

# 2023 Roberts Centre Graduate Conference

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# Remember, eh?

Memory, Identity, and a Critical Study of Canada

Conference Dates:

Thursday, 13 April 2023 & Friday, 14 April 2023

*(held virtually via Zoom)*

Registration is free. All are welcome!

Register here: [www.tinyurl.com/remember-eh](http://www.tinyurl.com/remember-eh)

**ROBARTS**  
CENTRE FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

## **Thursday, 13 April & Friday, 14 April 2023**

*A two-day virtual conference with 5 panels & 25 conference speakers.*

The 2023 Robarts Centre Graduate Conference will highlight and confront how memory and identity are at the centre of the study of Canada, past, present, and future. We ask: How have Canadian imaginaries and common senses been shaped by memory and identity claims? What can these claims tell us about Canadian society? Do mobilizing these memories support the status quo or transformative change? How can memory and identity claims enact change?

For the most up to date version of the schedule please visit us online at:

<https://www.yorku.ca/research/robarths/events/2023-robarths-centre-graduate-conference-memory-identity-and-a-critical-study-of-canada/>

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### **Schedule at a Glance:**

#### **Thursday, 13 April 2023**

09:45 - 10:00	Introductory remarks & land acknowledgement
10:00 - 11:30	Panel A – Political projects & memory-making
13:00 - 14:30	Panel B – Perceptions & representations: Canadian places & moments
15:00 - 16:30	Panel C – Critical perspectives on Canadian universities

#### **Friday, 14 April 2023**

10:00 - 11:30	Panel D – Peoples of Canada? Framings, barriers & experiences
13:00 - 14:30	Panel E – Decolonizing settler colonial structures?
14:30 - 14:45	Concluding remarks

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To register please visit:

[www.tinyurl.com/remember-eh](http://www.tinyurl.com/remember-eh)

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#### **Special thanks to the 2023 Robarts Centre Graduate Conference Organizer:**

Eva Wissting (*Graduate Associate, Translation Studies, York University*)

#### **The Robarts Centre Team:**

Jean Michel Montsion (*Director*)

Laura Taman (*Coordinator*)

Alex Felipe (*Media Mobilization*)

# Day One: Thursday, 13 April 2023

**09:45-10:00**      **Introductory Remarks & Land Acknowledgement**

**10:00-11:30**      **Panel A      Political Projects & Memory-Making**

Chair-Discussant: Dr. Jennifer Bonnell, History, York University

## *Spectral Histories, Screened memories: Examining Nostalgia as a Modality of Remembering*

Collective memory is the function not only of history, but of affect. In Canada, deep social schisms persist in large part on account of partially recollected, misremembered, and excluded histories. Examining different modalities of remembering—particularly as they intersect with affect—then, is of clear sociopolitical importance. This paper considers nostalgia as one such mode, because of its situatedness in the politics of memory, manifest uses in reactionary discourses, and elevation of modernity narratives which, taken together, grossly obfuscate vital sociohistorical contingencies. Drawing from Derrida's work on spectral history, the understudied psychoanalytic theory of screen memories, and existential phenomenology, this paper will demonstrate how nostalgia can function reflexively to underscore contradictory logics that maintain cruel attachments to antiquated and socially objectionable ideals. Taken together, this theoretical patchwork underscores elevating histories 'from below' as the only viable route for recognising, confronting, and grappling with the divisive past.

**Danielle Christie** is a graduate student in the Historical, Theoretical, and Critical Studies of Psychology program at York University. She holds an HBA in Philosophy and English Literature from the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the intersections of affect, memory, and history.

## *Assembling the Canadian Nation and the Politics of Representation*

Modern public museums have been pivotal social institutions of modernity and are embedded within the modern nation state; they have historically played a significant and constitutive role in the nation building project. National history museums in particular are recognized as the authoritative holders of the nation's heritage, memory, and traditions. This paper critically examines the role of the museum in the nation building project by analyzing the Canadian Museum of History and the changes to the museum and its mandate under the Harper Government. Through this examination it illustrates that the national history presented in the museum is guided by the existing and continuing conceptions of national identity as articulated by the state. It argues that although the museum is generally perceived as neutral in its presentation of history it disseminates a particular understanding of what Canada and being Canadian means, reproducing dominant norms and values and ultimately advancing the nation building project.

