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Life is free

Life is free

Sara Terreault and Matthew Anderson

## De Vieux-Montréal<sup>1</sup> à Kahnawa:ké<sup>2</sup>

The story of an urban pilgrimage between settler and  
aboriginal cultures

### Terra Incognita: No way from here to there?

The official at City Hall was polite, if disinterested, up until the moment we told her where we wanted to go. Suddenly, her face took on a pinched look, the look of a bureaucrat who is hearing news that might cause a lot of extra work. “*Ah non*, you can’t walk from here to Kahnawake,” she said.

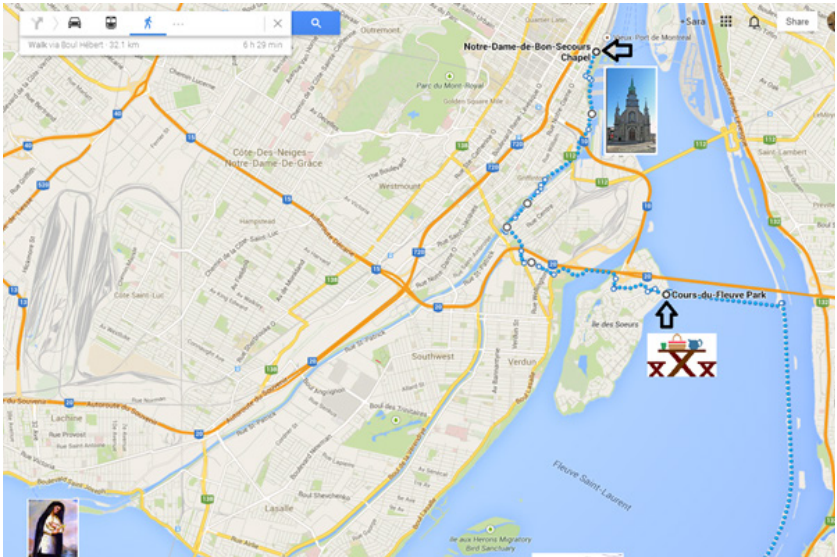
We were confused. On the counter a map from the pamphlet rack was spread out, with its “Welcome to *notre ville* (our city), a wonderful-place-to-live...” We pointed at the straight-edged grid layout of suburban city streets, then at the solid dark shape at the edge of the paper that showed the Mohawk<sup>3</sup> territory. No other details. No streets, no businesses, just “Kahnawake” in flat, empty-looking, unexplained grey.

“But there must be a path somewhere. Kahnawa:ké is along the river. Your city is along the river. You’re right beside each other. There must be some way to get through?”

“Impossible by foot.” Her initial skepticism was already turning to something harder, more defined. She turned her face to the map we

Opposite: Life is free: graffiti on a wall in southwest Montreal.





Map of the route walked.



Daisies on the embankment (narrow strip of land in St. Lawrence Seaway).

had spread out, but it was one of those perfunctory scans where the eyes don't actually make contact. "There is no path." Hands on her hips. "Non." "No way to walk from here to there?"

She shook her head. "You would have to go along the highway. I can tell you. I've lived here for thirty years. I know. We'd have to stop traffic. You'd have to have permission from the police. A permit." Then she turned toward the telephone, as if to call someone from the police department.

We exchanged glances. Could the police actually forbid a group of citizens from walking from one community to the next, even if the next is Kanien'kehá:ka territory? Given the checkered (to say the least<sup>4</sup>) history of the relationship between the various police forces and the Mohawk territories near Montréal, this did not necessarily sound like a promising way forward.

"Okay. No problem, it's just an idea at this stage," we replied carefully, if not entirely honestly. "And if you say there's no way to walk through, you must be right." Meanwhile, under the counter, we made signs at each other to cut and run. "Thanks so much for your help. Thanks for the map. I guess it won't work. We'll just take a drive. Thanks. Goodbye." And with that we were out the door and back in the tidy and mostly empty streets of this suburban city planted on the edge (although the Kanien'kehá:ka would say, in the middle) of First Nations territory, on Montréal's South Shore.

A few minutes later, with the help of Google Maps, we easily found the little dirt road along the river that linked the two communities. Clearly, the problem wasn't impassible terrain, but impassible assumptions. The Kanien'kehá:ka knew the route. The fact that the non-Aboriginal people who are their neighbors don't know—or seem not to care to know—the way, is the beginning of a complex and difficult story about human culture, identity and geography; of authority, history, guilt, anger, ignorance and ideology; and of the cityscapes that have grown up in the spaces between.



Contre-jour shot of angel at Bon-Secours Chapel.

The “De Vieux-Montréal à Kahnawa:ké” pilgrimage, walked in June 2014, was the third field trip we designed and led as part of a pilgrimage studies course that we team-teach at Concordia University Montréal. Concordia is an urban, secular and public comprehensive university; the course is jointly offered by the Department of Theological Studies and the Loyola College for Diversity and Sustainability. Our students are a profoundly diverse group culturally, linguistically, and religiously, and in terms of disciplinary foci. This walk was our first such trip in North America, hence in what was originally Aboriginal territory. It was also our first pilgrimage through a mainly urban and suburban landscape. As a pilgrim group from settler backgrounds, we had first to acknowledge that the original narrative of the *land* we would walk was the story of the original *people* of that land.

