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Peter Morin et Leah Decter

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## X: where paths cross

Peter Morin and Leah Decter

**X - where paths cross:** In this paper, we will discuss the ways our ongoing collaborative performance(s) of “X: where our paths cross” straddle the varied intimacies of live and virtual spaces of visiting and activate noncolonial concepts of host-guest relations that enact Indigenous sovereignties and confront the certainty of settler emplacement, while considering the responsibilities of settler guesting. As the first iteration of our writing about this ongoing performance, this is by no means an exhaustive discussion of the work. As we develop new versions, we will continue to reflect on how it evolves and uncover the ways it builds on our propositions here.

“X: where our paths cross” is a series of performances that occur in virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats. They bring together Peter Morin’s work with Tahltn knowledge and sovereignties through embodied activations of a publication of Tahltn stories “collected” and transcribed by white anthropologist James Teit (1919, 1921) in the early 1900s, and Leah Decter’s work in disturbing patterns of white settler entitlement and settler-state sovereignty, in part through interrogations of the Group of Seven’s landscape painting traditions, which date to the same period as Teit’s publications. Both Teit’s work, which reductively formulizes and freezes Tahltn stories as it documents them, and the Group of Seven’s work, which significantly influenced/s “Canadian” national identity in celebration of settler emplacement, demonstrate forms of possession and extractivism that aim to superimpose colonial sovereignty and whiteness over existing Indigenous sovereignties and knowledges. The practices we see in Teit’s work and in that of the Group of Seven extend stubbornly into the present, continuing to shape relations in the lands now called Canada. Engaging the X where Indigenous sovereignties intersect with the necessary activation of settler responsibilities across our different ancestries, the “X: where our paths cross” performances are an intentional deployment of noncolonial relations. They are part of a larger project titled “in care of” that itself results from an ongoing collaborative relationship—a friendship that necessarily extends beyond the confines of artistic production and academic discourse and outputs—between artist-scholars Peter Morin, who is of Tahltn Nation and French Canadian ancestry, and Leah Decter, an Ashkenazi Jewish white settler.

In keeping with our subversion of academic expectations (Teit) and artistic conventions (Gof7), our contribution to this issue blends writing and time-based media in the form of this text, as well as an animated poetic version of a transcript from one of our early exchanges about the project, and video

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**Peter Morin** is a grandson of Tahltn Ancestor artists. His artistic offerings can be organized around four themes: articulating Land/Knowing, articulating Indigenous grief/loss, articulating Community Knowing, and understanding the creative agency/power of the Indigenous body. The work takes place in galleries, in community, in collaboration, and on the land. Morin holds a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of British Columbia Okanagan. He is associate professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto. **Leah Decter** is an inter-media/performance artist and scholar who divides her time between Treaty 1 territory and Kijipuktuk/Halifax, where she is an assistant professor in media arts and Canada Research Chair in Creative Technologies at NSCAD University. Working from a critical white settler perspective, her solo and collaborative art and research practices address and disturb social-spatial dynamics of settler colonial whiteness through the ethic of being-in-relation. Decter holds an MFA in new media from Transart Institute and a PhD in cultural studies from Queen’s University.

excerpts from two of the fully virtual performances.<sup>1</sup> In the text, a chronicle of the work's inception is interwoven with both our reflections on its trajectory and theoretical implications as well as descriptions of its iterations. The text has elements of a performance score, using repetition as an iterative device that offers a gentle disturbance to the traditional academic paper. The animation takes the form of a deconstructed conversation that activates a metaphoric crossing—an X—while the video brings the reader/viewer into the sphere of the performance itself.

**X - where paths cross:** The idea of our shared work forming an X—a crossing—came from a conversation Peter had years ago. Peter remembers they were talking about Indigenous value systems in a college/room with Victor and Ellen Newman, two of the main Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Leaders working with the Camosun College Indigenous Studies department. Peter also worked there at the time. Peter can't really remember exactly what brought him to that room, on that particular day, whether it was a departmental request or just chance, but he feels luckier because of it as they were gathering to discuss Indigenous Studies, Indigenous pedagogy, and the Lewkungen knowledge practice/production.

Peter remembers these three things Victor shared with the group:

Victor said: We don't have that word *Elder*.

