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SONGLINES, NOT STUPOR: CHERYL L'HIRONDELLE'S NIKAMON OHCI ASKI: SONGS BECAUSE OF THE LAND AS TECHNOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP ON THE LANDS CURRENTLY CALLED "CANADA"

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Abstract | Marshall McLuhan's ideas have been foundational in shaping understandings about the role of media and mediation in landscape, identity, and nationhood. At the same time, his theories remain tethered to a liberal humanist schematic of citizenship and technological modernity, which advances—implicitly or not—colonial constructions of the land as terra nullius, and thus severely limits or frustrates attempts to enlist them in anti-colonial analyses. In response, this paper places McLuhan into dialogue with Cree artist and scholar Cheryl L'Hirondelle, arguing that such a move can begin to disrupt the settler underpinnings in McLuhan's ideas, and also broaden the potential for these ideas to be applied within contemporary queries into decolonial citizenships on Turtle Island. Our paper focuses on L'Hirondelle's *nikamon ohci askiy* (songs because of the land). An interactive digital platform framed through Cree cosmology, *nikamon ohci askiy* is a multilayered work that explores technological mediations of nation, land, and Indigenous citizenship. Similar to other Indigenous theories of new media, this work challenges the view of land as barren/hostile, in particular by emphasizing land-based animate relationships. Ultimately, this paper argues that the new media ecologies proffered through L'Hirondelle's work contest settler liberal citizenship, and reorients understandings of "networks" and "the digital" as crucially grounded in Indigenous notions of reciprocity and relationality.

Résumé | Les idées de Marshall McLuhan ont été fondamentales dans l'élaboration des compréhensions sur le rôle des médias et de la médiation dans le paysage, l'identité, et l'idée de la nation. En même temps, ses théories restent attachées à schéma humaniste libéral de la citoyenneté et de la modernité technologique qui avance, implicitement ou non, les constructions coloniales de la terre comme terra nullius, et limite ainsi ou freine sévèrement les tentatives de les enrôler dans des analyses anticoloniales. En réponse, cet article établit un dialogue entre McLuhan et Cheryl L'Hirondelle, artiste et universitaire crie, soutenant qu'un tel mouvement peut commencer à perturber les fondements qu'ont les colons des idées de McLuhan, et également élargir la possibilité que ces idées soient appliquées dans les requêtes contemporaines de décolonisation des citoyennetés sur l'Île de la Tortue. Notre article se concentre sur les *nikamon ohci askiy* de L'Hirondelle (chansons à cause de la terre). Plateforme numérique interactive encadrée par la cosmologie crie, *nikamon ohci askiy* est un travail complexe qui explore les médiations technologiques de la nation, de la terre, et de la citoyenneté autochtone. Comme d'autres théories autochtones sur les nouveaux médias, ce travail remet en question la vision de la terre comme stérile/hostile, en particulier en mettant l'accent sur les relations animées terrestres. En fin de compte, cet article soutient que les écologies des nouveaux médias véhiculées par le travail de L'Hirondelle contestent la citoyenneté libérale des colons et réorientent la compréhension des « réseaux » et du « numérique » comme fondamentalement ancrée dans les notions autochtones de réciprocité et de relationnalité.

...we stake a claim here too as being an intrinsic part of this place—the very roots, or more appropriately *routes*. So let's use our collective Indigenous unconscious to remember our contributions and the physical beginnings that were pivotal in how this virtual reality was constructed.