Our urban pilgrimage started at the eighteenth century Chapelle de Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, in Vieux-Montréal. This church was built on the site of the original seventeenth-century chapel in what was then Fort Ville-Marie, a colonial settlement of New France. Its establishment was the inspiration of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700), Ville-Marie's first teacher and the founder of the Congregation de Notre-Dame. The other pole of this two-destination pilgrimage was Kahnawa:ké Kanien'kehá:ka Territory on the banks of the Lachine Rapids, on the South Shore of the Island of Montréal. Kahnawa:ké was itself a kind of a itinerant village, having migrated from what is today Upstate New York, to various locations along the banks of the St. Lawrence River during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on land that was part of the Seigneurie Sault du St. Louis, granted for a mission by the Jesuits. One of these sites on the River was the second and final home of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680), the first North American Indigenous woman to be canonized by the Catholic Church. She traveled with her community as a child, and eventually walked to the Kahnawa:ké mission to join other Christian converts. It is a little known fact that Saint Kateri, the Mohawk convert, also journeyed to Ville-Marie to visit Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys, the French settler. The relationship between the worlds of these pilgrim women structured our route. In this relationship, we find the historical roots of the ambiguity and ignorance that still marks the two communities. Once at Kahnawa:ké, our pilgrim group visited both the Roman Catholic Kateri Tekakwitha Shrine, and one of the reserve's<sup>7</sup> longhouses, the centre of traditional Haudenosaunee spiritual, political and social life.





Homeless in southwest Montreal.



Opposite: Inside the Chapelle de Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours (group shot with chapel guide in period costume).



## The Point of the Story: Re-walking and rewriting cultural geographies

Pilgrimage is a journey for intentional transformation. Pilgrimage, thus conceived, *resists the objectification of space and its inhabitants*, because it opens the pilgrim to what Christopher Tilley calls the “power” of the “paths, movements and narratives” of the pilgrim way. The way acquires agency. It presses the pilgrim—body, mind, spirit—into a holistic relationship with the spaces traversed and arrived at. It places the pilgrim *at risk*—indeed *in hope*—of being changed by the journey. Certainly, the pilgrim rereads and rewrites the story of the territory, but in conversation with stories already narrated there. The pilgrim is vulnerable to encounter and communion, opened by the liminal experience of *not-home*, be it landscape or cityscape. She or he is also *responsible*: for new interpretations, new “modes of dwelling” and “experiencing” particular spaces, transforming the space only if transformed, in turn, by it. The pilgrim is a figure that fulfills the imperatives for relational subjectivity called for by the methodological insights of indigenous researchers, who are themselves on what might be called vision quests as pilgrims in the contemporary academy.

An urban trek, by non-Aboriginals, from the expanding spaces created by colonizer to those few remaining in the hands of the colonized, becomes a pilgrimage when it is a powerful catalyst for personal, spiritual and perhaps even societal awareness. Awareness is the precondition for change. This paper contends that walking pilgrimage, by virtue of its inherently narrative temporospatial structure, provides the time and terrain, interior and exterior, by which to examine, repair and re-construct narratives of self and neighbor. Pilgrimage can be, literally, a re-walking and rewriting of the cultural geographies—interior and exterior—that both link and separate our communities.

Walking pilgrimages are best recounted by means of stories and maps. Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko has suggested that, “stories are, in a sense, maps.”<sup>8</sup> Conversely, cartographer Sébastien Caquard writes about “the narrative power of the map”, noting “the potential of maps to stimulate narratives” and to reveal “the hidden stories of power and control embedded [in them].”<sup>9</sup> The two form an interdependent framework, where stories help to orient and navigate while maps formalize and demarcate tales and identities. For the pilgrim stories and maps converge in their experience as they prepare and then undertake their journey, bringing together suppositions with the act of moving through the terrain. The maps of the suburban city in our opening tale represent the neighboring Mohawk community by a name and an otherwise blank space. The interactive map on the website of the *Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal* does not even name Kahnawa:ké, and further, excises it completely from the terrain: in that map, it is simply not there.<sup>10</sup> This exclusion repeats, even if unintentionally, the historic removal of Aboriginal people from the Canadian cultural, political and physical landscape. The territory of Kahnawa:ké has been regularly impinged upon, bisected by highways (the route suggested by our friends at the neighboring City Hall was one of these) and forcibly expropriated for bridges and other urban developments. The most recent expropriation was for the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s.

On one level, our journey constituted fieldwork for a course in pilgrimage studies that is designed for performative experiential teaching and learning: in addition to attending in-class lectures, the students research, walk and report on their own pilgrimages, in conversation with the theoretical components of their coursework. But on another—deeper—level, the journey provides the ground for personal engagement with both aboriginal and settler histories. Most

profoundly, perhaps, the pilgrimage privileges personal encounters between settler and aboriginal persons, and with relationships to the urban and suburban environmental spaces that at once shape, and are shaped by, their stories.

## How We Got from Here to There : Urban Journey and Research Methodology

One of the characteristics of a good story, told by a gifted storyteller, is that it can inspire us to re-discover our own narrative voices. Likewise, generative methodologies deployed by skillful Aboriginal researchers and teachers have energized us to rethink our own methods for inquiry and teaching. In the course of preparing for our reception into the Kanien'kehá:ka community, we encountered, in the work of many Indigenous scholars, particular protocols and processes that challenged conventional academic methodologies and recalled us to more holistic practices often overlooked or forgotten in our own academic theological epistemologies.

In this project, we took our methodological cues from the integral and intersubjectivist approaches that are characteristic of much recent research by Indigenous scholars. These developments emerge from person- and environment-centeredness, and draw on traditional Indigenous epistemological and ethical frameworks, often expressed through stories. The methods reclaim and reshape teaching and research paradigms that have been, in effect, *colonized*: that is, marginalized and often discounted by the modernist neo-positivist leanings of the contemporary academy where the methods of the natural sciences have become the presupposed model for scholarly inquiry as such.

In her seminal work on Indigenous methodologies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith begins by reminding the reader that, for colonized peoples, “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism



Construction en ville, looking east from Lachine Canal.



