

Using Sacred Notions of Time and Space to Map the Hidden Stories of the  
Finch Hydro Corridor

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## **FOREWORD**

The components of my MES portfolio largely draw on research that I have done over the past year in the MES program. The intention of the portfolio is to use different popular education and arts based methods to communicate this research to different audiences including members of the Jane-Finch community. The components of my final portfolio include: a walking tour, a series of postcards, a discussion of the takeover of the campus and community radio station CHRY 105.5FM, and two workshop presentations on the research I have done on the fossil fuel industry through the OPIRG-York working group Environmental Justice @ York. These different components use popular education and community arts methods to share the hidden and erased stories in the Finch Hydro Corridor. The components utilize a combination of visual, tactile and auditory tools to engage the different senses in the storytelling process. The components tell the same stories in different ways to engage different audiences and build greater awareness of the issues.

Each of the components of my portfolio contributes to accomplishing different learning objectives in my plan of study that focus on the work of decolonization, environmental justice, popular education, and community arts.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Naila Lalji, Student number 211170560, hereby declare that this portfolio (MRP) for the degree Masters of Environmental Studies is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university.

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Naila Lalji

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to acknowledge my father who has provided the inspiration for this project. I would like to thank my family for all their support through this process. I would like to also send a big shout out to my activist family for providing the many experiences that are related to the work of this project. And last but most certainly not least, I would like to thank the different Faculty members at FES that have supported my studies and generously provided me with important feedback to push my activist and artistic work in new directions. I would especially like to thank my supervisor Jinthana Haritaworn for putting up with my constant tardiness with meeting deadlines and assisting me in the difficult process of writing academic papers.

## Introduction

Have you ever seen  
a seed fallen to earth  
not rise with new life  
why should you doubt the rise  
of a seed named human

...

When for the last time  
you close your mouth  
your words and soul  
will belong to the world of  
no place no time

- From the poem "When I die..." by Rumi

A seed named human. Your words and soul. (No) place (no) time. These fragments of the poem by Rumi convey some of the essential qualities of my final portfolio. The portfolio was designed to further contribute to the exploration of urban environmental justice issues in a Canadian context using the Finch Hydro Corridor and the Shell, Suncor, and Imperial Oil terminals at Keele and Finch as a case study. The Hydro Corridor is located between 350 metres and 450 metres north of the Keele Street and Finch Avenue West intersection. The 100-metre wide right of way contains buried oil pipelines and overhead Hydro transmission wires. There are three 230 kV power transmission lines operated by Hydro One and one low voltage transmission line operated by Toronto Hydro (Toronto Transit Commission, 2006). The Finch

Hydro corridor is also home to: one oil pipeline operated by Enbridge, two oil pipelines operated by Sun Canadian Pipelines, two oil pipelines operated by Sarnia Products, one oil pipeline operated by Trans-Northern Pipelines and one natural gas pipeline operated by Enbridge (Toronto Transit Commission, 2006). As the components of the portfolio began to unfold, the Sacred entered and shifted some of the concerns I was exploring through the portfolio.

My initial research questions for the final portfolio were:

- 1) How can we build strong connections between communities faced with similar environmental justice issues?
- 2) How can invisible structures such as oil pipelines be made visible to highlight how they physically connect communities?
- 3) How can we increase understanding of environmental justice in racialized communities such as Jane-Finch?

The components of my final portfolio are a walking tour, a series of postcards, a discussion of the takeover of the campus and community radio station CHRY 105.5FM, and two workshop presentations on the research I have done on the fossil fuel industry through the OPIRG-York working group Environmental Justice @ York. These different components use popular education and community arts methods to share the hidden and erased stories in the Finch Hydro Corridor. The components utilize a combination of visual, tactile and auditory tools to engage the different senses in the storytelling process. The components tell the same stories in different ways to engage different audiences and build greater awareness of the issues.

The walking tour was designed to physically engage with the actual space of the hydro

corridor. I used slow walking as a method to give participants the opportunity to become fully alert and aware of their surroundings. The slow movement of the tour also offered a sharp contrast with the speed associated with oil-based car and plane transportation. It offered the idea of slowness as a form of resistance to the fossil fuel economy by highlighting the many ways that oil permeates our lives and suggesting ways to reconnect with the land in more human-centred ways. The character that I created to conduct the tour was a spirit from the land of the spider people. I originally intended to carry my father's radiation mask as a way of illustrating the ancestors that walk with us through life but the mask had an "accident" while being transported to York and the top of it caved in. As a result, the tour also ended up being a funeral procession to bury my father's radiation mask.

As I was creating the walking tour, I began to think about the link between oil and transportation as well as the link between transportation and migration. For the visual component of my portfolio, I decided to create a series of postcards to think about migration and the movement of people and borders. I think of the Finch Hydro Corridor as a border space between the Jane-Finch community and York University because the space separates the Village which is predominantly student housing and the community. I also think of the hydro lines as a metaphorical electrical fence and the Danger High Pressure Oil signs as a way of saying to keep out to people who pass by. I used collage as my method for making the cards. I chose this method because it allows me to play with images by juxtaposing different images together to create a coherent wholeness. As I was making the cards, the trickster kept coming up in the images I was using. As Hyde (2010) points out, tricksters are found at the boundaries, the crossroads, and the in-between spaces. The continuous appearance of the trickster in my art

was an indication to me that the trickster archetype was an important part of the portfolio.

The portfolio was also supposed to include radio pieces that were going to air on CHRY 105.5FM either during the month of June or on July 1. The exact timing had not yet been determined. However, on April 30 the programmers at the station were informed during the Volunteer General Meeting that they were all fired and the station was now VIBE 105.5FM. I was unable to attend the meeting because I was preparing my presentations for the Critical Ethnic Studies Conference. I found out what happened at the Volunteer General Meeting on the afternoon of May 2. This was just a few hours after I had done the walking tour which involved the burial of my father's radiation mask. During the burial, I performed the final hours of my father's life which included the destruction of his voice. The synchronicity between the burial performance and the destruction of the voice of my portfolio was uncanny.

The final component of my portfolio was the Environmental Justice @ York workshops. These workshops were originally intended to build relationships between residents in the Jane-Finch community and different Indigenous communities affected by pipelines in the Finch Hydro Corridor. They were not meant to be about Environmental Justice @ York. However, the roundtable that I was trying to organize did not come together so I decided to present an activist report back session during the Critical Ethnic Studies Conference on the work of Environmental Justice @ York. This working group no longer exists because I have been the only person in the group working on environmental justice issues in the Jane-Finch community. Since I am finishing my studies at York, I have not reapplied to be a working group in the upcoming school year. With the "death" of the working group, I am now turning my attention to ways that the work can continue to grow. This became the purpose of my sessions during the

Critical Ethnic Studies Conference and during the Toronto Peoples' Social Forum.

I realized that the Sacred was entering into my work through the “accident” of my father's mask, the appearance of the trickster, the coincidental destruction of the voice of my portfolio and the performance of the loss of my father's voice, and the shift of the workshops towards the death of Environmental Justice @ York and how to move forward. I started asking myself how the Finch Hydro Corridor can be made into a Sacred space. Further exploration made me realize that this question did not make sense because a true understanding of the Sacred leads one to know that the Sacred is present everywhere and in everything. Jacqui Alexander (2005) argues that the Sacred cannot be known through archival documents and artifacts. It manifests itself through an interior process and lived experience that cannot easily be read in objects. The question of how to make the Hydro Corridor a Sacred space was an illustration of how we have come to see the world as a disenchanted place. Berman (1989) illustrates the history of the shift in the West from a participating consciousness that saw the Sacred in everything to a non-participating consciousness that removes the mind and spirit from the world around it. In this paper, I will explore the Sacred in connection to environmental justice in the Jane-Finch community. I will further argue that the removal of the Sacred from the world contributes to environmental injustice by allowing certain places and people to be considered disposable.

This turn to the Sacred was guided by a theme frequently expressed in writings and activism on environmental justice: that humanity has reached a crossroads. The direction we are taking now will ultimately determine the fate of life on this planet we call home. To counteract this, an understanding of this home as a Sacred space can begin to shift the current

modes of living to bring more balance back into our lives. Such a process is guided by an understanding that we need more than social, political, and economic cures for our present day woes, we need to bring the spiritual back into our lives. This is not an easy task. The process of disenchantment of the world in the West has been in place since the Enlightenment. Many spiritual traditions including my own tradition grounded in Sufi mysticism believe that the Sacred exists everywhere. When thinking about the Sacredness of the hydro corridor, it is important to understand that the space itself has always been Sacred.

My approach to the Sacred contradicts a view in the context of contemporary society where the Sacred is relegated to certain architectural sites such as churches, mosques, and synagogues. The Sacred is a multilayered entity and it cannot be understood through books. The Sacred manifests through the body and this means that the body is an important site in the cultural production work of this portfolio.