**Umbrin Bukan** is a PhD student in the Social and Political Thought programme at York University. Her research interests include comparative politics, international relations, nation building, and nationalism and museums. Her dissertation explores nationalism in Canadian and Egyptian museums, particularly the Royal Ontario Museum and the Grand Egyptian Museum.

## ***Tyrants, Rebels, and Reformers: The 1837 Rebellion and Nation-Building in the Canadian Historical Memory***

Over the last 20 years, conceptions of Canadian state-building have been fervently debated in academic circles, prompted by the publication of Ian McKay's *The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History*. Yet, despite its immediate relevance to Canada's political, social, and economic future, as well as a once revered place within the realm of domestic academia, the colony of Upper Canada and the Rebellion of 1837 have mainly served as a footnote in recent historical discussions. For my conference paper, I propose a historiographical and cultural analysis of rebellion scholarship that will chart the field's shifting status regarding historical and contemporary Canadian academic discussions. Thematically linked to my graduate research on the Family Compact and British imperial identity in early Canada, my paper will explain how changing approaches to the 1837 Rebellion reflect the evolution of Canadian historical memory and conceptions of nationhood.

**Kyle Mastarciyan** is an MA student at York University. A graduate of Ryerson University with a BA (Hons.) in history, his research interests include British colonial administration during the 19th century, pre-Confederation Canadian state-development, and Cold War Espionage. At Ryerson, he worked as a research assistant in diverse fields including espionage, South-East Asian politics, and Canadian border policy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ***Canadian Post-War State-Building through Nuclear Technologies***

The Second World War and immediate post-war period saw the birth of the modern Canadian administrative state. During this period, Canadian state officials used nuclear technologies as symbolic and practical means by which they could develop a new national narrative: one that posed Canada as a sophisticated and powerful global technological leader. Early nuclear regulation sought to facilitate the ambitious promotion of nuclear energy technologies, in part through the colonial extraction of uranium ore deposits in the north as well as administrative agreements between Canadian scientists and their colleagues in the US and Europe. Similar narratives and regulatory approaches persist to this day and can be seen in Canadian government support for new Small Modular Nuclear Reactor (SMR) technologies. This paper builds on Sheila Jasanoff, Sang-Hyuk Kim, and Itty Abraham's work on "sociotechnical imaginaries": it describes how nuclear technologies have been tied to Canadian state-building and how those in power within Canadian national structures see themselves and project their worldviews onto the places and people they claim.

**Pippa Feinstein** is a nuclear regulatory lawyer and the founder and coordinator of the Nuclear Transparency Project, a Canadian-registered non-profit dedicated to supporting open, informed, and equitable public discourse on nuclear technologies. She is a PhD student at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University and her dissertation examines how Canada's nuclear regulatory regime has developed over space and time.

## ***The Nostalgic Maintenance of the Canadian Imaginary: The Use of Nostalgia as a Political Discourse in the 2015 Rebranding of the Liberal Party of Canada***

The Canadian imaginary is steeped in rhetoric that champions Canada as a moral and influential actor on the international stage; the source of much of this rhetoric is the diplomacy and politics

of former Prime Minister Lester Pearson. Through rhetorical analysis, this research project examines the ways in which the Trudeau Liberals evoked the nostalgic remembrance of Pearsonian internationalism as part of their 2015 rebranding, and in doing so capitalized on this aspect of the Canadian imaginary. Employing this as a case study, I seek to theorize the relationship between the Canadian imaginary, nostalgia, and political discourse in order to question the societal conditions required for nostalgic discourses to be accepted and moreover, the potential consequences when gaps exist between this political rhetoric and actual policy.

**Breanna Kubat** (she/her) is a second year PhD student in the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies at Carleton University, located on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Nation. Her doctoral research theorizes the role of student organizing in institutional change in relation to, and juxtaposition with, university branding and administrative responses.