Eglise Sainte-Catherine d'Alexandrie, ville de Ste-Catherine, the basement became our hostel for night one.



and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary.”<sup>11</sup> The legacy of imperialism is tied up with the hegemonic epistemological culture of the modern academy; as such, some Indigenous scholars have replaced the term “research” with re:search or re-search. For example, Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogizhigokwe) uses “re-search” in *Kaandosswin: How We Come to Know*, in order to underline the quest component of inquiry (searching), to tie the process to personal and cultural memory, and to differentiate the process from conventional academic methodologies.<sup>12</sup>

Although developed by Indigenous scholars for Indigenous inquiry, there are meaningful implications in these findings for correcting the prevailing inclination in the globalised, and increasingly commercialized, increasingly STEM-focused academy to marginalize alternative methodologies. It is perhaps especially within the humanities that we encounter an unfortunate and often inappropriate “science-envy.” Indigenous methodologies constitute a recovery of the centrality of subject *qua* subject as the foundation of knowledge, of subjectivity as a proper focus of study, and of the ineluctable reality of scholars’ ethical and faith commitments (religious or otherwise) as inextricably bound up with knowledge production. Indigenous methodologies should be of special interests to theologians, pointing to ways of recuperating the holistic inquiry historically central to theological research.

As a note of caution, we do not mean to suggest that there is a singular pan-Indigenous methodology that non-Indigenous researchers in general and theologians in particular can seize upon, and repurpose for their own use. There is, nonetheless, a pattern of common insights and values that emerges in much contemporary reflection on methodology by Indigenous scholars that we believe to be especially suited to the task of correcting, expanding and advancing the current truncated range of research paradigms in the wider academy. The overweening

epistemological claims of modernist rationality have, indeed, been challenged from within postmodern critical theory, perhaps especially powerfully, by narrative theory. Humanistic psychology researcher (and practicing psychotherapist) Donald E. Polkinghorne challenges the universal application of “a distinct type of rational discourse appropriate for producing knowledge [as] the foundation for the advocacy of a single, unified science for all scholarly disciplines” and argues that “this kind of discourse is the essence of contemporary scholarly and academic writing.”<sup>13</sup> He counters this hegemony with a strong claim for methodologies of “narrative knowing.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise, within the field of theology, a strong contemporary tradition of “postliberal” hermeneutics emerged at the end of the twentieth century. Led by scholars such as Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, it sought to refute the modernist assumptions of a universal rationality as epistemological guarantor, and—importantly for our argument here—to reclaim the primacy of narrative for Christian theological methodology.<sup>15</sup> Canadian philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan also countered the modernist myth of objectivism elegantly with his “Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic [that is, self-appropriated] subjectivity.”<sup>16</sup>

Narrative and performance were foundational for traditional theological practice, but until relatively recently, had largely lost their authority as theology when they were academicized in the modern university.<sup>17</sup> In Christian traditions, pre-modern theology was necessarily inseparable from spiritual practice; the crucial source of theological inquiry, teaching and prayer was narrative. Certainly, Christian spirituality and theology, riding tandem as they did with Western colonialist powers, have undoubtedly played a complicated and, in many ways, destructive role in the lives and cultures of Indigenous people worldwide, and, in particular, in North America. It is with humility in the face of such a history that we suggest that there is much scholarly territory that can be shared among

theologians, students of theology and Indigenous re-researchers.

Strategies of inquiry, we propose, must emerge from the embodied and inherently relational cognitional structures of the researcher and the ontology of the matter of inquiry in its existential context, and urban pilgrimage provides one method through which to do so. Absolon writes, “The methods are determined by understanding the nature of our existence, of how we come to know, of how knowledge is produced and of where knowledge comes from.”<sup>18</sup> Willie Ermine, Plains Cree academic, explains that: “Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown.”<sup>19</sup> Knowledge of self and context must also include knowledge of the stakes for everyone involved in research projects: academic inquiry is an irreducibly ethical endeavor. Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree and Saulteaux) insists that it is “impossible to separate ethics from the totality of research.” She makes the case for an ethics of reciprocity and interrelationality between the interests of researcher and the interests of research subjects as individuals and communities.<sup>20</sup> Natalie Clark, who was born in Cree territory in Saskatchewan of Métis ancestry, and has worked as both social worker in Secwepemc territory in British Columbia and social-work educator at UBC, insists that researchers must acknowledge the intersections of research’s network of interconnected identities as ground of their knowing, and as corrective to hidden power plays in academic conventions. She proposes that as researchers and teachers, we must answer the questions, “Who are you and why do you care?”<sup>21</sup> Shawn Wilson, Apaskwayak Cree from northern Manitoba, underlines the performative dimension of holistic knowledge creation and dissemination when he claims that “research is ceremony” in the very title of his volume on Indigenous research methods.<sup>22</sup>

Pilgrimage can provide, we suggest, an especially fitting theoretical field and embodied practice for this methodological evolution/



Pilgrims and “Idle-No-More” graffiti, service road between Ville de Ste-Catherine.  
<http://www.idlenomore.ca/>



Pilgrims at the Riverside Inn, Kahnawa:ké.



revolution. As pilgrimage studies includes both study and practice, it bridges qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Shared among many Aboriginal scholars are notions of journey as emblematic of life processes, of research itself as transformative journey, and of story as privileged source and conveyer of knowledge. Valaskakis explains how, for “Native nations”, the “narrations of their origins...speak of movement; and movement was common in the Indian lifeways of earlier times” due to shifting resources and relationships. She describes how, “for all nations, there were travels to ceremonies, sacred sites, and social gatherings”, and how, in contemporary times, “For some Native people, travel is a perpetual pattern ... a trail of lifelong movement between reservations and cities, between houses, jobs and circumstances.”<sup>23</sup> Absolon writes specifically about re-search as a process that “inevitably involves travelling...Our voices, words, conversations and thoughts journey from Spirit, heart, mind and body into this work...”<sup>24</sup> Peter Cole, (member of Douglas First Nation BC, of Stl’atl’imx and Celtic heritage) frames his academically-dissident poetic-narrative on Aboriginal knowledge and education, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*, as a “journey shaped out of words” and a voyage to be “navigated.”<sup>25</sup>

