



# Abstracts

## Renewing Treaty Relations on the River of Life

Daniel Coleman / Rick Hill / Kelsey Leonard

Water is an important space in Indigenous and Western Treaty-making, as is modeled in the narrative of the Two Row Wampum Belt. When the Dutch and the Mohawks made the initial agreement in the early 17th century, they used the river as a metaphorical space in which the principles of the Good Mind, Justice and Peacemaking could take place between the Indigenous canoe and the Western Ship. More than this, the “river of life” places the natural world at the centre of the terms of treaty. The treaty-makers said the agreement would last “as long as the rivers flow, the sun rises each day, and the grass turns green each year.” They saw an equivalence between the lifecycles of the river, of the biome, and the lifecycles of human agreements with one another. Indeed, the formulators of the Two Row Wampum said that “no one can claim Mother Earth except the faces, waiting in the ground to be born.” Agreements between humans, according to this way of thinking, are not about claims for property but about the future lives (human and more-than-human) that emerge from Mother Earth. Our panel will consider this safe and healthy river space as a way to rebuild relationships in the era of reconciliation. Select authors of the recent publication Deyohahá:ge: Sharing the River of Life will examine the meaning and function of this treaty relationship space.

## Augmented reality as a settler technology: Pokémon Go, palimpsests, and the politics of place

Victoria Clowater

In this presentation, I will explore what the mobile game Pokémon GO reveals about the politics of place by exploring the ways that public memorialization and colonialism shape place knowledge, with a focus on monuments in Hamilton that have become part of the Pokémon GO gameworld. In my past work, I explore the power of Pokémon GO to shape place knowledge and relationships to place and space for players, as well as what the implications of this can be



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and politics of publicly memorializing place history is not neutral, marginalized communities are often prevented from memorialization (i.e., Carter 2014; Cristiano and Distretti 2017; Clowater 2021). Thus, the dominant place narrative—which in Canada is the white colonial narrative—is the version of place that often emerges in Pokémon GO's AR landscape. This has important implications for understanding how power is reinforced through public memorialization. Using specific examples of monuments in Hamilton that have become part of the Pokémon GO virtual landscape, I will illustrate these systems of power more explicitly, illustrating how settler colonial narratives are advanced through the game and through public memorialization more generally.

## Observe, report, extend: Designing projects to deepen learners' first-hand exposure to Hamilton

Melanie Bedore

This interactive workshop guides educators, community organizers, and others, in crafting impactful learning experiences that encourage learners to step beyond their usual environments and engage with parts of Hamilton they have yet to explore.

Drawing on my experience redesigning an urban geography project for McMaster undergraduate students—many of whom commute and rarely venture beyond the Westdale neighbourhood—I'll share strategies, insights, and lessons learned in guiding participants through unfamiliar urban landscapes and fostering deeper connections with the city's complexities.

The session will feature a presentation of the project framework, alongside practical methods for implementing experiential learning in urban environments. Participants will join a collaborative space where they will be invited to consider how social and spatial “bubbles” can be bridged, and how meaningful urban engagement across diverse audiences can be cultivated.

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## Guidebooks from Memory: Art, Storytelling, and the Spaces of Hamilton



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by Robert Motam (PhD, editor), Jojo Choo-Haney (BSW, visual art), and Jonathan Haney (MSW, musician), the project gathers anonymous submissions via a public website—stories tied to specific sites across Hamilton, from bus routes and hospitals to parks, demolished buildings, and even the spot where someone once saw a UFO.

These recollections were paired with original photography and compiled into a community-generated, unofficial guidebook—foregrounding the emotional, fleeting, and often overlooked geographies that shape everyday life. While the team hosted a handful of in-person workshops, most stories arrived through digital outreach, allowing for broad participation and a wide range of voices. Since 2016, the project has expanded to include editions for Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, and Kingston.