Peter remembers how he was saying it. He remembers that Victor expressed frustration with having to “deal with that type of word” and how much work is required by the community to negotiate its imposed/implied meaning within the established Indigenous knowledge systems. Like, we need to learn your English language to talk with you, and you haven't learned our Indigenous languages to talk with us. And we have to keep those English words as a way to live meaningfully when these words have nothing to do with us currently living well.

Victor said: The closest word in our language to indicate a similar type of meaning in English would be the Lekwungen word used to indicate a “wise person.”

He went further to amplify his point about being tired of negotiating their outside meaning by talking about the X that you see signed on treaty documents. Peter remembers how clear and concise his offerings were.

Victor said: They are always misunderstanding what was being marked by those Indigenous people at those treaty negotiations on the land.

That this X is always positioned by the dominant culture as a recognition of difference, that they think we aren't able to participate in their systems because we didn't have a writing system recognizable to them. Victor said, the marking of the X is an acknowledgment of our walking paths that have crossed here, in this place, and in this time. Peter keeps imagining those earlier paper documents, those treaty documents, and seeing this mark of X alongside the drawn “representations” of that Indigenous leader's collective and held knowledge. These images are better understood as ciphers, ciphers that hold a series of potential pathways into the collective, acquired, and held knowledge(s) of the mark maker. The x, or rather this X, is a physical manifestation of these new and potential world(s). This X also makes a space to acknowledge bodies and how those bodies are moving on the land—how they intersect.

**X - where paths cross:** The initial premise of the “in care of” project, which led to the “X: where our paths cross” performances, was that Leah would visit collaborators, such as Peter, in the territories of their home Nations and collaborate on works that counter the colonial and extractivist practices emblematic of the Group of Seven (and colonization as a whole). This larger project aligns with Indigenous scholars, such as Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2008), who highlight the need for all Canadians to shift the colonial dynamics of our present moment and recognize that this requires significant changes to the prevailing Canadian consciousness, including assumptions about place and settler emplacement. It also responds to the essence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 46:ii (2015), which appeals for the “repudiation of concepts used to justify European [Canadian] sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples” (5).

“in care of” was to include videos, animations, and drawings of the land created collaboratively, following nation-specific protocols with respect to visiting and documenting or re-presenting aspects of the lands and territories. These relational components of the project would adhere to principles of reciprocity, and archives of these engagements would be part of the artworks so as to contextualize the re-presentations of place/land by making visible (where appropriate and with permissions) the processes of negotiation and care—those of hosting and guesting. In this way, rather than being transformed into landscape images that reiterate the unfettered access of settler emplacement, the representations of land in this project would offer a relational view of place that foregrounds Indigenous sovereignty and enacts respectful relations through the ethics of permission, protocol, and reciprocity. In essence, these negotiations or relations, made visible as part of the artwork, would be a form of informal, personal “treaty” or agreement that would foreground host-guest relations in noncolonial terms.

**X - where paths cross:** We first planned for Leah to visit Tahltan Nation territory with Peter in the summer of 2019. Days before the departure, wildfires prevented travel to the territory. Then, subsequent strains on the community meant that travelling in the area remained impossible. We began planning for travel in the next summer. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, in-person visiting was at least temporarily out of the question. By May 2020, with everyone beginning to understand that travel restrictions and “social distancing” would very likely extend well past the summer, we did what many others were doing at the time: we adapted the project to an online format of visiting. These visits began at that time in 2020 and continue today.

In retrospect, both the delay due to wildfires and the shift due to COVID-19 benefited the project. In saying that these adverse situations were good for the project, we want to be clear that we recognize both have had significant negative effects—the wildfires on the local communities, human and more-than-human, and the pandemic on people globally. That said, the postponement of the initial trip proved valuable in that it slowed the project down and gave us additional time to think and feel more deeply about what we hoped to undertake. The necessity of moving off the land because of COVID-19, and our reworking of the project to an online format, was also a gift. We note here that moving online is not without responsibilities to territory consequent to practices of colonial extractivism, and following scholars such as Jill Carter (Anishinaabe/Ashkenazi), we acknowledge our debt to the Muwekma Ohlone tribal nation, on whose territory Zoom headquarters are located.<sup>2</sup>

We took the challenge of moving online as an opportunity to create a new tributary of visiting and decided that, in preparation, Peter would email photos of Tahltan territory, taken by him and his family over decades, to Leah. In May 2020, in one of the early Zoom meetings where we came together to begin to shape the project, post-wildfires and early in COVID times, we discussed this idea of tributaries as opposed to translations; how the photos Peter sent Leah were taken in different eras by different people and, in this way, formed different tributaries through which to “see” and “listen to” the land and its stories. The idea of tributaries arose from the presence of rivers: the Stikine and Tahltan Rivers seen in so many of the photos and the Red River that Leah could see from her window. These presences of rivers were intensified by Peter’s and Leah’s individual associations with rivers through their experiences, and through those of their ancestors. While we can only touch on this in the context of this text, we offer the following as a glimpse into these associations.