Indigenous insights into re-search thus energized us for our particular encounter: among pilgrims and terrain, and with hosts who received us at the various destinations on our pilgrimage between Vieux-Montréal and Kahnawake. However, there is an unavoidable question that arises from the bringing together of Indigenous methodology and urban pilgrimage. The keen awareness of the significance of situatedness and relationality that is sweepingly affirmed by the re-searchers cited here is typically conceived as contact with the land as natural topography. For example, one of Smith’s “Twenty-five Indigenous Projects” is “Connecting,” and by connecting, she means a regeneration of relationships among people and their culture, and “reconnecting people to their traditional lands.”<sup>26</sup>

The process of colonisation involved exactly a dis-connect of Indigenous people from their homelands, and from the land as such, that is, from the natural world. The city, as product of modernizing Western culture, might represent the apotheosis of colonization, literally separating the inhabitant from contact with the earth as surely as the St. Lawrence Seaway separated the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawa:ké from the rapids for which their territory is named.

Yet it is clear, especially in the case of a village-reserve situated on the edge of a major North American city, that the relationship of Aboriginal people to both back-country and urban landscape is complex and complicated. The men of Kahnawa:ké, for instance, became famous for their skilled work in high-steel construction, in cities like New York, and, in Montréal, many learned their trade on the very bridges that were erected on land confiscated from the reserve's territory.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary young Aboriginals are torn between life on and off the reserves.<sup>28</sup> A vital urban Aboriginal cultural scene has emerged across Canada, and is increasingly represented in major art exhibitions across the country.<sup>29</sup>

These artists illustrate a change in the conception of place: through their art they embrace the urban reality of their lives rather than simplistically contrasting it to a lost, and often romanticized, natural paradise. Our pilgrimage also embraced the urban reality of Montreal rather than transposing students to some confected country experience. In fact, urban pilgrimage works against the romanticization of landscape overall, which has often characterized modern Euro-American pilgrimage as well. Asphalt is less comfortable to walk perhaps than dirt trails. But the inner city is the homeland of many young Aboriginal artists and also, of our students and ourselves.

Archeologist Christopher Tilley, whose work also critiques the modernist "objective, rational and materialist approach to space,"<sup>30</sup> advances an approach in which the interpretive, imaginative and



Service Road between Ville de Ste-catherine and Kahnawa:ké, with Mercier Bridge.

embodied engagement of the researcher in the landscape becomes part of the story of that space. His approach to the human-landscape relationship, whereby both person and environment have transformative agency, is relevant to both country and cityscapes, and integrates creatively with Indigenous methodological insights, and with pilgrimage practice. He writes:

A landscape is a series of named locales, a set of relational places linked by paths, movements and narratives. It is a 'natural' topography perspectively linked to the existential Being of the body in societal space. It is a cultural code for living, an anonymous 'text' to be read and interpreted, a writing pad for inscription, a scape of and for human praxis, a mode of dwelling and a mode of experiencing. It is invested with powers...and is always sedimented

with human significances. It is story and telling, temporality and remembrance. Landscape is a signifying system through which the social is reproduced and transformed, explored and structured.... Landscape, above all, represents a means of conceptual ordering that stresses relations.<sup>31</sup>

Tilley's insights help ground and orient an interpretive journey such as ours in both its theoretical and practical expressions, as a journey that navigated urban, suburban and Kanien'kehá:ka land, crossed centuries of human history, and wound its way through multiple intersections of disparate cultures. Whether in urban, suburban or reserve settings, the land we crossed did provide, in his words, the "code for living" that we encountered, contemplated and, in some cases, re-told.

For us, story and map came together in the industrial routes and dirt lanes that we found, that offered a back-way entry between communities, a hidden path toward an often invisible space. Our discovered pathways became the physical embodiment of a subversive encounter and counter-narrative, showing that connections do exist not only between the histories, geographies and economies of neighboring communities, but also between their living inhabitants. The particular pilgrimage we undertook was conceived not so much as a journey to a destined destination centre, but rather as an intentional walk between poles on either end of a path crossing deep cultural sedimentations and divides. It was also planned as an attentional intentional passage across the diverse urban and suburban landscapes that have grown up in the historical and geographical spaces between these poles, offering students the opportunity to cross cultural bridges by traversing inner-city and suburban landscapes. This turned out to be a crossing of personal horizons as well. We learned together from walking together: from journey-performance as distinctive human



practice, as physical and spiritual discipline, and as fundamental metaphor for life.

Our shared itinerary demonstrated to us that, while contemporary popular walking pilgrimages are commonly practiced far from home, often along routes chosen for natural beauty as much as for any religious destination,<sup>32</sup> this urban pilgrimage through a nearby network of metropolitan neighborhoods and histories provoked a different but undeniably profound experience. Clearly, for us and for our students, it constituted a creative and healing practice of meaning-making and discovery, a journey of intentional transformation.

### Urban Spaces and Hidden Plotlines: From “Indian” Souvenirs to Shared Imaginaries

A story has not only a plot but a setting, and, quite likely, a series of settings. The characters in the story come out of, interact with, travel through, and imagine or create those various spaces as part of the narrative. In the same way, a pilgrimage is a journey through space, but not empty space:<sup>33</sup> the characters, colors, tales and terrain of that space are integral to the pilgrim experience. They affect the traveler and the voyage, and help determine the plot of the story and its outcome. The neighborhoods of our urban pilgrimage were the settings, indeed the very conditions, of the transformative narrative we would cross over between Vieux-Montréal and Kahnawa:ké.