Reed (2005) argues for the inclusion of the cultural realm in social movement theory in addition to the economic, political, and social realms. At the same time, he cautions against collapsing these different realms into each other. The author argues that cultural politics works best when it is embedded in specific movement cultures. Movements should be seen as sites not only of cultural production but of cultural reception. Part of the work of movements is to identify and strategically target only certain objects, texts, fields, and assumptions. When every aspect of the terrain is equally politicized, nothing is politicized, for no strategic targeting is possible. Culture can be defined as a kind of action in itself and as all those meaning-making processes that make any kind of acting in the world possible. Cultural poetics is a generation of new ideas and new “structures of feeling”, new ways of being and seeing, new thought-feelings

and felt-thoughts (Reed, 2005).

The cultural production aspect of this portfolio is meant to engage with environmental justice issues on a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual level. In taking an arts-based approach, I understand art not so much as didactic; rather I see art as a way of communicating with people on many different levels. Finley (2008) argues that arts based inquiry exposes oppression, targets sites of resistance, and outlines possibilities for transformative praxis by: making use of emotion, imagination, the intellect, the senses, and bodily experiences as ways of knowing and responding to the world; giving the researcher interpretive license to create meaning from experience; attending to the role of form in shaping meaning; and existing in the tension of blurred boundaries. Creative play and imagination are closely linked and in my mind are important aspects of making change. They give us permission to think outside the box and make up rules as we go along. This is crucial because a new world needs new ways of living and new rules to guide us in living good lives. I think that in order to make positive change in the world we need to be able to imagine what the world can be like and explore different possibilities in creative ways. The activist encompasses the mental and physical aspects of our lives and the artist encompasses the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives. The purpose of bringing together the activist and the artist is to create a holistic approach to change.

The portfolio takes a multivocal approach to environmental justice initiatives in the Finch Hydro Corridor. A multivocal approach emphasizes the dialogic nature of political resolution for social experiences of environmental injustices (Adamson, Evans & Stein, 2002). It indicates the potential of collaborations between artists, activists, scholars, teachers, and students working toward environmental justice. The art that was produced for this portfolio points to some

potential ways to connect the spiritual and emotional to the physical and mental aspects of the self.

I begin the paper by outlining the artistic aspects of the portfolio and then move into the activist aspects of the portfolio. Chapter One will explore the walking tour/ performance in the Finch Hydro Corridor that took place on May 2, 2015 as part of the Critical Ethnic Studies Conference held at York. For this walking tour, I employed the method of slow, meditative walking to connect participants to their surroundings in deeper ways. Chapter Two will explore the visual realm through a series of postcards I made to think about migration and borders. In this chapter, I will address the connection between the movement of oil through the hydro corridor and the movement of people through migration. Chapter Three looks at the hostile takeover of the campus/community radio station CHRY 105.5FM. In this chapter, I will look at the silencing of voices and how this connects to environmental injustice. Chapter Four looks at a different aspect of silencing through the work of Environmental Justice @ York and some of the challenges that this working group of OPIRG-York has experienced since it was first started in 2011. I will also explore how this work can continue now that the working group no longer exists. My portfolio includes two workshops that I presented to discuss ways of moving the work forward. These workshops took place during the Critical Ethnic Studies conference on May 1, 2015 and the Toronto Peoples Social Forum on July 11, 2015.

The writing of this portfolio paper has encountered many obstructions along the way. Flow is a key word here because it feels like a lot of pain and emotion is stuck in my body right now and I need to work at expressing it through various means to begin healing. The components of the portfolio have brought up a lot of pain and emotion that need to be

grounded and healed. Healing work is necessary to bring back balance. The fragments of the portfolio were meant to contribute to some healing of the body and the voice but the work is ongoing. Oppression produces disequilibrium so there is a need to understand the cause of the imbalance. Healing work is an important part of anti-oppression praxis and a key aspect of work on environmental justice particularly when the body and mind of the researcher, in this case myself, is marked by this system as disposable. It is even more painful when this circle of disposable people includes friends and family. The walking tour highlights some of the pain and anger associated with the violent death of my father through a rare form of brain cancer.

## Chapter One – The Walking tour

“We figure and find stories, which can be thought of as maps or paradigms in which we see our purposes defined; then the world drifts and our maps don't work anymore, our paradigms and stories fail, and we have to reinvent our understandings, our reasons for doing things...What we need most urgently, in both the West and all over America, is a fresh dream of who we are, which can tell us how we should act...They will be stories in which our home is sacred, stories about making sense of a place without ruining it...Wreck it and we will have lost ourselves, and that is craziness.”

– William Kitteridge, *Who Owns the West?* (1996)

The walking tour took place during the Critical Ethnic Studies Conference on May 2, 2015. The title of the walk was “Mapping the hidden stories of the Finch Hydro Corridor”. During this tour I appeared as a spirit from the land of the spider people who was visiting the human world to retrieve my father's head and bury it. The tour began at the Technology Enhanced Learning Building at York. I used this site to talk about how learning has been separated from the land. The pace of the walk was slowed down to give participants a chance to connect to the land. The walk incorporated the idea of slowness as a form of resistance to the fossil fuel economy by highlighting the many ways that oil permeates our lives and suggesting ways to reconnect with the land in more human centred ways. The walking tour engaged with the themes of uncovering the hidden histories and geographies of spaces, the relationship between distant spaces, and the ways that bodies and spaces are co-produced.

Dig where you stand is a research and educational process that begins with us and our immediate environment to uncover the history beneath our feet and critically engage with it

(Barndt, 2010, p.241). An important aspect of the work I am doing is about uncovering the history of the Finch Hydro Corridor and the industrial development in the area. As documented on the [jane-finch.com](http://www.jane-finch.com) website, an internet platform founded by a community member with the goal of creating a better understanding of the Jane-Finch community through art, interviews, and other resources, Jane-Finch was once a small farming district north of the City of Toronto. For nearly 150 years farms and orchards dotted the landscape where high rises and shopping plazas now stand. In the late 1950s it was prepared for residential and commercial development ([www.jane-finch.com](http://www.jane-finch.com)). York University is located on property that was originally woodland and also used by indigenous peoples to grow the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash). Every place is haunted by those who lived here first. Once you look into the space, you can find who has lived there before. Places are also haunted by that which is kept in or out: the Hydro corridor border was created in the 1950s and the borders between individual settlements were created in the 1800s when land became property. Mesa-Bains, in her book co-authored with bell hooks, argues that the imposition of a border creates a rupture that then needs to be healed (hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006). The healing work required involves a process of decolonization that fundamentally changes our relationship to the land.

Discarding and rewriting geography according to racial, white dominant hierarchies, asks for an exploration of what is beneath and beyond existing geo-political landscapes (McKittrick, 2002, p.27). What would a decolonial history of the area look like? What areas are significant in this indigenous history? Exploring the indigenous history of the area in more depth is also important in the work of decolonization. There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can “invoke” or not (de Certeau, 1984,

p.108). What can be seen designates what is no longer there. It is the very definition of a place that it is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers (de Certeau, 1984, p.108). Interpretations of what used to be there, charts of imagination and memory, not only make absences stark, they also contradict homogeneity by re-expressing how erasures are worked out beyond and beneath the landscape (McKittrick, 2002, p.29). The historical Huron-Wendat village on the east side of Black Creek in the Hydro Corridor is a landscape that has largely been erased. The only traces to indicate its existence are plaques in the corridor that present a brief history of Huron-Wendat settlement in the area and the naming of the bike trail in the corridor the “Huron-Wendat Trail”.

Places are also embedded in complex techno systems and environmental pathways that tie distant places to one another, poke holes in walls between cities, and disrupt the radical polarity between cities and 'pristine' nature (Throgmorton, 2003). The Finch Hydro Corridor is a site that contains six oil pipelines. Line 9 is the most well-known pipeline because of the current controversy around Enbridge's plans to reverse the flow of oil, increase the amount of oil transported, and open up the possibility of transporting diluted bitumen from the Alberta oil sands. The other five oil pipelines come from refineries in Nanticoke and Sarnia. These pipelines deliver refined products to the Shell, Suncor, and Imperial Oil tank farms at Keele and Finch. This means that the pipelines are an underground connection between Indigenous communities along the pipeline route and the Jane-Finch community. The Finch Hydro Corridor connects the Aamjiwnaang community in Sarnia affected by pollution from oil refineries to the Jane-Finch community affected by the oil storage tanks and the tanker traffic that transports

these products to their final destination. The walking tour was created to highlight this connection.

