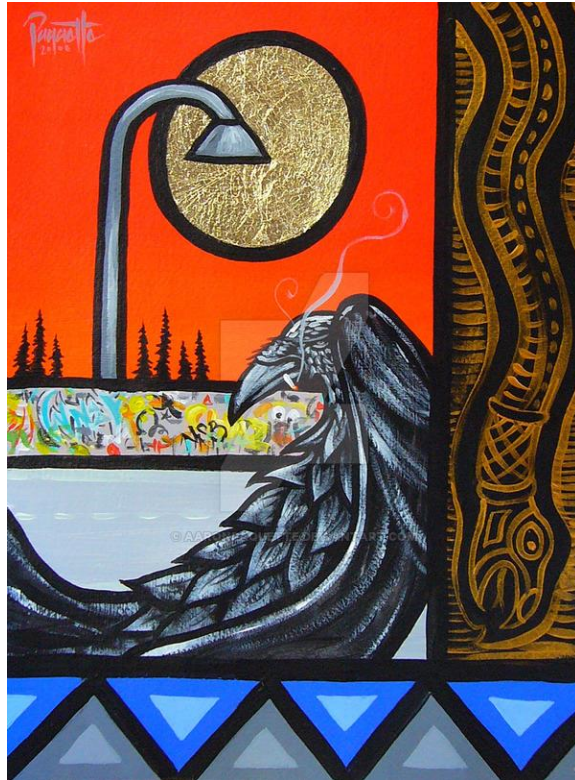


Re/making the 'Meeting Place' – Transforming Toronto's public spaces  
through Creative Placemaking, Indigenous Story and Planning



Down and Out - City Living, Aaron Paquette, First Nations Metis

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## Foreword

My Plan of Study explores the possibilities of creative design and urban planning in progressive transformation of urban landscapes. The art of *Placemaking* is particularly important since, in my view, it offers practical holistic ways to make and remake our environment. How do we design cities that are just, inclusive, safe and sustainable? How do we create thriving urban places that are both attractive and democratic? Does a change in the build environment impact urban communities and neighbourhoods? How do we turn a space into a place? The New York based Project for Public Spaces (PPS) defines a place as a space that people use for activities they enjoy doing. It is a space that is designed around a community. A place is not just to look at, it is to use. A place then combines physical materiality with attached meanings and subjective interpretations. To address such a complex construct, urban planning initiatives require original and integrated approach that melds together contributions from a number of disciplines such as sociology, visual arts, ecology, urban planning, geography, politics and law.

I believe that cities will shape the future of our civilization. We, urban professionals, have a tremendous opportunity to design that future. We have a privilege and, at the same time a big responsibility, to shape a better urban environment. Besides bringing into equation the three pillars of our society – economic, environmental and social – I envision adding a fourth pillar, which I view as an equally important albeit underrated – aesthetic pillar (or simply beauty). In my

vision beauty plays a holistic (as opposed to superficial notions of it by some) role in betterment of our environment. Further, I understand the necessity of interlinking design activities with the theme of social justice. Any plan or project would be incomplete without integrating all four pillars, and probably giving an extra weight to the social one. One of the ideas that I'm particularly interested in is the role of urban design in 'righting the historical wrongs'. Bringing into light the untold subaltern stories, while integrating principals of 'Just city', 'Creative City' and 'Walkable City' applied through a postcolonial lens, have the power to make more inclusive places and subsequently better cities and a better world.

Toronto - my city - takes the central stage in the paper. The research theme deals with a very specific idea: how to represent our city's heritage and Aboriginal history through Placemaking. It appears that Toronto's Indigenous story is rendered invisible. I find it telling that Victorian historians believed Toronto meant "a meeting place" in native languages and this romanticized version has stuck in the city's image. The real word came from the Iroquois term *tkaronto* meaning 'where there are trees in water'. Placemaking, incorporating historic narratives related to city's Indigenous presence, could create a shift our public memory and paint Toronto's image in a different light.

The second part of the paper – a practical project – was intended to be a case study including identification and development of a specific location/locations throughout the city based on Placemaking principles. Initially, the case study was focused on a project within the University's grounds: the future, currently under construction, TTC York subway station. Unfortunately, delays and

miscommunications had rendered this opportunity impossible. Instead, I developed several different ideas that form a broader initiative: from ambitious time and money consuming undertakings linked to important city places and infrastructure to relatively easy to implement (but politically difficult to advocate for) ideas.

## **Abstract**

The theme of Toronto as a middle ground has been often referenced by historians and archaeologists alike: “geographically a meeting point between Canada's vast natural resource wilderness, such Atlantic Ocean seaports as New York and Montreal, and the sprawling continental Midwest, and since prehistory, a place of meditation and exchange between different cultures and peoples” (Carruthers, 2008, p.7).

The international community might know Toronto as one of the best cities in the world in liveability or quality of living (Mercer survey, 2016). Unfortunately, our city’s important legacy as a middle ground or a “meeting point” has not been adequately celebrated both locally and internationally. The purpose of the research is to highlight the city’s diverse culture and identity as a modern world city with a unique Indigenous heritage that goes back centuries, beyond the colonial era. Looking at history and its representation through the post-colonial lens, my research has the potential to not only build our unique sense of identity and pride as city’s inhabitants, but to also serve as an important link in ongoing Canadian reconciliation efforts, in light of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 2015 report and recommendations.

I study how unearthing Toronto's forgotten/erased Indigenous historic narratives can remake our city a true '**Meeting Place**'. I believe that by celebrating our pre-colonial history we have an opportunity to make Toronto more livable, more inclusive, more just city for all its Lefebvre's citadins. The research focuses on studying the city's Indigenous background, its current state of representation; on undertaking a comparative analysis of relative cases throughout the world; and on developing a local case study. Ideally, future steps will lead to establishing a centrally located art/history project and/or a network of small-scale public places where our Aboriginal history is showcased and celebrated.

Toronto's story – our sense of place - will not be complete without acknowledging our Aboriginal roots. Beyond historical representation set in the past tense, it is imperative to talk in the present and even future language. Recognition of the continuous presence of Indigenous peoples on this territory is one of the building blocks in re-claiming the city by its Indigenous inhabitants. It is also an essential milestone in the process of Reconciliation.

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# 1 Introduction – Ode to the Great City

*“City air makes one free” it used to be said. The air is a bit polluted now. But it can always be cleaned up.”*

*David Harvey, 2003*

The old German proverb “*Stadtluft macht frei*” (city air makes you free) appears to encapsulate a historically enduring appeal and an emotional attachment human civilization has developed towards cities. Cities have been centers of human activity and most importantly, centers of human advancement throughout the ages. British urbanist Peter Hall argued that the history of Western civilization, from its beginning, has in fact been a history of cities (1998). Cities drew in the brightest and the most adventurous of minds, or simply minds that were different, opening unlimited, so it seemed, possibilities to experiment and dare. Innovative ideas shaped new ways for the civilization to develop and prosper, bringing about golden ages. And “like every ... golden age of which we know, it was an urban age”; like the age of Renaissance that “was an urban phenomenon; so was every great burst of creativity in human history” (Hall, 1998, p. 3).

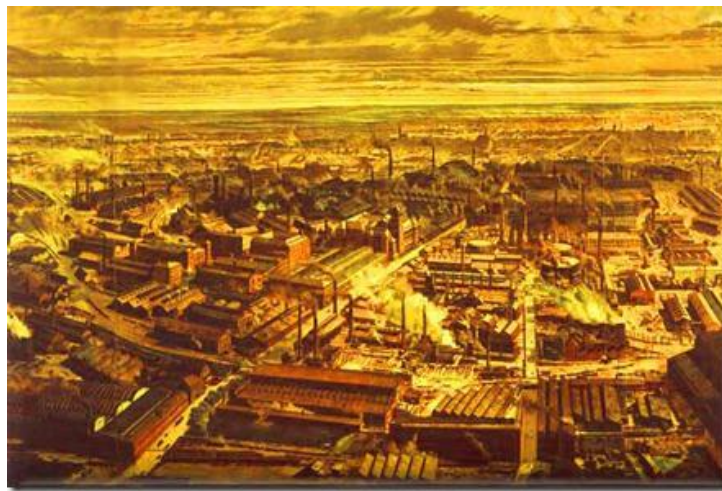


*Athens - one of the symbols of Western civilization, source: Lonely planet*



## 1.1 The Great City – theory and practice

The history of cities has been marked by immense volatility featuring phenomenal ups and downs, where bursts of creativity and progress would often be followed by decline and sometimes oblivion. Only a handful of once powerful magnificent ancient cities from Babylon (now ruins) to Athens have remained on the map, not to mention retaining, at least partially, their significance in today's world; Rome, Venice, Jerusalem and Damascus being examples of rare endurance. We often think of cities as hubs of art and culture, trade and commerce. Ancient cities often served as citadels of political power and religion, but were also stages for science and enlightenment.

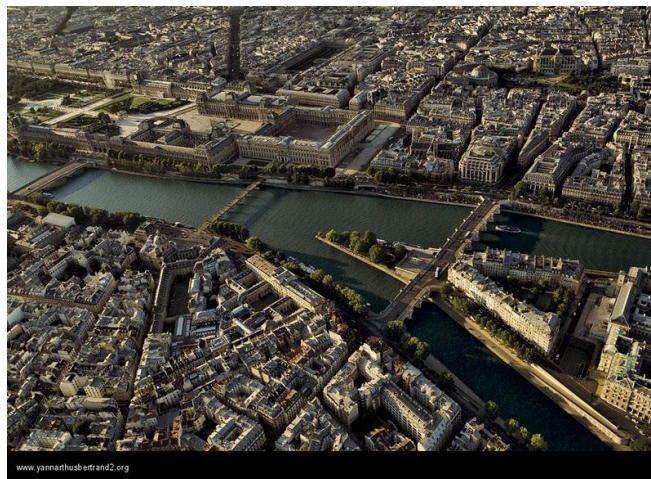


*Manchester, circa 1850, source: Richard Brown*

The industrial revolution ushered in an era of cities as centres of manufacturing and technological innovation. At the same time, rapid industrialization caused severe environmental degradation of townscape; and the rise of the bourgeoisie created new class divisions accompanied by social polarization and inequality among city inhabitants. Cities thus turned into arenas of class tensions and

clashes serving sometimes as living societal experiment labs. Grand imperial capitals such as Paris and St. Petersburg became cradles of revolution where old repressive social orders (absolute monarchy in both cases) were violently swept away by new ideologies giving rise to new power and new modes of governance.

Cities are peculiar places - energizing and empowering on one hand, but at the same time messy, ridden with struggle and distaste. “ ... The story of great cities: earthy utopias they were not, places of stress and conflict and sometimes actual misery they certainly were” (Hall, 1998, p.989). Since their inception, cities have been forced to deal with challenges created by their size, population growth, diversity and density. The problems inevitably lead to innovations in fields of civil engineering, architecture, healthcare and sewage systems, transportation, law and policing, and of course town planning and design. Various town-planning practices have existed from time immemorial, take for example the Zhou city of ancient China as early as 10<sup>th</sup> century BC where “the city... had to be properly aligned with the spiritual forces of Heaven” (Friedmann, 2005, p. 1). Nevertheless, the Western notion of urban planning was spectacularly introduced by Baron Haussmann in the 1860s’ Paris of Napoleon III.



*Paris after Haussmann, modern view, source: Paris Attitude*

I love the not so pure air of a city, its noise and pulsating energy and the freedom to either succeed or fail. For the energy of city to flow freely, it needs to be nurtured by diversity, this anarchic agglomeration of strange, foreign and unfamiliar that only cities can sustain. As Jane Jacobs put it “cities ...differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition full of strangers”. Naturally, a congregation of many strangers in a densely populated environment creates pressure, bigger the settlement and the diversity stronger the pressure. “Big cities have difficulties in abundance, because they have people in abundance” (Jacobs, 1992, p. 447).

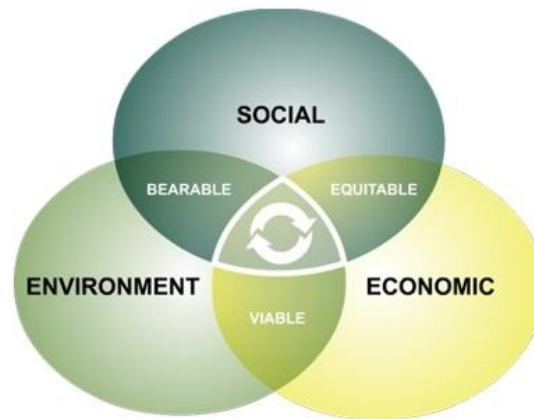
So what makes a city successful? What ushers in a city’s ‘golden age’? Urban planners, architects, scholars, activists and politicians have long been pondering to provide philosophical and practical answers to these formidable questions. Nowadays, urban planning professionals find themselves on the forefront of the quest for livable sustainable cities. Since the profession’s formal inception at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its catapult to fame by British planner and engineer Thomas Adams, urban planners and designers have been trying to respond to challenges and inevitable conflicts posed by rapid urban growth. Tom Gunton argues that the basic foundations of liberal society, laid down by people such as Adam Smith before the industrial revolution had occurred, had to be drastically modified to suit the more complex industrial market, making old principles of unrestricted use of private property dangerously outdated. “This conflict between capitalist institutions and the demand of the new urban society sparked an intense political debate which has continued up to the present” (Gunton, 1991, p. 94). Urban planning has been under

constant attack from across the political spectrum. Planners “must go beyond the trite and hollow definitions of planning as a process of decision-making and begin to analyze what role they actually play and why” (Gunton, 1991, p. 93). Contrary to the long prevailing stand assuming planning as an objective science or technical exercise, it is now acknowledged that planning in many respects is subjective and political. Planners and designers must operate in the reality of private markets and government regulations, reconciling opposing interests of various groups with a prime goal, I strongly believe, of safeguarding public interest and public good.

Urban planning profession exists in a much broader framework of society and therefore cannot be detached from the larger political, economic and social environment. It is now commonly accepted that our society rests on three pillars: economic, environmental and social. Following the gradual shift in our general understanding of societal mechanisms and the re-evaluation of hegemony of modernist principles, since the 70s the science of planning has been undergoing a profound transformation from a practice mostly occupied with economic reasoning, to a growing (and now widely dominant) focus on environmental concerns, to understanding the essential role the social pillar plays in developing our cities. “The post-war decades saw the expansion of powerful social movements, based in communities, pressuring for more participatory and inclusive decision-making to counter insulated bureaucratic planning process” (Evans & Advokaat, 2001, p.8).

Social and political studies have come to play a particularly integral part in planning decisions. Different schools of thought such as communitarian work, which stresses the notions of civil society and community, or neoliberal principals, which

prioritize individuality and free markets, offer often-conflicting influences on priorities and goals in developing our cities. The vital role of communities in health and well being of urban society is now widely recognized. “Humans... are the product of their social environment and are formed by the norms, beliefs, traditions, and attitudes of the society which surrounds them” (Evans & Advokaat, 2001, p.2).



*Three pillars of society, source: Dynamic AQS*

Early advocates pushing for community based and people- centric development include such iconic figures as American-Canadian urban activist Jane Jacobs, American urbanist and sociologist William ‘Holly’ Whyte, Danish architect Jan Gehl and French philosopher Henry Lefebvre. In her seminal work “The death and life of great American cities” first published in 1961, Jacobs poetically compared the “seeming disorder of the old city” to a complex order of an intricate sidewalk ballet in which “the individual dancers and ensembles al have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose the orderly whole” (Jacobs, 1961, p.50). Criticizing the devastating practices of after-war city planning and “renewal” projects, Jacobs laid out simple but powerful foundations of building vital cities, cities that have “marvellous innate abilities for understanding, communicating, contriving

and inventing what is required to combat their differences” (Jacobs, 1961, p.447). Her focus on the street and its diverse (preferably uncontrolled by planners) uses that produce big and dense cities served as a basic element for lively, intense, sustainable places that “contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over problems and needs outside themselves” (Jacobs, 1961, p.448).

Whyte’s groundbreaking conclusions were based on careful analysis of real-life data about the actual use of public spaces such as urban plazas, traffic routs and sidewalks. In his book “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces” (1980), Whyte challenged then conventional planning wisdom. Similarly to Jacobs, he believed in perseverance and sanctity of public spaces. He offered ideas that sometimes looked surprisingly obvious focusing on humanistic city design, which cultivates solidarity between citizens. For Whyte, “small urban places are priceless, and the city street is the river of life... where we come together” (Whyte, 1980). Whyte claimed that zoning and regulations were not the ideal way to achieve the better design of public spaces. “It is far easier, simpler to create places that work for people than those that do not – and a tremendous difference it can make to the life of the city” (Whyte, 1980, p.15). His claim that urban planners and designers have a moral obligation to create physical spaces that facilitate civic engagement and community interaction is as relevant today as it was 30 years ago, and may be even more so. The foundation of Whyte’s legacy, which is being continued today, for example through the work of New York based Project for Public Spaces (PPS), lies in the belief that “social life in public spaces contributes fundamentally to quality of life of individuals and society as a whole” (Whyte, 1980).

Jan Gehl pays close attention to the importance of designing cities, public places and buildings with human scale and human activities in mind, a design approach he coined 'cities for people' and 'life between buildings'. In the book "Cities for People" (2010) Gehl defined attractive urban environments as those that boast with life and activities, claiming that people are attracted mostly to the presence of other people. An ancient Icelandic poem *Hávamál* emphasizes that claim in an eloquent statement: "man is man's greatest joy" (Gehl, 2010, p. 23). Gehl looks at cities as meeting places where rich urban life sustains all forms of social activity, whether spontaneous or planned. "Throughout history city space has functioned as a meeting place on many levels for city dwellers. People met, exchanged news, made deals, arranged marriages... People attended city events large and small. Everything was carried out in full public view. The city was the meeting place" (Gehl, 2010, p. 25). Gehl warned of over-planning environments, which may result in stale or sterilized versions of urban life. "Unpredictability and unplanned, spontaneous actions are very much part of what makes moving or staying in city space such a special attraction" (Gehl, 2010, p. 20).



*Busy Italian piazza, source: Jessica Spiegel*



According to his vision, cities lost their essential function as an important social meeting place during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the “planning ideals of modernism prevailed and coincided with the car invasion” (Gehl, 2010, p. 25). Proliferation of urban design centered on cars and traffic coupled with gargantuan inhuman scale of modernist projects broke down the life sustaining social fabric of cities, especially in North America. The human dimension was neglected, and instead “dominant planning ideologies – modernism in particular- have specifically put a low priority on public space, pedestrianism and the role of city space as a meeting place for city dwellers” (Gehl. 2010, p. 3). Driving gradually pushed out the opportunities for people to interact, to experience unexpected encounters, to ‘be there in person’. A human dimension and good walking opportunities, according to Gehl, are the main prerequisites for lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities. As banal as it may look at first glance, walking is an essential component in designing lively, safe and sustainable urban spaces. Pedestrianism is closely tied to the social role of cities as meeting places, the role, which Gehl argues, contributes toward the aims of social sustainability and an open and democratic society.