Like layers of a palimpsest that are sometimes obscured, sometimes lost, sometimes rediscovered, the city discloses dramas that are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. However disparate and distinct, the tales it tells are always tales of transformation, as cityscapes are dynamic. And the Montréal neighborhoods we passed through presented themselves as far more than their material characteristics. The physical clues—housing, urban art, construction and renovation,

commercial activity, traffic flow, sidewalks and rail lines, street life—all pointed to the wider matrix of history, values and cultures that make up a neighborhood. Charles Taylor uses the metaphor of a map through an area one knows intimately, to illustrate how a social imaginary works:

This implicit grasp of social space is unlike a theoretical description of this space, distinguishing different kinds of people, and the norms connected to them. The understanding expressed in practice stands to social theory the way that my ability to get around a familiar environment stands to a (literal) map of this area. I am able to orient myself without ever having adopted the standpoint of overview that the map offers me. And similarly, for most of human history and most of social life, we function through the grasp we have on the common repertory, without benefit of theoretical overview.<sup>34</sup>

However, in our case, there was no specific physical route, and correspondingly, no obvious “implicit map of social space” that could encompass both Vieux-Montréal and Kahnawa:ké. Thus there was no single cultural imaginary for our walk, in Taylor’s sense of that term, and no comprehensive theoretical overview. In this very important sense, we were walking without a map.

Nor has anyone ever plotted out a contemporary intentional walking path between Vieux-Montréal and Kahnawa:ké, focal points of different and often conflictive cultures. In fact, the reason for our walk was that there is no defined pilgrimage path from the here of European-founded Montréal to the there of Kahnawa:ké, and—to use Taylor’s terms—no corresponding shared repertory of knowledge, experience or expectation. Not only was this true of the last step from the ‘white’ suburban South Shore neighbors to the Mohawk and Kahnawa:ké, it was true of the entire thirty-two kilometer length



“Indian” princess dolly in tourist shop in Vieux-Montreal.

of the walk, in the sense that modern roads and transportation have drastically shortened the travel time that Kateri would have taken to visit Marguerite. Urbanization and the histories it represents have all but obliterated the somewhat straighter cultural, spiritual and human path that once existed between the two poles of our journey.

While there is no single social imaginary to describe both Kahnawà:ké and Vieux-Montréal, there *can*, as Taylor notes, be social imaginaries, plural. Claudia Strauss points out the many similarities between Taylor’s use of the term ‘social imaginary’ and what anthropologists have called ‘cultural models.’<sup>235</sup> She explains how, if not for Taylor then in general discourse, the term ‘social imaginary’ has become, in many cases, simply the academic *mot de jour* for culture, which is seen as “too redolent of Otherness, fixity, and homogeneity” (322). In reaction to the oversimplification of the

term, Strauss suggests that the social imaginary consists of at least the inner life of individuals, people's publicly observable behaviors, and public culture productions. While she lists, as some examples of the last, "mass media, rituals, laws and the like" (339), the conception seems to be open to an understanding that includes how the material manifestations of a particular neighborhood express inhabitants' values and shared sense of identity. The fact that such cultural production arises from the lives of individuals (Strauss's point) and may overlap or conflict even *within* communities does not preclude that, internally, communities exhibit more similarities than differences, and that their physical characteristics speak to this real or imagined cultural identity. This shared cultural imaginary of place is paralleled in the shared cultural imaginary of our group of professors and students, in spite of our linguistic, cultural and religious differences. A term used in pilgrimage studies to describe this experience is *communitas*: a shared identity (pilgrimage's own version of social imaginary) arrived at despite personal differences.

Because there is no single cultural imaginary, our pilgrimage acted as a map-making exercise, and our research, including this paper, as a theoretical reflection on territory that has defied univocal interpretation. Especially on the last leg of the journey into Kahnawa:ké, our path was forging a way between sections of territory that resist connection. Although it was most obvious at the borders of the Kanien'kehá:ka territory, the same complexity and multivocality were variably true among the neighborhoods in the centre of Montréal as well. Thus, it was that on our way from a sixteenth-century New France settlement's chapel to a twenty-first century Mohawk territory's Longhouse, we passed through the traditional neighborhoods of working-class anglophone immigrants and francophones *de vieille souche*,<sup>36</sup> and those of the gentrifying educated and creative classes and suburban families,

the latter two consisting of shifting linguistic and ethnic mixes. These neighborhoods sit cheek by jowl, sometimes uncomfortably jostling each other for living space. Such is the case, for example, with the incursion of condominium development into what once was an inner-city Irish immigrant neighborhood (the half-buried foundation of its main church now haunting a park with benches set up like pews), or the modernist 1960s highway (now crumbling as its mid-century infrastructure ages), that cuts across the sibling working class communities of Pointe-St-Charles and Verdun.

Our story and our route reversed the seventeenth-century journey that Kateri Tekakwitha took to see Marguerite Bourgeoys and the sisters of her Congrégation, and this reversal was not accidental. There is historical record of this encounter between the young Kanien'kehá:ka woman and the teacher-sister of New France: the two women did meet. But there is no story of a journey from the tourist shops of contemporary Vieux-Montréal to the politicized and active First Nation of Kahnawa:ké. When there is any a story about the two communities, the urban metropolis and the Kanien'kehá:ka village, the standard stories seems to be enough for most people: those of indifference or conflict, or, if it is a story of engagement, it revolves around buying cheap cigarettes "*chez les Indiens*" or Chinese-made moccasins and "Indian maiden" dolls in the tourist shops of Vieux-Montréal.