### **13:00-14:30      Panel B      Perceptions & Representations: Canadian Places & Moments**

Chair-Discussant: Dr. Liette Gilbert, Environmental and Urban Change, York University

#### ***Studying Rural Education in Canada: The Opportunities and Challenges of Defining Rurality***

As a researcher working on rural education in Northern Ontario, it struck me that there is no uniform definition of rural communities. While many researchers simply contrast rural communities to urban populations, others argue for a Canadian definition of rurality as a path to community building and social justice (Corbett & Gereluk, 2020). Azano et al. (2020) propose that each rural community is unique and should be defined by a blend of its geographic, economic, and social characteristics. White & Corbett (2014) added other components to this definition that acknowledge external influences on rural definitions, such as globalization and national policies. Nonetheless, they saw a context-based approach to defining rurality as a way to fight back against negative assumptions and a prevalent deficit perspective. Through a literature review, I explore the different approaches to defining rural communities, the benefits, and the challenges of reaching a clear definition.

**Hamza Arsbi** is a PhD student in Education at York University. He has over ten years of experience in the nonprofit and education sector as executive director of the Mind Lab, a social enterprise with a mission to increase access to education for refugee and rural communities. He has an MA in international development and was awarded the Obama Foundation Scholarship and the Dalai Lama Fellowship.

#### ***The Affect of “Unfixing” the Canadian Tundra***

Archives, as a colonial system of classification, aided in the narrative of nation building and dispossession of land from Canadian indigenous populations, and continues to do so today. Romanticized images, such as photographs of the Canadian tundra from the “Rosemary Gilliat Eaton fonds” of the LAC, hide the history of imperial violence and capitalist exploitation of the

Canadian landscape and its indigenous populations. Images picturing wild, solitary space flatten the physical land and picture it as a resource; as an unoccupied space open for the taking. This type of photography mythologizes geography and contributes to constructs of national identity; where the narrative of land has become an endless resource for the extraction of capital. This paper explores the ways that affect in abstract painting can be used as a strategy against representation, inviting one to conceive of space not strictly as geographical but also as intellectual, emotional, and poetic.

**Maegan Harbridge** is an artist and a PhD candidate at York University where she also teaches studio art. Her research delves into the political nature of aesthetic experience, investigating the social and political implications of a material-based practice. Maegan has exhibited her work across Canada and has worked as an artist/researcher for extended periods in Cape Town, South Africa. She has recently published an experimental essay on painting in the journal *Borderland*.

### ***Rehearsing Canada: Music, Olympic Spectacle, and Settler Colonialism***

The Opening Ceremony for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games spectacularly combines music, visuals, and text to present a vision of Canada's history and identity on an international stage. In this presentation, I analyze one scene from Vancouver 2010's Opening Ceremony that exemplifies how these ceremonies operate to curate our memories and invent a shared national identity. As part of my continuing doctoral research, which investigates the role of music in national identity construction at each of Canada's Olympic ceremonies, this example employs a framework of decoloniality (Mignolo 2020), and a multimodal methodology (Machin 2010) which facilitate the critique of national spectacles (MacAloon 1984). I argue that the disjuncture (Goodwin 1992) between the multimodal layers of communication (music, visuals, and text) reveals an underlying settler colonial mindset (Veracini 2010, Wolfe 2006) that contributes to the erasure of Indigenous identity and enforces a white-supremacist standard within Canadian nationalism.

**Hannah Willmann** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa studying music and culture. Following a bachelor's degree in flute performance, Hannah completed an MA in musicology which examined themes of transnationalism, transcendence, and exclusion in the works of American composer Horatio Parker. Her doctoral research investigates the role of music in Canadian national identity construction, with a particular interest in how hierarchies and exclusions are reproduced.

