History Sticks to your Feet

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Abstract

This thesis addresses current concerns around climate change and geological time through Decolonial literature, seeking responses for change through the position of a critical settler. I use a process of observation and breakdown of the non-native and highly invasive *Phragmites australis* found on a site located in Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve to think through the complexities of colonialism in the land I inhabit. The incessant remodeling of *Phragmites australis* paper pulp allowed me to actively think through making.

Throughout autoethnographic research, I realized that if I want change, I need to radically accept the reality I live in and address the feeling of shame that arises within me, to move beyond this paralyzing feeling. To help me through my thinking, I have supported my research with *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* by Donna Haraway, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* by Alexis Shotwell, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* by Paulette Regan, and *Decolonization is not a Metaphor* by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. I also learned that Decolonization requires more than theories: it demands concrete material change. As the journey towards Decolonial ways of being and making is far from over and as I aim to work towards concrete change beyond the studio, I use site-specific engagement and lyrical performative approaches to unsettle my work and participate in the cultural side of the process.

Acknowledgment

My name is Camille Marcoux, and I am a French settler interdisciplinary artist, born and raised in Tiohtià:ke, commonly known as Montréal. Tiohtià:ke is on unceded land that served as a meeting and exchange site for many Indigenous peoples, including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg**.** Today, Tiohtia:ke is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which I live today.

My mother, Renée Othot, was born and raised in what is known as Québec city, the traditional territory of Huron-Wendat, and my father, André Marcoux, was born and raised in what is known as Montréal. Both my mother and father grew up in lower-middle-class, difficult family settings. Despite the intergenerational trauma from both sides of my family, I was fortunate enough to grow up in a middle-class family with parents who did the best they could to raise my sister and me. I am forever grateful for my parents' impure, unconditional love, for all the knowledge they shared with me, and for the privilege I have inherited.

I want to acknowledge Jessica Wyman, my primary advisor, who has been essential both professionally and emotionally. 2020 was a challenging year for many of us, and Jessica was there, like a beacon in the night for me. She helped me find motivation and confidence, which don't come as quickly in these precarious times. I also want to acknowledge Francisco-Fernando Granados, my secondary advisor, whose contagious energy and enthusiasm helped me get through this Master's degree and this pandemic.

Francisco pushed me to explore and play with my materials in ways I hadn't thought of before, and helped me look at my work from a different perspective.

I want to acknowledge Peter Morin for challenging me greatly. Peter and I met only a few times, but each time was transformative. Peter generously guided me towards Decolonial literature that tremendously helped me in thinking about and making my work. I wouldn't be where I am today without Peter's guidance, and I will always be grateful for that.

I have learned so much about Indigenous communities' struggles and even more about the history of colonialism and the ongoing harm towards Indigenous peoples. My journey at OCAD was eye-opening. It was a profoundly unsettling and challenging journey, but it was immensely gratifying. Today, I am still learning and will continue to learn and question my beliefs. The Decolonial project is far from being over, and I am looking forward to seeing how it will unfold in the near future.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT 2
ACKNOWLEGMENT 3
TABLE OF FIGURES 6
INTRODUCTION 9
THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK....19
METHODOLOGIES 38
THE WORK: HISTORY STICKS TO YOUR FEET 46
THE PROCESS....46
LA TRAÎNE 50
GRAPHIOSE 53
LE CERF-VOLANT....56
REVIEW OF MY DOCUMENTATION 59
CHALLENGES 61
CONCLUSION....63
WORK CITED 67
APPENDIX 69

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: CLOSE UP OF *GRAPHIOSE*, FALL 2020 3
FIGURE 2: CLOSE UP OF *LE CERF-VOLANT*, WINTER 2021 4
FIGURE 3: *GRAPHIOSE*, FALL 2020..18
FIGURE 4: CLOSE UP OF *LA TRAÎNE*, WINTER 2021..37
FIGURE 5: *LA TRAÎNE*, WINTER 2021 49
FIGURE 6: CLOSE UP OF *LA TRAÎNE*, WINTER 2021..49
FIGURE 7: *GRAPHIOSE*, FALL 2020..52
FIGURE 8: *LE CERF-VOLANT*, WINTER 2021..55
FIGURE 9: *LE CERF-VOLANT*, WINTER 2021..55

Figure 1: Close up of *Graphiose*, Fall 2020

Figure 2: Close up of *Le Cerf-Volant*, Winter 2021

Introduction: The Journey

If you're trying to change a society and you don't know its history, you will never get anywhere.
(Dunbar-Ortiz,58)

Concerned about climate change, I started my MFA digging into theories on our current geological era. I came across Donna J. Haraway's book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, which proposes a fierce reply to the shallow, anthropocentric discourses of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene. As Haraway says, staying with the trouble is the task of multispecies recuperation and making-kin with less denial and more experimental justice (Haraway, 28). Chthulucene means to stay with the trouble of our time and make kin with the Chthonic ones – the beings of the earth, both ancient and current, in ongoing presence. Alongside Haraway, I support my research with *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* by Alexis Shotwell, and with *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. Haraway, Shotwell, and Tsing all offer ways to observe and become-with the world and other-than-human beings in our current geological era.

As I was reading Shotwell, I understood the importance of doubting and questioning the "purity" of my practices and beliefs. Our mundane actions and choices all imply some sort of impurity: what we choose to eat, wear, and use (5). Being against purity is to recognize the inevitability of our impurity and imperfection within this impure and imperfect world. And yet, being against purity does not mean being for toxicity (9). As

Shotwell argues: “[living] well might feel impossible, and certainly living purely is impossible” (4); likewise, “to live in an unjust world and wish it were not so is to formulate an impulse to respond” (201). I understood that if I wanted to formulate my response to climate change, I would need to work with and around impurity instead of against it.

During the first two semesters, as I was trying to wrap my head around Haraway, Shotwell, and Tsing, I began to investigate various sites in Tkaronto. I was thinking about how landscapes carry multiple complex stories and were drawn by traces left behind such as lost items and debris. The first site I investigated was G. Lord Ross Park, close to my previous home in North York, where there is a reservoir full of debris. This is where Haraway, Shotwell and Tsing helped me thinking about this kind of landscape. I started wondering: how do we stay with the trouble in such disturbed landscapes?

Shortly thereafter, right in the middle of my second semester, the pandemic started; it was a traumatizing time for everyone. After my second semester at OCAD, I took the opportunity to move back to Tiohtià:ke, to be close to my family, my friends and my partner. Because of all the things that changed due to the pandemic, I had to rethink my whole thesis, but I kept Haraway, Shotwell and Tsing in my back pocket. It was then that I realized how vital Haraway’s theory was to me. How do we stay with the struggle of this pandemic? I wanted to apply Haraway’s approach to my work but also to my lifestyle. How do we stay with our inner and outer struggles in such precarious times?

Like so many other individuals, I have mental health struggles. Knowing that my struggles will follow me around all my life, I tell myself: I might as well stay with it. As the American psychologist and author Marsha Linehan would say, in order to change, I need to radically accept my condition (00:03:13-00:04:07). Linehan points out that it’s hard

to change something if you don't accept it exists in the first place. As I learn to live with my inner and outer struggles, I apply the same radical acceptance when I look at landscapes. Brené Brown, a Research Professor at the University of Houston, Texas, argues that shame is the birthplace of creativity and innovation (00:05:44-00:06:05). If I want to change, I need to address my feelings of shame and radically accept my reality.

As I was trying to survive in these difficult times, I began to go on daily walks in what is known as the Arrondissement Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (MHM), to search again for inspiration. There, I noticed a field with many train tracks, and almost entirely deserted by human activity. Decades ago, the Canadian Steel Foundry and a Steinberg grocery store were on this site ("Projet Montréal doit prendre ses responsabilités"; "The ghosts of Steinberg's"). Although contaminated, it is one of very few remaining green spaces in the east end of the city. For many years up to very recently, Ray-Mont Logisitique was planning a for-profit development project, that has recently canceled by the City of Montréal in 2021 for the development of an industrial ecological park (Teisceira-Lessard).

Walking along the railroad tracks that cut across this land, I found many patches of *Phragmites australis*. Not to be mistaken for its native lookalike, the *Phragmites australis subsp. americanus*, *P. australis* is a non-native, highly invasive plant that colonizes the land through sexual reproduction (seeds) and rhizome (cloning). It forms dense patches that can reach up to five meters tall, shadowing every other species below. When it is uncontrolled, it becomes an aggressive monoculture, a significant threat to many non-human organisms (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 13). *P. australis's* behaviour is very similar to white supremacy, colonialism, and imperialism: it is violently opportunistic and oppressive.

Compared to the invasive phragmites (australis), the native phragmites "… rarely develops into monoculture stands, does not alter habitat, has limited impact on biodiversity, and does not deter wildlife" (5). It can be tricky to differentiate invasive from native phragmites. Invasive phragmites can reach up to five meters tall while the native ones get no taller than two meters, and invasive phragmites grows in dense monoculture, while native phragmites grows sparse, interspersed with native vegetation (5). *P. australis* stems are beige tan, rigid, rough and dull, while native phragmites' stems are reddish-brown, highly flexible, smooth and shiny (5).

After beginning to explore Decolonial literature, I began to look at common reeds with a sense of responsibility. I understand *P. australis'*s invasion both as a metaphor for colonialism and as an indirect consequence of colonialism, as weeds travel around with us and "stick to [our] feet like history" (Modest Mouse). When I look at plants interacting with one another – the way they grow in patches or alone, how some of them are mis adapted to the environment, the gymnastic they do to reach light and water, and how they quietly fight for their space – it was apparent to me that *P. australis'*s invasion was a result of colonization; therefore, I felt the need to take a Decolonial approach. The ways plants interact with one another gives me insight into the complex and perceptible problematics of colonialism.