—Cheryl L'Hirondelle, "Codetalkers Recounting Signals of Survival," *Coded Territories*

In *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, Cree new media artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle highlights Indigenous practices of decolonization in the arts, challenging assumptions about nation, liberal citizenship, land, and technological modernity. L'Hirondelle's theoretical and artistic works advance Indigenous citizenship networks towards a decolonized civic ecology. L'Hirondelle's work *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land* presents a peopled landscape resonant with voices and histories. *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land* demolishes the settler mythology of land given to us by canonical national thinkers including Marshall McLuhan and George Grant, who offer its understanding as a barren and hostile challenge to overcome in the liberal humanist trial of Canadian citizenship. As an iconic Canadian media theorist, McLuhan shaped views of land, national identity, and citizenship through the lens of media. By delineating and embodying Indigenous histories of land and networked subjectivity in media arts, L'Hirondelle figures technological relationships from Cree perspectives that differ from those of McLuhan's arguments about Canadian nationhood and the technological individual.

Indigenous Media Art and Civic Ecology: *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*

The accounts and works of Indigenous theorists, artists, and media technologies differ from their presentation in McLuhan's arguments, although Indigenous articulations of new media do resonate at times with his vision of a global—though Eurocentric and colonial—framing of the return of tribal man through media (Loft, "Mediacosmology" 181). McLuhan does not emphasize the situated colonial national context of his perspective and writing. His argument around processes of what he calls "retribalization" places attention on the potential for "the primitive role of art" to serve as "consolidator and a liaison" with the cosmos (qtd. in Loft, "Mediacosmology" 181-2). In this specific aspect, Mohawk scholar and theorist of new media art Steven Loft writes that McLuhan "nails it" as regards Indigenous praxis and cosmology (181). Yet McLuhan's formulation is overly abstract; his "tribal" media argument presumes an unmarked world citizen within an undoubtedly abstract and liberal framework that, while it dissembles back into the "primitive" (181) is not grounded, as Indigenous media theory is, in the specificity of relationships in specific lands within which technology is figured in Indigenous ontological contexts.

Winnebago scholar Renya Ramirez provides a context for discussing Indigenous media art when, drawing on Indigenous women's experiences, she writes from the ground up against settler-colonial frameworks of liberal humanist citizenship such as McLuhan's. Ramirez argues that urban Native peoples practice relational citizenship by composing "hubs" formed by cultural processes and geographic places, including the use of technology, thereby "re-member[ing] the native body torn apart by

colonization” (23, emphasis added). For Dene theorist Glen Coulthard, this Indigeneity:

is deeply *informed* by what the land as system of reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in non-dominating and non-exploitative terms; [a] place based foundation of grounded normativity...[underlies] the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time. (13)

Ramirez and Coulthard focus on contemporary translocal and land-based relationships and their longstanding forms. Unlike for McLuhan in his famous formulation, content here is as significant as form. Hubs embody land-based relationships between city and reserve spaces, between Indigenous nations, and between settler and Indigenous peoples (Ramirez). Indigenous citizenship practices, oppositional to settler framings of the concept, originate from the grassroots practices of Indigenous communities on their own terms. Indigenous media art is produced in the longstanding and unfolding context of these land-based relationships.

Loft takes a genealogical stance in relation to the term *new media art*, situating it in the function of media within Indigenous cosmologies that are always in flux and, most importantly, connected to the land. Loft discusses what he calls the media ecologies (Cubitt; Fuller; Strate)¹ of Indigenous art as longstanding in Indigenous societies, citing “winter counts, birch bark scrolls, and the Aztec codices” as a few examples (“Mediacosmology” 172). Loft shows

how media has functioned for Indigenous peoples in ways that are consonant with the functions of cyberspace and digital forms within it, such as hypertext (172). For example, he cites Angela M. Haas, who describes wampum precisely as hypertext, citing it as “an American Indian intellectual tradition of multimedia theory and practice” (77-100). Not only are the forms and concepts that undergird, support, and materialize new media consonant in uninterrupted lines of continuity through Indigenous media ecologies, but, as L’Hirondelle notes, the movement pathways of Indigenous ancestors across the land of North America provide the routes on which settlers built their roads, and these ancient Indigenous routes are the infrastructure for the electrical lines along which digital data travels (L’Hirondelle 152-53). Indigenous thoroughfares, based on relationships with the land and animal nations, form the material networks of movement for new media forms. L’Hirondelle argues that understanding Indigenous sovereignty, especially in relation to media art, requires an awareness of the material ground as it articulates within Indigenous ontologies.