### ***National Interest, (Neoliberal) Nationalization, and the Critique of Critical Infrastructure***

Deployments of "national interest" and (neoliberal) nationalization are used to legitimize "critical infrastructure" projects, such as fossil fuel pipelines. "Critical infrastructure" is a legal category that mobilizes a regime of surveillance and securitization against Indigenous land defense and social movements to promote pipeline development, presenting them as necessary for the national interest and criminalizing those who interfere with their operation. From the railroads of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the pipelines (railroads, highways, etc.) of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, infrastructures, the forms of jurisdiction upon which they depend, and the ideological fantasies they sustain — have all been central to settler Canadian nation-building. This paper explores "critical infrastructure" as a site of active political conflict over settler state legitimacy and as an ideological support for a specific national vision. With my critique, I hope to offer an alternative

account of which infrastructures are *really* critical and which kinds of nationalization might be desirable.

**Isaac Thornley** is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University. His research draws on political ecology and psychoanalytic Marxist theories of ideology to analyze contemporary political conflicts surrounding fossil fuel pipelines in Canada (in particular, the Trans Mountain Expansion).

### ***Hazy Prospects: Wildfires and the Mediation of Canadian Wilderness***

Climate-induced wildfires are mobile; guided by wind and technologies for the redirection of air, they flow across political, physical, and aesthetic boundaries, reshaping the material and imaginative landscapes defined by these. Canadian wilderness landscape historically supplied settler-colonial capitalist social relations with the endless hinterlands of cheap nature they require. Examining images of Canadian landscapes affected by wildfires posted to the social media platform Instagram, I suggest how wildfires and the smoke they emit come to mediate and be managed as risks to Canadian wilderness and the settler-colonial capitalist social relations contingent on it. Smoke blankets popular sites of Canadian wilderness, marking the images which emerge from outdoor leisure in these spaces with an aesthetic of environmental precarity: haze delimits the receding horizons of once-romantic promontory views, drawing into question the futures of adventure, exploration and extraction they once implied.

**Ferg Maxwell** is a PhD candidate in York and Toronto Metropolitan University's joint program in Communication and Culture. She studies the intersections of the production of space, leisure, and elemental media. Her dissertation examines the visual culture of wildfires to address how climate change mediates the reproduction of wilderness and settler-colonial capitalism.

## **15:00-16:30      Panel C      Critical Perspectives on Canadian Universities** Chair-Discussant: Dr. Aparna Mishra Tarc, Education, York University

### ***Experiencing Hate on University Campuses: Online and Offline***

This project surveyed Canadian university students on their experience of hate within in-person and online campus spaces. The impetus of this study came after noticing a spike in reports of ongoing incidents of hate-motivated activity occurring in universities across Canada during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several Canadian students spoke out against the levels of hate motivated violence in university campuses. Thus, this study selected participants from Canadian universities that had reported incidents of hate, discrimination, and systemic racism in the media between 2020-2022. By learning about student experiences, we document the varying types of hate students experience on campus, what services and support exist, how the university understand and respond to hate, and whether experiences of hate differs online/offline across different provinces. With this data, we aim to increase awareness of the different degrees of hate on university campuses and help improve universities' anti-hate and anti-racism frameworks.

**Arunita Das** (she/her) is a PhD Student in the Socio-Legal Studies program at York University. She holds an MA in Socio-Legal Studies and a BA in Sociology. Throughout her graduate studies and work experience with non-profit charitable organizations, Das has been developing research in racism, hate and extremism, colonization, and feminist criminology. Her current research examines the relationship between online hate speech, hate crime, and free expression laws in Canada.

### ***From Model Minority to Yellow Peril: The Shifting Narratives of Asian International Students***

The ongoing pandemic, COVID-19, has demonstrated how quickly the depictions of Asian individuals can shift from “model minority” to “yellow peril” during times of crisis. These times were particularly difficult for Chinese post-secondary international students who were directly impacted by these shifting narratives, as many faced discrimination, violence, and prejudice as a result of the rise of anti-Asian hate that occurred across the nation. Thus, utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT), the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of these contrasting narratives and how “model minority” and “yellow peril” can contribute to the maintenance of White supremacy, and possible considerations and interventions to better support Asian international post-secondary students during their studies in Canada. This paper will also provide an overview of the history of anti-Asian racism that exists in Canada that greatly contrasts with its global identity and association with multiculturalism.