*Cities for People vision, source: Gehl architects*



This concept has been recognized by many leading urbanists culminating in an entire 'walkable city' movement initiated by Jeff Speck in 2012. "At its core walking is a special form of communion between people who share public space as a platform and framework" (Gehl, 2010, p. 19). According to Speck, it is walkability and fabric that make any urban experience rich and vital. Great walkable cities such as Rome, Venice, Barcelona, San Francisco and Prague have what planners call 'fabric', that "everyday collection of streets, blocks, and buildings that tie the monuments [of a place] together" (Speck, 2012, p. 10). Speck believes that walkability is what works best in the best cities, one issue that seems to "influence and embody most of the others". Walkability is "perhaps most useful as it contributes to urban vitality and most meaningful as an indicator of that vitality" (Speck, 2012, p. 4).

Many urban thinkers such as Charles Landry, founder of The Creative City movement, and Richard Florida, author of The Creative Class concept, searched for magic 'creative' ingredients that make cities successful. Landry believes he divined the connections between economic prosperity and creative achievement. Great cities have distinction, variety and flow; they attract a broad mix of inhabitants. Sterile regulated environments, on the other hand, cannot flourish. Successful cities are actually hubs, and Landry maintains that "hubs thrive when social and physical infrastructures are fluid enough to support experiment, serendipity and invention" (Landry, 2010, p. 10). Creative people of various professions, including 'creative bureaucrats', are magic ingredients for successful cities. A creative city offers the right physical and civic infrastructure that cultivates conditions, which attract the much-needed creative talent. "The symbiosis between an active citizenry and a bureaucracy able to

accommodate new ideas exemplifies the systemic creativity” that Landry seeks to promote (Landry, 200, p. 9). According to Landry, the place has a critical role in making cities desirable to creative individuals who eventually contribute to the city’s future economic prosperity. He views the street as a building unit and notes that, in order to succeed in drawing the talent, the city’s collection of streets must be “aspirational, world-beating, irresistible”.



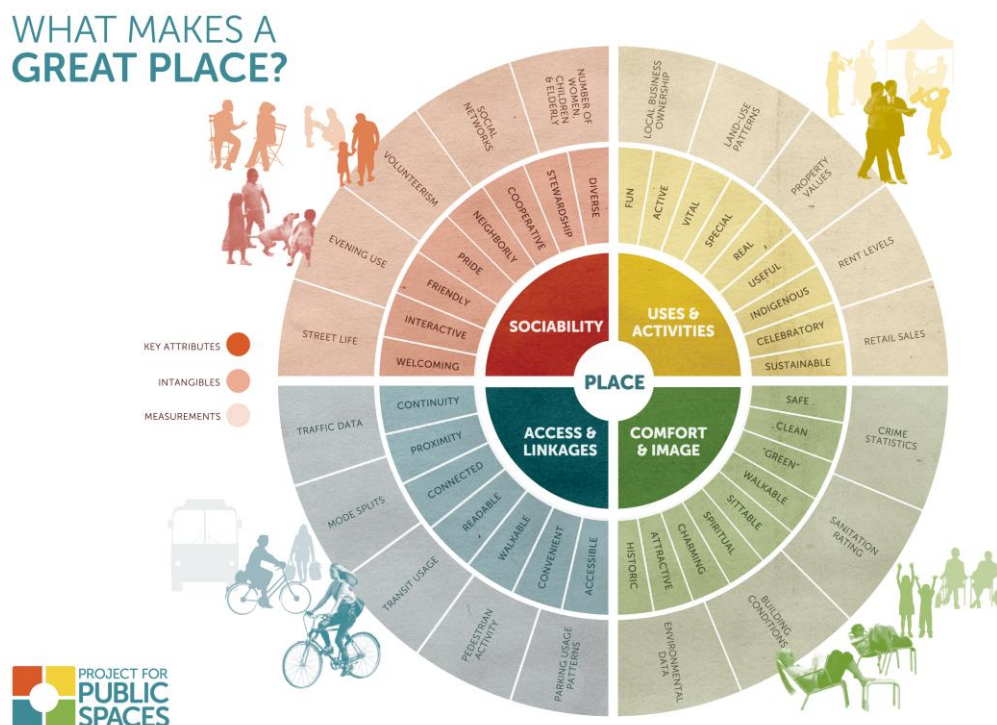
*Copenhagen's vibrant city centre, source: The Architectural Review*

As shown above, a rich body of urban research has demonstrated how the history of cities shows that urban structures and planning influence “human behaviour and the way in which cities operate”. Better conditions for city life invite more pedestrian and cycling traffic, invite new patterns of use and eventually more city life. Several surveys - particularly in Copenhagen and in Melbourne at the end of the 20th century - have documented a precise connection between city space quality, degree of concern for the human dimension and the scope of city life (source: Cities for People, Gehl, 2010). Physical planning is very influential in designing/redesigning

cities and in creating more sustainable and democratic urban spaces. At the same time, as Swiss-Canadian urban planner Ute Lehrer argues, the ways we interpret urban space reaches far beyond physical appearance, it is influenced by dominant ideologies, various cultural and political agendas. “Issues relating to where and how we chose to live, what we like, and what we identify as ‘good places’ to be in are intricately bound up with how we engage in civil society and how we impact the environment through our daily activities” (Lehrer, 2006, p. 438). Lehrer focuses on the Lefebvrian argument that space is socially constructed and that our relationship to space is defined through social practices. The way people perceive the same space differs depending on their cultural background, on their political values, on their religious beliefs and so on. In general, human psychology has a great impact on how people experience the environment around them. While Lehrer agrees that a well-designed physical space can make some cities attractive to almost anyone, listing noted scholars and professionals such as Jacobs, Lynch and Alexander (2006, p. 439) who all believe in fundamental principals of good urban form, she reminds us that space is social construct. Lehrer draws a distinction between **space**, which is commonly understood through its physical materiality as a three-dimensional expanse, and **place**, which is “about subjective feelings and attachment that human beings develop for the special environments that surround them”. “Like space, place is a physical location, but place is also a mental construct” (2006, p. 439). People attribute different feelings and emotions to a particular place eventually filling it with meaning. Meaning gives a place its identity and history, as opposed to a ‘non-place’

that might be defined as generic, lacking roots and meaning, and also as being beyond citizens' control.

Turning space into a place through meaning is the focus of Project for Public Places (PPS) initiative. Building on Whyte's legacy, PPS promotes and develops public places based on 'Placemaking' principles. "Placemaking is an activity through which members of society make sense of a particular space, their own positioning within, and their own relationship to that space (Lehrer, 2006, p. 439). PPS engages in planning, design and education in order to help people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. PPS views Placemaking as both the overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighbourhood, a city or a region. It advocates putting a place at the centre and building our communities around it.



“Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution” ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)). PPS founder Fred Kent believes that by focusing on a place instead of a project, it is possible to transform a space into a place. Kent defines a place as “a space that people use for activities they enjoy doing. A place is not just to look at; it is to use. It is a space that’s designed around a community” (*Frame*, 2012, p. 117). The process involves four fundamental principles: accessibility, activities, comfort, and sociability. Ultimately, it is people who make places, not architects, designers or planners. This philosophy adds a new dimension to the understanding of built environment and its complex interconnectivity with social, environmental, economic and demographic issues.

Kelly Greenop and Sébastien Darchen claim that place theorists have recognized that places are not only comprised of their physical, functional qualities in the present, but also of their associations with people, events and histories. “The classic geographic definition of place, proposed by Agnew (1987), states that place is comprised of *location*, the cartographic description of place; *locale*, the understood function of a place ..; and *sense of place*, which encompasses the social and emotional meanings associated with a place” (Greenop & Darchen, 2015, p. 381). Citing the work of Tuan (1974), they stress the holistic understanding of place as ‘a whole’ where the place identity is a key term describing the deep levels of attachment to places that can

entwine with a person's identity. Thus planning the physical characteristics of a place must be balanced by planning for social and cultural sustainability. "...there must always be balance – between well-orchestrated physical environment and socially constructed healthy communities" (Lehrer, 2006, p. 448). As geographer David Harvey famously concluded "place is not only physical, but is constructed and made meaningful only through social" (Harvey, 1993, p.5).

The year 2007 marked a new epoch in which the majority of human beings on the planet now live in cities. The world population has grown from 1.65 billion in 1900 to 6 billion in 2000, and total population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050 (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007). Urban areas have been absorbing the main portion of this growth. In 1900 only ten percent of the world population lived in cities, more than half of the world lives in cities now and it is expected that 75% of the population will be urban by 2050 (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007). Humanity lives in an age of cities, but this age is not one of equality. Scholars around the world have documented increased income polarization and ethno-cultural divides in large cities, writes David Hulchanski of University of Toronto (2016). Wealth and poverty tend to concentrate in cities, and there are growing trends known as divided cities, dual cities, and polarized cities. Many scholars, activists and professionals have raised concerns that the various processes of neoliberal restructuring are threatening democracy. For example, the well-known "Three cities" report by Hulchanski (2007) clearly demonstrates a growing gap in income and wealth and the increasing polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods over the course of 30 years from 1970 to 2000 creating three distinct Torontos (Hulchanski, 2007, p. 2).

The need to prioritize the social aspect of planning policies in order to safeguard democracy is now felt more acutely than ever. In the context of global restructuring that threatens the very foundation of enfranchisement of urban inhabitants, Mark Purcell re-examines the influential and radical 'The right to the City' introduced by Henri Lefebvre back in 1968. The process of neoliberal political and economic restructuring in cities, it is feared by a range of scholars, results in transferring control "from citizens and their elected governments to transnational corporations and unelected transnational organizations" (Purcell, 2002, p.99). Those global changes threaten urban democracy and encourage authoritarianism. Many scholars, including Harvey, see the idea of the 'right to the city' as a shield to resist neoliberal transformations and a way to empower *citadins* (urban dwellers). However, Purcell believes that Lefebvre's right to the city is not a completed solution to current problems, but an opening to a new urban politics, what Purcell calls 'an urban politics of the inhabitant'. "Lefebvre's right to the city is an argument for profoundly reworking both the social relations of capitalism and the current structure of liberal-democratic citizenship... key to this radical nature is that the right to the city reframes the arena of decision-making in cities: it reorients decision-making from the state and toward the production of urban space" (Purcell, 2002, p.101). As one of the forefathers of the social construct doctrine, Lefebvre believes that production of urban space involves much more than planning the material space, it necessarily involves reproducing and reproducing all aspects of urban life. The right to the city stresses the enfranchisement of city residents with respect to **all** decisions that produce urban space, going beyond the state structure into corporations and

multilateral institutions (such as trade organizations). Radically, the right to the city is post-national: it is above national citizenship, and it empowers *citadins* based on their inhabitation in the city. Despite the notion that the right to the city alone is “not sufficient for building a more radical and just urban democracy” (Purcell, 2002, p.106), Harvey argues that “the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is ...one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights” (Harvey, 2008, p.23).

The First UN Habitat Forum held in Vancouver in 1976 established the critical importance of cities for maintaining basic levels of social and ecological sustainability (Urban Forum, UBC, 2016). It is clear that the ongoing rural to urban migration, combined with the intensified competition for capital and influence is changing cities shape, function, political processes and demographic distribution. Public spaces are the backbone of sustainable cities, an essential element of our environment since they are “simultaneously an expression of political power and a force themselves that help shape social relations” (Low & Smith, 2006). Social shifts and transformations of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted in regressive restructuring and reduction of what counts as public space today. The last two decades and especially the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 brought dramatic changes, erasures and closures of public space led by the state and the corporate world. “From city parks to public streets, cable and network news shows to Internet blog sites, the clampdown on public space, in the name of enforcing public safety and homeland security, has been dramatic” (Low & Smith, 2006, p.1).



Among prominent urban thinkers researching the subject of effective urban spaces and placemaking is a British scholar Henry Shaftoe. In his book *"Convivial Urban Spaces"*, Shaftoe aims to demonstrate that successful urban public spaces are an essential part of a sustainable built environment. "Without them we are likely to drift into an increasingly private and polarized society, with all the problems that would imply" (Shaftoe, 2008). Placemaking finds itself in the middle of public debate and a growing concern about the disappearance and function of public spaces. "The struggle for public space today has everything to do with contemporary debates putting the public against the private, and vice versa.." (Low & Smith, 2006, p. 14). A recent conference on the "Politics of public space" held at the City University of New York Graduate Centre focused on "the recognition that public spaces are no longer, if they ever were, democratic places where a diversity of people and activities are embraced and tolerated. Instead, they have become centers of commerce and consumption, as well as places of political surveillance" (Low & Smith, 2006).

British geographer Bradley Garrett claims that we're in the middle of a creeping privatization of public space. Streets and open spaces are being defined as private land after redevelopment. Citing a 2012 campaign by *The Guardian* newspaper to crowd-source data about privately owned public spaces (Pops) in Britain, Garrett suggests there is a clear pattern: "Having begun to be built in the 1980s (unsurprisingly), Pops around the country increased steadily in number through the 2000s, and also grew in size. This includes the estate of More London, a 13-acre expanse stretching down the Thames's Southbank. It was completed in 2003 and sold off in 2013 to Kuwaiti property company St Martins for £1.7bn, in one of

the largest commercial property deals in British history” (Garrett, 2015). Privately owned public spaces - open-air squares, gardens and parks that look public but are not - contradict the very purpose of public space since the rights of the citizens using them are severely hemmed in. They fail to enable diversity in people’s engagement with such spaces evoking the quintessential question: who is a city actually for? According to Garrett, sociologist Richard Sennett suggests that private public spaces are “dead public spaces” because the essence of conviviality, spontaneity, encounter and yes, that little sprinkle of chaos, have been stripped out” (Garrett, 2015).

From my many readings and conversations with academics in the field of urban planning, an idea has been crystalizing - an idea of *‘unplanning’* or using Sennett’s phrase *‘that little sprinkle of chaos’*. As Abidin Kusno, MES York, once remarked: “Why do we need to plan everything? The best public places I’ve seen are people made, unplanned” (May 2015). That might seem a bit paradoxical for a profession entrusted mainly with the task of planning, nevertheless *‘that sprinkle of chaos’* introduces a fundamentally new framework for re/designing urban spaces. *‘Unplanning’* is directly tied to authenticity as it gives voice to local bottom up elements that shape essential components of identity, relations and history of a place. It gives the inhabitants a goal and a means to shape their environment. *‘Unplanning’* is democratizing by nature in that it challenges the common generic top down approach. It is now commonly agreed that the fascination with spectacular spaces and buildings (so popular during the last several decades), such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, does not create places for people, it creates generic spectacular places imposed from without, places that are usually detached from

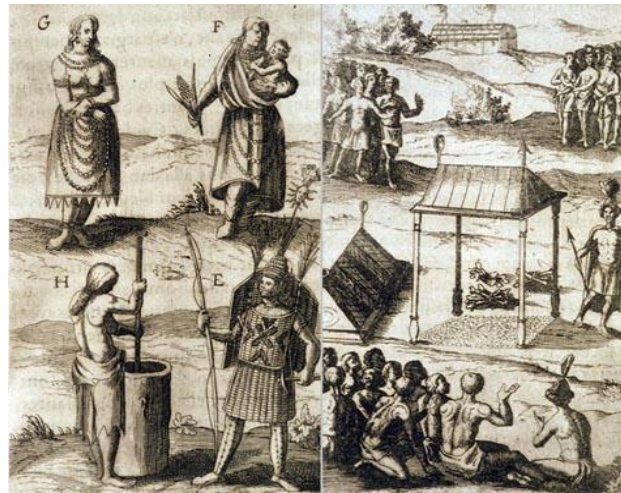
aspirations of its *citadins*. “This focus on the global and iconic (away from local and authentic), aligns with ... concept of urban *design-scapes*, in which urban form is used to create a marketable form of symbolic capital which promotes a particular place brand to a world audience” (Greenop & Darchen, 2015, p. 382). Authentic places, on the other hand, are dynamic holistic entities mostly shaped by insiders who give a place its special meaning, its unique *genius loci*. Landry’s The Creative City ethos that focuses on general principles rather than codified rules provides further validation to the idea of ‘*unplanning*’. His goal “to assist people who wanted to solve civic problems rather than imposing solutions on them” (Landry, 2010) has lead to successful implementation of many projects. Urban planners in ‘*unplanning*’ act as a creative framework designed to boost public participation: “The symbiosis between an active citizenry and a bureaucracy able to accommodate new ideas exemplifies the systemic creativity” (Landry, 2010, p. 9). This creative symbiosis might be a much-needed step towards Lefebvrian city.

## **1.2 My Great City - Toronto**

My home city Toronto is fortunate to have a widely diverse population and a vibrant city life. Toronto constantly ranks as one of the best cities in the world in livability or quality of living (Mercer survey, 2014). Although progressive in many aspects, it shares the fate of many other North American cities: it is not walkable, public transportation is inadequate, it has a sprawling footprint, it is car oriented, the scale is not people centered, and planning is mainly characterized by a top down approach. Despite the obvious shortcomings, I feel that my city has an even more

pressing need: the need to build its essential components of identity and history beyond the short period of European settlement.

This research paper deals with a very specific idea: how to represent our city's heritage and Indigenous history through Placemaking. Toronto's history and its mythology have been shaped by colonial attitudes. "History does not form a large part of the city's urban mythology or tourism promotion, and there is no museum or large-scale institution devoted to the whole span of the city's history..." (Freeman, 2010, p. 21). I find it telling that Victorian historians believed Toronto meant "**a meeting place**" in native languages and this romanticized version has stuck in the city's image. The real word came from the Iroquois (or the Mohawk) term *tkaronto* meaning 'where there are trees in water'. The history of the Toronto region has been closely tied with the history of the Hurons, the Senecas, the Mississaugas and other Indigenous people throughout centuries.



*Depictions of Huron Life, 1640, source: Toronto Public Library*

The theme of Toronto as a middle ground has been often referenced by historians and archaeologists alike: "geographically a meeting point between

Canada's vast natural resource wilderness, such Atlantic Ocean seaports as New York and Montreal, and the sprawling continental Midwest, and since prehistory, a place of meditation and exchange between different cultures and peoples” (Carruthers, 2008, p. 7). Unfortunately, our city’s important legacy as a middle ground or a “meeting point” has not been adequately celebrated both locally and internationally. Placemaking, incorporating historic narratives related to city’s indigenous presence, could paint it in a different light. Our city can be a true **meeting place**, both in Indigenous and Gehl’s sense.

The purpose of the paper is to highlight the city’s diverse culture and identity as a modern world city with a unique native heritage that goes back centuries, beyond the colonial era. Indigenous people living in the city keep memory of a long history of Aboriginal occupation of the area, which “Toronto’s modern towers of concrete and steel may obscure but can not eradicate” (Rodney Bobiwash, 1997). Looking at history and its representation through the post-colonial lens, my research has the potential to not only build our unique sense of identity and pride as city’s inhabitants, but to also serve as an important link in ongoing Canadian reconciliation efforts, in light of TRC report and recommendations. By awakening the forgotten stories, the paper can also help in asserting the right to the city by all of its *citadins*. Indigenous Research principles play an important role in my research, and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. In her influential book “Indigenous Methodologies” (2009), scholar Margaret Kovach of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry paints Indigenous research from the perspective of reciprocity: we are all, beings or *Entities*, are connected and interconnected; our goals and methods should

consider the consequences of our actions on balance with nature and within ourselves; guarding the *Entities* and benefiting the communities are the foremost reasons for undertaking any research.