How can different understandings of urban politics be gained by exploring on foot the historical influence of transnational corporations, or the webs of companies and institutions involved in international oil? This is an important question to explore in the context of the space of York and Jane-Finch. Arts of urban exploration are critical and politicized practices in relation to dominant power relations and their spatial constitution, that make use of artistic and creative means to question and explore social problems and conflicts, and that resist the processes through which urban spaces are currently produced in the interests of capital (Pinder, 2008, p.731). In contemporary debates about the ethics of public art and 'social engagement' (i.e. what public art should be seen to do and not do 'for' its audience), walking-as-art has been proposed as a radical method of reconceptualising the way in which images in and of public space are produced (Phillips, 2005, p.508). The speech act of walking creates stories, invents spaces, and opens up spaces through its capacity to produce "anti-texts" within the text (Pinder, 2005, p.401). The relative ease with which some explorers move through terrains is bound up with axes of power that involve complex articulations of class, gender, 'race', sexuality, disability and so on (Pinder, 2005, p.402). There is a boundary/border at Keele and Finch. Who can cross it? How does identity and oppression affect this? I was particularly concerned about walking by the tank farms with groups of people because some people might be viewed as a security risk in these areas. As a result of this concern, I ended the tour in the hydro corridor at Keele. The tank farms were visible from there but we did not cross over into the space that they occupy. The fear of crossing over into the space occupied by the tank farms is a result of the power they

have in contemporary society to clear spaces of people and land uses that do not accommodate their needs.

In her dissertation, King (2013) argues that the clearing is a process that makes space for genocide and settlement. In the Finch Hydro Corridor, the forested land was cleared by the early settlers that arrived from Pennsylvania. The land was again cleared in the 1940s and 1950s by oil companies as they made space for the pipeline projects and oil terminals that came to exist in the area and still exist today. This clearing retains traces of the past that continue to unsettle the present. King (2013) asks what kinds of bodily formations and spaces emerge when the power relations of slavery/anti-black racism and settler colonialism are mapped onto one another? Anti-black and anti-immigrant racism at York and Jane-Finch build on the idea of Canada as a white nation. This positions Blacks and other people of colour in a relationship of subordination. However, as King (2013) rightfully argues Blacks have a specific relationship to settler colonialism that cannot be subsumed in people of colour narratives.

Imprisonment of Black men and violent deaths are mirrored in imprisonment of Indigenous men and violent deaths. Slavery continues to exist today in the form of the prison industrial complex and prison labour. Areas with high surveillance and policing indicate a constant unsettling process. Enforced movement and enforced stasis (efforts to contain) occurs through the use of prisons, detention centres, and reservations.

In her dissertation King (2013) asks how are the imagined and material spaces of genocide also shaped by Black presence and how the landscapes of slavery also structured by Native genocide are. She goes on to ask how we can develop methodological tools to track these different power formations over time. As a method she turns her attention to bodies and

space. By attending to space we create conceptual spaces that allow us to think about the ways that multiple temporal periods of power coexist as palimpsests. The palimpsest is a paper that has been written upon twice with the original having been rubbed out (Kaye, 2000). By focusing on the production of bodies and space as dynamic, she overcomes the trap of looking for static and inert artifacts and time bound events. Building on this, I attend to the dynamic production of bodies and space as a way to think about my walking tour and the ways it wove the stories of different bodies, spaces, and times together into a performance piece. Indigenous ways of relating to the land have also been eliminated from the Finch Hydro Corridor where a Huron-Wendat village once stood near the banks of Black Creek. Similarly, King's work has helped me make sense of the slow motion form that genocide is taking in Aawmjiwnaang, where high rates of cancers exist due to industrial pollution.

In this portfolio, I have chosen to explore these processes of interaction between bodies and spaces through art. Schechner (2002) argues that performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories. Space is an active part of action rather than passive setting for action. Art can be used to move from geographies of sacrifice to geographies of hope. Casey (1996) argues that we are placelings, and our sensing body, reflects the kinds of places we inhabit. He goes on to say that we can get back into place by our own lived body and it is through our bodies that places become cultural. He highlights the crucial interaction between body, place, and motion, which may take the form of staying in place, moving within a place, or moving between places. Places are more events than things which we must continually work to discover.

Experimental arts and modes of exploration can play a vital role in the development of

critical approaches to the geographies of cities, where they may challenge norms about how urban space is framed and represented (Pinder, 2005, p.385). The cultural geographies of cities include practices of studying, representing and telling stories about cities; it also involves ways of sensing, feeling and experiencing spaces differently (ibid, p.386). Insightful urban mappings are also emerging from a range of other current experimentation in visual culture, art, and activism. Unlike many traditional forms of cartography, however, they aim not merely to reflect or to represent neutrally aspects of the world, but also to intervene in its conditions (Pinder, 2008, p.732). Community mapping can illustrate different stories people have about their community. These layered stories can be used to remember what is no longer there and also imagine what could be there in the future.

The process of community mapping can decolonize the dominant ways of map making. Mapping ordered the space into areas known, but also threw into relief how much of it was unknown; it was not a matter of simply and easily transforming uncontrollable space into controlled text, but a constant struggle with shifting supremacies and classifications (Reid, 2005, p.487). To imagine the city as text is to open out its meanings and subtleties. This kind of argument is often used to point to the makeshift nature of maps. The makeshift nature is what allows other community-oriented forms of mapping to reimagine spaces. The walking tour/performance that I did on May 2, 2015 used storytelling to map alternative histories onto the landscape of the Finch Hydro Corridor and to think about what the space could be in the future.

One of the key components of the performance was my father's radiation mask. This mask was a mould taken of my father's head that was used during his radiation sessions. It was

meant to immobilize his head on the radiation table so that the radiologist could specifically target the site of the tumour during the radiation therapy. In my performance, I propose to view the mask as Sacred, because it was an object that gave form to my father's mind.

Schechner (2002) argues that performances exist as actions, interactions, and relationships. My interaction with the mask during the performance went from lovingly holding it as if it was a precious object to ritually destroying it prior to its burial in the hydro corridor at Keele.

Jacqui Alexander (2005) argues that the Sacred cannot be known through archival documents and artifacts. It manifests itself through an interior process and lived experience that cannot easily be read in objects. This leads to the question of what knowledge systems we can turn to when knowledge from books is inadequate to the task? As Jacqui Alexander notes, spirits can refuse to be cluttered beneath documents of any kind. This illustrates my own problems with trying to control how I presented the story of my father during the walking tour. My original plan was to carry my father's mask during the tour to illustrate the presence of our ancestors in everything we do. The spirit in the mask refused to cooperate with my ideas for it and intervened in my academic research process by shattering prior to the walking tour. As I frantically tried to put the pieces of my father's head together using scotch tape and yarn, I realized that the mask was very fragile. This "accident" forced me to reconsider the objective of the tour and it was transformed into a funeral procession to destroy and bury my father's mask in the hydro corridor. My own research plan involves using the metaphor of the seed to think about my father's body. But the spirit of my father is still present throughout this process and has been guiding me in a different direction. I have chosen to embrace this new direction to honour my father and his role in this process. The ground of experience has shifted from the

secular to the Sacred and in this shift I have become more conscious of the spirits of the Wendat and other peoples who have lived in the area of the corridor. I have also been able to reflect on why the mask should be buried in the specific site of the hydro corridor.

Site specificity is the basis of exchange between a work of art and the place where its meaning is defined. Kaye (2000) argues that the location, in reading, of an image, object, or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institutional, or other discourses, all inform what it can be said to be. Walking is a movement or migration. Why is the work placed in a specific site and where did it originate from? Does the mask 'belong' in the hydro corridor? What is the connection between the mask and the corridor? Santino (2004) discusses the concept of "spontaneous shrines" and other examples of public memorializations of death. He uses the word "spontaneous" to indicate the unofficial nature of the shrines and the word "shrine" because it is more than a memorial. It is a place of communion between the dead and the living and a site of pilgrimage. The ritualistic event both honours the personal identity of the victim and the social malignancy that led to the death in a way that does not allow people to write off the victims as mere statistics. By bringing my father's mask into the hydro corridor, I was attempting to link his death with the cancer caused by the fossil fuels running through the pipelines underneath. I was compelled to voice my own sorrow around the violence of my father's death to begin the healing process. Before burying the mask, I grabbed hold of the spider "tumour" I had placed on it and used it to destroy the mask as I shared the story of my father's final hours. This involved the painful remembrance of how the tumour destroyed his brain bit by bit at the end of his life. Body praxis is central in the structure of healing. My body and voice remembered the death and enacted it as if in a dream. Healing

takes place on several levels including the symbolic. It is both an interior and exterior process.

The burial of the mask at Keele in a sense created a “spontaneous shrine” because it is still there and it has become a place that I visit occasionally to see what changes are taking place in the area. There has been a lot of plant growth around the site. I had a hard time finding the mask and the spider because the plants were hiding the frame. At first, I thought someone had destroyed the site until I found it and realized that my invocation for the pieces of the mask to act as seeds seems to have been heard and carried out.