Over the past months, I have come to more deeply understand the importance of Decolonial practices and Indigenous resurgence. Since then, I have been familiarizing myself with the work of various settler allies and Indigenous writers such as Robin Wall Kimmerer (*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants)*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson *(This Accident of Being Lost: Songs*

and Stories), Paulette Regan (*Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*), and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (*Decolonization is not a Metaphor*). Kimmerer and Simpson both help me understand the role of stories and of truth-telling in the ongoing Decolonial project. Regan, Tuck and Yang help me understand my positionality and my responsibilities as a settler who aspires to accomplice-*ing*. I use the word "accomplice-*ing*," meaning that I do not self-proclaim as an ally or an accomplice, but I aspire to learn and do what an accomplice would do. I decided to focus specifically on the texts by Regan and Tuck and Yang, which I found particularly useful for understanding my role as a settler artist.[1]

Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation was a must on my bookshelf. This book "is a call to action for non-Indigenous Canadians who do not see a need to take part in the truth-telling and reconciliation process. It makes a compelling argument for why they should care about the history of the IRS system and actively participate in dismantling its ongoing legacy" (16). *Unsettling the Settler Within* was a challenging read for a settler, the good kind of challenge that drives me to engage in deeply unsettling discussions and debates with other settlers. Progressively, I learn how to engage in difficult conversations with people around me. I am learning and dismantling the myths and distorted colonial beliefs with which I was educated as a young person. I do my best to tackle the settler mentality within me and around me. It is everywhere, and it stains everything.

[1] Regan, as well as Tuck and Yang, speak about settler responsibility in a very general way. Although these texts are very important in terms identifying general settler responsibilities, I believe there are complexes relationships between English, French, and other settlers that are important to consider.

Shotwell asserts the strategy of "unforgetting" to remind that classification, racialization, and healthism are not just historical factors but still impact Indigenous lives today. This unforgetting has become a way for me to address the feeling of shame that rises within me, using this feeling as a doorway to change. It's difficult to change something if I cannot admit it exists. Although it is important to address my feelings of shame and radically accept our fraught past, it is also important for me to not to stay paralyzed by it.

Settlers tend to assume the worst: "[they] assume that the social relations of oppression, violation, and dispossession would be merely reversed, and not transformed. They assume there is no way to reckon with the past that does not reiterate the founding violences that they have learned about for the first time" (Regan, 41-42). Such assumptions are dangerous. Because settlers feel threatened in such situations, it blocks us from doubting their own beliefs – such as inherent social stigmas and unconscious biases. One must not stay paralyzed by shame. The emotions sparking in us, from denial to guilt, to anger, are not all bad (Regan, 55). They are part of the process of accepting this difficult but real history. Like Linehan's view, settlers, including myself, need to accept the settler problem if we collectively want to solve it.

How can I, as a settler, participate in the Decolonial conversation and project through my art if I aspire to be accomplice-*ing* in the ongoing Decolonial project? As I kept reading Haraway, Shotwell, and Tsing, I asked myself what kind of ground-level Decolonial methods, and ways of staying with the trouble in the Chthulucene, I might integrate in my practice, and how it could translate into the process of making and into my "final" work.

While I continue my journey of unsettling, I feel like I am walking on eggshells and I understand that it should stay that way. I feel as if the ground could collapse under my feet at any moment, which is something I never felt before. This tells a lot about my privilege; I took this land for granted for way too long. Today I believe I can look at the land from a different angle, with growing attention and care that acknowledges the devastating impact of colonialism on the lands, waters, critters and peoples.

I strongly agree with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang when they argue that Decolonization is not a metaphor (1). I know that my work is limited in what it offers, and I am aware that the ongoing Decolonial project demands ongoing engagement. This project is only the beginning of my engagement with these matters, and I am looking forward to finding more proactive ways to participate in this fight once I complete my master's degree. No matter how unsettling this path might be, I am dedicated to learning and trying with the desire for a Decolonized future.

About the work:

Over the summer of 2020, I aimed to decrease the vigour of a small patch of *P. australis* by cutting the upper part of the plant right before it bloomed. Because it takes many years of close monitoring and mowing to notice a decrease in the vigour of *P. australis*, and since native and non-native phragmites have spread to every part of the globe except Greenland and Antarctica, it is pretty much impossible to eradicate within a "realistic" time frame without resorting to potent pesticides or other highly disruptive treatments (Lavoie, 324). However, it may be possible to minimize its spread over several decades or generations. The same may be true for Decolonization: I can't possibly

Decolonize so-called Canada on my own, but maybe I can imagine ways to contribute to the ongoing Decolonial project. This work is an act of a radical commitment to an outcome that cannot be guaranteed. It is a perpetual task that is much larger than my capacity for action and even lifespan.

My first attempts with common reeds were made during the KOLAB Residency and the Contingencies of Care residency in spring 2020 (see Appendix A). It was then that I chose to put *P. australis* at the centre of my thesis. As I draw connections between invasive plants and colonialism, working with common reeds has allowed me to get insight into a very difficult problem. Weeds have been migrating with travelers for centuries, which has had significant impact on those indigenous to the land, human and nonhuman alike (*The Buck, the Bull*, *and the Dream of Stag* 8).

After collecting the tops of the *P. australis* plant for weeks, I chose to process the common reeds into paper pulp. The great thing about paper is its versatility and recyclability. These qualities allow my work to be fixed and unfixed; its ongoing transformation enable me to rethink/untangle my work actively. I see the pulp's incessant transformation as one possible Decolonizing method among many others — a practice that allows me to reach deeply into critical thinking through making.

I want to be clear that the work I am presenting is an attempt. Speaking from a settler perspective, my goal is to focus on my settler response-ability. I am aware that focusing on the settler could be seen as potentially diminishing Indigenous voices. My purpose here is to tackle this giant, and to do so, I must revisit my history to understand better my responsibility and positionality.

For my thesis project, I seek to provoke and invite the viewer to question their myths and beliefs about Canadian settler identity. Through my work, I aim to provoke the viewer into questioning how they understand the gallery space and the investigated site through the radical comparison of the invasive reed's behaviour to the behaviour of the oppressor.

This work is about learning how to become a better citizen in the Chthulucene. I am aware that there are limits regarding what my work can and cannot do. I understand that accomplice-*ing* goes beyond theories, methodologies, and metaphors: it is a way of living. I met with Peter Morin to discuss my ideas before integrating a Decolonial approach into my work. Peter generously shared his thoughts with me, and suggested that I read some helpful Decolonial books, such as *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* by Paulette Regan. I also met with my colleague Justine Woods who kindly read parts of my thesis draft and gave me some great writing advice.

As silence is not an option, I choose to engage in this challenging, unsettling conversation, knowing that I might get it all wrong. I believe it's essential to try, even if it means taking on risks. I can't be sure that my work won't deepen the divide between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Considering all potential risks, I still hope my work holds the potential to evoke unsettled and unsettling feelings and raise difficult questions in those profiting the most from colonialism, including myself.

Figure 3: *Graphiose*, Fall 2020

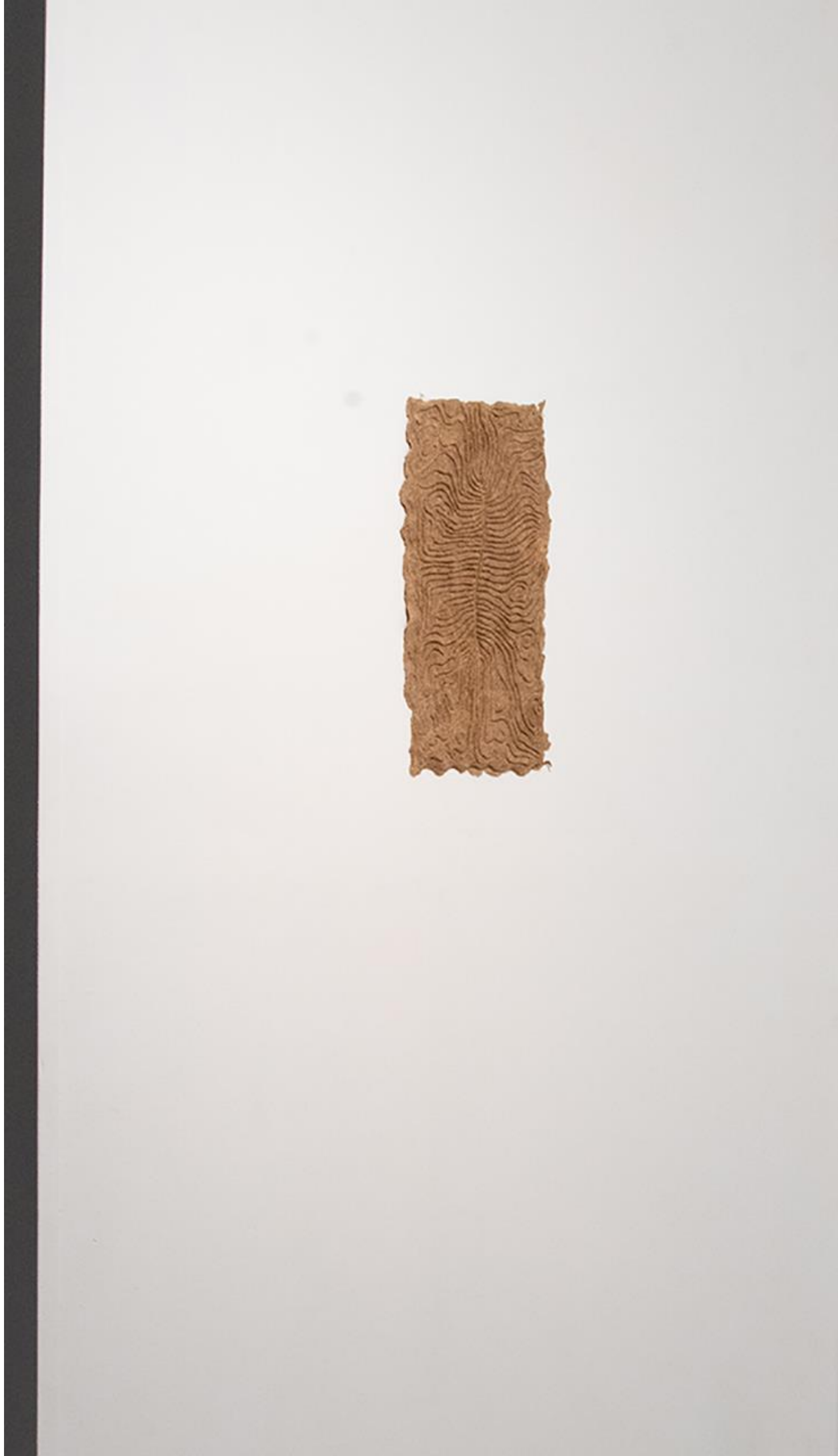

Figure 3: *Graphiose*, Fall 2020

Theoretical Framework

How do we become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the impure Chthulucene? This is where Decolonial literature teaches me how to become-with one another and other-than-human beings in today's world. Decolonial practices of becoming-with, making kin, and staying with the trouble are not meant to be easy. To stay with the trouble means to actively and continuously redefine relationships with other individuals, with other-than-human beings, and with the lands and waters. These practices demand a lot of ongoing, unsettling, hard work. Haraway argues that in yearning towards resurgence, inheriting challenging histories and recognizing our responsibilities is a necessity, though this will manifest unequally and in different ways (Haraway, 89). Through my work, my goal is to encourage other settlers like me to find the courage to engage in this unsettling work and make them question their responsibilities in this colonial system.

