

On Cultural Commons and Commoning in Aboriginal Street Art Murals: The Case of 7th Generation Image Makers

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Abstract

Centred on the results of an original case study of 7th Generation Image Makers, a Toronto-based Aboriginal street arts organization, this article contends that street art acts as a complex arrangement of urban cultural commons – represented through both knowledge and neighbourhood commons – where expressions of cultural production create space for resistance to the increased privatization of public space. This argument is based on Foucault's *biopolitics* which understands resistance as both alternative to, and independent of, the exercise of hegemonic power. The resistance of biopolitical labour is seen as a rupture rather than a collapse of capital such that alternative spaces are created. Commons, then, must be understood as both space and activity rather than a resource, a conception that Peter Linebaugh refers to as *commoning*.

Across from High Park in Toronto's west end, several professional and aspiring artists paint a mural on both sides of a Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) underpass. The piece is sketched out in myriad colours, taking traditional graffiti forms and aesthetics: steps, tags, and flowing lines of spray paint. As the artists continue to work, rivers and forests, and multitudes of animals begin to appear. Savannah grasslands meet with wetlands and boreal forest. Crooked trees appear, marking traditional meeting places. The mural presents the original landscape of Toronto, a meeting place of numerous watersheds including the Don, Rouge, Humber, and many others. When the mural is examined closely, an image of several poles attached to an underwater basket emerges. This image signifies the origin of the name 'Toronto', meaning 'poles in water' (see Figure 2, Figure 3).

This work, painted from July 20 to 26, 2013 is the creation of 7th Generation Image Makers (7GIM), a Toronto-based Aboriginal arts organization. Every summer 7GIM staff, volunteers, and professional artists engage in street art projects, painting murals centering on Aboriginal teachings and stories and connected to the local communities and environment. Originally founded in 1995 to provide outreach and draw attention to issues, risks, and challenges that face Aboriginal youth in

Toronto, 7GIM has gradually developed into a semi-autonomous arts education organization dedicated to urban Aboriginal youth.

Graffiti scholar and curator Cedar Lewisohn (2008), in presenting nuanced definitions of street art and graffiti, argues that “the best street art and graffiti are illegal. This is because the illegal works have political and ethical connotations that are lost in sanctioned works” (127). Similarly, environmental scholar Isis Brook (2007) claims that “the illegal nature of the work is what gives it an edge and it is this edge that makes some work effective in reflecting and commenting on the urban context in which it is found” (308). This sentiment too often seems to be reflexively and romantically echoed by street art and graffiti artists, as well as other scholars studying the subject, when the authenticity of authorized street art practice is called into question (Lewisohn, 2008).

Lewisohn is undoubtedly correct in stating that there are important elements of street art and graffiti that exist outside of authorized interventions, where the allure of street art and graffiti is its subversive, illicit capacity to push and challenge notions of authorization. This aspect of street art and graffiti is well documented (Philips, 1999; Austin, 2001; McDonald, 2001; Lewisohn, 2008, 2011), and presents important challenges to notions of authorship, appropriation, and public space. However, there must also be moments where these challenges, this resistance to authority in the form of both state and capital, are present within authorized environments. The questions that arise, therefore, are: When is an authorized piece authentic in the same way as an unauthorized piece? In which contexts might this occur? Is there some degree to which the subversion of authority actually occurs within a context where it is simultaneously granted? Aboriginal street art, and in particular the murals of 7th Generation Image Makers, offer one such context, making use of authorized spaces in order to engage with decolonization and to shape a new narrative around urban Aboriginal identity.

Colonization and Aboriginal resistance

The historical narrative of Canada’s post-settler colonialism effectively focuses on the slow displacement of Aboriginal peoples by predominantly white Anglophones. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP):

[A] careful reading of history shows that Canada was founded on a series of bargains with Aboriginal peoples - bargains this country has never fully honoured. Treaties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments were agreements to share the land. They were replaced by policies intended to remove Aboriginal people from their homelands... suppress Aboriginal nations and their governments... undermine Aboriginal cultures... [and] stifle Aboriginal identity (1996a).

The collection of policies known as the Indian Act sought to define Aboriginality and set borders around what constituted Aboriginal culture (RCAP, 1996b). The creation of “Indian status” regulated Aboriginal populations under the contentious categories of Indian, Inuit, and Métis. The other side of these policies, and their eventual goal, was the forced enfranchisement of large numbers of people as Canadian citizens, thereby terminating their legal Indian status, regardless of self-identification. Enfranchisement started with Aboriginal women who married white men, but grew to include serving the in armed forces, working off-reserve for too long, and simply receiving an education (RCAP, 1996b). Massive population loss amongst Aboriginal nations led to a belief that Aboriginal peoples would die out soon after the start of the 20th century. When this did not come to pass, the Canadian government continued to attempt assimilation through the residential school system, which stole

entire generations of Aboriginal youth away from their families and cultures. All Aboriginal peoples are still feeling the shockwaves of this program. The zenith of the residential school system was in the 1930s, and while the Canadian government was committed to dismantling the system in the 1940s, the program remained in effect until the last residential school closed down in 1996 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

While Aboriginal resistance to both cultural destruction and assimilation have remained both constant and varied, a critical mass of political organization began in response to the 1969 White Paper. The general strategy was to push back against specific aspects of the Indian Act rather than see it abolished all together and risk summary assimilation (RCAP, 1996a). Aboriginal organizations and activists were heavily involved in shaping the discourse around the constitutional battles of the 1980s and early 1990s. They made some headway in the 1982 Constitution Act, and the rejected 1992 Charlottetown Accord (RCAP, 1996). Small gains have been made with regard to self-organization and self-governance, and Aboriginal peoples are increasingly centering their cultures and perspectives in Canadian social, political, economic, and judicial arenas. This renewed political organization came alongside an intensified privatization of resources, often in contradiction to treaty rights and expectations (RCAP, 1996b). Not only are Aboriginal peoples pushing to take back ancestral and historical territory and cultural products, they are also fighting against the encroaching privatization of these same resources, and resisting new land grabs. Significant portions of land in Canada, particularly along the West Coast and in the more northern regions, were simply annexed by the Canadian government without treaties. However, the Canadian government has remained largely ambivalent to the question of Aboriginal identity, which increasingly defies the boundaries of reserves, and is expressed in part through a growing urbanization (Peters, 2011).

Increasingly, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are living in cities, a relatively recent trend that has continued to accelerate. According to census data, in 1951 only 5.1 percent of Aboriginal peoples lived in urban environments (Norris, Clatworthy and Peters, 2013). By the time of the 2006 census, this had increased to over half, at 54 percent of the total population of 1,172,785 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Toronto has the fourth highest Aboriginal population at 26,575, after Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Norris et al. (2013) suggest that varying population growth rates between these cities reflect differing processes in patterns of urbanization. This implies that the identity of *urban Aboriginal* is as culturally limiting as the term Aboriginal itself. Although the difference between patterns of urbanization between cities is beyond the scope of this article, a growing body of research (Anderson, 2013; Hokowhitu, 2010; Norris et al., 2013; Walker, 2013; Warry, 2007) demonstrates that urbanization narratives reflect complex Aboriginal identities. While Canadian census data tells us that Aboriginal peoples are increasingly moving to urban centres, the 7GIM mural at High Park reframes this narrative by positioning Aboriginal peoples at the heart of Toronto.