In 1917, at age fourteen, Leah’s maternal grandfather, her Zaida, known as Ernie Field or Aaron Gottesfeld, escaped a pogrom by swimming across a river in advance of his village in the Austro-Hungarian Empire being attacked. He waited for days before swimming back to find the village razed to the ground. He was the sole survivor. He swam once again across the river and began seven years of displacement that ultimately led him to translocate to the lands now known as Canada as part of the colonial project of “settlement.” This personal history and understandings of the role rivers have played in colonial invasion and expansion, together with a proximity to rivers that has afforded close observation, led Leah to consider rivers as harbingers of change; as barriers and borders; as conveyances for visiting, safe passage, and invasion; and as “always at once what was, what is now, and what will be” (Decter 2018, v). The meeting of the Stikine and Tahltan Rivers represents an important intersection of time and place for the Tahltan Nation. In the story, often referred to as the “Origin of the Wolf Clan” by anthropologists, women from different geographic locations follow along these rivers and meet each other for the first time. One woman from further north, one woman from the coast, and one woman from the interior all connect at this place. This location, where the two rivers intersect, is a place that Tahltan Nation people have been gathering for thousands of years.

With rivers at the fore, the concept of tributaries flowed naturally. The framework of tributaries has now extended into our thinking of each iteration of this project—each move to different platforms or formats as well as each performance—as another tributary that has its own route, rather than being a translation that gains or loses something in the process of passing from one mode to another.

The fluid pathways created through the exchange of photos and stories in the initial Zoom meeting laid another important foundation for us moving forward. In offering details about the photos, as admittedly provisional depictions of Tahltan territory, Peter introduced Leah to the land through his experiential descriptions of how to get from here to there, reflections on the physicality of vantage points, and recounting of family and community histories that connect to Tahltan knowledge and the histories of colonial incursion. This meant that, before hearing the stories as told by Tahltan Ancestors, as transmuted by James Teit, and as read aloud by Peter through embodied sovereignty, Leah began to get to know these places and their histories—familial and otherwise—through Peter’s direct re-collection. She began to get to know the land though not with the intention of knowing the land in the way Peter does. Following along these tributaries, Peter’s reading easily becomes speaking or telling these Tahltan stories. This reading as performance offers an opportunity for the

Tahltan meaning embedded within the spoken words to be felt on, and within, the body of the speaker/listener(s).

**X - where paths cross:** The land comes in here, especially at this time, when we were not *on* the land, as an initial layer of “site/ation” (Morin and Willard 2018). We draw here on Tania Willard’s characterization of site/ation as a practice of citation in which the land is referenced and acknowledged as a critical contributor to developing knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Tania Willard is a Secwépemc artist and scholar whose ongoing contributions include BUSH gallery, which she started in 2014 with Gabe L’hirondelle Hill, Peter Morin, and Jeneen Frei Njootli as a site of Indigenous experimental creation. We call on site/ation as an acknowledgment of all the Indigenous territories that have participated in the development of this scholarship and this project, particularly Tahltan territory, Tkaronto, Yintah, Secwepemcúl’ecw, Kjiipuktuk, Mi’kma’ki, Wolastoqiyik and Wabanaki territories, the territories of the Cree, Dakota, Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Anishinabewaki ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ and Métis Nations as well as the Muwekma Ohlone Nation.