I believe settlers bear a great deal of responsibility in terms of the Decolonial work we need to do, but still not equally and not in the same way. Shotwell argues that to interpret the world we need both ontological and epistemological work: "interpreting the world and changing it are inseparable—ontoepistemological—and thus they are matters for ethics and politics" (197). As an artist, I believe that my role and the role of my art are to stimulate hard conversations among settlers to promote a sense of responsibility. Haraway and Shotwell have helped me understand and define the sort of actions that I can take knowing that this world will remain impure, and that we need to become-with one another. To me, to become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the impure Chthulucene is to imagine a future with multiple worldings and realities, still imperfect, but with less suffering, less denial and more experimental justice. Through the incessant and stubborn

transformation of *P. australis* pulp, I hope to formulate a response for change, one that works with and around what is impure, one that aims to tackle the settler problem.

Haraway explains that "[the] term Chthulucene is a compound of two Greek roots: khthôn and kainos" (2). *Kainos* means now, at a time of beginnings, something that is new, but still "full of inheritances, of remembering, and full of comings, of nurturing what might still be" (2). *Khthôn* (chthonic) means beings of the earth, both ancient and current, in ongoing transformation. She writes: "Chthonic ones are monsters in the best sense: they demonstrate and perform the material meaningfulness of earth processes and critters" (2). Haraway describes Chthonic ones in the Chthulucene as the following:

> Speaking resurgence to despair, the Chthulucene is the timespace of the symchthonic ones, the symbiogenetic and sympoietic earthly ones, those now submerged and squashed in the tunnels, caves, remnants, edges, and crevices of damaged waters, airs, and lands. The chthonic ones are those indigenous to the earth in myriad languages and stories, and decolonial indigenous peoples and projects are central to my stories of alliance (71).

Compared to the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, "the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with" that challenge us to stay with the trouble in these incredibly difficult and precarious times, which still hold the possibility for other worldings and stories to come (55). Haraway's optimistic Chthulucene is a fierce reply to the shallow discourses of hope and despair of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene. These problematic discourses too often fall into the trap of faith in technofixes or the dramatic belief that the game is over (3). Anthropocentric discourses do not allow us to imagine and care for other worlds and realities, including the precarious lives of those that

exist today "... and those we need to bring into being in alliance with other critters, for still possible recuperating pasts, presents, and futures" (50). Thus, anthropocentric discourses can invalidate and alienate diversity and creativity altogether. This is one of the reasons why I chose to challenge myself into collaborating with impure landscapes.

Similarly, Shotwell says that the beginning of the Anthropocene is "roughly the moment that humans worry that we have lost a natural state of purity or decide that purity is something we ought to pursue and defend" (3). As such, aspiring to purity – being self-righteous – "is a bad approach because it shuts down precisely the field of possibility that might allow us to take better collective action against the destruction of the world in all its strange, delightful, impure frolic" (8-9). She also argues that the delimitation of what is and isn't pure contributes to the erasure of diverse and marginal realities, such as disability, poverty, and queerness (15). Additionally, Shotwell indicates that "[the] transition from apologizing for Indian Residential Schools to denying that Canada has any history of colonialism is also a purity practice—it is in part through framing residential schools as a sad chapter of our history that the Prime Minister can claim that Canada has no history of colonialism" (31).

However, being against purity does not mean being for toxicity. Being against purity is to recognize that the world has never been pure or perfect and will never be. Suppose one of the goals is to have less suffering and more flourishing. In that case, Shotwell argues that "... it would be useful to perceive complexity and complicity as the constitutive situation of our lives, rather than as things we should avoid" (8). Indeed, aspiring to live purely is not an option. As Shotwell points out: "[for] those of us who

believe that the world deserves more than interpretation, description, and despair, politics based on purity will remain unlivable" (195).

In a similar vein, Tsing proposes a commitment to living and dying with response-ability in unexpected company, which have the best chance of cultivating conditions for ongoingness (Haraway, 37). As Haraway reiterates it, Matsutake tell us about surviving collaboratively in disturbance and contamination (37). But what can common reeds that I have worked with tell us about living and dying with response-ability? How do we become-with such an invasive plant?

To me, such common reeds are testimonials of our fraught past. Tsing explains that the industrial revolution drastically transformed landscapes to sustain the needs of capitalists. In the 18th century, many kinds of weeds emerged from this rationalization, as well as virulent pests and pathogens (*The Buck, the Bull, and the Dream of Stag*, 9). Many landscapes were destroyed, such as wetlands, and some weeds – such as *P. australis* – took great advantage of it. "These are feral landscapes from inside agricultural and industrial rationalization" (9). As Tsing says: "[weediness] reaches to embrace both terrifying and hopeful ecologies" (9).

What I think common reeds tell about the world is that, in some way or another, settlers need to allow space for others to thrive. I see common reeds as traces that humans—travelers, colonizers, settlers—left behind. Observing how plants behave and reading more about plants, in general, help me understand the intricacies of relationships among settlers and Indigenous peoples. As Tsing has written, "[weeds] are creatures of human disturbance, and the forms they take depend on the kind of disturbance and the kind of

unmanagement that follows. Weeds guide us to coordinations between human and nonhuman projects of world-making" (3).

Being against purity and anthropocentric discourses (among others) is also to recognize that we live in an unjust world. Some people gain immense power and profit from the lies of purism, of self-righteous beliefs (Shotwell, 19). To recognize that we live in an unjust world and wish it were not so is to formulate an impulse to respond (201). But how should we respond? This is where Decolonial literature comes in to help me figure out how to respond.

Decolonial perspective

Regan introduces her book fiercely with the Harper government's Apology to the Indian Residential School survivors. She explains in detail why this apology reinforces the myth of the settler as the peacemaker and urges settlers to "solve the Indian problem" (2-4). She argues that us, settlers need to turn the mirror towards ourselves, look directly at our true reflections, recognize and acknowledge the past wrongs of our ancestors, and find ongoing, sustainable ways to solve the settler problem (11).

Along these same lines, I ask myself what I, a settler who reaps the benefits and privileges of colonialism, must do to help myself and others to cope with this detrimental legacy, and how I will do so in ways that speak to truth, repair broken trust, and set myself and others around me on a transformative Decolonizing pathway towards more just and peaceful relations with Indigenous peoples (2). How can I, as a non-Indigenous person, unsettle myself and others around me to name and then transform the settler by our actions as we confront the history of colonization, violence, racism, and injustice that remains part

of the IRS legacy today (11)? These are hard questions that I may not be able to answer fully in my work. Along with processing *P. australis* into paper pulp, I engage in the unsettling work of unforgetting as an initial act for change. Although I do not have all the answers to these questions yet, I hope that my work made out of *P. australis* paper pulp will help me understand and identify my responsibilities and positionality.

So far, my unsettling journey has taught me how to listen differently as I learn about my responsibility. From Regan's perspective, these unsettling feelings of shame and empathy are not all bad, but we must not become paralyzed by them (55). To unsettle ourselves within, I believe settlers need to address their feelings of shame as a step in our transformative learning. To reiterate Regan: "transformative learning "involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world"" (52). As settlers keep trying to escape this feeling of shame, settlers hardly acknowledge the reality of the Other. Brené Brown argues that we "cannot have that conversation without shame, because you cannot talk about race without talking about privilege, and when people start talking about privilege, they get paralyzed by shame" (00:10:12-00:10:40). The moment we, settlers, acknowledge the Other's reality, is when shame wins over defense. Anybody in confrontation may tend to fall in defensive mode. To break this barrier, we need to address the paralyzing feeling of shame. Settlers, including myself, must be willing to be vulnerable. When Brown speaks about vulnerability, she mentions that to be vulnerable is "to let ourselves be seen, to be honest" (00:04:44 - 00:05:13). To be vulnerable is to take the risk of seeing the world from another perspective. To unsettle ourselves, I argue that we need to be vulnerable and address our feelings of shame, as

shame is the birthplace of change (00:05:44-00:06:05). We, settlers, need to try "to walk through and walk our way around" this uncertain path (00:09:47-00:10:10).

Thus, as Brown says, shame is an epidemic in our culture and, if we want to address shame, we need to address empathy (00:18:58 - 00:19:06). It seems that we need empathy and vulnerability to address shame, and that we need to address shame if we want to change. Without empathy, there is no acknowledgment and no change, but colonial empathy is not enough. From my understanding, colonial empathy keeps settlers at a safe distance from the real problem. Feeling colonial empathy is insufficient because it does not require any change from our part (Regan, 46). Settlers' feelings of shame are limited, as they typically focus on solving "the Indian Problem." This is why settlers need to move beyond feelings of shame and start taking actions that lead to material change for Indigenous peoples.

While it is essential that settlers try to take actions, as Shotwell would say, we also need to be mindful and calculate the potential impact of our actions. We need to walk into the unknown with caution to prevent retraumatizing or deepening the divide between ourselves. Shotwell notes that "[the] point is to change the world, this world, and so the point is complicated, compromised, and impossible to conceptualize, let alone achieve alone" (196). She continues by saying that people doing "movement work" often get lots of things wrong, "which might not be such a problem—if the purpose of the work isn't to be right" (196). She argues that instead, our goal is to try to make sure that something that deserves a future has one. But this kind of work demands strong ontoepistemological work. In other words, we can speculate and theorize all we want, but in the end, we still need to go back to look at the facts and see them without personal implication (197).

I read *Decolonization is not a Metaphor* by Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang to better understand what Decolonization means and entails (Tuck & Yang, 2). Eve Tuck & K.W. Yang's text is a tough and unsettling reading that demands humility from the reader. There is a lot of valuable anger that can be sensed throughout this text. Settlers must be willing to listen and feel unsettled, especially if they have not already encountered this feeling. Some settlers might wonder: how long is this Decolonizing project going to last? I want to respond to those who ask this question with a reminder that settlers have been colonizing this land for hundreds of years, therefore it may take hundreds of years to Decolonize so-called Canada. Settlers, including myself, shouldn't worry so much about how long this work will take, what would happen to us, and the consequences for us, because this mindset focuses again on the Indian Problem. Settlers must be willing to walk into the unknown with humility, acknowledging the settler problem. Even though Decolonization is not a metaphor, it does not keep us from having to resort to metaphors in order to understand the violence of our privilege as settlers. Through my work, I go beyond the metaphor by making a direct connection between colonialism and the spread of *P. australis*.