### **1.3 Terminology**

Terminology relating to Aboriginal representation can be a complex issue and thus deserves a separate explanation. According to Linc Kesler of Indigenous Foundations at University of British Columbia (UBC), understanding Aboriginal identity in Canada is one of the most challenging and contentious tasks. “The history of relationships between the Canadian state and Aboriginal peoples is complex, and has oftentimes been paternalistic and damaging. As a result, terminology can represent something more than just a word. It can represent certain colonial histories and power dynamics” (Kesler, 2017). It is important to recognize that terminology can have either negative or positive effect: a term can be a loaded word, used as a powerful method to divide and control; on the other hand, it holds a potential to empower people and to create dialogue.

The First Nations Studies Program at UBC developed a resource to guide researchers through the maze of terminology (2017):

- The term “Aboriginal” refers to the first inhabitants of Canada, and includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This term came into popular usage in Canadian contexts in the 1980s.
- “First Nation” is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s

and '80s and generally replaced the term "Indian," although unlike "Indian," the term "First Nation" does not have a legal definition.

- The term "Indian" refers to the legal identity of a First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act. The term "Indian" should be used only when referring to a First Nations person with status under the Indian Act, and only within its legal context. Aside from this specific legal context, the term "Indian" in Canada is considered outdated and may be considered offensive.

- "Indigenous" is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (UN).

- "Native" is a general term that refers to a person or thing that has originated from a particular place. The term "native" does not denote a specific Aboriginal ethnicity.

In Canada, the term "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous" is generally preferred to "Native." While "Native" is generally not considered offensive, it may still hold negative connotations for some. "Indigenous" may be considered by some to be the most inclusive term of all, since it identifies peoples in similar circumstances without respect to national boundaries or local conventions. "Aboriginal" is the least contentious and most inclusive general term currently used in Canada. "First Nations" is a widely accepted term and may be used sometimes generally, but is increasingly used specifically for First Nations—reserve communities and the people living in them or closely associated with them.

In my paper I try to adhere to the general rules as described by The First Nations Studies Program at UBC. When referring to people, I usually use the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal, and I prefer to use the term Aboriginal in a more historical context. The use of the term Native is mostly reserved for histories, events and narratives that have a connection to the land, particularly the territory the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is located on. Whenever possible, when the information is available and clear (as with cases of self-identification), I make a respectful effort to relate to people by the name of their specific community or nation.

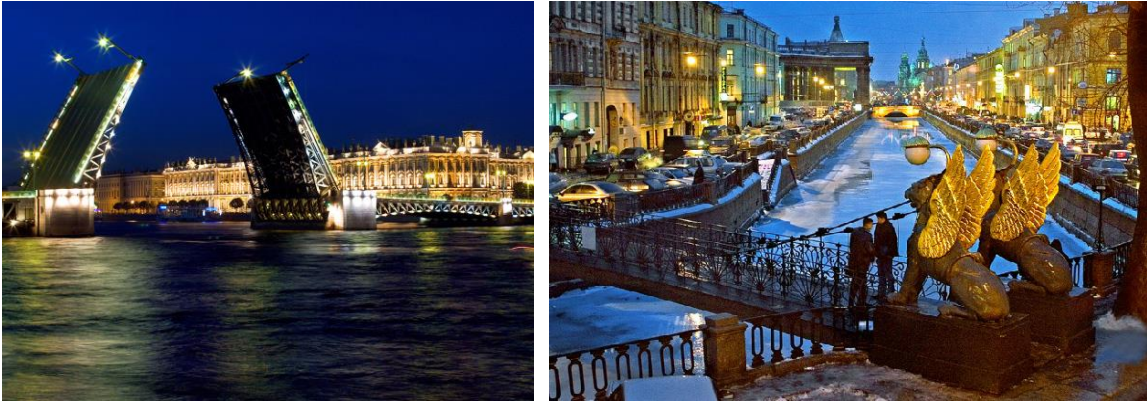
## **2 Incorporating Indigenous Research Perspectives**

### **2.1 Self-Positioning**

According to Indigenous Research methodology, it is imperative to position oneself before conducting research. Therefore in line with the methodology, first I would like to introduce myself and further extend on my aspirations for this research.

Having experienced a variety of different countries and different cultures, I have a diverse background that shaped me as a cosmopolitan individual who sees things through a global lens. I was born in USSR in one of the most beautiful cities in the world - St. Petersburg (then Leningrad). My home city, the cradle of Bolshevik revolution and the cultural and intellectual capital of the Russian empire was ridden with duality: unparalleled architectural beauty build by despotic tsar's will on the bones of thousands of serfs and drafted soldiers. This duality stays an integral part of any true Peterburger's personality: sadness (sometimes cynicism) and at the same time great pride to represent the best of the Russian culture and history.





*Modern views of St. Petersburg: Neva river and Hermitage; Bank bridge over the Griboedov canal*

I had a rare opportunity to transcend distinctly different societies and even orders: state socialism (albeit as a child), constitutional democracy, and constitutional monarchy. I've lived in four different countries, speak four different languages, love discovering and have traveled throughout half of the world. All those countries, places, learnings and experiences have added a layer after layer onto my spiritual, humanistic and intellectual development. The mobility has presented an opportunity to meet and make friends with an array of amazing people who influenced me in many different ways. Ironically, my closest friends come from very diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. This crazy dynamic life has made me a deeply multicultural and tolerant person, it has showed that people are similar and the majority basically want the same things in life: safety, family, good food and good company, and most importantly an opportunity to dream and realize that dream.

As a minority growing up in an authoritarian communist state that had tried to assimilate and crush all cultures and ethnicities into one homogenous and faceless society, I personally feel parallels with the Aboriginal history in Canada. The history of my people, vivid stories of WWII, the Holocaust, and the bloody legacy of the

communist regime made me very acutely aware of the sanctity and at the same time the fragility of life and of the paramount importance of family and dear friends. Having a family and kids had a deep and a transformational effect on my life. Everything receives another dimension and 'the seventh generation' philosophy becomes a personal quest. We are directly accountable to our children as our actions, and frequently non-actions, have a profound impact on their future.

I have a degree in economics, worked in investment banking, have a degree in Interior Design, passionate about creating and have been working in interior design since arriving in Canada and graduating from the Academy of Design. A multitude of writers, philosophers, professionals, humanists and scientists has left a long-term impression on my views and beliefs. Great designers and architects such as Phillip Stark and our own Moshe Safdi had a profound influence on developing my vision where beauty plays a holistic (as opposed to superficial notions of it by some) role in betterment of our environment. All this wealth of knowledge and progressive thought has contributed to the crystallisation of my passion to bring more justice, kindness and beauty to our world. There is a conscious transformation from a basic level of involvement in charity work and volunteering to a more proactive stand through professional and/or academic work I'm planning to pursue. Besides bringing into the equation the three pillars of our society – economic, environmental and social – I envisioned adding a fourth pillar, which I view as an equally important although underrated – aesthetic pillar (or simply beauty). Readings and classes at York, discussions and engagement in the current events of our world have contributed to the growth of my understanding of a dire need to interlink design activities with the

theme of social justice. Any plan or project would be incomplete without integrating all four pillars, and probably giving an extra weight to the social one. Well, it makes our work as future planners and academics extremely complicated. Here is my try to reconcile all of the abovementioned with my love of the place where I live – Toronto.

## **2.2 Research Theories and Perspectives**

My search for creative and useful ways to make the world a better place for the future generations, and hopefully for us as well, has been underpinned by holistic approach. Holistic framework covers physical, spiritual and intellectual dimensions of being and is based on four pillars of our society: economic, environmental, social and, as per my suggestion, beauty. The research framework that I find relevant to my idea is Postcolonial theory. Postcolonial studies form an academic theory that focuses on illustrating and challenging the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism. One of the main theorists of Postcolonialism, a philosopher Gayatri C. Spivak developed and applied Foucault's term *epistemic violence* to describe the destruction of non-Western ways of perceiving the world, and the resultant dominance of the Western ways of perceiving the world (Sharp, 2008). By studying the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies, the theory aims to explain and reverse the human consequences of power domination, control and economic exploitation of the native people, their land and resources by settler colonizers. "Postcolonialism is the critical destabilization of the theories (intellectual and linguistic, social and economic) that support the ways of Western thought ... by means of which colonialists "perceive", "understand", and "know" the world. Postcolonial theory thus establishes intellectual spaces for subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and thus

produce cultural discourses of philosophy, language, society and economy, balancing the imbalanced us-and-them binary power-relationship between the colonist and the colonial subjects” (Wikipedia). This framework falls in line with my ‘Re/making the Meeting Place’ initiative, which seeks to deconstruct the Western built historical narrative about Toronto area and to bring forward the ‘other’ story told about and by Indigenous peoples.

Bringing forward the story of Indigenous peoples inevitably triggered the imperative of integrating Indigenous research principles into my work. The two research approaches appear similar in many ways. Both try to deconstruct the dominant European-imposed ways of thinking and ways knowing, both introduce and promote alternative ontologies and alternative epistemic interpretations. Both Postcolonial and Indigenous research theories finally give voice to previously silent (or more accurately not heard) subaltern populations. Those research frameworks offer fundamentally different paradigms thus opening not only the academia, but also the whole society to new possibilities, enriching our understanding of the world. At the same time, I find that Postcolonial studies (especially Said’s theory of Orientalism) suffer from the same flaws it so widely criticizes in the Western thought: it homogenizes European ways of thinking and European epistemology not recognizing the wide variety of theories, approaches and cultures within it. Indigenous research, in my view, offers a more holistic approach that attempts to understand the other world and to be open to other cultures, other teachings and to other ways of thinking (not only Western). As an Indigenous scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax wisely stated, “ the more they knew and understood about other world cultures and ways of being and

thinking, the more they would be able to contextualize their own experience as healthy social and cultural beings, without a sense of isolation or disconnection from the rest of the world” (2001, p.168). In many instances I find an Indigenous research approach, which recognizes the importance of integration of values and cultural aspects of different ways of being and knowing in the modern world, to be more reflective and therefore offer more potential benefits than Postcolonial approach.

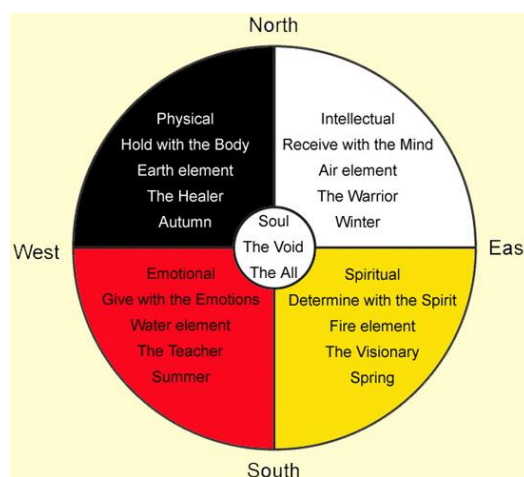
There are different lines of thought within Indigenous research scholarship, but the overarching idea in my view comes down to **“Doing It in a Good Way”**. Kovach’s insight on Indigenous Methodologies paints Indigenous research as essentially a holistic framework. Deborah Poff articulates the importance of oral tradition and story telling as central to aboriginal personal and community identity, advocating researchers to be a part of “a good story” (2006). This perspective stresses the importance of relationships as a foundation for research and the ownership and control over outcomes by community partners. “The research methods have to mesh with the community and serve the community... If my work as an Indigenous scholar cannot or does not lead to action, it is useless...” (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p.169). Some scholars claim that participatory research, which by definition aims to empower research subjects to assume ownership of the research process and to use the results to improve their quality of life, is a methodology that parallels the paradigm of Indigenous research. Key characteristics of Indigenous research include the four R’s principles and practices to guide ethical research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility (Bell, 2008, p.34).

Indigenous research, according to Weber-Pillwax, requires a context that is consciously considered and purposefully incorporated into the research. One of the main concepts is that any research related to Aboriginal issues should be done with Aboriginal people following Indigenous knowledge framework (Lynn Gehl's *The Ally Bill of Responsibilities*). The works and the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have created a basis for renewed attention, which hopefully will push to reconsider the entire paradigm of conceptualizing indigenous heritage, culture and knowledge. TRC's records, testimonies and recommendations have exposed the heartbreaking reality of prolonged cultural destruction and assimilation attempts orchestrated by the Canadian government (TRC 2015). All with good intentions... How can we prevent any future disastrous actions designed with good intentions? One way would be actually collaborating with people we design for, or better to design with instead of for.

Indigenous research framework gave a new dimension to my research. I firmly realize the importance of reaching out to local Native communities in order to receive their feedback, their comments and their valuable insights into the proposed ideas. Ethical considerations and guidelines such as OCAP 2005 (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) may make my research a more complicated and time consuming one, but I believe it will make it more grounded and more relevant for the whole community. At the same time, learning about Indigenous ways of being and knowing has strengthened my own belief in practice rooted in holistic and humanitarian values while incorporating a concept of critical thinking. Upon investigation, there is a deep breadth of knowledge and strength of conceptualization in Indigenous Research. More

and more Aboriginal scholars come forward defending and even privileging the Indigenous ontology and knowledge systems. It is definitely time to question Western doctrines and learn from other ways of thought.

According to a Cree elder and teacher Laureen Waters Gaudio, spirit name Istchii Nikamoon, Native American spirituality is based on the Medicine Wheel (2016). The wheel represents harmony and connections and is considered a major symbol of peaceful interaction among all living beings on Earth. The symbol has a form of a circle with two lines intersecting in the middle. The lines divide the circle into four equal sectors. “It is widely accepted that the Medicine Wheel is a symbol of life and specifically the Circle of Life. As well known the circle represents perfection as well as infinities since the circle has no beginning or end. There can many reasons behind the meaning of the circle itself among Nations” (Jamie K. Oxendine, 2014). Gaudio points out four essential elements of the wheel that make a harmonious whole: spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual. All four elements should be considered in order for any endeavor or research to be complete.



*Medicine Wheel*, source: <http://mesacreativearts.com/html/medicinewheel.html>

Indigenous research is deeply rooted in community, it recognizes the overarching importance of family or community as opposed to individual goals. "Whatever I do as an Indigenous researcher must be hooked to the 'community' or Indigenous research has to benefit the community" (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 168). This connection serves as a constant reminder for researchers to reflect on the anticipated outcomes of their work and to ask a very simple but sometimes daunting question: what is the purpose of my research? why do I do it? "Within emerging ethical frameworks, it is understood that research involving Indigenous peoples must advance internally-identified community development goals and yield knowledge that is useful.." (Ball, 2008 p.35). The idea of shared effort, of shared benefits, of trust and shared knowledge is reflected in the principle of reciprocity. Reciprocity is considered an important value in Aboriginal ways of knowing, in that "it emphasizes the mutuality of knowledge giving and receiving" (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHC), 2016).

Another integral aspect of Indigenous research is the paramount role of storytelling. Native teachers and knowledge keepers have traditionally taught lessons and passed knowledge through verbal storytelling. It has been for centuries one of the major ways to keep the Indigenous history and identity alive. Indigenous scholars often refer to their academic work as to 'telling readers a story' over writing a research paper. Indigenous research uses a concept of prologue in order for a researcher to self-position him/herself. Prologue is a function of narrative writing that "encompasses essential information for the reader to make sense of the story to follow" (Kovach, 2009, p.3). According to Julia Christensen, storytelling is especially



suited to “collaborative research with Indigenous communities, where storytelling and knowledge sharing are often one and the same” (2012, p. 231). The Tri-Council Policy Statement clearly describes that Indigenous knowledge is rarely acquired through written documents, but rather a world view adopted through living, listening and learning in the ancestral languages and within the context of living on the land (TCPS2, 2016, chapter 9).

Finally, the connection with the land should be highlighted. “The legacy of our people is this land” writes Kovach (2009). This is an underpinning thread throughout the Indigenous research literature. Land is the foundation for all, the nurturing stabilizing force that keeps people alive. Based on the principle of reciprocity, “Indigenous people have always been engaged in research processes as part of their ethical ‘responsibility to keep the land alive’” (McGregor, Bayha, Simmons 2010, p. 102). Connections to the land are among three elements that are fundamental in preserving Native peoples’ culture and self-determination: “insofar as Indigenous peoples have maintained their own languages, connections to the land, and knowledge systems, they also continue to govern themselves in the old way” (2010). This profound relationship to the environment and to the land is “a sacred basis to research grounded in the natural world” (McGregor, Bayha, Simmons, 2010, p. 106). All elements of Indigenous research are interconnected functioning as one whole organism. Since keeping the land alive viewed as a condition for the survival of Indigenous peoples, it is the peoples’ sacred obligation to “keep the land alive”.

It is important to stress that Ingenuous research involves alternative methodologies, and in many instances Indigenous methodologies question the

commonly accepted Western assumptions. The concept of interconnectedness “underpins the traditional principles of respect and reciprocal obligation with the land, within the communities, and among the communities. Although those principles are considered to be quite normal in Indigenous communities, they are radical in the context of a governance system built to protect principles of productivity, competition, and private property” (McGregor, Bayha, Simmons 2010, p.109). Indigenous scholars locate Indigenous methodologies within the context of Qualitative research and point out fundamental epistemological differences between Western and Indigenous thought, differences that challenge “the very core of knowledge production and purpose” (Kovach, 2009, p.29). The scholars call for the Western academy to pause and to open up to alternative possibilities. In light of Postcolonial theory, language thus plays an important part being the carrier of cultural codes and at the same time serving as an instrument of decolonization. “..Indigenous research holds the capacity to break the silence and bring forth the power songs of long-imprisoned Indigenous voices using their own languages (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 174).

Indigenous Research perspectives render urban planning initiatives with a deeper sense and deeper responsibility. As a non-indigenous professional, it is imperative to acknowledge our presence on ancestral land of the First Nations at the onset of every initiative. In Toronto, we inhabit the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishinabe Nation, the Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation and the Metis Nation. Urban Placemaking in the city should open with a clear statement of their relevance to our community with a

specific attention paid to benefits to the Indigenous community. Another crucial step in the process - local Indigenous groups should have a direct say in urban planning initiatives that affect their life and wellbeing. The Re/making the 'Meeting Place' research aims to give an additional voice to First Nations peoples, which in turn enriches the historic representation of Toronto for the benefit of **all** the city's *citadins*. I am hopeful that visually educating the public about our Aboriginal historic roots, carefully incorporating that narrative into local urban design initiatives, and reviving the traditional names of places in the city (thus highlighting Indigenous languages) have the potential not only to empower urban Aboriginal communities but also to strengthen Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships in a place we all call home.

### **3 The Meeting Place - Historical Outline**

#### **3.1 Ancient roots**

Toronto has a history that begins several millennia ago. Archaeological finds in the area have found artefacts of First Nations settlements dating back several thousand years (Williamson, 2008). According to J.M.S. Careless, "approximately 12,500 years ago the Laurentide Ice Sheet, a continental glacier that covered northeastern North America, retreated from the area of present-day Toronto". After the shift, small groups of Aboriginal people appeared in Southern Ontario hunting for animals such as beaver and caribou. "Around 5,000 years ago, settlements in hunting territories began to form, and people congregated in large spring or summer gatherings at the mouths of rivers to fish, trade and bury their dead. By 500 CE the population of Southern Ontario had reached 10,000, and was made up mostly of Algonkian-speaking peoples" (Careless, 2013).

