Weaving Indigenous Digital Strategies from Alberta, Canada and Oaxaca, Mexico

by

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Abstract

The mainstream history of the Internet, digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) shows a clear shift to a centralized digital landscape that is predominantly controlled by corporations. However, diverse individuals, communities and Nations around the world have created connectivity and communication models that respond to their own needs and contexts. For example, Indigenous Peoples from different territories, who have resisted colonial structures and demonstrated the sustainability of their communities, organizations, and Nations in relation to their territories, have developed and used ICTs to support their own ways of living. In this context, my research explores the strategies that Indigenous artists and communicators from territories in Mexico and Canada are undertaking to use digital tools according to their own terms and desires. Through *testimonio* as a narrative research methodology, this work assembles, shares and reflects on the journeys of Ayuujk, Xhdiza, Zapoteco, Nehiyaw, Dene and Métis artists and communicators from territories within the regions of Oaxaca and Alberta, in relation to the interconnected digital landscape of what we call the Internet.

This thesis is informed by a body of research that acknowledges that digital ICTs are not neutral, but tools of power and counterpower. The *testimonio* stories presented here provide a variety of experiences and reflections that reveal the strategies that Indigenous artists and communicators have used when interacting with digital tools, such as critical and reflective processes, experiences informed and nurtured by webs of relationships, relation to Land and Language and collective dreaming. Presented as first person narratives, these stories speak of resistance, memory, language

revitalization, and collective processes. They reflect journeys that involve digital tools such as video game designing, radio broadcasting, app designing, online streaming and gaming, digital collaging and filmmaking. Moreover, these testimonios provide insights about the role of non-Indigenous allies to contribute to their ideation of a digital world. In presenting this research, I describe my own self-reflective journey that seeks to contribute to more appropriate, coherent and ethical collaborations in both research and technology, through relational and reflective methods and processes while honouring people's stories.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by María Alvarez Malvido. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Weaving Indigenous Digital Strategies from Alberta, Canada and Oaxaca, Mexico," REB ID (Pro00103229), 01/12/2020.

We will not change history if we do not change the stories we tell.

Luna Marán

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Introduction

The mainstream history of the Internet and digital technologies shows a clear shift to a centralized digital landscape that is predominantly controlled by corporations. However, diverse individuals and communities around the world have created connectivity and communication models that respond to their own needs and contexts. For example, Indigenous Peoples who have resisted colonial structures and demonstrated the sustainability of their communities, organizations, and Nations in relation to their territories, have developed and used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support their own ways of living.

My inquiry seeks to explore the strategies that Indigenous artists and communicators from territories in Alberta, Canada and Oaxaca, Mexico, are undertaking to use digital tools according to their own terms. To do this, I apply *testimonio* as a research methodology to discuss communications and technology through people's own words about their journeys and narratives (DeRocher, 2018). In this way, participant's' stories allow us to understand the processes, reflections, and relational contexts that inform their use of digital tools. Their reflections also show how non-Indigenous allies might ethically support the ways in which Indigenous Peoples use technology to support their grounded and diverse needs and desires.

Participants in this thesis are situated in diverse territories within the regions of Alberta and Oaxaca. Their diverse reflexive journeys using different digital tools are tied to processes grounded in their territories and locations. These processes are not only ones of art, creation and communication, but are all also connected to larger processes of language revitalization, autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination. These narratives present opportunities to learn from the experiences, reflective practices and strategies of participants, and their use of digital tools within the global, digital network of networks that we call the Internet. In this context, my thesis examines the following research questions:

- ***How are Indigenous artists and communicators using digital technologies in Oaxaca, Mexico and Alberta, Canada?***

- *What strategies are they undertaking to use digital tools under their own terms?*

- *How do they dream of a digital landscape that reflects and responds to these terms?*

- *How might non-Indigenous allies contribute to these processes?*

My approach to answering these questions is informed by a body of research that acknowledges that digital technologies are not neutral but are tools of power and counterpower. My work is informed by the theoretical perspectives of community informatics (Gurstein, 2007), the social shaping of technology (Baym, 2010), and "technology rewriting" (Cortés 2016; Tiselli, 2016). Taken together, these three approaches examine ways in which different experiences modify the meanings and values implicit in technological artifacts, changing the way they are used and perceived. This constructivist standpoint acknowledges that technologies are designed and created to respond to specific interests and contexts, while recognizing the power and agency of people to transform them and their uses (Pinch and Bijker, 1987).

I hope that using testimonio as methodology will contribute to this field of study by providing an example of a narrative-centered approach that presents the knowledge found in people's stories, desires, questions and dreams. I also hope to contribute to what I find to be an urgent critical approach to digital technologies, one that centers scholarly attention on people rather than on the devices. Moreover, by assembling and sharing these reflections and learnings rooted in specific and different territories, I hope to contribute to others' dreams and desires in engaging with their own local communities through creative, communicational and artistic processes. This inquiry arises from my own journey as a non-Indigenous woman collaborating with Indigenous Peoples in Mexico on community media and connectivity processes. As I discuss in this thesis, some of the questions raised by those collaborations are now intertwined with those experienced in my journey as a graduate student at the University of Alberta, where I encountered Elders, activists and friends from different territories across the land now known as Canada walking similar paths

and asking similar questions in relation to digital technologies.

My location and privilege as a non-Indigenous woman from Mexico studying in Canada has given me the opportunity and strong commitment to share what I am continuously learning from different territories and the experiences using ICTs that I have found within each context. In this thesis, I bring in some of the important relationships and journeys that have been central to my continuous learning process in Alberta and Oaxaca. It is my hope that this shared narrative experience of testimonio with participants will nurture these relationships and provide possibilities for new relationships to emerge. For this reason, when this thesis is complete, I will share a translated version (in English and Spanish) of all testimonios to each participant, and invite them to read each other's journeys.

Considering the diversity of people involved in this research, it is necessary to clarify my use of the term "Indigenous Peoples" — two words that risk appearing as a narrow umbrella for a diversity of worldviews and contexts. The term "Indigenous Peoples" refers to a variety of different self-determined peoples. For example, in the communities I work within Mexico, "Indigenous Peoples" refers to Ayuujk, Xhidza and Zapoteco, while in my conversations in Canada, the term specifically refers to people from different Cree, Dene, and Métis communities. It is also important to acknowledge the different histories and structures of settler colonialism in Canada and extractive colonialism in Mexico (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013). These histories continues to shape present realities and "are crucial to understanding articulations of Indigeneity and how distinctive Indigenous demands, actions, and responses stem from structurally different colonial processes" (p. 281). The reason I chose to study Alberta and Oaxaca is my own relation to both contexts: Oaxaca is the region where I live and work, and Alberta was where I studied and worked during my graduate studies, and where I lived for almost a year. As I reveal throughout this work, my relationship with the participants and the locations is crucial for my study because my questions and reflections are concrete results of these relationships.

Re-thinking communications and connectivity alongside members of diverse communities in Alberta and Oaxaca has allowed me to learn from different ways of thinking about digital technology and its uses. The work in different territories responds to the needs and desires of the

people living there. It is also concerned with their creative resistances to oppressive stories of colonization, that are replicated in the digital landscape. My intention in this thesis and beyond is to keep learning from peoples' journeys, to share them in Spanish and English among participants and readers across these territories, and to disseminate the knowledge that I have gained through building these relationships in both places. My study will also contribute to understanding how local experiences are reshaping technology and challenging existing structures through Indigenous-led initiatives.

To start this journey, Chapter 1 contains a self-locating section where I situate myself in relation to the questions that I presented above. Through my story, I share my reflections as a non-Indigenous woman committed to understanding these issues and writing this thesis. At the same time, I put forward the privileges, challenges and contradictions that I have had throughout this journey, specifically as a member of an NGO and a graduate student in the University of Alberta. Moreover, I explain my thoughts on viewing these privileges as responsibilities, and my commitment to turning learning into a research design that is respectful, relevant and process oriented.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of Alberta and Oaxaca as the regions where the participants for this research are located. By acknowledging differences and commonalities among these territories, I aim to recognize the diverse realities in which all research participants are positioned. This Chapter considers the different expressions of ongoing colonialism within the political borders that now define Mexico and Canada, as well as the different expressions of resistance, the grounded efforts of language and culture revitalization and the Indigenous-led development of ICTs in both regions. Lastly, I provide an analysis of the digital landscape in order to situate this research in the context of a contested online, globalized and interconnected digital world where these territorially-grounded stories intersect.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research literature that informs and frames my research questions. This overview explores the literature of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars focusing on the dialectic relation between technology and society, both at individual and community levels. It also presents ideas and reflections grounded in experiences and processes

through which digital tools are re-shaped from their original purposes, such as those led by communities and Indigenous Peoples. Lastly, I present the reasons for choosing testimonio as a coherent methodology from the experience-centered approaches of discussing uses of digital technology.

In Chapter 4, I explain and present testimonio (DeRocher, 2018), a research methodology rooted in the Latin American social landscape marked by cultural revolutions and liberation struggles. My application of the testimonio approach is informed by the conversational method (Kovach, 2019) and the ethics of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), developed by Indigenous scholars working in Canada. I present the steps I followed, adapting this methodology into an academic thesis context. I also explain the institutional and relational ethics processes that I observed while conducting research with each participant. Lastly, I present my relationship to each of the artists, communicators and transformers contributing to this thesis and I explain why it matters for this process.

Chapter 5 presents the participants' complete testimonios, alternating between those from Alberta and Oaxaca. This chapter aims to allow readers to relate to and learn from testimonios from their own positionality and journeys. It is also a dissemination practice that aims to respect participants' own narratives through transcripts that they reviewed and approved.

In Chapter 6 I share what I have learned from participants' testimonios and journeys. I discovered that the stories reveal more profound stories of colonization and resistance. Also, their stories provided me with responses to my research questions about their strategies and dreams of a digital world according to their own terms, preferred uses and desires. Lastly, I discuss what I found about the role of allies in supporting these processes.

Chapter 7 is where I share my final reflections and conclusions around my research questions and around the process. I relate what I learned from using testimonio as a methodology, discuss the limitations of this study, and provide some ideas for future research. I conclude by reflecting on

the next steps to give continuity to this cyclic journey of inquiry and reflection.

As a final note, I use the metaphor of weaving in the thesis title to help explain the process of bringing together different people's journeys through an assemblage of my reflections on their testimonios. I also hope that the weaving of these narratives will resonate and spark thoughts about how these grounded experiences, reflections, and dialogues can inform local resistances across regions. As I learned in this journey, new cycles of conversation and relationships emerge not only in relation to uses of digital tools, but also in relation to each other's experiences and questions, to our location in place and community, and to our dreams and desires.

All participants gave permission to be named in this work. I invite readers to take this thesis as an opportunity to hear from Lilia, Joaquín, Aretha, Kyle, Luna and Kirsten about their journeys and to engage with their testimonios as if you were in conversation with them. I hope that my learning journey invites you to weave your own story and questions throughout this research process.

Chapter 1

Self-Location

In this chapter I situate myself in relation to my research questions, inquiry journey and the participant stories and regions presented in this research. First, I share my reflections about the path, learning process and relationships that led me to find and develop these research questions. This self-reflection also allows me to share the responsibilities, contradictions and questions that I find in acknowledging my privileges, and the strategies I found to incorporate my commitments into the work I do and the coherent, respectful research design I chose.

My Self-locating Journey

According to Absolon and Willet (2015) when we self-locate, we represent our own truths and reality. They write: "The process of telling a story is as much the point as the story itself. We resist colonial models of writing by talking about ourselves first and then relating pieces of our stories and ideas to the research topic" (p. 2). My intention in this section is to situate myself, while weaving my stories and transformative inquiry through reflection. Locating myself in this research process allows me to share my own story and journey behind the questions that I present. My journey is one that is woven with other relationships, shared processes and experiences both in Mexico and Canada. My questions are therefore rooted in shared conversations, learnings, personal interests and commitments, and grounded in my own relation to the digital tools that we use every day to communicate.

During my graduate program as an international student in Canada, living in Oaxaca, México, and having spent time in amiskwaciy-wâskahikan (colonially known as Edmonton, Alberta), I have had the opportunity to learn from creative strategies developed by Indigenous artists and communicators. The participants in this research are all part of this learning process. I specifically invited each of them to participate in this research because of their diverse use of digital tools, but more importantly, because of the broader reflective processes in which their creative practices are situated. For this reason, I first position myself as a learner, grateful for all the relationships involved in this process and hopeful of the opportunity to contribute to future collaborations across

territories. I hope to honour these learnings by giving continuity to the conversations and sharing these narratives in both languages and contexts.

How I Got to Here

I was born and raised in Mexico City, and I am now living in Oaxaca. I grew up in a city with a population of almost 22 million people where the roots of my family's stories don't go deeper than the memories of my grandparents, two who came from rural Spain on my father's side, and two who came from the North of Mexico on my mother's side. In this city that seems to grow second by second, the long story of colonization takes different shapes today. Some aspects remain as iconic images in the daily landscape, such as the Mexica's temple and cities buried as archeological sites under Catholic churches. Others remain in systemic violence towards the diversity of Peoples that inhabit this territory, such as the ongoing extractive practices on their Lands through mining and hydroelectrics, or most national policies on education and health that refuse to incorporate the diversity of worldviews and languages. An example of this is the exclusive use of Spanish in the streets, schools, institutions and mass media, in a country where 68 Indigenous languages are spoken.

More than a description of the landscape where I grew up, I intend to share the urban territory that has led me to a constant process of inquiry. Mexico City is a city of contrasts, where I discovered how differences become inequalities under the same power structures of those narrated from the colonial "past": those of wealth and poverty, racism and systemic violence, where the diversity of identities are fitted into a hierarchy that reinforces the privilege of western culture. Education, health and basic services are privileges to which I have had access, as well as access to education, health and basic services and consequent opportunities to travel to other places, including furthering my education through the Master of Arts of Communications and Technology at the University of Alberta.

However, my questions are rooted in another place that is not geographic but rather the emotional space of remembering and reconnecting (Absolon, 2015). The family stories I grew up with included endless names and relationships, of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, godmothers,

nephews and nieces, relatives who stayed on the other side of the Atlantic or in other parts of Mexico. More importantly, I was close to my left-wing journalist mother who has always been in a constant search for stories and an endless energy to share them through her written words. I became conscious of the power of dialogue, of listening and of the multiplicity of narratives that are found in a conversation; I also became aware of what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) has called "the danger of a single story."

My search for stories drove me closer to books, radio, movies and the people around me. In a city surrounded by hegemonic private media, I sought diverse voices and stories that I then came to find by asking questions and listening to the resistant diversity of narratives from Indigenous Peoples in Mexico. In those narratives I found opportunities to learn and unlearn, to see beyond the dominant narratives of heteropatriarchy, consumerism, and the so-called "development" that appears in political propaganda. I became eager to listen to and read traditional stories about the land on which I stood, but also stories of creative resistance to an oppressive structure of power and violence that claimed other ways of living and creating in relation to others and the world around us.

During my undergraduate degree I studied Social Anthropology and graduated with a thesis on Indigenous community radio and migration. My research involved spending time in Oaxaca, a region with the most diverse linguistic diversity in Mexico. There I learned that community radio has become a powerful tool of resistance through storytelling, information, music, and narratives that are as diverse as the territories. These teachings that disrupted the dominant narratives have accompanied me in my own decolonizing journey and have inspired me to work with communities to re-think radio and other media. They have done this not only through the diverse content and knowledge that I have been honoured to access and learn from, but also through the relational process of creating, sharing and communicating with others. I was soon confronted by the colonizing scope and origin of Anthropology as a social science and decided to step away from academia after graduating.

Through a short path in journalism and community engagement projects in Mexico City, I became a member of Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad A.C. (Redes) in 2017. Redes is a local (non-Indigenous) non-profit organization that has collaborated with Indigenous and

community media and telecommunication projects since 2005. The collaborations have had diverse approaches such as legal support and advocacy for community radio and other Indigenous owned telecommunications networks, or the design and implementation of training programs towards the technological autonomy of community media projects. We have also engaged in the systematization of the reflective processes and learnings that emerge from these, which are constantly shared back as methodological guides that are open access online and distributed freely to the radio stations in printed versions (Baca-Feldman, 2021; Parra and Baca-Feldman, 2020; Huerta et al., 2018). Some of these methodological proposals focus on posing questions and suggesting steps that collectives, communities or organizations might take to design their own communication strategies in relation to their territory. For example, these resources provide materials to help these groups collectively choose the right tool that responds to their needs, if they decide to choose an approach to communication that involves the use of ICTs. Most of the funding that supports our work comes from international organizations specifically dedicated to supporting community network deployment and training in Latin America, such as the Association for Progressive Communications and Internet Society, as well as other more general funds for community engagement such as those from the Ford Foundation or the Friedrig-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation.

Since 2017, my role at Redes has been to co-coordinate with fellow Redes colleagues a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process with communities from Ayuujk, Xhidza, Tseltal and Wixárika territories. This work has involved envisioning and building a network of "Community Intranets" in a way that explores how could they look in the context of these four diverse communities. These "Intranets" are local, wireless mesh networks that provide communities with a means to curate, manage and share local content through a local server and platform without having to connect to the Internet or global networks. This means that communities can create a local network with its own terms and conditions and organizational models. After two years of working together, these imagined networks of local content have taken different shapes that respond to local desires and needs: one became a live broadcasting project, one a digital library, and another the beginning of a community radio station. This work generated new questions around different aspects of the content that will be shared through these local networks. For example, we asked how we can create the conditions to enable/support the preservation, exchange, dissemination and access to the diversity of audiovisual content produced through Indigenous

communication processes.

Since then, Redes has been collaborating and continuing a collective conversation through workshops and meetings with communities, Indigenous filmmakers, community radio and video producers, hackers, and allied organizations. This conversation has been moving towards the design of a connectivity system and a shared platform of digital content where these communities can share and access the content produced in their territory. I have been supporting this process by documenting and facilitating this process through which community members design and build their own infrastructure and model of connectivity. As I noted in a blog post about this work, these activities "hold the possibility of re-imagining the networks and infrastructures that provide access to telecommunication, not as a service or a commodity provided by the State or the corporations but as a right and a good that is as communally owned as the water and the land" (Alvarez, 2020).

Alongside this work, I continued my learning process through pursuing graduate studies at the University of Alberta in Canada, where I found opportunities to reflect on communications and technology through research, and to learn from the work of those doing decolonizing research within the institution. More importantly I got to spend almost a year in Edmonton. There I found other stories of colonization and resistance, with similarities and differences from those I knew from Mexico and Latin America. I found a place that reveals a story of relations between Indigenous Peoples and the settler state through learning about treaties, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission process. I also learned about community-based processes from First Nations, Métis and Inuit that resonate across the territory that is colonially known as Canada. I had the privilege to engage in conversations with Indigenous colleagues, artists and communicators, some who participated in this research. Moreover, I participated in the "Inspiring Land Relations" project at the University of Alberta. Coordinated by the Department of English and Film Studies, this experience helped me learn more about the land where the University of Alberta is based. We shared visits, ceremonies and conversations with Elders at places like Sounding Lake and Fort Pitt, as well as going on a river valley walk with Cree scholar Dwayne Donald. The aim of this process is to understand what our obligations are to the place and to better understand what it means to acknowledge the Treaty 6 territory and the Métis homeland.

This time in Edmonton also allowed me to collaborate with and learn from Indigenous people about their experiences with technology and digital platforms. At the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2019 held in Vancouver, I watched a presentation called *As I Remember* by Tla´min Elder Elsie Paul and engaged in conversation and collaboration with her nephew and editor Davis McKenzie about the challenges and strategies of sharing traditional stories online. Another experience took place in October 2018, when I was invited to attend and participate in the Indigenous Connectivity Summit organized by the Internet Society North America at the University of Alberta, the First Mile Connectivity Consortium, the Town of Inuvik, and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (*Indigenous Connectivity Summit*, 2018). This event combined workshops at the university with a conference held in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. There I had the opportunity to listen to diverse Indigenous Elders, youth and community members from across Canada and the United States, who spoke about their challenges, processes and advocacy strategies for designing and deploying community owned networks across territories.

As a Graduate Research Assistant, I have had the opportunity to participate in two experiences that nurtured the research questions that I presented in this study. One was my collaboration with Piikani Camp, a project with Blackfoot Elders and youth through digital storytelling to preserve stories and knowledge in the community. The second was participating for over two years in DigitalNWT, a digital literacy train-the-trainer project in the Northwest Territories. In the latter project, I was involved in workshops and meetings with community members, adult educators and community champions working towards the co-design of a capacity sharing process to build community networks of local content.

Privilege and Responsibility

Through this self-reflective journey I acknowledge a series of privileges that have allowed me to walk this path through learning opportunities and employment, and allowed me to undertake this research. These include access to housing, education, connectivity and use of digital tools, along with the opportunities that come as a white Mexican located within colonial systems that privileges whiteness in Mexico and in Canada. Moreover, the privilege of benefiting from mobility —such as travelling from Mexico City to Edmonton to Oaxaca—has been an option and a decision rather

than a requirement for survival.

Also, I reflect on the privilege of learning from the stories and journeys of Indigenous Peoples within Canada and Mexico, and the ongoing opportunity to collaborate in community media and connectivity processes. Acknowledging these privileges also means acknowledging how these are sustained by the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous territories, in every region where I have lived.