This presentation will share excerpts from the Hamilton guidebook and reflect on our interdisciplinary process—merging storytelling, photography, music, social work, and public engagement. We consider how acts of remembering and re-mapping can interrupt dominant urban narratives and offer more inclusive, grounded ways of understanding space and place.

## A New Frame / Beneath the Map

### Ben Robinson

My presentation would be shaped around my recent book, *As Is*, which is a poetic study of Hamilton, ON. The collection utilizes archival documents and local history, challenging the conception of Hamilton as a timeless and stable entity.

One of the poems addresses the fact that the first public building was likely a prison and what this means for a city whose motto is “The best place to raise a child.” Similarly, another poem considers the city’s shadowy namesake, George Hamilton, and the fact that the only supposed photograph of him was later discovered to be a forgery.

Rather than ahistorical boosterism based on uncritically regurgitated colonial myths, the poems in *As Is* focus on treaty, natural history and the land itself. Instead of relying on the arbitrary and ever-manipulable city limits as a frame for understanding this area, poems in the collection examine the tract of land described in the Between the Lakes treaty of 1792, which covers present-day Hamilton, and consider what viewing the region through these terms might reveal

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## Through the Thick Wood: Indigenous-Settler Entanglement at the Head of the Lake

Scott Martin

Nursery (AhGx-8) in the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, has been a locus of activity at least sporadically for millennia. It was one of many sites in the area. Located on the east-west waterway and overland portage route from western Lake Ontario (the Head of the Lake) to the Grand River and westwards, this site was likely known to many generations of travellers and traders. Several exotic and pseudo-exotic chipped stone pieces have been recovered at the site (and others in the broader Dundas Valley area) along with many more 'everyday' items pertaining to life between the wetland, the escarpment and the lake. Recently, what is believed to be evidence of a hitherto unknown Mississauga camp of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century has also been recognised. It is suggested that the occupants were members of Rev. Peter Jones' (Kahkewaquonaby's) maternal grandfather's band. Chief Wahbanosay's people have been mostly forgotten by Settlers. For the Mississaugas at the Head of the Lake, the years around AD 1800 were a time of great transition - the waning of the fur trade and unrelenting Settler encroachment. Some documentary evidence remains, however, and this will be explored in the context of archaeological finds from the area.

## Poetry in Place: Reading the land with local poets

Elise Bird / Elizabeth Tessie / Arwen Roussell

In the curated anthology Poetry in Place: Poetry and Hope in a Southern Ontario Bioregion, poets ask themselves, "What is it that the land has to say to us?"

In these days of climate disruption, biodiversity loss, a new awareness of the dire history of colonized Indigenous peoples, and the spectre of global pandemic, how can we hear the voices of the natural world? We suggest that poetry offers a powerful mode of attention and analysis, now as it always has.

In this presentation, Elise hosts contributing poets as they read their work aloud; discuss their unique relationship, spirituality, and poetic responsibility to the land; and engage questions from the audience.

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## Chris Heidebrecht

As a result of global warming driven by climate change, our planet is experiencing an escalating heat crisis. New global average temperature records continue to be set, and the frequency and intensity of extreme heat events have been and continue to increase worldwide. We often talk about extreme heat in quantitative terms – temperatures, statistics and models – but these alone cannot capture the full picture of who is most affected or how people experience and navigate heat in their daily lives. Community knowledge and lived experience are just as, if not more, important and necessary as numeric indicators when it comes to understanding extreme heat and heat injustice. Further, conventional heat risk assessments tend not to integrate the perspectives of community members, community support services or policymakers and planners. Born out of the recognition that maps can be powerful tools for sharing stories and making visible things that are often unseen, the aim of this current project is to approach heat risk differently and co-design an interactive map with individuals from across Hamilton. This map will integrate environmental and social data with lived experiences and community knowledge, resulting in a heat risk resource that provides a more complete picture of heat risk and heat injustice, and communicates ideas about how to best address Hamilton's heat crisis. For the conference I will be exhibiting initial work on this interactive map in paper format.