It has been stated that the introduction of corn around 1,400 years ago dramatically changed settlement patterns and led to the adoption of farming. The Wyandot people or the Hurons were likely the first group to live in permanent settlements in the area, but were later driven out by the Iroquois (Morris, 1964). The Hurons traditionally spoke the Wyandot language, part of Iroquoian family of languages. By the 15th century, the pre-contact Wyandots settled in the area of the north shore of present-day Lake Ontario, before migrating to Georgian Bay. “By 1000 CE Iroquoian speaking peoples had moved into the region of present-day Toronto, and by 1300 had established villages there. By 1400 Iroquoian peoples lived in fortified villages that typically included longhouses and stockades that overlooked fields of crops” (Careless, 2013).

### **3.2 The city's name**

The word '*Toronto*' and its variations began to appear on French maps in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (1660s-80s) during the time that the Seneca tribe lived in the area (City of Toronto official site, 2016). French geographers first designated Lake Simcoe to the north with that name, but gradually name '*Toronto*' came to refer to a larger region that included the site of the present city. “At some point between 7,000 and 2,000 years ago, Aboriginal peoples discovered an overland shortcut between Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay” (Careless, 2013). The Toronto Carrying-Place Trail or also known as the “Toronto Passage,” this portage route was an important north-south trail for both Aboriginal peoples and Europeans. Eventually, the name Toronto was anchored to the mouth of the Humber River, the end of Toronto Passage from Georgian Bay (wikipedia.org).



Champlain and Brûlé travelled from Quebec up the Ottawa River and across central Ontario to negotiate with the Hurons near Georgian Bay as part of an early French effort to build alliances with the natives. French colonists were likely to try to avoid encounters with the hostile Iroquois (French Empire and Hurons' enemies) in the western boundaries of Iroquois territories stretching from New York.

Forming alliances (the Hurons alongside France against the Iroquois and the British) and the increasing European presence coincided with, and helped to fuel, an escalation of warfare among the indigenous population. Historians have documented that during the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Hurons and later their allies the Neutrals and the Petuns, were 'wiped off the face of the country' by the Iroquois (Morris, 1964).



*Etienne Brûlé at the mouth of the Humber, C.W. Jefferys, 1933, source: Library and Archives Canada*

Although destructive, the war proved to be not the most devastating factor: according to City of Toronto archives, “between 1634 and 1640, in what may have been the greatest human tragedy in this region, half of the aboriginal population of southern Ontario and elsewhere in the Great Lakes perished from terrifying new

diseases that the newcomers inadvertently brought across the Atlantic Ocean with them”.

### **3.4 Native settlements during the 17th century**

The Iroquois confederacy at that time consisted of five nations - the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. During the 1640s and 1650s, the Iroquois confederacy defeated, dispersed, or absorbed their aboriginal enemies in southern Ontario, including the Hurons. After the incorporation of the Tuscaroras in 1722, the Iroquois confederacy became known as ‘the Six Nations’ (Morris, 1964). During the mid 1660s following their victory, some Iroquois people moved to the Toronto area. “Thus, its character shifted again, from being a hinterland for the now-dispersed Hurons of Georgian Bay, as it had been since the end of the 1500s, to a colonized area for the Iroquois of New York” (City of Toronto official site, 2016).

Seneca tribe established two communities in the Toronto area: *Ganatsekwyagon* near the mouth of the Rouge River and *Teiaiagon* on the Humber near modern Bloor Street. Both sat strategically on the main lines of the Toronto Passage. These settlements, along with five other Iroquois communities founded in Ontario at the same time, effectively controlled the main hunting and trading routes from the north to the Five Nations' homelands in New York (City of Toronto official site, 2016).

It has been documented by Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan missionary, that Roman Catholic missionaries worked at *Ganatsekwyagon* and *Teiaiagon* in the 1660s and 1670s representing an indication of an early European presence in the Toronto area beyond that of seasonal traders and others who passed through the villages, including the famous explorer René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle in the early 1680s.



*Seneca Effigy Wolf Pipe and European Pieta Ring, C.1660s-80s, source: Parks Canada*

Seneca settlement in Toronto area lasted between 1660s – 80s. By 1687 however, according to French sources, their settlements were abandoned. The reasons remain unclear: it might have happened due to the natural movement of Iroquoian communities or due to the increased military threat from the French forces (City of Toronto official site, 2016).

### **3.5 New settlements through the 18th century**

Towards the end of the 17th century, Algonkian speakers from central Ontario replaced the Senecas in the Toronto area. “Some of these individuals of the larger Ojibway (or Anishinaabe) society came to be known as the Mississaugas, and it was these people who dominated the history of the region to the end of the 18th century” (City of Toronto official site, 2016). According to historians, unlike Iroquoians such as the Hurons and Iroquois, the Algonkian Mississaugas did little farming beyond establishing small garden plots in southern Ontario. Instead, they followed the more northerly hunter-gatherer subsistence patterns that they had known before coming south. They tended to live in seasonal settlements, and travelled through their new



territory to utilize different resources during the course of the year, such as through catching salmon on the rivers that flowed into Lake Ontario during the spring and autumn salmon runs.

### **3.6 Formation of Toronto under the British rule**

The French fur traders first set up trading posts in the Toronto area, including Fort Rouillé (or Fort Toronto) in 1750, located in Toronto's present-day Exhibition Grounds, which they abandoned as the British conquered French North America in 1759 (Careless, 2013). In 1787, the British negotiated the first treaty to take possession of the Toronto area from the Mississaugas. Treaty No.13, known as the 'Toronto purchase', was agreed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1787 between Sir John Johnson, representing the King and Wabukanyne, Neace and Paquan, principal Chief and Warchiefs of the Mississauga Nation at the Carrying Place. After surveying the land, the Mississaugas objected to the purchase claiming that the "the Instrument was defective and imperfect" and the treaty was declared invalid (Morris, 1964). Another agreement would be made in 1805, but this agreement too fell into dispute, and was only eventually settled two centuries later in 2010 for \$145 million (wikipedia.org).

After the United States War of Independence, the area north of Lake Ontario was held by the British who set up the province of Upper Canada in 1791. In 1793, the province's first governor John Graves Simcoe planned a centrally located town in Toronto area. Simcoe had a little town laid out by the harbour, which he named York, not wanting an aboriginal name (Careless, 2013). Simcoe originally planned for York to be a city and military outpost and set up a capital in the area of London, Ontario, but he abandoned the plan and York became the permanent capital in 1796. The

displaced Mississaugas set up a settlement reserve in the area of Port Credit to the west of York, and eventually moved further to the west (wikipedia.org).

York's official and military status attracted merchants, craftsmen and labourers, while the spreading rural settlement beyond made it a local market centre. "By 1812 this frontier village still had only 700 residents, yet its governing role, its harbour and its rough roads to the interior of Upper Canada gave it an initial economic advantage in the Lake Ontario area" (Careless, 2013).



*York, Upper Canada*, Watercolour by Elizabeth Hale, 1804, source: Library and Archives Canada

During the War of 1812 York was repeatedly raided and pillaged by US forces. During the period after war years, the town grew by absorbing a big wave of British immigration to Upper Canada. "By pursuing trade with expanding farming frontiers, York became the province's banking centre. By 1834 the fast-growing town of over 9,000 inhabitants was incorporated as the city of Toronto, with an elected civic government led by the city's first mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie" (Careless, 2013).

### **3.7 Sites of Native settlements in modern Toronto**

Sites of native settlements in Toronto could be anywhere thanks to the rich history that goes back 12,000 years. "Our people were everywhere. Therefore, you must expect to find their remains anywhere" claims Rick Hill, the coordinator of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic in Ohsweken, Ontario. Though the task of identifying the sites is a tricky and sensitive one, as highlighted by the High Park burial mound dispute in 2011.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture notes that in Ontario 80 per cent of all archaeological sites are aboriginal, including villages, longhouses, hunting camps, portage areas and artefacts like pottery shards, arrow and spear points (Ormsby, 2011). However there would not be any blueprint available as government rules limit the release of sensitive information. Sites of historic settlements were intrinsically linked to ancient burial sites fiercely guarded by the First Nations community based on their spiritual beliefs. The general public and the scientific community have to respect aboriginal beliefs and history. "We have to pay respect to our ancestors. Hopefully, we are not desecrating their graves and not studying their remains to the point they become specimens." argues Rick Hill (in Ormsby, 2011).

Secrecy surrounds the locations of historical significance. Both First nations people and archaeologists try to protect the historical sites in fear of vandalism and looting. "Nobody will give you a map," says Ron Williamson, chief archaeologist at Toronto-based Archaeological Services Inc., who works closely with First Nations officials. Aboriginal peoples' "connection to the soil is profound and unmolested graves are necessary for strong spiritual bonds to remain intact over generations"

(Ormsby, 2011). Many significant historical sites such as the highly contested burial site 'Snake Mound' in High Park or the Moatfield ossuary have been discovered only by chance as a result of a development or an excavation. Both discoveries have provoked public disputes, caused strife among the Aboriginal community, and with time remained virtually forgotten in public memory.

A historically important place is Baby Point located on the east bank of the Humber River in Toronto's West End. The area sits on top of the Seneca, village of *Teiaiagon* dating back to 1660-70s. The existence of this site has been fairly documented by Roman Catholic missionaries who visited the village at that time. Moreover, Toronto archaeologists have succeeded to collect many artefacts that might help shed light on a remarkable history of the place (Ormsby, 2011). In the view of Baby Point Heritage Foundation, "it was the Iroquois trading villages of *Teiaiagon* and *Ganatsekwyagon*, perhaps as many as 130 years before Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, that planted the very first seeds of modern Toronto" (2016).



*Plaque at Baby Point, source: Baby Point Heritage foundation & an effigy from a clay pipe, source: Toronto Star, collected by Ron Williamson, Baby Point site*

Another significant discovery in the Toronto area in 2002 relates to the Huron-Wendat (or Wyandot) legacy that can be traced back for more than 500 years: the ancestral Huron-Wendat early sixteenth-century Mantle site, situated in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville northeast of Toronto, encompassed an area of over nine acres. The Huron-Wendat Nation considers Toronto their ancestral territory and every discovery is of an utmost importance. Mantle site was occupied by approximately two thousand people and is the largest and most complex ancestral Huron site to yet be excavated on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Over 100,000 artefacts, as fascinating as the Woodpecker effigy pipe, were recovered from the site and are being interpreted (Toronto Museum Project, 2016).

### **3.8 Toronto in stories of Indigenous peoples**

Peter Schuler, an elder of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, offered his historical perspective of Toronto during the official celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's incorporation at Nathan Philips Square in 2009: according to tradition Toronto had been one of the stopping places of his ancestors on the Great Migration of the Anishinaabeg (or Anishinaabe/Anishnawbe aka Ojibway or Chippewa or Mississauga) from the East coast. "We stayed quite a while.... but in 1847 we were removed from this place" he added. Peter's 'history lesson' referred to the city's past that "remains unknown to most Torontonians, who generally seem to reflect the attitude that Toronto has little history worth remembering... and certainly very little Indigenous history worth remembering" (Freeman, 2010, p. 21).

A prominent aboriginal leader and educator from the Mississauga First Nation, A. Rodney Bobiwash wrote about the Toronto Islands in the pre-settlement era as one of

the important stopping places for the Native fishery and as a place of healing and spiritual renewal (1997). The favourable climate of the Toronto area moderated by the Great Lakes “offered a rich habitat both for Aboriginal societies practising hunting and gathering and those pursuing agricultural/horticultural activities” according to Bobiwash. He estimated that Aboriginal people living in the north central Great Lakes region utilized as many as 400 different plant species for a variety of purposes. Aboriginal stories tell “the Great Lakes area, particularly around Toronto, was a place not dissimilar to the Mediterranean in the Old World in that many cultures and peoples met for the purposes of trade and commerce, dating back thousands of years prior to European contact” (Rodney Bobiwash, 1997).

Indigenous peoples’ presence and settlement in lands around Toronto is “attested to by the rich archaeological history of the area, by its recounting in the oral testimony, and by the abundance of place names given to various geographical features and areas of Toronto” (Rodney Bobiwash, 1997). People who inhabited the Great Lakes area developed trading networks that stretched from Mexico to James Bay and from the east to the west coast long before the first European contacts. Early First Nations and European relations and treaties (such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763), recounted by several ‘wampums’ (belts of shells or beads, which record the history of agreements) recognized the sovereignty of the indigenous population over water and resources. The Mississaugas of the Toronto region were assured control of their lands by the Crown and were largely present on the town scene during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and forward that delicate balance changed due to the intensive settlement colonization.

According to native stories, colonization, disease, competition for food, warfare and most devastatingly “a concerted campaign by colonial governments to destroy the traditional political alliances of Aboriginal nations resulted in their marginalization in their own lands” (Sanderson, 1997). These events led to the Mississaugas moving into the New Credit Reserve and their visible disappearance from the Toronto landscape.

### **3.9 Going forward...**

After many years of oblivion, injustice and, sometimes, open hostility towards the Indigenous cultures, Toronto civic leaders and the public at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started to slowly recognize the city’s Aboriginal heritage as an essential piece in our city’s history and as an integral facet in our diversity. There is a sense of renewed interest in Indigenous peoples’ culture, Aboriginal elders get invited to talk at official celebrations, and Toronto’s pre-settlers history receives more and more publicity. But “the nature of the historical inheritance of city residence, particularly in relation to the land, its Indigenous past, and its displaced Indigenous peoples, remains conflicted, complicated, and contested,” claims Canadian writer and historian Victoria Freeman. “Today Toronto’s Indigenous past is acknowledged only superficially in most quarters and remains largely unknown” she adds (2010, p.31).

It is my hope that a Placemaking project incorporating historic narratives related to the city’s Indigenous presence can help refocusing public attention and moving Toronto forward towards finally celebrating ‘the return of spring after a long winter’ as asserted by Heather B., one of the Huron Wendat Nation representatives living in Toronto (Toronto Museum Project, 2016).

## 4 Comparing Indigenous placemaking in settler-colonial cities

*"The city is the very place of our meeting with each other."  
Ronald Barthes (1981)*

Urban landscapes represent both material and social constructs, where "space is a part of an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification in which the material and the ideological are co-constitutive" (Massey, 1994, p.3). Jane M. Jacobs draws our attention to the idea that "precisely because cities are sites of meetings, they are also places which are saturated with possibilities for the destabilisation of imperial arrangements... through the negotiations of identity and place which arise from diasporic settlements and hybrid cultural forms" (Jacobs, 1996, p.4). Cities, thus, are the stage of the postcolonial formations and struggles.

This section focuses on three different case studies to show ideas, the politics of identity and attempts throughout the world to highlight their indigenous histories through urban redevelopment projects. Jacobs believes that it is through the local, rendered in detail, that the complex variability of the postcolonial politics of identity and place can be known. "To focus on the local is also, then, to attend to the global" (Massey, 1993).

### 4.1 Case study – Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

The first case study covers a city that was built on what once was the edge of the British Empire, the East Australian city of Brisbane. With a "sprawling urban footprint and impeding connections to neighbouring metropolises" (Greenop & Darchen, 2016, p. 379), Brisbane is Australia's third largest and one of the oldest cities, and a capital of the state of Queensland.



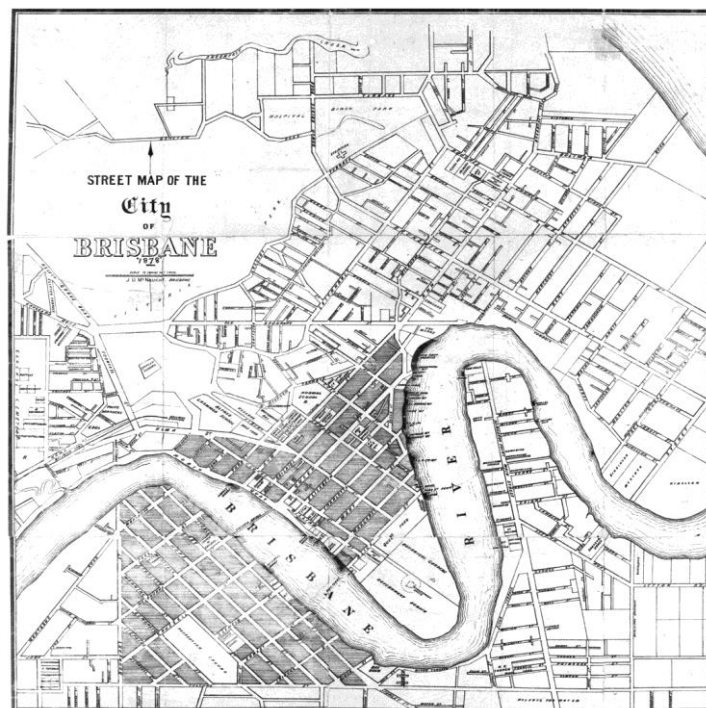
Considered until recently a “big country town”, Brisbane actively seeks to reinvent itself under the city government led place branding campaign showcasing it “as a New World city” (Greenop & Darchen, 2016, p. 380). Historically, the city closely shares an experience of colonialism and British imperialism with Toronto. Colonial processes have defined the spatial history of settlement in Australia, and its urban development involved continuous repressions of Aboriginal interests in land. According to Paul Carter (1987), space creates history by inventing ‘the spatial and conceptual co-ordinates within which history occurs’. “Such ordering was especially evident in the planning of colonial cities around the spatial template of the grid. These plans placed a rational spatiality of urban order over the unknown (‘irrational’) spatiality of Aborigines/Nature” (Jacobs, 1996, p.21).



*Brisbane's skyline*, source: Lachlan Fearnley,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26331156>

The colonisation of Australia aimed at establishing a white settler colony, which depended on erasure or containment of indigenous peoples and mimicking imperial urban models in the colonies. In this case, unlike Canada where the

settlement ideology was treaty-based, the erasure was based on the principle of *terra nullius*, land unoccupied. Spatial tools such as the laws of private property, surveying, mapping, urban and regional planning served as a base in realizing this colonization dream. One of the noticeable signs of obscuring (erasure) the prior Aboriginal history could be observed in the steady disappearance of Native names and sites from official maps during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. “Urban development in colonial Australia attempted to locate Aboriginality outside of the city. This was a spatial repression which kept distant the Otherness against which the Self was constituted” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 130).



*Brisbane city map, 1878, source:*  
<http://www.willemsart.com.au/brisbane-city-map-1878/>

In the 1970s efforts to acknowledge Aboriginal land interests and to provide some form of rights over land began in Australia. The High Court of Australia, in its historic decision over Murrey Island, in 1992, effectively recognized a form of native

title and “displaced the fallacy of terra nullius”. The decision together with the *Native Title Act* of 1993, “dismantled the established spatial architecture of existing land rights provisions in Australia..” (Jacobs, 1996, p.112).