These tensions and contradictions are also inherently present in the relationships between local non-Indigenous NGOs — such as the one I am involved with — collaborating with Indigenous Peoples within a global system that constantly reinforces extraction and power relations in different forms. While sometimes less visible, schemes of collaboration or narratives of allyship also replicate these systems of oppression. For example, it's been claimed and argued that "the ally industrial complex has been established by activists whose careers depend on the "issues" they work to address" (Indigenous Action, 2014). Some of these tensions are also intertwined with and revealed in problems and violence such as NGOs and members becoming gatekeepers (of funds, information and relationships), or reinforcing processes of extraction, exploitation or co-opting of movements, knowledge, and grassroots processes. One example is revealed by the structural system in which funding circulates. Funding usually requires formal documents, bank accounts and other organizational or legal requirements that have little or nothing to do with Indigenous Peoples' traditional ways of organizing and collaborating, leading to NGOs gatekeeping or mediating funds while limiting the access and agency that Indigenous peoples themselves hold over the projects.

Therefore, my involvement in NGO work requires an ongoing process of critical self-reflection and acknowledgment of these structural tensions and contradictions. I find this to be the starting point to continue undertaking responsible and collaborative work with Indigenous Peoples in ways that do not replicate power relations and oppressive structures. It is also a starting point I can use to identify and recognize genuine shared commitments as well as the limits of our contributions.

Another key starting premise I have learned along the way is not going where you are not asked to go. This is very relevant in technology-related work when technology is often assumed to be a need in places where the community does not perceive it as such. This means that processes must

start with communities identifying their needs and desires and deciding to engage in a collaborative process, and not the other way around. This includes co-developing strategies with collaborators, such as sharing management of resources and decision-making processes, that always include local resources, knowledge and organizational models.

On a more personal level, when collaborating I have learned ways of reconciling my privilege and contradictions, or assuming them as responsibilities. I position myself as a learner, walking a learning journey that never ends, and am committed to constant self-reflexivity practices that allow me to recognize the mistakes, contradictions and replications of colonized ideas or beliefs, that integrate my story and my context (such as beliefs that are deeply embedded in capitalistic and individual systems). This is not only in relation to media and technology, but primarily in relation to the world and peoples' relations with each other. This self-reflection implies embracing the vulnerability that it takes to unlearn, while embracing all possibilities to learn. One of the main things I have learned from this journey is to position relationships and care of those relationships as a central priority. This, for me, has mainly meant learning to see processes not in a linear but in a cyclical way, in the sense of understanding process-oriented collaborations, finding mistakes as possibilities to learn, and more specially, to think, feel and learn always in relation to others.

Journey Towards a Research Design

Moving from these learning processes from the NGO collaborations to academia involved a new journey of questions and responsibilities. One of contradictions in bringing these learnings, commitments and questions to a university research was incorporating collective experiences into an institution where knowledge acquisition tends to be individually based and linear, leading to an individual work qualifying the person for a degree. The current research involves the following questions: How might I undertake a research process that involves and reflects my commitments and questions, which are rooted outside of an academic framework? How can I do this work with respect and relevance? How can I contribute to the collective processes I have learned from? Finally, how can I honour and hold myself accountable to these learnings and relationships as a non-Indigenous person doing academic research with Indigenous Peoples?

Accompanied by these questions, the research design was a journey itself — from defining my questions to selecting and weaving together the knowledge gathering and analysis methods to finding the proper process to ensure care and ethical collaboration with participants. This process also involved deciding what to bring and what not to bring to this thesis, by selecting from the learnings that are part of this journey. These questions have also meant ongoing reflections on the ways to make the best use of my privilege of mobility, not only to nourish my own learning process but also to continue sharing with the people I have learned from along the way in Canada and Oaxaca.

To help make sense of these learnings, I have positioned this process as cyclical rather than linear:

- A cycle is **relational at its core**. The methods for every moment of the process ought to be woven organically to allow for continuity, as well as respect for all the relationships involved.
- A cyclic inquiry allows me to follow a **constant self-reflexive journey** into the research, with iterative possibilities to go back to the questions and location.
- A cycle reflects a **process-oriented journey**, where the path towards the findings is as important as the findings themselves. Framed this way, the findings are not the end of a linear process, but a new continuous location in which participants may be engaged for further questions that may arise through the processes.

- This cycle **starts by putting forward my location** and continues by sharing back the knowledge found in the process to that same location, and in relation to the participants.

It is my hope that the research questions, standpoint, methodology, analysis and conclusions assembled in this thesis reflect care and respect to the people involved, to their stories, and to all the learnings and relationships involved in the process. I hope to uphold my responsibility as a visitor and learner in both Alberta and Oaxaca, as well as my commitment to this inquiry that is beyond myself and my questions, and I hope that this work nourishes continuous cycles of collaboration and dialogue in the months to come.

Chapter 2

Situating Regions: Alberta, Oaxaca and a Shared Digital Landscape

My learning process has been situated in Oaxaca and Alberta, but also in other regions such as the NWT and British Columbia in Canada, and Chiapas, Puebla and Michoacán in Mexico. However, the research questions, relationships and testimonios presented in this thesis are situated in territories within the regions of Oaxaca, where I live and work, and Alberta, where I have undertaken my graduate studies. Also present is the shared digital world where communication and connectivity strategies in both regions intersect.

Accordingly, this chapter presents a brief overview of both geographical regions, followed by an analysis of the digital landscape where the testimonios in this thesis intersect. This illustrates how place and territory continue to matter, despite claims about a globalizing online society. This idea is relevant as it locates the testimonios in grounded regions that reflect ongoing inequalities as well as efforts of place-based communities to resist and build their own journeys and paths. It is not my intention to explain the distinct contexts of these regions in detail, but rather to provide an overview of where the stories presented in this thesis are placed, and why it is important that both regions are involved. It is important to clarify that this overview of the two different contexts will be expanded upon later in the participants' own stories and journeys. Similarly, it will be elaborated on through the analysis I provide in Chapter 6 where I share what I learned about the stories of colonization and the experiences of resistance to State violence that impact their territories.

Before locating these regions and their main characteristics, it is relevant distinguish between the different formations of colonialism in Canada and Mexico. As explained by Altamirano-Jimenez (2013) Canada's colonial history is one of settler colonialism whereas Mexico's is one of extractive colonialism. In Canada, "the colonial process rested on the concepts of *terra nullius*, justifying the removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands" (p. 213). Through the federal *Indian Act* (1876) "racial segregation and gender discrimination were formalized, allowing for the colonial authority to reproduce itself as a settler society" (p.33). In contrast, the colonial process in Mexico was

driven by the determination of the Spanish to sustain subordination rather than elimination, towards exploiting labour and extracting wealth from Indigenous Lands. In this context, many Indigenous Peoples in Mexico maintained their communal lands and resources. This overview demonstrates "how space, territory, and place were spatially remapped not by an event but by colonial structures that continue to shape present realities" (ibid, p. 42). It recalls Zapoteco scholar Jaime Martinez Luna's claims about the contexts of Mexico in relation to those of other self-determined Indigenous Peoples:

> "We have different languages and different ritual practices or different colored clothes or dances but what brings us closer together is the need to revindicate our relationship with the Land, the defense of our territories, facing the authoritarianism of our oppressors, or the impositions of a foolish modernity that refuses to understand the value of our philosophy" (2021, p.123).

The following descriptions are not static representations of territories. They intend to help situate participants' testimonios and their experiences in relation to digital tools within larger processes of colonialism and resistance present in the regions where they live. I also discuss the discourses that position both regions as situated — and narrated — as "remote and rural" in relation to the centres of Mexico and Canada, and how that discourse has implications in the processes of using and accessing networked digital technologies. It is my hope that the following conceptualization will also reveal the importance of learning from stories and experiences that are grounded in these territories.

Alberta

There are different colonial cartographic layers to locate in the region of Alberta. More generally, it is one of Canada's thirteen provinces, located in what is commonly known as the Canadian Prairies, between the provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and the Canada/US National Border. It is located in Treaty 6, 7 and 8, Lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene and Nakota Sioux. The following map, created by non-for-profit organization Native Land Digital, is a collaborative map that identifies Treaties and Indigenous

territories across the Land traditionally known as Turtle Island, or North America.
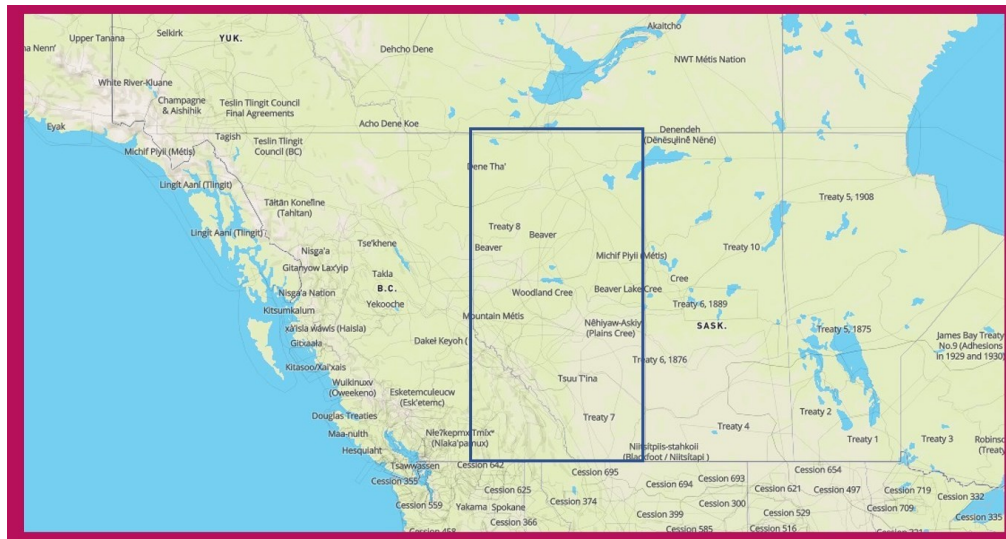
(Native Land, n.d)

The history of settler colonialism across Canada is based on the dispossession of Indigenous Land. Treaties are constitutionally recognized agreements between the federal government (also known as the Crown) and Indigenous peoples. However, these treaties have not been honoured by the Crown. Along with the literal dispossession through the imposition of a system of private property in these territories, Indigenous Peoples have been (and are) impacted by the policies of a colonial State. For example, the Canadian government established a system of residential schools operating from 1893 to 1996, which aimed to eliminate Indigenous Peoples through cultural assimilation and cultural genocide. During this time, more than 134 residential schools operated in Canada — including 25 in Alberta — supported by the federal government and often run by churches (Government of Alberta, 2021).

During the time of this thesis research, 215 undocumented remains of Indigenous children were found on May 27, 2021, at Kamloops Residential School in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, British Columbia. A few weeks later, 751 undocumented remains of children were found in Marieval Residential School, in Cowessess Nation in Saskatchwean. By the time this thesis was

finished, more cemeteries and residential schools, including those in Alberta, were to be investigated. The news of more than a thousand undocumented deaths already reveals a genocide where the "cultural" adjective seems limited (Stefanovich, 2021).

Parallel to this, other policies and practices continue to impact the lands and territories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The ongoing mechanisms of settler colonialism are enacted through industry in the forms of mining, pipelines, windmills and other projects. In Alberta, projects of tar sands and oil and gas extraction continue affecting what Peterson (2017) calls "racial extractivism," as seen in "the multitude of ways in which colonial histories and reiterations of race-based epistemology inform the discursive practices used by the oil and gas industry" (p. 356).

Other structural inequalities impact Indigenous populations in rural Alberta. One that is closely related to the questions and experiences assembled in this research is the question of access, ownership, control and possession of digital technologies and connectivity. According to McMahon et al. (2020), data from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2017) illustrates that "rural residents generally have fewer broadband service providers to choose from in comparison to residents of urban centers; and internet service prices are generally higher, with lower data transfer limits, in rural and remote regions'" (p. 27). In this context, people living outside urban areas are increasingly left behind as services continue to move to online delivery systems. More specifically, in Alberta "one third of Albertans, who live in towns with populations of less than 30,000—particularly those in geographically remote or dispersed regions—are still unable to access high-speed broadband" (p. 32).

This overview provides a glimpse into the context and ongoing actions of settler-colonialism in its different forms. However, it is also important to reveal the strong resistance and resilience of the Indigenous Peoples that inhabit Alberta today and continue to practice their languages and their relationships to Land and memory. Despite the historical violence and efforts of assimilation and elimination described above, according to Alberta's government, there are 220,700 Albertans self-identifying as Indigenous (Alberta Health Services, 2021) — the third largest Indigenous population in Canada. Also, there are three language family groups grounded in this land now known as Alberta: Algonquian (includes Cree and Blackfoot) Athapaskan (Beaver, Denesuline, Tsuut'ina and Dene Tha) and Siouan (includes Assiniboine and Nakoda). Michif, the distinct
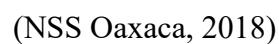
language of the Métis, is spoken in Alberta and throughout the Métis homeland (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2021).

Local First Nations in Alberta are engaged in a variety of community-based processes towards Indigenous knowledge and language revitalization. These diverse activities include camps in which digital technologies are present as tools for these purposes, such as ii na kaa sii na ku pi tsi nii kii (little camera storyteller), Piikani Digital Literacy and Cultural Camp Program in Blackfoot Territory (McMahon, 2020) and kâniyâsihk Culture Camp in Cree territory (Napier & Whiskeyjack, 2020; Ross, 2020). Other examples are projects related to radio and the Internet, and to do-it-yourself initiatives that do not depend on state government or corporate services. For example, in 2021, the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta (AMMSA) launched 89.3 "The Raven," featuring diverse music genres alongside language programming in Cree, Dene, Nakoda Sioux, Blackfoot and Michif, as well as news and Indigenous culture programming. Another example in Alberta is the work of "Broadband Bruce" Buffalo, and his project to provide fixed wireless internet access to people living in the First Nations community of Maskwacis (Al Jazeera, 2017). Other similar processes of language revitalization and resistance include University nuhelot'įne thaiyots'į nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills, a First Nations owned and operated university in Canada, the first of its kind in the country.

This brief overview of Alberta, within the larger context of Canada and the ongoing story of settler colonialism and Indigenous People's resistance in relation to Land and language, is where three of the testimonios presented in this thesis are situated. Next, I will move far south to introduce an overview of Oaxaca, as the other region in which stories are rooted.

Oaxaca

Oaxaca is one of 31 states into which Mexico is politically divided. It is located in the southeast of the country, between the states of Guerrero, Puebla, Chiapas and Veracruz. It is the most culturally diverse of all the regions in Mexico, with the largest Indigenous population speaking 16 different languages. Oaxaca is known for its long history of Indigenous mobilizations for political autonomy (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013). Since 1998, at least 412 out of 570 Indigenous municipalities decided to be ruled by their internal normative systems and are therefore politically organized without political parties. In these municipalities, the top authority is the Assembly, an orally based community mechanism for decision making processes.

(NSS Oaxaca, 2018)

(Native Land, n.d)

The map on the left situates the state of Oaxaca within Mexico, and the map on the right provides an overview of Indigenous territories within the state of Oaxaca. This map is also exported from Native Land and it does not intend to represent complete, official or legal boundaries of any Indigenous Nations but provides a different and relevant approach to other maps based on the Mexican state's geopolitical regions.

Oaxaca is known in Mexico for its diversity of languages and biodiversity, and by the political movements that have defended autonomy over Indigenous Lands in relation to colonial extractivism, as explained earlier. Today, colonial extractivism takes similar shapes as that of Alberta, with transnational companies implementing mining, pipelines, windmills and

hydroelectric mega-projects while threatening the autonomy and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples on their ancestral lands. As testimonios will reveal, national education policies have also played a central role in colonizing strategies through language, specifically by the imposition of Spanish as the national language.

Oaxaca is mainly rural and, like Alberta, this context means more scarce and expensive access to telecommunications services. In Mexico, only 70.01% of the population are defined as "Internet users," meaning that around 30% of the population does not have access to this technology. While there are states where more than 80% of their population has Internet access such as Mexico City and Baja California, those with more Indigenous populations have less Internet access, such as Chiapas (45.9%), Oaxaca (55.0%), Veracruz (58.9%), Guerrero (60.3), Michoacan (60.3%) and Puebla (62.7%) (INEGI, 2020). These conditions speak of the centralization of telecommunication infrastructure and the replication of other structural inequalities that affect Indigenous Peoples, such as access to health and education services.

Despite this structurally unequal access to connectivity, Indigenous regions like Oaxaca are also known for community owned and operated media experiences and Oaxaca is the state with most Indigenous-led radios (Cultural Survival, 2018). There is one important characteristic to highlight in the context of this region within Mexico, which creates specific conditions for media and technological autonomy to happen across the region. Since 2001, Article 2 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States recognizes and guarantees the right of self-determination and autonomy of Indigenous Peoples to, among other things, "Preserve and enrich their languages, knowledge and all the elements that constitute our culture and identity" and directs the Federation, states and municipalities to "Establish conditions for Indigenous People to acquire, operate and administer communication media in the terms that the law of the matter determines" (Const., 2001, art.2). Furthermore, Article 16 in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Mexico supported throughout the process initiated in 1985 until its adoption by the General Assembly, claims that "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination" (2007, p. 14). This legal recognition of Indigenous communication is the result of long fights and claims undertaken by Indigenous Peoples in Mexico and elsewhere towards their sovereign right to communication on their own terms. In some cases, Indigenous

Peoples in Mexico have claimed this right by setting up and operating a community radio or telephony service on their own autonomous territories without securing a license from the telecommunications regulator (Magallanes-Blanco and Rodríguez-Medina, 2016). In other cases, specific communities have undertaken a long fight to improve and make licensing conditions more accessible for Indigenous media to access a license. For example, after 2014, "Indigenous and community radio licenses" were recognized by the regulator after organized and committed pressure from Indigenous Peoples to change the law (Alvarez, 2016).

These legal and political conditions create a better environment for Indigenous Peoples to keep control and autonomy on their territories, as well as to own and manage their own media. However, despite these positive developments there is more to say about the context in Oaxaca and Mexico, which limits and violates the communicational processes led by Indigenous Peoples. Mexico was recognized in 2020 as the most dangerous country in the world for journalists (Lakhani, 2020). From 2000 to this day, 140 journalists have been murdered because of their job of informing and communicating. Many community radio stations have an important role in communicating, documenting, and supporting community efforts in defense of the land, the autonomy of the community and the safety of its people. In this context, Indigenous communicators and journalists face a high level of violence when they exercise their freedom of expression, and "journalists and activists in particular have faced violent reprisals at the hands of organized crime, police and politicians. The attacks, threats and murders of community communicators are poorly documented" (Cultural Survival, 2018, p.5).

During the process of this thesis since 2019, four Indigenous and community communicators were murdered: Rafael Murúa, director of Radio Kashana in South Baja California Sur; Samir Flores, founder of Amiltzingo community radio in Morelos; Telésforo Santiago Enríquez, founder of Estéreo Cafetal in Oaxaca, and Salvador Sánchez Bolaños from Radio Tlacuache, Puebla. This context reveals that, despite the regulations and legal acknowledgment of self-determination and autonomy, there is ongoing and systematic violence impacting Indigenous Peoples and their territories.

This context also reveals that, like Alberta, despite the systematic and diverse violence and persistent colonialism, community-based projects continue growing. Oaxaca, as mentioned, is the

state with the most Indigenous and community radio stations in Mexico. Moreover, it is also the state with the first Indigenous-owned telecommunications services operated in 17 communities, known as Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias (Huerta, 2016). It is also home to many Indigenous audiovisual and filming projects such as Cine Too and JEQO in Guelatao, all tied to the long paths of autonomy of the Indigenous Peoples over their territories (Marán, 2019; Campamento Audiovisual Itinerante, 2021). Moreover, diverse processes are reclaiming Indigenous ways of learning and researching in Oaxaca, such as Universidad Comunal del Cempoaltépetl in the Ayuujk region, Centro de Estudios Xhidza in the Xhdiza region and Universidad Comunal, which operates in several regions of the state, with curriculum designed by and for the diverse Indigenous Peoples of Oaxaca (Rangel, 2020).

Through different histories of settler and extractive colonialism, Indigenous Peoples and their territories face different challenges, tensions, and violence within the colonially defined regions of Alberta and Oaxaca. In both regions, Indigenous territories are also positioned as "rural and remote" in relation to urban centres and big cities, which impacts the development of infrastructures including telecommunications and networked digital infrastructures. In both contexts, Indigenous Peoples continue to face similar systematic impositions and ongoing colonization and violence through hegemonic educational models, religious institutions and national "democratic" processes based on political parties that are different from their own normative systems. Also, both regions face extractivist practices on their Land, allowed by the States and undertaken by corporations in most cases. The presence of Indigenous Peoples — their stories, languages, narratives, care and defense of the Land — reveal long processes of resistance, push back and resilience, that watch over the continuity of life under their own ways of living.

Politically, Alberta is a province organized in relation to treaties between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown that are layered onto regions geopolitically defined by the State, and that serve to mediate colonial relations with ancestral Lands. Oaxaca, on the other hand, is a state with eight different regions based on biodiverse characteristics, divided into autonomous municipalities that today are mostly governed by Indigenous Peoples. Canada's history has officially dispossessed First Nations from sovereignty and control over their territories; however, Indigenous peoples have secured control over various aspects of their societies, including the ownership, control, access and possession of communications tools and technologies including broadcasting networks and

networked digital infrastructures (McMahon, 2020; McMahon et al., 2014). Mexico has officially acknowledged the autonomy and sovereignty of the Indigenous municipalities, creating legal conditions for Indigenous Peoples to claim communications resources such as support for community media and spectrum for telecommunications. While the legal basis is different, in both cases Indigenous peoples have been actively involved in securing the legal, policy and regulatory conditions that enable their control over communications tools.

In acknowledging these contexts, this thesis is an invitation to flip the narrative and focus on the grounded, local, and community-based dreams and actions that are reshaping uses of digital technologies. Similar to struggles over territory, sovereignty and autonomy, the digital landscape also reflects a context of tensions over power and counterpowers, colonization and resistance. For this reason, the next section provides an analysis of the shared digital landscape, the online space where the testimonios rooted in Oaxaca and Alberta intersect.