Aboriginal artists challenge these narratives through resistance to hegemonic definitions of Aboriginal art, where “[a]uthenticity, or more specifically its myth... has therefore been at the centre of the struggle of contemporary Aboriginal artists” (Kermoal, 2010: 169). Indigenous artists across North America have become increasingly recognized for the adoption of hip-hop, remix, sampling, and appropriation practices as a symbol of resistance, and of subversion of power. The curators of *Beat Nation* [3], Kathleen Ritter and Tania Willard, argue that the “prevalence of hip hop in Aboriginal communities should not be seen as a break from the past, but a continuum” (Ritter and Willard, 2013: 5).

Native art practice thus presents an opportunity to share alternative viewpoints in the increasingly polarized discourse around property rights (both intellectual and physical) in urban centres. Typical research on urban Aboriginal identity focuses on cultural and socio-political issues (Hokowhitu, 2011; Vandervelde, 2011; Warry, 2007), and urban migration (Norris et al., 2013). Much research has been focused on culture and collective memory, although typically with an understandable focus towards rural communities (Cherubini, 2011; Ettawageshick, 1999; Krmpotich, 2010). Scholarship in native art practices has either focused on traditional and fine art (Kermoal, 2011; Spears, 2004; Vervoot, 2001), or on hip hop and rap music (Vályi, 2011; Manzo, 2013). Contemporary aesthetic practices in digital art and graffiti find purchase alongside, and within traditional motifs and customs. This is hardly exclusive to modern native artistic practice, but it does become more prominent as Canadian Aboriginal cultures resist biased representations. As Anishinaabek art scholar Shandra Spears (2004) states: “[w]e must be free, not only from the trap of colonial stereotyping, but from limited definitions about the purpose, style, content and direction of ‘Native art.’ Native art cannot and should not be narrowly defined. A single description of Native art would lock us into yet another colonial, two-dimensional definition of our very three-dimensional artistic selves” (126).

7th Generation Image Makers

The analysis and results of this article are based on a larger case study I conducted, working with 7GIM between 2013 and 2015. This case study followed the process and practice of painting a mural for the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto. Primary research included two main objects of study with 7GIM: observation of practice in the form of interviews, organizational observation, and analysis of content. The latter included a visual analysis of 7GIM artistic products – primarily the three murals described below. This primary research was couched within a critical policy analysis of the City of Toronto’s graffiti management strategy.

Anishinaabek artist Maria Hupfield founded 7GIM to provide a creative space, learning centre and outlet for at-risk Aboriginal youth (<http://7thgenimagemakers.weebly.com/>). This occurred amidst the backdrop of a resurgence in Aboriginal rights movements across Canada. The organization of the 1970s influenced the movements of the 1980s and 1990s, with activists, artists, and political leaders struggling to have their voices heard. Land claim conflicts between Aboriginal peoples, commercial developers, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments escalated into high profile confrontations, notably in 1990 in Oka, Quebec (Valiante and Rakobowchuk, 2015) and in 1995 the Ipperwash Crisis in Ontario (Linden, 2007). In response to the complete failure of governmental policy and legislation, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was formed in 1991 to create a way forward, publishing its final report in 1996 (RCAP, 1996). While RCAP remains highly influential in changing the narratives and discourse around Aboriginal identity, culture, and historical interpretation, federal and provincial governments have largely ignored its policy recommendations (Peters, 2011). Significant concerns surrounding the welfare of Aboriginal youth in urban centres were also coming to the fore (Warry, 2007). In 1995, the Toronto City Council established the Graffiti Transformation Project, ostensibly to eradicate graffiti by engaging with youth. Recognizing an opportunity, Hupfield created 7GIM as an outlet for Aboriginal perspectives on urban issues and as a form of guidance to Aboriginal youth.

A 2007 report by the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) found that Aboriginal youth face three main challenges in urban settings: “the difficulties associated with fostering positive Aboriginal identities in the city, the lack of employment opportunities, and having to quit school before

graduation” (UATF, 2007, 22-23). These primary social issues, coupled with high levels of racism towards Aboriginal peoples (UATF, 2007) are tied to the more visible issues of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and homelessness. These challenges must be addressed, and they help define the mission of organizations such as 7GIM. Additionally, however, effective change must appreciate the complex notions of community, culture, identity, and production that make up urban Aboriginal identity.

Inside the 7GIM youth drop-in centre, a large mural presents the 8th Fire Prophecy. This piece paints the teaching of the 7th Generation, exemplifies the urban and cultural struggle of Aboriginal youth, and holds a vision of the future. Street art thus is a useful medium for 7GIM not only because it provides a public forum, but also because there are both sub-textual and overt associations with civil disobedience and protest. The original program focused on street art, but has since branched into a number of different directions, including a drop-in centre and workshops on subjects such as visual art, digital production, and lyric writing. Street art continues to be a major part of the summer programming, with between one and five murals painted each year.

Three murals around Toronto were accessed as primary sites for analysis: Allen Gardens (2012), High Park (2013), and the 7GIM Pan Am Games mural (2014). While many other murals have been painted, these three murals are closely linked in terms of stories, teachings, and the artists who worked on them. These three murals are related through a shared association with original ecosystems, and even more notably, for telling the origin story of Toronto through images of fishing baskets.

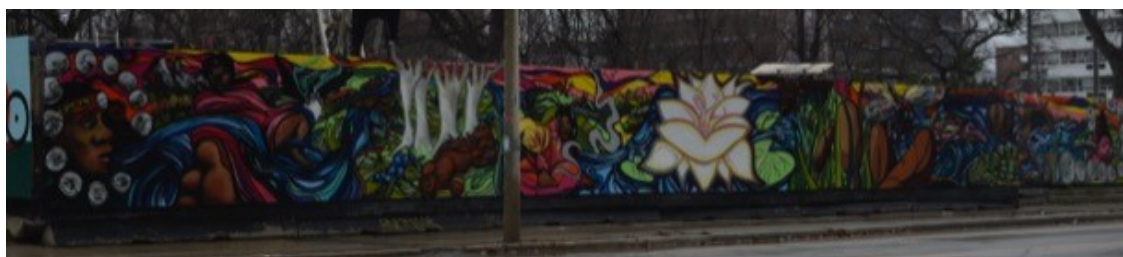


Figure 1: Allen Gardens mural (2012). Photo: Patrick MacInnis, University of Toronto

The Allen Gardens mural (Figure 1) was painted in 2012 as part of a five sided, 700 foot long mural at Allen Gardens Park at Sherbourne St. and Gerrard St. E. In this example, five Aboriginal groups painted one side each. The mural as a whole is known as *All My Relations*, and is dedicated to the hundreds of murdered and missing indigenous women. Each side takes different perspectives – Thirteen Moons teachings [2], history, South American Indigeneity, Earth teachings, and Water teachings. The Water teachings, which were assigned to 7GIM are Anishinaabek teachings which reflect the importance of women in representing, maintaining, and regenerating water. It was during the painting of the Allen Gardens mural that 7GIM learned that the original meaning of Toronto was “poles in the water”. For the first time, this story was painted by the organization. The mural is framed with the Thirteen Moon teachings (these are linked with the purification of water and the cultural importance and centrality of women).