Today Australia can be seen as an example of a postcolonial state where postcolonial is ‘a formal political and historical condition’ but still “it is a nation deeply marked by forms of internal colonialism. This is clearly evident in the fact that Australia has a Fourth World, Aboriginal Australia, within its First World boundaries” (Jacobs, 1994, p. 23)



AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia, D. Horton 1996, Brisbane area, source: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map>

Brisbane was founded upon the ancient homelands of several indigenous groups. Prior to European settlement in 1825, Brisbane was known as ‘Mian-jin’ – ‘place shaped like a spike’ – and was occupied by clans associated with the Yagerra language group. The Turrbal people mainly lived north of the Brisbane River and the Jagera people were located mostly south of the river (Brisbane City Council, 2014). In

a wake of new demands on tourism and public interest in 'authentic' sites, there are new cultural politics of tourism at play. Despite the dominant place branding campaign constructing a more urban identity of a 'New World city', which seems to "eschew its history in favour of a *tabula rasa*, evading associations with the colonial..." (Greenop & Darchen, 2016, p. 380), Brisbane at the same time is reinventing itself as more authentic through Nature and Aboriginality. Various tourist sites encourage visitors to 'discover Brisbane's Indigenous past' in an attempt to offer "anthropological places" which include "essential components of identity, relations and history" (Augé, 2008, p.42). Municipal sources advertise the city's native past claiming that "today, Aboriginal culture is enshrined in the city's historical art trails, exhibitions and place names" (Visit Brisbane, 2016). Mount Coot-tha's Aboriginal Art Trail is listed as one of the major city destinations:

"Head to the top of one of Brisbane's most popular attractions, Mount Coot-tha, where you'll be able to immerse yourself in the natural settings used by Aboriginal clans. Take the 1.5km art trail and learn how the traditional owners made the most of the lands. Signs will guide you along the trail with information on the flora and fauna clans used to survive. History has never looked so beautiful!" (<http://www.aroundyou.com.au/articles/discover-brisbanes-indigenous-past>).

The site with its panoramic views of the city has long been one of the favourite destinations for the city's residents and visitors. Even its Aboriginal name, reportedly meaning 'the place of honey', has survived. "But it was a colonising vision that was served by this emergent tourist space... Early tourists to Mount Coot-tha... could

imagine a land where 'threads of smoke' were replaced by 'painted cottages' and even riverside palaces.. (Jacobs, 1996, p.139). The 1914 promotional document assured readers that Mount Coot-tha "was part of a cosmopolitan not a pre-modern nation" (Mally, 1914, p.2). "The nation they saw contained a Nature tamed by colonialism and only traces of the Aboriginal inhabitants" (Jacobs, 1996, p. 142).

The Mt Coot-tha (also called J.C. Slaughter Falls) Aboriginal Art Trail was commissioned in 1993 to show how indigenous art is used as a way of mapping the land and passing on cultural information. This bush-land trail features tree carvings, rock paintings and etchings, rock arrangements and a dance pit. According to Jacobs, as opposed to many other projects that rely on primitivist stereotypes and incorporate Aboriginality in a 'predatory appropriation' form, this tourist venture may "contain hints of a more unsettling and, at times, optimistic postcoloniality".



*Aboriginal Art Trail, Brisbane, 2009, source:*  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/chelseabesser/3960657098>

The art trail was envisioned as a community arts and placemaking project directly involving the Indigenous community. In 1993 the Brisbane City Council commissioned artists Laurie Nilsen and Marshall Bell of Campfire consultancy, a



Brisbane based Aboriginal visual arts company. The project was part of the Council's commitment to reconciliation in the International Year of Indigenous People. "All the artworks are new but they have been executed in self-consciously 'traditional' style and draw on motifs which exist at pre-contact Aboriginal sites to be found across the state of Queensland" (Jacobs, 1996, p.144). The artists used only designs from the areas to which were connected by kin. Additional validation to use these images came by way of the Brisbane Aboriginal Council of Elders (Brisbane City Council, 1996). The Arts Trail concept is "based upon the creative appropriation of the map, that... signifier of colonialism" (Jacobs, 1996, p. 143).



*Aboriginal Art trail start and artwork, Brisbane, 2015, source: <http://www.weekendnotes.com/the-cross-summit-walk-mt-coot-tha/>*

The Brisbane Cultural Development policy of 1993 intended to "restore Aboriginal cultural production and articulation to city space". The policy proposed a more fundamental adaptation of Aboriginal notions of attachment to place, actively working away from the notion of 'exploitative, superficial' incorporations of

Indigenous cultures 'simply as objects to be reviewed by 'external' communities (Mercer & Grundy, 1993). Through this approach, "Aboriginal-style stewardship overlays European proprietorialism and is offered as a route for all Australians to feel a sense of belonging in their local place, their nation" (Jacobs, 1996, p.145).

As a community arts project, claims Jacobs (1996), the Art Trail has done what many claim to do nowadays – it has created place out of space. This Aboriginalised place is ... for all to see, for public consumption. It also opens out Mont Coot-tha to a new ecologically and culturally 'sensitive' practice of touring the country: "the panoptic, extraterrestrial overview of earlier this century is replaced by a terrestrial close-up" (Chambers, 1987). The trail is not a cultural recovery of the heritage kind thus avoiding the trap of turning places of cultural significance for Native Australians into intensely managed tourist attractions within a consumption economy.

"The trail ...has unsettled, if not usurped, the surety of colonial power... the postcolonial potential of these sites is apparent in the way in which such placemaking processes destabilize colonialist parameters of authority and authenticity around cultural production (Jacobs, 1996, p. 147). This project challenged the notion of authenticity in many ways: the 'traditional' designs were not local aboriginal designs, but based on motifs from outside of Brisbane; the project was commissioned by the city for a form of tourist practice; and the place did not have a special significance to the Indigenous artists. The process of getting the permission from the Brisbane Aboriginal Council of Elders by the city council was what gave the site a broad Aboriginal legitimacy. The protocol of consultation with the Elders also aimed at establishing "a more general practice of Aboriginal consultation which reinstated

indigenous authority over the city in a wider context” said artist Marshall Bell in the October 1994’s interview.

The artists used an Aboriginalised map of the site in juxtaposition to the topographic European map to create what Jacobs calls a hybridity, one that “destabilizes boundaries between Self and Other, colonial and traditional, authentic and inauthentic” (1996, p.151). The trail may well become a special place for Native people, but it is intended for everybody’s use. It was designed for education of both general visitors as well as young Aboriginals (Brisbane City Council, 1993). The art trail then presumes an Aboriginal authority over the country, it presumes that “Aboriginal knowledge needs to be taught, needs to be learnt”. Despite many limitations, it might be “one space that begins the necessary task of reminding non-Aboriginal Australians, albeit temporarily, that they are strangers in their own land” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 154).

#### **4.2 Case study – Vancouver, BC, Canada**

My second case study focuses on a Canadian West-coast city of Vancouver. An act of imperial will, history of the development and planning of this relatively new city could be seen from the perspective of colonial approach by the new ruling powers (municipal, provincial and federal) and its politics of displacement of indigenous communities in order to accommodate underlying business and political interests. This colonial approach to settling and exploration is deeply rooted and omnipresent as a common theme in the historic trajectory of Canada in general. Canada has many parallels with Australia, both countries being settled by the British, both being members of Commonwealth and both having implemented aggressive policies of land



appropriation and displacement of native inhabitants. Similarly to an Australian narrative, Canada could claim to have moved into a Postcolonial era. Canada then like Australia could be “a sort of nation that may be versioned as postcolonial by some but feels decidedly colonial to others” (Jacobs, 1996, p.24).



*Vancouver's Downtown*, source: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com>

The Greater Vancouver area is the third most populous metropolitan area in Canada. According to Wikipedia, Vancouver is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse cities in the country, 52% of its residents have a first language other than English (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vancouver>). The city was built on site of primordial rain forest where only “few marks on the ground, other than Native people’s trails and a few small waterfront encampments” existed prior to the urban settlement. Archaeological records indicate the presence of Aboriginal people in the Vancouver area from 8,000 to 10,000 years ago (Thom, 1996). “It has been estimated that at the time of Captain George Vancouver’s initial visit to the area in 1792, between three and five thousand Native People were living around the Burrard

Peninsula, in something like five separate shoreline villages” (Berelowits, 2005, p.95). Villages were scattered around various parts of present-day Vancouver, such as Stanley Park, False Creek, Kitsilano, Point Grey and near the mouth of the Fraser River. The city is located in the traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tseil-Waututh (Burrard) peoples of the Coast Salish group (Barman, 2005, p. 21). Evidence of pre-contact waterfront Native settlements in Vancouver has been largely obliterated, though “there still are Native communities such as the Musqueam Band Reserve on the Fraser River and the Squamish Band Reserve on the northern bank of Burrard Inlet’s First Narrows” (Berelowits, 2005, p.95).

As seen with other British colonial projects, Vancouver’s urban infrastructure has been formed by the street-grid system. British Royal Engineers came and carved up land into great squared-off sections implementing a colonial process of pre-emption “the surveyors would name, the settlers would claim and the Crown would grant” (Berelowitz, 2005, p. 96). Vancouver’s original street-grid was born within the first decade of city’s emergence out of three different grids laid out beside each other at different directions and ultimately shaped the urban form of Vancouver. The system was a “highly effective, if somewhat crude, way of subdividing raw land. It reflected the unsentimental military mindset of the British colonial imperative” (Berelowitz, 2005, p. 103). This grid pattern in different variations was applied across the entire British Empire. Prospects of commercial efficiency trumped over any concerns of aesthetics, geographical or environmental appropriateness. “It had a great virtue... of supporting the mercantile city, one of the bases of British colonialism. And it proved to be the basic building block of real estate development in Vancouver”

(Berelowitz, 2005, p.103). The rigid landscape of Vancouver was not modified to suit the actual topography or to try a more sophisticated urban form until the arrival of town planner Harland Bartholomew in 1927.

The city had several brief attempts throughout its history to beatify the urban form with master-plans by various town planners such as Thomas Adams and Thomas Mawson. Nevertheless the pragmatic approach “informed all subsequent episodes of city-building”, and since the post-First World War years the approach was underpinned by “City Council’s determination to maintain and enhance property values for its backers and a growing middle class” (Berelowitz, 2005, p. 116).



*Existing and Proposed Parks, A plan for the city of Vancouver by H. Bartholomew, 1928, p. 198, source: <https://archive.org/stream/vancplanincgen00vanc#page/n0/mode/2up>*

The Bartholomew’s grand plan for Vancouver has left the most significant mark on the city’s urban form encompassing a multitude of elements: streets, civic buildings, shops, parks, public transportation, community centres, and land-use zoning. Remarkably, indigenous sites or references had no historical or cultural value,

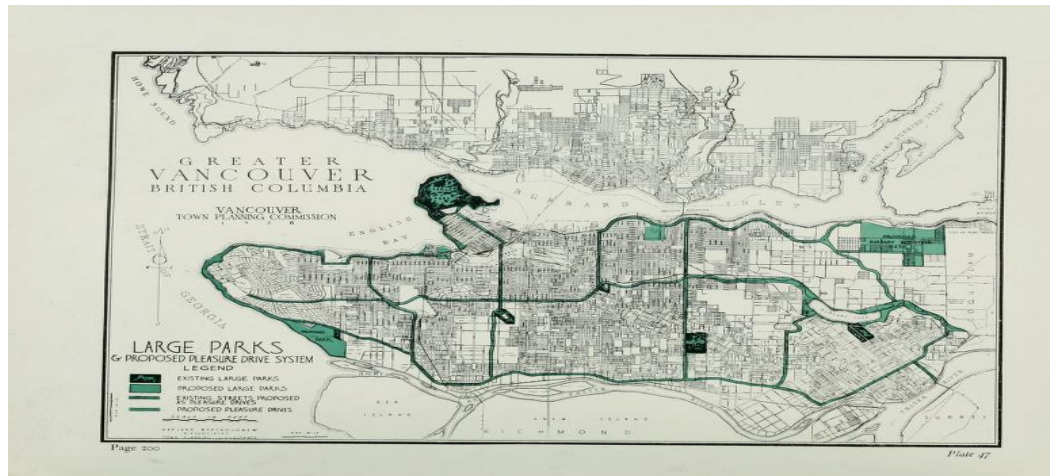
and benefits of the Native communities were not on the radar of British Columbia's plans for developing Vancouver. The Dream city's grandiose designs and projects of the following years may be mostly read "as a visual metaphor linking and balancing the urban trilogy of commercial power, political power and individual power" (Berelowitz, 2005, p. 122).

One could sense that Aboriginal communities represented more of the nuisance, an obstacle to progress in the dominating opinion. The 1928 Vancouver plan devoted significant attention to the Kitsilano and Musqueam reserves treating the reserves as a challenge for urban development. According to Stanger-Ross, "municipal officials came to think that the reserves harmed the rest of Vancouver and that modern urban areas presented a special case for dispossession. Marshalling the theories and methods of city planning in their attempts to control and acquire the reserves from the 1930s to the 1950s, city officials fashioned a distinctively municipal colonialism". The reserves were mentioned in the plan as 'waste lands', the authors claimed that the reserves were abandoned by their Native inhabitants and urged the city to keep the lands for public use: "The purpose was laudable whilst the Indians used the space... But by now they have gone and the parcel is virtually a waste space" (1928, p. 203). Stanger-Ross believes this outlook reflects an ideological dichotomy between civilized and savage, which underpins the claims that "Aboriginal people failed to possess property in a fashion that settlers were bound to respect... and validated the appropriation of Aboriginal land" (2008, p. 542).

Cities have been regarded by many post-colonial scholars as 'key mechanisms of colonial expansion' and 'symbols of conquest' (Brown, 2001, p.23). Vancouver gave

a specific expression to colonialism set in a fast-pasted urban setting, municipal colonialism as described by Stanger-Ross, where “dense concentration of settler population and economic activity set a peculiar stage for dispossession” (p.544). Jean Barman suggests that urban stage added another layer of stakeholders in the history of dispossession: municipal bureaucrats, urban planners, and local businessmen (2007). Historically, municipal officials viewed Aboriginal space as separate or even juxtaposed to modern life, threatening its urban vitality and growth. Ingenious history and culture and therefore indigenous presence had no place in the modern city.

The 1928 Plan for the City of Vancouver by Bartholomew was rooted in the newly adopted principles of city planning championed by F.L. Olmsted: cities were regarded as delicate living organisms that could be managed only by an innovative scientific approach in order to manage their growth and protect their vitality (Olmsted, 1916). Kitsilano and Musqueam reserves played important roles in the city plan: they were bound to be incorporated into a system of ‘Large Parks and Pleasure Drives’ offering a ‘scientific’ justification to dispossession. “...denying Aboriginal title, the plan construed Indian reserves as generous gifts that could be easily, and rightfully, reclaimed” (Stanger-Ross, 2008, pp. 554). In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Vancouver was on the cusp of becoming a modern city that needed beautiful elements such as parks, remarkable buildings and civic art to make it great. The reserves, in views of the municipal officials, “sabotaged the beautification of the city” (Stanger-Ross, 2008, pp. 559).



*Existing and Proposed Parks*, A plan for the city of Vancouver by H. Bartholomew, 1928, p. 200, source: <https://archive.org/stream/vancplanincgen00vanc#page/n0/mode/2up>

Indian reserves and Aboriginal people did not fit into a picture of a modern city painted by colonial land politics and backed by ‘scientific’ urban planning, thus creating a false ‘impossible contradiction’ between cities and Aboriginal people. This contradiction “continues to obscure the real history of Canadian urban and Aboriginal experience” (Stanger-Ross, 2008, pp. 580).

According to Jean Barman, an increasing urbanization of Canada (80% by 2001) has not benefited all Canadians, and in fact it has adversely affected indigenous communities (2007, p.3). Unlike elsewhere in Canada, British Columbia did not have signed treaties (except for several small parts), but reserves for status Indians were nevertheless dedicated throughout the province and the future city. Kitsilano reserve together with Musqueam reserve and indigenous population of Stanley Park constituted ‘inconvenient’ native presence in the heart of the new urban area. During over 120 years of intense building of a young city of Vancouver, the presence of Squamish and Musqueam peoples who had long used Burrard Inlet for its rich marine

resources has virtually disappeared. Barman calls this historic process “the erasure of indigenous Indigeneity” in Vancouver: “persons who were indigenous to the area, and considered it their home long before the arrival of outsiders, were first removed from the land they called their own and then saw even their memory deliberately lost from view” (2007, p. 3). The erasure was undertaken in two major ways, one including the physical unsettling of reserves in order to open up more valuable lands for city development and another including the creation of the illusion that Vancouver was indigenous-friendly. “With the totem poles erected in Stanley Park in 1923 to mark the forced removal of the last of its indigenous residents, erasure functioned as a pathway to indigenous Indigeneity’s replacements by a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere” (Barman, 2007, p. 4).

Kitsilano reserve on the south side of False Creek with its central location and easy access to water had been under constant pressure from the municipal government. Numerous attempts to expropriate the much appealing reserve land culminated in a compromised deal orchestrated by the province and city’s officials, led by then the attorney general, in 1913 without seeking an approval from federal authorities. This deal deemed later illegal brought endless disputes and shaming of the authorities, and eventually resulted in a multimillion-dollar settlement between the Squamish and the federal government in 2000. Nevertheless, “The deed was done. Indigenous Indigeneity was erased from False Creek” (Barman, 2007, p. 19). Half of the land became Vanier Park and the rest was used for private and housing developments.

The battle over Stanley Park, a peninsula on the south shore of Burrard Inlet, was a much more complicated and long affair. The unsettling attempts began even before the birth of the city of Vancouver in 1886. The site, long used by indigenous people and including settlements such as Whoi Whoi and Chythoos (now known as Lumberman's Arch), had been set aside as a government reserve prior to BC joining Canada in 1871 (Barman, 2007, p. 21) and was never officially granted a reserve status. The residents of the peninsula were expected to gradually migrate to the other Squamish reserves. The unsettling represented the first stage of erasure. The last native inhabitant of Whoi Whoi known as 'Aunt Sally', who owned a house and a two acres orchard, passed away in 1923. Aunt Sally's passing "...appeared to conclude the first stage of the erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from Stanley Park... the second stage was underway. It had two components, one centered on legal dispossession, the other a sleight of hand by which a sanitized Indigeneity obscured the unsettling and erasure of indigenous Indigeneity" (Barman, 2007, p. 22). Federal government, which acquired an official ownership of the peninsula only in 1906 after years of legal battle with the province, joined forces with the municipal government to legally dispossess indigenous families who had lived on Brockton Point, the site east of Whoi Whoi since the early 1860. Eventually, in 1923 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the city and the federal government in a suit that brought to unsettling of Brockton Point families. After the last family members moved out or passed away, the houses were burned erasing all the evidence of their longtime presence. "This final erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from Vancouver was not simply an end in itself, as was the case with Kitsilano Reserve and Whoi Whoi; rather it the impetus for the replacement



of indigenous Indigeneity with a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere” (Barman, 2007, p. 26).

Following the Supreme Court decision, the Vancouver Parks Board put up four Kwakiutl totem poles as “the first step forwards the erection this year of a replica of an Indian village of the British Columbia coast on the cleared space west of Aunt Sally’s cottage...” (Vancouver Parks Board meeting minutes, 1924). The Kwakiutl tribe lived far away from Vancouver and was at the time often juxtaposed to the Squamish as the ‘more advanced’ one. As Barman rightfully notes the Squamish presence at Stanley Park site “was overlaid with the material culture of a wholly different people who lived a safe distance from Vancouver” (2007, p. 27). Begun in the early 1920s with just four Kwakiutl totems from Vancouver Island's Alert Bay region, the display grew over the decades to include totems from Haida Gwaii (previously known as the Queen Charlotte Islands) and Rivers Inlet (on British Columbia's central coast). In the mid 1960s, the totem poles were moved to a more attractive and accessible Brockton Point. All poles represent real or mythical stories from First Nations peoples or symbolize a crest telling their family or tribe’s history. The Skedans Mortuary Pole is a replica as the original was returned home to Haida Gwaii. In the late 1980s, the remaining totem poles were sent to various museums for preservation and the Park Board commissioned replacement totems. The newly carved poles were made by various artists in the 1980s and 1990s (City of Vancouver site, 2016).