We, settlers, have a huge responsibility. We need to take part in this Decolonial project, but we must do it carefully. Reading Eve Tuck & K.W. Yang, I understand that my choice to try to incorporate a Decolonial approach must be an unsettling one. It has to be intentionally unsettling for me, and hopefully for the viewers as well. This unsettling feeling has the potential to provoke a reaction – from anger to shame, from shame to empathy – in those profiting the most from colonialism and can hopefully inspire some individuals to take part in the Decolonial project. I also understand the risk of speaking from a settler perspective that could potentially be seen as a way to move towards

innocence. My personal suffering might feed settlers' fantasy of mutuality (16). Settlers sympathy and suffering is a move towards innocence as it feeds a fantasy for mutuality with the Other's pain. What are my motivations for this work? As Tuck and Yang write: "The desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore" (9).

My work is an attempt to participate as well as I can in the Decolonial conversation, with the tools and mental capacity that I have. This attempt is not fixed in time: it keeps growing and changing, it keeps mutating. In the words of Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (2). Through the incessant transformation of *P. australis* into paper pulp, and through the observation of landscapes, I aim to identify trace of colonialism in our landscapes that often goes unnoticed. By bringing forward traces of colonialism into my work, and by making uneasy connections between *P. autralis'*s invasion and the spread of Dutch elm disease on elm trees in so-called Canada, I aim to unsettle the viewer and make them question what responsibilities for the future entails.

The shame that Brown has discussed is, I feel, necessary for settlers to acknowledge the enormous and detrimental impact colonization has had and continues to have on Indigenous lives. Decolonization is hard and unsettling. The point is not for settlers to save Indigenous peoples; the point is for settlers to recognize our responsibilities and find out what we must do to unsettle ourselves within. We must not aspire to become Indigenous,

or desperately try to find lineage within our family, or appropriate Indigenous ways of living and culture. Instead, we need to listen and learn *from* Indigenous peoples.

I strongly agree with Tuck and Yang when they say that Decolonization is not a metaphor (3). Decolonization demands a lot of effort and concrete actions that lead to material change. As I said earlier, settlers need to do more than theorize. I understand that my work is limited in what it can offer. I know that this paper is only generating words and thoughts on Decolonization and lacks concrete action (19). I am aware that this part of my work is incomplete, but this is only the beginning of my engagement. I am currently learning other ways to better participate in this unsettling work for the near future. Because my work is an attempt, and because the purpose of the work isn't to be right, it was important for me to take lyrical approach rather than a didactic approach.

I am not innocent, and I take responsibility for my steps, meaning that I recognize I am responsible for my past, present, and future actions, as well as the past actions and inactions of my ancestors. I know I can't please everyone; I know some people will disagree with my perspective, and I respect that. Opinions are very diverse within Decolonial conversations among Indigenous peoples and settlers. Not all Indigenous peoples agree on the same things, and therefore one must locate themselves within the specificities of nationhood that exist in the land one occupies. Compared to colonialism, Decolonization is impossible to contain in one box. It can be messy, it goes in many directions, and it should. "Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone" (7).

I know that by choosing to speak from my perspective, from a settler perspective, I draw focus on settler responsibility, which risks erasing Indigenous voices further. I cannot

speak for anyone but myself; I cannot tell others' stories, but I can share my story and my thoughts and how I aim to participate in this plight. There are limits to what I can imagine. Despite all these challenges, I need to stay with the struggle; I need to find the courage within me to stay with the troubles of our times, to hopefully find better ways to become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the Chthulucene.

Integrated Indigenous Learning

In the summer of 2020, I decided to meet with Peter Morin to discuss my ideas and to know if I was on the right track. I explained to Peter that I wanted to take a Decolonial approach in my work. I was very insecure, and I didn't know where to start, so he suggested three books to read: *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* by Paulette Regan, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* by James Daschuk, and *A Geography of Blood: Unearthing Memory from a Prairie Landscape* by Candace Savage. He also suggested I look at the work of Marie Côté, a ceramist located in Tiohtià:ke whose work is inspired by Indigeneity and the land.

When I explained my idea to Peter, to my surprise, he told me that I was already doing the "thinking through making," which I found very encouraging coming from him. I haven't read all the books he suggested to me, but I did get a copy of each book, and I am eager to read them this summer. I understand that those books are important for the continuation of my research.

It was important for me to get Peter's approval of my project idea as it can rapidly go in the wrong direction. Throughout my journey at OCAD University, I learned an

incredible amount of things about Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization, but I do recognize that I still need to do a lot of work on my own. This Decolonial journey has been very unsettling and life-changing, and I am forever grateful for all the knowledge that Peter shared with us all. Slowly but surely, I learned and still am learning to listen better, to question my own distorted beliefs and choices, and I hope that I can continue to participate in the Decolonial conversation with the desire for a Decolonized future, still imperfect and impure.

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a scientist, a professor, and an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* is a book about passion and love for the natural world. Throughout this book, Kimmerer weaves together science and Indigenous wisdom to share her vision of the world. This book helped me look at the environment and blasted landscapes from a very different perspective: one that cultivates hope and responsibility. Kimmerer encourages us to be attentive and build a reciprocal relationship with the land. She says that "[paying] attention acknowledges that we have something to learn from intelligences other than our own. Listening, standing witness, creates an openness to the world in which the boundaries between us can dissolve in a raindrop. The drop swells on the tip of a cedar and I catch it on my tongue like a blessing" (Kimmerer, 300).

In the story "*Mishkos Kenomagwen*: The Teaching of Grass," Kimmerer speaks about an experiment she did with Lena. The goal of this experiment was to find out whether

harvesting sweetgrass contributes to its decline or not. In Indigenous teachings, Kimmerer says that she learned to only take what's needed and to never take more than half (157). She also learned from her grandmother that "If we use a plant respectfully, it will stay with us and flourish. If we ignore it, it will go away. If you don't give it respect, it will leave us" (157). After completing the experiment, Robin Wall Kimmerer and Lena came to the conclusion that harvesting sweetgrass seems to stimulate its growth: "The surprise was that the failing plots were not the harvested ones, as predicted, but the unharvested controls. The sweetgrass that had not been picked or disturbed in any way was choked with dead stems while the harvested plots were thriving. Even though half of all stems had been harvested each year, they quickly grew back, completely replacing everything that had been gathered, in fact producing more shoots than were present before harvest. Picking sweetgrass seemed to actively stimulate growth" (162).

This result does not surprise me at all. I first picked phragmites early in the summer, which was a mistake because it stimulated the growth of the patch. *P. australis* that I picked had now multiple heads emerging from the same stem. At that moment, I realized how important it was to mow the plant right before it bloomed in order to hopefully weaken its vigour. I had to wait until late July to collect the seed heads that were just about to pop out. With this method, I was hoping to trick the plant. Maybe I did more harm than good. Cultivating a relationship with invasive plants is challenging.

At first, the committee was convinced that the best way to protect a plant was to stay away from it. As Kimmerer says, "They had been schooled that the best way to protect a dwindling species was to leave it alone and keep people away. But the grassy meadows tell us that for sweetgrass, human beings are part of the system, a vital part" (163). I think

it is absolutely beautiful to come to the conclusion that we, humans, can have a good relationship with our environment if we are attentive and careful enough. But I wonder, as we cherish good relationships with sacred plants, what kind of relationship should we have with invasive species that spread like diseases, species that we would rather not see? I think that, in some way or another, settlers are responsible for the spread of *P. australis*. It seems that *P. australis* does not need much help to spread itself and that even when someone attempts to eradicate the plant with strong pesticides, *P. australis* often fights back. Difficult to become-with such a plant. I think we should collectively think about our relationship with all plants, the sacred and not-so-sacred ones. We have a role to play. From what I understand as I read Kimmerer, it's a matter of listening, observing, noticing, exploring, and attempting. As Kimmerer suggests, we need to be respectful to the plants we harvest (164), and I think this rule applies to *P. australis* as well.

"Reciprocity is a matter of keeping the gift in motion through self-perpetuating cycles of giving and receiving," Kimmerer says (165). Can we, as settlers, find ways to build reciprocal relationships with plants such as *P. australis*? What gift does *P. australis* have to offer? Thinking about what it has to offer, it was important for me to not just mow the *P. australis* patch and leave it at that. It was important for me to find a way to use the plant in a way that makes sense to me and my research. By picking common reeds, I allowed sunlight to reach other native plants that struggle among the thick patches. I have profound joy in observing native plants such as goldenrods and milkweeds that thrive among the thick patches of common reeds, which is greatly rewarding. The native plants didn't need my help to grow; I didn't need to plant any seeds. All I had to do was make a little bit of room; I think the native plants appreciated that. This imperfect method of

collecting *P. australis* teaches me that in some way or another, I need to allow space for others to thrive; I need to be more than humble.

Additionally, Kimmerer says that "Polycultures – fields with many species of plants – are less susceptible to pest outbreaks than monocultures. The diversity of plant forms provides habitats for a wide array of insects" (139). We can play a good role and attempt to take care of a piece of land. We have the power to choose to build a meaningful relationship with the land as settlers. We settlers will always be settlers, and *P. australis* will never be fully eradicated. Maybe it's time to rethink our relationship with the plants we are responsible for. *P. australis* won't ever be a naturalized plant like the common plantain (213), but we have the possibility to change our relationship with it.

This Accident of Being Lost: Songs and Stories

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is an award-winning Nishnaabeg storyteller and writer. *This Accident of Being Lost: Songs and Stories* takes us on a journey full of dark humour, of poignant, unsettling anger, and of belonging and love for the land. This book was some of the most unsettling reading I have done so far. Simpson is incredibly generous to share with us her vision of the world. Her vision gives us insight into what it might be like to be Indigenous in so-called Canada. As I was reading the book, I recognized myself in her stories, which was very unsettling. In the story "Plight," she narrates the following:

> "We debated framing this as a performance art, well I debated framing this as performance art because white people love that if it were the fall and this was Nuit Blanche we'd be NDN art heroes. We could probably even get a grant. But it's

spring and we actually don't want an audience; we just want to make syrup in my backyard without it being a goddamn ordeal" (Simpson, 6).