Situating this Research in Relation to a Shared Digital Landscape

My research questions will be answered through the narratives and journeys of participants who are located in their Cree, Dene, Métis, Zapoteco, Xhidza and Ayuujk territories, within regions that are colonially known as Alberta and Oaxaca. However, both my research questions and the testimonios in this thesis, are also positioned in relation to a shared digital landscape (digital tools and the global Internet). For this reason, I find it necessary to recognize that the digital territory is informed by relations, tensions and power structures, which I will introduce in this chapter, and continue framing and problematizing in the next chapter through a literature review.

From its invention as a military tool of surveillance for the United States Department of Defense, through its further development at the hands of scientists, counterculture movements, governments and corporations (Curran, 2012), the technology-based network of networks that we now call the Internet has continuously changed. Back in 1993, Tim Berners-Lee released the World Wide Web as an open and free (and not copyrighted) gift to the community, inspired by two main ideas: "that of opening up access to a public good (the storehouse of knowledge contained in the world's computer system) and that of bringing people into communion with each other" (Curran, 2012, p.

40). Berners-Lee invented the addressing system that today allows all websites to be readable from anywhere thanks to the common computer language called the hypertext mark-up language (HTML). Therefore, "the Internet's inherent value and power comes from the fact that it is globally interoperable and decentralized, so that everybody can add to the network and create products, services and platforms on top of it without having to obtain permission or license, or some kind of access code, from anybody in particular" (MacKinnon, 2012, p.18).

Despite the inherent decentralized, free and open logic and network of the Internet, over the last decade the corporate oligopoly of Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon (known as GAFA) has been performing as a gatekeeper of its content (Foer, 2018). These corporations have managed to set a dominant model of "terms and conditions" that offers access to services at the expense of the data surveillance and monetization of every online user. The powerful algorithms that track the information of potential consumers respond to the capitalist system in which they have been designed, under the rules of the market rather than viewing them as the common goods that were once envisioned.

This context is relevant to understand the continuous changes on the Internet, where corporations have settled into the digital world as if arriving in *terra nullius* to set the rules (Peña, 2020). As explained by Paz Peña, this "Digital No Man's Land" operates today with underlying capitalist logics where some bodies matter more than others, and where our data information is treated as raw material that is naturally available as capital, just as oil, minerals and water were in settler-colonial histories. It is important to note in this research that this landscape predominantly designed and operated by GAFA is basically one owned and ruled by people fitting a specific profile: male, white, generally heterosexual, English speakers, from wealthy middle- or upper-class backgrounds from the Global North. Considering this context, Binder and García (2020) argue that "if technology production environments are patriarchal and neoliberal, their products and services will end up reproducing the same oppressions, imbalances, sexist practices, gender stereotypes or sexist behaviors that women and other identities experience on a daily basis. It will also happen with racialized people, with diverse functional, gender dissidents or Indigenous Peoples" (p.113)

The Internet has therefore become a context where systematic violence reappears as digital violence (Binder & García, 2020). Similarly, Ali Mejía (2013) explains this context as

"communicative capitalism" referring to "how the digital network forms part of a capitalist order that reproduces inequality through participation and how this participation exhibits a hegemonic and consensual nature" (p.21). Regarding participation, Ali Mejía refers to the different uses of the network, such as the creation, access and sharing of digital content in digital platforms. According to Mejía, the ideas of inclusion and participation in the digital world are in fact newer ways to capture resistance and intensify global capitalism. The author also explains this process as a "commodification" of the information, referring to what Marxist theorists explain as the process of taking something without commercial value, bringing it into the market and turning it into the subject of a commercial transaction. As stated by this same author "the diversity of voices found in multifaceted communities of the Internet is countered by the homogenization of software platforms, which means that all communities must use one set of tools and abide by one set of rules: the corporations'" (p. 23).

From all the problematics of a digital world in the hands of a few corporations, some scholars have identified other power dynamics such as digital capitalism (Binder and García, 2020; Alí Mejía, 2013) and surveillance capitalism (Shoshana Zuboff, 1951; Dan Schiller, 1991). Others have focused on the impacts on Indigenous Peoples as Indigenous Surveillance (Peña, 2019). This critical view of the digital world does not imply a complete rejection of technology or the digital landscape, but rather critically acknowledges the interests and structures embedded in its ongoing design, innovation and use. These critiques also reveal the importance of the reflective processes and experiences with which others relate to these digital tools and shape them according to different needs, terms and desires. This perspective recognizes forms of resistance and alternative pathways, as well as critique. Therefore, I chose to locate this research on the tensions and complexities of digital technologies, with a specific focus on acknowledging the processes by which Indigenous Peoples (and others) apply digital technologies toward forms of resistance. I also examined the possibilities of dreaming other possible futures and overcoming the current digital landscape explained above.

It is also important to mention that this research took place during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. As with many other processes, this meant readjusting the methodology to an online scenario of interviews mediated through Zoom meetings. This format is mentioned in this chapter because this pandemic has given rise to new questions in relation to digital connectivity as a way of adapting

communication, work and education in a context of social isolation. This sets a context where corporations appear to be taking over the means of online communication accelerated by increasing connectivity during times of isolation, as seen through work and education processes increasingly moving to centralized online platforms owned by GAFA. Some examples of this shift include the widespread and accelerated adoption of the Google Classroom platform for online schooling, Google Meet and Zoom as centralized, corporate video-conference tools, and YouTube and FacebookLive as centralized platforms for online streaming of seminars, talks and other events and conversations that are now predominantly online. For this reason, it is important to learn from diverse perspectives if we are to continue to imagine and create other possibilities for the digital world.

This dialogue is present in activities that have taken place during the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19. For example, in July 2020, the non-profit organization Rising Voices, through its project *Activismo Digital en Lenguas Indígenas* (Digital Activism in Indigenous Languages), organized an online dialogue between Indigenous digital activists in Canada and Mexico (Activismo Lenguas, 2020). This virtual meeting was designed as a space to exchange different experiences where digital activism has played an increasingly important role in the overall strategy of language revitalization.

The political economic context of a growing, centralized and market-driven digital landscape is intertwined with a dominant narrative that is shaping the future of the Internet. Listening to alternative stories that reveal other possible realities is one reason to undertake this research. Conversations and collaborations provide space to continue writing our own narratives of the present and the future of a world with digital technologies. In the next chapter, I will explain the theoretical approach to my questions, which focus on the dialectical tensions between the digital tools with embedded interests such as colonial, heteronormative and market-driven structures, and the agency of individuals and communities in critiquing and re-shaping these tools toward different ends, terms, and desires. The chapter will also examine the possibilities of signifying technology through community-based processes and experiences, such as those shared through testimonios in this thesis.

Chapter 3

Weaving Theoretical Discussions

Nunca más ningún medio a medias
siempre con nuestra voz con nuestra palabra
con nuestra cultura con nuestra razón
pero sobre todo con nuestro corazón.

Never again an incomplete media
always with our voice with our word
with our culture with our causes
but above all with our heart.

Bety Cariño, Ñu Savi communicator
Assassinated by paramilitars on April 27th, 2010

My inquiry is rooted in the recognition that digital technology is not neutral, but embedded with cultural, economic and political interests. Through critical analysis, these interests are revealed in the tensions and possibilities found between the embedded interests in the digital tools and networks, and the agency with which people use and transform them in order to meet their own needs and desires. I hope to contribute to the discussion of ICTs with a focus on the people and the possibilities that come with their desires, such as the strategies that Indigenous artists and communicators are undertaking in relation to their life journeys and contexts.

The following literature review starts with an overview of three main approaches that inform this work: social shaping of technology, community informatics and rewriting of technology. Secondly, I share theoretical discussions about more specific processes and tensions between technology and communities, most proposed and named by Indigenous scholars and communicators. Then I present an overview of the variety of experiences using digital tools, and lastly, I share a more focused theoretical discussion about communication and media process and why I chose testimonio as a methodology for this research.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Shaping and Rewriting of Technology

The accelerated expansion of digital networks in an interconnected world has given rise to a variety of multidisciplinary discussions and approaches to explain the changes related to the uses of digital technology. Baym (2010) explains three general ones. First, "technological determinism," which positions people as powerless and situates the power in technology and devices as arising independent of social contexts. This technologically deterministic approach also positions technology as a neutral means to achieve higher ends. According to Tiselli (2016), the development of technology is positioned through this scope as independent of contingent and conflictive intervention, often leading to dystopian and utopian scenarios where technology is either connecting us closer to each other or ending intimate face-to-face human relationships.

Secondly, Baym discusses the "social construction of technology," which focuses on how technologies arise from social processes and the choice that designers and investors make as they develop technology in relation to their social contexts. Tiselli also explains that "rather than viewing social change as a consequence of new media, it views new media and their uses as consequences of social factors" (p.16). In this way, the socio constructivist approach reveals some limitations in the sense that technology appears to be a finished product, or a 'black box' with forgotten social or conflictive origins. From socio-constructivism, the sociologists Pinch and Bijker (1987) understood the closure of a technological artifact as a stabilization process, as well as the disappearance of the problem at the origin of its design, leaning towards an apparent neutrality of the tools.

Baym refers to a third approach, the "social shaping of technology," which informs this research. This perspective positions both society and technology as interrelated so that "consequences of technologies arise from a mix of 'affordances' -the social capabilities technological qualities enable- and the unexpected and emergent way that people make use of those affordances" (2010, p. 16). This approach takes into consideration the societal circumstances that give rise to technologies and the possibilities and constraints technologies offer. Examples of the tensions identified by this approach are revealed in the multidisciplinary discussion on the "network society" (Castells, 2007; VanDijk, 2005; Gurstein, 2007) and the interplay between

communication and power relations that characterizes it. According to Castells (2007) "throughout history communication and information have been fundamental sources of power and counter-power, of domination and social change" (p. 238). He writes: "the diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools of social software have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time" (p. 246). In this context, Jan van Dijk (2005) identifies two sets of outcomes: more freedom on one hand but more control on the other, more openness at one level but more constraints at another. These tensions are identified by the author as a "dual processuality" or "dual affordances" approach to understanding the complexity of the networks.

A complementary approach is Community Informatics (CI), with an emphasis on the dialectical relationship between "community" and centrally controlled electronic networks (Gurstein, 2007). Moreover, CI provides a framework to support the use of ICTs as resistance while offering an alternative approach to understanding the current environment of ICT-driven and enabled economic totalization (Gurstein, 2012). This alternative approach focuses on communities in contrast to the dominant mode of analysis which sees ICT networks as interlinked individuals aggregated as nodes of the networks. According to Gurstein, "communities" —both physical and electronically-enabled — provide a foundational element for the construction of an alternative reality, which is in practice "a set of organizational, economic and social structures which operate independently of the centrally controlled networks and are capable of opposing and creating different processes, structures and "realities" to those being forcefully reproduced and extended through the centralized/individualized networks" (Gurstein, 2007, p. 39). From the lens of CI, the role of communities in the "network society" is to provide a creative and dialectical tension with, and a counter to, individual-based networks including from the perspective of broader sharing and collectivity. The objective of this approach is "to document these areas of conflict and resistance; identify those areas of small victory (where autonomous community-enabling activities and objectives are realized); determine those strategies which have achieved success; and suggest means for replicating, reproducing, and extending these [strategies]" (Gurstein, 2007, p.39).

One of the terms that has been quite popular lately under these approaches that acknowledge people's agency is "technological appropriation" or "adoption" (Beaton et al., 2017) which

generally refers to the acts of adapting a determined technology to certain characteristics and needs of a sociocultural group or context. Furthermore, Cortés (2016) and Tiselli (2016), scholars from Mexico, speak of "technological re-writing" to see beyond the idea of "appropriation" or "adaptation" and identify the transformation of technological artifacts and their intrinsic values throughout experiences. Technological re-writing is therefore a process in which technologies are constantly questioned to be potentially re-written and contextualized, so that they respond to local aspirations "and not to those of the powers that globally mobilize the interwoven flows of technology and capitalist accumulation" (Tiselli, 2016, p. 16). Inspired by the work of Cristina Rivera Garza (2014), Cortés and Tiselli (2016) refer to "re-writing" to recognize that all technology is also a form of writing in the culture that produces and uses it. "Re-writing is a practice through which one redoes something that has already been done before, that's true. It is also true that the rewriting process undoes what has been done, better still, it turns it into an unfinished fact" (Rivera Garza, 2014, p.267). Writing and re-writing not only modifies the meanings and values implicit in technological artifacts, but also re-structures the signifier and therefore changes the way it is presented and perceived. It is then through collective experiences that technology can be freed or dis-appropriated from its original meaning and re-written by collective processes over time.

According to Tiselli (2016) this approach allows technology to be understood as something malleable since it is fundamentally the product of complex social, cultural and political processes. As such, "if the political properties of technological artifacts and systems represent a particular choice between different possibilities, then the task of transforming their modes of use could be useful to modify these properties, activating other immanent and alternative values" (p.9). The ability to alter technology becomes, then, a form of counter-hegemonic political agency. In a similar way, Cortés (2016) approaches technology as an experience composed of singular elements: artifacts, people, environments and situated places, material possibilities and ideologies. From this standpoint, "it's not just about appropriating technology and making a different use of it, but to dis-appropriate as a resistance to the imposition of certain values or uses" (Cortés, 2016, p.23). This resistance can come from our own social and political configurations; therefore, thinking about technology has to be linked to reflecting on the ways we constitute ourselves as a

community, thus, "rewriting allows us to realize the unfinished nature of technology to think of it as an experience in which we have an active role" (p.25).

These three dialectical approaches — shared from the Global South and Global North — inform the theoretical framing of this research. First, the social shaping of technology provides a scope that allows me to focus on the tensions between technologies and people, as well as on the possibilities that emerge from acknowledging both the embedded interests in technology, and the agency of the people to transform them. Secondly, CI puts forward objectives that resonate with my research objectives: to identify strategies to support areas of resistance in the network society through learning from the reflexive processes of Indigenous artists and communicators as a foundational element for the construction of other possible realities in relation to the digital world. Although my research is not fully framed in CI, since my questions do not focus on community-based processes but rather on the actions and perceptions of individuals, I seek to learn from participants undertaking processes of artistic creation and communication in relation to their communities, memories and ways of doing. These processes and relations are revealed in their own narratives, as testimonios of individual journeys that are always in relation to others, and to their own location. Lastly, understanding technological re-writing as a process of re-signifing technologies through experiences strongly resonates with the narrative inquiry approach of testimonios as a methodology that guided this research.

I recognize that literature discussed here is written primarily by non-Indigenous authors. I find these to be relevant critical approaches that contribute to an understanding of the dialectical relationships between technology and society. However, in this section I will turn to discussions coming from diverse Indigenous scholars, activists, thinkers as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous community communicators and researchers that explain communication and technology from their own dialectical process and tensions. I will also draw from scholars who discuss this dialectical relation with technology using experiences of community organizations who are engaged in resistance to the centralized and individualized models that are predominant in the private/dominant/mainstream network society and media processes. This includes an overview of the literature discussing how people use, transform and conceptualize technology in order to meet their own needs and desires. I will start by exploring experiences and discussions in

relation to infrastructure and connectivity, followed by software design and more specific uses of digital tools in communication and media. This literature review focuses on experiences and theoretical discussions coming from experiences located in Indigenous territories in Canada and Mexico. In accordance with my research questions, it is my hope to interrelate the literature about connectivity with literature about communication and media, through experiences and concepts that become meeting points and reveal the social shaping and re-writing of technology. For this reason, I will first provide an overview of the discussion around infrastructure of communication, move towards digital tools and their uses, and end with a more specific focus on digital media and communication.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: Community Networks

The experiences in which people appropriate, use and maintain networked digital infrastructures according to their own ways of life have been more recently defined as Community Networks (Baca et al., 2019; Baig et al., 2015; Fuchs, 2017). Approached from a diversity of fields, contexts and approaches, Community Networks have also been specifically explored in Indigenous contexts, in close relation to issues of sovereignty, self-determination, and control/ownership (Duarte, 2017; McMahon, 2013, Magallanes & Rodriguez-Medina, 2016). These processes have a particular meaning in relation to specific territories, worldviews (Baca et al, 2016), and decolonization strategies (Beaton & Carpenter, 2016). For example, research across Canada is informed by the Community Informatics approach "within a context where the local community is in control and is directing the process of its own technology enablement" (Gurstein, 2007, p. 64). The application of Community Informatics has aimed to reorient technology in a way that enables communities to achieve a degree of autonomy in elements such as design, access, appropriation and use. In the late 1990s a group of rural telecommunications technicians, university-based researchers, community-based professionals and policy-makers formulated the concept of "First Mile" connectivity (Paisley and Richardson, 1998), arguing that "processes of connectivity development in local communities must be fundamentally re-framed to support and encourage participation of community members in all stages of planning, implementation and use" (McMahon et al, 2011, p.8). One example of such a First Mile development initiative is the case of K-Net, one of the first Indigenous non-profit service providers in Canada. K-Net, which was established by the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Tribal Council, has been operating in Northern

Ontario since 1994. Today it is a for-profit, collectively owned organization that remits any profits to its owners (First Nations communities), and offers computer training and skills development, as well as videoconferencing, Internet telephony and mobile services (McMahon et al., 2017, p. 269). Moreover, Beaton & Carpenter (2016) recall the importance of online local and educational content with the argument that "challenging contemporary regimes of truths and hegemony is now possible as remote and rural First Nations [access] digital technologies to create and distribute their own stories and experiences in various online media" (p. 56). The emergence of new digitally enabled services, social actors and institutional frameworks through projects like K-Net all reflect the persistence of ongoing dynamics linked to long-term ongoing projects of Indigenous self-determination (McMahon et al., 2017, p. 261).

The relation between networked digital infrastructures and Indigenous Peoples' contexts has also been discussed in Mexico (Baca et al., 2016) through the concept of *comunalidad* or "communality." *Comunalidad* is one conceptualization of community life rooted in the Ayuujk and Zapoteco territories that was first developed by Zapoteco and Ayuujk anthropologists and thinkers Jaime Martínez Luna and Floriberto Díaz (2007). According to Martínez Luna "communality" can be explained through four pillars of community life: the territory, the political organization, the collective work labour known as *tequio* and community celebrations (Martínez Luna, 2015). From this perspective, where territory is the first pillar of *communality*, the geographical sense of place plays a fundamental role, since it is through its relationship with nature that a community can reproduce collective life.

Connectivity undertaken as a communal project leads to "social processes in which various actors come together through collective work to enable communities to access, operate, use and manage their own media" (Baca et al., p.25). Martinez Luna's conceptualization of *comunalidad* has transcended the Zapoteco region, inspiring other geographies and fields to think about community and territory in relation to technology. For example, informed by Martinez Luna's conceptualization of *comunalidad*, Colombian scholar Juan David Reina introduces the concept of "communal innovation" as "the creative and collective processes of communities that are affected by the hegemonic economic and cultural model of Western development from the perspective of locally-based practices" (Reina, 2019, p.3). In a similar way, Ayuujk linguist Yásnaya Aguilar

speaks of "tequiology" as "a modest proposal to save the world" (Aguilar, 2020). Rooted in Latin America and Indigenous Peoples' long paths to autonomy, "tequiology" is a combined word that weaves together "tequio" and "technology"; it represents a form of collaborative effort or communal labour known to many Indigenous Peoples in Mexico, through which schools, houses and water systems have been built and a variety of needs are continuously met. According to Aguilar, just as free and open-source code has enabled collective progress in the digital sphere, tequio raises the possibility of collective resistance as an alternative that lies in separating economic development and the development of new technologies from the values of consumerism. Aguilar argues: "This would place technological creation and ingenuity once again at the service of the common good, not of the market. Technology as tequio; technological creation and innovation as a common good" (Aguilar, 2020, para.11). This perspective of tequiology can be seen, for example, in the possibilities, limits and contradictions of the technological appropriation of Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias, an autonomous cellular telephone system that connects 18 Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico (Aguilar, 2020; Magallanes-Blanco et al., 2016).

Researchers based in the U.S. have also discussed Indigenous Peoples' experiences in interrogating oppressive colonial structures through the use of technology. Yaqui scholar Marisa Duarte (2017) refers to "Network Sovereignty" as reflective of the ways Indigenous people leverage information and technology to subvert the legacies and processes of colonization, and create alternative spaces for different forms of resistance, endurance and liberation. Duarte examines the power of locally owned infrastructure, but also refers to Indigenous movements such as #IdleNoMore in Canada and the Zapatista movement in Mexico as examples of how Indigenous Peoples are "turning first-world technologies into means of working towards decolonization, challenging the assumption that the Internet, broadly, must always be a tool of domination wielded against Indigenous ways of being" (p. 131). Srinivinasan (2014) similarly discusses the Western worldviews embedded in technology, claiming the need to open up the codes of new media to better engage with diverse community and cultural voices, with the idea that the digital world (interfaces, hardware, software and databases, etc.) need not solely be conceived in Western, elite terms, but instead can and should be re-envisioned as a space that empowers the values, priorities, and ontologies held by global users from the so-called 'margins'.

So far, this literature reveals the variety of experiences and processes that demonstrate alternative approaches to the access and management of digital networked infrastructures through community-based processes that can help redefine digital technologies. The literature raises theoretical discussions on the connectivity and uses of digital networks, while also revealing constant tensions between the centralized market-driven environment and the local interests and desires of various communities. These tensions are also revealed in acts of resistance to dominant structures, including through strategies that grow from the long stories in Indigenous territories. Discussion around Community Networks and innovation sets a broader context of the dialectical processes in which Indigenous Peoples engage when using and accessing digital tools that are designed under western paradigms, as well as networks that are predominately centralized and individualized in relation to structures of digital capitalism (Alí Mejía, 2013). Having established how these elements are reflected in networks, the next section of my literature review focuses on research about another layer of digital technologies, specifically the creative uses of digital tools to communicate and create.