As Kaye (2000) discusses, site-specific practices work over the production, definition and performance of ‘place’. The walker can never resolve the multiple and conflicting spaces of the city into the place itself but is always in the process of acting out, of performing the contingencies of a particular spatial practice. The ensuing sense of mobility of spaces or places is defined in fluid, shifting and transient acts and relationships. Basso (1996) argues that places possess a capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection. When these acts are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind. The land is a university carrying wisdom and stories. He indicates the importance of a smooth mind that is unobstructed, uncluttered, and unfettered. Schechner (2002) argues that the act of paying attention to simple activities performed in the present moment is about developing a Zen consciousness in relation to the daily, an honouring of the ordinary. The method the walking tour employed to actively sense the landscape was slow walking. The meditative aspect of the walk helped make participants more aware of their surroundings as I asked them to observe what they saw, heard, smelled, and felt. We engaged with the spirit of the wind to sense what sounds and smells it brought to us. At the same time, we did not stop at any place. The

movement was slow but constant. There was a restlessness associated with the lack of a place to stop and constantly having to move on as one does in forced migration and exile.

The hydro corridor is an energy pathway moving in a linear direction through time and space. As humans, we are made up of multiple energies. The elements of water, air, land, and fire exist inside of us as well as outside of us. If all is connected then the spirit work that we do within ourselves can also move outside of us by crossing the boundary of our skin and mouth to interact with the wider world. Alexander (2005) argues that Sacred ideas are manifested over a period of time in one's life until a personal understanding is derived. The Sacred must be practiced to bring it fully into the body. A daily practice can instigate the necessary shifts in consciousness. Sacred praxis is based on the cycle of action, reflection, and practice. We need to be attentive to ourselves to see who walks with us. For me, I think it might be the spider but I am still in the process of uncovering and discovering what spirit walks with me. More precisely, I chose the spider as the spirit who would bury my father's mask in the corridor. The spider is significant to me because of its connection to life and death and the weaving of fate. The creation of the character of the Spider Woman was done fairly late in the process of putting together the walking tour. For this reason, I did not have the opportunity to fully explore the character and it did not manifest strongly in the walking tour. I want to continue the work by actively exploring how this character can continue to manifest itself in the hydro corridor for future performances in the space.

A decolonial sense of time relies on the palimpsest and other non-chronological modes that can appear to congeal centuries and eras into a viewable frame (King, 2013). Different chronological eras can exist in a space together and the move away from linear time to a cyclical

time can challenge ideas around progression. In my walking tour, the Spider Woman character came to bury my father's head and release the spirit of her grandmother from the mask. The burial of the mask as an artifact was linked to the discovery of the artifacts in the Huron-Wendat village. I was interested in what future archaeologists would think about the presence of the pieces of my father's mask in the hydro corridor. What possible explanations would they come up with? How accurate would they be? Can we ever really know the stories of objects that are buried in a site? I also buried small pieces of the mask outside the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) building at York and at the site where we first entered the hydro corridor at Sentinel Road and Murray Ross Parkway. The York site burial was meant to connect the disposability of my father's mask (it was made of plastic and meant to be thrown away), which further reflected the low value that had been accorded to my father in Canada in his lifetime because his degree came from a University in Africa. I buried a piece of the mask in a small plot outside of the TEL building to honour my father's brilliant analytical mind, which belonged in places of higher learning. I made it clear to participants that my father's mind was not garbage, thus counteracting the system that we live in that designates some minds as disposable. I also buried a piece of the mask at Sentinel and Murray Ross. At this corner, there is an official sign that talks about the Huron-Wendat village that was in the area and the artifacts that were located at the site by archaeologists.

Nicks (2003) argues that artifacts are contact zones that can be sources of knowledge and act as catalysts for new relationships. They embody both local knowledge and the histories that produced them, and the global histories of Western expansion (Peers & Brown, 2003). The concept of the contact zone specifically addresses issues surrounding human relationships in

colonial encounters. It represents the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (Nicks, 2003). This contrasts with a colonial approach to objects placed in museums and initially decontextualized to tell an evolutionary narrative about the progress of Western societies (Ames, 2003).

We can move away from this linear narrative of progress by suggesting that different eras exist in the same space. The palimpsest enables an understanding of landscapes as spaces of erasure and overwriting where different scripts coexist (King, 2013). The palimpsest provides a model for the relationship between place and non-place. Marc Auge, cited in Kaye (2000), discusses the notion of non-place which is produced in the passing over of place. It is not in any simple way the antithesis or negation of place. Non-place is defined in relation to place even as that relationship is one of displacement. Place and non-place are like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed.

Art attempts to recover lost voices of those who were marginalized in life and whose stories do not exist in archives. Toxic tours are about momentarily shattering the safe distance that people have with toxic industries so that participants can feel, hear, and smell the place up close. Bodies are in the land and haunt it. The act of burying my father's mask in the hydro corridor was meant to embed a part of him in the landscape as a way of haunting it with his spirit presence. The hydro corridor is also a potential space of radical entanglement where Black and Native survival depends on one another (King, 2013).

It is because life is fluid and cyclical that it is celebrated in elaborate rituals that engage

the past. There is metamorphosis and disorder in a place where ruins can reveal truths that are hidden. Materials are reused and resignified in the process. The mask of my father's head was made to be disposable. But my father's head was not garbage. There was an impermanence linked to the mask, the story of an object that was unfinished. When I buried the mask, I chose to dig the hole with a branch rather than a shovel to connect the burial with a return to the earth. The mask, however; is plastic and will not degrade easily to return fully to the earth but will retain its manufactured quality. The pieces of the mask that fell to the ground were meant to act as seeds to bring life into the space just as my dad's body was a seed returned to the earth to grow again and transform into new life. As the mask was ripped apart by the spider tumour, the pieces fell to the earth to fertilize it with the spirit and the voice that had been imprisoned in his head. The spider was also returned to the earth with the ritual invocation or prayer asking the spider to use its destructive energy against the pipelines that are in the space. This prayer was meant to imagine the destruction of the oil industry.

Ceremony produces ways of knowing that exceed and often defy Western ways of knowing. The walking tour used the burial ceremony to bury my father's mask and connect the burial to the Sacred. Alexander (2005) argues that the focus on spiritual work necessitates the knowing of the body as a medium for the Divine. In this sense spiritual work can be seen as a type of body praxis where the body is a home. Memory is also situated in the body. Embodiment functions as a pathway to knowledge and it can be decoded by the ritual expertise of the community in the same way that the burial ritual that I performed at the end of the walking tour could only be decoded by members of my own community. How does body connect to the mind and spirit? These are not separate distinct elements but rather they infuse

each other. Speaking is a powerful medicine that gives voice to what exists in our bodies, minds, and spirits and the land we are connected to. The land is a university and a healer. The water was once so pure that a person could drink it straight from the source. This is becoming increasingly rare in the societies we live in. The earth was a natural grocery store that contained medicine that was once pure and powerful. With toxic landscapes these connections to land and water are being lost. What we see in the landscape does not help us understand what is underneath or in the air as electromagnetic radiation and toxins.

A further concept that my walking tour engaged with was that of the border. In particular, I viewed the hydro corridor as a liminal space. The walking tour began at York University and moved down Sentinel Road to the hydro corridor, which functions as a metaphorical boundary that separates York and the Jane-Finch community. Hyde (2010) defines liminality as an in-between space. Similarly, Bhabha (2012) argues that liminal space is like connective tissue that constructs difference between two spaces. Art does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent in-between space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. It requires a movement away from a world conceived in binary terms with notions of purity on either end. It is a crossing and a meeting place – an intersection of different histories that collide. The site of intersection between cultures is not a simple celebration of cultural fusion but a carefully considered analysis of unequal power relations and the history of their effects.

Alexander (2005), too, invokes the idea of liminality. According to her, the “Pedagogy of Crossing” is physical and spiritual, and the crossroads acts as a metaphor or part of a journey. In my walking tour, the mask is buried in a border space that is liminal. It exists in the world of no

place, no time. Ritual objects such as the mask cannot be separated from their ritual context. Centuries old grief still lingers in places. What does this mean for healing work? When the grief is so thick no passage of human time can absorb it there is a scarring of the soul and the pain continues over generations. “The dead do not like to be forgotten, especially those whose lives had come to a violent end” (Alexander, 2005, p.289). My father's death was a violent end where the spider tumour slowly took over his brain and started shutting down different parts of his body. One of the first things he lost was his ability to swallow which led him to choke on his food and end up in the hospital. He also lost his ability to speak. This is echoed in my own fight to have a voice in order to heal from the trauma of watching my dad lose his. The walking tour thus helped me manifest his presence in my life, which continues to exert itself strongly.

In conclusion, the walking tour engaged with the themes of uncovering the hidden histories and geographies of spaces, the ties between distant spaces, and the ways that bodies and spaces are co-produced. The tour used art and ritual as a way to move away from linear notions of time and space. The spirit world plays a role in the mundane world and the relationship between the two will always be ongoing. The spirit world infuses the space of the hydro corridor. It is through the recognition of this spirit presence in spaces like the hydro corridor and the tank farms at Keele and Finch that we can seriously question the idea of certain spaces as sacrifice zones. An understanding of all spaces as Sacred can fundamentally change how we interact with them.