In this quote, Simpson is teaching us humility. I have to admit that as an artist, I was debating whether I should perform or not and how I should do it in a way that doesn't seem too pretentious. It's hard to be a humble artist, as these things hardly go together. Somehow, I needed to find a way to make a work that speaks about responsibility.

In the story "22.5" under the "Topic 12: Taxes," Simpson expresses her anger towards the elaborate system of oppression in so-called Canada (17). She says:

> "First you Canadians stole the land, then you make up this elaborate system of oppression to keep us too dead or too depressed to do much about it, then you create this elaborately irritating system for us all so that you have the cash to maintain the deadened depression and, admit it, Revenue Canada irritates the fuck out of you guys too, it's like our first point of agreement, and then, to add salt to our wounds, you make us figure out how much zhoon we gotta pay for the oppression" (17).

What I understand from this quote is that even though the system we are in does benefit settlers and rich people in general, we are still all trapped under this oppressive system. To me, this quote is a call for action, a call for solidarity with those who are the most oppressed.

In "Doing the Right Thing," Simpson speaks about a conservative man teaching a firearms safety course in which Simpson is participating. In this story, we can sense a clear distaste for the white stereotypical conservative man who lives for guns and would never want that right to go away. The man goes on pretending that "this class isn't about

politics…" after he says, "There's only one party that is interested in protecting your firearm rights" (27-28). Simpson narrates:

> "The only time he breaks from the Conservative platform is on climate change – it's real, he sees it, and we have to fix it. "It's reality. I've seen it with my own eyes. It's no one's fault." He raises his voice when he says "no," drops it when he says "one's," and then raises it again when he says "fault." Then he stares at us. The tension in his face whispers to me what he's afraid of: being misunderstood and having his right to hunt taken away by the city people. And what he is not afraid of: hurting me" (28).

Simpson follows, saying that "[the] moral of the story is that you have to respect the people whose land you are hunting on" (28). Conservative white settlers are so self-righteous sometimes. I am not conservative or liberal, but I also find myself sometimes having self-righteous thoughts: the truth is that it happens to all of us. What this quote teaches me is that we must be careful of what we believe in and what we tell others. We must be careful with our actions. We have to stop trying to protect our small individualistic desires and become more aware of our role not only in society but also on this stolen land. Later in the story, she continues, saying the following:

> "The instructor asks me to pick up the pump-action shotgun. Shotguns are the firearms of humiliation for the Mississaugas. They are the symbol of our defeat. Bison, Elk, Caribou, Moose… all gone or nearly gone from our territory. Our land is such a cesspool that we are only allowed to use slugs in shotguns to shoot deer, mostly in cornfields. The land is so destroyed by these white motherfuckers, there is simply not enough space left for the elegance of rifles. I hate shotguns. I hate

squeezing the trigger. I hate the sound. I hate the spray. I hate the kick in the teeth" (31).

To me, this story speaks about trauma. Objects, such as shotguns, do carry strong histories of harm towards Indigenous peoples and wildlife. When Simpson speaks about shotguns and when she holds it in her hands, she is aware of what it symbolizes. Being aware of these things is a responsibility. Even objects that we might think are inoffensive do carry strong histories of colonialism, such as train-track toys for little white boys.

The man in the story is far from being mindful of the others in the room. Encountering people speaking violently about others and being openly racist and sexist happens way too often. It is just unacceptable. I cannot even imagine what it is like to be Indigenous in this country. My suffering is nothing compared to the treatment of Indigenous peoples on this stolen land. But, at the very least, Simpson was tremendously generous to give us a small taste of what it is like to live in an Indigenous body. I will never be able to fully grasp what it is like to be Indigenous, but books such as This Accident of Being Lost: Songs and Stories are tools for us to become more mindful and unsettle ourselves with. As Simpson says: "It matters if you are born with a target on your back or not" (83).

Figure 4: Close up of *La Traîne*, Winter 2021

Methodologies

Ongoing Land-based Method

While walking and observing the landscape, I was carried by a train of thoughts, thinking about how to become-with one another in the Chthulucene. Although it is sometimes difficult, this has been an enjoyable and meditative process for me. I engage in this process with the desire to listen and learn what is there to be learned.

Last summer, as I was collecting *P. australis* plant tops, space was created in the field such that sunlight could reach other species of plants. Throughout the summer, I observed plenty of native and non-native plants – such as goldenrods, tansies and milkweeds – thriving within the small patch of phragmites. *P. australis* showed me how to become-with humans and other-than-humans in the Chthulucene: to allow space for others to thrive, settlers need to cede space. After all, we are on unceded land.

Monitoring, collecting, and transforming *P. australis* into paper is a very long process that demands patience and endurance. Through this imperfect experimental method, I observe how the plant reacts when I cut it and evaluate the best time to mow the plant before it blooms. My goal isn't to eradicate *P. australis* with pesticides or with other violent methods. By cutting the upper part of the plant before it blooms, my immediate goal is to decrease the vigor of the patch of common reeds. Because it may take years to notice a considerable change, this method could potentially be practiced by many other settlers over several generations.

This method of collecting and transforming *P. australis* was generated from the utopian desire to imagine ways to become-with one another in the Chthulucene. I can't be

sure my methods won't do more harm than good, but I am willing to try to engage in the unsettling work of unforgetting, and to find ways to participate in the Decolonial project.

Autoethnography

Initially, I was not interested in autoethnography because I was skeptical of its legitimacy. Some scholars believe that autoethnographic research, as a qualitative method, is not as good as quantitative research (Wall, 2). Because autoethnography is so subjective, the data may be perceived as invalid. Being unsure whether to employ this method, I realised that I was doubting the legitimacy of what I had learned through my personal life experience (4).

What is autoethnography? Autoethnography is a form of emerging qualitative research that allows the author to speak from a personal perspective, drawing from personal experience to make connections with the cultural, and the political. As Sarah Wall, professor in the Sociology department at the University of Alberta, says, "the intent of this method is to reveal the inextricable connection between the personal and the cultural and to make room for non-traditional forms of inquiry and expression" (1). "If a researcher's voice is omitted from a text, the writing is reduced to a mere summary and interpretation of the works of others, with nothing new added" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994 qtd in Wall, 3). Following this thought, I wonder how new someone's voice can be. I don't suggest that because I speak personally, my perspective is necessarily a new one. This work is about a lived experience in the Chthulucene that is not all uncommon. From my understanding, autoethnography can sometimes be very similar to truth-telling, although there is a

distinction to make between a personal truth and the idea of a factual Truth. It takes courage to talk about one's truth.

At first, I was unaware that I was engaging in autoethnographic work, but after reading about autoethnography, I realised I was already using this method. Throughout my journey, as I was and still am figuring out my position in the Decolonial conversation, autoethnographic methods came to me naturally. In the context where I attempt to integrate a Decolonial approach into my practice, autoethnography plays an important role as I wonder how to become-with this world in the Chthulucene. Everything is interconnected in my mind; my worldview informs my research, and vice-versa. I was already drawing figures in my head, trying to connect dots, understanding how I am part of this hyper-mesh of complex interconnectedness. Through my work – as I observe, collect and transform common reeds into paper – I aim to observe how I, as a settler, stand on this land, and understand how history is engraved in my skin.

Intentionally or not, my work is constantly influenced by my environment and my personal life experience. It was through my daily walks and attentive observation of my surroundings that I shaped my initial idea. It is through challenging readings and life events that I formed my conceptual framework. Haraway's book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* is an empowering reading that guided me throughout this pandemic. How does one produce a thesis in such precarious times? Rooted in the present, Haraway's optimistic discourse on our current times gives me fuel to keep getting out of bed in the morning and to keep trying to do the work of becoming-with humans, other-than-humans, lands and waters.

I am not neutral, not pure, not unique. I am real, and my reality is not uncommon. I don't aim to be right or aim to impose my opinion. I am here to share thoughts; I am here to think with others. I am part of something bigger, and I want to chip in. I need to take concrete actions if I want to be able to see change happening in my lifetime.

Living in challenging times with my personal struggles, I learned how to cope with myself and the world around me through radical acceptance. As I mentioned earlier, it's hard to change something if you don't admit it exist. My experience has taught me that there is no other way but to go forward. What guides me through this difficult unsettling work is my desire for change, for a more just future with less suffering and more flourishing for those who needs it the most. Empathy, whether it's colonial or not, is not all bad.

Importance of play

When I think of play, I think of children in a park laughing, making up imaginary worlds and games. When I think of play, I also think of creativity. When I chose to process *P. australis* into pulp it was mainly because I wanted to be able to play with the material. My work is meant to be reimagined, to be unfixed, to be played with. My work is meant to mutate, to change over time, to be dismantled and take up new forms. Every time I present this work it will be different, as it should be. It has to be different because the process of imagining how to become-with the world in the Chthulucene, and how to Decolonize so-called Canada is impossible to contain into one finite thing. Therefore, my work is ongoing, never exactly finished. As I play with the pulp made of the *P. australis* reeds, I keep reflecting on my concept, which allows me to think through making. The hardest part is to

decide what to make out of it. The versatility of the pulp gives me space for trying different things as I reflect on complex theory.

Unforgetting past wrongs: Remembering for the future

I believe that, for too many generations, settlers collectively denied and ignored their true history and responsibilities, such as the undeniably horrifying history of Indian Residential Schools, the displacement of Indigenous peoples into reserves, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, the classification of Indigenous peoples through blood quantum, and the exploitation of natural resources. Settlers must be held accountable for these systemic issues. As Regan says: "[ignorance] is not just an absence of knowledge; it is a way to (not) know things. In our being, ontologically, we become who we are in part through what we know and what we are made (or made able) to forget" (Regan, 37).

Learning about our fraught past can make settlers anxious, as if the ground could collapse under our feet. It's not a bad thing to not take the land for granted, for once. It's a necessity for us, settlers, to feel this collective anxiety; it allows us to better understand the perspective of the oppressed. This task of learning is and should be very unsettling. As Shotwell says, "One aspect of our role is actively participating in a politics of responsibility in our intellectual and social labor, actively challenging our own and others' ignorance and occluded thinking, and taking up practices of decolonization" (25). Shotwell follows this by arguing that "[unforgetting], in this view, is an activity, just as forgetting is an activity" (37).

I only learned so much about our fraught past since coming to OCAD. This means that I spent most of my life not knowing much about the current and past conditions of Indigenous peoples in so-called Canada. This speaks to my own privilege of not knowing. All that I have learned since beginning my MFA has shaken me up, and I am grateful for this difficult learning.