When we decided to move online, we had to make, out of whole cloth, a new version of, or tributary for, the kind of noncolonial host-guest coming together we had intended to take place on the land. We had to do this without proximity of bodies, without the smells and sounds and tactile feel of the land and the elements, without the kilometres and hours of process in getting there, without the proximity and relationality of community in place. It was to be the two of us in identical landscape-format Zoom frames, with audio lags and the now familiar visual glitches of the online meeting. Our first planning meeting had Peter holding his phone up to the camera to show Leah the photos, and Leah finding the corresponding version she had printed from the email attachments Peter sent. It was cumbersome, as such things were at the time on Zoom. We looked at the photos together in that meeting and Peter talked about the locations and the people, stories, and events they brought to his mind. Later in that same meeting, we came to the idea of Peter reading from the Teit publication while Leah listened and made drawings of Tahltan territory from the photos Peter had sent. As we have discussed, we did not see this as a translation of being together IRL in territory, but rather a new and fluid path for enacting the crossing of Indigenous sovereign hosting and white settler accountable guesting—the virtual crossing of our own bodies as well as those of our ancestors. This Zoom space became the first place where our paths actually crossed in the context of this project, the first of our Xs.

**X - where paths cross:** The beginning of Peter’s reading performances that fed into this project is here in his Facebook post from May 6, 2020:

*Been thinking about how to reach out. Years ago I thought I should make little videos of these stories and share them. I asked Aunty and Uncle what they thought... and they said I should too... bedder late than never... I’m going to make a little video and post one almost every day for folks in the community, in the communities... We are a voice culture. And nobody wants to read these really (except for nerds like me...lol). Keep in mind that these stories are in english and were written down by a non-Tabltan person... and also edited by a non-Tabltan person. So, you have to listen for the old school Tabltan knowledge... These edited versions of our stories are available online... but also, if you want copies please just message me and I will send you a digital copy. Tabltan family and community members, no point in all of us paying for a copy of these things...just message me if you want a copy and I’ll email to you.*

*There is a history of thinking/making here. I've spent a lot of time considering the nature of Tabltan thinking and spent a lot of time decoding and illuminating Tabltan knowledge that is embedded within colonial frameworks like the "museum." I think there is also this consistent pressure to be an "expert" in knowledge(s) that have purposefully been silenced by Canadian Colonialism. Tabltan knowledge is a lived, and practiced, skill. During the pandemic, "we" spent time locked-down in our houses. I was in Toronto, and we spent 300+ days locked in. I started to read these older Tabltan stories out loud on FB live, this online reading took place during the day, specifically afternoons. We were just months into being asked to stay home in order to stay safe. All of us were at home. Parents working from home, and children didn't go to school at this time. I wanted to help out with parent's work at home. I thought if I read these "stories" that I could give parents some room in their day and also, maybe kids would like this too. I gave myself two parameters: the first one being about returning these Tabltan words to Tabltan breath, the second was to be entertaining. This was the direct challenge Teit's english'd version of Tabltan words. Before each reading, I would ask, "can we listen for the Tabltan meaning hidden underneath these 'English' words?" I would also offer to the folks who "tuned in" on my Facebook live that I am returning to, or trying to return to, the breath patterns of those original Tabltan story tellers. I fancied myself a Tabltan story teller even though I've only performed an old school Tabltan story once in my career. Over the course of a couple of weeks, I read the entirety of James Teit's "Tabltan Tales." 7 hours total. At the end of this storytelling cycle, I don't know if I was able to return to that original Tabltan breath/work of those original story tellers. I was, however, keenly aware of all of the places where Tabltan breath was interrupted, or disregarded. I learned that the ones who told these stories to Teit had an elegant breath, a poetic breath that prioritized being charming because you wanted the listener to "actually" feel the words.*

*After a period of time, I learned that in this Facebook live reading that a generous space was opened up for Tabltan folks in the community to hear these stories spoken out/loud for the first time. I was able to respond to comments/offerings from Tabltan elders about the stories and what they remember of these stories from their childhood. My Uncle Freddy was one of those listening weekly Elders. He would write in the comments things like: that's not how my mom (aunty Gracie) would tell it. He would also write things like: I remember her words when she would tell the story. And the words he would write would be in the same order of the spoken words that were written down by James Teit. I return to this echo often. Listening across time becomes an intriguing world-re-building possibility. I return to that X as a document and acknowledgement of our meeting place. It is a place to meet the expertise of Tabltan Knowledge leaders and their application of Tabltan knowledge with James Teit as a way to speak to the complicated future(s).*