**Helen Liu** is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University and teacher on the York Region District School Board (YRDSB). Her research interests include media literacy education, social justice, and the exploration of international student experiences in the context of critical race theory and equity issues.

### ***Decolonize My Academic Politics? Reflecting on Academic Narratives on Indigenous-Settler Solidarity***

This paper is a result of a directed reading course titled, “Diaspora and Indigeneity”. I completed this course during 2020 under the supervision of Dr. Tania Das Gupta. Anchoring on certain academic conversations discussed in the Scholar Strike Canada over 2020 and 2022, I reflect on the question of how should I decolonize my academic politics as a racialized scholar and settler? Through select academic readings by racialized scholars, I make sense of Indigenous-settler solidarity that was expressed in Scholar Strike’s teach-ins, action and advocacy. Solidarity professed by Black, other racialized professors and activists was evident through Land acknowledgement, highlighting of Indigenous movements and updates including 1492 Land Back Lane, historic and current policing on Indigenous reserves discussed through Oka Crisis and Wet’suwet’en camp organizing. Emphasis was placed on the need for allyship and settler solidarity in questioning white supremacy of state-led political actions and violent policing in the space we call Canada. I try to relate these learnings to the course readings and narratives by academic scholars engaged in Indigenous-settler solidarity.

**Shruti Raji-Kalyanaraman** (she/her/they) is a 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD candidate with York University's Gender, Feminist and Women’s Studies Department. Her SSHRC funded research centers particularisms of Dalit, Indigenous and Black mothering experiences as theories and epistemologies. She adapts these experiences to understand community advocacy as a component of racialized mothering. Within community advocacy, Shruti explores food work by

new immigrants and uncover new immigrant knowledges and experiences towards food security.

### ***The Political Workings of Social Justice, Academia, and the Community***

Going to graduate school, is a path that one hopes will be filled with expert analysis and reading to attain “high” level knowledge along academic disciplines. This knowledge in turn is used to pursue a career in teaching at a post-secondary institution, working for the government, or working in the not-for-profit world. By embarking on a second tour of graduate school to achieve a terminal degree, I have some simmering thoughts about graduate school, social justice, racism, and identity politics. This presentation will reflect on my experience as someone who identifies as a scholar-practitioner interested in decolonial futures to eliminate current oppressive structures. I am interested in examining how critical cultural studies interventions have influenced the University. Secondly, exploring the balance between critiquing social structures in graduate settings versus critiquing these structures for political change. Finally, addressing the political implications of academic critiquing of social structures for transformational change. These three points of investigation and explanation will offer my personal insight and reflection about the intersections of graduate school, politics, social justice, academia, and the community at large.

**Kojo Dampety** is an interdisciplinary educator and facilitator. His area of interest is social justice with a focus on leadership theory, race, racialization, racism, African studies, African governance and postcolonial studies. He approaches these disciplines from an anti-oppressive framework with a foundation in Afro-centric traditions and culture. He also uses performing arts, specifically music, to address world phenomena discourses relating to human rights, marginalization and neo-colonialism.

### ***Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI): How the Narrative of Equality Reinforces Inequality in Canadian Institutions of Higher Learning***

This project seeks to explore whether Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion projects in institutions of higher learning indeed substantially address social inequities or whether they reproduce them. As such, this paper seeks to draw on Canada’s history of implementing and subscribing to liberal projects designed to manage and solve the problem of race as well as to challenge existing approaches intended to remedy racism and racial injustice in the academy. My research engages with scholars contending with the Canadian context that expose how an emphasis on multiculturalism and post-racialism inhibits meaningful discussions about race and obscures liberal forms of racial governmentality. As such, my research aims to challenge the vision of Canadian multiculturalism and diversity.

**Sophia Martensen** (she/her) is a third year PhD candidate in the Socio-Legal studies program at York University. She holds an Honours Specialization in Criminology and a Major in Psychology from Western University. She obtained her Master’s in Criminology and Sociological studies at the University of Toronto. Her current research focuses on racial liberalism, post-racialism, and projects of race management, with a specific focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives in institutions of higher learning.