## Chapter Two – The Art Cards

As I was creating the walking tour, I began to think about the link between oil and transportation as well as the link between transportation and migration. For the visual component of my portfolio, I decided to create a series of postcards to think about migration and the movement of people and borders. Postcards are small cards that we normally send to friends and family when we are away from home. This connection between home and migration plays an important role in the Jane-Finch community because it is a community that is racialized with many recent immigrants from different part of the world. It is a space that is often imagined as Black and dangerous to justify high levels of policing. I think of the Finch Hydro Corridor as a border space between the Jane-Finch community and York University because the space separates the Village which is predominantly student housing and the community. I also think of the hydro lines as a metaphorical electrical fence and the Danger High Pressure Oil signs as a way of saying to keep out to people who pass by. I used collage as my method for making the cards. I chose this method because it allows me to play with images by juxtaposing different images together to create a coherent wholeness. The process is largely intuitive because I begin without a set idea of what the final outcome will be. The images themselves guide me in the process. As I was making the cards, the trickster kept coming up in the images I was using. As Hyde (2010) points out, tricksters are found at the boundaries, the crossroads, and the in-between spaces. The continuous appearance of the trickster in my art was an indication to me that the trickster archetype was an important part of the portfolio.

The Sacred can be found in the meeting ground of the erotic, the imaginative, and the creative. It is linked to the making of beauty and makes one more present in the world and can

connect us to politics. There is an alienation from self and from each other when the spiritual is excised from the political. The Sacred is not fixed. It is re-created in practice (Alexander, 2005).

Such practice must involve the decolonization of sight, as King (2013) argues.

Decolonizing sight requires that we understand how sight works. We need to allow for the possibility of an eye that is passive. King proposes that the western, imperial eye is primarily an active eye that reads scans and surveys from an all knowing point of authority. The eye in this imperial view is a masculine force, which reads the landscape in a penetrating way. Surveying eyes reflect a colonial vision that looks out onto the land and bodies and sees the potential yield of both bodies and land as commodities (King, 2013).

Rather than looking out with the eye to see things, one can ask for images and natural elements to be in the eye. According to King, we can allow the eye to be penetrated. Decentring the eye is a part of decolonizing the imagination. Sight happens due to a combination of senses. Seeing is a recognition of the whole self and its different ways of knowing. Decolonized sight seeks healing. A new vision has to be attained so that we can imagine societal transformation. Decolonizing sight requires that we first understand what is currently directing our sight (King, 2013). In particular, she proposes that we view settler colonialism and slavery as simultaneous – a simultaneous vision that is difficult to obtain. The power of settler colonialism's and slavery's spatial formations do not appear on the landscape in the same hue and with equal intensity. One will be the foreground colour while the other provides texture. But the texture is just as crucial as the foreground (King, 2013). This process of reframing allows us to understand how the two structures co-constitute one another. Thus, in the hydro corridor, we must hold Chemical Valley in Sarnia, which affects Indigenous people,

and the terminals at Keele and Finch, which affect Black people and other racialized people, in our vision at the same time.

Art plays a role in making the hidden transcripts of colonial violence visible. Chemical Valley and the Keele Finch terminals are invisible to many people that benefit most from the fossil fuel products they refine and contain i.e. the property owning settled class. The toxicity needs to be made visible. According to King, the Settler is an ontological position of self-actualization while the bodies rendered toxic by settlement are disappeared. At the same time Black bodies are rendered hyper visible through surveillance and policing. Bodies and land can be brought into our line of sight in ways that crack our eyes and show us something else (King, 2013).

“Home is multiply valenced, a space and place in which Time centers the movement of Sacred energies; a place where those who walk with you...live and manifest” (Alexander, 2005, p.328). Sara Ahmed (1999) examines the relationship between migration and identity by complicating notions of home and arguing that it is through an uncommon estrangement that the possibility of migrant communities comes to be lived. She asks what does it mean to be at home and how does it affect home and being-at-home when one leaves home? The questioning of boundaries, and the movement across borders, leads to an expansion of vision, and ability to see more. Ahmed (1999) argues that we must radically call into question the opposition between home and away. Home is theorized as a lived experience of locality that intrudes into the senses. Being at home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other and inhabit each other. Home as skin suggests the boundary between self and home is permeable and the boundary between home and away is permeable. The intrusion of an

unexpected space into the body suggests that the experience of a new home involves a partial shedding of the skin.

Migrations involve complex and contradictory relationships to social privilege and marginality. The colour of one's skin plays a strong role in how freely that person can migrate from one place to another. When spaces are contested different means are employed by those in power to clear them. In Jane-Finch, immigration raids and policing are processes of clearing through the removal of people into detention centres and prisons. Environmental toxicity can be a slow process of clearing through illnesses such as cancer that kill people who are viewed as disposable such as Indigenous people, Black people, and people of colour. Spaces are also cleared through name changes that function as a way to forget the history of the land.

Multiple units and scales of space exist from the body to the community to city, regional, national, and international scales. These spatial scales are embedded in the hydro corridor as it affects the bodies of people living near the toxic facilities that the corridor passes through and the different communities it passes through as well as the political space at the national level which is a tar sands friendly space and the international level with the possible future shipment of tar sands crude to Europe via the Line 9 pipeline.

The process of creating the cards made me think of the trickster archetype because it kept appearing in the cards in various ways. Hyde (2010) argues that the boundary is where the trickster can be found, sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, and at other times erasing or moving it. He argues that the origins, liveliness, and durability of cultures requires that there be space for figures whose function is to uncover and disrupt the very things that cultures are based on. Tricksters can be found at the crossroads and they represent the

paradoxical category of Sacred amorality. This amorality need to be distinguished from immorality which is seen as evil. Amorality is a way to understand the ambiguity of life that is not separated into pure spaces of good and evil. When the trickster lies and steals, it is not to get away with something or get rich, it is to disturb the categories of truth and property and open the road to possible new worlds (Hyde, 2010). Purity is not safe with the trickster around. He is a poet of contamination.

The cards in an indirect way examine the idea of borders/boundaries. How do they impact relationships? Borders make it difficult to peer into things and examine them. They can exist externally or they can be internalized. I think of borders as having some sort of barrier that prevents us from gaining access to what exists on the other side. These barriers can include doors, fences, walls, warning signs, caution tape. These barriers can prevent us from seeing and challenging what exists on the other side. They can also act as barriers to the imagination that prevents us from seeing ways to change oppressive conditions in society.

The cards became a way to think about freedom and the barriers that exist in attaining it. I see freedom as the complete removal of all borders/boundaries. It is an ongoing process that I think is never completely achievable. The map to a new world is imagination. Without new visions we do not know what to build only what to knock down. Many movements struggle with constantly having to put out fires. This makes it difficult to be able to imagine what a future world could look like because we are stuck in the present. Hegemonic power structures create the idea that there is no alternative and to some degree people have internalized this notion. Dian marino (1997) looks at how cracks in our consent to hegemonic power can be used to find openings where we can glimpse signs of a better world. The trickster is always present in

these cracks.

Beauty is one of the roles of the artist and it is different from consuming style. In the constant pressure to consume, people are not free to make aesthetic decisions. When the imagination is colonized, the mind does not allow for subtleties, contradiction, and complexities. The visual arts can create a new field of images of decolonized representations. Water has memory and can also be used to cleanse and purify through sacred water ceremonies. Hooks (2006) argues that memory is an important site of resistance in this work because it allows us to resist and heal. We know ourselves through the act of remembering and reclaiming our histories. Our ability to remember is at risk in a culture where only the present moment matters (hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006). The images on the cards are meant to draw the eye in to read what is written on them and contemplate how the image and the words are connected.

The cards are also a way to think about migration in general. Migration corridors are used by birds, animals, pollinators, butterflies and economic goods such as oil. Buell (2014) argues that it has become impossible not to feel that oil at least partially determines cultural production and reproduction on many levels. He describes fossil fuel culture as an age of exuberance haunted by catastrophe. He stresses the need to look at the role oil plays in our lives in a critical way. Both my walking tour and the art cards examine the presence of oil in our lives in different ways. The walking tour addressed the idea that we are oil through the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. Water begins with a single raindrop and accumulates into creeks, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Can the work of healing begin with the single raindrops? The pollution of the air affects the rain which then affects the land so that everything becomes polluted. The cards look at pollution symbolically and literally

by addressing the conflicts that exist to reclaim our relationships to the land.