**X - where paths cross:** In the initial iteration of "X: where our paths cross" we are in Zoom windows side by side. In one window is Peter's face. He is reading the text aloud. In the second Zoom window, we see Leah's hand drawing Tahltan land/territory featured in images taken by Peter's family during trips back to their home territory. In the windows, we see two friends who are comfortable with one another. We see a crossing of trust. The language patterns between them are filled with familiarity and the breath of often joyful exchange. As we have mentioned, the written text Peter reads aloud is attributed to an anthropologist named James Teit. We also know that the shadow editor of this text is Franz Boas. The original Tahltan knowledge leaders who offered their expertise/skill to Teit from 1910 to 1914 are not named in this publication. Intermittently throughout Peter's reading, he and Leah talk informally about the text he is reading. He can't stop himself from making Tahltan-centric comments/commentary about these Tahltan ideas written

down in English by Teit. The impromptu exchanges between Peter and Leah are not always light. It takes a toll on Peter to read these words as reinterpreted by Teit and edited by Boaz—to read these words aloud and filter them through his body.

In moving to the Zoom format, we are in a space where the boundaries of the frame in landscape format echo those of early Canadian landscape painters who continue to have a profound impact on how Canada and settler Canadians see them/ourselves. Turned ninety degrees, these frames echo the pages that James Teit's renderings of Tahltn stories are confined within. The lands the Group of Seven painters saw and the Tahltn knowledge James Teit heard extend well beyond these colonially rendered borders.<sup>4</sup> Like the land within the picture frame and the tellings printed within the limits of a page, our bodies are artificially confined within the Zoom borders, and at the same time, they exist and extend outside of the usual frontal head and shoulders flattened visage represented in the Zoom box on our computer screens. In these Zoom performances, our paths cross in multiple ways. We reach beyond these frames and through the frames of our ancestries to see, hear, and embody in deeper and more expansive ways. In the intersection of the X, we listen for what is silenced and look for what is hidden; we search for what is deeply rooted and flourishing beyond the edges. Our embodiment exceeds the Zoom frame in ways that are inherently not visible, and at the same time, we *use* the format to engender positional embodiment. Peter speaks head-on, facing the camera and negotiating the space between the words on the page and his body, his breath and vocal cords transforming the text. His directed gaze creates a new tributary. All that can be seen of Leah is her hand negotiating the space between the printed photos of Tahltn land and the evolving re-presentation rendered in pencil on paper. Hand to pencil to paper is another tributary. This disrupts the echoing formality of the Zoom boxes. It sets up a listening that moves back and forth in the spaces between.

We are in a Zoom space where host and guest are labels denoting specific levels of access. In truth there may be something to learn from these seemingly banal parameters that define what can and cannot be done by a guest and a host. On Zoom, there are specific responsibilities for a host and equally prescribed limitations for a guest. Is it some kind of act of sovereignty to be the one who “admits” a guest into the Zoom territory? Is it a reminder of humility to understand the limits to autonomy as a guest in these spaces? One of the many ways this admittedly slight parallel fails is the randomness with which guesting and hosting duties are both granted and assumed in Zoom. They are not based in histories, experiences, and kinship ties to place but rather in those of institutional, collegial, or other forms of agency that often level the field with disregard to situatedness. This is not to say that the cyber world or institutions are not deeply encumbered by racism, patriarchy, and all the intersectional power dynamics. What we draw attention to here is that the particular cyber world of Zoom does not, within its structure, enact protocols related to place, just as when we pass through the territories of distinct Indigenous nations in the land now called Canada, the protocols of those nations are rarely followed. In this work we consider what the crossings might look like—historically and in the present—if they were.

These online performances have now expanded into a series that have happened both in Zoom land and live in public. One of these hybrid versions of the performance took place at the Arts Atlantic conference in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 2022. It brought our online practice of crossing pathways into a live in-person context while retaining the online Zoom meeting component. In it, we are both present in the performance space—Leah drawing the Tahltn territory while Peter reads about Tahltn knowledge from that specific part of the territory—so that a live audience experienced the performance in person. In addition, there is a camera focused on each of us,



creating two live streams for a Zoom meeting projected in the space so that the performance could also be viewed by the live audience in its original online format. The audience had two pathways to follow—one that could lead toward their crossing through or over the live reading and exchange between Leah and Peter on Zoom, or they could decide to bring themselves closer into the complicated political realities that are also embedded, and acknowledged, in the places where two lines cross IRL; the Xs.