## Day Two: Friday, 14 April 2023

### 10:00-11:30      **Panel D      Peoples of Canada? Framings, barriers & experiences**

Chair-Discussant: Dr. Laura Kwak, Graduate Programs in Socio-Legal Studies and Sociology, York University

#### ***Childcare as Reproductive Justice: The Consequences of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan for Women and Caregivers' Citizenship***

Canada recently launched its Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan, which promises an affordable, high-quality universal system of childcare nationwide. However, many childcare advocates remain concerned about whether the program will be able to fulfil its promises. This paper argues that the implementation of this national childcare strategy has critical consequences not only for children's early learning and development and women and families' economic opportunities, but also for Canada's welfare state and citizenship rights therein. Framing childcare accessibility as an issue of reproductive justice, this paper draws upon social reproduction literature to centre its profound lived implications for women and caregivers. Considering the experiences of Indigenous and migrant mothers and caregivers, this paper will complicate the notion of citizenship by situating it within the politics of reproduction, underscoring its implications for the realization of women and caregivers' full citizenship within the Canadian state.

**Kenya Thompson** is a PhD student in York University's Department of Politics, having recently completed her MA at Carleton University's Institute of Political Economy. Her research interests include social reproduction, family policy, the politics of caregiving, everyday activism, and community-based research. She is currently working as a research assistant on the SSHRC-funded "Reimagining Care/Work Project," which aims to advance equitable and inclusive care/work policies in Canada.

#### ***Remembering the "Two Founding Races" and Canada's Official Languages Act: An Exploration of Linguistic Border Governance***

This paper examines how Canada's Official Languages Act (OLA) creates and/or reinforces language barriers. A language barrier is a common-sense concept that is rarely interrogated. To combat oppressions like coloniality and racism, it is important to identify and question the supposed neutrality of common-sense notions. In this paper, I conceptualize language barriers as linguistic borders, which are socio-political constructs. I seek to deconstruct linguistic borders by asking: in Canada, who do linguistic borders serve, how do linguistic borders function, and what are the effects of linguistic borders? My theoretical framework draws from critical race theory, raciolinguistics, and border imperialism. My method, a socio-diagnostic critique, juxtaposes the discursive practices of Canada's Official Languages Act with four border governance strategies. The results highlight how Canada's linguistic border imperialism preserves the hierarchy of its so-called "two founding races" while this colonial memory is suppressed by the current rhetoric of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

**Sonia Martin** is an English language teacher and second year PhD student in the Faculty of Education at York University. Her research interests include linguistic border de-construction, anti-oppressive internationalization, and anti-racist language education. Sonia is curious about the relationship between water and language and what water can teach us about socially just languaging practices.

### ***On Multiculturalism, Whiteness and the ‘Other’ in Canada***

The mainstream understanding of Canadian history is that it was founded by two groups, the British and the French, and that it eventually evolved into a society containing multiple ethnicities. This paper challenges the commonplace understanding of multiculturalism by examining how the Canadian government and state structures use multiculturalism as a symbolic tool to manage its diverse society while also maintaining a racial hierarchy that glorifies white Canadians. Specifically, Muslim Canadians are subordinated to white Canadians because their religious identities are often conflated with their cultural identities that depict them as “backwards” and “uncivilized”, resulting in the rise of Islamophobia. Though it doesn’t address the root causes of the discrimination, multiculturalism manages to keep Muslim Canadians connected to the national imaginary by symbolically recognizing their right to belong.

**Taheera Sarker** is a Master's student in the Public and International Affairs program at Glendon College, York University. Her research interests include diplomacy, international relations, and public policy. She recently participated in the CAPP Case Competition where she and her team received second place. Taheera is the Director of Mental Health for the Public and International Affairs Student Association.