Shotwell notes that "… some people think that they "just don't see race," or that poverty doesn't exist in their community, or that Indigenous people aren't part of their national consciousness" (38). Settlers have the tendency to detach themselves from responsibility, and one way to do it is by not knowing. But "… people just haven't been taught the facts of the situation, and so they can't be held responsible for not understanding how race, poverty, indigeneity, and more, are present in their lives. If this were the problem, just giving people more and better information would correct their knowledge problem" (38). Shotwell follows this by saying is not just a matter of knowledge, but a matter of whiteness, as "[whiteness] is a problem of being shaped to think that other people are the problem" (38). In my own experience, when confronted, the white settler may pretend to be a neutral participant, when in fact we, white people and settlers, have inherited a lot of responsibilities our ancestors failed to take. We have debts, the kinds of debt that are impossible to fully repay. Shotwell suggests that we "… unforget, actively and resistantly, because forgetting is shaped by forces bigger than ourselves" (38).

Unforgetting methods are meant to be uncomfortable and unsettling. The practice of unforgetting raises feelings of shame, guilt, and anger. There is also a lot of confusion about what our future will look like. Interestingly, as Shotwell continues, this tells us a lot about how people view whiteness (42). Imagining the oppression being reversed tells us

how unbearable and cruel our colonial state is. It is for this reason that difficult, introspective conversations among settlers are so important. We, settlers, need to allow ourselves to doubt the foundations of our beliefs. Are we capable of imagining different worldings? As we do the challenging work of unforgetting, we must not stay paralyzed by our feelings of shame; we need to continuously question our beliefs and engage in profound critical thinking. Shotwell says that "[unforgetting], in these terms, can be understood as requiring not only the acknowledgment of things that threaten the colonial status quo. Unforgetting, following Regan, will also require a willingness from those of us who partake in the legacy of colonialism and have the potential to affect what is remembered and why. This, again, involves a shift from knowing about particular things to taking action in particular ways informed by that understanding" (41). Settlers need to make much greater efforts in the Decolonial project.

We need to understand colonialism as a systemic structure instead of an event and remember that this system is still in place today and continues to oppress Indigenous communities and exploit natural resources. It's important to remember that the Indian Residential Schools literally sought to "kill the Indian in the child" (33), and left the survivors with intergenerational trauma for which settlers, including myself, are still responsible for today. As we unforget actively, we need to understand how colonialism works.

As Shotwell says: "One way to understand a more usable mode of remembering the past that has harmed and benefited us, differentially, pervasively, is through a critique of the individualizing effects of what has been called "healthism" (24). Healthism is the belief that each individual is responsible for maintaining their own health and well-being, even

in the context of collective harm (24). Shotwell argues that instead, we need to challenge this mentality with "an understanding of complex interdependence, which must involve a reckoning with our implication in unjust pasts" (24). ""Healthism" names the tendency to think about individual health as a moral imperative—individuals are held responsible for their bodies, and obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic conditions are rendered as moral failings" (29). Like healthism, classification, such as blood quantum, is key to colonialism (25). We need to address how classification was deployed and still impacts the lives of Indigenous peoples today.

As mentioned earlier, unforgetting is a way of living. As I was tending "my" patch of phragmites, noticing the gymnastics other plants must do to take up space and reach the light, I was reminded of my responsibilities. As I drive my car around, I can see phragmites peeking through the snow along the roadside, blending into the landscape. Weeds such as these remind me again of my identity as a settler. Working with this difficult material forces me to do the challenging work of unforgetting.

By choosing to speak from a Decolonial perspective, I allow space for an important conversation to take place within my practice. However, because I play with metaphors, I feel as if my work is lacking concrete actions; it is only an abstract provocation that is up to interpretation. This is why after my master's degree I plan on finding more concrete ways to participate in the Decolonial project. Even if playing with metaphors helped me understand my positionality as a French settler artist, perhaps it would be a good idea for me to join a local community-based organization that fits my values.

The work: History Sticks to your Feet

At first, I wanted my research title to be *Dismantling a Giant: Breaking down Phragmites Australis as an Ongoing Land-based Practice*. But one day, as I was listening to the radio while in the car waiting for my mother, I heard a song by the band Modest Mouse called "History Sticks to your Feet." I think it is a very catchy title and it kind of sums up very well what I am trying to express through my work. Compared to my initial title, I think this title allows more space for the reader to imagine what my thesis is about.

The Process

I had difficulty figuring out what I wanted to do with the phragmites I collected, and I still struggle with this today. This work is an exploration, an attempt at thinking through complicated theory and stories. This work isn't supposed to be easy. In order to find what to make out of *P. australis*, I had to play a lot with the pulp and think outside the colonial realm which isn't easy. And as I tried to work with *P. australis*, I aimed to think and take care of the settler problem. These challenges demanded a lot of deep critical thinking about my positionality as a French settler artist and how it shapes my work.

As I work with common reeds, I try to find clever ways to use the plant to serve a purpose other than invading lands. In the Chthulucene, we need to work with what we've got, which are disturbed landscapes that still hold potential. We need to work with impurity; we need to get our hands dirty, face reality and try to clean up our mess, us, settlers, instead of repeating the same mistakes our ancestors made. The site of the former Canadian Steel Foundry is the kind of trace that I was looking for.

After collecting *P. australis's* plant top for weeks, and after a few experiments, I chose to process the common reeds into paper pulp (see Appendix B). Gratefully, I learned how to make paper when I was studying at Concordia, but it was my first time attempting to make paper from raw plants. I see this process as one Decolonizing method among many others — a deep, critical way of thinking through making. To make paper out of *P. australis*, I had to find a Hollander beater, which would allow me to process the plants into pulp. To do so, I contacted Sophie Voyer, owner of the papermaking studio Atelier Retailles, whom I had met while studying at Concordia University. I asked Sophie if I could rent her Hollander beater for a day or two per week for a few months. Thankfully, she replied positively and made an arrangement with me. I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to access Atelier Retailles in such precarious times, in which it isn't easy to access equipment.

Considering the complexity of papermaking from raw plants, I had to organize my schedule wisely. Papermaking from raw plants requires a very long process of drying, cooking, rinsing, and beating. It takes a few weeks to make paper out of plants. In spring and summer, I went to the site in Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve about once a week to observe the small patch of *P. australis* grow, and from August to November 2020, I went to the papermaking studio several times and processed enough pulp to create my work. The long and repetitive movements in making paper from raw plants are an embodying practice that demands energy and patience.

I processed common reeds into paper pulp specifically because of paper's versatility, which allowed me to think through making while continually reformatting the material. Because it was such a long process, it allowed me to take time to play with the

materials. If I made something I wasn’t satisfied with, I could reuse the pulp by simply rehydrating it. My work can still take many directions. The pulp has a lot of potential now that it has been transformed into a usable material (see Appendix C).

Figure 5: *La Traîne*, Winter 2021

Figure 6: Close up of *La Traîne*, Winter 2021

La Traîne

Walking around on the land in MHM, one cannot help but notice all the train tracks. The Canadian Steel Foundry was founded in 1912 and closed its doors in 2003 (UQÀM). As I mentioned earlier, the site is still contaminated today, and Ray-Mont Logistiques had started decontaminating the land for another venture-driven project ("Projet Montréal doit prendre ses responsabilités"), that recently got canceled (Teisceira-Lessard). It is one of the very few remaining green spaces in the east of the city and is very dear to MHM residents. The local community-based organization Mobilisation 6600 hopes to protect this site, and I learned in March 2021 that the city of Montréal is now planning to create and industrial ecological park on this site ("Écoparc industriel de la Grande-Prairie").

La traîne is a modular piece that mimics tile work. The paper casts were first made from clay and then cast in silicone. This installation is about two and half feet by five feet. This modular piece allows me to play with it and change its shape depending on the space of showing and how I personally engage with the space.

In French, *traîne* means trail. As I drag my fingers on the wall, it is as if I leave a trail behind. There is part of myself in this piece, through this trace. It begs the viewer to look at their surroundings with curiosity, and directs the eye to the aesthetic details of the work, evoking decorative crown mouldings and modular train tracks toys for kids. The traditional Western train tracks toy targeted for boys is part of the colonial realm. By mimicking modular train-tracks and decorative mouldings, I aim to question the kind of everyday objects that we think are inoffensive, but that may carry some strong histories of colonialism.

For my first install, I wanted to make a horizontal frame reminiscent of Western landscape paintings. As I frame the wall, this work aims to disrupt the traditional contemplative Western landscape painting by questioning exactly what is there to contemplate. This modular piece aims to provoke and unsettle the viewer by making them question the space they find themselves in and the space they are looking at. Through this piece, I aim to blur the lines between the spaces of the gallery and the spaces of inhabited nature. I want to draw attention to the space by engaging with this site, making uneasy, disturbing resemblance comparing the gallery space with the site of choice. This piece aims to speak about landscape in an unusual way, with a sense of responsibility, and aims to encourage the viewer to observe disturbed landscapes, such as the one located in MHM, with curiosity. These connections that I make are unsettling because I view these two spaces as profoundly colonial, but in different ways. The whiteness of the modern art gallery reminds me of the deserted and contaminated space were used to be the Canadian Steel Foundry. I find the traditional, although modern, white galleries aesthetically cold and austere. Are we or are we not responsible for the well-being of our environment? What does the work aim to do?

Figure 7: *Graphiose*, Fall 2020

Graphiose

One day I went on a walk in a park in my new neighbourhood, outside of MHM. As my partner and I entered the park, I noticed a lot of fallen trees around. When I went to look at the trees more closely, I saw the carved designs that Dutch Elm Disease leaves on the bark. *Graphiose* is the name for Dutch elm disease in French. This paper cast mimic the intricate tunnels that elm beetles carve under the bark as they invade the tree. Dutch elm disease, originally from Europe, is a fungal disease that attacks elm trees (Tree Canada). Lumber infected with this disease first arrived in Canada in 1930 and has ultimately destroyed nearly the entire elm population in the region (Tree Canada).

The Dutch elm disease reminds me of Smallpox, a disease that was introduced by French settlers in so-called Canada in the 17th Century (The Canadian Encyclopedia). Indigenous peoples exposed to this disease, including Inuit, Algonquin, Huron-Wendat, Nehiyawak, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, Niitsitapi, Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, Tlingit, Heiltsuk, Haida, Tsimshian, Tŝilhqot'in, Coast Salish, Interior Salish, Métis, and many more Indigenous communities, were not immune to this disease, which resulted in fatal infections and extremely high death rates (The Canadian Encyclopedia).