The High Park mural (Figure 2) was painted in 2013, on both walls of a TTC underpass on Clendanan Ave. across from High Park, on Bloor St. W. Where the Allen Gardens mural was primarily concerned with water teachings and representations of the feminine, the High Park mural was focused on ecosystems. Research on the area by 7GIM showed High Park to be a unique meeting ground between a number of ecosystems – wetlands, Black Oak savannahs, and forest zones, which

were transitional between southern Carolinian forests and northern Boreal forests. This convergence of flora and fauna was in turn supported by five major watersheds flowing into Lake Ontario. These areas served as meeting points for the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee peoples, and supported their portaging and trading activities, celebrations, and large villages. Further impetus for the placement of this mural near High Park partly resulted from a 2011 Mohawk park occupation and protest against the creation of mountain bike trails over the top of sacred burial sites. Having identified substantial confusion and hurt between the local community and Mohawk protesters, 7GIM wanted to create a mural that would advance a broader understanding of the importance of the High Park area (and Toronto in general) for the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee peoples. Recognition of their history would also give something back to the community.



Figure 2: High Park mural, west side (2013). Photo: Patrick MacInnis, University of Toronto.

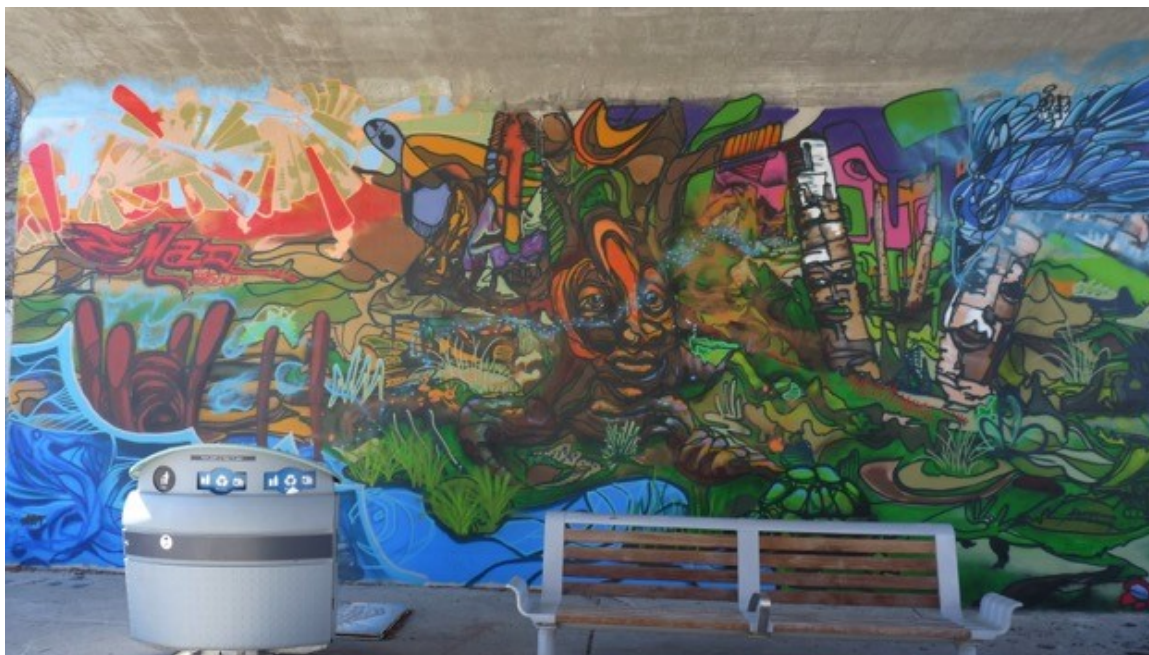


Figure 3: High Park mural, east side (2013). Photo: Patrick MacInnis, University of Toronto.

The Pan Am Games mural (Figure 3), titled *Water: Our Lifeline, Our Spirit*, was painted in 2014 as part of the Aboriginal Participation Program at the 2015 Pan American Games. This mural depicts the shared ecological heritage of both the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek peoples in the Toronto area. It created a space to present different cultural teachings, framed by the Anishinaabek northern white cedar and the Haudenosaunee eastern white pine. This mural once again emphasizes water, looking at its importance in traditional ecosystems as well as for the traditions of different Aboriginal communities. Relationships are traced between the underworld, land/water, and sky worlds through the sacred trees framing the piece.