At the core of Indigenous survival and resistance is reclaiming a relationship to land. Within anti-racism theory and practice, the question of land as contested space is seldom taken up. This speaks to a reluctance to acknowledge that there are deeper, older stories and knowledge connected to the landscapes around us (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p.126). The treaties that govern this land are about sharing the land not owning it. In order to live together in peace, friendship, and respect we need to reconcile different worldviews about land and property. Treaties are Sacred agreements made in ceremony and in the presence of the spiritual world. They are Sacred covenants recorded through wampum belts. On June 26, 2015, I attended a day long symposium at George Brown college called Talking Toronto Treaties. During this symposium, Brian Charles of the Georgina Island First Nation gave a presentation on the many wampum belts that govern Toronto. He also shared knowledge about how the belts are made from wampum shells, which contain a small bit of purple. The shells were broken to make beads for the wampum belts but the dust of the shells is toxic, so people had to be by the water, constantly rinsing the shells as they broke them. These beads of purple were highly prized. The belts highlight the treaties that shaped the Toronto area before the arrival of European settlers as well as the treaties between the settlers and Indigenous peoples of the area. Decolonization involves a process of unsettling that includes learning the history of this land and finding your own place and that of your family in the story of North American colonization.

The recovery of Indigenous self-determination and the recovery of Indigenous national territories are crucial elements for the renewal of Indigenous Knowledge (Simpson, 2004).

Indigenous artifacts are also tied to relationships with the land. When those relationships are

severed, the relationship to the artifact can be severed as well. Artifact forms 'grow' like organisms, and are generated from complex interactions among the artifact makers, their social and natural environment and the particular material qualities of the raw materials which are used in their manufacture (Byrne et. al., 2011). The ability of objects to operate as mnemonics, involuntarily triggering significant personal memories, has long been understood (Byrne et. al., 2011). The Haudenosaunee have specific members of the community who remember the stories behind the wampum belts. These stories are not static but built on relationships that are dynamic and constantly shifting. From Indigenous perspectives, sacrality may be more accurately rendered as apprehensions of spiritual presence, of qualities of personhood, or of deeply felt ancestral resonance. Some can be appropriately viewed and discussed only at certain times of the year or under particular conditions, or handled only by men, women, members of medicine societies, or people who have acquired particular rights and privileges through dreams or inheritance (Phillips, 2011). The Sacred has rules that must be respected in order for the relationship to be maintained between the Sacred and the mundane world.

Ancestors exist in a different time/space that is connected to the time/space we inhabit. Moving in slow motion brings us in line with a different time frame that can allow us to experience the time of the ancestors. The living world and the spirit world touch at the border. Time, space, power and people move together (King, 2013). Toronto is a meeting place and the hydro corridor can also function as a meeting place and a border. What can blur the boundary of the hydro corridor in order to create a space of fluidity? Understanding the trickster archetype can help us figure out how to begin to answer some of these questions. The trickster is the embodiment of uncertainty and chaos. Erotic chaos as discussed by Audre Lorde (1984) is

an important concept for decolonization. It produces a disorientation that allows us to see different vantage points. It inspires new action and new space. It destroys something in order to create something new – a place of beginnings and endings. It is associated with a life of risk where there is an openness to chance and accident. The diaspora connects to new soil and roots itself through the performance of sacred rituals honouring the land, air, and water. They also bring a different consciousness of culture, language, and region at the crossroads of the meeting place, Toronto. These migrations indicate that cosmologies are not static entities. Some elements gain strength, some atrophy, and some are transformed to take in new surroundings (Alexander, 2005).

In conclusion, the art postcards offer a visual way of understanding the ways that border spaces can be played with metaphorically to shift our imaginations. In particular, the trickster archetype that continued to appear in the cards is connected to border spaces. The trickster is always playing with boundaries. The use of collage as a method allowed me to work with a passive decolonial eye by allowing the final image to emerge in a way that was open to chance. In this space of uncertainty and chaos new meanings came to light that pointed the way towards a subversive idea of borders and migration.

### **Chapter Three – The hostile takeover of CHRY 105.5FM**

April 30 – a fairly innocuous date on the calendar. However, this date has significance in the Jane-Finch community. On April 30, 2014 the youth participants of the Palisades Media Arts Academy (PMAA) were informed that their space was closed. No explanation was given to the participants in the program. Months later it was revealed that the staff had unionized and the management responded by ending the program. The case has gone to the Labour Board and the future of PMAA is still unclear.

One year later, on April 30, 2015, the volunteer programmers at CHRY 105.5FM were informed that they no longer had shows on the program grid as of midnight that night. The portfolio was supposed to include radio pieces that were going to air either during the month of June or on July 1; however, the situation at the radio station meant that I was no longer able to carry out the radio component of my portfolio.

I originally planned to use participatory communication methods in relation to radio as a way of presenting the history of settlers and Natives on this land to a broad audience. The purpose was to highlight the colonial history of Canada in order to create a greater understanding of current Native struggles. I also wanted to highlight some of the Indigenous struggles in Sarnia and along the pipeline routes to connect these struggles with environmental justice issues in the Jane-Finch community around the tank farms located at Keele and Finch. A group of programmers have been meeting since May to strategize around ways to get our community radio station back. As a programmer with the proPIRGanda collective on CHRY 105.5FM, I have been attending these meetings. At this point, they have mainly been a space to share information about what has happened at CHRY.

What is clear at this point is that the management's plans to take over the station have been in place for quite a while. When the management was involved in filing the application with the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) to renew CHRY's operating licence in 2012, they changed the station from a campus/community radio station to a campus radio station. This means that the only legal members of the station are current students at York University. This is problematic because many of the programmers affected by the changes at CHRY are community members who now no longer legally have a say in what happens at the radio station. Some of these programmers have been with CHRY for 28 years. At the strategizing meetings, the vast majority of the programmers are community members. Meanwhile students who are not invested in the fate of the radio station have the power to make govern the station and make changes to bylaws.

When I was designing my portfolio, I was thinking of the radio component as the sound or oral component. In this sense, it is ironic that the voice of my portfolio has been cut out by a new entity called VIBE 105.5FM which I see as a "tumour" that is embedded in the host body of CHRY 105.5FM. My portfolio began with a walking tour that highlighted the violence of the "tumour" that killed my father. My father's brain tumour destroyed his voice so that during the last days of his life he could not communicate with his loved ones beyond nodding yes or shaking his head no when we asked him closed ended questions. Sound works on our emotional state. The voice is an instrument that can be a source of healing. Sound energy can heal whatever bad energy our body is holding or experiencing. The hostile takeover of the radio station feels like a betrayal. The management that carried out the takeover were people I trusted. They were teachers who would give me feedback on my shows on a regular basis.

After the hostile takeover, I was walking around telling people that it was like I had an invisible knife sticking out of my back. I had to stop saying this because I started to feel pain in my back in the area around my heart. The betrayal comes from a sense that someone has done badly to me by metaphorically cutting out the tongue and slashing the throat not only of this portfolio project but also of my voice in general. The crisis has in some ways initiated a healing process by acting as an instigator for this work and the acknowledgement of the many ways my voice has been silenced.

I remember a time when my voice was strong enough to be heard in my high school auditorium when I projected it without the assistance of sound amplifying devices. Now, I find it challenging to make myself heard by people a few feet away. Activism has weakened my voice but it is not the only culprit. Shame and ostracism from members of my family have also played a role. The weakening of my voice has taken place mainly since the time my father died. The tumour that stole his voice is mirrored in the stealing of the voice of this portfolio project through the hostile takeover of the radio station by a “tumour” intent on turning the station into a corporation.

The former station manager of CHRY is now referring to herself as the CEO of VIBE 105.5FM. This is an indication of the direction the station is moving in. The management is trying to create a bland sameness to the station by eliminating a diverse ecology of perspectives for a monoculture product that can more easily be sold to advertisers. They are branding VIBE 105.5FM as an urban alternative station. The conflict is between a polyculture view of communication and a monoculture view. In a monoculture, cross-pollination does not happen. Some of the programmers were invited back to VIBE 105.5FM and people can still listen to their

shows on the station but the majority of the cultural programming has been eliminated. At the strategizing meetings, the majority of people attending are Black. This is because there were many African and Caribbean shows on the program grid and most of them have not been invited back. The management has been practicing a classic divide and conquer strategy by inviting some programmers back and not others. Terrell Dixon (2002) argues that the toxicity chain is not only physical. The way we have degraded our environment, our own bodies and those of other citizens, also creates a web of mistrust and fractures the potential for community. The webs of mistrust in our relationships make it possible to stab each other in the back and cause harm to others the way the management at CHRY has done. They have fractured the community through a practice of divide and conquer to ensure that the policies they implement are not challenged. An important counter-strategy on the part of programmers will be to find ways to build and maintain communication networks amongst ourselves to ensure that we are working together for the benefit of all of us as a collective.