## em.i.gra.tion

### Jonny Garcia

The em.i.gra.tion exhibition by Jonny Garcia consists of 10 artworks that reflect his 10-year journey from 2014 to 2024, visually depicting his experience of arriving in Canada until attaining Canadian citizenship. This series captures the most significant moments throughout this intense journey. It reflects a period of both turmoil and growth, as he navigated the challenges of adapting to a new country.

## BIRD FICTION

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### Gary Barwin / Sarah Imrisek



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scene and hear their unique songs.

In a large city like Hamilton, people often feel distant from the natural world. “Bird Fiction” celebrates the biodiversity of urban nature by showing its resilience and how, even downtown, humans and the natural world can remain connected. The aesthetic is bright and lively. Audiences animate birds’ shapes, names and trigger their songs with their hands by pointing to the names of urban bird species contained in poems. All of this, set against vibrant footage from around Hamilton. The projection acts as a vivid playground where the urban, natural, human and the non-human can interact. “Bird Fiction” inspires audiences by showing the surprising diversity of birds that live in the city with humans. While acknowledging the very real effects of climate change, we can still become energized and find inspiration for positive change in the continuing adaptability of species. By connecting with the birds and by recognizing and learning their names, audiences can also learn more about the species that share their city.

## Stories of Migration and Belonging — Making Hamilton Home

**Natasha Martinez / Meredith Leonard**

Throughout its history, Hamilton has become home to hundreds of thousands of newcomers, displaced persons and refugees. This workshop invites participants into the Stories of Migration and Belonging exhibit at the Visitor Experience Centre. This exhibition provides insight into peoples’ journeys to Hamilton and showcases the diversity of contemporary immigration. Participants will have the opportunity to walk through the exhibit, hear migration stories through a video presentation, and have a conversation about the ways migration continues to shape Hamilton. The hour will close with time for collective reflection on migration and belonging.

## Urban parks as spaces of multispecies commoning

**Becky Ellis**

The Earth is currently in the midst of a global biodiversity crisis (Ceballos et al, 2020; Nath et al, 2022), a phenomenon made worse by climate chaos (Habibullah et al, 2022). Urban parks are



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Dr. Ellis will explore how the process of commoning can facilitate multispecies flourishing by creating crucial habitat, wildlife corridors, “wildness”, and relationships of reciprocity between humans and non-human nature. While commoning alone will not solve the biodiversity crisis, urban parks can be spaces that give glimpses into possibilities of flourishing even in the context of climate chaos, pollution, and habitat loss.

## Profane Mapping and the Brightside Neighbourhood Project

Simon Orpana / Matt McInnes / Nancy Bouchier

From 1910 to the 1960's, Brightside was a thriving neighbourhood of working people and immigrants. Nestled just to the east of the steel giant, Stelco, Brightsiders created a robust culture of mutual aid, sport, recreation, domesticity, and activism in the heart of what many outsiders considered to be an industrial badland. Brightsiders also witnessed the radical transformation of Hamilton's eastern lowlands, as inlets and open fields were steadily replaced with factories, sewage treatment and waste facilities. In the 1950s and 60s, homes in the neighbourhood were slowly bought or expropriated to be dismantled, house by house, to make room for industrial expansion. Today, all that remains of the 200+ homes of Brightside are a dozen or so houses clinging to the south side of Burlington Street and a couple buildings to the north.

The Brightside Neighbourhood Project was created in 2016. Working with former residents of Brightside, we facilitated a series of collaborative mapping and storytelling meetings to commemorate and celebrate Brightside's history and culture. Much of this research is consolidated on the City of Hamilton's Digital Civic Museum website, where users can explore interactive maps and listen to stories about the neighbourhood told by Brightsiders. In this presentation, we will talk about the Brightside Neighbourhood Project, the Civic Museum website, and the idea of “profane mapping” that we coined to describe the collaborative/artistic mapping process developed while working on this project.

## Poetry, Protest, and Place: Learning Hamilton Through Solidarity

Zahra Tootonsab



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storytelling, and care.