*Totem Poles at Brockton Point, Stanley Park, source: Tourism Vancouver, 2016, <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/totems-and-first-nations-art.aspx>*

The totem poles at Brockton Point have become one of the most popular attractions in Vancouver. Tourism Vancouver site lists them as “one of Stanley Park's most fascinating attractions, not to mention one of the most-visited tourist attractions in British Columbia” (Tourism Vancouver site, 2016). Nearby the city installed another example of First Nations art in the form of the Coast Salish Gateways. The three carved gateways fashioned after a traditional architecture style symbolize “the entry to the Brockton Point Visitor Centre as well as the traditional lands of the Coast Salish people” (Tourism Vancouver site, 2016).

That romanticized image of Indigeneity fell comfortably with the sanitized notion of the province's heritage that became very common in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the form that did not affect the realities of newcomers' everyday life and provided a safe encounter with Indigeneity. “The passion to rehabilitate the imaginary Indian who existed prior to the arrival of outsiders was very different from coexisting with real people” (Barman, 2007, p. 28). Meanwhile, memory of the native families who used to call the peninsula that became Stanley Park their home remains erased,

deprived even of signage to recall their presence, in favour of a fetishized image. According to Tourism Vancouver, Stanley Park is one of the city's main tourist destinations, attracting approximately 8 million visitors each year. It is described as a 1000-acre haven of beauty that offers a backdrop of majestic cedars and firs and an environment teeming with wildlife just steps from the sidewalks and skyscrapers of Vancouver. But “few visitors stop to contemplate the secret past of British Columbia's most popular tourist destination” (Barman, 2005). In an interesting twist that might mark the reinscription of indigenous Indigeneity in Stanley Park, the ninth and most recent totem pole, carved by Robert Yelton of the Squamish Nation, was added to Brockton Point in 2009. The pole is unpainted and represents a tribute to the artist's mother Rose, who was one of the last residents of Stanley Park (Hegel, 2011).



*Totem Pole by Robert Yelton (Squamish Nation) in Stanley Park, Vancouver, 2011, source: <http://sandalroad.com/destinations/americas/canada/discovering-vancouver-totem-poles-in-stanley-park/>*

## 5 Testing Out Toronto

*Native people living in the city keep memory of a long history of Indigenous occupation of the area, which “Toronto’s modern towers of concrete and steel may obscure but can not eradicate”*

*A. Rodney Bobiwash, 1997*

This section focuses on Toronto. It seeks to study and test the current state of representation of Indigenous histories. The study though extends far beyond history as a static representation of the things past. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *history* as “a chronological record of significant events (as affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes” (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Farther, history is also defined as a tale, a story; and a story should be viewed as not static, but rather a living form. Fittingly, Indigenous history of Toronto is a story that is not set in the past tense. It is alive and pulsing, forcing its way to the forefront of the city’s consciousness, awakening from a long period of dormant existence in the shadows of the dominant imperial narrative. The study will attempt to discover ideas, initiatives, the politics of identity and attempts to not only highlight the local Native histories but also to claim the city back by its Indigenous inhabitants.

### 5.1 Academic and official sources

Preliminary search has revealed very limited academic sources that address our city’s indigenous history and its representation. Victoria Freeman, A. Rodney Bobiwash and Heather Howard-Bobiwash appear to be the main figures in the field. Toronto’s public memory, they argue, has been shaped by colonial attitudes. As mentioned in previous chapters, a historical fact that our modern city has a history that began several millennia ago is not commonly recognized. “While Indigenous

people have lived in the Toronto region for at least eleven thousand years and the original peoples who have made this territory their home over the last several hundred years included the Wendats (Hurons), Tionnontati (Petuns), Senecas, and Mississaugas (Ojibwa, Chippewa, Anishinaabeg), there is little widespread awareness of the depth of this pre-contact settlement history, or the general knowledge of the societies that inhabited Ontario..." (Freeman, 2010, p.21). *'Toronto: A Short Illustrated History of its First 12,000 Years'* issued in 2008 by Toronto-based archaeologist Ronald F. Williamson is one of the very few books dedicated to the city's history.

In its official proclamation for National Aboriginal Heritage Day 2013 on June 21st, the City of Toronto acknowledged that the Aboriginal Peoples are the original inhabitants of the land now known as Toronto (City of Toronto website, 2016): "WHEREAS the City of Toronto recognizes the inherent rights of Aboriginal Peoples and acknowledges that they are the original inhabitants of the land now known as Toronto". As mentioned in the Historical outline, the name "Toronto" itself is of Aboriginal origin derived from an Iroquois term meaning 'where there are trees in water.' By most official accounts, the meaning of Toronto has to do with the city's natural features. The Mohawks, a member of the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy, used the phrase '*tkaronto*' to describe 'The Narrows' - the fast-moving waters. The erroneous interpretation of the native phrase as 'a meeting place' nevertheless remains a popular and even powerful image signifying the aspirations of nowadays city's inhabitants both Native and non-native alike.

According to the city of Toronto, the Mississaugas (of the larger Anishinabe society) dominated the history of our region to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The

controversial treaty known as ‘Toronto purchase’ of 1787 and intensive settlement colonization during the 19th century forward led to the Mississaugas moving into the New Credit Reserve and their visible disappearance from the Toronto landscape. The Mississaugas “...had not simply “faded away” through some natural process; they had been crowded out of their last 200 acres on the Credit River just west of Toronto in 1847” (Freeman, 2010, p. 24). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 1881 census of Toronto area that counted population of 86,000 living in the rapidly expanding capital of Ontario did not even list Indigenous peoples as a distinct category (Census of Canada, 1881-2).

As Stanger-Ross in “Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver” (2008) and Freeman (2010) argue, the social, political, and cultural processes of urban development have themselves constituted a specific modality of colonialism. The development of the city of Toronto clearly shows characteristic economic and discursive colonial processes visible in various other urban settings. However, Freeman points out that Toronto’s celebrated “founding moment” has generally not been European founding of the settlement in 1793, but the city’s incorporation in 1834. The 1884 commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Toronto’s incorporation “marks the transition from the founding of the settlement... to its incorporation... as the city’s “founding moment” and marker of the assumed “Indigeneity” of settler-immigrants. The deed acquired from the Mississaugas in the Toronto Purchase of 1787 is deemed irrelevant, while the 1834 act of incorporation becomes the symbolic deed to Toronto’s modernity (Freeman, 2010, p. 21). The anniversary’s commemoration symbolises in Freeman’s analysis “on one hand, the erasure of the area’s Indigenous past and the celebration of

its European future, on the other, an idealized view of the past of Indigenous-settler partnership ignores the role of local settlers in the dispossession of the Mississaugas” (2010, p. 21). The events of 1884 then became symbolic for Toronto’s history as they popularized and defined ways of talking about Toronto that “would remain hegemonic in Toronto popular histories and civic commemorations until the late twentieth century” (Freeman, 2010, p. 22).

In a wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report and recommendations, a momentum has been building to uncover and bring attention to the Indigenous story of Canada in general and of Toronto in particular. The momentum, and a shift in our public conscience, that Indigenous activists and organizations have been fighting for for decades (Bobiwash, 1997). A push to recognize the living history and legacy of aboriginal peoples started to come not only from various grassroots organisations but from the official side as well. Since the TRC’s inception on June 2 of 2008, a significant number of official declarations has been made including a unanimous motion in Canada's House of Commons in 2009 to declare June a National Aboriginal History Month (Government of Canada website, 2017). The declaration is seen as an opportunity ‘to celebrate the heritage, contributions and cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Canada’. In addition to celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21st, in 2013 the City of Toronto proclaimed 2014 to be the year of Truth and Reconciliation. Our city’s erased Indigenous history has finally been acknowledged as a critical missing block: “part of the reconciliation process requires that we collectively learn about the Aboriginal history of Toronto” (City of Toronto website, 2016).

## 5.2 Official Public Initiatives

A significant step towards shifting our 'public memory' was introduced by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in 2015. TDSB schools now pay daily tribute to Indigenous lands they're built on: *"In keeping with Indigenous protocol, we would like to acknowledge this school is situated upon traditional territories. The territories include the Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations, and the Métis Nation"* a student announces after ritually playing 'O Canada' on a school day's morning (TDSB, 2017). The TDSB first started acknowledging traditional lands at its meetings in June 2015. The acknowledgment then became part of the morning ritual at all 588 schools across the Toronto District School Board in the beginning of the 2016 school year (Martin, CBC News, 2016).

While there is a visible shift in our 'public memory' and ceremonial celebrations of that missing past, the physical representation of the actual historic sites remains both inadequate and challenging. The Toronto area is dotted with numerous sites, many of them unmarked or unknown, of previous Aboriginal settlements belonging to different First Nations. Those sites could be anywhere thanks to the rich history that goes back 12,000 years. Yet the question whether physical public spaces should be linked to specific historical site is a controversial one. As mentioned, the locations of historical significance remain protected by both First nations people and archaeologists in accordance with Indigenous protocols. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture determines policies and programs related to the provincial interest in conserving, protecting and promoting Ontario's heritage. The



policies stress that artifacts like human remains should be treated with “utmost respect and dignity.” In the 70s and 80s, the Ontario government enacted protection rules that limit the release of sensitive archaeological information.

### 5.2.1 Birkdale Ravine Park

Several sites, mostly marked only by a plaque, can be found throughout the many city parks. Birkdale Ravine Park in Scarborough was home to an early Iroquoian village dating back to about 1250 AD. “This site was excavated in 1956 by University of Toronto students who recovered numerous projectile points, tools, and fragments of pipes and globular bodied pottery with simple geometric line decorations” (City of Toronto website, 2017). Traces of large multiple family dwellings - longhouses, and artefacts pointing to hunting, fishing and agricultural activities were found during the excavations. Two related ossuaries were discovered on a hill nearby. A lonely plaque erected by the Scarborough Historical Society is the only information reminding park visitors about this historic village.



*Plaque at Birkdale Ravine, October 2015, source: <https://scenesto.wordpress.com/tag/birkdale-ravine/>*

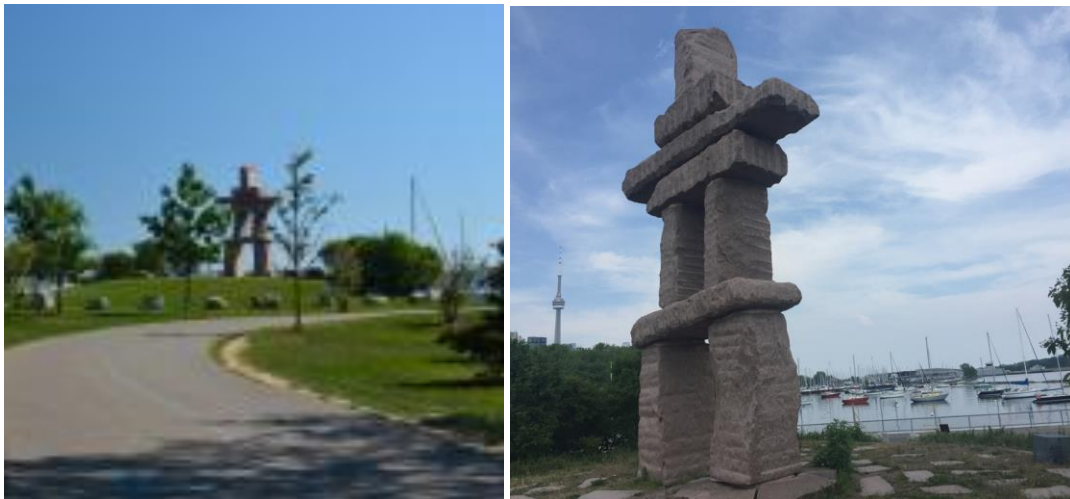
### 5.2.2 Étienne Brule Park

Étienne Brule Park in Toronto West End area is another historically significant site. It was named after Étienne Brule, the first French explorer to step foot on this land at the mouth of the Humber River. The park stretches out along the Humber River starting near the Old Mill and winding north to the bend in the River around the Baby Point neighbourhood. According to many sources, the Humber River and its shores along the Park were once used as a major trade route by the Aboriginal Peoples of the area. The river itself bears such significance that it was designated a Canadian Heritage River by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in 1999 for “its significant cultural and recreational contribution to the development of Toronto and surrounding area” (TRCA website, 2017). When the Humber River was declared a Heritage River, the city held a commemoration ceremony and installed a heritage plaque. The plaque is on a large boulder in the park with inscriptions in English, French and Ojibwa (City of Toronto website, 2016). The site of Étienne Brule Park once was a site of a bustling Seneca village and is one of the best-known First Nations archaeological sites in the City of Toronto. Aboriginal peoples likely used this advantageous site for thousands of years, but “between circa 1670 and 1688, a Five Nations Iroquois Seneca village was located here. Its inhabitants called it "Teiaiaagon". An agricultural village of perhaps 1,000 people, it would have been surrounded by fields of corn, beans, and squash” (City of Toronto website, 2016). Information about Teiaiaagon was well documented by Europeans who visited it. Nowadays, a couple of bilingual (English/French) story panels located along the park trail are the only reminder to a visitor about this important historical site. Ironically, the park was

named after the first European explorer who just visited the area thus eschewing the place's rich Indigenous heritage.

### 5.2.3 Inukshuk Park

The Toronto Inukshuk Park located near Battery Park on Toronto's Waterfront is the site of one of the largest Inukshuk's in North America and is named after a dominant Aboriginal artwork located in the park. The Inukshuk was chosen by City Council as “the City of Toronto's legacy project to commemorate World Youth Day 2002 and the visit of Pope John Paul II to Toronto” (City of Toronto website, 2017). The sculpture, standing 30 feet high and made of approximately 50 tonnes of mountain rose granite, was commissioned by the city from an internationally acclaimed Inuit artist Kellypalik Qimirpik from Cape Dorset, Nunavut. Inukshuk is a traditional Inuit stone monument often found in the arctic landscape, in the Inuit language it means “in the likeness of a human” and symbolizes safe harbour.



*Inukshuk Park, Toronto, 2015, source: courtesy of TripAdvisor*

While City Council viewed the sculpture as “an important symbol of Canada's Aboriginal people brought to the people of Toronto” (City of Toronto website, 2017),

an Inukshuk has no apparent connection to Toronto's Aboriginal history. Its role is vaguely symbolic, somehow reminiscent of the story of Vancouver's totem poles. The project, however grandiose, serves more as another generic "magnificent addition to Toronto's waterfront" than an authentic "timeless reminder of when the world came to Toronto".

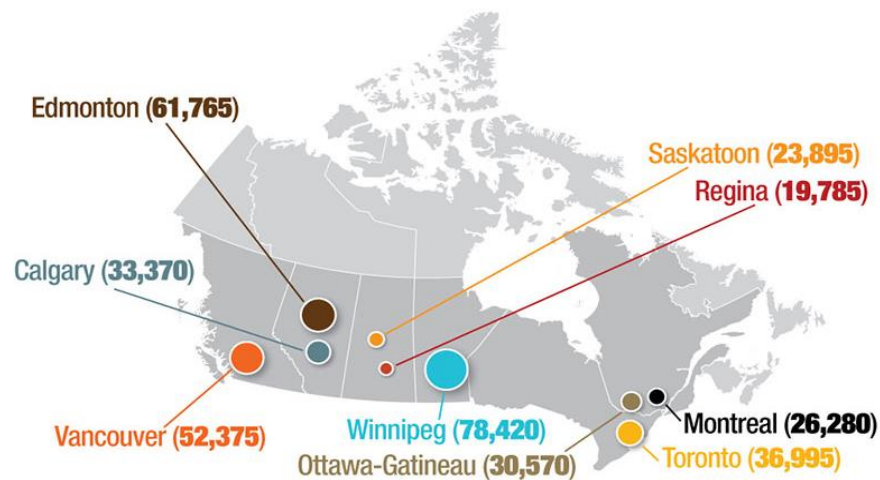
A city with such a diverse history, Toronto's discursive and physical representation of its Indigenous roots remains very limited. "The nature of the historical inheritance of city residence, particularly in relation to the land, its Indigenous past, and its displaced Indigenous peoples, remains conflicted, complicated, and contested," claims Victoria Freeman (2010). A multitude of important sites, mostly marked by a plaque (if at all), visually remain unnoticed and uncelebrated; obscured by the surrounding developments, towers and parks. Publicly, Indigenous history and the sites do not appear in the spotlight of the city's touristic and public promotional materials. The Aboriginal influence is probably most evident in the names of many places around the city: Toronto, Mississauga, Mimico, Seneca Hill park, Cayuga park, Hurontario street and so on. Fittingly, it is mainly the oral tradition, the foundation of the Indigenous cultural methodology that keeps the city's First Nations memory alive.

### **5.3 Grass roots Initiatives**

Indigenous grass roots organizations have been tirelessly working to push bottom up initiatives aimed at re-imagining the place and re-claiming their 'right to the city'. Perhaps the most striking claim could be seen in the growing presence of Indigenous peoples in Toronto and other major Canadian cities in general (Winnipeg,

Edmonton, Vancouver, Montreal etc.). Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) uses the term urban Indigenous peoples, which primarily refers to First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals residing in urban areas. It was estimated that in the early 1950s only two to three hundred Aboriginal people lived in the city, although the number may have been much higher due to the tendency of many Native people to be 'invisible' in the face of racist sentiments. According to Bobiwash, towards the end of the 90s that number grew to approximately 65,000 (1997). Data from the 2011 Census presented a much lower number – 36,995 urban Indigenous people lived in Toronto in 2011 (INAC, 2017). This data seems like a serious underestimate due to Indigenous homelessness, transience and related factors.

The cities with the **largest Indigenous populations in 2011** were:



source: Government of Canada, INAC site, 2017

Regardless of the exact numbers however, off-reserve Indigenous peoples constitute the fastest growing segment of Canadian society (2011 Census). From 1996 to 2011 the percentage of urban Indigenous grew by 7% (INAC website, 2017).

### 5.3.1 The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT)

The most prominent sites of aboriginal presence in nowadays Toronto are Aboriginal Centres such as the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT). NCCT is a membership-based, charitable organization located in the heart of downtown Toronto. The centre is not a historical site, but a focal point for the urban native community. The NCCT has become an important place to meet, to socialize, to seek support, to provide guidance and to discuss the future. Frances Sanderson, a Native activist and one of the directors of the Centre, writes: “The Toronto area has long been a meeting place for Aboriginal people, as historians have documented over the years. It is fitting that today’s Native people have reclaimed their land in this area... and making their presence known” (1997).



*Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Spadina Road, source: <http://ncct.on.ca>*

The Native Centre was officially established in 1962 to offer a place to meet for the growing Native community of Toronto. “Our purpose has been to deliver programs and services to urban Indigenous people. The strength and beauty of our people lays in our ability and willingness to share with one another as well as with our non-Indigenous members and other interest groups. This is one of the fundamental values

embodied in our distinctive culture” welcomes NCCT main page (NCCT website, 2017). The centre’s founders wished to reflect an Aboriginal cultural presence in Toronto and to develop a sense of pride and identity among the community. Massive migration of Aboriginal people off reserves into urban centres (73% of all Aboriginal people in Canada lived off reserves in 1997 according to NCCT data) further accentuated the need in a ‘meeting place’. “As this area on the north shore of Lake Ontario has been Toronto – the meeting place for Aboriginal people since the time immemorial, the Centre has also served as a place where people of many diverse First Nations have gathered to share in each other’s experiences and work together to develop the Aboriginal community of today” (R. Obonsawin & H. Howard-Bobiwash, 1997). The centre offers a wide range of services including cultural programs such Native language classes (Ojibwe, Cree and Mohawk) and Mixed Hand drumming, event organizing, referral services, and seniors and youth programs.



