Architecture of Reconciliation on the Lachine Canal: A Story of Decolonization over Seven Generations

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi’kmaq’i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

The site of this thesis is situated on traditional Indigenous territories which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst the Indigenous peoples of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg Nations. I humbly acknowledge the Kanien’keha:ka as the traditional stewards of these lands and waters which form part of their unceded territory. The work of this thesis took place in Kjipuktuk, in Mi’kmaq’i, in the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq.

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Abstract

This thesis proposes strategies for architecture to redress the impacts of colonization and industrialization that have overshadowed and erased Indigenous narratives from public memory in lands and waters of Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal). The thesis questions whether architecture can facilitate reconciliation for Indigenous people and decolonize its extractive ways. Perspectives of Indigenous knowledge and the history embedded in the land inform a design methodology that aims to tell a deeper and more complete story of place, while creating a system and platform for Indigenous storytelling and collective healing. The resulting architecture is a series of seven built interventions including programs of community center, daycare, co-housing, and clinic in the former cradle of Canadian industrialization along the Lachine Canal. The design is positioned as a story of architectural possibilities stanced as solidarity from a settler perspective, that reflects upon truths of colonial trauma, and the potentials of reconciliation over seven generations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The French architect and writer Léopold Lambert wrote there is “no other discipline better at implementing settler colonialism,” as architecture occupies land and imposes ways of being on that land (D’Aprile 2021). It may be argued the counterpoint is also true; that architecture may be the most effective discipline to address unsettling and decolonization for these same reasons.

Architecture has always been site specific, addressing the complexities of all aspects of sites; however, the responsibility of architectural practice must additionally reckon with the storied pasts and legacies through an acknowledgement of ancestral lands upon which we continue to settle. The growing consciousness that architecture remains a part of an ongoing colonial project without a clear direction to what can be done lies at the center of what this thesis aims to question. How can architects contribute to a disruption of the ongoing oppressive forces of colonization and engage in meaningful relationship to the lands and sites that have been dispossessed from Indigenous peoples?

Intentions and Objectives

This thesis conceives architectural strategies that form a deeper recognition and acknowledgement of traditional Indigenous lands and move toward more meaningful action to reconcile the social and environmental losses as a tool for decolonization. The architecture intends to dismantle the alienating hierarchies supported though the structures’ colonization and serve the urbanized Indigenous community. The objective is to implement a design methodology informed by Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing including Indigenous Storywork, Two Eyed Seeing and a Responsibility to the Seventh Generation.

Colonization has been understood historically as a forcible displacement of Indigenous people from their lands for the purposes of extracting resources and accumulating of capital. These systems of coloniality go largely unchallenged in the architectural profession and play a marginal role in shaping architectural discourse. The sites on which our cities are built are oftentimes limited in practice to imagined boundaries and rationalized as an unquestioned delineation of the property line. As legal scholar Brenna Bhandar argues, legal forms of property and ownership and the modern racial subject are realized in conjunction with one another, and contemporary understandings of property laws are in effect legacies of the way in which colonial domination was enacted (Bhandar 2018, 5). The processes of colonization and the subsequent phenomena of industrialization afforded by structures of capitalism underscore the ideologies embedded in this hegemony: racial consciousness has always been central to the design of Western civilization as a strategy to make exploitative social hierarchies appear as natural orders. (Adeyemo 2021, 70). The imposed social hierarchies of settler colonialism in Canada justified dispossession of Indigenous lands, promoted systems of control, and produced policies of assimilation that promoted the erasure of Indigenous culture, and ultimately genocide through the residential school system. The incomplete palimpsest of the ground and the page, the missing elements of stewardship to the ground and land, and unwritten stories of the land result from this imposed colonialism. This thesis aims to investigate the story of place and reinforce acknowledgement of ancestral territory through a broadening of widely accepted narratives of place through an architecture that aims to reveal and return the rightful place to Indigenous people in order to reconcile and decolonize the public memory of this place. The architecture aims to support Indigenous futurity, sovereignty, and livelihood and the multiplicity of Indigenous cultures, languages and stories found in these lands.

The responsibility for the Seventh Generation implies a necessity for sustainability. This, of course, requires that generations that follow are offered care. That care encompasses economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing. In the face of an environmental crisis, humanity must respond to the need to sustain itself which necessarily requires the protection of the environment. The objectives of sustainability are inextricably intertwined with the futurity of Indigenous spiritual practices, customs, language and beliefs, the survival of which have been equally as undermined as the environment by industrialization and colonialism. Decolonizing along the Lachine Canal in this respect may be seen as a means to reconciliation.

The project aims to reclaim the land, and to repurpose symbols of colonialism through adaptive re-use. Sustainability is at the forefront of its intentions. Indigenous perspectives will be used to inform the designs. By amplification of stories, the architecture recognizes stewardship and the ownership of the land by the Indigenous peoples. The architecture aims to build relationships through revealing stories and promoting inquiry by participants of what once was there, what has been lost and what can be reclaimed and repositioned. The architecture aims to take responsibility for the disruption and destruction of the past. These are some of the objectives of the decolonization on the Lachine Canal.

These concerns stem from a correlation of industrialized capitalism and colonization towards the environmental legacy that has brought us to the Anthropocene.

Colonialism and the Anthropocene

Humanity has made its mark, staining itself within the deep surface that is the stratigraphic record of our planet's history. The French philosopher Bruno Latour refers to this stain as "the critical zone" (Latour 2014, 4). It is a thin film in which we all inhabit that envelopes our world's crust. This layer marks the Anthropocene and accounts for the everlasting damage our species has made to the earth on the geological time scale. These impacts emerged out of the Industrial Revolution, a period as described by Lewis Mumford that keenly reflects "Western man's ruthless exploitation of nature for the sake of his temporary and socially limited profit economy" (Mumford 1961, 459).

The sites on which this thesis is situated are within the Lachine Canal and present a demonstrative example of the harmful impacts of humanity's attempt at controlling the landscape as well as the peoples who relied upon the undisturbed landscape before the Lachine Canal was built for their livelihood and culture. The Lachine Canal is historically accepted as the cradle of industrialization in Canada in the mid 19th century and is an example in this nation's history of the colonial extractive attitudes that industrialized capitalism has had towards land and waters. The waters and lands were meant to be controlled, manipulated, and ultimately polluted.

Prior to colonialization and industrialization, the area occupied by the Lachine Canal was known as Tiohtià:ke which roughly translates to "where the boats/rivers meet" or “the first stopping place”. This relation to the river’s geography in the Hochelaga archipelago is not only meaningful to the Indigenous presence on this land and its surrounding waters, but was also significant in how these lands were colonized and controlled. This first stopping point where Ville Marie would be first settled, was downriver of an impassable threshold to the rest of the Great Lakes later known as the Lachine Rapids.

The purpose of the Lachine Canal, from its construction in the 19th century, was to bypass these rapids. The canal was positioned between Indigenous societies and their pending marginalization. Developed by Scottish industrialist John Redpath, in 1825, the Lachine Canal opened its locks for Montreal to become a gateway to the interior of the continent and the capital of Canadian economy.

In the process of its construction and the industry that followed, the Lachine Canal had drained entire lakes and natural bodies of water leaving a heavily polluted waterway and contaminated soils. The Lachine Canal was eventually rendered obsolete in the 1970s with the construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway.

This enterprise was short sighted, it did not fulfill a service to the Indigenous philosophy of seven generations that followed, nor did it foresee its environmental legacy that later generations would inherit.

At present, the Lachine Canal is no longer a commercial waterway; it exists to serve pleasure boats and other small craft. The bottom of the canal is heavily polluted from years of industrial use. The surrounding land is owned by Parks Canada and the signage and historical iconography is largely focused upon the settler perspective and recognition of the historical importance of the canal to industry and trade with inadequate recognition of the importance of the area to the Indigenous peoples. The research question emerges further to how can Architecture play a role in the deeper story telling of a place.

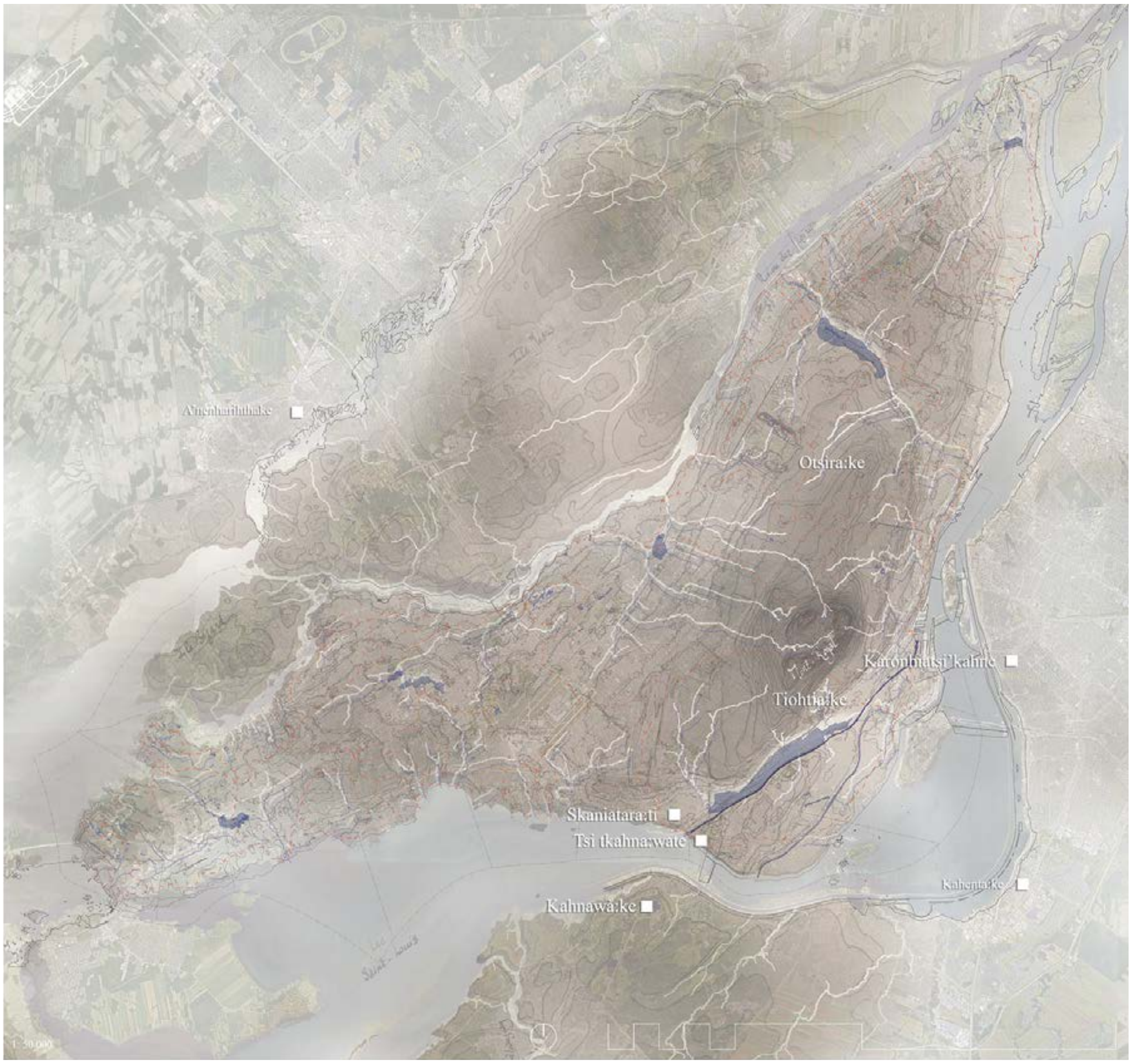
Thesis Statement

Though a design methodology that is informed by perspective of Indigenous knowledge of Indigenous Storywork, Two Eyed Seeing, and a Responsibility for the Seventh Generation, architecture can reflect a truer story of place, be programmed to support the healing of community, and operate as infrastructure for cultural sustainability, decolonization, and the amplification of Indigenous stories.

Chapter 2: The Colonial Narrative of Place

Settler colonialism in Canada has a deeply layered and complicated story in the nation's history reflective of the imposition of European ideologies steeped in expansionist ambitions and territorial acquisition, colonialism entailed domination, exploitation and control of lands, waters, people and resources. These attitudes and effects persist to this day. Furthermore, the imposition of European land control and the European conflation of concepts of property and land reinforce the discrepancies between Indigenous concepts of land and our relation to it. The discrepancies of worldview between Indigenous people during the early land alliances and agreements in Colonial New France took advantage of what Historian Allan Greer refers to as "creative misunderstandings" (Greer 2018, 148). Through many of these early territorial acquisitions made by French settlers, the Indigenous people acknowledged the governor of New France as their "father", but understood this to mean the dispenser of gifts. This misunderstanding and agreement led to the imperial interpretation that there was an implied submission to the authority of the French Empire (Greer 2018, 148). The discrepancies of worldview in countless instances throughout the colonization of this nation were exploitative towards Indigenous people and continue to be contested in land disputes to this day.

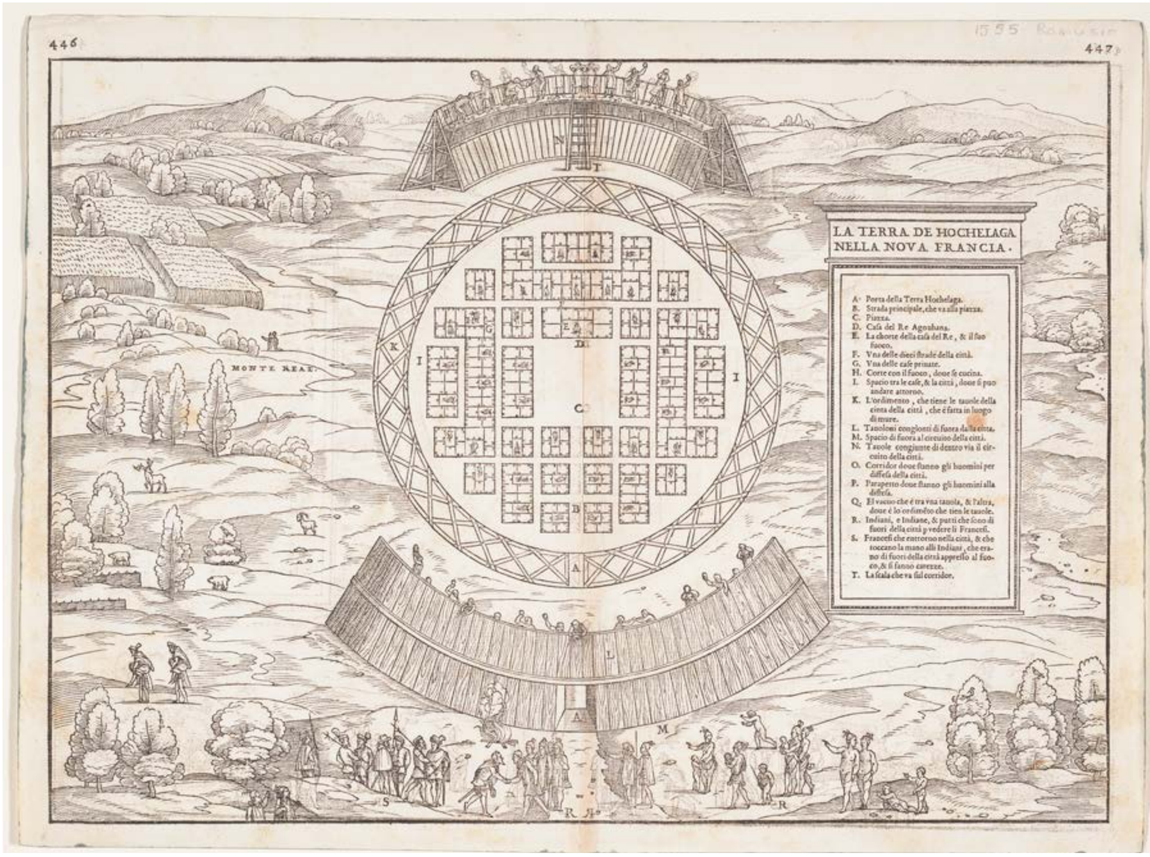
Critically revisiting of this colonial history is essential for understanding the present-day challenges faced by Indigenous communities and for advancing a path toward reconciliation and decolonization.