In 2012-2013, I did my Community Arts Practice Certificate Practicum placement at CHRY as a producer and host of the Friday edition of News Now. The former station manager was my supervisor during this practicum. As a student interested in community engagement at the station, I used the practicum to reflect on the barriers to participation and possible ways to get more people involved and more issues discussed. What I did not do at this time, which I now believe was a serious oversight on my part, was look at the governance structure of the station. While I was looking at ways to increase community involvement, the governance structure was slowly pushing community out of the station. Creating alternative media spaces that focus on anti-oppression and include voices that are under-represented in mainstream media is a

challenging undertaking. While attempts were made to include as many voices as possible the stories that were covered by News Now were determined by a relatively small group of people and subject to issues that collective members were aware of and interested in covering. Many stories get left out because of this. The radio component of my portfolio was going to try and bring in as many people as possible to decide on the stories that would get covered throughout the month of June.

Feld (1996) argues that voice moves in and through the body, but the physical and emotional presence of the entire body is always in the voice. There is a difference between coming to voice in an atmosphere of “safety” and coming to voice in an atmosphere of “risk” (hooks, 1989). CHRY was a relatively safe space for me to talk about issues that I was interested in and bring them to a larger audience. I could not see my audience and so I could ignore how they were responding by not answering the phone in the studio or eliciting feedback on the show. The negative aspect of this was the lack of connection to the audience which made it difficult to judge how messages were being decoded and if effective communication was taking place. An atmosphere of “risk” involves being face to face with the audience like in a workshop setting. In this setting, I know if communication is not taking place from facial expressions and body language as well as clarifying questions and comments. The risky atmosphere could also be created through an openness to audience feedback on the radio show. The prOPIRGanda collective was actively looking at how we could do this using various social media platforms such as Facebook and a wordpress site.

Basso (1996) indicates that a sense of place roots individuals in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung together, holding them there in the grip of a shared identity,

a localized version of selfhood. At the first meeting in May, there was a sense of mourning that accompanied the loss of the station in the same way a place can be mourned. Since then, people have still been coming to meetings trying to figure out how this happened and what could have been done to prevent it from happening. CHRY was a home and the programmers are suffering the effects of a forced exile from this home, a displacement, a rupture. The radio station has become a ruptured, contested space. Programmers have been working to inform their listeners about what has happened at CHRY. Unlike the one way flow of information, there is dialogue between programmers and listeners because they are connected and part of the same community.

Mainstream media culture focuses on celebrities and stars and makes them role models. The community radio station focuses on “everyday” people and issues that concern those that are marginalized and do not have a voice in media culture. With the growth of social media platforms like Facebook and twitter, what role do community media play? I would argue that social media platforms only give surface views of issues whereas community media gives depth. These platforms also converge around celebrities so those with the loudest voices and biggest networks tend to be more heard than those who do not. A diverse media ecology helps ensure that more voices are acknowledged and respected.

In conclusion, when the management of the radio station makes decisions on what programs to bring back on air and which ones should be left out, they are unilaterally deciding whose voices are valuable and whose voices can be thrown out like garbage. They use the need to professionalize the sound of the radio station as their excuse. Professionalization can mean sounding good on the radio and producing the show well so that it is worth listening to or it can

mean replacing volunteers with media professionals or those that are training to be media professionals. There is nothing wrong with a professionalization that is meant to teach people how to produce good shows that audience members will want to listen to. But the notion of professionalization should not be used as an excuse to push voices out of the station. People's voices are valuable and need to be heard, especially those whose voices have been marginalized in society.

#### **Chapter 4 – Environmental Justice @ York workshops**

“Each of us must find our work and do it. Militancy no longer means guns at high noon, if it ever did. It means actively working for change, sometimes in the absence of any surety that change is coming. It means doing the unromantic and tedious work necessary to forge meaningful coalitions, and it means recognizing which coalitions are possible and which coalitions are not.”

- Audre Lorde

I am trying to figure out why the Toronto context of the fossil fuel industry has been ignored and why I am having such a challenging time trying to bring these issues out to a wider audience. I think one of the problems is that I have been looking to others for answers in academic books and articles. These efforts to intellectualize the problem mask the pain that comes from a lack of acknowledgement and a deep silencing. For this final portfolio, I conducted two workshops to discuss the work that I have been doing through the working group I started at OPIRG-York. These workshops took place on May 1, 2015 as part of the Critical Ethnic Studies Conference and on July 11, 2015 as part of the Toronto Peoples' Social Forum.

In Fall 2011, I started the Environmental Justice Working Group at OPIRG-York to connect Indigenous communities working on stopping the tar sands and other industrial polluting activities with the Jane-Finch community which housed the Shell, Suncor, and Imperial Oil tank farms. The idea was to use the corporations as a way to build bridges between these communities. I also wanted to connect this to the York University community by initiating a fossil fuel divestment campaign addressing these three companies specifically. The workshops

that I did for my portfolio offered an opportunity to share information I have found through my research and to strategize how this information can be used to further build bridges between communities in Toronto and Indigenous communities that are impacted by the same industries.

One of the issues I have encountered in the environmental justice work I do relates to the narrow definition of the word 'environment'. These narrow definitions lead to understandings of the environment as something that exists outside of the urban context of Jane-Finch. I use Gosine and Teeluksingh's definition of 'environment' to talk about environmental justice. The environment here is defined as the places where people live, work, play, and worship (Gosine & Teeluksingh, 2008, p.12). Environmental justice is a political movement concerned with issues of environmental racism and a cultural movement interested in issues of ideology and representation. It places people, especially racialized communities and urban spaces, at the center of what constitutes environment and nature (Sze, 2002, p.163). It can only be achieved through strong community engagement.

In a world where life, land, and labour are commodified, transportation corridors are an economic lifeblood whose clear passage is guaranteed by power of state. The era of free trade has thrown traditional notions of place haywire with products coming from everywhere. Zehle (2002) argues that the real price of oil links individual and collective mobility, urban and rural pollution, trade regimes, transnational corporate activity, human rights violations, and local demands for self-determination. Entire commodity cycles – extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal need to come into view so existing dependencies can be voiced.

Fossil fuel is dirty at every stage. A multi-pronged campaign that addresses numerous points of intervention can have an impact but some aspects are more powerful such as stopping

pipeline projects, divestment campaigns that are gaining momentum in recent years, an support for indigenous legal struggles. Other means include storytelling, popular education, and media campaigns as well as prayer and ceremony. D'Arcy (2014) argues that the movement should focus its attacks on strategic vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include soft targets that crucially bear upon conflict outcomes either financially, politically, or ideologically. Retailers are considered to be soft targets because of the importance of their public profile. These include banks and gas stations which I think need to be part of our organizing strategy. In both my workshop sessions, I argued for a critical look at how we can target these softer targets as a way to build solidarity with the Aawmjinaang community since all gas stations in the Toronto area are supplied by fuel coming from refineries in Chemical valley. I think the best way to target places such as the tank farms and refineries requires figuring out how we can make them obsolete. D'Arcy (2014) also argues for the redirection of some of the movement's focus away from the main adversaries such as refineries and tank farms and focusing it on the support system upon which they rely by making the industry toxic in public perception. Art and media work is useful in this regard.

The tar sands have been described as Mordor, a land of evil portrayed in J.R.R. Tolkien's book Lord of the Rings. In my opinion this analogy has not been taken far enough. I think this is an indication of the need for more creativity in the way that we organize and build momentum to shut down the tar sands. When framing the conflict we need to ensure that we are building from an anti-colonial, anti-oppressive foundation. Decolonization involves a process of re-evaluating our connection to the Sacred. There is a problem with using market based approaches. Instead we need to withdraw our consent and cooperation and learn to live in a

good way. Awasis (2014) argues that anti-tar sands mobilizing can only be effective if these efforts are part of a larger radical transformation, because the tar sands are a form of colonization, with intersecting impacts of racism and heterosexism (p.256). They also argue that anti-oppressive pipeline campaigns need to be accountable to treaty relationships, and responsible for supporting resurgence and decolonization (Awasis, 2014). How can people of colour work together with Indigenous people to decolonize the land?

To acknowledge that we all share the same land base and yet to question the differential terms on which it is occupied is to become aware of the colonial project that is taking place around us (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p.126). While it is important to acknowledge the history of the land, it is also important to address the situation of the people living on the land right now. The Jane-Finch community is comprised of mostly people of colour. Broad differences exist between those brought as slaves, currently work as migrant labourers, are refugees without legal documentation, or émigrés who have obtained citizenship. Indigenous people and people of colour are impacted by white supremacy in different ways.

In order to act relationally, we need to think relationally. The work is not about creating static identity categories like people of colour settler but about moving toward a new vision for ourselves, the way we relate to each other, and how we live on the planet (King, 2013). The organizing that is done in coalition with other people of colour and Indigenous groups needs to look at how each group is situated within the broader context of white supremacy to ensure that our work is not contributing to the further marginalization of other groups. Andrea Smith (2006) helps us understand how white supremacy operates in society by using a three pillar framework. One pillar is slavery which can take different forms such as

the formal slavery system, sharecropping, and the current prison-industrial complex. Another pillar is genocide. This logic holds that indigenous people must disappear. In fact, they must always be disappearing, in order to allow non-indigenous peoples rightful claim over this land (ibid, p.68). The third pillar is Orientalism. This logic is evident in the anti-immigration movements that target immigrants of colour (ibid, p.68).