*The centre’s main symbol, February 2017, source: <http://ncct.on.ca/programs/>*

### **5.3.2 Dodem Kanonhsa Lodge**

Following the events of Oka Crisis in 1990, NCCT in partnership with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (former AANDC) established Dodem Kanonhsa’ Elder’s Cultural Facility. DODEM is Anishinabem (Ojibwe) meaning ‘clan’ and KANONHSA is Kenienkaha (Mohawk) meaning ‘lodge’, and is transcribed in Cree syllabics. The name was chosen in order to represent the three main tribes prominent



to the Ontario Region (NCCT, 2017). Dodem Kanonhsa' is a learning and sharing facility, a place to learn from and speak with Elders and Traditional Teachers. According to the Native Centre, The purpose of Dodem Kanonhsa' is to promote sharing and understanding of Aboriginal Culture and its philosophies. The lodge is open to both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people with the hope that it will benefit intercultural relations, cross cultural communication and understanding.



*The lodge's symbol and the main circle, February 2017, source: <http://dodemkanonhsa.ca>*

### 5.3.3 First Story Toronto App

Indigenous groups and leaders began to take initiative in reclaiming their history through Native sites projects. One such project is the *First Story Toronto App & Bus Tour*. First Story Toronto is a community-led organization (operating within NCCT) originally established in 1995 as the Toronto Native Community History Program (TNCHP). Its mandate was to “research, keep, and share Toronto’s vast Indigenous heritage in order to build awareness of Indigenous peoples’ enduring presence and many contributions to the city” (First Story Toronto, January 2017). According to First Story website, the organization engages in a variety of scholarly, archival, and popular education initiatives such as public tours and talks, community-



based events and artistic projects, maintaining a growing archive of Toronto's Indigenous community, as well as the ongoing development of the First Story Toronto mobile app (February 2017). First Story Toronto has collaborated with the Centre for Community Mapping (COMAP) to create an online and mobile app named 'First Story', that maps the Indigenous heritage and community of Toronto. The First Story Toronto app was launched in October 2012 at the *imagineNATIVE* Media & Arts Festival. It is free and available for Apple and Android phones and tablets. The application is an interactive map accessing original stories, photographs, archival documents, audio and video clips that illuminate the evolving Indigenous history in places across the Toronto area. Many of the stories feature the voices of Indigenous community members and are curated by members of First Story to ensure accuracy. "First Story endeavours to bridge traditional knowledge with social media, inviting users to explore Toronto's history as told from the perspective of Indigenous communities" (NCCT, 2017).



*First Story logo, source: <https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com/aboutfirststory/>*

#### **5.3.4 First Story Toronto Bus Tour**

Another major initiative by the organization is First Story Toronto bus tours. The Tours began in 1995 with a bus tour called "The Great Indian Bus Tour". The name has changed since then and First Story Toronto has added various walking tours. The bus tours are usually about 3 hours long and the walking tours are about

2-3 hours long. Currently, there are three bus tours offered each focusing on a different geographical area: East End, West End or Downtown. “The tours focus on telling stories of Toronto’s rich and enduring Indigenous heritage from Indigenous perspectives. Some of the topics include: Ancient Indigenous trails and portages; Old villages, campsites, and burying places; Hunting, fishing, and medicine places; Indigenous place names; Treaties and colonialism; Indigenous resilience and adaptation; Indigenous Knowledge” (First Story Toronto, February 2017).



*First Story Toronto tour led by Jon Johnson (York University), source: <https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com>*

### **5.3.5 The Moccasin Project**

For the Mississaugas of the New Credit, part of an Ojibwa people who once roamed much of Southern Ontario, and who were pushed out of Toronto to a reserve near Hagersville, Ont. following the ‘so called Toronto purchase’ of 1878 (the way Indigenous peoples refer to that treaty) and an intense settlement, the history lives in the present tense. Two centuries later, the New Credit people have not perished or assimilated as the colonists had predicted. “The idea I’m always trying to push,” says

former chief Carolyn King, “is that we were there, and we’re still here” (Allemang, 2013). The Mississaugas of the New Credit want their story to be told, and not lost “in a ruthlessly modernizing city like Toronto, where memory is obliterated by social change” (Allemang, 2013). Which is why Carolyn King, former chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation together with other native elders and scholars, have established the Moccasin Project – native sites across cities and suburbs will be publicly identified with a moccasin symbol representing the tribe that inhabited each location. “From this point forward, people will know whose land they’re on,” King says. “And that will go a long way to address the hurts of the First Nations. Because for most of the time, we have just been ignored.” (Allemang, 2013). King was the first woman elected as chief of the Mississaugas in 1997. She helped to re-launch a land claim by the Mississaugas over territory that is now part of Toronto (CBC, Oct’17). The chief’s dedication and efforts to preserve her community, share her heritage and promote a better understanding of First Nations in the Greater Toronto Area were recognized in October 2016 with a special achievement award from Heritage Toronto. According to King, a four-year contract working for the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation on a mapping project that will assist the First Nation to identify the significance of current and historic sites within our traditional lands, the Moccasin project has been recently finished (King, 2017). The project, King emphasizes, is “not about land claims, but recognition for the past” (2012). The moccasin identifiers placed in key archaeological locations in Ontario would coincide with a curriculum program for local elementary school students to learn some of the history of the aboriginals in their area (Allen, Brant News, 2012).

Eventually, the project would include the use of QR codes that are scannable by smart phones to link people to more information when they see a moccasin marker.

### **5.3.6 Ogimaa Mikana – street signs**

A group of Toronto Indigenous artists started a project reclaiming the city's Native history through renaming street names - Ogimaa Mikana. The project was initiated at the height of the Idle No More movement in 2013 by artists and activists Hayden King and Susan Blight. Hayden and Susan began by making stickers with Indigenous translations of Toronto street names, plastering them over the English signs. "The Ogimaa Mikana project is an effort to restore Anishinaabemowin place-names to streets, avenues, roads, paths and trails of Gichi Kiiwenging (Toronto) – transforming a landscape that often obscures or makes invisible the presence of Indigenous peoples. Starting with a small section of Queen Street, renaming it Ogimaa Mikana (Leader's Trail) in tribute to all the strong women leaders of the Idle No More movement, the project hopes to expand throughout downtown and beyond" reads the stated goal of the project (Ogimaa Mikana website, 2017). The initiative took off and Ogimaa Mikana has collaborated with Dupont by the Castle Business Improvement Area (BIA) and City of Toronto to bring some more Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibway language, to the neighbourhood.

The BIA was inspired to bring the signs to their area after seeing the hand-made ones by Ogimaa Mikana online, and after taking the idea to the city, a collaboration group started work on the signs' designs (Chivers, CBC, September 2016). Three years later "official" signs can be seen popping up across the city, with four of Toronto's major streets now bearing signs with their Anishinaabe names.



*Spadina, or Ishpadinaa, one of the streets bearing signs with their Anishinaabe names, source: Craig Chivers, CBC*

Toronto inhabitants now can learn about the centuries old names of our streets, and that is something the chair of Dupont BIA believes is important: "by doing this, it shows that the First Nations people are still here. We're still on their land. We share it but we're still on their land" (Grant, CBC, September 2016).

### **5.3.7 Ogimaa Mikana - billboards**

Ogimaa Mikana followed with another project in asserting Indigenous presence in the city that "despite having a large Indigenous population, does not reflect their culture in public art, buildings or street signs" (Blight, CBC, May 2016). "We are slowly reclaiming our territories from an alien landscape committed to erasing us while contributing to the growing Indigenous cultural, political and linguistic revitalization efforts across Turtle Island. In the space between raising up our nations and languages and reminding non-Indigenous people that they are on Indian land, we hope to create dialogue" (Ogimaa Mikana, 2017). Over the course of 2016 the project was installing billboards across Anishinaabeg territory. This campaign was aimed to draw on Native "language, philosophy and diplomacy to

challenge, reflect on, and operationalize the concepts of reconciliation and decolonization". The first installation featured a large billboard with black text on a white background on the corner of Queen Street West and Noble Street in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood. The text is in Anishinaabemowin and it translates to "If you want to learn something, first you must learn this" (Deerchild, CBC, May 2016). The location of the billboard was intentionally selected in a high traffic and multicultural rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood that once was home to a relatively large Indigenous community.



*Queen & Dufferin, Toronto, March 2016, source: <http://ogimaamikana.tumblr.com>*

According to the artists, the billboard reflects our original obligations to each other, which are captured in the Dish with One Spoon wampum belt. "The Dish with One Spoon is a common diplomatic metaphor for Great Lakes Indigenous nations. It is considered among the early treaties between the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee and also among the first that French and English settlers were welcomed into. All Canadians today should see themselves as living in the Dish" (Ogimaa Mikana, 2017).



### 5.3.8 The Community Canoe

The Community Canoe project is another grass roots initiative that helps to shine light on our city's forgotten history. According to the organizers, a Community Canoe is "a flowerpot that means a lot. It marks lost waters, acknowledges First Nations traditional territory, and grows pollinator habitat!" (Community Canoe website, February 2017). The Project is part of the Homegrown National Park project, endorsed by the Suzuki Foundation, and began in 2013 as an effort to create a butterfly-friendly corridor through the City of Toronto, along the former Garrison Creek. Since then more than a dozen canoe planters have been added to parks and schools throughout the Garrison Creek and beyond. "This network of pollinator friendly canoe gardens is part of the Homegrown National Park Project and seeks to create abundant habitats for bees, bats, butterflies, and birds while reminding citizens of the lost, buried and neglected waterways that still meander their way through our communities" (Homegrown website, 2017).



*Community Canoe, source: <https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com>*

The project partnered with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation who produced the "Moccasin Identifiers", which are found on the side of each canoe, acknowledging this land as their traditional territory while including design features from other First Nations that have also shared this land.

### **5.3.9 All My Relations Mural**

It feels like our city is finally awakening to its distant history in hands of many restless activists, artists, scholars and even local politicians. Toronto City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, whose Ward 27 includes the heart of downtown as well as the largest concentration of Aboriginal people in the city, said it's about time the First People in Toronto had the opportunity to tell their story. "First Peoples have such a distinct history in Canada and nothing comes close to what they have experienced and you can't talk about the history of Toronto or the history of Canada without talking about the First Peoples and the contributions they've made" (Wong-Tam, Windspeaker, 2013).



*Kristyn Wong-Tam in front of All My Relations mural, Nov. 2013, source: <http://www.ammsa.com/publications/windspeaker/all-my-relations-work-art>*



According to *Windspeaker* (Canada's National Aboriginal news source), there has never been anything that has proclaimed the presence of Aboriginal people in the city as loudly and as clearly as *All My Relations*, an art mural unveiled by Wong-Tam in Toronto's Allan Gardens on November 9th, 2013. All My Relations is a monumental artwork – it comprises of five vast paintings, the size of two football fields, and more than 90 square meters. It's been painted on construction hoarding that surrounded the Gerrard Watermain Replacement Project.

Nationally recognized award winning artists Tannis Nielsen and Phillip Cote were the lead artists for the project. One painting is the memorial wall for the missing and murdered Aboriginal women, "it portrays the beauty and power of Aboriginal women, and with its strong affirmation of all life, it is a fitting tribute to the murdered and missing women" (Nahwegahbow, *Windspeaker*, 2013). The themes of the other four paintings are dedicated to Community, Water, Anishnawbe Teachings and History of the Land. According to Cote, the project's Elders, Dorothy Peters and Alex Jacobs were crucial to the success of the art project. They shared traditional teachings and challenged the artists to root their vision for the mural in Indigenous values, beliefs and community structures (*Windspeaker*, 2013). The artists drew inspiration from the work of the late Norval Morrisseau, and from *The Mishomis Book* authored by Eddie Benton-Banai. "The largest painting in the mural titled History of the Land which spans the distance from the beginning of time with the birth of the cosmos, the creation of Original Man, the first ceremonies, the renewal of the earth on the back of the turtle, and on until the current time. The colours are bright, the images well

executed and there is no doubt that this painting and in fact, the entire mural is Aboriginal story telling at its best” (Nahwegahbow, Windspeaker, 2013).



*All My Relations mural fragments, 2013, source: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/The-NindinawemaaganidokAll-My-Relations-Mural-Project-309167695843315>*

The project can be seen as a true Placemaking endeavour as it brought people, artists and residents alike, together during the year it took to complete. Nielsen pointed out that the mural has brought out the best in neighbourhood residents and members of Toronto’s Aboriginal community. “During the hot summer days, people brought food and cold drinks for the artists. More importantly, though, they provided daily encouragement for the artists to keep at the task and see the project through to completion. New and positive relationships were formed and ... this can lead to an understanding that we are all related, we are all connected and we can come together in spite of our differences to create a renewed sense of community (Nielsen, Windspeaker, 2013). Sadly, the mural has since been taken down during the fall of

2015, and is awaiting its new destination. It is currently at the care of artist Phillip Cote, according to The Nindinawemaaganidok/All My Relations – Mural Project Facebook page (February 2017).

### **5.3.10 Peace Path – Roncy Village**

The last case I would like to explore is another example of grass roots Placemaking in the city. The project is the Peace Path within the Peace Garden in Roncesvalles Village. The Dundas Roncesvalles Peace Garden (DRPG) was designed to turn a barren jut of concrete, at the intersection of Dundas Street West and Roncesvalles Avenue in Toronto, into a new public space of repose under native trees. “Peace, not war, is celebrated here, through justice and reconciliation events, artistic and heritage expressions” (Friends of the Dundas Roncesvalles Peace Garden, 2017). Through the DRPG there were embedded 24 dark granite pavers, laid amongst lighter pavers, engraved with words, images or phrases that mark “The Peace Path”. The Peace Path represents the first permanent, joint, community arts collaboration between a Toronto community and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. “These designs are the product of the first permanent, co-operative, arts project between a community in Toronto and the descendants of the Anishinaabe leaders who made treaties with the British respecting the land now called Toronto, beginning in 1787” (Peace Path website, 2017). The garden is designated on the Moccasin Identifier project to mark it as a place of significant heritage; it celebrates the rich history of Dundas Street and its origins as an indigenous trail. The garden also features the first indigenous artwork on a traffic signal box on Toronto streets (Friends of DRPG website, 2017).



*Dundas Roncesvalles Peace Garden rendering, 2016, source:  
<http://dundasroncesvallespeacegarden.com>*

Toronto community was presented by a wide variety of actors including Roncesvalles Village BIA, horticultural societies, residents association, historical societies, local schools (such as Bishop Marrocco), the city of Toronto, a landscape designer firm and other local partners. Carolyn King served as one of the community historians who provided guidance to the project. The Peace Path involved junior and senior artists of both communities who met for friendly mixers and workshops and took inspiration from presentations by community historians from both communities. “Their designs, laid in a living garden, intertwine respect for heritage with new relationships between residents of Toronto and our founding First Nation, and the need to care for the earth. These young artists symbolize equality, courage, hope, and promise, all good foundations for true and lasting peace” (Peace Path website, 2017).

#### **5.4 Museums and Galleries**

Thousands of Indigenous people call Toronto home nowadays. Although the number varies significantly between the City data of around 19,000 (Norman, BlogTO, 2015), Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada of almost 37,000 and number claimed by some Native groups such as NCCT, our city’s Indigenous past and present is

becoming more and more visible. City Ward27 Councillor's announcement even went so far as to call Toronto "Canada's largest reserve... with an Aboriginal population of more than 75,000" (Ward27 website, 2013). At the same time, the city still has no museum or permanent facility that focuses explicitly on the history of Toronto including its pre-settlement past. Several First Nations historical and art collections are found scattered in Toronto museums. Historian Alison Norman writes "some of our other major museums and galleries hold fantastic collections of Indigenous art and artifacts. My favourite is the First Peoples Gallery at the ROM, which includes over 1000 artifacts, including works of art by Indigenous men and women from the past up to the present... Bata Shoe Museum also has a huge collection of Indigenous footwear in it's collection... The AGO also has a fair-sized collection of Indigenous art in its Canadian holdings" (2015).

The AGO has commissioned and acquired an extraordinary painting entitled *The Wisdom of the Universe* by Christi Belcourt, a Métis visual artist and author who received the 2014 Ontario Arts Council Aboriginal Arts Award. For a taste of art from the far north, one can visit the Museum of Inuit Art on Lakeshore.



*The Wisdom of the Universe*, Christi Belcourt, 2014, source: AGO <http://artmatters.ca>

While visual representation sites remain relatively scarce, Indigenous events and community celebrations gain prominence in the public life of our city. The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may mark the beginning of Urban Indigenous Renaissance, with more and more places where one can learn about Indigenous history and culture. In addition to the projects, declarations and initiatives showcased throughout this section, it is important to mention events like the Indigenous Education week, which took place in February 2015 and offered multiple talks on Indigenous culture, history, and education. The Week was hosted by First Nations House at the University of Toronto, which generally services Indigenous students of the school, and often hosts events open to the public. The *ImagineNative* film festival, taking place each fall, is an important event that showcases, promotes, and celebrates emerging and established Canadian and international Indigenous filmmakers and media artists.

## 6 Placemaking in Toronto – introducing new ideas

*“Although we are in different boats, you in your boat  
and we in our canoe, we share the same river of life”.  
Chief Oren Lyons, Onandaga Nation*

Toronto is an interesting and vibrant place several million people call home. Its diverse scene and high quality of life (commonly ranked in the top 20 by Mercer Survey, ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in 2016) attracts thousands of people from within Canada and from around the world. Toronto was again ranked the fourth most liveable city in the world by The Economist Intelligence Unit in 2016 following Melbourne, Vienna and Vancouver (The Economist, 2016). It is one the fastest growing megapolises in North America swelling at the rate of more than 100,000 people annually (Toronto Vital Signs, 2016). A projection based on the 2011 National Household Survey estimates that the Toronto Region would grow an average 1.6% annually between 2014 and 2019, bringing the population to almost 7.1 million (Toronto Vital Signs, 2016). And people are increasingly choosing to live and work downtown contributing to intense densification, which manifests itself in slender skyscrapers popping around the city core like mushrooms. According to Vital Signs report, more than half - 51% - of Toronto's inhabitants were born outside of Canada (2014). The city speaks in more than 150 languages (GEOS Toronto, 2017) making it one of the most culturally diverse urban centres in the world, which prides itself in being a welcoming and tolerant urban society. Today our relatively young megapolis has secured its position as a world global city, based on its ability to attract and retain global capital, people, and ideas, as well as sustain that performance in the long term. Global Cities report 2016 lists Toronto as a “Global Elite” – the only Canadian city among the ‘elite’ 15 – and one

of the world's 25 most economically powerful cities in the world, in company of such influential hubs as London, Paris, New York, Singapore and Tokyo (A.T. Kearney, 2016). Finally, Toronto was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> by the United Nations City Prosperity Index, which measures prosperity along five dimensions: productivity, infrastructure, quality of life, equity and social inclusion and environmental sustainability (UN Habitat, 2012/2013).