Map of Montreal showing historic waterways, missing lakes and watershed boundaries, 1:50 000. Cartographic survey of the island of Montreal's former watercourses showing thalwegs and crest lines. (data from Mahaut 2016).

The Hochelaga Archipelago

During the early seventeenth century, the French established a settlement colony referred to as "Canada" along the St. Lawrence River, which provided them access to the interior of North America. This region had previously been explored by Jacques Cartier in the 1530s, where he encountered thriving agricultural villages inhabited by the St. Lawrence Iroquoians (Greer 2018, 145). The exact details of their encounter are somewhat unclear, but Cartier's records



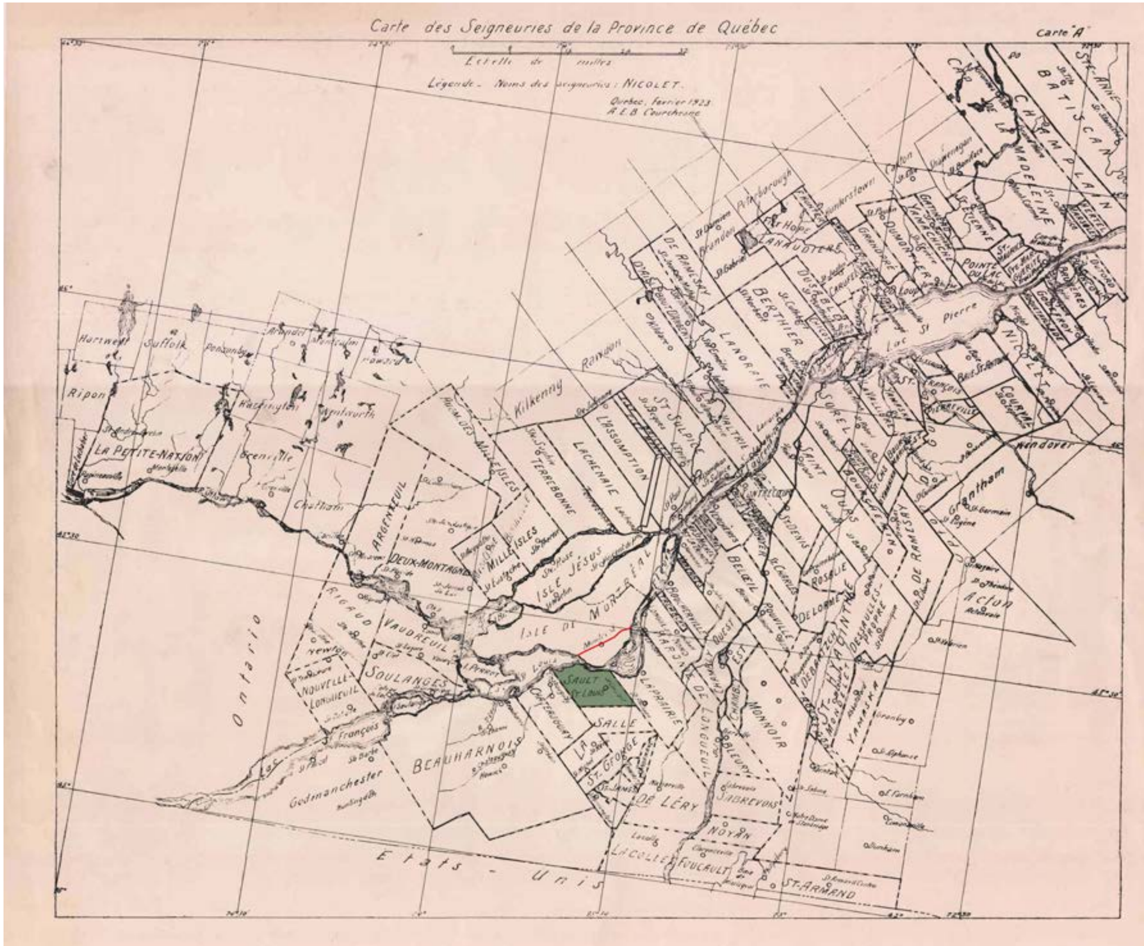
Early colonial interpretation of the Lost Village of Hochelaga. (Battista 1606)

describe the village as a fortified settlement with longhouses made of wood and bark. However, when French colonizers returned sixty years later, they discovered that these Indigenous people had vanished, leaving behind a mystery in Canadian history (Greer 2018, 145). The disappearance of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians remains unexplained, with possibilities including epidemic disease brought by Cartier's expeditions, climate change affecting their food supply, or conflicts arising from the introduction of European goods and weapons (Greer 2018, 145).

Collective Memory Making: The Dominant Story of Place

Without dispute, it is widely acknowledged that Montreal was previously occupied by Indigenous peoples. Histories often mention the presence of the Hochelagan people and the neighboring Iroquois villages in La Prairie and Kahnawake, which influenced the local Christian perspective on Native Americans. However, Indigenous peoples are marginalized in the public memory of Montreal. Their memories of Montreal may tell a story of gradual expulsion and exclusion (Gordon 2001, 27). Not only did the Hochelaga's leave Montreal in the sixteenth century, but the name of their town was taken for a French-Canadian, working-class suburb and has become a symbol of francophone proletarianization (Gordon 2001, 27). Few people living in Montreal are aware that Indigenous populations briefly outnumbered French settlers in the late 17th century, or that nearly 1,000 Indigenous people were enslaved during the French regime (Gordon 2001, 27). The Indigenous past is not portrayed as a story of struggle against oppression but has instead one that has been co-opted to serve dominant narratives of Montreal. Indigenous peoples are not celebrated as a distinct people who taught Europeans valuable lessons about survival, defended the city, and played an indispensable role in the fur trade (Gordon 2001, 27).

This limited history of Montreal that serves as the dominant narrative of public memory of the lost Indigenous community of Hochelaga is problematic as it continues an account that reserves Indigenous identity in Montreal to a far and disappearing past, obscuring the vibrant presence of Indigenous communities in the city today. The problem with these stereotypes of relating Indigenous identity to that of the past is that it continues to reinforce these beliefs and misrepresentations as well as how Indigenous people see themselves.



The seigneurial system delineated the colonial property boundaries in New France. Sault Saint Louis, shown in green, would become the Mohawk reserve of the Kahnawá:ke. The Lachine Canal is indicated in red. (Base map from Courchesne 1923)

Seigneurial System in New France

From the beginning of colonization in New France, surveying was an integral part of property formation (Greer 2018, 335). The presence of these seigneuries defined the legal landscape of the colony of Canada within the larger territory of New France. “There were 210 seigneuries here by the end of the French rule in 1760 and they blanketed virtually all the ground available for settlement” (Greer 2018, 158). The presence of these seigneuries defined the legal landscape of the colony of Canada with Imperial territory known as New France and continue to this day.

The Lachine Canal

The Rapids: Overcoming an Obstacle

In the seventeenth century, when Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve founded Montréal, the Saint Lawrence River and its tributaries were the primary means of communication in New France. However, the Lachine rapids posed a significant obstacle to further navigation upstream, requiring cargo unloading, portaging, and reloading. In 1611, Samuel de Champlain observed the surrounding drainage network and proposed a potential channel to bypass the rapids (Bélisle 1992, 9).

The idea of a canal to by-pass the Lachine rapids was first recorded by Maisonneuve, the founder of Montreal, as early as 1651. The first attempt to build such a canal was carried out by the Sulpician seigneurs of the island of Montreal between 1680 to 1716 (Desjardins 1999, 76-77).

First Attempts at Creating the Canal

The Sulpicians, who held authority over the island of Montréal and monopolized flour milling, aimed to establish water mills on the Saint-Pierre River and one of its tributaries. In 1670, François de Salignac Fénelon, the superior of the Sulpicians, conceived the idea of canalizing Lac à la Loutre to increase the volume of goods in transit (Bélisle 1992, 9). Although the canal project did not progress initially, François Dollier de Casson, Fénelon’s successor, resumed it around 1680. Construction began on June 13, 1689, but was interrupted by an Indigenous raid on Lachine on August 4. Nonetheless, Dollier de Casson persisted with the project (Bélisle 1992, 9).

In 1700, Gédéon de Catalogne was hired to dig a 3.9 km long and 1.3 m deep canal, but construction was again interrupted due to Dollier de Casson’s death and de Catalogne’s financial difficulties. Despite these setbacks, the Sulpicians managed to canalize the Saint-Pierre River to supply water to their water mills near Old Montréal (Bélisle 1992, 9).

The project gained new momentum with the arrival of military engineer Gaspard Chaussegros de Lery in New France in 1717. The Sulpicians sought financial assistance from the king and showed de Lery the site of de Catalogne’s canal. However, de Lery deemed the canal’s construction to be too costly. In 1732, the Sulpicians revived the project as the city’s enclosure was almost complete, and de Lery reevaluated the plan. He concluded that the Sulpicians, as toll collectors, should bear the cost of building the canal. Nevertheless, the project never came to fruition (Bélisle 1992, 10).

The Cradle of Canadian Industrialization

The industrial development of the Lachine Canal began in 1850 when water intakes were leased to plants operating along the canal. This decision, in collaboration with figures like John Young and Ira Gould, led to the rapid establishment of industrial operations. The St. Gabriel Hydraulic Company, led by Young and Gould, imposed their conditions on firms wishing to operate along the canal, including existing establishments like the Goudie-Ogilvie flour mill. Despite criticism in the newspapers regarding favoritism and conflicts of interest, the development continued. In the following year, two new associates joined Young and Gould, and a network of parallel canals was built upstream from the locks, providing water intakes and outlets for companies along the canal (Bélisle 1992, 10).

In fact, two canals were built as indicated on a plan drawn by Chaussegros de Lery, the King's Engineer, in 1733. The western one, known as "Le canal des Sulpiciens," joined the "Lac Saint-Louis" to the "Lac Saint-Pierre" and was never really finished. The eastern one, named "canal Saint Gabriel," linked the "Lac Saint-Pierre" to "la Petite Riviere" and then to the Saint-Lawrence River. Indeed, this first canal was never officially used for transportation but served to bring water to the Sulpician flour mills in Ville-Marie during the 18th century.

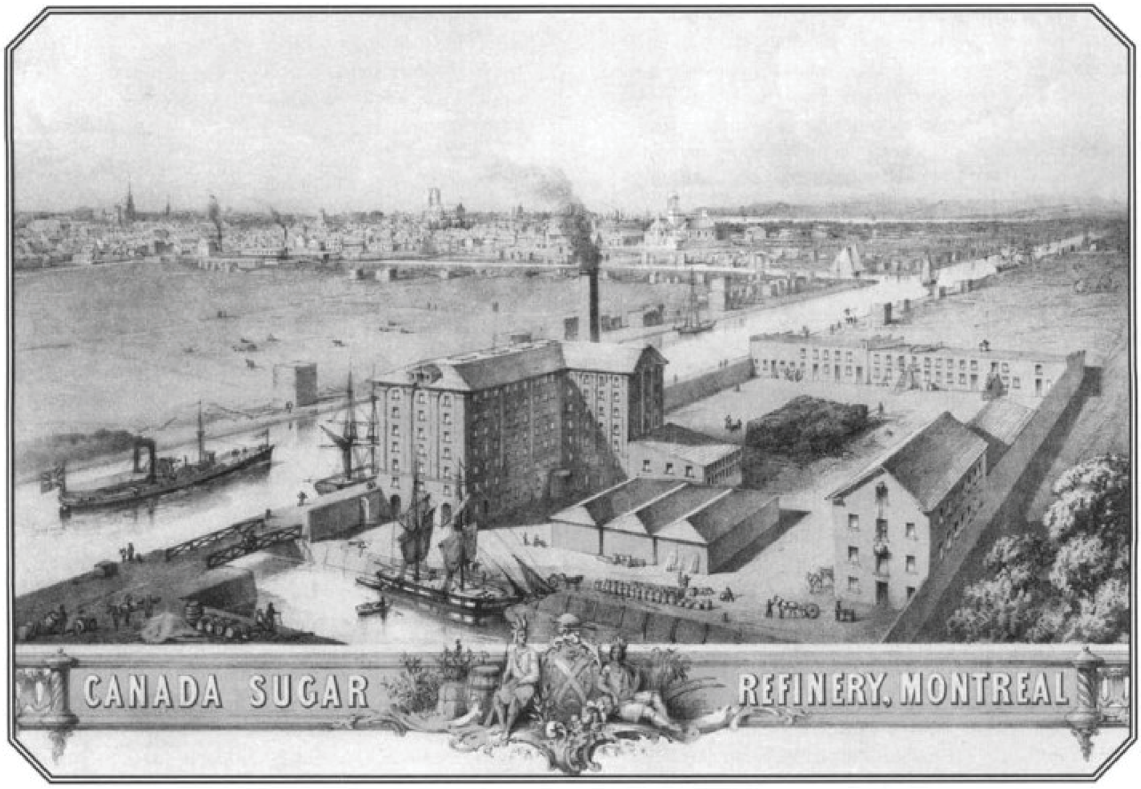
This canal, opened in 1825, linked Montreal to Lake Saint-Louis, crossing the southern portion of the Island of Montreal by way of a lateral waterway. The early Montrealers were faced with the impetuosity of the Lachine Rapids, known as "Sault Saint-Louis," and had been dreaming about the creation of an alternate passage since the 17th century. The canal opened a new era of direct communication by water between Montreal, the Great Lakes, and the interior of the continent to the West (Bélisle 1992, 10).