The performance will highlight how diverse movements for justice intersect across this city: Indigenous knowledges and activism that confront colonial histories and center Indigenous lands and peoples (including the 1492 Land Back Lane protests); climate justice organizing that resists ecological precarity; Palestinian solidarity that connects Hamilton to global struggles; and the voices of workers, students, and educators who gathered in collective action during the CUPE 3906 TA strike. My work also carries echoes of Iranian activism, bridging my cultural heritage with Hamilton's local geographies of resistance.

By pairing the rhythm of the daf with the spoken word, I aim to evoke both the urgency and the persistence of these movements. Poetry becomes a spatial practice: a mapping of Hamilton not only as a built environment, but as a living archive of protest, resilience, and community solidarity. This creative form situates Hamilton as a place remembered through chants/music/rhythms, gatherings, and shared visions of justice.

This presentation resonates with the conference's call to think critically and creatively about Hamilton, celebrating the city as a site where stories of land, struggle, and solidarity converge.

## Girls on the Streets: Navigating Public Space and Social Control in Victorian Hamilton

**Jordyn Beaupré**

Interactions with the urban environment are formed at the intersections of social construction, and the historic experience of girls provides one avenue to glimpse this complexity. In my presentation, I mean to consider the gendered boundaries of the public sphere, and how age, class, and standards of acceptable femininity informed the experience of girls on the streets of Hamilton in the past. In the late-Victorian period, girlhood morality became a significant site of social intervention, and the public presence of girls on the streets exemplified these anxieties. Citizens and the police collaborated in their efforts to surveil and curtail unwanted social behaviour, and the liberal use of vagrancy charges was particularly useful in this effort. By tracing these encounters, I argue that Hamilton's urban landscape was a space actively structured by gendered power. Public space was a contested arena where girls may have engaged in crime, but also in work, play, friendship, dating, asylum seeking, and kinship with



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## Culverts and Contamination: A Biography of a Creek through Judicial Proceedings, 1986-1990

Gavin Rees

In light of recent events that have transpired between the city and the Chedoke Creek, this paper examines ten days of court proceedings that occurred in Hamilton from 1988 to 1991 that contribute a small piece to a growing interest in examining the Chedoke Creek and its relationship with the city and its many other natural environments. The trial involves a Hamilton grocer, a Burlington man, and an oil company who were charged under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and the Water Resources Act (WRA) for leaking 1,100 litres of fuel oil into the creek, and eventually, Cootes Paradise. Beyond being an important part of the creek's story, the paper elucidates lessons about public memory, nature, and the importance of place in historical writing.

## Beyond the Welcome Package: Treaty-Informed and Place-Conscious Ritual as Soil Work for Ethical Engagements

Abdullellah Hbbani (Abdo)

What is the role of treaty-informed and place-conscious ritual in newcomers' settlement and their relationship with Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians? This presentation reflects on Canada's "White Civility" (Coleman, 2006) through the lens of my own displacement from Sudan and immigration to Hamilton, where institutional orientation practices often overlook Indigenous presence and newcomer epistemologies alike. I contrast this with Sudanese Taaruf which is a ritualistic hospitality practice where guests and hosts are mutually oriented to shared landscapes and relationships, and its adaptation in my Hamilton-based Pamoja tea gatherings.

Structured as a 15-minute presentation followed by Q&A, I will:

- Share a story about Winston Churchill in Sudan (one of the British colonies) and how naming a park after him in Hamilton reproduces colonial exclusion.



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This talk aligns with the conference's themes by introducing treaty-informed African epistemology to reimagine Hamilton's public spaces. It asks: How might place-conscious rituals create ethical space for locals residents, while honoring Indigenous sovereignty and newcomers belonging?