Community Media and Communication

The following discussion reflects on Duarte´s statement that "the scientific literature lacks an explanation of the creative spiritual, emotional and political dimensions that shape Native people's choices to select information and communication technologies for select purposes" (Duarte, 2017, p. 24). Within academic literature, this diversity of uses of technology to communicate has been commonly categorized through different types of media: alternative, popular, pirate, independent, and community media. Collectively, these forms of media often challenge State power and market-driven structures and serve to put forward and claim local understandings of and approaches to communication tools. For example, Clemencia Rodriguez speaks of "communication at the margins" as a plurality that does not intend to fit in any of the commonly used categories of communication, such as "alternative" or "pirate" media (Rodriguez, 2017). In contrast, she conceptualizes "the margins" to speak of "complex dynamics of power inequality and processes of asymmetrical access to material and symbolic resources that shape differentiated and unequal access to the public sphere" (Rodríguez, 2017, p. 49). These sites of struggle or tension are what she calls the margins, where communities struggle to empower their voices and position

themselves in public spheres. At the margins, "media never look the way we expect; technologies are used in ways that differ from their originally intended purpose; media don't emerge or develop in a predictable manner" (p.49). From this perspective, the interaction between media and people is highly complex. In some cases, "understanding the media produced requires making sense of a complex mesh of interactions between hegemonic and counter hegemonic narratives and notions of self and place, access, appropriation of audiovisual technologies, media pedagogies, and historical dynamics of silencing and empowerment" (Rodríguez, 2017, p. 54).

Indigenous peoples have their own explanations for these forms of media. For example, the final declaration of the First Continental Summit of Indigenous Communication of the Abya Yala (2010) states:

- That Indigenous communication only makes sense if we practice it within the framework of our worldview, our language and culture, to make known to all the peoples and nations of the Abya Yala and to the world, the struggles for our territories, for our rights, for our dignity and integrity and for life.

- That Indigenous communication is a right that we commit ourselves to exercise autonomously, with deep respect for our spiritual world, within the framework of the cultural and linguistic plurality of our peoples and nationalities.

- That communication is a power that we must appropriate and exercise to influence society and the formulation of public policies that guarantee us the right to access the media.

Other, more specific, definitions also exist. For example, Indigenous community members from Chiapas explain communication as "a permanent process and involves everyone around us, where everything communicates: people, the environment, nature; synonymous with dialogue, horizontality, sharing and learning" (Campos, 2019, p. 10). Ñu Savi communicator and sound scholar Griselda Sánchez claims that Indigenous communication is practiced within the framework of Indigenous worldviews and "in relation to nature, harvest, bellies, mother tongue and memory" (Sánchez, 2015, p. 122). Zapoteco thinker Jaime Martinez Luna speaks of "communal communication," in which communality, as mentioned before, is "an experiential concept that

allows a comprehensive, total, natural and common understanding of making life: it is a natural logical reasoning that is based on the interdependence of its elements, temporal and spatial" (Martinez Luna, 2015, p.100). Martinez Luna raises a distinction between the individually-based, Western concepts of democratic media, and the communally based concepts of communal media. In this sense, understanding communication through *comunalidad* means to design it communally, in opposition to "the ownership of the media, radio, television, telephony, internet, publishing, everything and for the same reason: extractivism" (Martínez Luna, 2015, p. 106). Instead, through *comunalidad*, Martínez Luna explains communication in relation to the Land:

> The source of our own thought is nature, its movements mark our rhythms, its humors mark our festivities, its heat and cold determine our needs, it gives us the answer to reproduce our species. In this sense, the content is the daily communication. Communal media is community-based because they arise from the community, with them we reproduce and enrich our worldview, our natural interpretation of history. Our wisdom finds in them the necessary means of exchange (Martínez Luna, p.112).

Others have explained Indigenous communication and media through storytelling (Christian, 2019), referring to video as a possible method to honour the seven principles of "storywork" (Archibald, 2018) that Stó:lo and Coast Salish Elders recognize for using First Nation storytelling for educational purposes: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy, and in this way, to become part of regenerating life on the Land.

Indigenous peoples have used a variety of communication tools: radio broadcasting (Ramos, 2016; Roth, 2013), video and film (Christian 2019; Marán, 2019; Magallanes, 2008), platforms to present traditional stories and Elder teachings in digital formats (Wemigwans, 2008), "story maps" to refuse the logic of elimination and tell unheard stories (Buhler et al., 2019), animated mapping as contrapuntal representations to colonial geography (Remy, 2018), community television to distribute locally-produced content (Ginsburg, 2017), augmented reality as a digital storytelling medium to reveal place-based content with the potential to challenge representations of settler colonialism (McMahon et al., 2019), telephony (Huerta, 2016; Magallanes-Blanco & Rodriguez-Medina, 2016), and video games, mixed-media and performance to resist colonial representations (2 Bears, 2014). These ongoing, innovative practices reveal how Indigenous communities and media makers constantly create and claim digital spaces on their own terms and

from their own diverse worldviews. For example, Jennifer Wemigwans developed the concept of "digital bundles" to demonstrate that online spaces can be defined and validated through cultural protocols, acknowledging the Internet's potential to serve Indigenous Resurgence (Wemigwans, 2008). The concept of "digital bundles" is also an opportunity to understand how Indigenous Peoples are decolonizing the digital, as "choosing to work digitally we are reclaiming the fluidity of our traditions by choosing and adapting how to represent, restore, reframe the teaching and inspire to remember and reclaim" (p.47).

The variety of experiences mentioned above reveals the different ways in which Indigenous Peoples are shaping digital networks and tools to meet their own communication needs. Ginsburg speaks of "media sovereignty" to describe "the practices in which people are exercising the right and developing the capacity to control their images and words and their circulation" (Ginsburg, 2016, p.32). She explains "sovereign" as meaning having authority over an area, extending the usual reference of the word to political authority over a land and populace, "to consider the significance of having technical, cultural, political and creative control over media being produced by and about Indigenous lives" (p. 32.). Ginsburg identifies different levels of questions and processes in which politics and circulation of knowledge are intertwined with Indigenous digital media. Within communities, she refers to questions such as 'who has access to and understanding of media technologies?' and 'who has the right to know and circulate certain stories and images?' Ginsburg's scope acknowledges the evidence of the creative uptake of new technologies in Indigenous communities on their own terms, while providing a relevant and complex reality in which Indigenous digital media is embedded through different levels of sovereignty, such as production, archive management, distribution and the digital broadband networks. Creativity and digital tools can also further the development of political networks that extend traditional cultural worlds into new domains.

This scope of research on Indigenous media provides a dialectical approach that I find to be aligned with the social shaping of technology. It provides a means of exploring media technologies that are used to meet ever-changing historical and localized communication needs, and illustrates how communicators use available technologies to address these issues. Rather than foscusing merely on the access to connectivity, Rodriguez (2017) stresses the importance of sharing lessons learned among grassroots communicators as processes to detect local needs and shape media technology

to meet them. This literature review has ranged from Community Networks to diverse uses of radio, videos, platforms, film, digital maps, and augmented reality, as processes of counter-narratives, counter-mapping, self-determination, sovereignty, and the continuity of language and storytelling. The experiences are just a few examples of the projects that Indigenous artists and communicators are deevloping, creating and sharing across Canada, Mexico and the world, while shaping tools under their own ways of doing. This review sets a context of the dialectical tension between people and technology, while revealing the wide possibilities of process, experiences and resistance to the models that prevail in the digital world.

The social shaping of technology, community informatics, and rewriting of technology are all process-oriented approaches towards understanding the design, adoption and use of technologies. As I argue in the next chapter, this insight informs my chosen methodology as a way to learn from the knowledge in the stories from Indigenous artists and communicators about how they adopt and use digital technologies in relation to their experiences in diverse 'offline' territories. In the next Chapter, I will explain testimonio as the narrative methodology that is a powerful way of learning from others' stories, about the challenges and limitations of the digital world today, as well as the strategies and dreams that are nurturing their journey and relation to technology.

Chapter 4

Testimonio as Methodology

In this chapter, I will present testimonio as a methodology to learn from people's experiences and individual stories that are also relational and collective. I start by presenting Testimonio as a methodology and writing praxis rooted in Latin American research, which places people's narratives at the center of the process. I then present a polyphonic approach to the methodology, consisting of learning from testimonios from different voices and locations. I then explain the conversational method as one that informs this research and relies on relationships and trust with participants, and lastly, I share each of my relations with participants and the reasons that guided me to invite them specifically to participate. Also, I discuss the ethics process that I followed in relation to the institution involved in this research, and also the process I followed to ensure long-term accountability to each participant and their stories.

Testimonio is presented here as a powerful methodology to learn about technology through experiences and processes, by focusing on the people rather than on the devices, as well as in relation to the dialectical tension revealed through approaches of social shaping and re-writing of the technological framework. This methodology also allows me to share my own learnings, while inviting readers to find their own meanings in the complete testimonios presented in the following chapter.

This knowledge gathering is also part of my standpoint as a learner in both Mexico and Canada, as I will draw from methodologies and methods from both geographic contexts. Rooted in the Latin American social landscape, marked by cultural revolutions and struggles for land rights and legal recognition, I will use testimonio (DeRocher, 2018) as a research methodology. This will be informed by the conversational method (Kovach, 2019) and the ethics of *relational accountability* (Wilson, 2008) inspired by Indigenous methodologies that are rooted in territories now known as Canada.

Testimonio emerged from Latin America as a tool to document the experiences of oppressed people, often within the context of war (Yúidice, 1991), and liberation struggles in the Global

South. One of the most well-known testimonios is *Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (Burgos-Debray, 1984), written by Venezuelan anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. Menchú shared her story with Burgos in an interview where she describes how she survived as an Indigenous Guatemalan woman and active leader in the struggle for Indigenous rights in her country. The researcher, Burgos-Debray, transcribed and edited Menchu's story, mainly removing her questions from the text, which was later published as a book by Menchú, narrated in the first person. As seen in this example, in testimonio the researcher documents the story of the narrator who describes her/his life events and "poses questions to the narrator to prompt for the description of specific experiences or for purposes of clarification. However, it is the narrator's role to dictate what information will be shared during the testimonio and to present that information within a context she/he feels appropriate" (Pérez, 2008, p. 169).

As a "genre at work" (DeRocher, 2018), testimonio has been promoted and used by scholars, creative writers and political organizations in and outside of Latin America "in ways that blur the boundaries between social science, political activism and literature" (Yúdice, 1991, p. 19). Minh-ha Trinh (1990) describes "Third World literary discourse" as "art for the people, by the people, and from the people" (p. 252), highlighting how the principles and functions of Latin American testimonio more broadly correspond with first-person plural social justice writing projects in their differing contexts, struggles, and forms (DeRocher, 2018, p. 15). With a focus on narratives and experiences, testimonio allows researchers to document the stories of their participants while validating their experiential knowledge (Perez, 2018). Testimonial writing, as the word indicates, promotes expression of personal experience, which is at the same time "a collective struggle against oppression from oligarchy, military, and transnational capital" (Yúdice, 1990, p. 26).

Testimonio has been a contested methodology in academic contexts. Manchu's testimonio, for example, was the subject of scholarly criticism and discussion in scholar discussion after North American Anthropologist David Stoll questioned its "veracity" as a collective story that he argued pretended to represent all Guatemalans. Among other life narrative approaches, it has been called a "marginal variant" or a "'subset' of autoethnography," while often being pushed to the periphery of literary classifications as "extraliterary" or "socioliterary" (DeRocher, 2018, p.18). In this thesis, testimonios are not presented as objective stories but rather as stories that present as the narrators' own truths, through an experiential-based narrative and storytelling practice that does not pretend

to fit into any specific literary category but its own.

Narrative as Knowledge

In this work, testimonio as methodology is informed by DeRocher's feminist transnational approach, which acknowledges the potentiality of polyvocal testimonios from different geographies. This approach presents the labors of writing and reading, remembering and dreaming as political work that encourages readers to reason with more than their intellects. "Testimonio allows a means of affective connection through an ability to position readers to see through the eyes of others who reside in different cultural and material worlds" (DeRocher, 2018, p. 47). Testimonio, is in other words, an instance of the feminist claim that "the personal is the political" (Beverly, 1989).

Besides highlighting how narrative contributes to political thought, testimonio is also a culturally resistant writing praxis towards knowledge decolonization that "resides at the intersection of experiential-based narrative and storytelling practice, and hence at the intersection of discourses concerned with the truth-value of experience and stories" (DeRocher, 2018, p. 44). As DeRocher proposes, it is a writing praxis that serves as an applied example of post positivist realist theory, "a body of thought that understands experiences, like identities, to be simultaneously real and constructed, contextual, and relational, for the purpose of epistemic wholeness, therefore offering social "truth-value," even as testimonios are always socially situated, theoretical mediations of objective "truth"" (p.29). In this sense, choosing testimonio as a research methodology is a recognition of the value of narrative and people's stories to the (co)production of knowledge.

Individual as Collective

According to Beverley (1989), testimonio is typically concerned with a problematic collective social situation in which the narrator lives, and it is this focus on the collective that separates testimonio from other forms of life writing (such as life story or autobiography). In this sense, "the collective ethos of testimonio decenters western epistemologies that privilege the rigid individualism of the Enlightenment" (p.18). DeRocher (2018) writes that it is: "a utilization of

first-person plural narratives to relay a macrosocial critique in a microsocial, affective register" (DeRocher, 2018, p. 16). In the context of my thesis, an inquiry with Indigenous artists and communicators using digital tools, the intrinsic collective ethos of testimonio does not intend to be a generalization of their narrative towards other members of their Nation, artists, communicators or Indigenous Peoples around the world. Rather, it is a methodology that acknowledges the collectiveness of the individual — but nonetheless relational — experience of the narrators.

In accordance with my research framework and questions, testimonio is centrally preoccupied with relationships that "vary in scale and scope and include exposing interlocking social systems of power by conceptually linking public and private, self and collective, past and future" (Beverley, p. 24). Furthermore, the feminist approach to testimonio recognizes that "memory work" cannot be thought of in isolation from "dream work," meaning that documenting experiences and imagining possible social alternatives are complementary. This is relevant to this research because the experience and testimonios of Indigenous artists and communicators might reveal challenges and struggles in their dialectical relation with digital tools and networks, while also raising the possibility of exploring dreams and strategies towards alternative digital futures.

Polyphonic and Transnational

Well known testimonios *Soy Rigoberta Menchú y así nació mi conciencia* (1983) and *Si me permiten hablar, testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (Viezzer, 1977) are both novel-length works that have become a reference for understanding and discussing testimonio as a writing praxis. Each of these individual testimonios tells the life story of a single narrator, while revealing a collective experience of social struggle. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will not present an individual life journey but a diverse range of testimonios that speaks of the life journey of participants, but is focused on their journey as communicators and artists and their relation to digital tools, through specific open questions that I will present later in this chapter. For this reason, testimonio as methodology in this research is informed by "polyphonic testimonio"

(DeRocher, 2018), a common formal variation on the classic first-person singular testimonio and "it is made up of accounts by different participants in the same event" (p.16). In the context of this research, there is no shared "event" in participants' experiences; rather I focus on their experiences of the shared, interconnected digital world in which we all meet and relate to from our different territories and social landscapes. This inquiry is polyvocal as it will include the testimonios of different Indigenous Peoples based in territories located in Oaxaca and Alberta.

Polyphonic testimonio is not just a variety of experiences, but an approach that DeRocher explains as a way to signal a "glocalized" or "translocal" ethos to highlight epistemological interconnections between sites with overlapping histories, such as the histories of colonization and resistance in Mexico and Canada. Moreover, this translocal ethos of testimonio:

> Serves as a discursive practice that destabilizes a dependence on physical and national borders by placing emphasis on epistemological and historical interconnections. By creating a textual bridge to link together readers with social actors from different geopolitical sites, epistemologies, situations, and perspectives, testimonio brings disparate worlds into critical proximity, a proximity that privileges intimacy even while distance is maintained (DeRocher, 2018, p. 52).

In this way, this polyphonic testimonio methodology attunes with my intentions to bring together the personal reflections from both Alberta and Oaxaca, as a critical proximity across geopolitical distances. I also find it relevant to highlight the dynamism of these testimonios, where, as Bevereley states, "the narrator in testimonio is a real person who continues living and acting in a real social history that also continues (1989, p. 25). This acknowledges the relational and dynamic reality of the voices that participate and that "the stories conveyed in testimonio might not connect all of the dots, but the dots they do connect are meaningful and purposeful, more deserving of being understood as a fragmented yet grounded form of theory" (DeRocher, 2018, p, 47).

My methodology is also informed by narrative inquiry. As Joe, L & Young, M.I (2012) explain about narrative inquiry, "thinking narratively about experience entails staying attentive to the multidimensionality of experience, that is, to the interaction among the personal and social, between the past, present, and future, and the place or places where an experience unfolded" (p.32).

This approach allowed the authors to turn attention toward the consequences each story could have in the "subversion" of the dominant narrative of colonization, in the sense that "each experience carried within it the possibility for additional alternative reverberations, reverberations seeking to counter, to interrupt, the lingering narrative of colonization and to start new possible narrative reverberations in the lives of present and future generations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, children, youth, families, and communities" (p.33).

With this commitment to personal narratives, Joe, L and Young, M.I (2012) highlight the importance of attending long-term relational responsibilities for significant change to happen and they ask themselves and readers to stay alert to these responsibilities by asking these thought-provoking questions: "Now that we/you know these stories, what strengths, what responsibilities do we/you now carry? How might we/you live our/your lives differently?" (p. 32).

The Conversational Method

My methodology is also informed by the conversational method (Kovach, 2019). Inspired by Indigenous methodologies, this approach engages in conversation and story with the research participants. Relational at its core, this method is "a dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an Indigenous relational tradition. It utilized open-ended and semi-structured interview questions to prompt conversation where participants and researchers co-created knowledge" (p. 129). Through the questions I posed I seek to learn from the participants' journeys in becoming artists and communicators, and how digital tools are intertwined in creating and sharing stories. This open-structured method, where the conversation has focus with prompt questions, unfolds organically with orality and "allows participants more control over what they wish to share in relation to the research question" and "the storyteller is granted the power to tell his or her story on his or her terms. The researcher is integral to the conversation. It is not still but fluid" (p.226).

These testimonios using the conversational method were originally planned to be co-created and documented through personal face-to-face meetings in both Alberta and Oaxaca. However, they were adapted to take place online, due to the global pandemic of Covid-19 and consequent travel

restrictions. I used the Zoom video conferencing tool to adapt the conversation to a digital form of teleconference to meet virtually with all research participants.

Participants

I invited three participants from Oaxaca and three from Alberta, for a total of six participants. I used criterion sampling to explore different experiences where artists and communicators from different Nations in Canada and Mexico are using digital tools in diverse ways, such as video game designing, filmmaking, community radio production, digital collaging, Free Software app design, online streaming and gaming, etc. The research participants involved in this inquiry are colleagues, friends, and professors that I have come to know during my time as a graduate student at the University of Alberta and in my journey of collaboration in Oaxaca. As I will introduce with more detail at the end of this chapter, they are all people who I have learned with and from, collaborated with and listened to their critical insights and experiences, communication and art in relation to their language, the Land, community memory and the resistance of Indigenous Peoples.

Engaging with participants that I know, and who know me, is a significant relational factor I considered while choosing this method and methodology. According to Kovach (2019), researchers must have a certain amount of trustworthiness for people to participate with a greater likelihood of deeper conversations "and consequently, the potential for richer insights to the research question" (p.127). In testimonio methodology, Burgos-Debray (1981) explains how asking an open-ended question about the narrator's journey will allow the narrator to share their story in their own ways. Also, choosing a set of themes that can be shared with the narrator helps guide the focus of the narrative. For this purpose, throughout the participants' sharing of their journey and experience I used the following themes as guidelines: life journey, use of digital tools, benefits and limitations, dream or ideation of a digital landscape and ideas of collaborations towards that dream. Along with these themes, the following set of prompt questions guided our conversations:

- Would you like to introduce yourself?
- Could you share your journey of becoming a multidisciplinary artist /filmmaker

/communicator/ audiovisual producer (other ways they introduced themselves)?

- How was the process to start using digital tools for your artistic / communicational desires?

- How would you dream of an ideal digital landscape?

- How do you think non-Indigenous allies can contribute to this process?

All questions are tied to my main research questions (RQ), some more directly than others. The process of formulating these interview questions was informed by both narrative approaches of the testimonio methodology and the conversational method. For example, to respond to RQ1) *How are Indigenous artists and communicators using digital technologies in Oaxaca, Mexico and Alberta, Canada?* and RQ2) *What strategies are they undertaking to use digital tools under their own terms?* I prepared the first three interview questions, which are open enough for participants to introduce themselves and begin sharing narratively their journey in their own way. For the RQ3) *What strategies are they undertaking to use digital tools under their own terms?* I reframed the interview question towards a more open one — *How was the process to start using digital tools for your artistic / communicational desires?* — that I then guided through the conversation towards more specific themes like benefits and limitations/challenges, and lastly, to the strategies to overcome those limitations. The last two questions of the interview were directly tied to my last research questions, RQ4) *How do they dream of a digital landscape that reflects and responds to these terms?* and RQ5) *How might non-Indigenous allies contribute to these processes?*

I sent interview questions to participants prior to the interviews, while inviting them to review them and share any doubts or concerns with me at the beginning of the conversation. All participants confirmed they felt fine responding to all the questions. Nevertheless, these guiding questions sometimes differed in rhythm and order during the various interviews during the different interviews, according to the participant's responses and order of ideas. With some participants, I added emergent questions to specific topics that were raised by their stories, either to expand or to narrow the scope to my research questions, always ensuring consent and agreement to respond.