John Redpath: A Canadian Sugar Empire

Richard Feltoe's 2004 biography, *A Gentleman of Substance: The Life and Legacy of John Redpath (1796-1869),* provides a detailed account of John Redpath's remarkable journey from modest beginnings to becoming one of Canada's wealthiest industrialists. The book not only highlights Redpath's accomplishments in advancing Montreal's economic infrastructure, including his notable contribution to the construction of the Lachine Canal, but also sheds light on his alleged support for the abolitionist movement and his perceived good nature (Zhang 2013, 25). Redpath's sugar company, the Redpath Sugar Refinery, played a significant role in transforming Montreal into an industrial powerhouse. Despite his achievements, it is important to recognize that Redpath lived during a time when slavery was still legal in Canada, and even after its abolition, the consequences of slavery on a global scale were still evident (Zhang 2013, 27).

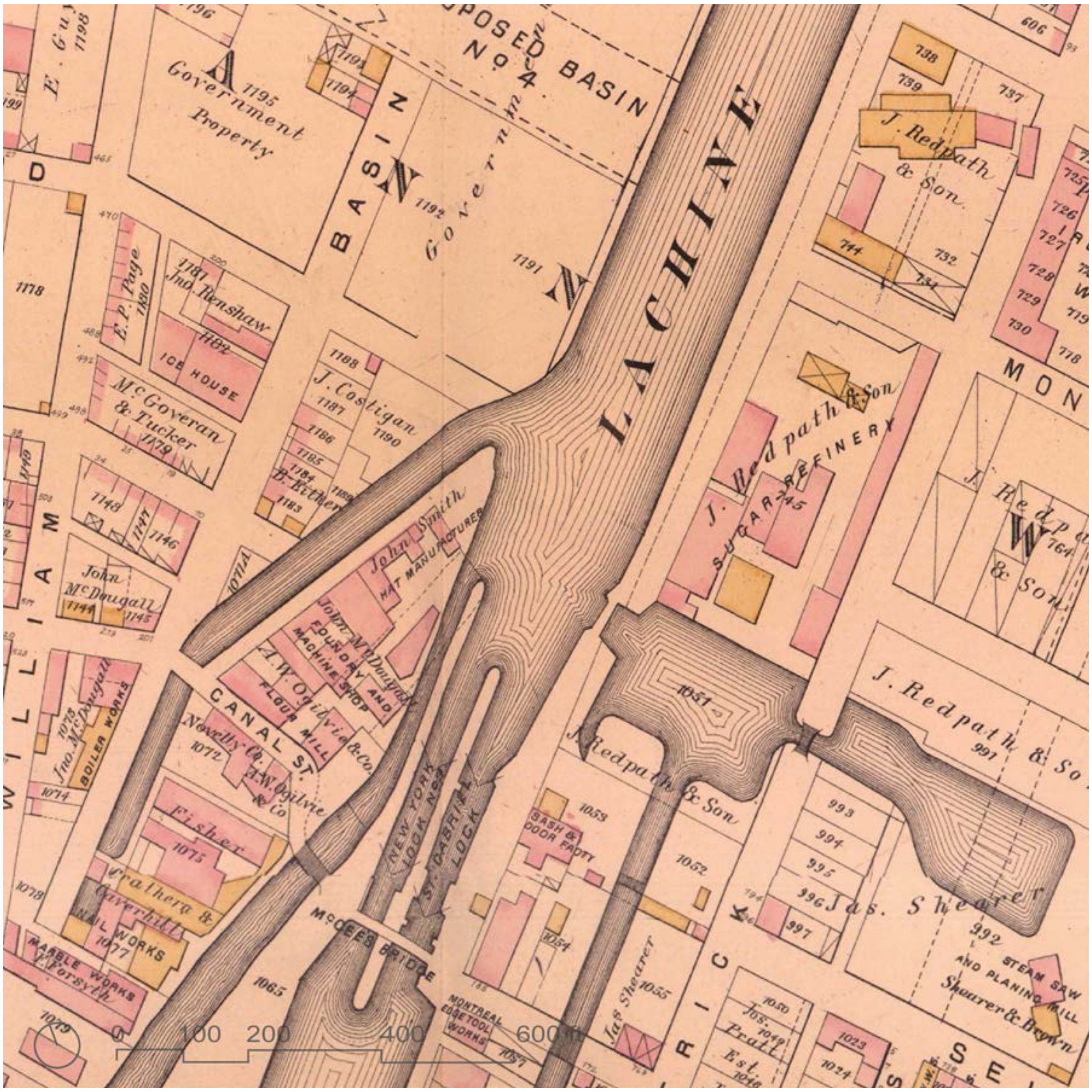
The images associated with the Redpath Sugar Refinery uncover forgotten connections between Redpath and slavery, revealing potential avenues through which he may have profited from the slave trade. The opening of the Lachine Canal not only facilitated commercial growth for Montreal but also contributed to the expansion of the triangular trade and the importation of slaves (Zhang 2013, 28). However, the biography neglects to mention these aspects of Redpath's involvement with slavery. Understanding the significance of Quebec's role in the triangular trade underscores the urgency of constructing the Lachine Canal for economic development in the region. It becomes apparent that Redpath's association with slavery and its legacies played a part in his financial gains (Zhang 2013, 28). The print images associated with the Redpath Sugar Refinery aimed not only to promote and document their commercial endeavors but also to emphasize the importance of Montreal and the St. Lawrence River within the global trade network (Zhang 2013, 28). The river served as a vital conduit for Montreal's prosperity, but its role in the triangular trade further enhanced its significance.

The architectural legacy of the Redpath Sugar Refinery represents more than just a symbol of extraction and impacts of industrialized colonialism. While it stands as a testament



This panoramic view of the Redpath sugar refinery gives a good impression of the site chosen by John Redpath for his new enterprise. In the distance the City of Montreal and the St. Lawrence River can be seen. Artist unknown (Feltoe 1991, 39)

to the industrial revolution in Montreal and Redpath's entrepreneurial success, it also invites critical reflection on the broader implications of extractive industries and their relationship to colonialism. The refinery's architecture serves as a tangible reminder of the exploitative practices and labor conditions that were prevalent during its operation, including the potential connections to slavery. By acknowledging this aspect of its legacy, we can engage in a more nuanced dialogue about the impact of colonialism on both the built environment and society as a whole. It becomes an opportunity to examine how architectural symbols can embody complex narratives of power, exploitation, and resistance, encouraging us to question the structures and systems that have shaped our world.



Selected detail of a historical map showing the site which is the subject of this thesis and the industrial uses of the site. (Hopkins 1879)

This site has a rich history, some of which is not apparent as consequence of colonization. It is an important site for the Indigenous peoples as a location where they lived, cultivated the lands, gathered to trade, and portaged through it to avoid the impassible rapids. It was one of the earliest points of contact between the colonial French and the Indigenous peoples particularly though the fur trade. With the construction of the Lachine Canal, opening a direct navigation route to the Great Lakes and further west, it became the epicenter of the early development of Canadian trade and commerce. Upon the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the canal became canal obsolete and the surrounding area ceased to be a center of industry leading to the current phase of redevelopment and adaptive reuse. The Lachine Canal is now a national park in celebration of its role in the early industry of Canada. The architecture of the area contains many layers, a kind of palimpsest, which reflect this past except of the original Indigenous inhabitants, effectively erasing them in much the same way as other colonial activities marginalized and oppressed them. The layers of this history that are present and heralded as heritage, reflect the extractive legacies of industrialized colonialism and are furthered by the area's continued gentrification. As the area undergoes further transformation there are opportunities for architects to redress this omission and to reveal and reinforce the stories of the many generations of Indigenous peoples on this site, through forms and programs that reflect the significance of this place as part of this layered history.

The methodology of the TRC was to uncover stories of colonial trauma and to reveal the past as a method of healing and reconciliation. The methodology of this thesis looks to history of place in a similar fashion, to reveal and uncover the colonial traumas present in the land. The history discussed in this chapter leads to a reading of site that reveals an alternate story of the Lachine Canal and its industrial environs. The canal is a scar of Canada's colonial legacy; however, the dominant narrative does not reflect the extractive trauma it inflicted. The site was chosen because it is an important origin point where this scar first occurred. As the area undergoes further transformation there are opportunities for architects to collaborate with Indigenous people to tell the stories of the many generations of Indigenous peoples on this site. These stories can be designed through forms and programs that highlight the significance of this place as part of a more complete layered history. This design can uncover invisible stories in this palimpsest by embossing layers that are unseen: the natural watercourses and wetlands that existed before the canal, the Indigenous origin stories of the land, the native flora and fauna, the inhabitation and settlement that existed before European contact, the networks of cross-cultural trade, instances where industry and indigeneity become enmeshed, and the present day existence of the Indigenous communities of Tiohtià:ke.

Chapter 3: Decolonization of Architecture

The traditional Western practice of architecture through its occupation of land, intended permanence, its foundation upon land ownership and uses of its structures operates inherently as a tool for colonization. Architecture by its very nature delineates boundaries of interior and exterior, and has from early settler contexts supported ideas of otherness beyond their walls. Furthermore, the resources and materials used in the construction of architecture reinforce the extractive mechanisms integral to colonial attitudes of expansionist ambitions, and resource exploitation. Architecture and subsequent industry have been mechanism of displacement of Indigenous people and denial of autonomy and sovereignty of their ancestral territory. Decolonization implies a reciprocal response, an undoing of these colonial acts. To some scholars, decolonization necessitates the repatriation of land to Indigenous peoples, and to others it is seen to untether colonial paradigms and promote Indigenous methods and world views. This chapter addresses the way architecture enacts colonial ideologies, and how these differ from Indigenous perspectives and views on property and land. These perspectives position acts of decolonization and the role of reconciliation in relation to one another. This discussion is further explored through how architecture may respond spatially to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Delineating Nation State Capitalism

Indigenous and allied scholars have highlighted that settler-colonialism involves the appropriation of land. They argue that for decolonial efforts to be effective, it is necessary to go beyond cultural recognition and address the issue of Indigenous control over their traditional lands directly (Blackwell and Fortin 2022, 3).

Elder Winnie Pitawanakwat objected to the notion of property: “How can someone own the land?” She eventually asked “Do they think they own the trees too? What about the birds, the animals, the insects? I’ve never really understood how someone can think they own any of it” (Blackwell and Fortin 2022, 2). These questions reflect an Indigenous conception of land that differs from the dominant Western notion of property ownership.

Ownership of land raises questions and challenges the fundamental understanding of Indigenous peoples. It becomes clear how Pitawanakwat’s worldview is deeply ingrained through interconnectedness of all living beings and their relationship to the land (Blackwell and Fortin, 2022, 2).

In Indigenous conceptions of land, there is a recognition of the land’s intrinsic value and the responsibility to care for and live in harmony with it. Rather than viewing the land as a resource to be exploited or commodified, Indigenous cultures often emphasize the idea of stewardship and the intergenerational connection to the land and waters.

The Anishinaabe people recognize water as a vital source of life, considering it the lifeblood of mother nature. Water is seen as a vessel of ancestral knowledge and a reflection of life itself. These principles and beliefs are encapsulated in Anishinaabe water law which emphasizes the sacredness of water and the responsibility to preserve, protect, and respect all forms of water (Craft 2014, 27).

In contrast, Western society tends to view water as a commodity that can be bought, sold, controlled, and even polluted. The Anishinaabe people, however, perceive water as a living entity that sustains life and possesses healing properties. Women, in particular, are regarded as keepers of the waters because they carry babies in water, symbolizing the deep connection between water and life (Chiblow 2020).

This perspective contrasts with the Western concept of property ownership, which often focuses on individual rights, exclusionary boundaries, and economic exploitation. Indigenous conceptions of land are rooted in a collective understanding of shared responsibilities and relationships with the natural world (Blackwell and Fortin, 2022, 2).

The colonial act of delineation and outlining abstracted Western concepts of property onto land as highlighted by Blackwell and Fortin is a pervasive process found in various fields such as surveying, urban planning, and architecture. It involves drawing lines and boundaries to demarcate and compartmentalize land, creating divisions and prescribed spaces. “Delineation is seen at once as the ongoing expropriation of land inhabited by Indigenous people by settlers and the gradual construction of the spaces of a capitalist nation-state” (Blackwell and Fortin, 2022, 2).

Colonizers often used mapping and surveying techniques to assert control over newly acquired territories by establishing ownership, exploiting resources, and exercising political control. This process played a fundamental role in the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples, as their traditional territories were partitioned and redefined to suit the colonizers’ interests.

Colonial delineation also imposed Eurocentric ideologies and systems of land tenure, eroding Indigenous concepts of land stewardship, communal ownership, and interconnectedness with the environment causing cultural and ecological dislocation to Indigenous people (Blackwell and Fortin, 2022, 2).

Moreover, the act of delineation in colonization perpetuated power imbalances and hierarchical structures. This spatial segregation served as a tool for controlling and suppressing Indigenous populations, limiting their mobility, and infringing upon their autonomy and self-governance.

The consequences of this process are still evident today, as Indigenous peoples continue to face the deep-rooted impacts of colonization on their lands, resources, and cultural practices.

Ground and Page vs. Land and Story: The Embedded Histories in the Palimpsest of Place

Lessons found within the land and theories of history embedded in the ground can be found in both Western and Indigenous paradigms, but differ based on their respective ways of knowing. Through a Western perspective held by British social anthropologist Tim Ingold, the ground and the page are the deep surfaces of our cities in which we collectively we store and inscribe meaning. In his essay entitled Surfaces Textures, Ingold refers to these surfaces textures as “a palimpsest” though which he asks the following: “what if surfaces are the real sites for the generation of meaning?” (Ingold 2018, 137). Ingold continues this inquiry through a discussion of two types of surfaces we encounter daily: the ground and the page. For Ingold both the ground and page act as kinds of live documents that record the history of a given place, a palimpsest that is created by the collective daily engagement with the ground and its surfaces. The traces of quotidian activity become imbedded in the deep surfaces of the earth and our urban environments. Ingold argues these kinds of surfaces have analogous properties and claims that as iterations of how one comes to understand these surfaces have changed over time, so too have our relationships to them.

In as much as these deep surfaces of the ground have written in them a literary inhabitation of place that embed relationships to the land, so too do the pages of documents that decree treaties, laws, statutes, and deeds; they hold the power to write relationships to the land. These pages are also a kind of palimpsest, they are documents that have been rewritten and redacted over hundreds of years, holding remnants of previous versions that contain commanding clauses of long held ideologies of supremacy. One such document that has affected Indigenous relationship to their land is the Indian Act. The Indian Act is a federal statute from early post confederation that governs Indigenous relations, their bands, reserves, and Indian status (The Canadian Encyclopedia 2020). One of the most deeply destructive policies of the Indian Act was the establishment of the Indian Residential School System.

This deeply colonialist statute persists to this day; it is a remnant of Canadian government's ambition to assimilate and arguably erase Indigenous people. There is an analogy between Ingold's ground and page, the palimpsest of our urban environment, and the Indian Act, they both have been written, re-written, redacted, erased and re-inscribed. They have drawn deep lines that have severed links to the inhabitation of many “on with or through the earth” (Ingold 2018, 138).