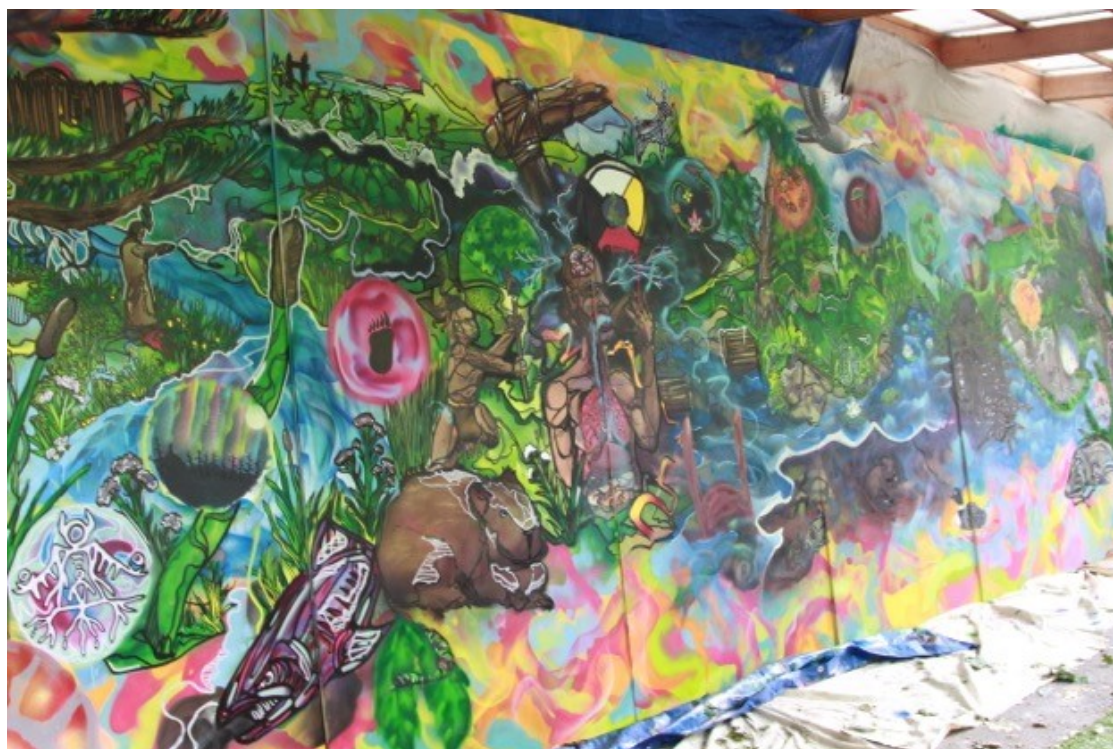


Figure 3: Pan Am Games mural (2014). Photo: Lindsey Lickers. Accessed courtesy of 7th Generation Image Makers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four artists associated with 7GIM. Three of the participants were primary lead artists on all three of the murals discussed in this research project. The fourth participant worked on the High Park mural and also acted as a workshop facilitator with 7GIM. The small sample size was intended to provide context and depth to the specific cultural and social practices of 7GIM (while acknowledging the size of 7GIM and its organizational structure). Questions such as those about graffiti vandalism were not designed to create a generalization about understandings of graffiti in Toronto. Rather, the interviews with 7GIM artists gave insight into 7th Generation Image Makers as an organization, and illuminated the specific art practices of the artists interviewees. Specificity is an integral part of this research, and this was stressed by all interview participants:

I don't speak for First Nations across North and South America. I'm an Anishinaabek man, but still I don't speak for all the Anishinaabek Nations, I speak for my community, from my teachers and my mentors, the way I was taught. So those are the stories and the teachings that I carry. So it's very clear that, even Anishinaabek, our stories and teachings might change from community to community, which is a really beautiful thing (Interview with Geoffrey, 14-5-2014).

In order to understand the significance of these murals it is important to first consider the historical and contemporary socio-political conditions that influence the artists of 7GIM. Placing dates and history around graffiti is a fairly subjective practice, and indeed most authors writing on the subject (Lewisohn, 2008, 2011; McDonald, 2013; Young, 2014a) tell a story of wall-art and writing that dates back to the earliest human cultures. Examples include animals painted in the Cave of El Castillo, Spain, 42,000 years ago, the petroglyphs of the Americas, messages carved into the walls of Pompeii, and the carvings of soldiers and travellers throughout European history (McDonald, 2013). Historical

perspective is central to the context of this study; each of the artists at 7GIM have stated that telling stories on walls is a continuation of their own cultural practices dating back thousands of years. While contemporary graffiti and street art might inform some of the aesthetic practices, the practice itself sits within both an expanded and specific history. The connection between these historical practices and contemporary street art is important, particularly when looking at the context of Aboriginal murals, where they are not simply an aesthetic object, story, or history, but also a means of demarginalization and decolonization, an assertion of authority and connection.

Four themes can be identified in the work of 7GIM: community, decolonization, place, and identity. These concepts are interrelated, but explore different facets of the production that occurs through mural creation. Community represents the relational engagement of 7GIM in their mural painting; their relationship with the communities where they paint their murals, and their relationship with the communities from which they draw their teachings. Seventh Generation Image Makers are producing community murals and are teaching communities in Toronto about their struggles, their needs, and their cultures. Community engagement in a general sense is vital to the work of 7th Generation Image Makers – without community support they would not receive funding, and the educational aspect would be for naught. However, the concept of community is also more nuanced and complex than this high-level overview suggests. Amidst a broader community of graffiti artists and writers, 7GIM not only presents graffiti as a practice, they also situate themselves as respected actors and participants within this broader community.

To protect and preserve their murals, 7GIM engages with graffiti subcultures. A vital aspect of community, however, is that it is not merely a localized concept. Community is a relational term, connecting a variety of spaces through cultural production. For 7th Generation Image Makers, community is representative of the places that members of the organization are from, and the places from where they draw their inspiration and teachings. Subsequently, these communities are also connected to the communities where the murals are painted, and where teachings link specific geographical spaces with new relationships.

Decolonization is most clearly identified in the rejection of mainstream narratives about urban Aboriginal identity. This is done by asserting a historical legacy which is associated with Toronto through visual representations. The Allen Gardens mural acts in part to challenge the sexualization of Aboriginal women by generating new meanings and demarginalizing the role of Aboriginal women in society. Likewise the High Park mural reconstructs associations between Aboriginal peoples and urban spaces and challenges assimilationist narratives surrounding urban Aboriginal populations:

For Aboriginal people, facing a history of oppression, there's a lot of yearning to get things out there in whatever avenue you can, and especially raising awareness. I think that graffiti culture and street art has that opportunity, has a really long history of doing that (Interview with Mosteller, 9-5-2014).

Place showed up most obviously in the attachment of the artists to the physical environment, but also in the critique of the colonial legacy and the contemporary neoliberal privatization of land. This is a more complex notion of place, where specific places and environments (High Park as a meeting place of eco-systems) are tied to outside communities through teachings learned from community Elders. Identity is reflexive of all of these themes, and of the relationship between self and complex communities. The artists of 7th Generation Image Makers had strong associations with place, with the land of Toronto, the land of their ancestral communities, and the land of North America in general.

In many ways the work of 7th Generation Image Makers facilitates the production of cultural identity for youth who are struggling with place in the urban environment.

Even when sanctioned by the city, street art nevertheless disrupts the notion of cities as stable spaces, exemplifying the mutability of colours, shapes, emphasis, and stories. Each time they paint a new mural, 7GIM reconstructs, or simply repositions, a portion of the city as public common, a space for people to observe, learn and become a part of the community. This is 7GIM's fundamental strategy, to centre Aboriginal people, stories, struggles, and history within urban landscapes. The High Park mural is positioned simultaneously at a *site* of struggle and resistance, and as a *reimagining* of struggle and resistance (by incorporating local communities into Aboriginal connections to urban spaces). The significance of the High Park mural does not rest solely in its association with past protest. However, the association is there and must inform understandings of the art piece as an act of commoning (in terms of neighbourhood identification and knowledge creation). Using media such as murals, a new generation of Aboriginal artists are working to change the narrative around urban Aboriginal peoples, placing issues of oppression, homelessness, and alcoholism and drug abuse front and centre, while simultaneously giving voice to a vision of what the city should be.

Developing a cultural commons

Foucault's biopolitics, as conceptualized by Hardt and Negri (2009), provides a foundation for understanding the relational quality of the commons. Hardt and Negri (2009) theorize biopolitical resistance as both alternative to and independent of the exercise of hegemonic power. The resistance of biopolitical labor is understood as a "rupture" rather than a "collapse" of capital, which can create alternative spaces. David Harvey (2010) finds that the increasing capacities of global production have allowed capital to modify labor-forces and commodities in order to escape catastrophic crises. Cornel West (1990) argues that without outside pressure or *crisis*, transformation is ultimately subsumed or stagnated and critics of culture working from within institutions of power will necessarily find their work "simultaneously progressive and coopted" (94). Dyer-Witherford (1999) claims that the very power and penetration of capital creates its own nodes of rupture:

At every moment we will see how people oppose capital's technological discipline by refusal or reappropriation; how these struggles multiply throughout capital's orbit; how conflicts at one point precipitate crises in another; and how activists are using the very machines with which capital integrates its operations to connect their diverse rebellions (92).