Making Meaning Through Testimonio

Both testimonio and the conversational method acknowledge a collective production of knowledge through conversation that is nurtured through the process of reviewing the text together at a second stage. This implies identifying some of the limitations related to my self-location, as a non-Indigenous person situated in the academic environment in which the conversations take place — for example, listening to and acknowledging the relationship to Land and language that participants shared in all conversations, without having a similar epistemic and ontological experience of place. In this same sense, my experience with the impacts of colonization, capitalism and digital tools in their territories is different — and privileged — and may limit the possibilities and potential depths of the conversation and my own analysis. Another limitation is undertaking testimonio and personal conversation and narratives in an academic context. Despite the participants' trust in my commitment and genuine interest in creating something collective that transcends this thesis, I believe it is difficult to step out from the implicit academic framework in which the conversations take place, and respond to questions formulated through a research process inside an institution.

However, by incorporating this difference and diversity of standpoints, I find there is value in engaging in a conversation nurtured by different geographies and experiences that goes beyond a dialogue between a transcriber/editor and a narrator, to a co-creation of knowledge, from questions and stories that are nurtured by each other's experiences and journeys. This is informed by my commitment to recognizing the importance of narrative and people's stories to the production of knowledge, and to a writing praxis that serves a body of thought that understands experiences to be always socially situated.

This process of knowledge gathering involved several steps. I transcribed the participants' narratives after each conversation and edited the parts of conversation in which I participated or asked questions. Secondly, I shared the transcript with participants for them to read and review. I then invited them to have a second conversation to revise it and ensure ethical voice and representation of their stories, revising details, adding information they considered important, or removing and clarifying information that they did not feel comfortable including. Lastly, participants reviewed a last version of their testimonios for a final approval. In the case of

participants from Oaxaca, I translated the approved narrative from Spanish to English to include in this thesis, and vice-versa so that all participants could have access to the testimonios in their languages.

Summarized steps of testimonio methodology in this research:

1. Interview	One hour virtual one-on-one meeting for the interview using Zoom digital platform with prompt questions and themes. I sent them the prompt questions in advance.
2. First transcription	I transcribed the complete conversation, removing prompt questions and other interactions, leaving only the participant's story as testimonio in first person. I sent back this first transcript to participants in a collaborative document (GoogleDoc) to review.
3. First revision of the first transcript with participants	Second one-hour virtual meeting using Zoom platform where the researcher and participant discussed the text together. This was an opportunity to allow participants to reflect on the text, add and remove information or note any other needed changes. This step used GoogleDoc, where both the researcher and participant can access the document simultaneously through the conversation to review and make changes.
4. Second transcription	I prepared a second transcript including the discussed edits.
5. Second revision and approval	I sent the testimonio to participants for a second review and approval.
6. Translation	In the case of participants from Mexico, I translated the final and approved version of the manuscript from Spanish to English.
7. Weaving stories	The dissemination chapter contains all participants' stories separately, intertwining those from Canada and Mexico. This chapter will be sent to all participants for review and approval.
8. Dissemination	Once participants agreed on the final document, the testimonios will be presented in one chapter of the thesis document. All participants will get a copy of this work when completed.

Inviting Participants

As I have explained in this chapter, relationships are core to this methodology. Next, I will briefly share my relation to each participant and the process of inviting them to participate in this journey through *relational accountability* and institutional ethics processes.

I met participants from Alberta through the University. Kyle and Aretha are both friends of mine and cohort-colleagues from the M.A in Communications and Technology since it began in 2018. I have had the joy of collaborating in projects with both of them: with Kyle in DigitalNWT and with Aretha in Piikani Digital Literacy and Cultural Camp. Both projects involved long drives, walks and ongoing conversations that accompanied shared meals during my time in Edmonton. I also had the good fortune of attending Aretha's film screening in Metro Cinema. I must note that while Kyle is from the NWT, his reflections are located in both his home community and his Alberta home, where he collaborates with Elders and youth in relation to both regions.

I met Kirsten during the Indigenous Methodologies course I attended during my time in Edmonton at the Faculty of Native Studies in 2019. I listened to her journey and reflections on research creation that she shared as a guest presenter in the class, followed by a short but nourishing conversation that I remember well. We met again during the "RELAB. Unsettle the future" and "Tipi Confessions" events in Edmonton, where I learned more about her work, inquiries and involvement in those projects.

My relationships with participants from Oaxaca have different stories. Lilia and I studied in the same University and met in 2014 when she opened the doors of her house to welcome me during fieldwork in her community. I stayed for three months to complete my Undergraduate thesis with Ayuujk Community Radio Jënpoj and we have been close friends ever since. I have the honor of being the godmother of her daughter. I met Joaquín and Luna through my work in Redes in 2018. Joaquín is one of the community communicators and hackers with whom we have been thinking and collaborating in the "Intranets" journey in Yaviche, his community. He has since become a

friend and mentor in my journey using Free Software. I met Luna in her community in 2017, when I visited Guelatao to participate in a Community Networks workshop that luckily coincided with the opening of CineToo, a community cinema that she was coordinating. I interviewed her for a journalistic article about it, and we have since engaged in a variety of conversations and collaborations through Redes's projects, often supporting us as an advisor.

As I mentioned before, I decided to invite these six participants because I understood the thoughtful reflection behind their work through previous conversations and collaborations. I was also looking for experiences that were diverse in terms of digital tools and creative processes that people engage with, such as filmmaking, App and video game design, online gaming and streaming, digital collaging and radio broadcasting. I invited them to participate in this study by phone and email and shared with them the consent form that had been previously approved by the University of Alberta's Ethics Board. In both the invitation and consent form, I explained that it was completely up to them to decide whether or not to participate in my study. If they chose not to participate, that would not impact their relationship with me in any way; if they chose to participate, they could withdraw their participation at any time. All participants gave consent to include their names and testimonios in this thesis.

Due to Covid-19 and geographical distance, all interviews happened using Zoom as a video conference tool, so verbal consent was confirmed and documented during the video conference interview. In the case of participants based in Oaxaca, Mexico, I translated the consent form into Spanish and recorded the participant's consent in Spanish. I kept all recorded consents and interviews in audio files in a secured hard drive. Those audio files were then downloaded and secured on a separate hard drive for five years. Participants each received a $200 honorarium based on University of Alberta Indigenous honoraria rates per day, considering the estimated 5-7 hours of their time for their involvement in this research. The honoraria were provided through the Killam Accelerator Grant held by my supervisor.

Applying Canadian institutional ethics — including honoraria — in this research implied a process of translation with participants, and a learning process for me to understand and apply. This first involved understanding the ethical mechanisms in Canada that are different from the ones I am

familiar with in Mexico, which are often based on trust and relationships rather than mediated through paperwork. Understanding ethics in this way meant learning about the important Indigenous Peoples claims behind the Ethics Boards at Universities, and the efforts to repair the (physical and epistemological) colonial and violent practices in the history of universities in the service of both settler and extractive colonialism. This required me to understand the reciprocal logics of monetary honoraria and signed or verbal consent in Canada, so that I could explain and translate that to participants in Mexico. The process of explaining and obtaining verbal consent opened interesting conversations about comparisons of how things are done with institutions in Mexico. For example, in conversation with participants we recognized how consent forms are often mistrusted in Mexico, considering the context of constant corruption through institutional bureaucracies. However, we acknowledged the missing mechanisms in Mexico and Latin America to prevent extractivism from universities in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. These initial reflections raised important questions about institutional and localized ethics that could be further explored towards nurturing these mechanisms across regions.

Beyond the institutional ethics process, consent was ensured throughout the duration of this research process through iterative transcript revisions. Moreover, this testimonial strategy with participants was also informed by ethics of *relational accountability* (Wilson, 2008) meaning that being accountable to our relationship "is not just about the researcher being responsible to a research participant; it holds the family and community of those two people, and all their other relations, accountable for the research being done in a good way" (Johnson, R et al., p.14). In choosing this writing praxis and research methodology, I committed to the participants and their stories, as well as to my accountability and responsibility for the relationships within this inquiry. Committed to this relational accountability, the following chapter shares the results of this process, in the testimonios in the following order: Lilia from Tlahuitoltepec, Kyle from Fort Smith, Luna from Guelatato, Kirsten from Northern Alberta, Joaquín from Yaviche, and Aretha from Edmonton.

Chapter 5

Testimonios

To hear is to let the sound wander all the way through the labyrinth of your ear; to listen is to travel the other way to meet it. It's not passive but active, this listening. It's as though you retell each story, translate it into the language particular to you, fit it into your cosmology so you can understand and respond, and thereby it becomes part of you. To empathize is to reach out to meet the data that comes through the labyrinths of the senses, to embrace it and incorporate it. To enter into, we say, as though another person's life was also a place you could travel to.

Rebecca Solnit (2013)

This chapter assembles all six testimonios separately. Each of them is the result of the iterative process I explained in the previous chapter: transcribed conversations that were edited, reviewed and approved by all participants. As Margaret Kovach (2009) claims "if we choose to write our research findings, then we must find form and content that honours them. Form and content must reflect the conceptual, the enigmatic, the tangible and the schema for our framework" (p.129). Testimonio, as story, is both form and content. Results in this thesis are both the testimonios and the research findings presented in the following two chapters; I will present my own learnings in relation to these stories, and show how my research questions are answered by my learning process.

The linear order in which I present the testimonios in this thesis responds to the linear nature of its written form. I interspersed the stories between those from Alberta and Oaxaca, while taking into consideration the diversity of people, processes and digital tools involved. In this suggested order, I present a flow of stories with the aim of highlighting the diversity of experiences and voices. However, this order is only a suggestion, and an open invitation for readers to follow this order or choose your own.

This research is also informed by the "careful partial participant" (Brattland et al., 2018) writing strategy for non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous peoples, where researchers are positioned as learners. This writing strategy understands care as a collective achievement and partial participation means "that there are no clear-cut inside-outside positions, and that participants and persistent tinkering take on the ambivalence and tensions that planning and doing research bring into the world" (p.77).

I find it important to note that I translated Lilia's, Joaquín's and Luna's testimonios from Spanish to English, with the aim of making them accessible to other participants and to all anglophone readers of this thesis. I find this to be both a strength and a limitation of this research; it is a strength for the cross-regional exchange of experiences, and a limitation because of the meanings and contextual references that are lost in the process of translation, especially as I am not a trained translator. I decided to leave some of the words in Spanish for their local and politically-loaded meanings, such as *tequio*, *lucha* and *comunalidad*. It is my hope that the stories as a whole enrich the meaning and fill in some of the gaps of what is lost moving from one language to the other.

Finally, I invite the readers to also undertake this "careful partial participant" as a reading strategy. Testimonios are an invitation to engage with others' stories, not only through the intellect, but through an affective lens. "That is, a careful reader does not just encounter a series of individual interviews but is rather able to hear a conversation emerging between interviewees, a direct result of placing differing accounts of specific events in close proximity to each other" (DeRocher, 2018, p. 102). I invite all readers to engage with these stories as careful readers and partial participants of this journey.

1. Lilia.

Santa María Tlahuitoltepec, Oaxaca.

I am Lilia and I am a community member of Tlahuitoltepec. Here I live and participate in the Ayuujk Community Radio Jënpoj, an Indigenous licensed radio station that I have been involved with for almost 20 years, when this community communication project began in 2001.

I got involved with interest in knowing what a radio was and what it was like to be in one, because in our contexts we had never seen a radio station before. There was not one station nearby to learn about this type of media: how it works, which equipment is used and how words travel through all the machinery to place voices on the air and reach people's houses. Before this project began all the radio stations we listened to came from other regions, and none were close to the community. Most were commercial stations, except for one that is one of so-called "cultural" radio stations that belong to the State´s Indigenous Radio System, so there were no ways of participating in addition to the fact that it was from a region far from the community.

When this process began I was studying in Mexico City and like many other students I spent the holidays back in the community. Then, some colleagues invited me to participate in the radio transmission tests that they were running in a private home. This is how I became part of this process. Being a communicator was not my ideal, it was not a goal or something that I was looking for, I was simply interested in learning. Through that process I started participating more actively on the radio and we made some initial productions. In this period the coverage of this radio broadcasting was very small and it only reached the downtown area of the community.

During these months of testing the community authorities called us to meet with them. They asked us about our objectives with this new form of communication in Tlahui and our response was that the objective was to communicate and to do so from the community context; to strengthen our culture, language, worldview and philosophy, and to provide information that is clear and closer to the population.The authorities then invited us to move the radio to the *Casa Comunal* (Town Hall), and there we installed the little equipment that we had. It was very homemade: we had some

borrowed old recorders to play tapes, music cassettes, some records and microphones. We were there for a while and it was in that period when the police arrived and took away all the equipment saying that it was not a legal radio, that it was not allowed. They bypassed the Community Authorities by not going to their offices but directly to the radio facilities, taking with them all the equipment that we had.

That was the beginning of a whole process, for the radio and for me as a person. People noticed that the voice on the radio had been silenced and began to ask about what had happened and why it had been turned off. So people did listen to it! It was a new thing to listen to our own language on the radio and listen to the voice of people speaking in the Ayuujk variant of Tlahuitoltepec, so people were concerned about what had happened to the radio. We began to feel the support of all the people in this process of reflecting on what to do next, because at the beginning we never thought about asking for a permit or license from any institution or government agency. This radio was simply installed because we wanted to communicate from the community and because we were in our territory, making use of homemade equipment and we were not interfering with other radios.

We began to search about it and there some colleagues met people from the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC) and we started to build a relationship with them. The Community Authorities then suggested two alternatives: to continue broadcasting without State´s permission as we had done so far, or go through the legal route which meant covering all financial, technical and bureaucratic requirements needed at the time to obtain a license, in addition to the fact that the legal figure of "community radio" did not exist in the regulation. We reviewed the requirements to get a license and started learning from a similar process that Radio Teocelo had undertaken in Veracruz. We decided to create a committee that endorsed the figure of the radio and said that they were going to contribute financially from time to time, because we had to cover a high amount of resources to reflect in a bank account that we were going to be able to sustain our media or that there were going to be people who were going to be financing so that we could be on the air. We began to visit people in the community to sign that document for us, and it was like a letter of commitment to cover that legal requirement.

For me it was temporary to be here in Tlahuitoltepec because I had to go back to the school in Mexico City. When I finished studying I came back here to support the whole process because I

had already got into being involved in this communication project and had lost the fear of speaking on air. During the last period of my stay at the university it was the time when the radio had finally obtained the license through the Community Authorities, who went to Mexico City to receive this permit. They told me they were going to go and I joined them that day when the permit was issued. It was a moment in which we got to know the institutional side of the process, and it was also a community achievement through our authorities, after a process of *lucha,* (struggle) of arguing and demanding this space. It was then when this other path began through the legality of this radio and its recognition as a community media project.

The idea of communicating and being there as Ayuujk women and being able to open spaces for participation in public spaces, has been a process of recognizing ourselves as women and facing limitations in our community spaces, because it is not easy to be there. Generally, those who participate are men, and for us to have a voice and participate is not something that is given so lightly or so easily. The radio shows that I have done have to do with issues such as women's rights, Indigenous communities rights, and rights in general. Attending workshops has been an important part of training that got me to be there today, some provided by various institutions and other organizations. Also joining workshops by women's organizations where I participate and learn about the process of other women in various fields, not only communication but also the fight for sexual and reproductive rights, rights to the territory, etc. All these spaces are shaping us and strengthening us as well.

Being with other women who got involved in the radio strengthens the path to continue being there, because being alone is very complicated and it is very difficult. Male colleagues often do not understand or cannot understand the magnitude of our participation in these places. They do not value it, or they say they do but in reality they don´t. This has a lot to do with issues of *machismo,* of recognizing the value of work and the contribution we are making as women. We are diverse women: youth and girls participating in this radio, as well as adult women who have children and obligations in other spaces. This has been the process that I have undertaken as a communicator and the path that brings me to be on the radio today.

Organizing ourselves as women was a process that took place in 2009. Back then there were other colleagues who were also working collectively and were working with solid waste collection in the community and that was their topic to work on. When they also got involved in the radio,

myself and two or three women were already participating and they joined this effort. It was when we started a program to address topics such as caring for the environment and the Land, pollution, and women's rights; also speaking specifically on commemorative dates such as March 8 or November 25, naming to the community and audience of Jënpoj radio these issues that were not being addressed from the voice of the male colleagues. So we decided to do it and we decided to support each other among women within the same radio station.

We were also responding to the concern raised by the girls who were participating in the radio, because they told us they did not feel safe going there because those who are there are generally men, and that they would like us to accompany them to feel safe and be able to work on their shows. Based on these needs, we decided to create a collective which is now a specific area of women in Jënpoj radio. We called ourselves at that time the Jënpoj Women's Area. We were 6 or 7 colleagues at that time on the radio and that is how the women's area started and the main tasks that were being addressed was the need to support each other because among us it is easier to deal with colleagues who do not understand the work or the contribution we make to this type of spaces and community projects.

We then raised the needs that we found along the way, such as training ourselves to use the entire equipment. This is also related to the legal requirements that the government´s regulator asked for when we got the license about what types of equipment have to be used and how the transmission has to be done. Thus, we suggested that it was necessary to train ourselves as women for the technical management of the entire team and to be able to broadcast live programs or cover programs from other communities, cultural events, community festivals, etc. That was also a need that we raised and also getting to know each other and articulating with other colleagues from other community media in the country. So we started working in 2009 to be able to support each other.

The inclusion or use of this digital technology in radio did not change a lot of things. We were already on air through FM and the inclusion of the digital space through our website generated that other people could listen to the radio. That was the first change, that other people in other cities, other states or other countries, could have access to Jënpoj radio transmission. The other thing was that many people began to communicate through the telephone or mail when they needed to communicate something. On one occasion I was on the radio and someone called to inform that a

person who had died in the United States needed to be transported to the community. They were asking for support from the community and support from the radio to spread that message of the people who would support their relatives to gather some economic resource and be able to support the transportation.

That is an anecdote and an experience that we lived. Moreover, people who were making music in other places began to approach the radio to broadcast their music in Ayuujk. For example, there is a musician who lives in the United States and who makes songs in the Ayuujk so he started sending his work when he started listening to the radio. Online radio generates those relations and those places for people who have migrated. There have been several processes and projects that followed the radio being broadcasted through the Internet. At the beginning the audience was very high, there were many people who began to connect because there was no other online media, and people began to find or share information about their community or their communities through the online streaming of the radio. After the arrival of social media, the Internet audience dropped for the same reason: they began to communicate more directly or to see the information that circulates on social media. But it is maintained, there are people who connect to the radio through the Internet and we know that because they get in touch with the radio team if they need to broadcast something. Especially in recent years, people who work in other regions of the country have been communicating and asking us to share job opportunities for people to go to work in those places. That has been the way that the Internet has come to change the local dynamics of the radio.

The thing about the Internet is that you could say that there is too much information. But it is also information that you do not know if it is real or not real. I can publish news or a note, or what I am doing in my house or what I am thinking and desiring, and that may or may not interest other people. That does not necessarily mean that I am communicating something essential or fundamental about my community. There have been people who have created, for example, false pages with false names in the community, publishing on behalf of the authorities or a public person. There has even been a false account of the radio where they critiqued the Community Authorities several times and this generated conflict. In order to know who that person is we would have to have the technology to find out, but these platforms are not within our reach and it is not so easy to make a complaint. Many times it has generated conflict. In recent days, now that the pandemic is present, the authorities also make an invitation not to use these platforms to publish names of

people who are possibly infected with COVID-19 and I believe that these are as generators of conflicts within the communities. This not only happens here in the community, but in all communities. We know that this form of conflict happens, especially with the authorities.

When the Internet began to be known here in Tlahuitoltepec before 2000, there were questions about whether or not to use this type of technology. This was also considering whether the information of the community would come out of the territory and how the people of outside were going to use that information or knowledge to their advantage, or harming the community itself. I think there were two approaches discussed back then: one saying that we must make ourselves known as Indigenous Peoples for others to value us, so that they recognize that we are here and that we live in this territory, in this place and that we can also demand our rights. On the other hand, there were people who said that we must take care of our knowledge of everything that is going to be published or taken outside, especially information about the community, such as the location of our territory.

These two parts or two opinions are very valid, even to this day. For example, the plagiarism of the Tlahuitoltepec traditional blouse was an issue that we were able to publicly denounce using this kind of media and we got support from other organizations, voices and communities. We as persons and as a community decide how to use this type of communication media, which in the end is media and you generate the content that you want to give it. So if you want to be publishing notes or topics that are going to conflict the communities in some ways, then that is what you are going to do. But if you want to strengthen, for example, the language, the culture and the worldview, then you are going to go towards that sense, you are going to take that path and that is going to be your goal. So it depends on the people how this type of media is used.

Personally, the way I think and act about it, comes from a whole process that started prior to participating in the radio. There is also a process of *lucha* (struggle), resistance and strengthening the use of orality of Ayuujk and its written form. Turn to look at how the use of the language has been lost since the arrival of the Spaniards, the road and media, and how discrimination has also caused many people to stop transmitting their language to their children. Like us, we do not fully know the Ayuujk language. For example, now not everyone is able to say the types of prayer in community rituals and ceremonies, which use our language in a particular way. Many of these words and much of the language has been lost through a process of colonization and the

educational policies imposed by the State on Indigenous communities. Also through discrimination and us having to leave the community to go to work in urban spaces. If people speak their language here, they are discriminated against. This is not a matter of the past, it is not a concluded issue.

This whole process has taken place also through religionsm, which are involved in causing people to stop doing spiritual practices, such as offerings to Mother Earth and to respect the Land. For example, there has been a massive increase of religious sects in communities. This also leads to the loss of all these cultural practices, such as the rituals that were done before. In some communities they continue to be done, and in others they are being lost. Also all the knowledge that we have as communities in various aspects. For example in astronomy: if you ask younger people today about the names of the constellations, they will not know. From my generation, not all people know it or will know it. I know some because I have asked, because I want to learn and I want to know what they are called, as well as the flora and fauna.