Other writers, too, have stressed that coalition building requires building relationships with diverse groups of people. According to Reagon (1983), coalition work is not done in the home. It has to be done in the streets and it is dangerous work. It is very important not to confuse the home and coalition. One useful way to approach coalitional politics is to allow each organization to act as its own piece of the puzzle without forcing them to do things they were not built to do in order to respect the ecology of the movement. I have been trying to build relationships between students at York and the Jane-Finch community. The relationship between York and Jane-Finch has been predominantly negative. As a student at the university, I have to contend with negative images that some community members have of the university. There have been instances where students have carried out research and coursework in the community in disrespectful ways. There have been instances where negative stereotypes have made it difficult to establish relationships.

The process of building relationships is challenging and takes a lot of time and effort. In the case of the Environmental Justice working group, a lot of time and effort has gone into trying to find out who in the community is interested in working on issues related to toxic pollution. The work of challenging a powerful fossil fuel industry requires strong coalitions that are still in the process of being built. As these relationships are developed, the work of

organizing a powerful movement to fight against the industry can grow at multiple scales from the local Toronto context, to the regional Southern Ontario context and beyond.

The work of Environmental Justice @ York focused on the local impacts of the oil industry as a means to connect the local with the regional scale that looks at the refineries in Chemical valley and from there the national scale with the tar sands and efforts by the Canadian government to make this country more friendly to fossil fuel corporations operating in the tar sands. We were also interested in the international scale with the threat of climate change and the impacts it will have on the poorest countries in the world that are also the least responsible for causing the problem in the first place. Who lives in the sacrifice zones and why are they the ones to bear the brunt of the burden of our fossil fuel addiction? Our addiction to fossil fuels imprisons us. It is a destiny we must refuse for our children and grandchildren. My work towards a fossil free future is inspired by my four year old nephew and other young children in my family because they will experience the worst of what is to come if things do not change. It is also inspired by ancestors like my father who worked hard to give future generations of their families a better future.

As a woman of colour from the suburbs, I have grown up in racialized neighbourhoods in Toronto and feel most at home in these spaces. However, I also acknowledge that I do not live in the Jane-Finch community and I have a lot to learn about this community. Making a place is about making a home. Genocide in Sarnia and gentrification in Jane-Finch clear the land for whites who wish to make lasting long-term homes. As an activist, I have entered spaces such as Jane Finch Action Against Poverty meetings, the Driftwood Community Centre, Palisades Media Arts Academy protests, the Jane-Finch intersection, Yorkgate Mall, and Black Creek Farm. This

orients me in the community that I am entering as an outsider. My efforts to minimize power relationships involve acting as primarily a support person. Is this a way of maintaining my separation from the community? The issues that I am involved in also affect me so I am not completely detached. For the activist scholar theorizing their activism there is no separation between participant and observer (King, 2013). We are both simultaneously. De Filippis, Fisher, and Shragge (2010) discuss the contradictory and contested concept of community, a politically neutral term that is not simply an inherently good thing. They ask how we can understand the importance of community in struggles for economic and social justice, without losing sight of the limitations inherent in community work. They further go on to argue that community-based efforts must transcend the places in which they are rooted. The creative act of weaving a collective identity can have profound environmental significance. Knowledge of land derives from physical work, creative production, and spiritual reflection.

The first year of the working group mainly focused on finding out who in the community was working on toxic pollution issues and what they were doing. This was important to me because I did not want to enter the community with my own preconceived notions of what issues to work on. The first project that the working group was involved with in the community related to the city's right to know bylaw that requires small and medium sized businesses to report their emissions of 25 harmful substances. By working with the community, we were hoping to identify as many industries that create environmental risks as we could and to work on ways to minimize these risks. The project was meant to be long term but it only lasted a year. Some groups involved in the coalition such as the Centre for Green Change continued to do work on raising awareness in the community about these smaller companies but they lost

their funding about a year ago so the work is now at a standstill. The National Network for Environment and Women's Health also lost their funding during the project. This is a clear example of the problems that can occur when trying to do work on these issues in coalition with NGO's that are reliant on funding to do their work.

In the second year of the working group's existence, the focus shifted to look at the Line 9 pipeline and Enbridge's proposal to reverse it. Despite some initial stumbling blocks, interest in the Line 9 issue has grown in the community. My initial reservations around working on the singular issue of Line 9 slowly shifted towards a cautious optimism. This shift in my thinking came about when I heard members of the community link Line 9 to environmental racism. The battle against Line 9 has been a catalyst in the community to start talking about other environmental justice issues.

When the working group first started working on Line 9, the size of the group increased exponentially in size. Most of the individuals who came into the group were specifically interested in the tar sands and doing solidarity work with frontline impacted indigenous communities. There was very little desire to engage with the issue of oil and gas development in the Jane-Finch community. The Line 9 issue also brought different environmental organizations into the community. These groups did not have any prior working relationship with the community and this caused some problems and miscommunications. The main reason that outside groups got involved was to encourage grassroots community groups to intervene in the National Energy Board hearings. The National Energy Board process for the reversal of the Line 9 pipeline made it difficult for community members to participate. The application process to intervene in the hearings required technical expertise that involved time consuming research.

This lengthy process breached the community's procedural rights as defined by Gosine and Teeluksingh. Procedural rights include access to information, fair hearings, and equal participation (Gosine & Teeluksingh, 2008, p.7). Environmental Justice @ York was also interested in intervening in the NEB process but we did not have the capacity to go through the intense application process.

In the Fall of 2013, I participated in a Critical Urban Planning Workshop course offered through the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York. This workshop explored some of the issues around environmental justice in the community. We explored some of the brownfield sites in the community and also looked at the oil pipelines that are in the Finch Hydro Corridor. Our group created a Line 9 walking tour and developed a WordPress website to share information about the pipelines. We also presented our work at a community session in Yorkwoods library. This session was well attended by members of the community.

Through the working group, I have attempted to use the space of the hydro corridor as a laboratory for experimentation to find ways to engage residents of the community. The hidden geography of the pipelines makes it difficult to see the connections between the communities. The research on this fossil fuel infrastructure is ongoing and challenging because there is very little material available. This is probably due to the fact that the fossil fuel industry in this area is cloaked in secrecy to protect it from potential 'terrorist attacks'. The evacuation plans are not publicly available and potential accidents could be catastrophic. The Finch Hydro Corridor is home to a community garden where community members can grow food for their families. The NEB indicated in a consultation meeting that they would not allow anyone to intervene in their hearings on behalf of the interests of the people growing food on top of the Line 9 pipeline. In

the Finch Hydro Corridor, the pipelines take precedence over any other land use that exists in the area. The power that the fossil fuel industry exerts in this area is largely invisible but moments such as the NEB hearings can shed light on this power and make it visible.

The Finch Hydro Corridor and the tank farms at Keele and Finch have gained a greater significance for me now that my father's mask is buried there. This portfolio has engaged with the area as a site of public contestation, where fossil fuel development and the underlying regimes of racism and colonialism are challenged simultaneously through popular education and cultural production. My own healing from environmental racism and its interpersonal effects means that I can no longer turn my back on this area. What would it take to get others to engage with it? This question necessarily remains one that needs to be addressed collectively.

## Conclusion

The components of the portfolio have engaged with the idea of the Finch Hydro Corridor as a Sacred liminal space. This reframing of the site offers a radically different way of understanding our relationships to ourselves, each other, and the land that we occupy. When the land, the people occupying the land, and other living creatures such as plants and animals are seen as Sacred, we can no longer view them as disposable.

The walking tour and art postcards connected the emotional and spiritual aspects of my artist self with the mental and physical aspects of my activist self. This connection was further deepened through the work I have been doing with Environmental Justice @ York and my efforts to save CHRY. These physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components are not mutually exclusive. Their interdependence is reflected in the different chapters that make up the various components of this portfolio. The walking tour in some ways highlighted all four categories even though it was primarily a work of art. The art postcards also highlighted all four categories even though the physical might not be as apparent. The process of making the cards was an embodied process because it relied on the hands and the intuition that came from the gut. The activist work with Environmental Justice @ York and CHRY has been emotional because I care a lot about both organizations and watching them die has been extremely painful.

I am still struggling with trying to find ways to cope with the losses of my father, my community radio station, and the working group that I have put so much time and effort into over the past four years. Caring for the body is a radical act of self-love, yet practicing radical self-love is challenging. Invoking the Sacred as a means to heal from the wounds of oppression

can connect us to our own bodies, each other, and the land. This is the path that will lead us to environmental justice.

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