Capital thus avoids crisis through geographical flexibility and by reorienting the pressures of outside and inside disruptions. Casting biopolitical power as similarly dynamic is therefore essential to expressions of resistance, but this dynamism must be similarly drawn from both material and immaterial struggle, and a relational understanding of the commons.

Hardt and Negri's (2009) biopolitical struggle is carried out by a largely non-exclusionary working class they call *multitude*, a moderately vague categorization that necessitates a generalized and homogenous understanding of *identity*. However, this generalization does not infer an absence of identity, but rather states that diverse identities do not endanger a broader conceptualization of biopolitical labor. In place of a non-distinct mass, "[t]he diversity of subjectivities implied by the multitude who are engaged in class struggle requires us to investigate each instance of struggle" (Caraway, 2011: 49). Biopolitical resistance finds one such instance of struggle in the cultural

production of Aboriginal street art: “[b]y telling their stories, Aboriginal artists show the Canadian public that active resistance is everywhere” (Kermoal, 2010: 172).

So what then does biopolitics look like? For Hardt and Negri (2009), biopolitical labor power takes its form as *exodus*, “a refusal of the increasingly restrictive fetters placed on its productive capacities by capital” (152). The requirements for this exodus are not simply found in the refusal to produce, in the subversion of production, but rather are “only possible on the basis of the common – both access to the common and the ability to make use of it” (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 153). This use of the commons helps to construct the notion that an action need not necessarily be politically charged and revolutionary to be an exercise of biopolitical power. Rather, expressions of biopolitical power can be found in struggles for alternate subjectivities, as is evident when the urban environment enables uncharacteristic and innovative initiatives.

This disruption is witnessed in Young’s (2014a, 2014b) idea of urban enchantment which deconstructs everyday urban flow by replacing *transition* between spaces with *encounter*. Urban enchantment does not necessarily denote delight or wonder at an object, but simply the fact of being arrested or surprised, “halted in our passage through public space and everyday life, suspended in a momentary relation with an image or a word” (Young, 2014b: 45). Young (2014b) makes clear that this is not limited to pleasure in an encounter; enchantment also can involve fear, anger, outrage, confusion and disgust. Similarly, Dovey et al. (2014) state that regardless of its qualities as art or as vandalism, acts of graffiti in urban space “throws its publicness into contention” (40), and creates awareness of, and new purposes for forgotten spaces. These disruptions occur during encounters involving both authorized and unauthorized street art. This is not to say that the authorization (or lack thereof) of a piece does not matter in an encounter – indeed, the question of whether a piece is authorized is often central to the encounter, helping to develop a larger enchantment. From a biopolitical perspective, legal murals are tied to unauthorized graffiti as modes of cultural production which are not tied explicitly to capital accumulation (in fact, such graffiti is often resistant and opposed to capital accumulation).

The murals produced by 7GIM provide a space for disruption and encounter to advance the objectives of decolonization and demarginalization (as well as offering a place for specific Aboriginal cultural production). Biopolitics thus presents the conditions of agency and resistance against cultural imperialism. Hegemonic influence in cultural appropriation comes to the forefront, as relationships of power – particularly in Western media – are unequal and unbalanced (Rogers, 2006). Cultural appropriation is a complex and dynamic negotiation: a dominant image appropriated by a marginalized culture as a form of resistance might then be turned around by a dominant culture to assert a new identity.

Aboriginal-specific graffiti reflects diverse meanings and motivations, often tending towards Phillip’s (1999) conception of political graffiti. In December of 2012, a teach-in called “Idle No More” was held in Saskatoon in direct response to the Canadian government’s Bill C-45, and more generally to the ongoing exploitation of Aboriginal peoples and marginalization of treaty rights (www.idlenomore.ca). Tags and pieces bearing the name Idle No More began to appear across Canadian cities, demanding that Aboriginal issues take centre stage. Their struggle was written into the stones of the urban environment:

For Aboriginal people, facing a history of oppression, there's a lot of yearning to get things out there in whatever avenue you can, especially raising awareness. I think that graffiti culture and street art has that opportunity, has a really long history of doing that (Interview with Mosteller, 9-5-2014).

The murals created by 7GIM engage with urban enchantment as both an eye-catching disruption and a means of education. The creation of space is noticed, and people are expected to stop and think about their environment. These key notions of street art as an effective mode of communication against decolonization and hegemonic narratives of identity, inform the ways in which street art acts as a commons. This bridges the gap between the somewhat "inert" traditional physical property-based commons and the more "dynamic" immaterial cultural and knowledge commons (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 139).

Hess (2008) provides a typical working definition of a property or resource-based commons, describing it as "a resource shared by a group where the resource is vulnerable to enclosure, overuse and social dilemmas. Unlike a public good, it requires management and protection in order to sustain it" (37). This definition places enclosure front-and-centre within a commons discussion. Numerous scholars (Harvey, 2006, 2010; Hess, 2008; Hyde, 2010; Low and Smith, 2006) have discussed commons in terms of the increasing privatization of public spaces in cities, and the ensuing repercussions. These include decreasing access to traditional public infrastructure such as parks (Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 1992), crackdowns on community gardens (Assadourian, 2003; Eizenburg, 2012; Salvidar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004), and the spread of advertisements on public grounds (Harvey, 2012; Young, 2014a, 2014b). Blackmar (2006) finds enclosure around the very concept of commons. Commercial enterprises appropriate commons discourse and terminology to "conjure up pleasant feelings of connection" (50). Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevin (2012) argue that enclosure is "not predicated on displacement and land grab alone, nor on class exploitation, but on the appropriation of wealth produced in common, from affective ties and cooperative care that characterize so-called 'knowledge' or 'creative' industries" (1249). It can thus be understood that enclosure of public space within cities prevents the open communication of ideas, history, and culture. This can only be experienced through creative engagement with public space.

However, Harvey (2012) deconstructs the commons-as-resource analysis to show that constructing the commons as a set of specific resources to be protected enforces enclosures, typically revealed through the exclusionary, draconian measures of state authority, effectively ensuring that "one common may be protected at the expense of another" (2012: 70). Not only does the static commons demand a hierarchical and preferential protectionism, it also serves to enclose resources within very particular spaces (Harvey, 2012). Street art, then, must be understood as cultural commons. Hardt and Negri define cultural commons as:

[d]ynamic, involving both the product of labor and the means of future production. This common is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships, and so forth (2009: 139).

Similarly, Ronald Niezen defines culture as "often impermanent, complex, 'creolized', hybrid and contested. In his view, culture is a verb, not a noun, a process, not a thing itself" (cited from Warry, 2007: 88). Harvey (2012) reiterates Hardt and Negri's dynamic idea of the commons, stating that "the common is not to be construed, therefore, as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process,

but as an unstable and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet- to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood” (73). Incorporating more dynamic notions into this definition places the emphasis on the “coming together” of a group of people, thereby developing the *community* as a resource, perhaps more easily understood in terms of *identity*.