For the same reason of educational public policies we are far removed from the Land, from agriculture and our parent's daily practices. They used to go to work on the Land with their parents in the fields, so in their daily lives they learned the name of plants, animals, and the life cycle of each one. All of these have (or had) names, they all have knowledge about its life cycle. Even names of the territory: to learn how each place is named on our way to the field, that is when you learn from the Land, all the toponymy of this place. Nowadays it is no longer known because children have to go to school from 9 to 2. in the afternoon and from 2 to 6 they have to go to workshops, music classes and who knows how many activities that we did not have before. You had to be in the field or you went with your parents to work, that was the way of transmitting this knowledge and acquiring it. Today that no longer happens. Also today we are immersed in technology and it absorbs us. In Tlahui, for example, when the cell phone arrived, everyone bought their own even though there is no good coverage. Each person is listening to music or now that there is the Internet, all the youth is there, immersed. These devices or instruments are generating that, distancing us from our immediate reality. Youth wants to know and see what is there on social media and the platforms to which they have access to, and they are increasingly moving away from this reality.

I think that if we are aware of all this that is happening, and if we as a culture and community want to continue living, we then want the young generations to be aware of the value that we have: to be aware of our language, knowledge and philosophy of life. We are working on that. For example, sometimes I use social media and I write the same thing in my language and in Spanish. I always do it in my language or I try to do it because I think that is a way of making visible that I value it, so that the people who read me are people who know that if they want, they can make use of the Ayuujk in these kind of media. This may or may not raise awareness at all but will strengthen the use and writing of the language, and of our thoughts and our word.

Also through audio. I believe that orality has an important value because there are people who become aware of the language when you speak and listen to it. For example, people have come to share with us on the radio that when they listen to our live programs or programmes in Ayuujk and its variants, that generates certain awareness or reflection on how to start using this language to express ourselves. Whether through poetry, music or art, or recognizing the value of working in wood, painting, graphic art, all these expressions that reflect our Ayuujk worldview. Some people have even commented about the transmission of the time in Ayuujk through the radio, and they say "through the hour count, I am learning again to count in Ayuujk" because many young generations do not know how to count to 10 or 20. Through time they at least get to know the count of the numbers up to 60. And that is how we are giving content to these various media and platforms, gradually generating these collective reflections. Because a single person cannot do not much either, you need several people, groups and communities that can intervene in these media so that something can be achieved.

My dream in relation to the radio…having a license has its limitations, or advantages and disadvantages. Because when you have a document from an institution that is regulating you, it also puts obligations on you. For example, at the moment the Regulator is sending us radio spots of electoral campaigns for us to broadcast, which has nothing to do with the reality or community context because here we are governed by the internal regulatory system and not by political parties. So it has nothing to do with people coming to hear about political parties in our contexts, it really is not necessary. Perhaps it is necessary to know the real approaches of the people who want to occupy political positions in Oaxaca or the country, but that is not what is done in electoral campaigns. It is something very different, it is not real or reliable information that they are raising,

rather conflicts between them that end up creating conflict many times in the communities. Then in the communities there are beginning to be groups that support this or that party, and these communities are not even governed by political parties. The ideal would be to have a means of communication that were really managed by the community. Although we manage the radio in that way in terms of programming and content, with feedback from the Community Authority that we get every year, and the feedback from people when we meet them in the streets or other places. However, the fact that there are these obligations from the State is one of the things that I wish they did not exist.

On the other hand, raising the consciousness or reflection of the people. Because it is true that over the last few years we have been on this path to strengthen ourselves, to seek communication alternatives and generate these contents from our languages, our words and our worldviews. These themes and reflections can be used so that our way of life is not lost and that we get lost in this globalized world. So that we do not become blurred in this capitalist world. Especially for the increasingly present projects by transnational corporations. In other communities corporations are coming to build dams, hydroelectrics and extract mining. These projects are also generating conflict in the communities, they co-opt the authorities by giving them some recourse and ask them to sign a document to gain access to their territory, once the State has given them a concession. This generates conflict because when the community becomes aware, people begin to fight among themselves and there is no real awareness of what is happening, because the problems of these companies that come from outside are not known. And it is the same that happens with colonization and educational policies: although many times they are called bilingual, intercultural, multicultural or any other surname, the reality is that if they are not generated and created within the communities, they will not respond to this context community in which we are living, and to the needs that can respond to everything that is raised by our population. For example, creating content according to the community context, history, our *palabra,* our language, that happen when you have the conditions to make use of these media more freely.

A few years ago I attended a workshop in which I learnt about all the machinery that has to be used for the Internet to reach our homes or for us to send stickers or emoticons for example, and how that affects the Land and water in other territories. Also how it is affecting the territory of communities that do not have a direct benefit from these technologies, which are rather run by

very large and transnational companies that are not benefiting nearby populations at all. They are only affecting all the biodiversity that exists in the sea where all these machines are being housed in order to contain the information that we are generating through these means. Much of this information is not known and we are not aware of the use that we are giving to this type of media. When we get to know this information, we can be a little more thoughtful and start to think whether or not to use the internet, if it is so necessary. However, for example, when we work with projects, the organizations that finance them require us to have a Facebook page or YouTube channel, so that you can make your work visible. So all these reflections are emerging collectively, with people who are researching and reflecting on how we are making use of this type of technology. As for a dream, my ideal would be that the Internet does not exist, but we are already here.

I feel that the conditions are also being generated through our own *luchas*. That is, we would not have that recognition as Ayuujk peoples, or as Native Peoples or Indigenous Peoples, from the government institutions or the institutions that are regulating these spaces if it was not for our own processes. By looking at how our rights as peoples have been recognized from the legislation, and having our own denomination in the legislation as "community media" (different from cultural or educational) is a recognition that we achieved from the struggles and the communities processes. Not the other way around. It is not that governments come to recognize us very kindly just because they want to. They have done so due to demands from communities, organizations, and groups that have fought and resisted through various forms of manifestation of these demands.

We have algo met allies that are external to the communities along the way, through the workshops I mentioned, or processes to train us on these issues, or instruments of legislation. Some have supported the cause of the communities by taking advantage of those windows that are sometimes opened in the legislation to place these debates. I think that is the way in which external people have been able to contribute to these struggles: generating spaces for reflection. Just like that workshop where I got to learn about how the Internet works, with people who are also worrying about how technology is affecting us in every way, and asking ourselves about cell phone signals, for example, and how it passes through walls and how would it not be penetrating us in our bodies? And now the Internet signal that is changing more and more can also affect us in physical, emotional, mental and social health? because the use we make of it affects our interpersonal relationships that we establish and that we have had as communities.

I think that this is also a critical reflection from other communities, even if they are not Ayuujk communities or Indigenous Peoples, or Native Peoples or whatever they want to call them. They are emerging. Also from our contexts and realities, we are making these reflections to use these technologies, and that is the way in which twe have a reciprocal support. Those others are also critical or alternative collectivities to this world of capital and States, and all in this world that oppresses us.

2. Kyle

Tthebacha, Denendeh

ʔédlánet'é. Sezí Kyle Napier *sulyé[1], mâka ê-nêhiyawêwin* Kyle Napier *nitsîhykâson[2]* about digital technologies and how they relate to Indigenous people. I'm from Tthebacha, which is referred to in English as "beside the rapids", or colonially as Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, but it's within Denendeh and it's where the giant fell from the stars.

I think that it's important always to consider the names that have been here far before colonization. I mean, Columbus doesn't even deserve the credit because he never actually stepped foot on this continent. And he was a murderous, treacherous bastard. Previous to it being called the Northwest Territories, it was called Rupert's Land. It was owned by the Hudson Bay Company. And then before that and still to this day, and for many generations from now, it'll be called Denendeh. And hopefully that name will outlast colonial Canada. That's where I'm from.

When I was a kid, around six or seven years old, I was living in Łutselk'e. There is no road access stuff, you can only get in by boat or plane. And I was living there. Then my mom was down south at Red Deer in school, and she had Internet and she met a guy in Philadelphia. So I moved from Łutselk'e to Philadelphia, and that was the weirdest thing ever. That gave me a different involvement around access to digital technologies and the Internet and capacity building and being able to do just really cool things. After that, when I was down south, I entered a "spelling bee" contest and I won, school-wide, with the words "thermometer" and "refrigerator". So, that's really cool. And then we went countywide — in the States, eh. So, I went and competed against a bunch of other schools. There's like 40 other nerdy kids with me, from all these other schools I never heard of. So it goes around first and then I get my first word: "macaroni". Second word: "vanilla". I´ve eaten food my whole life, like I'm really good at this. So it goes around again with the word "multidisciplinary". So I spell it and they buzz me. So I walk off, and they're like, actually, you

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[1] Hello, my name is Kyle Napier (Denededlıne Yatı)

[2] but in Cree, Kyle Napier is the root of my connected name (nêhiyawêwin)

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spelled it correctly. So then they walked me back in the line, which was weird. Anyways, they admitted I spelled it correctly. And then it comes back again and the word is "Indigenous". And wouldn't you know that that was the word that I didn't spell correctly? And so that was around 14 years old. And then my mom was not proud of me at all at that moment. So ever since then, I've been trying to make it up to my mom.

About 10 years ago, when I was in journalism school, I realized because I had gone south, actually from Tthebacha. Well, first I moved from Philadelphia to Calgary. And then I moved from Calgary back home. I was in a journalism program which had me heavily involved in technologies, including at this point running sound for festivals and concerts, and using cameras and videos to support local communities. Mostly at that time I got into journalism for free concert tickets, and then came out with a passion for Indigenous language revitalization and not a passion for journalism. In fact, I came away with a disdain for journalists, but halfway through that degree I realized I'd have to go home, and what was it going to do? So, I realized that the biggest thing affecting my home that I kept reading articles about were youth suicide. I was like "What do I want to do with these skills, with journalism?" and then I realized the more that people are connected to their culture, into their language and into their identity, the less they're likely to commit suicide, and to take their own life. I mean, then there are other factors, of course, related to community and connectedness and representation, and all these other factors of trauma and abuse and residential traumas from colonization, but at least I could do my part and by helping to support with media and broadcast skills applying them to Indigenous language revitalization.

I didn't know at the time what languages, so I ended up back home continuing working labor jobs. I've been a plumber and stuff for a few years so I worked labor pretty much right away. I worked at my local paper selling ads which sucked the living soul to me, and then ended up with a job with my Nation for four years, which was great. Eight months of that, I worked specifically in resource and capacity building and in that role, creating CDs with high-profile musicians and artists, collaborating with communities to ensure that youth are on that same CD as, like, a Tribe Called Red, or a bunch of other badass musicians. To see themselves literally sandwiched between these super cool artists and things like that. So to do my part to counter youth suicide, and a lack of really good representation, I wanted I got into resource development, and that's allowed me also

to reconnect to my language. And then I realized more and more that with my language, Dene Dedlıne, "Chipewyan" or sâkâw-nêhiyawêwin, Bush Cree, that the closer you are to the Land and immersion and your family, the more likely you are to learn the language.

So I'm not necessarily entirely an advocate for digital technologies. I think the Land is the best way to learn. And I do think that technologies have pre-existed colonization. These technologies have been around forever, including, not necessarily the agriculture in the way of farming but in terms of living and being symbiotic within the environment and having existing reciprocity and protocol with non-human relations. So all of this is more important than digital technologies, but in an instance of, let's say COVID, or a situation such as my own where I am down south and away from my own community, it's like how can I reconnect, and do digital tools allow for that reconnection? I'm really selfishly a resource creator because I want to learn my language. I think creating tools to help other people learn the language has given me an edge and gives me really cool opportunities to learn and to work with others in exciting ways. Working with Elders, and when they say "Oh, I haven't heard this word said in 40 years" then they're like "let's make sure that this word is included." You know how powerful that is? When they haven't heard it said, and they're there in the speaking community and to make sure that that word stays awoken. So it's things like that and ensuring that youth are involved in projects and workshops along the way and that they have opportunities to create representation for themselves, and to build skills along the way so that they can create things that counter this homogenous colonial bullshit narrative that presents one very distinctly capitalist and colonially-reinforcing bias, and that is just so entrenched in media, by instead creating relevant content from our communities. That's why I'm doing what I do.

How I have used media and tools and technologies is as a filmmaker, videographer, editor, and recently a video game designer; involving Indigenous languages in my art and collages, spray-painting in Indigenous languages, being an audiovisual technician for Indigenous language projects; and then being an instructor for teaching people how to use whatever, particularly open-source resources that are available. The process to start using digital tools for my artistic or communicational desires, which are always Land and language connected, started with, honestly, having a big budget and being able to do everything that we could possibly think of. We did do

everything we possibly could think of and that allowed me to explore every possibility right away, including its challenges and limitations.

With filming, and videography, sometimes if you're filming on the Land and if it's cold, or if it's windy, or if you're on a boat or if you're fishing, all these different factors are going to affect whether or not an Elder is going to want to speak to you. And often they're gonna want to do it when they're doing something else. And it's windy and the boats going, you have to find the frequencies they are speaking at, like, navigate out the frequencies from the boat, and things like that. That's one example. And intellectual property became immediately then for me, around six years ago, a major factor in the process of using digital tools for language revitalization. I mean, we had to sign licenses and contracts with all of those big name artists and I was like, at this point I could just do whatever I wanted with the budget, like nobody was telling me "No" it was like, all right, well whatever then, so I got all of the kids to sign SoCan agreements also. That means if the radio played any of their songs, they would get a cheque in the mail. I mean, granted, if they played the song 20 times, you get 30 cents. So it's not like a big payout, but they're respected in the process.

Ultimately, I met also with Elders who are very protective of their knowledge, or not wanting to speak to me for various reasons, and it often came down to recognizing sovereignty over Indigenous knowledge as well, in that relational kinship. There was one Elder, for instance, that I offended without knowing that I had offended them. And what happened was, I hadn't been told this Elder´s name, and I was at a large event and I gave gratitude to one Elder who had done a lot of work for something, but I didn't give credit to the other Elder who had done so much for the program. That I didn't know, I didn't even hear the other Elder´s name beforehand. I was just told the one person so I only said one person, and the one who had also been doing as much work was really pissed. So I called her. A few weeks later, people were like "Hey, did you know so-and-so really needed this translation work? And I was doing translations so I called her and she was like "This is bullshit, I've been working for this for five or six years and you don't acknowledge me or nothing during our big whatever". So I offended her without even realizing how or why. I was like "I'm sorry, I didn't realize this, I hope to make it up to and I'm really sorry" and she's like "Well, you better" and then hung up on me. So then a few weeks later, I had happened into some dry meat, which is like really sliced-thin caribou meat which is like the best food ever. All the Elders love it, everyone loves it. It's just it's black gold, they call it. It's so good. Anyways, I had all this

dry meat and store-bought tea. So I tried to make it up to her, like, "Hey, I have this dry meat and tea. Is it okay if I dropped off to you? We don't have to do anything". Anyway, that process of reconnecting happened, and it came down to relational kinship and rebuilding that relationship. And eventually, we did end up working on a video game together.

What happened was, I brought over this dry meat and tea and I really want to make it up. She says "I'll let you know when". So now it's another two months after it's already four months after I offended her. So the day comes and she calls me "Alright, you can come over at such-and-such a date" she says. So I bought the little bag of dry meat, like this brown paper bag and some tea from the store. So I go in and she's like "tâtawâw, there's room for you to come in". So I come in and then her big table is just full: she just has fresh bannock and homemade jam all over. She picked all her own tea. I had this little bag of store tea. She had all her own, she picked it out on the Land, laid tobacco protocol, everything — just the best tea. I had this little bag of dry meat. She had this big spilling over mountains of dry meat, which was like "I don't need you" like, at all. She at least listened to me a little bit more after that.

She found where I was coming from, and that I meant to repair that relationship. And so that's exactly what it is. It was about repairing that relationship and maintaining that relationship. And the reason I'm not using her name is because I don't want to discredit the person who didn't tell me her name. She's amazing. She and I worked together for a few months and I provided the script narrative, which was 12 nouns as an animal, like an owl, and a pig and a chicken and a cat. Like I was saying, it doesn't teach you that language, it tried teaching you 12 words, but even then it doesn't even teach you them. It just plays the sound of them once and it didn't really. I was approached by this game production company to do so, and they're like "We would want representation from your language", they've read about me in the news paper or something. And I was like, this is a really cool project, I'd like for [name redacted] to work on this. And so she did and did the recordings and we got them to the game. And then the game is for free. And my community, like I said, it's 12 words. So we went from her calling me and my involvement bullshit, to her making those. (She) passed away maybe two or three years ago from cancer. And, and so I just have a lot of respect for her anyway. So that's how that relationship was maintained. Like I said, it's all about relationships.

So now I am in the process of developing a video game. I've worked on a few now at this point, I think three. And the first one was in 2015, when I was approached by a production company. And this was for free, I didn't have to pay into it. And I quickly realized the limitations of apps and video games for language revitalization, because often it comes down to noun identification or single words, but not complex sentences. And so the limitation there is that it doesn't allow for engaging with multi sensory, interactive learning. And that creates an environment that you would otherwise want on the Land, that immersion environment for language learning.

The best way to do that I've discovered over time, is a multi sensory game that allows you to interact and forces you to think in the language, it's not just a tape that plays that you when you're trying to fall asleep, and you don't speak at it, or it's not just like an app where you press a button and t's like "cow", "chicken", but that's not how you speak a language. And it'll be like, just the word "plate" or "spaghetti"... that's not how people speak English and that's not how people speak today either. So I quickly realized the limitations of these apps that people were selling for $25,000 that don't work. They don't do what they say they're going to do. So the limitation there was lacking interactivity and I think you would have to do it in Unicode. So I realize, okay, games or software or programs or whatever that use the language has to be written in Unicode. And so that became something I was passionate about right away.

I think even deeper than digital tools. I like when tools are able to really represent like glottals, nasals, tonals, anything like that, that'll allow for really speaking the language. So it's something you have sovereignty and control over. In relation to open-source, accessible technologies and their limitations and benefits, I like that there's a holocracy to digital content creation, where it's more accessible. I like to create content, I like that you can use digital technologies in Land based environments, like filming when you're out on the Land, or taking pictures or recordings. I like that digital media allows for representation, communication and participation and I like that, in those benefits, that there's digital and technological autonomy and sovereignty. I think that's all critical.

As far as limitations, so, in the 1800s, there was the first industrial revolution which was about textile manufacturing and using hydro for power, things like that started emerging. Then the second industrial revolution came with the combustion engine, and using coal and oil. And then the third industrial revolution came with the microprocessor in the '60s. And then the fourth

industrial revolution came digital connectivity, that's Industrial Revolution 4.0. Each of these industrial revolutions has affected Indigenous People. The first one was manufacturing and in its own way agriculture and textile. At first it was colonization and the beginnings of capitalism and its need for profit, when then they needed room for manufacturing and moving people. And then the combustion engine, they need oil and gas and mining and gold and stuff. So all of this has led to a diaspora and disconnect from Indigenous Peoples and ancestral homelands.

Then, with the fourth industrial revolution came the microprocessor. And so with those computers came a totally different way to communicate. And that's the industrial revolution 4.0, which is connectivity and has an entirely Anglophonic bias across all of our materials. Not only Anglophonic, but colonial and capitalistic, it maintains this hegemony there from media. Not only is there an Anglophone English bias, there's my own bias towards Indigenous language revitalization: there's a limit on complexity of interactivity. And then digital technologies are often removed from Land and ceremony with some Elders preferring not to film ceremony for their own various reasons. Limitations around digital technology would also relate to community control of Indigenous ancestral knowledge. I use ancestral knowledge and not traditional knowledge because "traditional" as a colloquial word, kind of puts things in the past. And then with limitations on these digital technologies, it's like the dependence of global mining against Indigenous People´s Lands. So, I mean, that's a massive limitation.

I'm passionate about the idea that 400 years from now, if we create a dependence on using digital technologies to solve all of our problems, as soon as we're not able to reduce, reuse, recycle, and upcycle any of our materials — once we hit that limit — we can no longer mine and keep exhausting these resources is that the generations now are not going to be prepared for life without, that isn't for life after the exhaustion of digital tech and the resources needed to uphold them, or — why wait? — we colonize another planet, and that's not too far off. I'm not saying that that's the solution at all. I really appreciate intranets, that side of digital sovereignty and keeping things within communities because otherwise, the consequence of things getting out, come down to things like bio-piracy, where medicines and plants are released to the new agers who use our sacred medicines, and then start selling it and then it ends up in pharmaceuticals. Then suddenly the actual plant medicine, the spiritual benefit of the medicine, is stripped from the plant for manufacturing for pharmaceuticals. That's just one example. And then imagery, names, likenesses —

appropriation, exploitation, extraction, all of these things, come to Indigenous languages. And that comes down to communications, maybe not necessarily digital media, but definitely communications.

Then intellectual property brings another facet of limitation. If you're talking about internationally, that's under the World International Property Organization, if you're looking at it nationally, within Canada, we're looking at federal jurisdiction which often fails. Canada knows that intellectual property laws in Canada fail Indigenous Peoples for many reasons, including not protecting Indigenous knowledge, intellectual Indigenous knowledge properties internationally. Like if Germany is going to rip off imagery, or like sewing patterns or techniques of Indigenous people (because Germans do that a lot) then Canada can't protect against that[3]. Those are international examples profiting off of stories, like I said, pharmaceuticals medicines as a major example of intellectual property infraction. Because intellectual property is the new frybread, because fry bread was introduced to colonially and was required for communities to sustain themselves. So it's a colonial concept. But then it was reclaimed by Indigenous communities. So that's fry bread, and Intellectual property is the same way. It's a colonial concept that is only necessitated because of the involvement of colonizers. And then made and perfected and localized by Indigenous communities, and that ranges and it's so different from the different communities. That's very important.