### ***Conditional Acceptance: Black Drag Queens and the Transnational Negotiation of White Supremacist Quebec Nationalism, 1935-1960***

From the 1920s to the 1950s, jazz, Blackness, and gender creativity represented three pieces of the same unity. Dick Montgomery was one of the creative minds who, between 1935 and 1956, participated in this vibrant mix of jazz, drag and art. A boxer, operetta singer, dancer and drag queen, Montgomery joined the transnational Black variety stage and traveled throughout the United States and Canada presenting her humorous performances as a cisgender working-class woman. Montgomery's artistic praxis crosses national, racialized and gendered boundaries. In order to account for her journey, her professional trajectory will be explored in two parts. First, her Broadway career as a masculine-presenting actor will be surveyed, shedding light on the complexity of negotiating racisms and antiracisms on stage. Second, her performances as a drag queen will be analyzed with particular attention to the ways in which they unfolded in the contexts of Black middle-class respectability in Washington, white supremacist nationalism in Montreal and Black liberation’s cishnormativity in New York.

**Raphaël Jacques** is a white queer non-binary settler living in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang. As part of their master’s thesis in sexuality studies at Université du Québec à Montréal, they are delving into the gendered and sexual experiences of queer and trans people who stutter through a crip perspective. Their academic areas of focus include trans studies, queer studies, feminist studies, disability studies, Black Canadian studies and Indigenous studies, mobilized through a

historical and sociological lens. Their writings have been published in the Bulletin d'histoire politique and Histoire engagée.

### *It Was Never Easy*

What do the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration have in common? *Breath*. Through this revelation, I share the story of my uncle's experience of being in the ICU for having contracted COVID-19 and its uncanny relation to his immigrant life. I think about how the encounter of losing breath, with his life attached to an oxygen mask and a ventilator, is intricately connected to his travel from India to the nation-state of Canada, as well as all the memories that follow. I think about how this experience shrouds his breath—how it stifles the life of a man ascribed to the status of an immigrant in an unknown country and its deleterious implications. In that way, this is an attempt to recognize the precarity of immigrant life well before the pandemic, and the unsettling ways in which the Canadian nation-state shapes the identity and memory of someone like my uncle.

**Shyam Patel** is a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at York University. He received both his MA in Education and BEd at the University of Ottawa, and completed his BCom at McGill University, and is a former fellow with Teach for India. He has been drawn to the works of bell hooks, Loretta Ross, Thich Nhat Hanh, and others who have taught him how to exist in a world that is often complex and ineffable.

## **13:00-14:30      Panel E      Decolonizing settler colonial structures?**

Chair-Discussant: Dr. Boyd Cothran, History, York University

### *Tensions and Contradictions in Settler-Colonialism*

This study attempts to reveal the complexities, contradictions, and tensions in the relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. It explores the ongoing tensions in the processes of decolonization between a politics framed around resurgence and a practical need to engage with the Canadian state. Generally, a politics framed around resurgence, sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination calls for a radical reimagination or paradigm shift. Yet, there is often a need and even compulsion to engage with the settler-colonial state in the short-term. Using Auto-Ethnography, this study seeks to contribute to these debates by highlighting the dualistic terrain that Indigenous organizations and peoples have to navigate to achieve their short-term and long-term objectives as well as emphasizing the important role that newcomers, refugees, and immigrants play in this arena.

**Theo Nazary** is an Associate Director at Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. A graduate of McMaster University and the University of Toronto with a degree in Project Management, Theo has been involved with research on the Impact of Digital Technology on First Nations Participation and Governance and the Internet Voting Project for Ontario. His doctoral dissertation uses auto-ethnography to explore his role as a settler, working for a prominent Indigenous cultural centre, and advancing the Centre's mission vis-a-vis the Canadian state.

## *Spirit and Intent: Remembering the Treaties in Resource Revenue-Sharing Negotiations in Ontario*

In May 2018, Premier Wynne announced that the Ontario government had signed three resource revenue-sharing agreements with the Grand Council Treaty #3, the Mushkegowuk Council and the Wabun Tribal Council. Although these agreements were celebrated as “reconciliation”, they were the result of decades-long negotiations between First Nations, mining associations, and the provincial government. In these negotiations, First Nations consistently invoked the “spirit and intent” of Ontario’s treaties to advocate for a more equitable distribution of government resource revenues. This paper will examine the transformative potential of when the “spirit and intent” of Ontario’s treaties were recalled by First Nations in two ways. First, this paper will discuss the moments when the treaties were remembered by First Nations and how government and extractive actors responded. Second, this paper will consider if the effects of these revenue-sharing agreements have led to positive changes which reflect the “spirit and intent” of the treaties.