Within Indigenous media histories, land, and its animacies are content, and form follows in a relational equilibrium. As Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskewew writes, “the ancient process of... innovating the application of best practices to suit complex and shifting flows—from a position of equality and autonomy within them, is the macro and micro cosmos of contemporary Indigenous cultures: a truly networked way of being” (n.p.). L’Hirondelle’s work is inextricable from its cultural and land-based specificity in the eyes of those who remember land-based Indigenous histories. As Loft argues:

The phrase “all my relations” is often used to explain the interaction of all things within an evolving, ever changing social, cultural, technological, aesthetic, political, and environmental intellectual framework (what I would refer to as the cosmological dynamic) and can certainly be applied to the landscape of media. Cosmological intellectual ecosystems exist as media, as message, and as a form of knowledge transferal. They are epistemological [ontological] environments wherein notions of nationhood are interspersed with, connected to, and integrated with a larger sense of the plurality of life. (“Decolonizing the Web” xvi)

Indigenous aesthetics emphasize experiential land-based knowledge. Media arts shape conditions of perception in relationship with the land, as they have from time immemorial. Indigenous media, on and with the land, advance Indigenous knowledge that is embodied, material, animate, relational, and land-based. Coulthard situates emphatically land-based, spatial, and ecological grounded normativity of Indigenous worldviews against the temporal context of possessive colonial perpetuity in the theories of the Western left. In many Western media theories, for example, theorists follow Marx in measuring oppression by theft of workers’ time and labour, now understood as “attention” (Crary). We can observe this orientation in McLuhan’s use of the Narcissus myth to analyze technological subjectivity: Narcissus dies because time passes; in his hypnotic stupor, he starves. Land is absent from this story. Indigenous media arts frequently rearticulate mainstream liberal humanist theorizations of embodiment, technology, and citizenship: the screen-based works capture the viewer; the “time” of attention is held by the priority of the

expansive and agential ecological frameworks of Indigenous land.

L’Hirondelle’s interactive website, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, is a multidisciplinary work that engages technological mediation of nation, land, and citizenship, including bodily comportment and material and technological relationships. It elucidates a Cree cosmological philosophy conceptually far from the Narcissus myth: that of the teepee pole teachings. The piece began as a technologically recorded performance of L’Hirondelle’s walks through Vancouver city spaces in 2006 and continues as an interactive website: www.vancouversonglines.ca.

Grunt gallery, which funded the work, reflects upon the complex layers of this project in its publication, *brunt magazine*. The work began as a mobile communication arts project with various conceptual parts developed throughout including: “performance art, concept art, an interactive web-based installation, musical composition, musical performance, compact disc recording, DVD, web 2.0 exhibition (via YouTube, Twitter, Blogger and MySpace), and [a] spirit quest” (Boyce 43). This paper focuses on the website and the various performative/musical parts directly connecting to the online project.

The interactive website embodies and extends L’Hirondelle’s projects, which are described on grunt gallery’s website:

During the month of December 2008, the artist will make daily journeys throughout Vancouver and “sing” the landscape she encounters. These encounters will be captured by mobile phone by the artist and whatever other technologies are made

available by participating viewers/audience (video, photo, audio)... .During the live performances, Cheryl will sing, record and upload audio clips to an online database. Each audio clip will be tagged to one or more of the 16 Cree values. The clips will automatically be available to online audiences interactively through a rich online media experience available at VancouverSonglines.ca. (n.p.)