**X - where paths cross:** The spoken voice takes up an important space within Indigenous knowledge/practice/production. The spoken voice is a type of vehicle that aids in the transmission of practised skills. Tahltan knowledge is practised, it is skills-based, and this practised-skill aids in the development of Tahltan knowledge. The spoken, or this version of Tahltan orality, within this X matrix, means that Peter's body is crossing over/through those older Tahltan speakers. This crossing over is guided by his research methodology that centres performance art. Within this specific matrix, we encounter not just the memory of these original Tahltan knowledge leaders; we also are moved by the evidence of their acquired skill. In this series of reading performances with Leah, Peter has also been reflecting on those original speakers and why they spoke with James Teit; the desire to understand what guides/drives this act of orality, or the performance of Tahltan knowledge to any qualified, and unqualified, listener. Tahltan knowledge is practised. This practice requires speaking. This speaking is guided by value systems informed by reciprocity and generosity. These two value systems aid in community survival. Reading as performance art opens up the possibility of listening through the regular complications of anthropological texts such as Teit's. Tahltan orality is performance art. This type of speaking still happens today. These performative readings of these older texts have allowed Peter to stand beside these Tahltan Knowledge Leaders who were speaking to Teit. Peter can see them speaking with Teit because this knowledge will also help him to survive, and because Tahltan people like to make friends. The original performances, those first Facebook Live experience(s), were also focused on Peter's own skill building. He wanted to become a better Tahltan storyteller. One of the goals of those performances was to see if his Tahltan breathing body could, through story/telling, return, or match, the Tahltan breath of those original storytellers.

One of the critical components of our exchange is centred around a profound form of listening. In this action, sound pours into the body. This is a crossing of paths between the tangible and intangible. This is an intersecting that requires a consistent balance of sustaining and unsettling. Leah listens as she draws. In our crossings both online and offline, Leah's renderings of the land are unfinished, a gesture that negotiates the importance of not-knowing and recognizes the asymmetrical conditions that ground the necessary impossibility of settler understandings of these lands. This drawing while listening is not a way for Leah to capture or fully comprehend. This is a listening (and drawing) that, in its incomplete state, holds space for the unknowable. This factor of the unknowable is crucial to our methodology and our ethics in engaging across our ancestries and current day positionalities; in making our Xs. This is not about Leah seeking to gain a mastery of knowledge about the land of Tahltan territories or the stories retold by Teit and breathed into the now by Peter's orality. Instead, our process reflects an understanding that Peter's "knowing" and Leah's "knowing," with regard to the land and the stories/knowledge, are inherently different. Peter's is based in lineages of placed knowledge as a form of sovereignty, while Leah's is embedded in the humility of not altogether knowing. It is a subversion of capturing the land within the frame and "canadianizing" it through un-relational interpretation and aesthetic ownership.

Peter's recounting of details relating to the land as prompted by the photos *and* his reading aloud are generous offerings dependent on a recognition of trust built into a personal relationship of duration, reciprocity, and respect and with the awareness that his knowledge will not be extracted or consumed in a manner that is predatory or harmfully "hungry" (Robinson 2020). Peter knew that he could share all of the edges in the text that he was experiencing, and how those edges were hurting him because of this deep friendship. It should not be a surprise that those English words can hurt a lot. The performative reading made the edges of those English words more prominent. This also led to a chance for Peter's Tahltan critique of the words/phrases, Tahltan critique in the form of pointed jokes (jokes that other Tahltans and friends who are in the circle would understand and laugh at). Later, when the performances took place in a room, with other human bodies, the shape of the English text took prominence. The majority non-Tahltan people in the room were able to reflect on the shape and scope of these particular English words. The comment that stays with Peter is about how the cadence of text reminded one of the older listeners in Saint John—where the public performance took place—of the editing of the King James bible. As we move into further live and hybrid performances that merge Peter and Leah's exchanges with the inclusion of audience responses, new tributaries are created and new crossings are brought into being.

**X - where paths cross:** We manifested the X before we travelled to Tahltan territory. This is a theoretical proposition concerning land/language and the act/ions that enable an understanding of what we know of as time, bodies, ancestries, within this place now called Canada. This work is shaped by deep listening to the older Tahltan/Indigenous knowledge(s) through the act of returning versions of these ancient texts to a Tahltan body/voice. This ongoing performance extends accepted practices around the action of "reading," including stretching them through cyber worlds into the realm of drawing. Peter is reading Teit's English-dominant version of Tahltan knowledge. Leah is drawing/redrawing images taken by either Peter or one of his family members over thirty years of travelling to Tahltan territory. In this project, these tools are being crossed on purpose. These voices are *also* being crossed on purpose. These strategies are being crossed on purpose to create new and challenging opportunities for unimagined future possibilities. Bodies are being included and acknowledged in this crossing. Time is being affected. This ongoing performance work is grounded through turning toward critically listening and slowing down enough to become more human with each other and with these places. This humanness makes more space for those original Tahltan Knowledge Leaders who spoke with James Teit on Tahltan territory in 1904 when he first came to these places. It makes more space for ethically sharing on uneven terrain.