These surfaces on the ground contain a literary inhabitation of place, imbedding relationships to the land. Similarly, the pages of treaties, laws, statutes and deeds powerfully write relationships to the land.

Conversely, Indigenous stories of the land, archived as ancestral knowledge are light on the land, and reverberate in the oral tradition, rather than being inscribed in parchment.

The architectural response can offer a counter point to the existing structures which represent the colonialization of a site, and propose new layers to the palimpsest grounded in oral tradition to redress the erasure of the earlier stories of place.

Non-Extractive Architecture

In a position that seeks to question how architecture may undo the acts of colonialism, and its attitudes towards land, resources, materials and people, architectural theorist Mark Wigley argues for a paradigm shift in architecture to reverse its extractive impact. He brings forth an idea of a non-extractive architecture. Wigley criticizes architecture for reinforcing authority and maintaining privilege while concealing the environmental and social costs of its construction. He suggests that buildings are not static but rather mining equipment actively consuming resources (Wigley 2021, 47). This position understands how architecture operates in a vastly extractive system, not only concerning materials and resources, but also labor, people and even community consultation. “What if the seemingly sensitive gesture of carefully listening to the client or community is understood as a form of extraction, a form of taking that benefits the designer more than the people being listened to?” (Wigley 2021, 55).

Decolonization is Not a Metaphor: Adopting an Ethic of Incommensurability

For Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, decolonization can only take one form: the repatriation of Indigenous lands. Decolonization is not a metaphor for other things. Tuck and Yang criticize how the discourse surrounding decolonization that decenters settler perspectives within education, social justice, or critical methodologies, as these are incommensurable with the objectives of decolonization. “The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or ‘settler moves to innocence’, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity” (Tuck and Yang 2012, 1). In the face of these positions that shift decolonization off its course, Tuck and Yang propose “an ethic of incommensurability” restricting the use of the word “decolonization” for purposes of repatriation. Through this lens, the architecture may serve ambitions of decolonization through land ownership and usage. A decolonized architecture would be sited on land returned to Indigenous people, and the usage may be for reconciliation or social justice purposes, distinct from decolonization, yet sovereign and self-determined.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2008 to address the harmful legacy of the Indian Residential School system and promote healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The TRC released a report in 2015.

In its introduction the Commission states the following:

> To the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. We are not there yet. The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is not a mutually respectful one. But, we believe we can get there, and we believe we can maintain it. Our ambition is to show how we can do that. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015, 6)

The final report included 94 Calls to Action aimed at various sectors of Canadian society, including government, education, health, justice, and media, among others. These Calls to Action serve as a road map for addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and working towards reconciliation.

The recommendations and Calls to Action cover a wide range of issues and seek to address the historical and contemporary injustices faced by Indigenous peoples. Some key areas of focus include education, child welfare, health and healing, justice and reconciliation, and Indigenous rights and self-determination. The Calls to Action are intended to be comprehensive and transformative, requiring sustained commitment and collaboration from all levels of government, organizations, and individuals to achieve meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The TRC conducted hearings and consultations across Canada, engaging with thousands of residential school survivors, their families, and communities, and representatives of Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Given the efforts of the TRC to be comprehensive in its consultations, there is significant public support for many of its recommendations. Though this process of consultation was long arduous and difficult in uncovering and sharing painful truths and stories of survival, this complicated and sensitive process is part of the ongoing political conversation in Canada.

Through a study of these Calls to Action, there are key recommendations that elicit an architectural response. They include the following:

> 20. In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.
>
> 21. We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.
>
> 68. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, and the Canadian Museums Association to mark the 150th anniversary of Canadian
>
> Confederation in 2017 by establishing a dedicated national funding program for commemoration projects on the theme of reconciliation.
>
> 79. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for
>
> Canadian heritage and commemoration. This would include, but not be limited to:
>
> i. Amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.
>
> ii. Revising the policies, criteria, and practices of the National Program of Historical Commemoration to integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada's national heritage and history. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015)

The calls for action above align with the two-fold mandate of the TRC: uncovering the truths of colonial impacts (amending historic sites and monuments, historical commemoration of

Indigenous history) and reconciliation though addressing health and healing needs. The TRC report and the process that led to it merit an architectural response in and of themselves. How can an architecture further support the process of sharing, maintaining, and amplifying the stories of Indigenous people?

Acknowledgement of White Settler Perspective

In addressing the harms caused by colonization, we need to examine how to challenge and dismantle the narratives and structures that have normalized colonial power dynamics. To address this, it is essential to engage in a genuine relationship with Indigenous communities, who have been at the forefront of decolonizing thinking. At the same time, we must acknowledge our responsibility to recognize and honour the influence of Indigenous scholars, architects, and activists without appropriating their knowledge for our own benefit (Swiftwolfe 2019, 2). By drawing inspiration and guidance from their work, we can continue our own journey of decolonization while understanding the limitations of our own perspectives.

As a descendant of white settlers intending to engage in projects of decolonization of architecture, I must recognize that my ancestors migrated to Canada, and I continue to benefit from ongoing colonialism. This acknowledgment places a responsibility on me to approach my role with humility and an awareness of the privileges I possess.

In my capacity as a designer, I can contribute to decolonization efforts by becoming an ally and co-resistor. This entails actively supporting the voices of Indigenous communities. Solidarity requires standing alongside Indigenous peoples in their struggles for self-determination and the repatriation of their land (Swiftwolfe 2019, 2). I understand that the importance of Indigenous authorship in architecture cannot be understated. Indigenous communities have their own rich architectural traditions, knowledge systems, and ways of understanding space. It is crucial to recognize that their contributions and perspectives must be given their appropriate place.

In the process of decolonizing architecture, representation plays a pivotal role. Indigenous architects should be given prominence, as they possess firsthand experiences, cultural understanding, and a deep connection to the land that settlers lack. My role involves embracing solidarity, recognizing Indigenous authorship, and supports Indigenous voices. I understand the limitations of my position and privilege, and I am committed to collaborating with and supporting Indigenous architects. Their invaluable knowledge and perspectives are essential for meaningful steps towards decolonization, and to allow the reclamation of Indigenous spaces and fostering self-determination. I have to acknowledge my authorship of the proposals in this thesis are without the benefit of these important voices.

An implicit aspect of decolonization is restoration of ancestral lands for Indigenous use, not in the sense of individual property ownership, but rather seeing land as interconnected to community, collective use, and the environment. These concepts coupled with programs identified in the TRC inform both a design intention, and responsible design methodology. The colonial delineation of property needs to be visually and functionally de-emphasized in favor of an architecture which spatially blurs the notions of boundaries across a site, sees land more expansively, and blurs notions of past to present over future generations. To address more responsibly the architectural programs that are identified in the interpretation of the TRC recommendations, Indigenous perspectives are needed to design the architecture more meaningfully. A central tenet of the TRC was to do extensive listening to Indigenous voices and stories of survival. Holding space to hear these stories reiterates the need to consult Indigenous perspectives in the development of the design methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The methodology of this thesis explores a number of approaches to architectural design by incorporating forms of Indigenous knowledge, with the aim of developing an architecture of reconciliation. It seeks to explore and adopt various forms of Indigenous knowledge as a means to inform and shape the architectural process. Three significant perspectives that are central to this methodology are Indigenous Storywork, Two Eyed Seeing, and a Responsibility to the Seventh Generation. Some case studies of work by Indigenous architects are also considered, The limitations of community consultation within the scope of this thesis are also discussed.

Indigenous Storywork is a key aspect of the methodology, highlighting the importance of storytelling and narrative in Indigenous cultures. Stories hold significant cultural, historical, and spiritual meanings for Indigenous communities, and integrating this storytelling tradition into architectural design helps to capture the essence and identity of the community. By incorporating Indigenous narratives and collective memories into the design process, architecture becomes a medium for preserving and honoring Indigenous heritage.

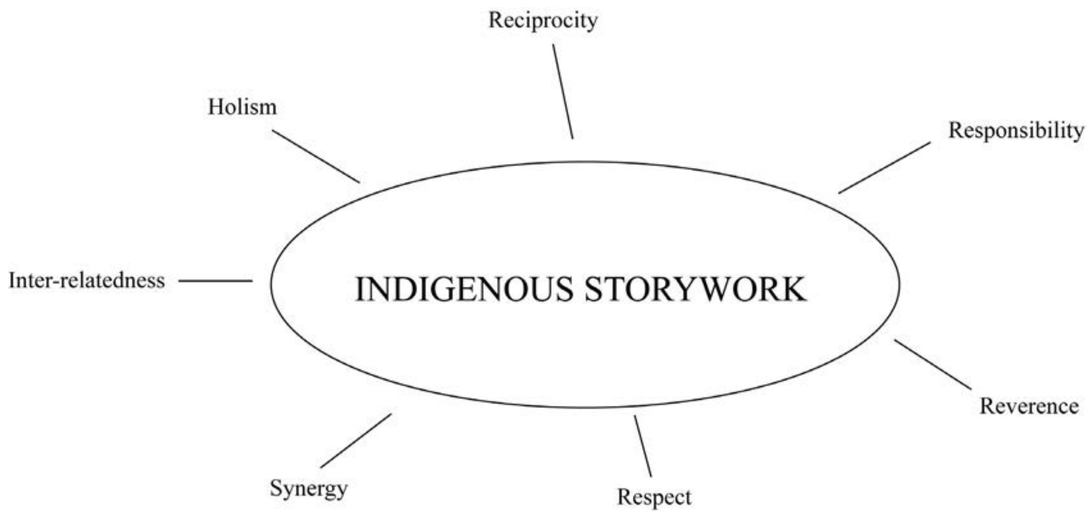
Two Eyed Seeing is an approach that emphasizes the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems with Western knowledge systems (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall 2012, 335). It encourages the simultaneous use of both perspectives to gain a more holistic understanding of the built environment and its impact on communities. By combining Indigenous ways of knowing with conventional architectural practices, Two Eyed Seeing offers a unique lens through which to approach the design process.

A Responsibility to the Seventh Generation refers to the principle of considering the long-term consequences of design decisions and their impact on future generations. Indigenous communities have a strong sense of intergenerational responsibility and understand the importance of sustainable and resilient design practices. This concept urges architects to go beyond immediate needs and think about how their designs can benefit and support the well-being of communities for generations to come.

Together, these perspectives provide a framework for creating an architecture of reconciliation that acknowledges and respects Indigenous cultures, values, and aspirations. By embracing Indigenous knowledge systems, the ways in which Indigenous storytelling is passed on, and a perspective reflects upon sustainability through intergenerational implications, architects can contribute to the empowerment and self-determination of Indigenous communities. It is crucial to recognize that while these concepts guide the methodology, the ultimate goal is to amplify the work of Indigenous architects and communities as their voices, perspectives, input and expertise surpass any contribution from that of a settler.

Indigenous Storywork – Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem

Indigenous scholar Jo-ann Archibald coined the term "Indigenous Storywork" based on her research with Coast Salish/Sto:lo Elders in British Columbia (Archibald 2019, 4). Through her work, Archibald outlines how Indigenous



Seven Principles of Indigenous Storywork

Storywork is not only a research methodology but also a source of education and emotional healing. It allows for the exploration of cultural principles that have withstood colonization, facilitating transformative action and the examination of the political struggles inherent in Western and Indigenous education.

Across many Indigenous communities, knowledge is often held though oral traditions, and these sources of Indigenous knowledge are maintained through storytelling (Archibald 2008, 83).

Indigenous Storywork refers to a methodology and practice employed by Indigenous communities to reclaim, preserve, and share their stories, knowledge, histories, and cultural traditions, often in collaboration with community members, elders, and knowledge keepers. The Seven Principles of

Indigenous Storywork are respect, responsibility, reverence and reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness and synergy.

Indigenous Storywork in many kinds of stories with various degrees of access, “These types of stories can vary from the sacred to the historical, from cultural traditions to personal life experiences and testimonials. Some stories are just for fun, while others have powerful teachings” (Archibald 2008, 83). Indigenous Storywork emphasizes the need for relationships, cultural protocols, and the honoring of Indigenous knowledge. The process of storywork involves trust, respect, and a gradual accumulation of knowledge, in contrast to the consumption-based nature of our current society.

Storywork offers a lens through which the thesis project can further develop its programmatic intentions and conceptual design framework. By adopting Indigenous Storywork as a research methodology, the project aims to create buildings and infrastructure that sustain and honor oral traditions and stories. This methodology also fosters relationship building, consultation, and reciprocity, which are crucial in designing architecture of reconciliation.

An Indigenous philosophical concept of Holism, sometimes symbolized by the medicine wheel, and sometimes the scared circle of life, refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical realms to form a healthy person (Archibald 2008, 11).

> The image of the circle is used in many First Nations peoples to symbolize wholeness, completeness, and ultimately wellness. The never-ending circle also forms concentric circles to know both the synergistic influence of and our responsibility to the generations yet to come. (Archibald 2008, 11)

The contexts in which these stories are told is partly where Indigenous storywork informs the architectural response and method of thesis. The infrastructure and spaces where these stories may be told informs the programmatic intentions of the design. I explore how architecture may support the gradients of access to these stories, providing spaces of intimacy, domesticity, and family, while supporting spaces of larger gathering in space of ceremony, as well as for stories to be shared with community, the general public and a platform to amplify these stories to the nation as a whole.

Overall, Indigenous storywork serves as a powerful tool for reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting cultural resilience, self-determination, and community well-being. It invites individuals to become “story ready” by valuing learning relationships and approaching the process with a good heart and mind.

Two Eyed Seeing: Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall

Two Eyed Seeing is a way of learning and understanding developed by Mi’kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall along with Dr. Cheryl Bartlett. At its foundation is the concept of learning to see with one eye Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge and with the other eye using the strength of Western knowledge as a way of knowing to the benefit of all endeavours. Bringing two perspectives allows for multiple views and knowledge to come forward to ensure more beneficial outcomes. Understanding Two Eyed Seeing means first understanding that Indigenous ways of knowing are different from the Western basis of knowledge. This is outlined in Indigenous research methodologies. The major difference in Indigenous way of knowing from Western ways of knowing is the Indigenous belief that knowledge is something that is gained, not owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the belief that knowledge is relational, knowledge is shared with all of creation, however Elder Murdena is passionately firm in saying that Indigenous knowledge “was never meant to be static and stay in the past; rather, it must be brought into the present so that everything becomes meaningful in our lives and in our communities” (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, 2012, 336). It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with plants with the earth that we share this knowledge (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall 2012, 336). The original authors are clear the Indigenous was of knowing should not be merged with Western way of knowing. Two Eyed Seeing fully accepts the paradigm and promotes the benefits and use of both (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall 2012, 334).