These sound samples are a compelling aspect of the work, representing her musical communication with her environment, a self-made Cree mapping of place. She explores various downtown urban environments and simultaneously records who, where, and what was immediately surrounding her through impromptu singing into her cell phone (Figure 5). This musical mapping not only became an outlining of the city's urban space, but also a daily or weekly diary of her world as she describes it through city-inspired lyrical and oral history. Glenn Alteen, curator to the project, further explains:

During its development *nikamon ohci askiy* (*songs because of the land*) has moved around a lot. It was always about the city and how it was used but we never exactly knew where it started. So we started taking walks. Much of what this project became was envisioned during those walks or because of them. Walking the city with Cheryl continued over many months... .In the genesis of this project for Cheryl was the idea of songlines, an essential part of Australian Aboriginal culture. According to their beliefs ancestral totemic beings sang the landscape into existence and these songs are still used to navigate a territory. Cheryl had just moved to Vancouver and wanted to navigate her new city through songs and audio (n.p.).



Figures 1 and 2. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.

L'Hirondelle's actions, engaging with the concept of Australian Aboriginal Songlines, map the world through an Indigenous perspective and provide an organic, sonic visualizing of the landmass and its inhabitant animacies. In *Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems: Principles and Practices*, Leonie Sandercock applies the Indigenous perspective of Songlines to urban space. She later expounds on how "Songlines can take many forms in today's digital world. ... They can facilitate connections between city

dwellers and their bioregions, linking city and country, and providing a tangible broader context for city life” (154). The work, although informed by several various outside influences, is undergirded by Cree cosmological structures in which each sound sample attributes to a value of the teepee pole teachings.²

Indigenous new media artists merge personal experiences, Indigenous tradition, technologies, and ecologies. Coulthard makes clear that settler exploitation of Indigenous peoples through technology is a theft of land, or spatial dispossession—what McLuhan’s theories render invisible or posit as empty. Indigenous new media arts focusing on civic spaces assert grounded normativity against settler configurations of technology in practices, theory, and ontology. Indigenous new media arts prefigure spatial, relational, and ecological forms of Indigenous nations in multifaceted relationships that challenge the conventional, temporally, and acquisitively oriented settler gaze, and humanistic settler sensorium in technology, through what Steven Loft, Melanie Townsend, and Dana Claxton discuss as Indigenous media and cosmology in their collection, *Transference, Tradition, and Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*.

L’Hirondelle’s work alters perspectives on Vancouver and urban space broadly, rearticulating the boundaries between the city and other urban and non-urban Indigenous spaces through a website enabling online interactivity and collective praxis through Cree citizenship forms. In contrast to McLuhan’s views that Canadian land is “empty space” that functions as passive content for media forms, these standpoints affirm that colonial and sovereign Indigenous materiality (content) are just as significant as the discursive, narrowly technological,

and human perceptual. As Warren writes, “the worldviews conceptualized [in the artists’ projects] rebuild the integrity of [an Indigenous environment] for peoples within the particular situations and frameworks defined by the artists’ projects” (4). Further, they actively decolonize conceptions of technology and citizenship framed within the lens of humanism. L’Hirondelle’s artistic contention is an act of citizenship that participates in constituting peoples eschewing state-based politics of recognition, instead affirming themselves in intergenerational relationship, in relational and contextual practice on the land. Indigenous media, in Taiaiake Alfred’s phrase, *creatively contends* with and in the city.

The *vancouver songlines* website tags the audio-clips with 16 Cree values associated with the teepee pole teachings, interactively visualized on the site’s page. The first page presents the viewer with a large black background with three light-blue animated icons: a teepee, branches for a fire, and a button “go.” Each icon, when clicked, leads visitors into the teepee teachings. Down to the bottom right, one can see three branches, and an animated blue hand takes one of the branches and drags it to the left where three slender poles are being erected over a fire. The hand drops the stick into the flames and embers rise from the fire, after which the hand turns into a selection tool and the pointer finger touches on one of the rising embers. This animation repeats until the viewer clicks on the word “go,” at which point they enter into the body of the website (Figure 3).