The cultural commons is thus effectively an abstraction, continuously generated through the practice of what Linebaugh (2008) calls *commoning*. Linebaugh (2008) claims that viewing the commons simply either as a resource or a verb creates a trap which is “misleading at best and dangerous at worst” (279). Instead, *communizing* must be understood as an activity, as labor that is deeply connected to the physical environment. While Hess’s (2008) commons produce enclosures, Harvey’s (2012) definition of commoning lacks both clarity and outcome. Applying Hardt and Negri’s idea of cultural commons to Hess’s conception of vulnerable resources demands an examination of the relationship between unauthorized graffiti and authorized murals. In order to deconstruct this cultural commons dynamic, I find it useful to consider two interrelated categories of commons: street art as neighbourhood commons and street art as knowledge commons.

Community gardens and public parks are often the focal point of neighbourhood commons research (see Assadourian 2003; Eizenburg 2012; Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1992; Salvidar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004), which demonstrates both this commons mentality, along with a controversial struggle for rights to public spaces. At the core of this research is the restructuring of the urban environment, and class struggle against the commodification of the city. Yet the critical narrative of capital accumulation is not a story of privatization of resources and thus an expropriation of access, but rather one that foregrounds the exploitation of labor that results from these privatizations. It is not accumulation of resources, but the accumulation and control of labor. Harvey’s (2010) concept of critical geographies positions capital’s ability to infinitely exploit and adapt to crisis as resulting from its geographic expansion. This was originally tied to state authority, but subsequently exploited multiple authorities. This dynamism of capital must be met by a dynamism of commoning which is tied to the relationships between the authorized and unauthorized urban intervention. Harvey (2008) explains:

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization (23).

Street art exists as a neighbourhood commons in the content of communal identity. As illustrated by the following interview excerpt, for a mural to be funded by the City of Toronto an organization needs to have direct support from the community in which it is to be placed (www.toronto.ca/streetart):

You do community consultations. It’s always community consultations. You look at historically what that land was being used for, also the narrative that we want to tell. Then you proceed with concepts. Find local support, whether it’s with politicians or with whatever. It’s a long process. (Interview with Geoffrey, 14-5-2014).

In the same way, the community often takes on some responsibilities in maintenance, protecting the mural as a part of their identity. The Allen Gardens mural created by 7GIM (2012) is a good practical example of this. The local residents as well as the homeless community who sleep in the park protect the mural from vandalism, even though it is only a temporary fixture. While the production of

community and identity prominent in my understanding of neighbourhood commons is not necessarily material in nature, there is a sense in which a neighbourhood commons is at least informed, if not directly influenced by the physical environment and the specificity of geographical space. There is a crucial relationship between street art and these objects – rooted in history, culture and practice – that has a major impact on the typical occurrences of street art.

Neighbourhood commons is the production of identity and community. However, identity and community should not be defined narrowly or statically. Rather they should inform a relational understanding of the urban centre as a shifting, complex, dynamic whole. Murals can help define the look of a physical space by drawing attention to infrastructure, and creating a particular feel to a community (generating the idea that Kensington Market in Toronto is an artist community for example) (McLean and Radher, 2013). This identity does not stop at the borders of a geographically defined community, however, as the murals reflect a general Toronto arts “scene”, and are often intended to inspire others to contribute to the continual cultural production of communities. Likewise, murals create opportunities for the production of knowledge commons through the ways in which they are accessed, and through their potential to be used as tools for the dissemination of information. Most often these murals facilitate messages of decolonization and access to cultural teachings. To return to an earlier point, it is important to note that murals do not necessarily constitute a knowledge commons in and of themselves. In fact, control over production can lead to forms of cultural exploitation. Rather, what murals present is an *opportunity* for the production of commons, rather than a definitive commons.

Constructions of *neighbourhood* in Aboriginal communities also centre on creating non-spatial, geographical and cultural links between urban and reserve communities. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS, 2010), a large-scale survey of urban Aboriginal peoples across Canada, found that urban Aboriginal peoples “retain a strong sense of connection to their ancestral communities or places of origin [but] consider their current city of residence *home*” (UAPS, 2010: 8, emphasis in original). Furthermore “most urban Aboriginal peoples are likely to feel connected to Aboriginal communities in their cities” (UAPS 2010: 8). Perhaps most importantly, the city represents vast potential as a site for “creative development of Aboriginal culture” (UAPS, 2010: 8), once again challenging mainstream narratives of “assimilation or poverty” (UAPS, 2010: 8). Artists from 7GIM worked to advance this multifaceted understanding of community in the production and presentation of their murals. This served to reform the spatial context of urbanization.

One neighbourhood commons issue arises from the concept of urban beautification. Scholars (Dovey et al., 2012; Hardt and Negri, 2009; Harvey, 2012; McLean and Rahder, 2013) have criticized urban aesthetic movements as leading towards gentrification and the cultural homogenization of communities. One critic suggests that “it has long been well known that artistic subcultures are the harbingers of gentrification” (Dovey et al., 2012: 36). In his view, “artists have become – perhaps unwittingly – complicit in a process that in many cases ultimately alienates and displaces low-income communities, including artist communities, through gentrification” (McLean and Rahder, 2013: 94). The basic narrative reads that poor artists move into a neighbourhood because they can afford it, and gentrification follows (Hardt and Negri, 2009). This may be the case at times, but this narrative lacks agency, with capital seemingly acting like a leech on the back of the passive artist. In fact artists are often active participants in the gentrification process. McLean and Rahder (2013) note that while artists and activists often perceive their efforts to transform public space as creative interventions and community building, “these same events, wittingly or unwittingly, reproduce and often exacerbate

powerful class divisions within communities” (106). Beautifying the city is one of the primary motivations behind the work of 7th Generation Image Makers; however, for these artists the beautification of a city is not simply the act of adding a pretty picture, but building a cultural vibrancy which will create space for change and for protest.

Murals themselves can also be subsumed by commercial interests which drive neighbourhood gentrification by increasing property values and drawing particular community attributes to the fore, while pushing away lower class values (Harvey, 2012). In fact, an amendment aimed at restricting corporate branding of murals or arts programs involving youth failed to pass council during the creation of the new street art program (City of Toronto, 2011). This is probably a function of the increasingly close-yet-tenuous relationship between street art and high art. Young (2012) notes a rise in unauthorized graffiti interventions in gentrified or gentrifying areas, which creates interesting tensions, and a counterpoint to the notion of graffiti as a sign of social decay. While this can once again play into the narrative of authorized murals versus illicit graffiti, there is little understanding of the motivations held by individual artists and organizations. For now it can be said that the desire to create murals to foster creative community engagement needs to take into account, but quite often takes for granted, the messy, heterogeneous urban neighbourhood.