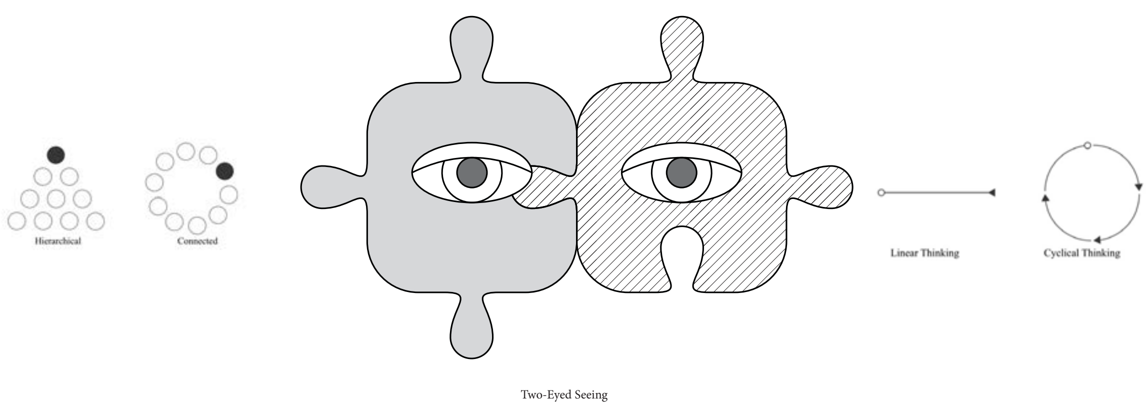


Diagram of Two Eyed Seeing - Learning to see the value of both Western and Indigenous perspectives.

Adopting Two Eyed Seeing into the design methodology of this thesis allows for both Western and Indigenous perspectives to guide design, embrace cross cultural collaboration, and acknowledge there a need to integrate both distinct world views especially in goals of reconciliation. This guiding principle makes way for seeing the value of both Western and Indigenous perspectives in an inclusive way, and positions this thesis in part as a record of my own co-learning journey, documenting how my own position and perspectives shift through this study. Two Eyed Seeing as a guiding principle affords a collaboration with Indigenous ways of knowing and bridges them with my own Western perspectives. Co-learning through a guiding principle of Two Eyed Seeing is an ongoing process, and the learning to find best practices from either perspective is a continual acknowledgement of similarities and differences. Two Eyed Seeing makes spaces for a dialog in the stories that weave back and forth between our worldviews to shape design in an architecture of reconciliation.

Responsibility for the Seventh Generation

The concept of the Responsibility for Seventh Generations is rooted in Indigenous wisdom and worldview, particularly among the Haudenosaunee. It recognizes the interconnectedness of all beings and emphasizes the need for decision-making and actions to consider the long-term impact on future generations (Clarkson 1992, 55). The responsibility is to ensure the well-being and sustainability of the Earth and its resources for at least seven generations to come.

When applied architecturally, the Responsibility for the Seventh Generation calls for and approach to design

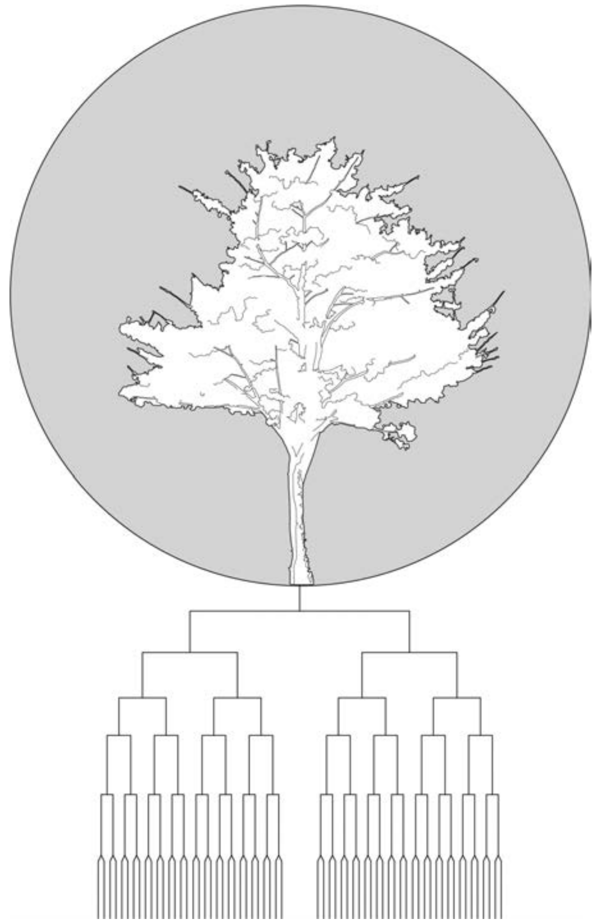


Diagram of the Responsibility for the Seventh Generation

and construction of built environments that engages with sustainability on all levels. It challenges architects to consider the long-term consequences of their decisions and to prioritize the well-being of both present and future generations. Incorporating environmentally friendly and energy-efficient design principles to minimize the deterioration of our environment and reduce resource consumption. This can involve using renewable materials, optimizing energy efficiency, implementing green building practices, and designing for resilience to climate change.

Within the scope of this thesis, the Responsibility for the Seventh Generation is considered though a design methodology that grapples with this extended time frame, and contemplates how design can be shaped and evolved through this broader understanding of time. Not only does this perspective speak to sustainability in an ecological sense but speaks to how actions can be considered with respect to materials as they this shift across the site through time. The projected lifespan of a building common to architectural practice today does not anticipate the time frame of seven generations, nor does it consider how it may evolve through that longer cycle. This more expansive view of time and intergenerational sensitivity play important roles in the design methodology of this thesis.

Ultimately, applying the Responsibility for the Seventh Generation requires a shift towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and culturally sensitive approach to design. It encourages us to consider the social, environmental, and cultural impacts of their work, and to prioritize the well-being of current and future generations within the larger context of Indigenous values and perspectives.

Linda Clarkson et al. in their report on the sustainability of Indigenous communities offer specific recommendations to the survival and sustainability of the health of the urbanized Indigenous community: healing circles, sweat lodges and access to land.

> One of the most ancient and effective methods that our people used to heal themselves was through conversation. While dialogue among our people took many forms, there were specific types of structures that were used and are still use today to promote healing in individuals and in groups.
>
> (Clarkson 1992, 51)

The healing circle today is powerful tool for healing because, as Indigenous people we have many common experiences that have caused much pain in our lives, the circle presents an opportunity to release this pain and to support each other through it" (Clarkson 1992, 51).

The sweat lodge is typically a dome like structure heated with hot stones or wood burning fires that serve as spaces to heal promote physical, spiritual and emotional health common to many Indigenous communities. These spaces serve to facilitate the ceremony as part of this form of Indigenous healing. For Indigenous peoples, the sweat lodge has spiritual, cultural and practical purposes. It is a place to connect with the Creator and to nature, and restore order and balance in life. The sweat lodge is also a place to connect with Indigenous heritage and culture. Until 1951, the Indian Act forbade the use of the sweat lodge in Canada (Gadacz 2006).

Access to land is essential for Indigenous health and healing, as it forms the core of Indigenous identity and provides a source of strength (Clarkson 1992, 55). When Indigenous people are disconnected from the land, their healing process is hindered. Those residing in urban areas face particular challenges in maintaining this connection. To maintain sustainable lifestyles, Indigenous communities require access to land for permanent residential communities, healing lodges, and cultural camps. These spaces would serve as healing centers, offering refuge from racism, exploitation, violence, and other challenges (Clarkson, 1992, 55). They would enable individuals to live according to traditional teachings and work towards self-sufficiency. Healing lodges and cultural camps could also support

Rendering of the The Indigenous Peoples Space in Ottawa (Dalla Costa 2020)

affiliated urban-based projects and services, serving as valuable resources.

Case Studies: Indigenous Architects in Canada

The Indigenous Peoples Space

Wanda Dalla Costa presents projects that challenge conventional notions of Indigeneity and emphasize an engagement with the future rather than focusing solely on the past. These projects involve deep work and require a collaborative approach, inviting the participation of citizen experts and knowledge brokers. Dalla Costa proposes a seven-part metric for Indigenous architecture which includes elements such as clarity about its genealogy, a link to Indigenous archetypes or narratives, an engaged response to defined Indigenous needs, and a design that reflects the specific place-based narrative of Indigenous peoples. It aims to go beyond superficial understandings and applications by integrating cultural values, principles, and knowledge systems into built form.

Dalla Costa stresses the importance of moving away from an architecture of convenience that suppresses Indigenous perspectives and instead embracing an Indigenous architecture that is value-driven, hyper-local, and responsive to the complex relationships and belief systems tied to the land, the Creator, and community. The projects discussed in her essay exemplify this approach, seeking to increase the visibility of previously invisible groups and preserve the original meanings and associations associated with Indigenous architectural forms.

The Indigenous Peoples Space design is a result of a proposal submitted by three Indigenous architects in response to a call for proposals by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). The project aimed to create an office building for the AFN, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis National Council, fostering relationships between the Canadian federal government and Indigenous groups. The design team, consisting of Eladia Smoke, David Fortin, and Winnie Pitawanakwat, incorporated Indigenous narratives and symbols into the design, such as the wigwam, feathers, jingle dress, snowshoes, and blanket gifting. The building was intended to be inclusive to all Indigenous peoples, with features like an Indigenous garden, a sacred fire, and a soup kitchen.

The design process involved an intergenerational team structure that reflected Indigenous sociocultural values. The team recognized the territory as the homeland of the Algonquin peoples and honored their histories and traditional forms, such as the wigwam. The design proposal included a Nation-to-Nation axis, symbolized by a walkway connecting the main Parliament building to the Indigenous Peoples Space. The outdoor spaces of the building were designated for gatherings and connecting with nature.

Overall, the Indigenous Peoples Space design aimed to provide a home for Indigenous governance while recognizing the equal relationship between the Canadian and Indigenous governments. The design incorporated local Indigenous connections to the land and emphasized inclusivity, cultural symbolism, and the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and values.

The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre

The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at the University of British Columbia campus serves as a space for reimagining the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadian society, “promoting dialogue among community members and scholars, and a powerful recognition of Indigenous culture and history in the heart of the campus” (Formline Architecture and Urbanism 2021). The facility consists of existing library basement and new addition above, that looks onto the adjacent plaza. The design aims to incorporate “community engagement, emerging technologies, and collaborative approaches” to foster informed dialogue and transparent information practices (Formline Architecture and Urbanism 2021). It aims to create a model for information stewardship, particularly concerning collections that record of traumatic events (Formline Architecture and Urbanism 2021). The design of the building reflects the reconciliation process,

Photograph of The Indian Residential School and Dialogue Center by Formline Architects + Urbanism. The programming of the building aims to be a place where dialogue and information stewardship from residential schools can occur, while the architecture aims to capture the Indigenous spirit with no specific reference to a particular nation (Latreille 2021).

emphasizing the need to acknowledge past traumas and divides in order to work towards healing. The architecture “captures the Indigenous spirit” without representing any specific Nation, incorporating memory, symbolism, and the diversity of Indigenous People (Formline Architecture and Urbanism 2021).

Makoonsag Intergenerational Childrens Center: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Makoonsag is an intergenerational learning center designed by Prairie Architects, and is an aboriginal based daycare in the North end of Winnipeg that is affiliated with a nearby adult education center, Urban Circle Training Center. The childcare at Makoonsag is intended to be for the children of those who are working or studying at the education center. This facility helps keep childcare close to the parents. Makoonsag was the vision of Elder Stella Blackbird who saw an opportunity for intergenerational activities (Government of Canada 2014). Elder Blackbird wanted children to be near the parents of the community, and return intergenerational connections, that were lost through colonial impacts, especially residential schools. Makoonsag aims to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in every part of daily activities, though rituals of smudging, learning their language drumming and singing. The curriculum is grounded in Indigenous teachings and traditions and creates a positive intergenerational learning environment for the larger community, involving Elders, parents, families and youth. The vision of this center was to have children grow up from their infancy knowing who they are and be proud of their heritage (Government of Canada 2014).

Each case study entails different elements and objectives. There are, however, elements of commonality which I reflect in my design including integration of cultural values, principles and knowledge systems into the built form, the importance of collaboration in the development of the design, and the imagining of spaces for intergenerational activities.

Extractive Stance in Regarding a Work of Fictional Architecture

Although intended to work towards decolonization and reconciliation, this thesis ultimately reflects a fictional piece of architecture that will not serve Indigenous communities.

Had I consulted communities for the work of this thesis, they inevitably would not benefit from this theoretical work. I acknowledge the limitations of research without significant consultation to inform an in depth and complete architectural response to the complex and layered dynamics of designing for Indigenous communities. In place of undertaking my own community consultation and relationship building, I have reviewed secondary sources that have engaged in extensive community consultation and relationality. Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and the Public Inquiry Between Indigenous People and Public Services in Quebec, act in a way as a proxy for some aspects of the community consultation within this thesis.

In part these intentions aim to be non-extractive. Throughout the research of this thesis, I have come to understand that research concerning Indigenous communities has a long history of being conducted without a deeper connection to the community. The research was often done on these communities, rather than for and with them. The findings would rarely, if at all, provide benefit to the communities being studied. This is not what this thesis aims to reinforce.

I have relied upon information gained through secondary sources. Although I recognize this as a limitation to this research, especially in coming to understand the profound necessity of relationality and relationship building in all Indigenous research paradigms, the research contained within this thesis serves as a checkpoint along a continued pursuit of Indigenous studies.

This site section tells the story of decolonization over seven generations. Each generation engages in Storywork, essential to healing the traumas discovered through the TRC. The architectures tell a deeper story of place that recalls the impacts of industrialized colonialism found ever-present in this site. In this image, histories of colonial violence are overlaid as a narrative embedded in the palimpsest of the land. A depiction in the sky hints to the falling of sky woman, cuing the origin story of Turtle Island. The air too holds history of colonial violence, deepened by the onset of the Anthropocene. What can be done of this incommensurable era? And how might architecture reconcile this trauma? The architecture of this story builds a system of spaces and programs where Indigenous stories can be uncovered, and shared. Through this Storywork the interconnectedness of the land, water, people and environment can begin to be reconciled.

Chapter 5: Design

The design work takes the form of a story that imagines the possibilities for architecture to promote reconciliation realized over seven generations. Each Generation reflects a chapter in the broader history of this place, and builds spaces to tell the story of healing, each providing a lesson or role in a trajectory towards decolonization. The thesis primarily focuses on the first two.

Site Selection

The TRC report calls for the integration of Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada's National heritage and history. An architecture of reconciliation ought to be positioned in a site where a part of Indigenous history needs to be uncovered, made visible, and where colonial impacts need to be reckoned with. Furthermore, the site ought to be in a place of prominence that holds symbolic cultural importance where this uncovered story can be told.