### Pilgrim newcomers on the Turtle's Back<sup>37</sup>

The students in our *Pilgrim Bodies, Sacred Journeys* course prepared for their pilgrimage from the first day of class.<sup>38</sup> Our company of pilgrims hailed from a diversity of personal and academic backgrounds<sup>39</sup>, including psychology, philosophy, anthropology and sociology, performing arts and political science. Most would identify themselves



by the postmodern convention “SBNR” (spiritual but not religious), though several were religious adherents, and several considered themselves neither religious nor spiritual. Age-wise, most were young adults, though a few were older, and one was a senior citizen. They researched the route, the landmarks, and the historical, political and economic stories disclosed by the pilgrim path. They engaged a wide collection of pilgrimage-related resources. This included original literary, artistic, musical and filmic sources, both historical and contemporary, and secondary scholarly sources across the multiple disciplines that converge in pilgrimage studies. In keeping with the course’s goals, and its insights into the importance of qualitative research and the role of subjectivity in scholarly methodologies, students were expected to integrate the resources critically in a series of short assignments. The main coursework for the term was the walking and writing of their own pilgrimage story, reflecting critically on their own expectations and actual experiences of, and meaning-transactions with, the spaces walked and the people encountered on the journey.

How does one qualify the ways in which our urban pilgrimage was in fact a transformative journey? Examination of the students’ journals reveals that it was difficult for some walkers to engage with the urban landscape section of the pilgrimage, and that a horizon of high-rises and industrial zones along a path of concrete was not as stirring for them as the subsequent quiet evening beside rustling water of the Seaway. The June weather in Montréal was hot, and we spent much of the first half of the trip walking on asphalt. It was tricky to find enough green space at the right time to eat our packed lunches, and in the end, our meal, such as it was, was consumed on the grassy median of a shopping mall. This may have been part of the reason why one student remarked being much more affected by

the experience of *communitas*<sup>40</sup> with his walking mates, than with the urban landscape:

There was not much to see on the walk itself, but plenty of time to talk to my fellow pilgrims. My pilgrimage was a secular pilgrimage ... (Abe Cohen).

As we plan to re-walk the route again this summer with a new cohort of students, we will actively seek ways to promote more conscious engagement with the urban landscape.

There was a sense of general delight, even relief, among the group in any patch of greenery, as when we'd crossed the *Estacade* (ice bridge) and reached the path through grass and scrub trees on the embankment that stretches for 11 miles in the Seaway. The landscape that allowed for this little encounter with "nature", including wild strawberry, birdsong, slithering snakes and hopping frogs, is actually an artificial spit of land created from soil and rock expropriated from the Kanièn'kehá:ka territory in order to dig the Seaway. Several students expressed surprise and disorientation on arrival in the village-like and resolutely anglophone Kahnawà:ké. Only one had been on the reserve prior to this pilgrimage and he wrote frankly about it:

Since I experienced a complex relationship with the Mohawks growing up in Chateauguay [a community that abuts on Kahnawà:ké], as I entered deeper into Kahnawake, my past exposures (and thus biases) directed me towards feelings of unwelcomeness and being out of place ... an important part of pilgrimage is separation from one's ordinary world ... I did not feel like a pilgrim, but I also did not feel like a tourist.... (Micah Genest)

Perhaps this student is proposing a difference between how a tourist places demands on landscape and culture, while a pilgrim – at least potentially – is transformed by them, and may even feel uncomfortable in that transformation. Another explained how the identity quest of another nation whose culture she clearly already admired, perhaps a little romantically, pressed her to explore not so much their culture (as she had expected), but her own:

Seeing myself, how different I am compared to this “other,” made me come to some realizations of who I am, and who I am not...I see that the traditions of my personal background (English, Scottish, Russian and Polish) differ from those of Native People, but my nationality/culture has been so modernized and industrialized that it becomes easy to understand my interest in Indigenous culture. I don't see myself as a First Nations person, but I do see myself more clearly as an Eastern European Canadian...I am interested in further researching my own ancestry and its ancient traditions to discover who I am authentically... In observing myself and my inner attitude toward the “other,” I made sure to acknowledge when I was tempted to objectify my experience of “them.” (Stephanie Frizzell)

It seems that the performative fieldwork of pilgrimage awoke in some students the very sensibilities and values we have subsequently encountered in researching Indigenous re-search. The following was part of another student's journal:

I'd say that this was no ordinary journey, nor even an ordinary pilgrimage (if there is such a thing), because it was, at its heart, a journey towards understanding...there was not one specific site that held more meaning to the whole journey than any other. Rather, our pilgrimage was a movement between multiple sites and, I would argue,

multiple worldviews...I believe that our walking into Kahnawake on foot, with the intention of seeking, rather than imposing, understanding, was an important political gesture...a (small) practical gesture of reconciliation...The idea of the Two-Row Wampum<sup>41</sup> had already been introduced to us, but it wasn't until this journey that I fully grasped its implications..."(Casey Stainsby)

Students' comments reinforce the understanding—and experience—of pilgrimage as transformational journey. Openness to transformation implies risk and an experience of personal and social vulnerability. From the many thoughtful, honest and challenging reflections in the course journals, we choose to end this section with a simple but profound statement of identity formed through the purposeful journey of the course:

It was the first day in my life that I walked on the road with an identity of pilgrim. (Lin Fang)

### **Walking Home with a Story: Maps are never finished**

We began this paper with a story and a thesis, or, if you wish, a map and a destination. All of these elements shaped our three-day urban pilgrimage. The story is of a group of students and their professors walking between two traditional and historical pilgrim centers, forging a physical path that, to our knowledge, has not been walked in recent decades, since the building of the Seaway. To parallel that, our story is also of transgressing political, social and cultural borders on the way from a colonizing 'here' to a colonized "there." We claimed that, by virtue of its inherently narrative temporospatial structure, walking pilgrimage functions as a effective way of re-reading and re-inscribing narratives about oneself and one's neighbors, and that reconciliation can happen precisely through the process of un-learning—through the embodied practice of re-walking

and re-telling—the narratives that have divided terrain and alienated people from each other.