There are resemblances between the way *P. australis* and Dutch elm disease behave. They are both aggressive and opportunistic, like settlers. As colonizers travelled, they carried with them plants and critters that were not meant to live on this land. Whether or not these catastrophes were intentional, these diseases and invasive species of critters and plants are a result of colonization.

Nowadays, contamination is inevitable. Just as settlers are responsible for the immense, detrimental impact of Smallpox on Indigenous communities across so-called

Canada, it follows that settlers are also responsible for spreading Dutch elm disease to native elm trees and for the spread of invasive weeds such as *P. australis* across the lands. As Regan says: "To those who argue that they are not responsible, because they were not directly involved with the residential schools, I say that, as Canadian citizens, we are ultimately responsible for the past and present actions of our government. To those who say that we cannot change the past, I say we can learn from it" (4). But how do we become-with a contaminated world?

Ten inches wide by twenty inches tall, *Graphiose* is one of my favourite pieces. It's a modest work, perhaps simple in terms of concept but efficient in delivering its message. The piece was first made out of clay and then cast into plaster. The unruly edges open up the piece, extend it beyond its monochromatic and textured edge.

Installed on the wall, this piece is a portrait, a reflection of settler identity: a diseased and impure identity. As I make connections between the spread Dutch elm disease and the spread of *P. australis*, I aims to provoke the viewer into questioning their role and responsibility in the colonial system.

There is a strange beauty in the way the elm beetles carve the bark. Thinking again about Tsing and her Matsutake mushrooms, I wonder what the spread of the Dutch elm disease and Phragmites tells me about how to become-with other beings in the Chthulucene?

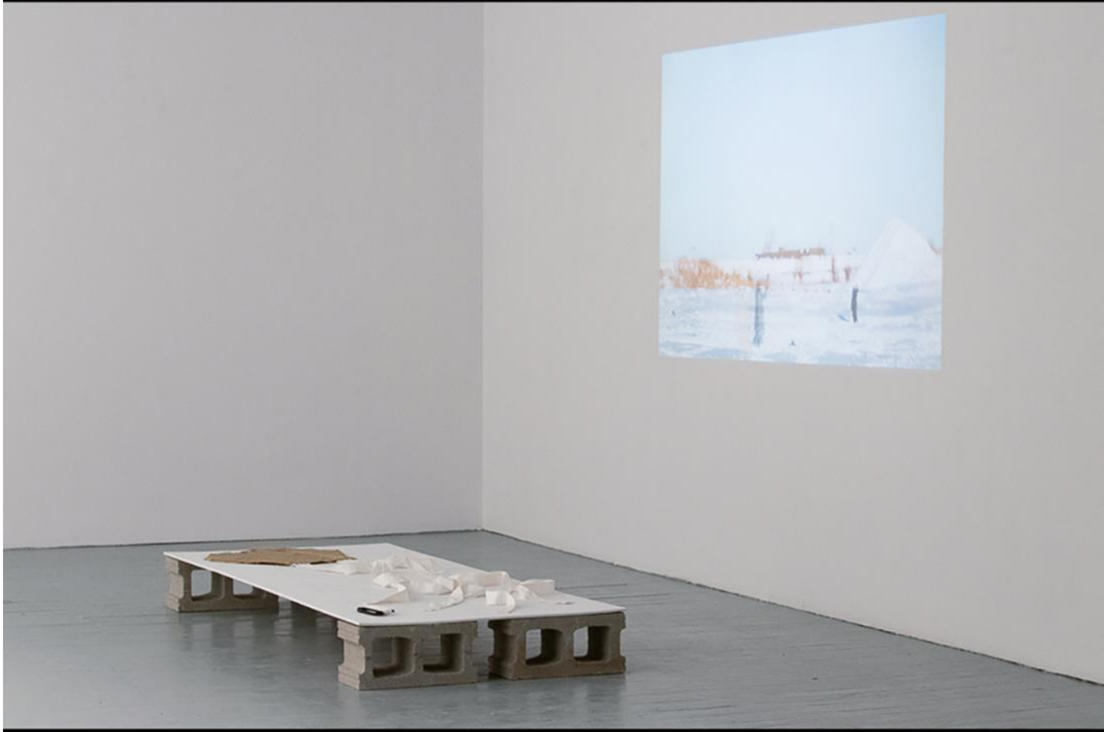

Figure 8: *Le Cerf-Volant*, Winter 2021

Figure 9: *Le Cerf-Volant*, Winter 2021

Le Cerf-Volant

Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Montreal. As I mentioned earlier, this specific site at the intersection of Hochelaga Street, Dickson Street, and Notre-Dame Street, is one of the few remaining green spaces in the east of the city. If the Canadian Steel Foundry had acted responsibly in 2003, they would have decontaminated and restored the land before selling it. This kind of colonial behaviour is typical, as there was no requirement in law to leave it as it had been previously.

This site is already used as a park by many residents, and it offers habitat for wildlife. Every time I go there, I see people walking their dogs while others are jogging. I believe that the best decision for the future of this site would be to decontaminate and restore it. This site will never be as it used to be, but it holds the potential to become a place full of remembrance.

In seeking to activate the site through a performative act, I decided to use what was available to me: the *P. australis* pulp, the wind, and the land. When I thought of the wind and space as material to work with, I automatically thought of making a kite. To me, kites are objects of contemplation that kids and adults love to play with. There’s a dreamy and aspirational feel to kite’s flight. There’s a hopeful and optimistic message in the transformation of an invasive plant into a flying object.

Because I had never made or flown a kite before, making a kite was a challenge for me. While I was making the kites, I was skeptical whether they would fly. The paper was a little heavy; it needed strong winds. I reminded myself that it’s ok if it doesn’t work, that I am aiming to experiment, and that my goal is to try. This is what the kite represents to

me; it's an attempt to activate the site, draw attention, create a conversation with the viewer, and a potential reconsideration of this land's fate.

In order to make the kite, I first had to make sheets of paper at the Atelier Retailles. I could only make letter size sheets of paper, therefore I had to stiches the sheets together to create a bigger surface for my kite. At first, I made a diamond shaped kite, but it didn't fly very well. For my second attempt, I made a Sled kite, which was originaly invented by the American William Alisson in the 1950s ("Sled Kite"). Once my kite was all assembled, I reinforced it with decorative blanket stich around the edges.

First, I had to find the right day with enough wind. Since my mother already knew how to fly kites, she assisted me during the performance. My mother helped me make this performance come to life by assisting and teaching me how to fly a kite. Together, we had to sense the wind passing around and in between us. When we felt strong winds coming, we had to release the kite. I was learning how to pull string figures in the sky.

Our first attempt with the kites was a failure. I attached small paper ribbons at the bottom of the kite to help it fly, but the paper ribbons were too short and too small to support the kite. I didn't have enough paper to make bigger and stronger ribbons, therefore I opted for ribbons made out of cotton I had at home. It was important for me to try again instead of just accepting my failure and moving on. I reminded myself of the importance of trying and not staying frozen in front of failure. My mother and I went back home; we fixed my kite. We tried again, and it worked. It was a hopeful moment of joy in the struggle of making, and of living through the hard work of unsettling myself.

I decided to film the kite flying at the specific site located at the corner of Hochelaga Street, Dickson Street and Notre-Dame Street to activate and draw attention to the site.

Using this site as a playground, it was important for me to find a way to make this site come to life through a performative act. By engaging in this joyful activity, I attempt to look at the site with curiosity. This lyrical performative act aims to reveal beauty and potential into this blasted landscape. Working towards decolonization is neither a metaphor nor a game, but it is essential for settlers to learn to stretch our imaginations to think differently about the land, the process, and about our relationships with one another and other-than-human beings, in order for a Nation-to-Nation conversation to take place.

The kite represents the act of trying to make it become something more than just an invasive plant, something playful and contemplative that serves other things than invading the lands. This work is focused on the act of flying the kite as kites are fragile flying art objects that are meant to be contemplated, the same way we contemplate landscapes. Flying a kite on this site was a way for me to enliven it, to give it potential.

Considering that my other pieces are much more static, I wanted to create at least one performative piece that tells a story about my trajectory (see Appendix D). I wanted to connect with this space much more deeply. Like a requiem, I wanted to bring some sort of peace to this blasted landscape through a lyrical performative act. Pulling strings figures in the air, this performance aims to articulate my perseverance in trying to become-with myself and what's around me.

Now that I have tried making some small kites, I hope that I will be able to create a much bigger kite in the future, maybe this summer, one that is more beautiful and intricate in detail. Thus far, I have had limited access to the paper-making studio – particularly because of the movement restrictions required by the Covid pandemic – and I hope to develop this idea and its potential more fully.

Review of the documentation

After documenting my work, I felt like there was something missing, that I could have done more work. I was happy with the works I was presenting, considering all the difficulties 2020 brought us, but I still wished I had more to show.

Francisco and I reviewed my documentation and, through our discussion, were able to pin down what wasn't working as well as I wished. *La traîne* was bothering me. Francisco pointed out that the edges of the tiles were too neat compared to the edges of the other pieces, which seemed to have more personality. In fact, I had gone around each tile with an X-Acto knife to cut the edges off. Francisco encouraged me to rehydrate a few tiles and see how it looked with rougher edges. He also encouraged me to play a little more with the tiles. Excited about this new challenge, I rehydrated a few tiles and cast some new ones with imperfect edges. After making a few tiles and playing with them on the floor, I realized that the tiles now had a lot more personality; each tile could be seen as an entity. I can use them and play with them individually, make different composition. The roughness of the tiles seems more genuine to the conceptual framework, as now each tile is singular.

I had wanted to step away from a normative gallery setting and maybe find an atypical place to show my work, but I ended up being able to access the POPOP gallery in central Montreal for a very fair price. What I liked about the white gallery is that it made me reflect on the relations between the space and the work. The work not only speaks about invasive phragmites, but also about a very specific space charged with colonial history of damage caused on the land. I can see a relationship between these two spaces, reminding of me colonial, and white supremacists' habits. To me, the white cube gallery resonates with the abandoned space in Hochelaga Maisonneuve in the history and stories they both

carry. Still today, white galleries are predominantly showcasing white men artists. Female artists are largely underrepresented in the art scene and are still hypersexualised in galleries and museums. That's patriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism.