That's nationally, then even some of the Indigenous Nations are creating and implementing their own intellectual property laws, including UNDRIP, but Canada didn't sign. Mexico did, which is fascinating. It allows for so many different articles of UNDRIP for further sovereignty for input from Indigenous communities. So then you have Indigenous Nations rights with their own that are going through self-government processes and Land claims is that often with their self-government process, they have like education health, judiciaries and I am strongly arguing for them to have intellectual property laws that are written into their self government agreements. Some organizations do like Cowichan, and how they have the Cowichan represent genuine Cowichan sweaters where they can give you art tag, for example, or really good examples of Indigenous owned copyrights. There's OCAP® and then there's CARE in the United States.

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[3] https://www.dw.com/en/why-germany-cant-quit-its-racist-native-american-problem/a-52546068]

As far as intellectual property, I think it's deeper than human intellectual property law, too. It's always important to look at non-human intellectual property relations. If you record out in the woods and a wolf howls, who owns that recording? Or, what's the protocol to respect the wolf for the recording in the same way that you would respect an Elder? Or if you break a branch from a tree, is that your possession or is that still the tree´s possession? And how do you respect that as medicine? Do ceremonies have their own intellectual property laws? Who owns the stars and who owns space and how it is connected with play a role in that?

The Treaty of Waitangi allows for Maori in Aotearoa, what's commonly referred to as New Zealand, to have sovereignty over sky and space. I just think that's so fascinating because Dene are also connected to sky in space, because that's Denendeh, the giant that fell from the stars, and then landed. So we are also connected to sky and space, but obviously the crown, Britain, wouldn't sign that over and they realized there was no communication then between, right, Maori and Dene. But now there is, and what can we do now that we can share these communications? Can we renegotiate the Treaties, for instance, so that every Indigenous community has connections to sky and space, and therefore first right to refusal, have access to the spectrum? When does Indigenous natural law take precedence over colonial intellectual property law? And that's really important to consider when it comes to intellectual property, law and Indigenous peoples.

I could go on for that forever, and how Indigenous knowledge is constantly ended up in Creative Commons or public domain. Like the medicine wheel, which ended up on the Creative Commons? I'm mad about that. Like all these Anishinaabe protocols and ceremonies end up in Creative Commons, like recordings of really sacred drum stuff, and what does that mean? you end up with examples of people misappropriating or misusing Indigenous Knowledges. Or things like Ungava Gin, trying to pretend like it's Inuit gin and uses all the Inuktituk symbols, and it doesn't actually mean anything. It's just symbols that are meaningless and not connected to any words, as they just throw a bunch of symbols on their logo and they say its Inuit gin. Does not mean anything, they don't actually donate the community. Examples like that of appropriation.

All of these come to digital tools, I like to link it back to colonial communications. That's the thread and the narrative, where you see appropriation of representation and appropriation of Indigenous knowledge is in languages since touchdown. The first Bible published on this continent was not published in English or French, it was published in Wampanoag, an Indigenous language. I mean,

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colonizing the language for publication and print has been happening for a long time. Then again, the first syllabics came by in the 1800s, first by Sequoia, and then second by Calling Badger. Those have been so great. So Sequoia developed Cherokee syllabics, Calling Badger developed Cree syllabics. Then James Evans took credit for syllabics. So when Sequoia developed Cherokee syllabics in 1821, they started publishing the Cherokee Phoenix, which published in both Cherokee and English, Cherokee first. And so that was an 1827 I think they started publishing, and they still publish to this day, I just think that's so badass. So it's using the communication tools that had once been used against you to, now that you have sovereignty over typefaces, for instance. You wouldn't normally think that it's such a badass idea, but then when you're designing things for your own community in Unicode or in Cherokee syllabics, or on a typewriter in the early 1900s, you could do it in syllabics using Dene orthography, or like Indigenous orthography. I love that narrative.

Walking in the balance of benefits and limitations, I do things because the Elders tell me it's a good idea. All my ideas start with Elders. If the Elders didn't approve, then I wouldn't do it. If an Elder says "we need to create a CD all in our language" or "we need to create a video game", then I'm all for it. So that's kind of what's motivating me right now for what I'm doing, is because Eileen told me you need to create a game and we need to call it DeneQuest. That's what's gonna happen. That's my strategy to continue, to listen to the knowledge holders and the Elders and to ask them and to reflect using my own capacity because like, I have a very unique skill set: I was writing when I was 12 and creating online forums that were highly political, like teaching people to break the law in different ways, like how to shoplift and be a shitty kid. I have a lot of experience with that stuff, coding and that, but that's not that's not necessarily common in an Indian country. I use the word Indian facetiously, of course. So having the skill set of being like a sound engineer, having done concerts and festivals, of knowing at least a little bit of coding, it allows me to follow through when Elders are like "You know what would be a good idea? This" and to push for representation and us creating it ourselves. Because so often Elders will say, this may be a good idea and then that'll happen, and it will depend on other people coming to our community, and those other people don't know what the hell is going on and they end up insulting Elders in the way that I did but without the chance to repair relationships. So they'll go there, mess things up and leave.

So, yes, that's my strategy for continuing: always listen to the Elders. All of my projects that I've gotten funding for, I'm always finding a way to "How can I give this to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers?" And it's been working out for me, because it's supporting, it's supporting people who know the Ancestral Knowledge and how to share them in the way that they want to, while also supporting local youth skill building, being like "Hey, we need to collect some recordings from such-and-such Elder" or "We need an artist to design sprites for a game", or "We need people to design or draw panels for graphic novels, or to design like really cool stuff like sweaters or clothing that show syllabics and how to pronounce them," and stuff like that. There's a lot of opportunities and it's all about ensuring other people are involved in the learning process, by creating. That's my bias, again, as a resource developer and creator its that's how I want to learn, or at least how I have been learning, and so for youth who are maybe disengaged from their Ancestral languages, is to be like, well, It's cool!

Now, how is this badass super cool knowledge gonna survive the next 400 years of extremely intense colonial media pressures? It's a big massive fight. Strategies for continuing is revolution, beauty, laughter, love, consent, respect to intellectual property, protocol, love, smudging, ceremony, and laying tobacco and just stopping and acknowledging and breathing with the air, and like, not being a workhorse about things. To actually stop and think and process. And to fight the fights. I'm often a little bit cagey and edgy at first if I don't know someone, I am dark, jagged and often I'm like, "okay, we need to have the colonization talk, the sovereignty talk, we need to have the 500 years of oppression talk". Once you get that out of the way, then you can start chilling and having fun. But that's the strategy. Now I look forward to having those really hard conversations and making sure that it's known. I come from a privileged opportunity where not only do I have the creative skills for resource creation, but advocacy. It's not to say that I'm an advocate or I'm a representative of any cause. But it's more like I can at least articulate through colonial terms and languages on colonial turf, what the hell is going on. Using their tools against them — that's what motivates me.

My first initial response to an ideation of a digital world is, to be frank, I would say no digital world at all. It would be to go back to 500 years ago. Now that there is such a thing as a digital world — because that concept was meaningless a hundred years ago — my ideation of a digital world, there being one is —I need to speak personally here and say — something that would allow

me to reconnect to my language when I'm away from home. There's a few people like me during COVID when you are in the community. I grew up on adventure games, not that I really played them, but my parents did. I got to see what the potential was for these things. I never really got into actually gaming. But I did get into how cool it was to game design. So if I did, an ideation of a digital world would be like an emerging game that's entirely in the language. I guess it's what I'm creating, but the ideation would be even better, way better, because it's interactive, like you could have everyone in the communities going and playing and doing the thing but it's not like playing, it's like connection to the culture. So it's not like a shoot 'em up. It's like, how are you going to raise your 70 dogs that you need for your sled dogs? And the answer is, you're going to need to set a net, and fish every day and catch at least one fish for every dog a day, so it's something that reflects the reality. If there is a digital world, I would want to be as close to reconnecting to a pre-colonial world as possible. And so that's what I'm actually building and looking towards, and that's just one example, everybody is working on amazing things. That's one thing that I'm creating and working towards. But that can be just like a community network, for instance, where people are creating what makes sense for them. So an ideation of a digital world for me is something that is also beneficial and cool for communities that makes them want to engage and use it on their own terms.

It's not whether it's cool for me, but like I got like a pretty good barometer on cool. And so like, run an idea past Elders, my friends, my family and ask them like, "is this lame, or is it awesome? Somewhere in between?" and then they'll tell me so. And if you have that buy in from the community, if you have that interest, then it's a lot easier to roll with that idea. But if you don't have community...that's what Noam Chomsky told me. I said to him, "here's the situation that communities coming from — we have Residential Schooling and the 60´s Scoop and now there's the millennial scoop where there's more kids in foster care today in Canada than there were at the height of Residential School in 1931, which is ridiculous. So it's not that it's a thing of the past, it's still very much ongoing". I asked him, "What do you have in terms of advice?" and he said the community has to want to reconnect. And if you don't have community buy-in then then you're not really going to actually do anything, you have a bunch of shallow projects, even if the community is one other person learning on their own, at least that's how it starts. So my ideal digital world would be one that the overlapping communities also agree on, and so that they think is cool.

I often consider collaboration on a sliding scale, it isn't set anywhere and I'd be interested in adding more terms, but it either goes from extraction to collaboration. And it's like the sliding scale of engaging with Indigenous communities. Let's say, *extraction* is like doing what I was saying where it's like "we realized that, you know, such and such a bark from this plant acts as an aspirin, and now we're going to sell it as aspirin or extract our Lands for resources, this is a gross word. But for digital mining, for tech development, anything like that. That's extraction. *Exploitation* would be like exploitation of Indigenous knowledge means using them without Indigenous representation or advocacy. Then *appropriation*, with its many definitions. So these are all on the bad side, kind of scaling in. So opposite of appropriation is *appreciation*. Let's say you saw at a PowWow some really cool feather earrings that were beaded awesome. Appropriation would be to make those earrings yourself in that style, whereas appreciation would be to buy those earrings and support the artist, and know the name and the community of that artist. Exploitation and *representation*, I would say kind of counter each other, and then extraction is countered by *collaboration*. And so this is all on the scale of, of what it means to engage with Indigenous communities. And I'm sure there's other "ations" that we could add.

So where is your engagement? Where are people's individual engagements on that scale? With collaboration, who owns the finished project? Who owns the raw materials of the project? Who has a say in the editing process? Is there the ability to withdraw consent after the release of such a project? that's about what I work in which is recording technologies, but let's talk about worlds that I don't work in, which would be like mining for instance. The collaboration of that might emerge as a development of a negotiated of Treaty negotiations, right from modern Treaty and Land claims. It could fall in collaboration or it could very easily fall into extraction. So where does that fit on the activity? it can be both it can be both. IBAs, benefit agreements, where does that fit?

I guess to ensure the process of a healthy collaboration involves communities from the beginning, and not just like in the end or middle phase where they are like "we need to talk to Elders and indigenize a University" and then they talk to a bunch of Elders and totally sterilize it of any actual meaning. *Sterilization*, that's a very colonial thing and they're good at that. They just emerged in the media for every day sterilizing Indigenous Knowledges — and literally women. That's even

worse, that's genocide. I guess counter to genocide would be something stronger than collaboration.

What can people do? is to ensure all of those steps that they're appreciated, that they're named, that they're credited, that they're represented. Meaning, like myself, as an academic, all the conferences that I'm speaking to coming up, I am reaching out to Elders, to involve them in those conferences, and and being like, "Hey, they offered me $200 to speak at this conference, would you be comfortable taking that stipend and speaking with me?" because I'm not the knowledge holder, I'm just the resource guy, I'm just the IT guy, I'm just the sound guy, I'm just the tech guy. I'm not a big knowledge holder. The digital world and the ideal and people working together for that, it falls on that scale of appreciation and representation. So making sure that knowledge keepers are involved in the research project, that they're involved to talk about it, that's not just the academic that gets all the accolades.

I have known that digital technologies are not the solution, but knowing that they aren't it allows us to embrace what they are. And what they are is a tool. And there's classic Dene and Inuit and Indigenous adaptability and Métis adaptability. That has not stopped us from embracing different technologies for hundreds of thousands of years. Most recently, the cellphone, before that the radio, the gun, the train. They're not the solution. But as long as we know what their limitations are, it allows us to use them more realistically. I'm immersed in a world of disdain for the technologies that I use 24/7. I'm surrounded by them. You can send an email and you'll darn well expect that I'll get back to you. Which is sickening. I feel like I take on the role of wanting to learn the code and the bullshit English side of things, so that the knowledge keepers don't have to struggle with Audacity, or have to learn how to log in to Zoom — because their ancestral knowledge shouldn't be dependent on that.

Just realizing where and what the benefits and what the challenges are, has allowed me to be more realistic and pragmatic about their uses. I don't trust them and I don't want the world to be immersed in them. But a lot of youth and everyone has a cell phone, and play video games, so it's like how do I meet the youth on their terms, to help to reconnect them to Land and language and to help make them realize why it is so cool that they're connected to what they're connected to?

3. Luna

Guelatao, Oaxaca

My name is Luna Marán. I have been a Zapotec *alebrije* for a few months. I began to say that in a country where so many women are killed, I stop being a woman to be an *alebrije*, for the safety of my person. I am native and resident of the beautiful community of Guelatao de Juárez, where I live a bucolic and equestrian life. I drink coffee every morning, *Serrano* coffee, from communities around here. I grew up in these mountains and these mountains have seen many things happen, including a historical process that is the use of communication tools that humans have invented, by people who inhabit this same territory.

It has been a whole process related to the foundation of radio stations. The first was founded 32 years ago and today it is still called the XEGLO "La Voz de la Sierra Juárez" and broadcasts in Zapoteco, Mixe and Chinanteco for a very wide region of the state of Oaxaca. Here, in 94-95, by the time of the Zapatista Movement, we already had Channel 12 "Our Vision", a community television here. It was supported by the team that worked at Fundación Comunalidad. By 1995, I was 9 years old and this team of filmmakers and audiovisual producers decided to produce a television series, a didactic fiction series where I worked as an actress. So, at the age of 9 they invited me to participate, I did the traditional casting, like many boys and girls in the community and I ended up participating in that process for two years, recording programs and more programs.

Around 96, "La Voz de la Sierra" invited me to host a radio program for children where we talked about our rights. It was called "The Children's Cloud" and they allowed us at first to lead the show and then to produce it. We take care of writing the script, looking for the songs, choosing the themes and all, it was super cool. We had three half an hour shows a week, something that I think today would cost me a lot of work to do, it's a lot! We did it for two years, until it was interrupted because I was entering high school and the schedule no longer allowed me to do the program, but the program still continued for another year or two.

I was fortunate that this same group of filmmakers at Fundación Comunalidad received the project from a Mexican photographer, who may rest in peace. Her name is Mariana Rosenberg, a woman from Mexico City who came to Guelatao with a very particular training in photography. She had been studying photography in the United States, so she came with clarity of other ways of approaching artistic creation. When she arrived in Guelatao, they developed a project that lasted for four or five years. It resulted in a catalog and exhibition that traveled to various parts of the world, it was exhibited in PHotoEspaña and in Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City, in 2001. It was a photographic exhibition by Indigenous photographers, and is a very important exhibition in the history of Mexican photography because it is the first in which photographers are people from Indigenous Peoples. To think that today is very strange because media has changed and now many of us have access to smartphones that can generate images, which at that time did not exist.

I had the privilege of having grown up as a photographer for four years, with a team, materials and an amazing guide, because Mariana is a great educator. In the sense that she worked very clearly from freedom and from the recognition of our own gaze, which for me has been like a statement of life: to recognize how I am seeing the world and recognize my gaze; to recognize how I am framing the world, what I am prioritizing, where I am accommodating myself to take an image. I experienced all that thanks to them who made this microclimate in Guelatao. More than 50 people from the community participated in this workshop, and at least three of them are now formally dedicated to image production.

After that, when I was 15 years old, I decided to leave the community. I studied a Bachelor of Arts and Humanities in Miguel Cabrera Artistic Education Center (CEDART) which is a very interesting pedagogical design in Mexico. In fact, some of those who made up this group of Fundación Comunalidad had studied there, such as Ángel García and Estanislao García and I think that for me it was like the way forward, as the one they had followed. In those days, that high school had a very high load of arts and humanities and we learnt very little about science. There was an effort by all the teachers to develop very strong and very clear critical thinking. The truth is that for me the CEDART was a very important stage in the development of very strong argumentation, discussion and questioning skills, and with three years of acting preparation as well. At that time I wanted to be an actress and I made an effort to do it, until I realized that there

is one thing that I find very sad: the pedagogy of acting is in many cases a terrorist pedagogy, the actor has to suffer. So in the professional schools, the National School of Theater Art and the University Theater Center, there are thousands of horror stories about those experiences of suffering that they make to the actors.

It was a very demanding preparation I had there with Luis Crevantes, and I think that I will always have that level of discipline for my whole life. I think it was a place that greatly shaped my character and artistic discipline. Coming out of there, I was very tired and exhausted because it had been so strenuous. I slept four hours a day, a barbaric thing. So my decision was to stop studying to find out first what I was going to study, because if I wasn't going to study acting, I wasn't very clear about it.

This moment coincides with the creation of a training project called *Mirada Biónica* ("Bionic Look"), promoted by Isabel Rojas and Bruno Varela. They were pleased to grant me in that process and I am very grateful for that, but I am also very grateful because Bruno and Isabel did several very wise things. One of them was designing a training from the understanding of audiovisual art, beyond the cinema and its classic structures that I didn't even know. I didn't even watch movies back then. My whole audiovisual reference were *telenovelas,* or soap operas. If I wanted to create something, it was soap operas. So one of the things they did very well is work, again, with a lot of freedom. Telling me "Luna, grab the camera and go to record whatever you want. What you want is what you want ". My first work is a super naive piece about a person playing with gum. It had no greater depth in life, a totally informal exercise. Bruno immediately told me how to download the material and showed me how to use Final Cut to edit it, which is what I use today in its new versions. I started playing with that program to understand how it is played at a formal level with the image. I think I was very fortunate that someone like Bruno encouraged me to keep making things like that.

Then I presented another project that had more structure in the sense that there was a premise that was being placed in the video. It's also a lot of formal experimentation, with a number of mind-blowing effects and image manipulations. But there was already a premise that was being considered in the image and that result was very reciprocated, I would say, by Bruno and Isabel.

They motivated a lot to keep making things. It was not a matter lik "Congratulations! It was beautiful" but it was like "Make more, make more!" and they gave me a lot of confidence that I could make more things. They also did something else that was very fortunate, which was exhibiting my work. So, with that first short called *Sin Tiempo*, I started to be in festivals and to understand what those things called "festivals" were like. From there I did another project, when a visual artist in Oaxaca, whose name is Ana Santos, invited me to work. I was the figure of the character that she was looking for as an actress and since I still wanted to act back then, she invited me to act in the project and we filmed. I was already making things, so she allowed me to edit that video called *Mare* and it ended up being a co-director of that film. It is a contemplative film, I think it is one that I still like a lot.

After that I started freelancing very locally in Oaxaca, making institutional videos and documentaries. Then I found the need to live university life, because I was already working and I felt that I was skipping a stage in my life. I went to study in Guadalajara thanks to the invitation of an artist friend Oscar Tanat that I appreciate and admire a lot, who told me about the school and that above all it was a free school. I paid 120 pesos per semester throughout my career to study a film career with very good facilities and very good equipment. So obviously it takes a whole admission process: you take an exam and then three interviews and it is super difficult to enter the program but I was fortunate that they admitted me. There began a very complex process for me, because I came from very open and modern learning processes that continues to be very revolutionary, about how to view art or view creative processes. Entering the University of Guadalajara (UDG) was a lot of work for me, like finding that I had to call the teacher "teacher" and sit in seats that were set literally in rows, when I was coming from processes where everything was done in a circle. There are things that now make me laugh a lot, things that I really didn't understand back then.

I also arrived very presumptuous, because I made video art and had exhibitions in museums, so for me what I was doing was super fun. In addition, I came from a very stimulating context where my whole context was telling me "How cool, make another one!" And arrived at a place where they told me "It is disgusting what you are making". Video art is very despised from the film academy, very despised! it's like pooping. It was very tough for me to understand what film was.

I entered the Audiovisual Arts Degree, which in reality was a film career, but they could not give it that name due to bureaucratic issues. So I started to watch films and to understand what was called filmmaking. I began to make fiction the first two years of my degree. It was very difficult for me to understand all the protocols, all of that was very strange. I came from playing, from another kind of conversation, concerns and reflections. I also came from Oaxaca 2006, a hyper politicized context and it was to arrive in Guadalajara where the conversation of the young people was not politicized. Today it has changed a lot, but in my time it was not like that. For me the shock was very strong.

I was making video art and for me that was filmmaking. I can say that I am a very privileged person because my artistic development started from a very young age at the age of 9, and by the age of 15 I was already exhibiting in museums with my photos and the photos of my *paisanos*. In all my conversations or my social nucleus between the ages of 15 and 21 (until I went to Guadalajara) were artists all the time, paintings, exhibitions...It was Oaxaca! the Contemporary Art Museum of Oaxaca (MACO), the Graphics Arts Institute of Oaxaca (IAGO) or the Álvarez Bravo Museum. Zapoteco artists and activist Francisco Toledo did not teach me, but he built an entire infrastructure in which I lived. I think I was just that generation that lived through that glorious time of Toledo, the time when you had a place like the IAGO with a lot of books and I could sit there as long as I wanted. That was arriving in the city of Oaxaca at 15 with that free places in addition to a lot of access, like I remember being in symposiums and many things about "Contemporary art" that I did not understand then but all that was a very strong influence. Then I went to Guadalajara to think about film in such a schematic and orthodox way, I didn't understand, but I wanted to live university life, so I had to put up with it.