## A City of Words: re-imagining place through poetry in Hamilton, Ontario

Stephanie Sushko

This presentation concerns a Poetry Map which I had the opportunity to create several years ago during Dr. Simon Orpana's class "Critical and Creative Approaches to Literary Studies: Sharing Knowledges in/with/for Communities" at McMaster University. It is based upon the premise that, in addition to facilitating physical movement from place to place, maps deeply influence, and are influenced by, the ways in which we think and feel about the places they portray. In contrast to maps on a page, these personal "maps in our minds" bear much beyond the proverbial street or building names – which are often rooted in colonial and patriarchal power – instead featuring drawings, symbols, and words which not only speak to the experiences and perceptions of those who place them there, but also denaturalize the aforementioned hierarchical place-based powers.

Navigating to the Home page of the map's site (<https://hamiltonpoetrymap.wordpress.com/>) and selecting "Explore the Poetry Map" takes you to a map of the city of Hamilton which, alongside the place names familiar from most maps of the city (Hess Street, Bay Street, Barton, etc.), you will see many green "pins." At each pin, you will be able to read poems which have been written about that particular place by ordinary people, words which reflect what the place means or has meant to them, or what they experienced, felt, or thought in relation to that place.

## Understanding International Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Climate Change Through Photovoice



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part of the "climate change generation", little is known about the factors shaping their attitudes towards their relationships with climate change. This is especially true for international students, many of whom hail from the Global South.

As such, the goal of our project across four Canadian universities (McMaster University, Hamilton; Trent University, Peterborough; University of British Columbia, BC; and Queen's University, Kingston) was to understand the perceptions and attitudes of international graduate university students with regard to the relationship between climate change and human health. This presentation is based on the experiences of 15 international graduate students at McMaster University, Hamilton. Our study embraced photovoice, participatory arts-informed research, which allowed participants to convey their perspectives through individual interviews and photographs. Thematic analysis of participant-generated photographs and interviews in Hamilton generated preliminary themes that highlighted how participants perceived the impacts of climate change on human health: "one planet, one health"; "incompatibility of capitalism with ecological wellbeing"; "collectivism and individualism"; and "mass media and eco-anxiety."

The findings identify and make available context-specific innovative strategies and best practices to foster a culture of engagement and advocacy on climate action in Hamilton. From a methodological perspective, arts-based data, such as participant-generated photographs, offer nuances of participant experiences that traditional methods fail to convey, especially for vulnerable populations.

## Steel City Transit Series

**Esther Kok**

The Steel City Transit Series is a print media "zine" series that explores issues in public transportation in Hamilton and throughout the GTHA. It originated in September of 2024, and is supported in editing and publishing by the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection. Seven issues have been published so far, ranging in topics from how to ride the bus to transit history and visual research. I research, write, illustrate, and design each issue independently, with exception for one issue that was a collaboration with a student club. The issues are built around descriptive maps, and each issue features at least one map that I develop myself.



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the feeling that it was built for them, with hope that they will see our city transform in the coming years with the improvement of transit infrastructure.

## Critical Analysis: Hamilton, Ontario - Beyond Stereotypes

**Mutaz Khider**

Hamilton, Ontario, often conjures images rooted in its industrial past, earning it monikers like "Steel City" or "The Hammer." These preconceived notions, while historically grounded, frequently overshadow the city's evolving identity and complex social fabric. This critical analysis aims to dissect the negative stereotypes and preconceived ideas surrounding Hamilton, moving beyond superficial perceptions to explore its multifaceted reality. We will investigate the city's history as a sanctuary for migrants, newcomers, refugees, and political activists, and compare its urban offerings and social dynamics to those of larger Canadian metropolises such as Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver. Crucially, this analysis will be underpinned by a rigorous application of key urban sociological theories, providing a robust framework for understanding Hamilton's unique urban experience.

## Defying the Trope of Isolation and Aging, for an Independent Woman. (or Growing Community in My Garden)

**Cynthia Meyer**

My (Cynthia's) adventures in returning to Hamilton, my childhood home, as a mature and elder woman. Having lived in many places in the wide world, -even in the wilds of downtown Toronto, I could not have predicted how important it would be to live in my own birthplace.