In making paper from invasive plants and continually remodeling *P. australis* paper pulp, I have been trying to better understand my positionality as a French settler artist who wishes to participate in the ongoing decolonial conversation, working my thoughts as I work the pulp in my hands. Through this practice, I aim to formulate a response not only to climate change (making use and reuse of what we already have, diminishing the presence of that which "does not belong") but also to the ways in which we, as settlers, can unsettle ourselves within so-called Canada, questioning the very "naturalness" of our being here. Rather than rejecting the past, I seek to converse with it to find ways to responsibly become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the Chthulucene, remodeling versions of a possible future.

Challenges

Overall, even though this pandemic brought its fair share of difficulties, I have been very resourceful from the beginning till the end. With the help of my scholarship (OGS), I was able to rent a space where I could process my paper, I rented a gallery space to document my work, I worked on a very small scale all along, I spent lots of time not only making the pulp, but also played with it a lot and tried many configurations. Working in a small-scale and modular fashion not only was a way to accommodate my lack of space, but was also a way to create something bigger that could be easily built and carried around

I have moved twice during the pandemic. In spring 2020, I moved from Toronto to live with my partner in what is known as Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, in Tiohtià:ke. Later in the summer, we moved into a new apartment in Ahuntsic, another part of the city, and away from the patch of land where I had been tending *P. australis* through the summer. Leaving Tkaonto due to the pandemic, required that I had to change my research plan, which was to investigate various sites located in the GTA, but ultimately my concept evolved beautifully during this time.

It was challenging to work from home. When we were living in Hochelaga, my partner and I lived in a tiny studio apartment. At that time, all my stuff was still in Tkaronto; for months, all I had was my luggage. I had to be resourceful. Even today, in our new apartment, it isn't easy to work from home. My partner is working from home three days a week, and I do not have a room strictly for myself. My stuff is all over the place, which sometimes created conflicts. These are the real circumstances in which this work has been produced: limited space, limited resources, withdrawal of many social and community

resources, and feeling very much in isolation. Like so many other artists, these constraints have both limited my prospects and forced me to work creatively to meet my challenges.

Despite all the difficulties that I faced, I am incredibly grateful for all the support I had from my advisors, Jessica and Francisco, who have given me confidence in my work, who supported me in the most difficult times, and who were present and listened.

Conclusion

It is incredibly oppressive and a continuation of the violence that has been inflicted upon Indigenous peoples to expect that they will bury their collective and personal traumatic past. This is why ongoing Decolonial conversations and actions are essential for everyone, especially for those of us who benefit the most from colonialism. We, settlers and white people, need to change our ways of being. We need to learn to listen better; listening is not meant to be easy. We need to collectively dismantle the myths and beliefs that settlers know what's best for Indigenous peoples. We need to revisit our past collectively and acknowledge that colonialism still impacts the lives of many Indigenous communities today, and that it also colours the lives of those who have historically benefitted from colonialism. Giving up the expectation of unearned privilege means giving up "the possibility that our relationship with Native people has never been predominantly peaceful or reconciliatory" (Regan, 5). As Shotwell wrote, it's a choice to not know; forgetting is an activity as much as unforgetting (37). We, settlers, need to turn the mirror towards ourselves.

But how do we stay with the trouble of our time? Through making paper from *P. autralis*, I aimed to find my way through the challenge of being a settler, an artist, and a graduate student. It was demanding and very unsettling intellectually and personally to dig into Decolonial literature. I made mistakes. I did a lot of introspection. I have grown and learned a lot throughout my master's at OCAD. I became more mature.

Together, my three main piece aims to reveal traces of colonialism that are blended in our landscapes. Traces of colonialism, such as the contaminated site located in MHM, often go unnoticed. Thus, through the incessant transformation of *P. australis* into paper

pulp, my work aims to bring forward the impact that colonialism had on the land, with the desire to evoke a sense of curiosity and responsibility in those profiting the most from colonialism.

In producing my thesis work, I have developed a personal land based Decolonial practice and the ability to work on current issues that are difficult to tackle. This work is not the prerogative of a single person, however I can take responsibility for myself by understanding my positionality and my responsibilities as a settler who aspires to be accompli-*cing,* and through this I hope to encourage others to carry forward their own knowledge and contributions to the Decolonial project.

I hope my work raises unsettling feelings, such as shame as shame is the birthplace of change (Brown, 00:05:44-00:06:05). I hope that settlers viewing my work find the courage to move beyond the paralyzing feeling of shame and find ways to take greater responsibility in the Decolonial project. Often in doubt, I still wonder whether I should have done this work, but I believe it's counterproductive to avoid the painful task of acknowledging and talking about our fraught past.

It pains me that my beginning is farther than some people will ever get. This is the work of many lifetimes, and the Indigenous peoples who inhabit this land deserve to know that they are not in this struggle alone. As history keeps sticking to our feet (Modest Mouse), it's important to recognize that whether it is intentional or not, we, settlers, are responsible for the history that follows us around. Like I said earlier, if settlers are responsible for the immense, detrimental impact of Smallpox on Indigenous communities across so-called Canada, it goes without saying that settlers are also responsible for

spreading Dutch elm disease to native elm trees and for the spread of invasive weeds such as *P. australis* across the lands.

I argued that Anthropocentric discourses of hope and despair invalidate and alienate diversity and creativity altogether. Anthropocentric discourses such as the Capitalocene and the Anthropocene do not allow us to imagine and care for other worlds and realities that extends beyond the human realm. These discourses too often fall into the trap of faith in technofixes of the dramatic belief that the game is over (Haraway, 3).

As Shotwell would suggest, the point isn't to be right and failures are inevitable: what matters is to try (204). While it matters to try, Shotwell argues that it to interpret the world and changing the world are inseparable and it demands good ontoepistemological work, therefore it's a matter of ethics and politics (197). I believe the role of my art is to interpret the world around me and stimulate hard conversations among settlers. Haraway and Shotwell greatly helped me define my positionality in this impure world. Practices of become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the impure Chthulucene demands to imagine multiple imperfect realities, but with less suffering, less denial and more experimental justice (Haraway, 28).

It is important to stay optimistic in these incredibly pessimistic times (Shotwell, 203). Like finding Matsutake mushrooms in disturbed landscapes, I believe the ability to see the beauty and potential in any kind of landscapes, especially the disturbed ones, is essential for change. As Tsing says, "[if] a rush of troubled stories is the best way to tell contaminated diversity, then it's time to make that rush part of our knowledge practices" (*The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 34). "Matsutake's willingness to emerge in blasted landscapes allows us to explore the ruins that have become our collective home…

To follow matsutake guides us to possibilities of coexistence within environmental disturbance. This is not an excuse for further human damage. Still, Matsutake shows one kind of collaborative survival" (3-4).

For me, this work is a beginning. My work is not fixed. In some ways, my work is far from being finished. While the learning and the listening can be painful, I see this as an early step in my ongoing commitment to the Decolonial project of contemporary Canada. As an artist, I can contribute to the Decolonial project and seek to build my own Decolonial practice. In recovering from what I did not learn earlier in life, I plan to unforget actively through reading more Decolonial literature by Indigenous, BIPOC and settler-ally writers, and plan to share my knowledge with the people around me through the practice of my art. I also hope to find more efficient ways to participate in the Decolonial project once I am done with my master's degree. As I move away from my graduate education, my next steps will be to join a local community-based organization that fits my values.

To stay with the trouble is to recognize that the struggle will follow me around all my life; might as well stay with it. It's impossible to live purely, but that doesn't mean I am for toxicity. It is hard to stay optimistic in this impure world, but I am confident that through my work I can articulate ways of become-with one another and other-than-human beings in the Chthulucene. If we all wish to live in a world where there is less suffering, and more experimental justices, then we all need to redefine our relationships with one another, and with our environment.

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Appendix A

My two first attempts with *P. Australis* were done during the KOLAB Residency, and the Contingencies of Care Residency in spring/summer 2020.

Figure A1: Project for the KOLAB residency

This project was completed during the KOLAB Residency in 2020. This was my first attempt working with *P. australis*. I broke down *P. australis* fibres and spun them together to create this long rope.

Figure A2: Project for the Contingencies of Care residency

Figure A3: Project for the Contingencies of Care residency

This project was completed during the Contingencies of Care Residency in 2020. I coiled *P. australis* leaves together to create this basket-like object.

Appendix B

Processing raw plants for papermaking takes multiple steps. First, once I collected the *P. australis*, I had to cut the plant into small pieces and let it dry for several days (see Figure B1). Once I thoroughly dried the plant, I had to cook it for several hours in a solution of water and sodium carbonate (see Figure B2). When I was done cooking the plant, I had to rinse the fibres multiple times. After rinsing the fibres, I had to wring out the excess water and leave it all to dry. Once the fibres were dried, I had to weigh them and make sure they didn't exceed 2 lbs because the Hollander Beater only takes 2 lbs of fibres at a time. After I weighted the fibres, I could then process the fibres in the Hollander Beater (see Figure B3). After processing the fibres in the Hollander Beater, the fibres were now transformed into a pulp and ready to be used (see Figure B4).

Figure B1: Drying the *P. australis* in my kitchen, summer 2020

Figure B2: Cooking *P. australis*.

Figure B3: Beating the P. australis pulp in the Hollander Beater at the Atelier Retailles

Figure B4: Pieces of *P. australis* paper pulp (left), and compacted paper pulp (right).

Appendix C

Here are a few examples of experiments I did with *P. australis* paper pulp before creating my final work. All of these experiments have been rehydrated/reused to create my final work, which means that these following pieces no longer exist.

Figure C1: A *P. australis* paper tile. 6”/6”

Figure C2: A *P. australis* paper tile. 6”/6”

Figure C1 and C2 are two tile-like paper casts made out of *P. australis* were my first objects made of paper pulp I processed at the Atelier Retailles. I first created the moulds out of clay and cast them into plaster to finally cast them in paper.

Figure C3: Assembled sheets of *P. australis* paper. 18”/23”

This window-like piece was made in fall 2020. I stitched the paper sheets made out of *P. australis* together with decorative embroidery stitches. I also added decorative stitches all around the borders of the piece.

Figure C4: *P. australis* paper cast. 11”/20”

I made this paper cast made out of P. australis in fall 2020. I first created the mould out of clay, using a rope and a chain to complete the picture.

Appendix D

Here is the link to the video performance titled *Le Cerf-Volant*:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z0dWAu-unU&ab_channel=CamilleMarcoux