A second page presents the words “choose 3,” which slowly fade as a third page uploads. As a black background transitions to dark grey-green hues, sixteen Cree syllabic words present in a loose grouping: each word blurs and

appears, as if waiting for the viewer. When moving, the viewer can select any three words. Once all three are selected, each statement turns into a wood-like pole and the perspective moves downward on the screen. We are then taken into a darkened landscape that contains a forest, a teepee-like structure, a fire pit, a pile of small logs. One discerns in the right-hand area of the page a distant wolf's silhouette, the Lion's Gate bridge, and obscured mountain ranges (Figure 4).

Following the first page's directions, we raise the teepee poles over the fire. White markings then appear on the upper areas of the poles. Selecting one of these markings, we can see that the pole represents one of the words that we had previously chosen. Each selection causes a digital sound sample of the artist singing a melody. When one adds a few logs from the pile into the fire, the fire gets brighter and embers begin to float out of the pit. By selecting several of the embers, we participate in an interactive self-directed digital sound mixing. On the lower left of the web screen, there is a "reset audio" button, which ceases the digital sound samples when pressed. Selecting another pole builds up the fire once again, adding more embers to create an entirely new sound composition that connects the theory and practice of songlines to the relational praxis of teepee pole teachings.

By developing her musical mapping into a website and DVD, L'Hirondelle underlines how all of her artistic processes reflect accountability to her community. She places herself and the participants that she encountered on the city streets in relationship with online users, creating "place" or an embodied and land-based communal environment framed through Cree cosmology. The teepee pole teachings become a structure assisting individuals in how to

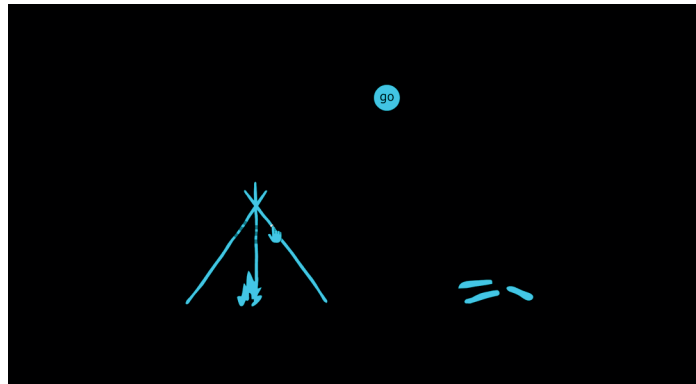


Figure 3. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.



Figure 4. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.

interact or engage within community or communal situations. For L'Hirondelle, "[t]he very act of erecting a tipi is a ceremony" (157). These sacred technologies animate in virtual spaces that are composed of the Indigenous material infrastructure of lands and routes.

L'Hirondelle's website-as-participatory-artwork allows the visitor to create their own non-linear perspective of Vancouver and personal relationship with Cree teepee pole teachings. Her singing honours her own body in and

with the land, while the media work extends this perspective to other Indigenous peoples who interact with the site. Visitors can explore and create their own recursive and shared experience of Vancouver's time and space through Cree relationship paradigms. In many ways these could not be farther from those articulated by McLuhan on media and "the Canadian question."

McLuhan's Themes: Land as "Empty," Sensorial Extension, and Settler Colonialism

In, "Canada and Counter-Environment," one of his rare undertakings of the Canadian question, McLuhan argues that the Canadian spirit inherits a "war on empty wilderness" from its settler ancestors. Antagonistic relations with the brutality of nature defined a population, forging a particular type instilled with "initiative amidst solitude" ("Canada and Counter-Environment" 75). For McLuhan, the "emptiness" of nation reflects Canada's oscillation between the ballast of British tradition—from which it is alienated—and the lure of American futurity, which it observes as a "spectacular light show from afar" (Marchessault 81). McLuhan claims that Canada is a "counter-environment" that functions as the "psychic theme park" for the U.S., "something like a Hollywood set that simultaneously links the past with the present, a city with the wilderness" ("Canada and Counter-Environment" 73). He references the installation of the United States' Distant Early Warning system (DEW line) in the Canadian north to argue that Canada is an "anti-environment" that provides a neutral setting for the working through of "other people's fantasies" (73). McLuhan's argument is similar to Maurice Charland's on technological nationalism; rather than providing "substance or community" for the construction of a polis,