The project and this writing and reflection are also an echo of a friendship that really started on a wintery night in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 2013 and that includes years of laughing, thinking together, sharing food, crying, taking road trips, finding new tributaries, trust, and transformation. The performances called "X: where our paths cross," and our offering these thoughts to you, are also a record of a friendship across ancestries (Jewish, white settler and Tahltan, French Canadian) in this place now known as Canada. The X is our historic guide because it is an acknowledgment of the meeting place of Indigenous knowledge(s)/bodies and the incursion of settler investment/colonialism. This X offers a historical and theoretical frame/work that acknowledges how bodies met on this land. We learned this first from Coast Salish Elder Victor Newman, also from the artwork of Anishinaabe performance artist Rebecca Belmore.<sup>5</sup> X is the mark of a hand made on historical documents by invested parties. These historical documents, also known as treaties, represent a chance for relationship. X is the mark that acknowledges there is both a past and a future for all the bodies present at the making of treaties. Like the "X: where our paths cross"

performances, the reflections threaded throughout this document, together with its time-based components, offer a chance for the reader to meet us at the crossing, the place where our paths cross on the land (physical/virtual/conceptual/actual).

Travel to Indigenous territory can be perilous, affecting, and life-changing. This travel, along with this *traveling*, can easily become rote because of histories of exploitation. It is hard to lose that Cowboy and Indian trope because it has become a collective muscle memory. For this consideration of the X, it is important to acknowledge the conflicted histories of human bodies in relation to territory. X marks the spot as a version of the colonial visioning of land. Land becomes a place of “interest.” This unseen Land becomes solid because the X enables us to imagine standing there with the gold in our hands. X marks the spot. This is also a version Peter awoke with, a message that followed him from a dreaming space to this physical realm. Included with these words was a vision of a treasure map with a clearly marked pathway that led to that X. There is no calm or reassurances in searching for that type of X. Perhaps it is better to say it this way: when we show up to our activations as performance artists, we are offering a purposeful pathway for other human and more-than-human bodies to stand closer in, to shared intersections, intersections that become about crossed time, crossed land, crossed bodies, crossed histories, crossed futures. This intersection also implies and acknowledges the crossed-out component pieces that are connected with being aware of our human body. It is easier to consider the importances of the positionality of the body when considering what the X might be doing. In this ongoing and iterative performance art/work between the “human bodies” also known as Peter and Leah, we are opening up a space for a practiced institutional critique because our bodies can easily be made into the historic bodies of old Indigenous and settler people whose interactions have led to shaping our collective future. This time travel backward is not our interest. We aren’t travelling back to the future. We are crossing territories like the historic crossings of Indigenous people over rivers and over land. We are keeping in mind the implications of the crossings of “settlers” over rivers and over land—and also over oceans.

We manifested the X, in cyber worlds and in breathing IRL into other places, before going to Tahltan territory. This shifting of the tributaries of embodied practice refocused our actions, bringing bodies into closer relation to Indigenous territories *before* setting foot together on the land itself. This is tricky work. The English words—*manifested*, *Indigenous*, *territory*—can all be conceptual terrains loaded with colonial baggage. In the middle of this, two friends, one Tahltan/French Canadian and one Jewish white settler, are standing together. There is work required to build the trust of good friends and collaborators. Part of this is the shared work of examining, interrogating, and dismantling colonial privileges and the shared work of remaking pathways and tributaries of care toward each other and this “Native Land.” Our actions within these performances, in this text and in the project as a whole, metaphorically cross each other like an X marking our meeting place in time and on territory—whether that territory is IRL or virtual. Ultimately, by working through personal and socio-political scales of relationality and embodiment, these actions contribute to envisioning the otherwise possibilities of meeting on territory in ways that generate ripples of change in the present and for the future.

## Notes

1. These fully virtual experimental performances took place on August 28, 2020, and October 11, 2020, and were funded by the Manitoba Arts Council under the project “in care of.”