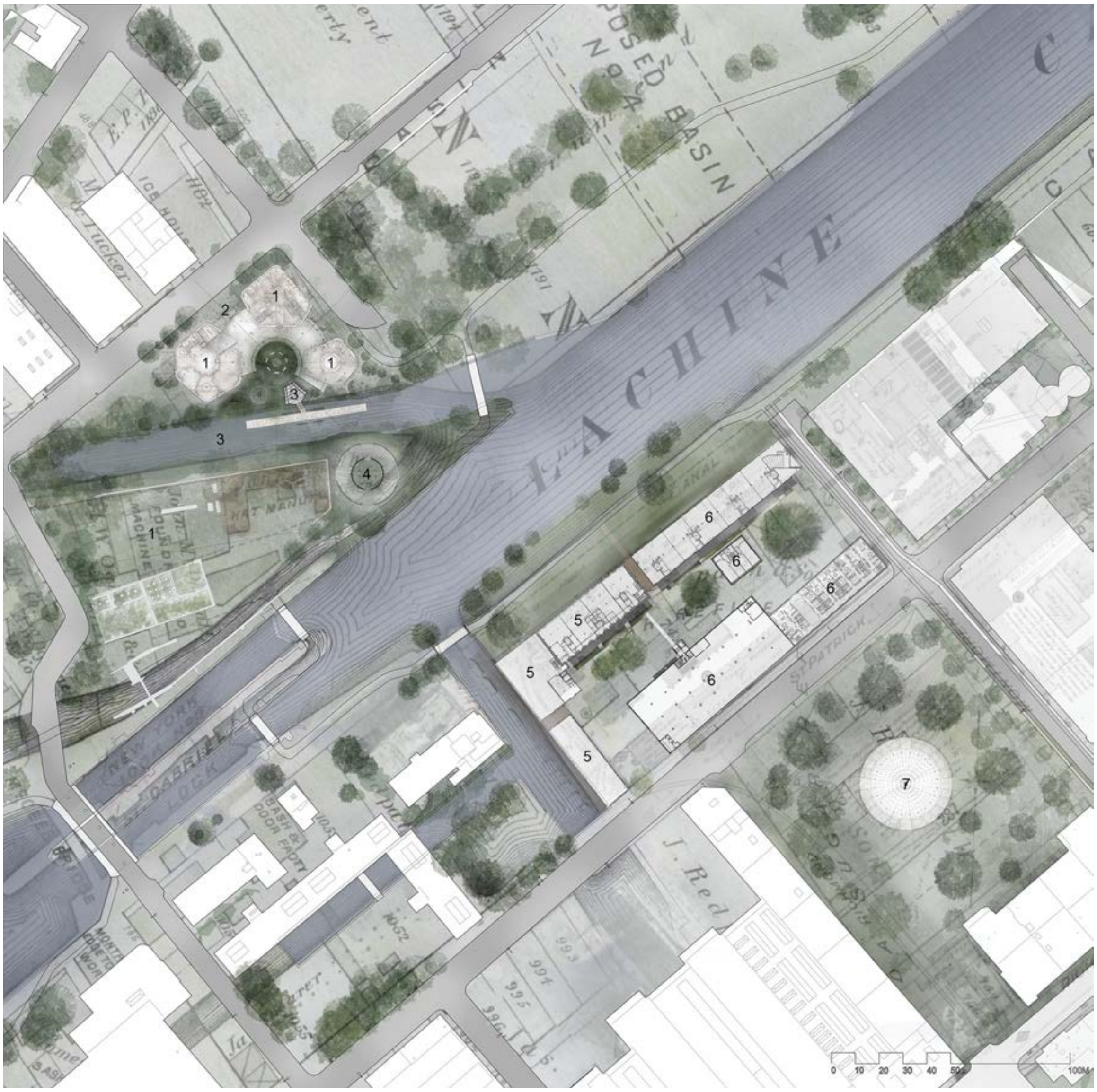
The site chosen holds a significant place in the Indigenous history of Tiontia:ke, though this story is currently invisible, overshadowed by the dominant narrative of place as the cradle of industrialization and trade in Canada.

Once a network of rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands, navigable only though the ancestral knowledge and experience of an Iroquois guide, these waterways eventually became the Lachine Canal, the fulfillment of the settlers' long held ambition to overcome, conquer and control.

The constructed waterway not only was a colonial act of industrializing a landscape, but its bypassing of the rapids undermined the significance of these rapids to be a place of meeting to the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe nations. As outlined in chapter 2, the importance of the area in the Hochelaga Archipelago is well documented. This was the first stopping place, where boats and rivers meet. It is where the French colonialists would first settle and engage with first nations. This is a site of treaties and exchange, particularly though the fur trade of the 1600s.

Furthermore, the disregard of First Nations represented by the construction of the Lachine Canal merely foreshadowed the repetition of the same lack of consideration to the interests of Kanien’kehá:ka in the construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway which replaced the Lachine Canal as the industrial trade route to the Great Lakes. The construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway expropriated 1,262 acres of land and effectively cut off the community’s access to

Aerial view of the site circa 1927 with an overlay drawing delineating the site of the thesis design (View of Montreal and the Lachine Canal 1927).



Site plan showing the seven generations in The Story of Decolonization: 1. The First Generation: Community and Health Care; 2. The Second Generation: The Story of Housing; 3. The Third Generation: Urban Wetland; 4. The Fourth Generation: Healing Though Story; 5. The Fifth Generation: Metalshop and Makers Space; 6. The Sixth Generation: Art Gallery and Artists Residence; 7. The Seventh Generation: Powwow Arbour.

the river (Phillips 2000, 6). The site chosen therefore has symbolic importance to the continued imbalance in settler Indigenous relations to land and water.

The site is on the northwestern side of the Lachine Canal and Saint Gabriel Locks, with its southern boundary formed by the water's edge. It was once the location of a variety of industries. These include the Caledonian Ironworks factory, the Ogilvie four mills, coal and lumber merchants and a hat manufacturer. The site is directly opposite and across a prominent symbol of colonialism, the Redpath Sugar Refinery, whose founder, and proprietor John Redpath oversaw the canal's construction.

The primary site of the first two chapters of the design is on the shores of what is now designated as an archaeological park in view of its industrial heritage. These stories aim to further convey the Indigenous significance of this place.

The design intention is to create a story in counterpoint to the legacies of colonialism that this site represents, and the chapters of the design unfold to reoccupy the Redpath Sugar Refinery in reclamation of a once extractive force on the canal.

The architectural response is grounded in programs identified in the Calls to Action from the TRC. These programs are reinforced by the findings and Calls to Action in the Public Inquiry Commission of Relations between Indigenous People and Public Services in Quebec which recognized that connecting Native Friendship Centers and clinics resulted in greater engagement and trust in Western medical services, particularly at the Clinic Minowé in Val d'or (CERP2019, 387). Programs intend to be responses to these identified needs, while also responding and reinterpreted former uses of these locations as an intention of further revealing the embedded stories of place found in the site. The programs address the calls for access to health care and Indigenous healing centers, and affordable housing for the urban Indigenous people.

The site is located at the nexus of three former industrial neighborhoods that are being gentrified with higher density

The First and Second Generations: The intergenerational co-housing sits on top of the community center and clinic of the First Generation.

residential uses: Griffintown, Little Burgundy and Point Saint Charles. These former working-class areas are well served by public transportation, schools, recreation and commercial amenities. The former industrial area is now a desirable densely populated residential neighbourhood. It is close to the major MUHC hospital which provides continuity of care to the Indigenous patients of the health care and healing centers.

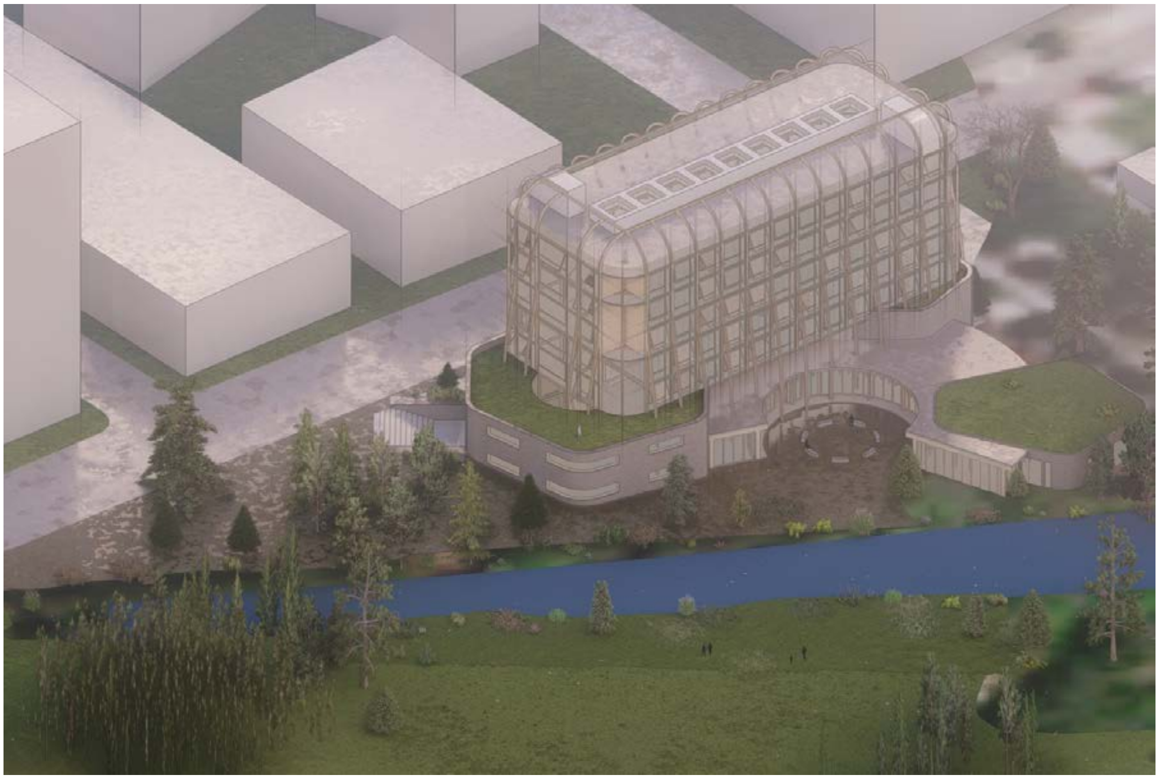
Perspective view of the First and Second Generations

Perspective view of the healing circle in the First Generation

The First Generation: Land Creation and Time Immemorial: Community, Health and Childcare

This First Generation of the design offers a grounding, a beginning to the story of place, while programmatically responding to the most impending needs of the urbanized Indigenous communities of Tiontià:ke: Community Native Friendship Center connected to a health care clinic and daycare. This center for community and healing specifically aims to provide the social services needed by the urban Indigenous community of Tiontià:ke.

The First Generation reflects upon the oral creation story of Turtle Island. The architecture of this generation addresses the need for health care access, and is programmed as a community center, clinic, and daycare. Healing is facilitated through the clinic, which, consistent with Two Eyed Seeing,



Axonometric view of the First and Second Generations

provides both Western medicine and access to traditional Indigenous healing practices.

The design utilizes its proximity to the adjacent archaeological park to introduce programming centered around healing through access to land, endemic species, and Indigenous healing plants. The park includes features such as a three sisters garden (the traditional corn, squash and bean staples of the Indigenous diet), a meadow of sweetgrass (important for spiritual and ceremonial purposes), and white cedar saplings both in recognition of their spiritual significance and planted for lumber intended for the Seventh Generation.

The axial organization of these separate programs is formally expressed in plan from the geometries present in turtle shell. As per the story, the mud and dirt pilled on the back of the turtle's shell to form our continent is symbolically

Site plan of the first four Generations

Interior view of the circulation space opening to the healing circle and gathering space at the center of this First Generation

represented through the green roofs and gardens atop the buildings of this first generation. These three programs are contained within thick stone masonry wall, mimicking the turtle's carapace. These "shells" are anchored within the land and form the foundations of this intergenerational story.

As observed by the Inquiry Commission of Relations between Indigenous People and Public Services in Quebec, Connecting the Native Friendship Centers and Clinics resulted in greater engagement and trust in Western medical services as noted at the Clinic Minowé in Val d'or, Quebec.

These three programs are connected through a bow of circulation space, connecting the programs like a river flowing around these stone masses. This liminal unprogrammed space acts as a blurred delineation of exterior boundaries though the unfolding of the glazed exterior walls. The sliding doors offer an expansion of the programming in the inner

Section of the First and Second Generations

circle of this plan. The image of a circle is used by many First Nations peoples to symbolize wholeness, completeness, and ultimately wellness.

The never-ending circle also forms concentric circles to show both the synergistic influence of the responsibility toward the generations of ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come (Archibald 2008, 11). The plan is radial from this central point and serves as a place of gathering and sharing of stories within a community.

The Second Generation: The Story of Housing, The Lost Longhouses of The Village of Hochelaga

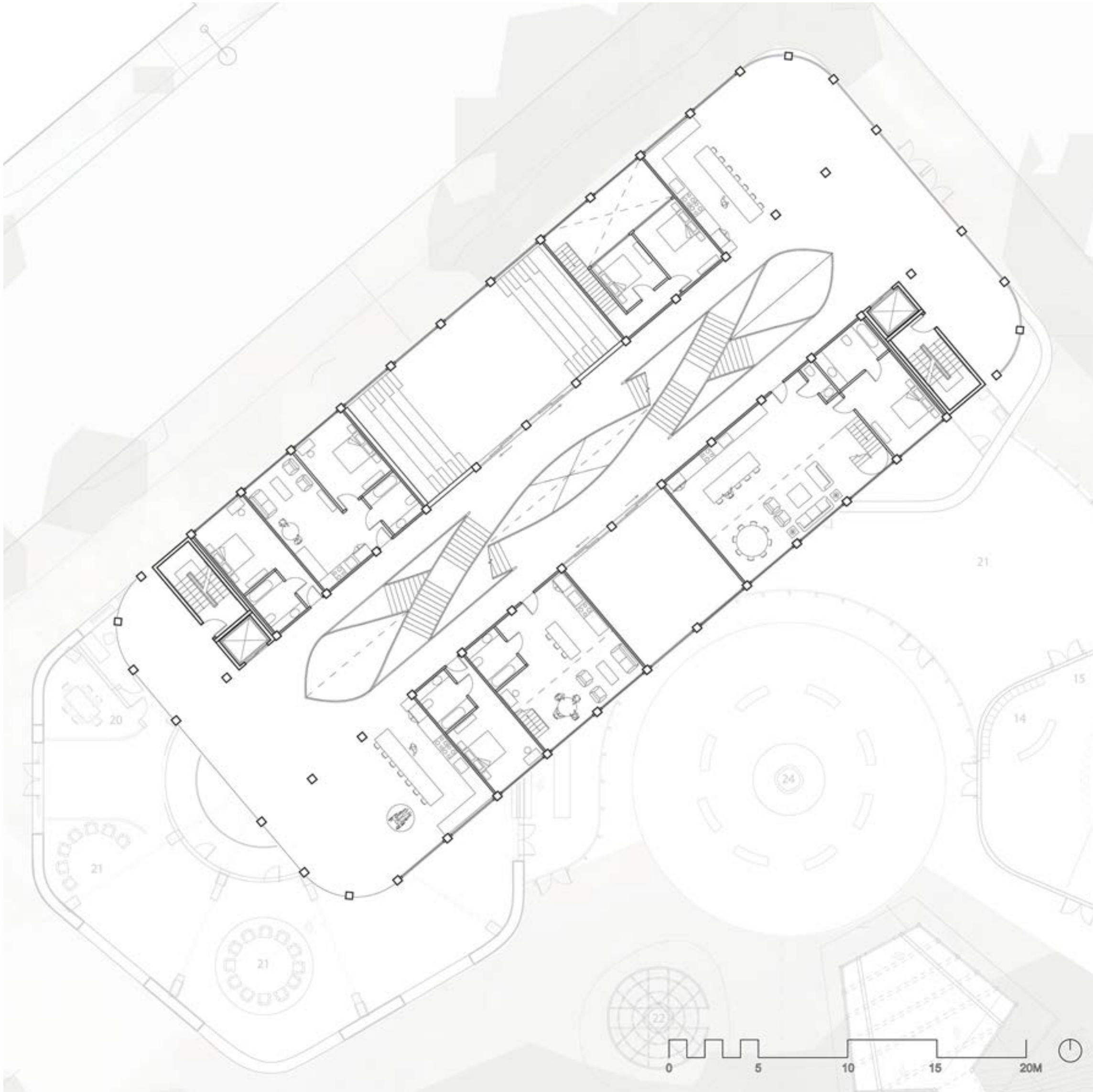
The Second Generation addresses the chapter pre-dating settler contact and illuminates the lost village of Hochelaga in a story of housing. It responds to the call to action to

Long section of the First and Second Generation

provide affordable housing for urbanized Indigenous peoples following one of the recommendations of Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain Public Services in Québec (CERP).