*Toronto waterfront, 2016, source: The Economist*

Toronto is my home. It is a beautiful place: full of different people, different colours, different scents; flanked by blue-green waters of lake Ontario; dotted with green parks and corridors; filled with dreams, and well also filled with noise, cars and tall buildings. Beauty like happiness best served shared. Despite the laudable rankings, the accolades and the attractive sceneries, we cannot fully build our pride and identity as Torontonians until we include all the voices, and more importantly until we, as an Indigenous scholar Renee Pualani Louise put it, “seek to hear the original voice” (2007). Urban leaders, politicians and professionals alike, and the general public should be aware of a different view on our city as articulated by



Toronto artist Susan Blight of Couchiching First Nation in Ontario: "I think that people need to understand that we live on occupied territory. That the settler/colonial system is not legitimate. That the Anishinaabe people, the Haudenosaunee people of this territory are the original caretakers of this land and we've done a very good job for 15,000 years. So we have a lot of knowledge that we can share." (2016).

Sharing our home in a holistic way requires a conscious effort to question our 'public memory' and to uncover a different - Indigenous - story. This effort may involve a conceptual paradigm shift in ways we plan and manage our city. One of the important lessons I've learned from reading the work of Indigenous researchers and from studying Aboriginal history is (1) that we cannot set our mindset in the past tense, we can not treat our knowledge as a distant 'Indian' history. In order to celebrate Toronto's Native heritage, there should be a clear connection to Indigenous community's presence and current living history.



*Where the Trees Stood in Water* – 1857, Bambitchell, 2013, 2nd of 5 Cyanotype Prints

The works and the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have created a basis for renewed attention, which hopefully will push to reconsider the entire paradigm of conceptualizing indigenous heritage, culture and knowledge. Another important concept I've learned from my research is (2) that any actions/plans related to Aboriginal issues should be done with Aboriginal people following an Indigenous knowledge framework. In order to prevent any future disastrous actions designed with good intentions, we should be collaborating with people we design for, or better to design with instead of for. That notion leads to the next important lesson: (3) the realization that without adopting an Indigenous Research approach we will not be able to make any tangible progress towards reconciliation, towards truly sharing that "river of life" (Lyons). We need to think critically, constantly questioning dominant Western doctrines and learning from other ways of thought. Moreover, as Brant Castellano suggests, "...when learning, healing or rehabilitating is aligned with traditional ethics and values, it takes on astounding energy" (2004, p. 112).

Freeman points out an interesting fact about our city's history: the incorporation in 1834 was accompanied by the reinstatement of the Indigenous name "Toronto" over Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe's 1793 imposition of "York". The preference given to a Native rooted rather than English name "marked the assertion of the city as a uniquely North American place and the "indigeneity" of its settler population, which was of course appropriated from the Indigenous peoples the city had displaced" (Freeman, 2010, p. 22). Despite the sad irony one can see in this appropriation, there might be an opportunity to rediscover our shared "indigeneity" if

we frame name Toronto in a different context, if we give it a renewed meaning as a meeting place promoting discourse between Indigenous epistemology and knowledge systems and the Western ones. The name itself set in a context of Aboriginal languages (Mohawk in our case) becomes a powerful tool as it bears a codified message. Linguists and Indigenous scholars long viewed language as a carrier of traditional knowledge, as carrier of “the code for interpreting reality”. Indigenous scholar Marlene Brant Castellano of Mohawk First nation argues that “skills for decoding complex messages from the social and natural environment are embedded in traditional languages” (2004, p. 101).

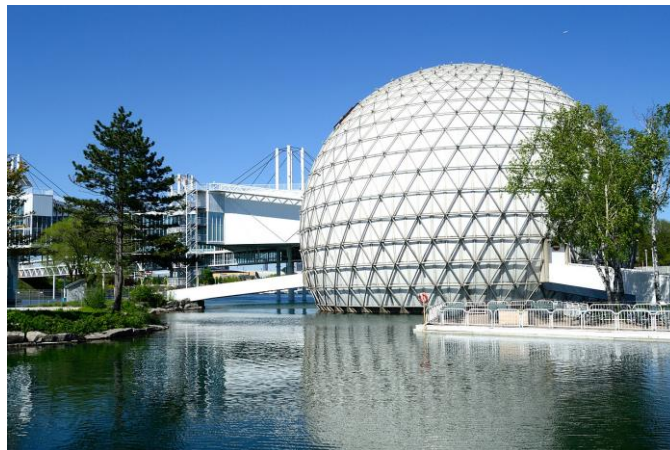
At this point I find it beneficial to reiterate Postcolonial theory and Indigenous research approaches that are relevant to my paper. Postcolonial theory focuses on illustrating and challenging the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism. “Postcolonialism is the critical destabilization of the theories (intellectual and linguistic, social and economic) that support the ways of Western thought ... by means of which colonialists "perceive", "understand", and "know" the world. Postcolonial theory establishes intellectual spaces for subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and thus produce cultural discourses of philosophy, language, society and economy, balancing the imbalanced us-and-them binary power-relationship between the colonist and the colonial subjects” (Wikipedia). The theory is therefore concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled “Third World” cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments.

Those research frameworks offer fundamentally different paradigms thus opening not only the academia, but also the whole society to new possibilities, enriching our understanding of the world. Both approaches try to deconstruct the dominant European-imposed ways of thinking and ways knowing, both introduce and promote alternative ontologies and alternative epistemic interpretations. This framework falls in line with my ‘Re/Making The Meeting Place’ initiative, which seeks to deconstruct the Western built historical narrative about Toronto area and to bring forward the ‘other’ story told about and by Indigenous peoples. Building upon the presented theoretical arguments, the initiative includes several practical propositions within the realm of transformation of public spaces through Placemaking and urban planning, with an imperative to understand the need to interlink design activities with the theme of social justice. As mentioned in previous chapters, adding a pillar of beauty into the equation of the three pillars of our society – economic, environmental and social – would extend the holistic framework that underpins my research to mend and enrich our environment, both physical and social, as well as spiritual. Since visibility is an important factor in the study, the proposed ideas focus on the downtown or near by area of the city.

### **6.1 Aboriginal Art Walk at the redeveloped Ontario Place**

Ontario Place is an ambiguous place on Toronto’s skyline. Despite its beautiful waterside location and bold architectural ideas, Ontario Place remained underused and virtually un-present on the city’s vibrant leisure/entertainment scene (except for its concert venue Amphitheatre).

Ontario Place was an entertainment and exhibition complex located on the shore of Lake Ontario, just south of Exhibition Place, and south-west of downtown Toronto. The complex, owned by the Government of Ontario, operated annually during the summer months from 1971 until 2011. Three artificially constructed, landscaped islands were built to house the facility as well as several 'Pod' buildings suspended over the water and the Cinesphere geodesic dome IMAX theatre, the first permanent IMAX theatre (Wikipedia). One of the islands was dedicated to an open-air concert space, while the other two were used for amusements, restaurants, parkland and exhibits. After a long period of declining attendance, the Government of Ontario closed the facility in 2011 except for its music venue and marina.



*Cinesphere at Ontario Place, 2017, source: Wikipedia*

According to media reports, an advisory panel to the Province recommended in July 2012 that the site be turned into a year-round facility, incorporate private-sector components, add an innovation park and residential development on the west island. In January 2014, Ontarians got their first peek at what fate awaited Ontario Place when plans were unveiled for the eastern portion of the complex. The reworked three-hectare section — a staff parking lot for four decades — would be a dense mix

of “forest” and open space, including a “romantic garden” aimed at families (Bradbeer, The Star, 2016). A new site plan was unveiled in 2014, which incorporated the ideas of the panel, but rejected the redevelopment of the west island into a residential district. Private sector partners would be incorporated into a shopping and dining 'Canal District' north of the Amphitheatre. A new "innovation centre" facility would replace the old facilities on the west island. On the east island, the water park, games and fairground rides were to be removed, replaced by open space. The Cinesphere and the Pods would be preserved. Construction of a park and trail on undeveloped lands on the eastern island began in 2015 (The Star, 2016).



*A concept vision for Ontario Place, 2016, source: The Star*

The redevelopment of the site presents an opportunity to give it a new dimension. It is only fitting that the Province of Ontario commissioned Ontario Place in the aftermath of Expo 67, primarily as a showplace for the province’s culture. That vision of culture dressed as a grand modernist fantasy of the 70s on Toronto’s

waterfront, which ended up as a theme park, clearly collapsed. According to Alex Bozicovic of Globe and Mail, it was a powerful lesson about what makes public space work: you have to give people a reason to come (2016). The revitalization will not be completed in 2017 for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Canada as the Province had hoped. The process of Ontario Place redevelopment is still ongoing, since the very scale of the site makes it hard to fill with new uses. Those new uses should speak to the needs of Torontonians, to reflect our diverse culture. One of the projects that is grounded in real history and is relevant to building our identity could be an Aboriginal Art Walk set within the grounds of Ontario Place - a walk that tells visitors, local residents and tourists, a story about and by the First Nations through art and interactive visual experience. Giving the local Indigenous community a part in the design process of the site should be a priority, thus giving representatives of the urban Indigenous residents (possibly though NCCT), local Indigenous artists and the Mississaugas of the New Credit a permanent seat on an advisory panel to the Ontario government. As with the example of the Peace Garden in Toronto's Roncesvalles village, the project should be collaboration between the provincial government and the indigenous community.

The Walk could take many forms and directions: it could follow the example of the Aboriginal Art Walk designed by Native artists in Brisbane; or it could incorporate elements of the dismantled grand mural "All My Relations"; or it could feature "Moccasin Identifiers". The details will be decided by the community members according to the message they choose to convey. The essential step is to ensure that Indigenous voice is included in the process of decision-making by the Province and by the City. This protocol should be extrapolated to **all** projects of

development/redevelopment of significant public spaces by all levels of Government – municipality, provincial and federal. To make the process even more meaningful, the redeveloped place can be given a new Aboriginal name building on the example of Ogimaa Mikana initiative. Making a direct link to the nearby Inukshuk Park would add significance to the place as it can serve as the first link in developing a whole network of public places, concentrated in the downtown area, that celebrate our Indigenous history.

## **6.2 Indigenous Arts downtown Network**

Building on ideas of walkability and connectivity, my grand vision is to create a network of public places in downtown Toronto. Each place should be different, representing possibly various First Nations and telling different stories. Ideally, the stories will be related to this land – Toronto or *Tkaronto*. We as planners do not need to provide a recipe, our role is to create a framework for creative process that involves Urban Indigenous community and local artists. As in the previous idea, planners should be responsible for building productive collaboration, kind of Placemaking panels, between the city and the Indigenous community, and the details will be decided by the panel members.

Connected network is a key factor in this vision: people experience the art and stories through walking and observing. First, the network can make walking in downtown Toronto more pleasant and relaxed for local residents and tourists. In order to ensue that, all places ideally would have some basic design characteristics: opportunity to stop and rest, green areas preferably made with indigenous plants, opportunity to communicate with other people. Densely build downtown core may



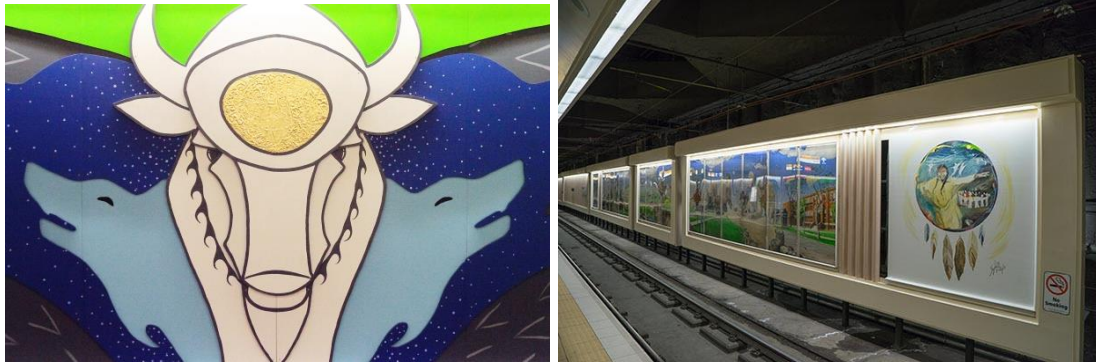
prove challenging for imposing a connected public spaces network. In my view, Nathan Phillips Square should be connected to the network and have a designated public place dedicated to Indigenous representation. One optional radical solution could be conversion of current city owned parking lots into the network. “Parking lots are predominantly perceived as inevitably unstimulating and unattractive places despite the fact that they occupy a great deal of space in today’s cities; after dark, parking lots can become veritable landscapes of fear” (Lehrer, 2006, p. 440). Converting parking lots into beautiful public places can therefore reduce the scope of ‘landscapes of fear’. Urban planning has long shifted its attention from prioritizing cars to prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists. Moreover, as Toronto prepares to move into the age of shared economy and driverless cars, parking lots no longer viewed as a ‘necessary evil’ in the city core. More detailed research into implementing the idea and locating best spaces to include in the network will require a separate study.

I can think of a myriad of ideas for our city’s Placemaking. In the next page, I would like to briefly outline some of the initiatives that seem ripe for implementation.

### **6.3 Indigenous Art in subway stations**

Toronto can beautify its subway stops simultaneously creating awareness about its history by introducing Indigenous art installations at TTC subway stations. Currently, the majority of the stations are blank canvases that feature no creative designs (except for advertisement posters). Given the will by TTC management and the city administration, we can begin with one station as a pilot project and then extending the program to other stations.

The idea has been tried before: Indigenous artist Aaron Paquette created an installation for Edmonton's subway stations - Stations of Reconciliation - in 2014.



*Grandin Station, artwork by Aaron Paquette, 2014, source: <https://www.edmonton.ca>*

#### **6.4 Art Installation Tkaronto at the Nathan Phillips Square**

We can celebrate the original meaning behind our city's name Toronto by creating an art installation that features creative representation of 'trees standing in water'. The best location for this installation, in my view, is Nathan Phillips Square in front of the City Hall. It could be a sculpture or a fountain combined with solid elements. A collaborative panel formed with members of local Indigenous community, artists and city officials could oversee a competition for the best design by Indigenous artists.



*Nathan Philips Square, Toronto, 2017, source: CBC news*

Turning the City Hall square into a more attractive and more people-friendly place is another point I would like to make. The current mass of grey concrete is in desperate need of colour, greenery and meaning to make it in sync with our 21<sup>st</sup> century diverse city. It needs to become a **place** where people would like to stay and linger.

## **6.5 Making *Tkaronto* our city's second official name.**

*Tkaronto* could be featured on road signs, advertisement materials and official documents. It could be added to the currently erected 'Toronto' installation at the Nathan Phillips Square. Understandably, this move is political and will evoke considerable consultations, negotiations and discussions. At the same time, it could immediately anchor the city's Aboriginal past making it our present and future.

Toronto has been taking considerable steps to further shine a light on the Indigenous urban population of the city. An initiative being launched by Councilor Kristyn Wong-Tam and supported by Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation aims at developing an entire Indigenous business district in downtown Toronto. The city has secured a building on the corner of Jarvis and Dundas, and the hope is that it will house Indigenous businesses (CBC news, 2017).

Official proceedings at city hall are now opened by recognizing the Indigenous territory the city is on. Wong-Tam says that other cities have been doing this for years, so it was about time Toronto adopted the practice (CBC news, 2017). This spring, the city plans to raise Indigenous flags at Nathan Phillips Square outside city hall to fly alongside the Canadian flag.

## 7 Conclusion – closing the circle

A quest for ways to build more livable and sustainable cities is an unraveling journey filled with taking unexpected turns and discovering new perspectives. Integrating all four pillars of society - social, economic, environmental and esthetical - makes our work as future urban planners and academics extremely complex. The importance of purposely interlinking the theme of social justice with planning activities complicates the subject even further. Indigenous research approach adds another dimension to our work challenging the incumbent policies and practices of city planning, and pushing for a paradigm shift. At the same time, ideas of many of great urbanists such as Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl, who put community-based people-centric design at the heart of city planning ethos, may be viewed as echoing Indigenous epistemology that centers on community and sharing. We can trace many synergies between progressive urban theories/practices and Indigenous research framework. In my view, both approaches share many common elements and rather compliment each other thus creating an overarching holistic framework of conceptualizing cities and places.

William Whyte wrote about the sanctity of public space for preserving vital democratic cities. Public space is by definition a shared space where community interaction and civic engagement take place. Shared space and community are the backbone of Indigenous traditional way of life. Whyte's poetic definition of small urban spaces and streets as cities' "river of life" evokes parallels with Aboriginal storytelling. The significance of public space in both progressive urbanist and Indigenous approaches gave impetus for my research to focus on design and

transformation of public spaces in Toronto. Either an Aboriginal art walk or an Art installation at the Nathan Phillips square is small-scale open public place that in addition to educational component encourages lingering and exploration by foot.

Jan Gehl explains how public space that invites a multitude of people and activities, ideally not over-planned by authorities, is what actually makes cities a true meeting place. In order for Toronto to remain a healthy, safe, and lively city, it must strive to rediscover its historical role as a meeting place. In order for Toronto to be an authentic 'meeting place', it must integrate Indigenous heritage and Indigenous voice into its story. In order for Toronto to be a just inclusive city, it must celebrate not only its current diversity but also its historical Native roots. In order for Toronto to be a distinctively creative city, it needs to incorporate Aboriginal art and culture into its urban fabric (notably through Placemaking). In order for Toronto to be a democratic city, it must offer free and open public access to those artistic and cultural installations. In order for Toronto to be a socially and culturally sustainable city, it needs to allow that 'little sprinkle of chaos' into the life of its public places.

The idea of walkability deserves a special attention. Prominent urbanists, such as Jeff Speck, consider pedestrianism a basis for urban vitality. The concept implies human dimension, and walkable collection of city streets and blocks as well as accessible public spaces. Walkability is integral to Indigenous epistemology: traditionally spaces designed around people to be small-scale and accessible by foot. Keeping with the urban theory and Indigenous approach, proposed ideas in the paper, be it the Ontario Place Aboriginal Art Walk or the Indigenous Downtown Arts Network, incorporate walkability as an essential element of their design.

It is important to reiterate, that the ideas presented in my paper serve not only as concrete propositions but also as food for thought, as opening for a dialog about public places and Placemaking in Toronto. While the ideas offer conceptual possibilities, the design process and its implementation must be centered on participation of local Aboriginal communities. Planning for social sustainability as advocated by David Harvey includes both physical and social elements. Only when Indigenous artists and community members act as rightful participants in a Placemaking project, we can achieve an authentic social construction of space. Our role as urban professionals boils down to mostly offering ideas and facilitating the consultation and design process. I believe this is the path of “doing it in a good way” towards exercising Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’.

TRC’s Calls to Action #62, #63 and #79 talk about Education and Commemoration as paving stones in reconciliation process (TRC, 2015). Education about Indigenous history is recognized as an integral part of the process. The Commemoration actions call specifically to integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada’s national heritage and history. In my opinion, Education and Commemoration should be part of not only national educational and heritage projects. The practice of revising the policies, criteria, and practices of the National Program of Historical Commemoration should be continued and adapted to review Planning practices on all levels: federal, provincial and municipal. It is my hope that, in addition to my initially stated goals, this paper also serves as an impetus towards improving Planning policies and practices in Toronto and in Canada in general.

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