**Mathew Montevirgen** is a PhD candidate in the Socio-Legal Studies program at York University. His research critically studies how reconciliation in Ontario’s mining industry is operationalized through revenue-sharing and the effects of this initiative.

### *Modern Homesteading and Settler Identity*

As environmental crisis looms closer and larger, and North Americans are offered little more than individualized solutions and narratives of personal responsibility, modern homesteading practices have become popular as a more environmentally-conscious way of living. Modern homesteading trends are driven by a collection of blogs that serve as repositories of recipes, manuals, and instructions for everything from baking from scratch to tending goats, as well as offering lifestyle models and advice. These blogs frame particular practices as traditional aspects of Canadian identity. In Canada, modern homesteading taps into romanticized ideas of the frontier, reframing settler colonial history as one of environmental harmony, in which “we” lived closer to the land, and whitewashes the truths of dispossession, extraction, and genocide. I argue that through this reframing, these blogs – and narratives around modern homesteading as a whole, (re)construct settler Canadian identity around the land and its appropriate stewardship.

**Angela Stigliano** is from Boston, MA, and lived and worked in the Middle East and Africa for several years before settling in Toronto. Academically, her background is in digital culture and social media studies. She completed her MA at Cardiff University's Digital Media and Society program and is now a PhD student in the Communications and Culture program through York University. Her research focuses on white supremacist identity, digital culture, and far-right environmentalism.

### *Community Histories: Identity, Pride, and Settler Myth-Making on the Canadian Prairies*

Colonial violence on the Canadian prairies has long been fueled and rationalized by a pioneer mythology of innocence, hard work, entitlement, and civilization (Starblanket and Hunt, Thobani, Gebhard, McLean, and St Denis). But how has this myth persisted, albeit in shifting forms, through the upheavals of the last 150 years? In an effort to historicize historical production itself (Trouillot 145), this paper will examine the phenomenon of community histories, particularly the wave of such texts produced by committees across Saskatchewan in

the 1980s, and the social, cultural, and political processes in which they played a part. It would be disingenuous to hold these collectively-authored local histories up to disciplinary standards, but their ubiquity, social life, and role in community-building (Massie, 129) render them impactful and thus worthy of scrutiny. Unpacking mechanisms of myth-making and claim-staking can help us unsettle settler “common-sense” and reckon with colonial injustices, past and present.

**Johanna Lewis** (they/them) is a doctoral candidate in History at York University who works on cultural histories of settler colonialism and British imperialism, with a focus on family and intimacy, identity and power, and questions of inheritance, commemoration, and historical production. They are also a researcher with Brittany Luby's First Nations Guide to the University project, a community organizer with Showing Up for Racial Justice Toronto, and the parent of two magical kids.

### *Mii Leat Dás Ain: Literary Expression as Decolonization*

Many parallels can be drawn between Canada and Sweden when it comes to their histories involving the Indigenous peoples of the territories that the two countries occupy. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's debut book, *Islands of Decolonial Love*, is written mainly in English—the language of the colonizing mainstream society—along with some Nishinaabemowin. Similarly, Sámi writer and journalist Elin Anna Labba's first book, *Herrarna satte oss hit*, is written mainly in Swedish, with parts in Sámi. Both books incorporate non-fiction narration of inter-generational trauma caused by colonization. My paper investigates parallels in how the two books offer resistance towards colonization. By incorporating Indigenous language in various ways, and in other ways further challenging the conventions of languages and of our understanding of what a book is and can be, both books apply partly similar resistance strategies through appropriation.

**Eva Wissting** is a graduate student in Translation Studies at York University. She has a BA (Hons.) in English literature and creative writing from University of Toronto, and an MA in English literature from York University. Her research interests include literary translation, Indigenous literatures and the use of literature for language vitalization.

### 14:30-14:45 Concluding remarks

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