technological nationalism constitutes the nation as reflective surface, or "common carrier" of foreign signals and content (Charland 198). Such constructions of Canada as empty carrier point toward the nation as the triumph of form or mediation. To adapt McLuhan's phrasing, it is medium trumping content. The "absent nation" expresses ambivalence about Canada's technological sovereignty, highlighting colonial exertion wherein the terrain of "nation" becomes a backdrop for the exercise of individual will. The lack of content reveals the power of the technological capitalist structures and the self-sustaining exercise of formal seductions carried ever forward and onward towards totality.

McLuhan's absent nation, as technological drive, reflects colonial constructions of the land as *terra nullius*, land passively "empty" of its original inhabitants and available for settlement. In this vision, technological, material, juridical and imaginative apparatuses "clear" the land, making it an amenable ground for the flowering of European civilization. This absent nation may be an unintended symptom of the conditions for Canada's existence, according to Charland. Under the lens of settler colonialism, however, it reflects an active and willful imperial landscaping. This process embodies Patrick Wolfe's concept of the "logic of elimination," describing the mechanisms of settlers' violent incursions into Indigenous land and communities in order to claim these as their own. Wolfe distinguishes settler colonialism as structure rather than event, reverberating Charland and McLuhan's arguments regarding the "empty nation" predicated through form over content. Elimination becomes the "organizing principal of settler colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence" consigned to a distant past (Wolfe 388).

In Wolfe's view, settlers must perpetually enact the logic of elimination, at both structural and individual levels, in order to naturalize European settlement and render its mechanisms invisible. The analysis of the "absent nation" here is not motivated by mournful clarions to replenish an impotent nation/alism. Instead, the concept hints at how colonial national narratives are mobilized through form, medium, and structures of feeling. These key themes inflect McLuhan's idea of sensory extension through technology, which, while it does not explicitly centre Canada as a foundational context, nonetheless reflects settler-colonial logic.

The sensory extension of man through technology is one of McLuhan's most influential ideas. In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan examines how various media—ranging from the printed word, clothing, the light bulb, and television (to name but a few)—function as prostheses for our bodies and their sensory capacities to extend into the world: "[t]oday, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (19). Here, McLuhan's liberal humanism is on bold display; the "extension" of man assumes the ontological category of "man" tied to the notion that man's body (and its sensory amplitude) can undergo hypnotic externalization and be mirrored forth in cosmic perpetuity as the extension of man's "final phase" (Kroker 19).³³ At the same time, McLuhan tempers the humanist subject by suggesting that, while electronic media extend man's central nervous system out into world, technology also reshapes man, "incorporate[ing] the whole of mankind in us" (20). While George Grant views technology as a force of domination and subjugation, McLuhan believes not only that human freedom

and creativity can be unleashed through new media, but also that true human potential is to be achieved not "outside' the technological experience, but... 'inside' the field of technology" (Kroker 64). McLuhan's vision of sensorial extension in technology is hopeful, even celebratory. However, his reference to the myth of Narcissus shows that he also sees that technology can dominate the individual subject.