This design of this generation takes its formal expression and programmatic organization from the Haudenosaunee typology of the Longhouse. Wanda Dalla Costa says that Indigenous architecture should recall a local typology responsive to the Indigenous community of a given place. Similar to the longhouse, family units are arranged and divided between each structural a bay flanking a shared central space for community and social activities. This is conceived as a central atrium providing light, and passive ventilation in the summer months. The outer skin features

Perspective view of the northeastern entrance of the clinic.



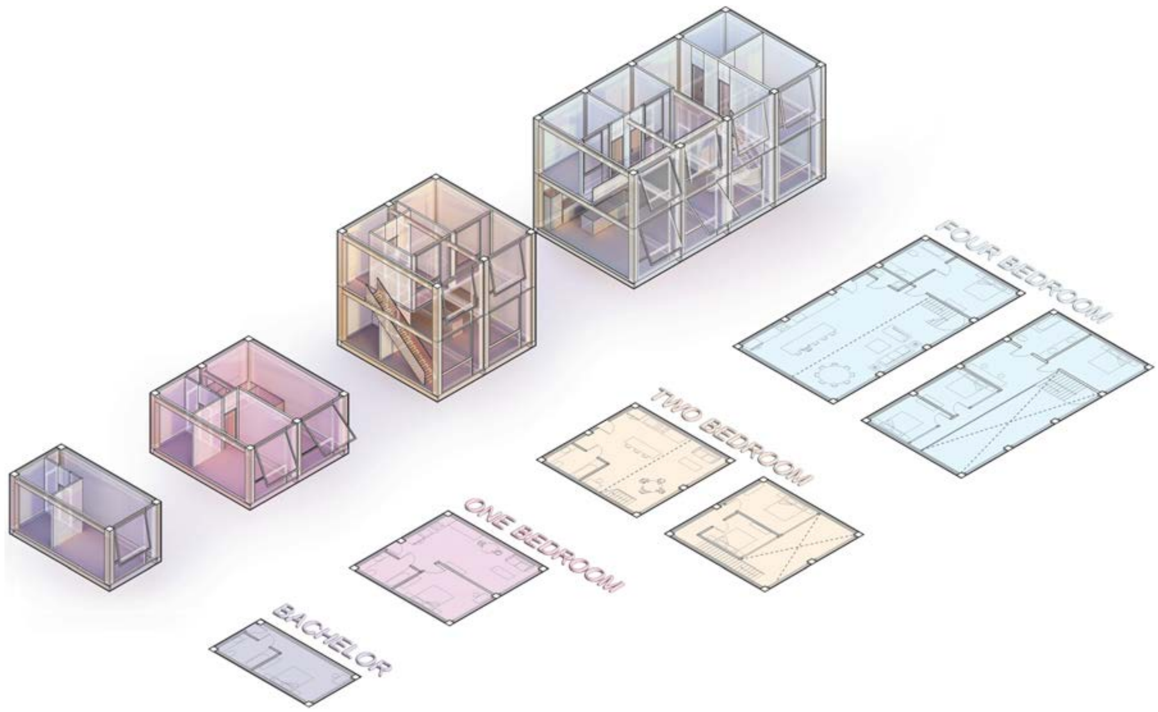
Plan of the intergenerational co-housing

operable windows like the breathable bark exterior envelope of the longhouse.

The design of this phase sits atop the previous one, maintaining a light touch on the land while its engineered timber structure roots within the previous building and bears on the stone masonry walls. The programs within this phase not only reinforce the retelling of the story of the place, but also provide the necessary infrastructure for the practices of storytelling and the preservation of oral histories. The

Interior view of the circulation stair in the central atrium of the longhouse

shared amenities in this cohousing residence allow for various levels of access to the storytelling practices: shared kitchen spaces, common living rooms, community performance space, with access to a rooftop garden. The spaces for story telling range from more intimate domestic and ceremonial contexts to community, and public contexts. A Central circulation stair is a place within the longhouse where informal connection can occur and serves to weave the community together. There are four housing unit types



Bachelor units are suitable for singles or young professionals, who desire their own private space while benefiting from the social and communal aspects.

One bedroom units are well-suited for couples or individuals. They offer adequate space while still allowing residents to participate in shared activities in the communal spaces.

Two-bedroom units are suitable for couples, small families, or roommates who desire individual bedrooms.These units allow for residents to have their own private space while still participating in the shared aspects of the community

Four-bedroom units or larger configurations are advantageous for larger families or multi-generational households. These units can accommodate the needs of families with children, offering enough bedrooms and common spaces for everyone.

Examination of the four housing unit types found in the co-housing of the Second Generation

presented in the design to allow for families of various sizes and elders to live amongst younger generations. They range from bachelor, single bedroom, two bedroom, and four bedroom units.

The Third Generation: Lac à La Loutre and The Lost Bodies of Water, Remediation of the Suffering Waterways

This Generation programmatically recalls the series of waterways that were eventually connected to form the

Lachine Canal, and addresses access to water as a vehicle for healing.

The massive Lac a La Loutre was drained by the Lachine Canal. In this chapter, initiatives from the gardening and planting projects in the First Generation have expanded into an urban wetland on the Lachine Canal. This urban wetland has helped to remediate and restore the pollution that soiled the lands and waters after the de industrialization of the Lachine Canal.

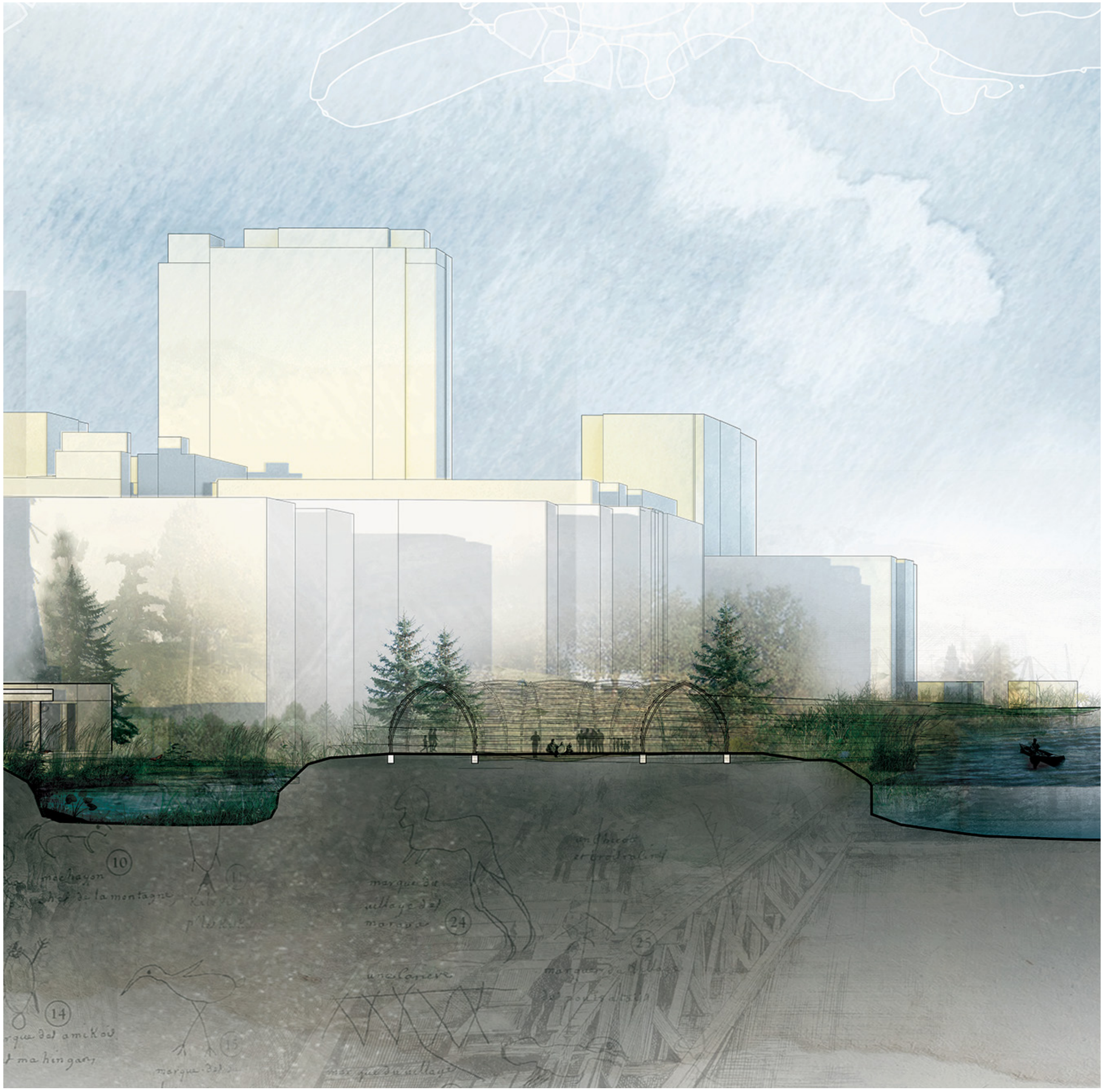
This Third Generation includes a boathouse for the storage and launch of canoes to access the healing benefits of the restored waters and recalling programmatically the dominant traditional form of transportation in the area.

The Fourth Generation: Early Contact, The Fur Trade and The Oral Tradition of Wampum

The Fourth Generation offers the programming of a community ceremonial gathering space where healing circles occur. This Generation is sited in a place in the archaeological park where a hat manufacturer once stood in the industrial heyday of the Canal. This space and architecture recall the oral history of the early contacts made with French settlers during the era of the fur trade and the practice of exchanging wampum.

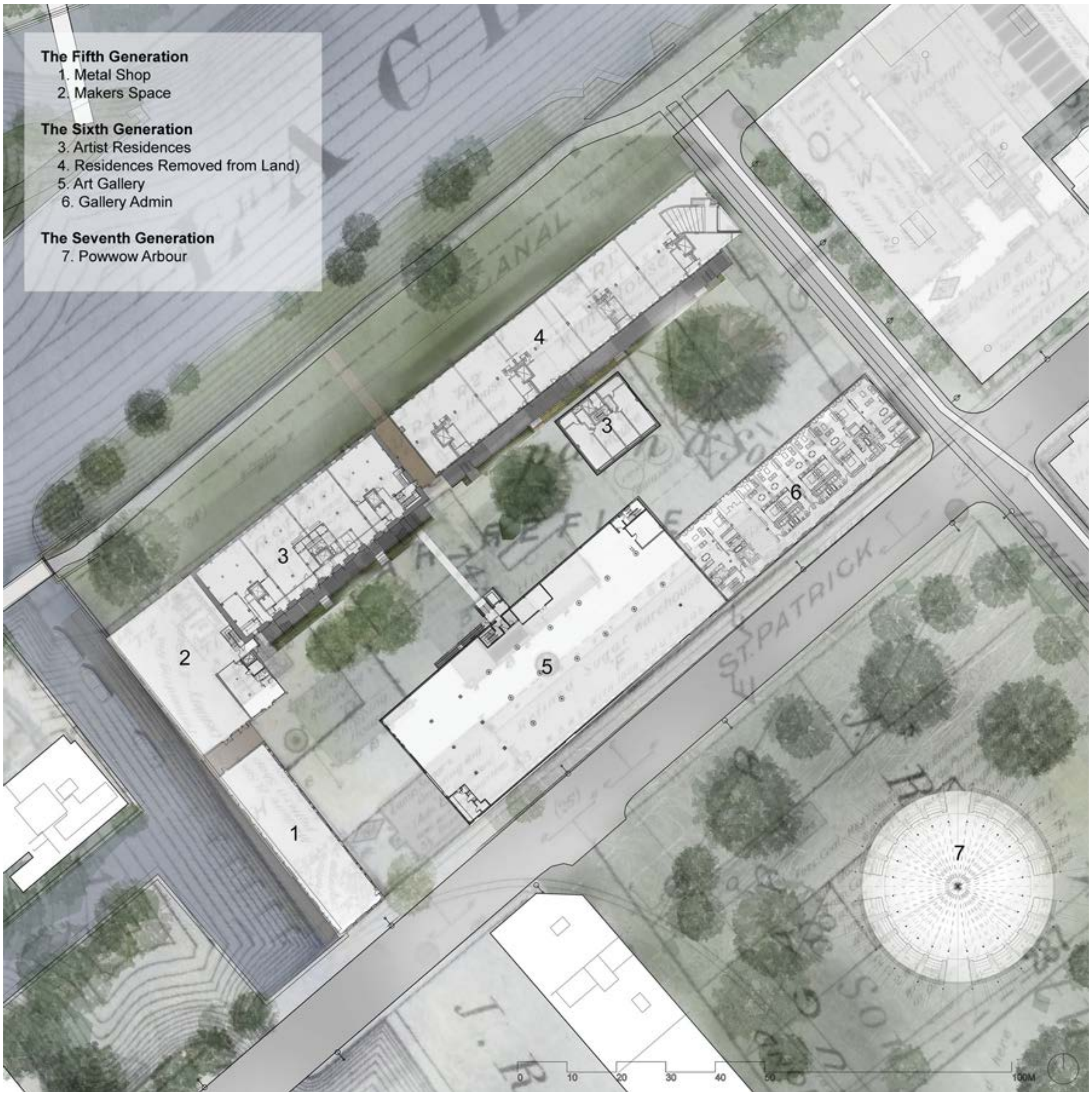
The healing circle offers a place where stories can be shared in ceremony and is intended to be a platform on which the Indigenous storywork can be revealed to the general public in the national park along the Lachine Canal.