With the second category, knowledge commons, I contend that street art acts as a complex mode of communication, providing public access to ideology, history, and cultural knowledge in ways that are otherwise only accessible to cultural insiders. Knowledge commons tend to exist in a more non-physical space than neighbourhood commons, and this raises the theoretical issue of what it is to be a common resource. There are often physical repositories of knowledge (libraries, museums, galleries, etc.), but with the advent of the internet (also a material repository) knowledge commons discourse has moved towards more immaterial discussions of information sharing and alternatives to intellectual property regimes (Bollier, 2014; Hyde, 2010; Lessig, 2004, 2008; Ostrom and Hess, 2007; Vaidhyananthan, 2001). Street art offers a potentially alternate model of a knowledge commons, representing the communication of cultural knowledge in a capacity that is neither fully private nor public.

In demonstrating the production of a new cultural commons within the urban environment, 7GIM murals are significant presentations of knowledge and community. Reflecting on the widespread cultural appropriation, destruction, and degradation experienced by Aboriginal peoples over the past hundreds of years, the public display of cultural teachings could certainly be considered a controversial practice in Aboriginal communities. Prior to the 1960s most First Nations cultural practices were outlawed in one form or another, including, dancing, singing, wearing regalia, and smudging ceremonies (Warry, 2007). Contemporary mainstream culture has not slowed down the pace of cultural appropriation, as evidenced in controversies surrounding the naming of sports teams such as the Washington Redskins, the wearing of regalia (Friesen, 2013), and the hyper-equalization of Aboriginal women (Wohlberg, 2015).

Each 7GIM mural produces and reinforces particular sets of cultural knowledge, managed as a commons. This system is managed by 7GIM by influencing how certain information is accessed, and who is capable of accessing it. Public display enhances rather than endangers dynamic cultural production:

This collective of people are really about the opinion that you can translate traditional knowledge and histories but still protect it. Some of the imagery that we know of, as far as maybe stories and knowledge about an area, some things are outlined by an Elder to be sacred knowledge. In those terms we usually wouldn't use it, or we would hint at it, but nobody that doesn't know that knowledge won't see it anyway. It'll be kind of like a hidden message (Interview with Mosteller, 9-5-2014).

In both the Allen Gardens and the Pan Am Games mural, 7GIM drew on Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee teachings connecting femininity with water, life and birth. However, these murals are not simply groupings of icons and motifs, they are stories and relationships. The teachings connect Aboriginal peoples with place, community, and culture.

To explore this notion, it is useful to look closely at the murals painted by 7GIM. Familiar motifs wend their way through several of the murals, and a number of different images are recurrent as well. Should a pedestrian pass by one of these murals, the most obvious and immediate association is with nature. This is clearly an intentional connection. It emphasizes the idea that nature is close at hand, and the importance of reconnecting with the natural environment. There is also more specific cultural knowledge that can be accessed through these murals. However, access to this knowledge requires prior information. In each of the three murals discussed within this article there is an image of poles in the water, and while this image is fairly prominent it does not necessarily demand attention in the same way as do some of the other elements of the mural. And yet, the image of poles in the water tells the origin of Toronto, both as a translation of the name and in the region's development into a major fishing hub due to the convergence of five watersheds. This story, just one of many told within these murals, represents a large schema of complex cultural knowledge with varying levels of accessibility.

Each mural, while connected by teachings and imagery, tells very different stories and histories:

I always believe that we're not just doing a bunch of symbology, and broken up imagery that's jumbled together, like a bunch of handprints and people holding hands and rainbows like that. No, it's a story that ultimately has to be told... and the way we go about storytelling is, these stories are a living spirit and they have to be honoured in a respectful way, and the same with these pictures, the same with these stories. It's a continuation of that, whether it be through song, painting, storytelling, it's the spirit that comes through (Interview with Geoffrey, 14-5-2014).

As stated previously, the High Park mural not only makes a historical claim to land, but also creates particular meanings about this claim. The Allen Gardens mural shares some of that claim, but focuses on Anishinaabek water teachings, drawing attention to the importance of women. The Pan Am Games mural, notable in its title – *Water: Our Lifeline, Our Spirit* – reinforces the teachings of both the High Park and Allen Gardens murals, but helps to generate contextual awareness of cultural specificity and the relationships between nations. Ultimately, 7GIM murals are intended to tell stories, to teach the living history of a people. These murals do not simply piece together traditional motifs, but rather take historical and contemporary cultural associations and teachings in order to craft a relational mode of accessing cultural identity and knowledge.

Reshaping the city

Many 7GIM murals have been made in partnership with the City of Toronto's mural funding program, StreetARToronto (StART) [4]. The City of Toronto's graffiti management strategy is a hybrid

approach, integrating a zero-tolerance for graffiti mentality with a desire to advance the cultural production and aesthetic value of murals (Toronto Municipal Code, 2011). While enforcement and eradication mechanisms are in place, the core values are most visible through their mural funding program, StART. Preliminary policy analysis of this program shows many of the tensions at play among mural artists, graffiti artists, property owners, municipal officials, and many others. This demonstrates a complex relationship of power. It would be imprudent to simplify these complex relations by stating that murals created through this program necessarily constitute commoning, as various motivations are not accounted for. And, while critical analysis does show that the potential is there for a commoning movement to be exploited through capital accumulation, mural creation does present space for the growth of a cultural commons.

A crucial issue with StART, just as with various other graffiti management and enforcement strategies, stems from their definitions of *graffiti art* and *graffiti vandalism* (www.toronto.ca/streetart). These definitions attempt a binary distinction between murals on the one hand and tagging and writing on the other. Apart from whether or not these practices and aesthetics can be separated, positioning them as oppositional seems in some ways counterintuitive to the goal of fostering a creative cultural environment in the city. One of the stipulations for funding through StART is the inclusion of a maintenance plan for the mural, which not only would cover touch-ups due to age and the elements, but also to ensure that any tags were promptly covered (www.toronto.ca/streetart).

Young (2010) questions graffiti management strategies that assume a separation between tagging and more complex street art creations in murals. He argues that there can be no definition of street art that does not acknowledge the heterogeneity of its practice. One striking aspect of the current graffiti management strategy is its victimization of graffiti writers, as well as property owners and occupants. Critics have argued that property owners are often hit twice by graffiti, once by the initial act, and a second time by municipal bureaucracy that demands they pay for the clean-up under the threat of steep fines (Peat, 2015). While exemptions can be granted to property owners who either commissioned a piece without receiving prior consent, or who want to regularize an unauthorized piece, ultimate authority rests with the graffiti panel. Given that this pins limitations on an owner's authority over private property, the notion that the same authority is undermined by graffiti starts to become highly problematic. With this problematization arises an opportunity for understanding the urban environment, and walls in particular, as a commons which represent a space between public and private. An interesting visual note within 7GIM murals is the presence of graffiti objects, such as tags. On their own, they would be the type of object to be covered by such a mural, but in this case they are used within the aesthetic of the mural. Such is evident in the High Park mural, where tags are used as a means of crediting both artists and sponsors, ironically including StART. Painting an object as complex as a mural takes a large amount of talent and imagination, but also technical knowledge which needs to be developed somewhere. Early discussions with artists at the 7th Generation Image Makers indicated that political tensions within the graffiti community come into play, which provide a degree of self-regulation. Murals by artists and organizations that do not address or understand the place of graffiti in the local community may be more prone to vandalism.