McLuhan believes that exteriorization induces a state of narcosis—and *failure* of self-recognition—wrought through the traumatic amputation of the self in technology. This perspective relies on the notion of the liberal subject's bounded body, again a historically specific paradigm of "the human." McLuhan points out that Narcissus comes from narcosis, or numbness. His recounting of the myth inflects less the infatuation with the repeated image so much as the stupor induced through this repetition. For him, bodily and sensory extensions involve narcosis or numbness, because "amplification" through extension/amputation produces a shock that the body then seeks to alleviate through a denial of recognition. Therefore, conceiving of extension as merely ecstatic embodiment misses McLuhan's point regarding auto-amputation as the body's attempt to bring an overstressed and overstimulated system to equilibrium. While this stress and stimulation inheres in McLuhan's theory of technology, it also resonates with his figure of Canadian man, individually struggling in a hostile and barren circumstance wherein technology becomes the form through which it is possible to extend subjectivity and embodiment, while at the same time numbing and misrecognizing. He emphasizes reciprocity with "man's" own technologies rather than with the land or its peoples.

McLuhan's argument on the technological extension and amputation of limbs and nervous systems usefully shades the questions of Canadian national identity and belonging through the lens of media as liberal humanist and settler colonial. He argues that man's extension and amputation (and attendant hypnosis) cannot easily be pried apart. Ecstatic declarations of technological amplification function as intended cures for an overstressed system as well as narcissistic-narcotic yearning to confirm the uncertain body—or Canadian settler subjectivity, citizenship, and nation.

Conclusion

Indigenous theorists of technology in media arts emphasize ongoing land-based animate relationships. We extend these elaborations to show how they inflect accounts of Indigenous land-based citizenship, opposing McLuhan's notions of the "empty" nation. Marshall McLuhan's media theories rarely engage with the question of Canadian identity and nationhood directly, but when they do, McLuhan describes technology as a means for overcoming a hostile empty landscape—not only for heroic Canadian settlers who would prevail over this hostility through the use of technology as colonial endeavour but also for ambivalent settlers caught in an embarrassing crux between the nostalgic bombast of Britain and the American "spectacular light show from afar" (Marchessault 81). McLuhan's theories of empty space and the sensorial extension of man in technology ratify a settler-colonial humanism that ignores the land and other-than-human animacies, while also positing technology as a teleological tool for human beings (settlers) to extend themselves indefinitely, to re-tribalize, to be reborn in an ultimate, cosmic, end-time, technological

futurity that moves past the original trauma of technological articulation of the self.

In the context of the sovereignty of Indigenous citizenship and attendant media arts, Indigenous lands provide the material support and a key foundation for digital networks as demonstrated in L'Hirondelle's work. Arts-based approaches to relational urban civic ecology are oriented through Indigenous relationships to land, which Coulthard calls grounded normativity. These foundations accord with technological relationships, where Indigenous arts posit the priority of land-based relationships and decolonize media theories that figure abstract form over animate material content. McLuhan's media theories do not attend to land as the material and animate space of relationship or as an agent in relationships. Media artworks such as L'Hirondelle's *songs because of the land* articulate land-based relationships as Indigenous citizenship.

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Image Notes

Figures 1 and 2. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.

Figure 3. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.

Figure 4. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, <http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html>.

Notes

1 Lance Strate described media ecology as “the study of media environments, the idea that technology and techniques, modes of information and codes of communication play a leading role in human affairs,” “Understanding MEA,” *In Medias Res* 1 (1), Fall 1999. Indigenous conceptions of media ecology differ, decentering the human. See also Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, “Storm Spirits: The Cultural Ecology of Aboriginal New Media Art,” *Storm Spirits — Aboriginal New Media Art*. Artist’s Statement, 2005. <http://stormspirits.ca/English/curatorial.html> (Accessed May 4, 2012).

2 Glenn Alteen argues L'Hirondelle's work can be compared to that of the Situationist movement in the 1950's: “In the 1950's the Situationists explored notions of Psycho-geography and central to this was the practice of ‘derive’ translated in English as drifting. It meant to walk through the landscape with no purpose or destination” (n.p.).

3 Kroker argues that the technological humanism espoused by McLuhan is “expansive, pluralistic, universalistic, and creative” precisely because it is rooted in the perceived alliance between technology and the potential for freedom (14).