This structure is assembled from smaller timber members made from trees found on site. Its construction embraces the material qualities of wood through its properties of bending



Detailed view of the site section showing the Fourth Generation. The light bent curved timber structure is used as a space for healing and sharing stories.

and tensile strength. The components of this structure rebuilt and maintained with care and continued to be revised and revisited like the practice of renewing oral agreements. This structure highlights the importance of Indigenous place making as a pathway toward Reconciliation. It is used for outdoor teaching, ceremonies, music, dance, and performances; it is also designed as an informal space for daily use for individual or group study.



This is a detailed view of the site plan showing the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Generations. These interventions reprogram and redefine the once extractive force on the Lachine Canal: The Redpath Sugar Refinery. The Seventh Generation is a powwow arbour, built out of timbers grown from seven generations ago. (Base plan of the Redpath Residences were provided with permission courtesy of HUMA Design + Architecture).

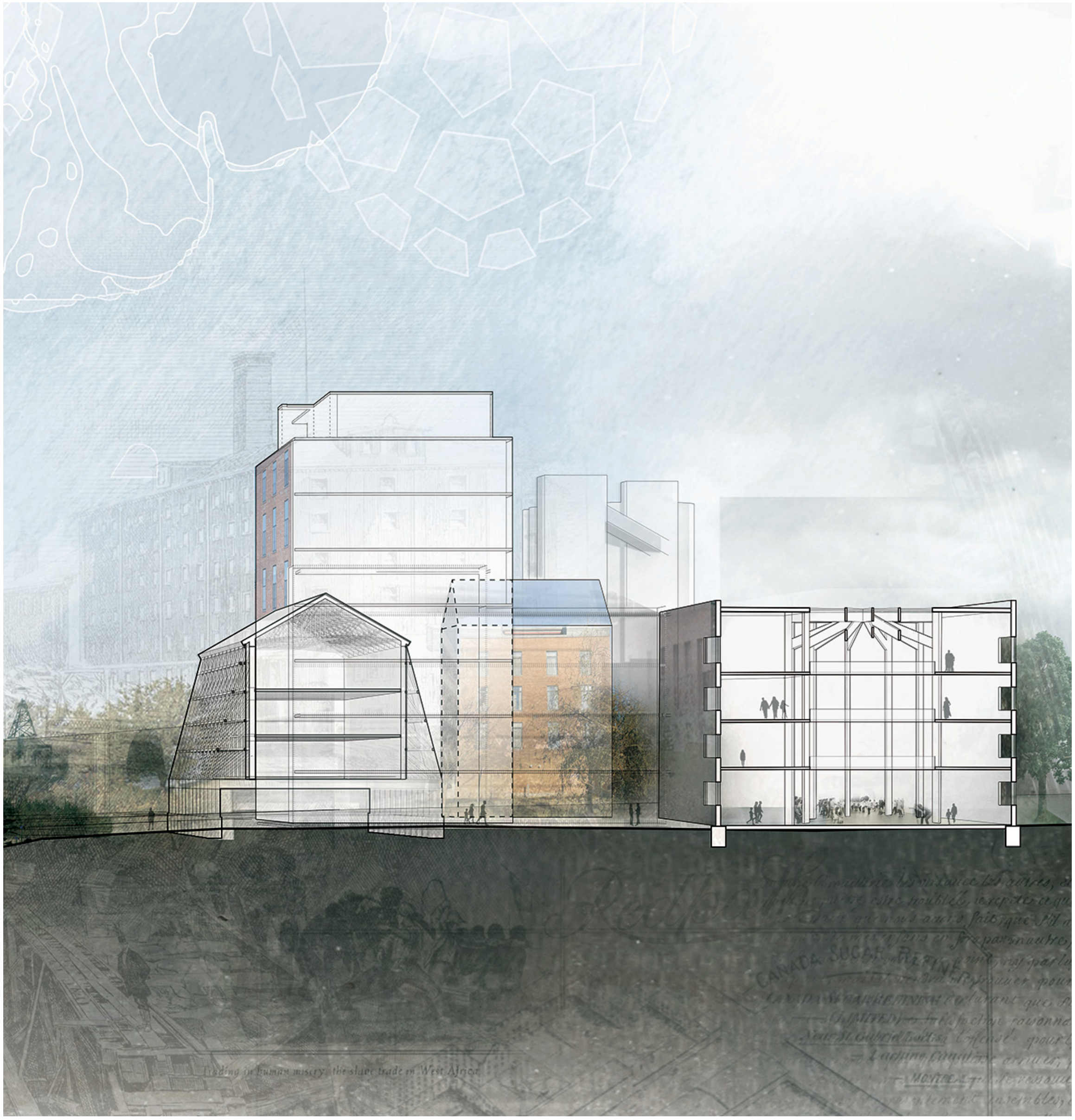
The Fifth Generation: The Mohawk Ironworkers, Makers Space, and Metal Shop

The Fifth Generation speaks to the chapter in the history of this place where Indigenous identity has become enmeshed and entwined within the industrial story of this place. The Kanien'keha:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are the traditional stewards of the lands and waters of the place Tiohtiá:ke, and self identify as and have historically been referred to as Mohawk people. In the mid 1800s in the height of industry on the Lachine Canal, the Mohawk Ironworkers became extremely adept in this trade after they had been contracted ton construct the Mercier Bridge that spanned from the island of Montreal into the Kahnawake Reserve. The trade of iron work, became a great source of pride and identity for the Kanien'keha:ka. The mohawk Iron workers played a pivotal role in the labor and construction of the built environment, not only in Montreal but across the Haudenosaunee confederacy that extends as far as New York. This intersection of Indigenous identity into the industrial history of this place is conceived through a telling of this story of pride in the architecture through the programming of a metal shop and makers space in the first floor retail spaces of the converted Redpath Sugar Refinery.

At this chapter stage in The Story of Decolonization over Seven Generations, programs and designs become increasingly speculative. They less supported by the secondary sources as proxies for necessary community consultation in informing their program; however, the successive chapters are proposed for consultation regarding potential program that offer further avenues though which Indigenous stories can be shared by way of material culture, art and performance and ceremony.

The Sixth Generation: Reconciliation and Re-claiming Redpath

The sixth generation of this story aims to tell the chapter in the history of this place in which we are now reckoning with: Canada's commitment to the truth and reconciliation of



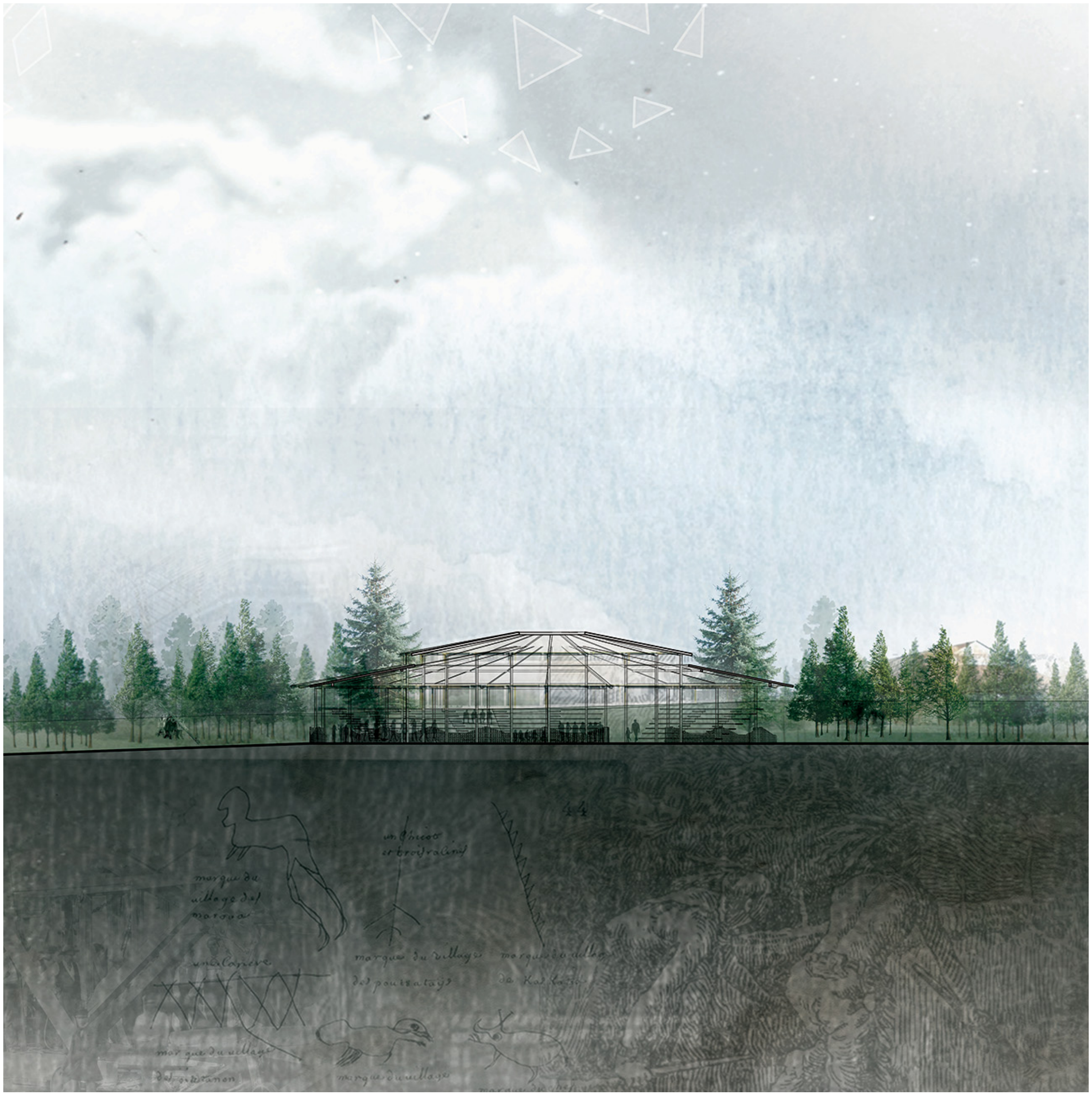
The Fifth and Sixth Generations: The Reconciliation and The Decolonization of the Redpath Sugar Refinery. The Fifth Generation is a makers space and metal shop, shown in the center, and is continued with an art gallery shown on the left, and artists residences shown on the right as part of the Sixth Generation.

Indigenous peoples. This phase understands that attempts at reconciliation are no longer a part of engaging with settler futurity but sees decolonization not as a metaphor, and the ethics of incommensurability are enacted through a radical approach to the design. This Generation demands the extractive forces of the Redpath sugar refinery be reprogrammed, refined, and removed from the lands with which it has occupied. The Sixth Generation entails reclaiming the remaining structures of the former sugar refinery by reoccupying them as artist residences and the remaining wing of the sugar refinery is dismantled and reused as an Indigenous led art gallery to offer a platform for the people of Tiohtiá:ke to tell their stories through their material culture. The maker's space of iron workers creates a scaffold by which the Redpath Refinery is lifted off the land, in a true symbolic gesture of giving the land back. Through this project of adaptive reuse, another platform is offered for the Indigenous people of Tiohtiá:ke to tell their stories, this time through their material culture.

This proposal attempts to temper the harmful colonizing legacies of the Sugar Refinery, with its links to triangular trade, and the dispossession of ancestral lands of Indigenous people, while recognizing the architectural significance of the existing buildings. Phyllis Lambert thought it was wrong to turn these buildings into residential condominiums because of their history and architectural significance (Lambert 1999).

The Seventh Generation: Indigenous Sovereignty and A Prosperous Futurity

This Seventh Generation tells a future story of a thriving Indigenous community, a completely decolonized chapter in the story of this place. This phase is programmed as powwow arbour, a space for sharing stories through dance and song. The foundations of this arbour are made from the spolia acquired from adapting the former refinery. Its mass timber frame comes from the trees planted from seven generations ago.



The Seventh Generation: Indigenous sovereignty, a prosperous futurity is celebrated in the construction of the powwow arbour.

On the banks of the canal, where this factory once refined the perennial grass stalks of sugar cane, a meadow of sweetgrass now grows for purpose of ceremony and healing, and marks the return of Indigenous perspectives and values for this land, water and ways of being

Chapter 6: Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, I outlined how the practice of architecture has been inextricably linked to the ongoing project of colonialism and sought to explore how this discipline may also be an effective means of reconciliation for Indigenous people and decolonization. In recognition of how architecture operates within these systems, it became clear the limitations of this discipline. These ambitions are highly political endeavors and are dependant on the communities they aim to serve. Decolonization holds different meanings to different people, and the extent to which any project achieves these objectives must be measured by those most affected by its impacts.

The method of this thesis supports a process that Jo-ann Archibald calls “becoming story ready”. To be story ready is to have the cultural sensitivity to meaningfully engage with the stories of a community. Study of Indigenous perspectives and gaining a knowledge of the impacts of colonialism more broadly, are parts of an architect’s due diligence to enact allyship and solidarity. To be story ready opens the designer to listen, uphold, support and amplify these stories essential to the deep work of community consultation, collaboration, and relationship building, indispensable to designing an architecture of reconciliation.

In this thesis I have deliberately emphasized the use of story in relation to history as a decolonial framework. The design work of this thesis does not intend to be a prescriptive outline or plan for the steps required to redress colonization but is rather a story that proposes a series of the architectural possibilities in solidarity with Indigenous perspectives. The chapters of the design are conceived as system through which oral history can be sustained and stories retold. Indigenous perspectives are at the core of how to design an architecture of reconciliation. These are the stories that would inform a design that truly serves the real communities to benefit. The lack of actual authentic storywork is a limitation of this thesis, but the recognition of its imperative value may be how this method can best serve the discipline of architecture in practice.

I have attempted to address this limitation, by relying upon aspects of the calls for action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report as a replacement for community input, but I recognize this is an inadequate facsimile. The design in thesis has also been informed by research on Indigenous perspectives. While these are helpful approaches, collaborative partnerships, building relationships, and bridging cultural gaps and objectives are the only ways storywork can fully inform an effective design methodology for an architecture of reconciliation. These processes are sensitive, complicated, and tethered with the difficulties of our interrelatedness. Consensus may rarely be found, but it is through this deep work with story ready participants where meaningful progress may be made.

The methodology of this thesis, if adopted more pervasively into the practice of architecture may enrich a deeper reflection upon the lands and the ancestral territories upon which we build, the communities we aim to serve, and the stories that the architecture aims to tell. The process of bridging worldviews and perspectives is a continual process of mutual learning in the ongoing project of reconciliation.

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