Examples also abound in the way graffiti is often used not in opposition to murals and public art, but as an unauthorized collaboration, addendum, or side contribution (including a public art tape measure in Yorkville, Toronto) (Micallef, 2014). While the original artist or property owners do not always appreciate these unauthorized collaborations, the intent behind them is notable. These types

of examples offer potential openings into a number of issues, including the encroachment of advertising on counter-cultural practices and spaces. There are also issues of authorship, remix and moral rights. I include these examples to illustrate the vast problems that can arise from the simple juxtaposition of murals and graffiti. It is likely that some murals are not tagged because they fit within the same culture that spawns unauthorized graffiti. Likewise, murals may be tagged because they conflict with a particular writer's sensibilities. Nevertheless, oppositional positioning between murals and graffiti is not strictly a political construction, and researchers (Kramer, 2010; Latorre, 2008; Lewisohn, 2008) have made clear that disparities exist between those who identify as muralists, and those who identify as graffiti artists, among other artistic labels. Furthermore, Latorre (2008) suggests that murals and graffiti represent "symbiotic and interdependent parts of public urban aesthetics, thus refusing to privilege one over the other" (1404).

While I have speculated on the generalizability of authorized street art as biopolitical resistance and an urban cultural commons, the work of 7th Generation Image Makers demands a particular sensitivity to specificity. The organization was created to voice the concerns of Aboriginal peoples, in particular urban youth. After nearly twenty years they have continued to serve this role, while helping young artists to grow their craft and learn new skills in reconstructing the city as a space of new opportunities. Through their particular methodologies and their focus on a community-based approach within the mural process, 7GIM positions itself as a space to drive new, alternative cultural narratives:

We have a tradition that has been proven to be successful, sustainable, and very civilized with respect to flora and fauna and we want to promote that, because it is something that we definitely can reach collectively. It's a matter of perspective and trust, and that's why we think the visual aspect, to have that out there for people to look at and to consider is an important act of decolonization, defiance of whatever globalized aspect or world view there is right now (Interview with Binjen, 14-5-2014).

The preservation and sustainability of these urban resources is a challenging subject. Street art is not necessarily made to last, and calls attention to the flux of urban infrastructure; objects painted on construction walls will be torn down in the years to come. Based on my analysis of Toronto's graffiti management plan, the City is trying to create a stable model of street art, and thus a more stable perception of the city. The StART projects' five year maintenance plans require a level of resource governance that must contend with the physical environment. Cement expands and contracts with different seasons, creating cracks. Paint fades, wood splinters, and metal rusts - all of these eventualities must be taken into account.

It is one thing to speak of preservation in terms of a broad notion of commoning, which enables widespread creative access to spaces that are alternative to capital; it is quite another to consider matters of cultural production and preservation from the perspective of often-marginalized cultures. In the case of 7th Generation Image Makers, the artists and organization have embraced the precarious nature of street art in a variety of ways. The three main sites studied in this article offer differing lifespans for murals. The Allen Gardens mural will stay up for only as long as the construction walls exist. They are likely to come down this year (2016). The High Park mural is part of a five year plan, and while it could stay up much longer than that, most planned maintenance work will cease at the end of its official tenure. Finally, the Pan Am Games mural is likely to last as long as the life of the building - possibly longer. This is an effect of being an indoor public mural rather than a street art mural with an inherent precariousness. At various points 7GIM have created twenty-four hour pop-

up murals or painted pieces for week-long pavilions, all with the intention of emphasizing non-permanence. These non-permanent structures allow 7GIM to engage with story-telling and cultural production in a dynamic manner.

My work with 7GIM focused on the physical site, but that is not the only means of distribution for street art in contemporary society. The organization keeps digital records of their murals through photographs, and communicates these murals through their own website, as well as opening up distribution through social media platforms such as Facebook. Graffiti is a precarious art form, prone to either erasure through strict municipal policy, or being covered by the work of other artists. It is perhaps ironic that graffiti preservation might be best achieved through a digital medium, given the variety of major urban landscape interventions (construction/deconstruction of buildings and landscape) and minor urban landscape interventions (eradication and replacement). The connection between physical and digital space in terms of distribution and preservation is ripe for further study. Pertinent themes include the precarious of access (changing city spaces versus changing digital media), the relation between materiality and immateriality along with broader understandings of public spaces.

What, then, can be said about the specific and culturally significant stories tied to these impermanent sites? How is the knowledge commons preserved when the medium becomes corrupted by time? Street art can be seen as a continuation of oral cultural history – the speaker might die, but the teachings are passed down. The mural projects are about teaching Aboriginal youth these stories during the process of painting and during the lifetime of the mural. In so doing, spaces of struggle are crafted. Dynamic cultural production occurs in the moments in which it is continued by others, not simply through the preservation or reproduction of objects. Similarly, for the neighbourhood commons, community and identity is an ongoing means of action. A neighbourhood commons is apparent within the alternative means of production carried out through biopolitical labor (rather than by the protection of a specific set of resources). Therefore the commons is tied to resources, but not bound by them.

Stepping back from these broad generalizations about the relationship between murals and graffiti, 7th Generation Image Makers' murals mark specific narratives of struggle, but even further, alternative constructions of the city as space. As outlined previously, four interrelated themes were repeatedly brought to the fore during my interviews: community, identity, place, and decolonization. Seventh Generation Image Maker murals offer alternative narratives concerning the place of Aboriginal peoples in urban centres. This deconstructs the classic flow from rural to urban communities, and refuses the notion of assimilation. Going further, 7GIM murals enable degrees of inclusiveness within the specificity of stories, environments, and communities. Street art murals are an interesting mode of expression for Aboriginal struggles. They represent a continuation of cultural production associated with traditional rock art practices as well as contemporary interpretations of graffiti as resistance and disruption. Initially, I asked if authorized murals could replicate the resistance of unauthorized pieces. Seventh Generation Image Makers, painting their stories, struggles, and successes on the walls of Toronto, certainly resist simplistic notions of authorization and resistance:

We're in a time right now where we do it, we just put it out there. We don't take no for an answer, and it's our right to be passing these stories and use this imagery. It's as much a part of who we are. You know our ancestors were doing this long before this city was here, and we're going to be doing it, our future generation will be doing it long after. We are the people of the rock carvers, it's what we do (Interview with Geoffrey, 14-5-2014).

Author Bio

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Endnotes

- [1] This article draws from my MI thesis titled *Appropriating City Spaces: Exploring Practice, Process and Policy in Aboriginal Street Art* (MacInnis, 2015), which provides a more expansive version of the same argument.
- [2] Anishinaabek teachings about the thirteen cycles of the moon.
- [3] *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture* is both a digital and a travelling exhibition reflecting the association between Aboriginal and hip-hop cultures. See <http://www.beatnation.org/>.
- [4] StART was created in 2011 when the City of Toronto completely amended the Municipal Code on graffiti, including the Graffiti Management Plan and the Graffiti Transformation Program (City of Toronto, 2011).

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