A path and a map—topographical, cultural, and (we maintain) methodological—all needed to be developed to make our pilgrimage. We have argued that the path was developed, in part, by finding, in our own Western intellectual traditions, methodologies that have themselves been suppressed, but that once recovered, can have resonance with the insights of contemporary Aboriginal scholars. They coincide in their acknowledgement that, as researchers, teachers and learners, we operate within a tradition, not according to some hypothetical objectivity that too often conceals its own colonizing interests. Moreover, as our students' journals witness, such a methodology finds a place for the narratives that organically emerge from the experience of pilgrimage itself, and, within that process, through encountering the neighbor whom we have made a stranger. Here, the concept of the 'social imaginary' has been helpful, and the ways in which mapping of theory, and the re-telling of stories of place and connection, are required precisely in those cases where there is no shared social imaginary or where it has broken down.

Practically, finding and mapping the path we walked between very old pilgrim sites in Vieux-Montréal and Kahnawa:ké required us to go beyond the official maps and that we, at times, discard the advice of municipal governments that seem to operate with a momentum that maintains the division between the communities. While our pilgrimage was subversive in only the humblest of ways, it still points in a direction that may need to be considered in order to make connections more likely and more secure. As one of our students pointed out, having considered her discouragement at the scale of the reconciliation needed, through walking and encounter she came to the realization that small humble person-to-person steps are within our power; she wrote:



I am in the process of understanding that personal relationships bring a whole new level of healing to the table. (Casey Stainsby)

As the pilgrimage crossed through many urban and suburban neighborhoods, our story widened out to include not just sixteenth-century New France and Jesuit missions, and not just a twenty-first century metropolis and suburban reserve, but also resurrected and retold sub-plots and detours. These included the stories of the religious women who played such vital roles in the narratives of both New France and Kahnawà:ké; and the working-class Irish who fled the Famine and joined working-class Québécois, those whose descendants are increasingly pushed out of gentrified neighborhoods and replaced by new waves of the newly affluent. In particular, the story of the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway itself, so much a part of our route, materialized, for us, the routine way that Aboriginal land and identity have been (dis)regarded and used by settlers in Québec and Canada.

Were we able to re-tell the narrative by re-walking the route between these two pilgrim centers? In resonance with some Indigenous re-search methodologies, cartographer Caquard reminds us that, like stories, “maps are never finished, but are rather always in the process of becoming.”<sup>42</sup> In one real sense, the story that stretches with the routes between Montréal and the Kanien’kehá:ka is too large and complex, and at 350 years and counting, has been going on far too long for our three-day walk to subvert in any major way. But we have added to that story, and we believe that we have charted a new and alternate plot line, perhaps adding a small twist to what has become a rather predictable story-line of domination and alienation. We were able to re-tell and re-walk some of our personal stories, and that is, as every reader and pilgrim knows, the only real place to begin.

## [Endnotes]

1. Vieux-Montréal is the usual French name for the oldest part of Montreal, known in English as “Old Montreal”.
2. *Kahnawake* is pronounced “Guh-nuh-WAH-ghey”; it means “On the Rapids”.
3. The Mohawk are the most eastern tribe of the Six Nations, or the Iroquois (*Haudenosaunee*) Confederacy. They are known as the “Keepers of the Eastern Door” of the Confederacy Longhouse. Mohawk came from a Dutch appellation. The Mohawk name for themselves is: *Kanien'kehá:ka*, pronounced “Guh-nyen-geh-HAH-ga”; it means “people of the flint”.
4. See “Rights and Warriors” in Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*, (Waterloo ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2005), 35–65, on the so-called Oka crisis of 1990, for one story that reveals the frayed relationships.
5. Our first two pilgrimage field trips investigated medieval Christian routes in Spain and Ireland.
6. The terms used in Canada for what would be, in the United States, “Native American” include a mixture of terms such as Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Peoples, and First Nations. Some of these terms, but not all, will also include reference to the Métis, or mixed-blood (European and Aboriginal) peoples, and to the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, both of whom have a separate history in Canada. In this paper we will use the terms Aboriginal, First Nations, or First Peoples, or the term “Indigenous” as it is used in the methodological research. The terms Aboriginal and First Peoples (but not First Nations) includes the Métis and the Inuit.
7. What is called a “reservation” in the United States is called a “reserve” in Canada.
8. Leslie Marmon Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective”, in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 57.
9. Sébastien Caquard, “Narrative Cartography: From Mapping Stories to the Narrative of Maps and Mapping,” *The Cartographic Journal* 51, no. 2 (May 2014), 102, 104.
10. *Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal* (CMM) is the planning, coordinating and funding body for Greater Montreal, including the islands of Montreal and Laval, the North Shore and the South Shore. The interactive map is available here: <http://cmm.qc.ca/territory-and-population/interactive-map/>
11. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London & New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 1.
12. Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogizhigokwe), *Kaandosswin: How We Come to Know*, (Halifax: Fernwood Pub., 2011), 12 ff.
13. Donald Polkinghorne, “Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis,” *Qualitative Studies in Education* 8, no 1, (1995), 9.
14. See also Polkinghorne’s *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, (Albany:

State University of New York Press, 1988).

15. See, for instance, the so-called “postliberals” associated originally with the Yale Divinity School, especially George Lindbeck, Has Frei and Stanley Haueraus.

16. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

17. Edward T. Oakes underlines how “Narrative theology was never ignored or denied by pre-Enlightenment theology ... [narratives of scripture and saints’ lives] were always assumed to be part of one all-encompassing narrative, within which “propositional” theology did its work. But “narrative” only became thematized as a privileged *category* when the prior-narrative world collapsed under the impact of Newtonian physics and the slightly later Enlightenment critique of the particularity of revelation.” See his “Apologetics and the pathos of narrative theology,” *Journal of Religion* 72, no. 1, (January 1992), 38-39. I am grateful to have been alerted to this text by my colleague, Martha Elias Downey, in her “A Perspective on Narrative Theology: It’s purpose, Particularity, and Centrality”, in *Theoforum* 43, no 3 (2012), 292n.

18. Absolon, 22.

19. Willie Ermine, “Aboriginal Epistemology”, in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, eds, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995, 108.

20. Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 142.

21. Natalie Clark, “Who Are You and Why Do You Care: Intersections of Identities Within the University”, *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* 15, no 2, (2009), 5-13.

22. Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Pub., 2008.)

23. Valaskakis, 111, 113.

24. Absolon, 88.

25. Peter Cole, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing: Coming Home to the Village*, (Montreal, Ithaca NY: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), xiii, xiv.

26. Smith, 148-149.

27. Valaskakis, 51. See also Kahnawake film-maker Reaghan Tarbell’s, *To Brooklyn and Back: A Mohawk Journey*, National Film Board of Canada, 2008, telling the story of “Little Caughnawaga”, an area in Brooklyn that became home, from the 1920s to the 1970s, to many high-steel workers and their families from Kahnawake. Famously, and tragically, in 1907 thirty-three men from Kahnawake died during the construction of the Québec Bridge when the partly-built structure collapsed.

28. See another Kanien’kehá:ka film-maker Tracey Deer’s *Mohawk Girls*, National Film Board of Canada, 2005, for an intimate and honest portrayal of this dilemma from the vantage points of five young women of Kahnawake, available at: <https://

[www.nfb.ca/film/mohawk\\_girls](http://www.nfb.ca/film/mohawk_girls)>

29. *Claiming Space: Voices of Urban Aboriginal Youth*, (showing work by young aboriginal artists from across Canada, the United States, Norway, and New Zealand) was exhibited from June 1, 2014 to January 4, 2015, at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver); *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture* (on urban culture and Aboriginal identity; organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery) was shown at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal from October 17, 2013 to January 5, 2014).

30. Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*, Oxford/Providence: Berg Publishers, 1995), 8.

31. Tilley, 34.

32. The Camino Francès section of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, with its hundredfold growth in pilgrims over that last 30 years, is the quintessential contemporary walking pilgrimage route. It runs some 800 kilometers from the foothills of the French Pyrenees westward across northern Spain. It passes through urban spaces, but these are regularly seen as necessary evils by walking pilgrims seeking transcendence in “natural”, and preferably lonely, landscapes. A typical example of anti-urban pilgrim rhetoric can be found in Jane Christmas's Camino memoir, where she describes entry into the city of Santiago thusly: “High atop Monte del Gozo, a broad hill on the outskirts of Santiago, you get the lay of the land. Behind you spans nearly eight hundred kilometers of largely peaceful trail that bends and meanders to Nature's mold; below you awaits several kilometers of complicated concrete and asphalt that spiral around Santiago like one of the circles of Hell, none of which had a pilgrims-only lane. To steal a phrase from Barbara, it was shocking.” The capitalization (sanctification?) of the word “Nature” is from the original. From *What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim*, (Vancouver, Toronto & Berkeley: Greystone Books, 2007), 263.

33. In their 1991 book, John Eade and Michael Sallnow challenged essentializing approaches to studying pilgrimage by contending that pilgrim sites are more better understood when construed as “religious voids” rather than as loci of univocal meaning. While we heartily agree with their rejection of univocal meaning in pilgrimage places, we also reject their characterization as “voids”, *tabulae rasae* to be inscribed, for the first time, by each pilgrim. See their *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991, 2000), xiii, 15. (To be fair, on page 15, they do qualify “religious void” with the adverb “almost”!)

34. Charles Taylor. “Modern Social Imaginaries,” in *Public Culture* 14, no. 1, (Winter, 2002), 108.

35. Claudia Strauss. “The Imaginary.” *Anthropological Theory* 6, no. 1, (September, 2006), 322-344.

36. “*De vieille souche*” is a term meaning “of old stock”, and is used to identify French

people whose families have been in Québec for many generations.

37. North America is known as “Turtle Island” among several Northeastern Woodland aboriginal nations, including the Haudenosaunee.

38 Half the class chose to accompany us on our walk from Vieux-Montréal to Kahnawaké. The students have the option of participating in the organised course pilgrimage or designing, walking and articulating their own.

39. Here we would like to identify a few things about our academic unit as a locus of study. Our small Department of Theological Studies is located in a large urban secular comprehensive university, in an intensely multi-cultural city. As a pluralist department of theology in a secular university, it is unique in Canada, as far as we know, and perhaps in North America. Besides the core of theology majors, our courses attract a large number of elective students from across the disciplines; more than a few have told us that they come to explore existential questions not given hearing elsewhere in the university.

40. The term *communitas*, referring to the fellow-feeling that often arises among pilgrims travelling together, often in spite of otherwise very different social identities, was popularized by Victor and Edith Turner in their foundational book, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 250-255. It became a foundational text for the emergence of the field of pilgrimage studies.

41. “The Two Row Wampum belt is the symbolic record of the first agreement between Europeans and American Indian Nations on Turtle Island/North America,” from the website of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign, an educational campaign partnership begun in 2013 between the Onondaga Nation and Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and European settlers. For more on the Two-Row Wampum, see resources provided here: <<http://honorthetworum.org/learn-more/history/>>

42. Caquard, 104.