, others may be encouraged to engage with similar forms of storytelling.