I was discovering what a script was, for example. I think that my script teacher, Arturo Arango, was a fundamental piece for me to continue, because I was about to leave, I couldn't stand it. I would do the tasks and they would tell me "Why are you doing experimental video?" And I was like "For me this is not experimental, I am doing the task you just asked me to do." There was an encounter with the pedagogical form and I had many encounters with my teachers and my tutors, because I also came from questioning. I had been educated to question, not only in my family, but also in high school. So I was able to claim that they lacked pedagogy to teach film, with some arguments that now I think must have sounded super mean.

My tutor told me to hold on, calm down and be patient. And well, I was patient, I held on. One of the things that I am very grateful for having studied in Guadalajara is that it was there and it was not the center of the country, because although it is a city of 8 million inhabitants, it is a province and there is a relationship with audiovisual production that it is very different from the modes of production in the center of the country. Also, the UDG did not have much structure at that time for the financing of the students' work and that automatically generated a very strong need for self-management, because if didn't, I would not have been able to do things. So I am grateful for University because for an infrastructure that I did have: the equipment, the space, the editing rooms. Also the very humanist reference of Boris Goldenblank, who was a very orthodox filmmaker but very much from approaching film as a motor of social change. I think that's where I was able to open a conversation in my head. And also what gave me a lot of time to watch movies, because I hadn't watched movies, and I was able to see a lot of movies in those years.

For me, the bachelor's degree was sitting around watching movies, which is like what more do you want? I watched everything, because I had not watched anything. And it's cool, there is a load of movies to watch, I am not yet that super cinephile person, but that helped me. Also as a human being, in terms of learning to live with people who were very different from me. The context of the people I studied with is a context of very, very, very different people. Later I realized that it was something very similar to the reality in all the cinematographic guild that I´ve come to know. From the place where I came from, it was very normal to ask where you come from, because it is very normal to refer to which culture you are from. When I got there it was not important to say where you were from as it did not matter, and it was because there is not such a strong identity. For me, those are the things that at a personal level have placed me with great privilege. I do know where I come from, and that does make a difference with other people and with other artists, because I don't have to ask myself what I belong to, and that logic of belonging to a culture does feel that it does something very different. It is a privilege.

It also made me learn to live with people from cultures that are very different from mine, with very different values, and to try to make myself understood in that world. I did realize that there were words that seemed strange to them, like having to explain what *tequio i*s. Realizing that it was not understood was like "Oh! The world is not like Guelatao" and it's crazy, because I knew it from growing up watching television: I grew up watching soap operas where they said Guadalajara, not

Guelatao. And then it was arriving in Guadalajara and realizing that they don't know what Guelatao is. So I do know a lot about them, but they don't know anything about what cultural differences imply and there is no sensitivity to that. This is also very complex to analyze and reflect on today.

Anyway, after that I returned to Oaxaca. I already knew that I wanted to go back because I obviously wanted to live in the region, because you live very well here and you drink coffee, good coffee. I have always been very clear that I am interested in a quality of life and thinking about traffic jams is something I do not want to do every day. I already knew that I was going to come back to Guelatao and I was working at that time with a group called the Audiovisual Cooperative with Carlos Espinosa and Laura Ramírez. We wanted to put together a project from this mythical idea that everyone has had of "What if we make a bunch of shorts films and then we put them together and then we make a long?" But in the end, making a lot of shorts is making a movie when you see it in budget terms. From there we planned to make short films with folks here and there, and we thought about making workshops for the folks to get into it. There I said "We have to do a workshop in my community"

What Mariana did when she arrived here in Guelatao and developed such a long-term training process changed my life. For me it was very necessary to be able to do these kinds of processes. I had already facilitated workshops since I was sixteen, when we started facilitatin photography workshops to other kids in the community and elsewhere. When I stopped studying, I did a project called "Theater, radio and photography as communication tools for the sexual and reproductive rights of young people in the Sierra Juárez." Since then, for me, theater, radio or photography (which were like my communication media) were tools of motor of social change. I had then developed a project where we formed a team of promoters, so to speak, in sexual and reproductive rights, who were artists, photographers, theater workers or did radio. We were working in various communities and we learned very hard, it was the first project I led and there are many important lessons learned from that experience

I was eighteen years old, leading a team where all were my best friends. I think the first thing we learned, now that I think about it, is not to work so hard. The team broke down a lot because we worked too much and we worked too much because the people I worked with studied and then worked and also had this project. Then you burn out. We were very young and we came from

sleeping four hours a day in high school, we held on a lot and moved emotionally very strongly, because it was a moment of sexual discovery that was also very strong for us, but emotionally it was not something manageable. I did not have the experience to handle it, I did not understand so clearly that we needed to sleep, that we had to eat. Now I see it and say "how wrong we did it", but at the same time it was a time of much learning. It was a very exacerbated project, it was not only theater and photography, it was radio as well. It was not a community, there were like five and many workshops. Now I think about it and I think about how it has been difficult to contain the madness and the desire to do things, because you start doing too much and you burn people, because not all of us handle fatigue and stress in the same way. But we got burnt, and that was very sad because then it did not allow us to continue the project. However, each of us gave continuity to that project in other ways, there are people who made radio soap operas on the same topic or who got much more involved in sexual and reproductive rights activism.

After returning from Guadalajara, what happened was that we had presented a project for funding called "Oaxaca I Love You. Pilot Project of the Itinerant Audiovisual Camp (CAI)[4]". That first project involves an investigation that we do not really have as a deliverable input, but we did interview and speak with Guillermo Monteforte from Ojo de Agua organization and many other people. The CAI was going to last five weeks at the beginning and he told us that it was better to make it shorter, with three weeks. They thought it was absurd anyways and that it wasn't going to work. In 2011 we were planning the project and in 2012 it was executed. These are very important years: at the same time the Oaxaca Cine scene was happening, where I worked in a first stage. At the same time, Roberto Olivares had a great year with *Silvestre Pantaleón*, the premiere of *Norteado* by Rigoberto Pérez Cano, and I had a package of shorts from the university and the documentary that I was looking to present in some places. All this together got me and Damián López, to create a project called "*Aquí Cine*. Itinerant Cinema Show", in which we also traveled through various communities and presented the films. It was a very important place for me to learn what films were really made for. I understood that it made no sense if I made movies if they were not exhibited. .

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[4] CAI 1 – Campamento Audiovisual Itinerante

With Damián, we later developed a second stage of this project to train community screening projects in Oaxaca, and from there arose the *Aqui Cine* network. It was a process that began to play along with the presentation of the CAI. After having made that trip of those screenings, the project that was only film workshops got together with a project where there were presentations by artists, reflections, conversations and community television. That is why I think it is very important to re-history the history of the CAI because it has a lot to do with what was happening in Oaxaca at that time, the other projects that were at the same time, and all the thinking that was happening around it. The first CAI in 2012 begins with a conference by Jaime Martínez Luna on *Communality* and one by Yásnaya Aguilar on linguistic diversity. We held these two talks during the eight editions of the CAI and it cements the philosophical basis of audiovisual production.

With the whole thing about *Communality*, I was clear in a much more organic way that there were other ways of organizing audiovisual production and that we must continue to insist on being able to name them, because it is not that they do not happen, but that we have to name them more so that more will happen, too. It is about making visible how powerful collective creation is and the idea of collective creation comes from having grown alongside such processes with children's music, theater, puppetry and painting. My parents made tours in several communities where they came to a community and did the theater, painting, music workshop and did collective creation with the children in the community and presented them at the end to the whole town. If you think about it, I'm not actually doing anything that they haven't done before, in a way it's a recycle. For me it's very important to evoke it because it's not just a matter of the ideas that I came up with. The only thing I did was being able to function as a funnel for many processes that were happening at the same time. Then the funnel of being able to converse widely with Yásnaya and be able to have a different understanding of filmmaking from understanding the linguistic diversity that this country has, and then all the stories that are not being told and placed on the big screen. On the other hand, Damián had many years making workshops in communities with *Mano Vuelta* collective, where they did the community television process. So what we did was gather that, while involving the experience of Ojo de Agua. In the first edition it was the Mal de Ojo experience, and the *Transferencia de Medios* experience, both experiences that made the local history of audiovisual production for young people who were learning.

We also involved a very open look to experimentation. Bruno Varela is a very fundamental piece within the CAI project, because Bruno himself has a very divergent philosophy and conception of audiovisuals. It's amazing to always listen to him, I think my process made me very different in every way having had classes with Bruno Varela before college. When I returned I wanted Bruno to be the one to teach, he is a person who generates a very important movement of audiovisual reflection for you and very few people do that. Pressing buttons can be learned from many people, but reflecting on and questioning and criticizing the use of image and language, as it is something that I owe a lot to Bruno and that is why we involve him in the CAI project. Just like Elena Pardo who makes expanded cinema, she was also sharing from the first year, and she also comes from that ecosystem of thinking about audiovisuals in a very different way.

There is also the whole history of filmmaking by Indigenous peoples with Ojo de Agua, which has always been a super important collaborator from the first year. And then there is another part that we could say was the part of Laura and Carlos and that Mariana added later, which is the most classic part of film schools, but it was mixed with thinking about the training space, also experiencing the exhibition. Every night we had a screening open to the public where, on the weekends, there were also talks and community activities. It was something that we began to trace edition with edition where the first year, what we did in community activities was to start with a ritual, then we did many concerts to also connect people through music, with the people who came to the community. So, in Bruno's words, the CAI is a Frankenstein, it is precisely that image that brings together many elements, concepts, and that is what made or generated that story. Now it is being transformed again by the pandemic, but we will see what it leads to.

In 2012 was the first CAI, in 2013, in Amatlán we began to train around the exhibition and screenings. In Amatlán it was one week, in Capulalpam in 2014 it was three intense weeks of training on screening. Everyone who joined continues to do things professionally in relation to screening. These are things that were not scalable at the beginning, but because of that Frankenstein, a very complex and also very wide network of contacts was generated and a community in many other regions. These things that are not easy to make tangible. But you see people like Isis Choi from Colima, who came here once and then people from Colima began to always send someone. People in Puebla, also making another micro-universe; people from Durango, because we made an alliance with the Durango Film Festival to finance them sending

people. So there are small units in various parts of the country. And I think that it is very difficult to measure, in that sense, what is the impact that the CAI has had.

I think it is very important to mention those pieces that can be foundational pieces of the CAI. Also people like Marina Azahua, who is a super powerful Mexican essayist who has a very important book *Involuntary Portrait*, with essays on the image as a mechanism of violence, and we started to work on that in the CAI since 2015. This reflection has been accompanying and has also awakened other reflection gaps within the CAI. In 2016 we started working with narrative practices, from 2015 I met Alfonso, from the Narrative Practices Collective, and we began to collaborate. In 2016, the narrative practices were a super badass framework because it is exactly what the cinema does: the review of the narratives and the review of the point of view from where you are telling that story and why you are telling this story. We then began to place workshops on narrative practices at the CAI and invited people from the group to help us facilitate conversations about violence. And when violence begins to be named, well, it begins to appear.

So if we think about CAI from this journey, we have: the narrative practices, the reflection on the image as a mechanism of violence, all the reflection on linguistic diversity and the narratives not told on the big screen; there is communality, filmmaking experiences from Indigenous Peoples (and experimental and expanded within that universe), and there is the traditional filmmaking that we come from because we come from a film school. And there is the community television, which has also been very important, and community radio. Finally in CAI 8, they began to do the intranets or local networks, and experimented doing the CAIFlix. So there are already ten very complex things that, if we put them on paper, we have a master's or a doctorate because they are very complex academic philosophical structures that go hand in hand, but they are other ways of understanding audiovisuals. I did not take philosophy in my undergraduate degree and for me it is like "How can you not have a place for the development of the thought of the image?"

In addition, it came from this process of sexual and reproductive rights and from the first CAI, it had the topic of prevention of adolescent pregnancy, then the first year we had a gender workshop. For example, Itandehui, who I worked with at the age of eighteen,joined the CAI to raise the issue of how gender is constructed. Let's say the thing, at a basic level, because there was not much time to go deeper, but in the end, we gave condoms to the whole band and in all the CAI there were

always condoms to give away. So if you add that, there is an eleventh great line of work. They are all those things. And the other one that is the one of the screening, in the 6th and 7th edition, we began to do film criticism training. So it is a very complete thing and it could continue to be much more complete, but I believe that we will now see where the issue is going with the pandemic.

That is why I think it is very important to write that re-historicization of CAI so that today it cannot be a story about me and Laura. Because if Yásnaya, Jaime or Damián had not been there, it would not have been the CAI. We would have given a little workshop and it would have turned out well, but what the CAI is today is so much more. And it is important to name people like Bruno or Elena who are thinking about audiovisuals from another side.

I feel that there is something very cool about CAI that we are also trying to rescue. When we started it we had just come out of the school and we were 25 years old and we had that energy. The perspective of someone 25 years old is not the perspective of the older person that I am now, and that is very important. That is why for me it was very important to have a generational replacement since 2016, because the people to whom my algorithms send the information from the CAI are people of 30 and over. My relationship with younger people is distant and I have to do very different strategies to reach out with 15-year-olds. One is listening to people of 15 and 25, who are the generation that grew up with the Internet and Apps. I feel that my relationship with audiovisual consumption is older, I still haven't opened my Tiktok! To think about where this training is going and think about how the digital world should be in relation to that, it has to be up to people who are in those ages, those are the ones who will know where and what they need, and what to visualize. In college I always felt that I was learning to make films as if it were going to come out in the 70s. With the training I had, if I had gone out in the 70s, that would have been great, but no! I graduated in 2011. There are a number of things that I should have learned if it was an updated career, but I did not.

With the pandemic, we have no choice but to think about this in the digital world, in many ways. I just made a short film online with youth from 15 to 19, we were working for three weeks and it is about to be released in a few weeks before we finish the post-production process. It was made with 10 youth from 10 different places in Mexico and a girl from Guatemala. These were people who would never have met. I tried to generate exchange and teamwork processes through two-

hour sessions. I was not used to that and it was interesting. I had a good time, the result is a portrait of what they wanted to do and say. It's a bit down, but that's also the world and what do you do to it? It makes me want to continue working like this a bit, because there is something rich to explore, which is that perhaps with much less resources (perhaps, because it is relative because computers cost) we can do things that were unimaginable. Like we just made a 6-minute movie, filmed in 10 different and totally distant places like Puebla, Tamaulipas, Mexico City, Oaxaca ... thinking about that before was something else and now we can do it all the time.

That workshop was an invitation from the BBC and it is a short that will be published on a platform they have called BBC Reel, which is a platform for short films. There is my film *Tio Yim*, and in an interview I said that I was doing training processes and they invited me to do that. It's some sort of videoletter. I feel that we have to experiment and the experience is still super important and I think we will continue. What the CAI team did last year was to do it with very few people, but they did and I went and facilitated a workshop. I felt like I was doing something forbidden, and that is super important. I am very grateful to the team, they were very brave, I would not have dared. I couldn't even think about it. They did it and I have that feeling that we are doing prohibited things, in some way what we do is an insurrection, questioning what we question from where we question it. It is an audiovisual insurrection and we are doing it, and it is prohibited by the system.

What we need are processes like the ones others have so wisely nurtured. CineToo has another history and there are other processes because it depends on Guelatao´s Assembly and whether it moves or not depends on an assembly energy that is very complex and that is why it is super cool. The Cine Too Lab was to rethink what the CAI did not address, and it has been a very rich process in the sense of understanding self-taught, accompanied, supportive and autonomous training. A project in which they decided which teacher they wanted to receive classes from. What else do you want? We invite them, but we have to pay him, because you have to make sure there is no labor exploitation and those things, so you have to get money, make raffles, sell mezcal, sell shirts, whatever, and the team achieved that. Both JEQO and Cine Too Lab are self-managed projects that have no debts and are a much more intense learning process than the one I experienced in college, because it implies a greater responsibility to assume commitments and to make the use of resources transparent, but that is making movies too, learning to solve, produce and do things. They are not closed processes, we will see them when the films finish, hopefully this year, there

are going to be three or four very important films. JEQO was a self-managed project designed in short films, those already exist and the girls are producing a movie with funds from IMCINE, building an audiovisual cooperative of feminist women. There we are, learning along the way.

Going back to being *alebrije*. It's fun. For many years I have been saying that I no longer want to be a woman. I think that speaking of myself as an *alebrije* is a political exercise. On the one hand, to denounce that women are killed and I do not want more women to die, so then you have to stop being women, because the problem is to be women? then you have to stop if it is and see if we end the problem. Obviously it is ironic, but I think that this patriarchy has us so much against the wall that rethinking it from something other than a woman for me right now is a very important exercise. Also not forgetting that gender is a cultural construction and therefore we can construct ourselves culturally as alebrijes . And *alebrijes* are cool, my people have exploded the imagination building these figures. I think that is what human beings are, in reality we are *alebrijes*, each human being is made of so many things and we do not look alike, then break the idea that we are women and we are all the same. An alebrije is a fantastic animal that is the mix of many animals, and that is very fundamental, to understand that we are the mixture of many others. So I'm not doing anything new that Ojo de Agua hasn't done, or my dad, they already did this. I think I am just slower in many ways, but I am repeating many things and I do not worry because I feel that what is happening to me is the reencounter with the common sense, the sense of understanding life from another side.

El día que decidí ser árbol fue hace poco tiempo,
desperté un día y no salí de la cama.
Me quedé viendo por la ventana a un árbol grande y amarillo.
Me acordé que tenía muchas cosas que hacer
y las dejé caer como ese árbol había dejado caer sus hojas.
Pensé en el movimiento del árbol.
Él crece ahí sin presumirlo, en cámara lenta.
Adentro.
Adentro de mí se mueve todo.
Se estremece y mis manos arden,
duelen.
Algunos humanos dicen que las emociones las sienten en su estómago;
yo las siento en las manos.
Arden.

*

Nos han querido borrar, pero aquí estamos
Y estamos con todos nuestros muertos
Han pretendido que no-soñemos
Pero tenemos sueños propios
Universos propios
Nuestros propios monstruos
Nuestras propias limpias
No somos tú
Somos otras millones de formas de existir
Crecimos viendo de frente al sol
Crecimos defendiendo la tierra que pisamos
Moriremos en ella otra vez.

*

Queremos sanar siglos de dolor
Necesitamos vernos
Hay que saber quiénes hemos sido ¿Para qué estamos aquí?

*

Los ojos son para ver
Los mismos ojos que se comerán los gusanos

No estamos de paso
Venimos a sanarnos
Somos los hijos y los nietos de los que han luchado
Somos las madres y los padres de los que seguirán luchando
No importa cómo me llames Importa que sé quiénes somos
Sabemos a dónde vamos
A sanar nuestros corazones

*

Somos los que nunca acabarán de definirse
Imágenes que se reconstruyen en el paso del tiempo
Hacemos lo que queremos que vean los que vienen
Los que seguirán luchando

*

Nos toca hablar
Nos toca mirar
Porque nuestros ojos miran y se comen el mundo
Porque nuestros oídos oyen y lo reconocen todo
Nos toca sanar la violencia
Nos toca celebrar la grandeza de nuestras abuelas
Nos toca mirar y mirarnos de frente y a los ojos

*

Nosotros sabemos cómo nos llamaron nuestros abuelos
No importa la forma con que intentes definirnos
Importa la fuerza de nuestros corazones
Para imaginar un mundo lleno de nuestras historias
De nuestros propios sueños
Con nuestros ojos
Con nuestros colores
Tendrás miedo de mí
Miedo de lo que no conoces
Tendrás que vivir
Porque estamos y con nosotros los que siguen

*

Nuestro cine no es para los ojos que no quieren vernos
Es para nuestros ojos, para los ojos que apenas vienen

Contamos historias para sanar nuestros corazones
Para hacer justicia Para hacer memoria
No trabajamos para ti
Trabajamos para que los que vengan sepan de dónde vienen

*

No importa como nos llames hoy
Nacimos mirando al sol de frente
Quedarán nuestras películas
Quedarán las historias de nuestras abuelas
Quedará la música de nuestros padres
Quedarán nuestros ojos

(Marán, 2021)

4. Kirsten.

Northeast Alberta / Amiskwaciwâskahikan

My name is Kirsten Lindquist. I'm Cree Métis, with Euro-settler ancestry from Northeast Alberta. I'm currently a PhD student in Indigenous Studies at the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta and I´m just starting to define myself as artist, or performer but I would probably just call myself more of a storyteller, or a creator or a transformer, just because I never really identified with the artists label or even the performer label. I resonate more with "creator", "storyteller" and "transformer", and I think that's the way I approach my methods and my way of communicating through visual and movement expression.

If I was thinking of my journey as an artist, and what I perceive that other people think of artists, I didn't start that until recent work with my Master in Arts in doing digital photo collages with Indigenous youth and some of the more recent dream photo montages and collages. But if I think of myself as a storyteller and a creator, I have been raised since a young age to visualize stories even though they're not on paper. Using my imagination was encouraged by my father and my grandfather, they always told these stories and I would imagine them in my mind's eye and I've always been connected to dreaming, which I think is a part of visualizing different possibilities, rather than just the material reality outside, in our external; that there's such an imaginative and, I guess I would call it a technology to imagine within yourself and I think by sharing that, the next step is sharing that with other people who may resonate with your imaginings. I think this is integral to what folks call Indigenous Futurities, to think about what sovereignties could look like through art.

More into my technical training, I started in business with a marketing degree and then I worked in advertising, so although I was working more on the spreadsheet sides of organizing within the advertising industry, I became good friends with some of the designers in the firm and learning how they work through a process of coming up with a concept was really interesting for me. So, although I didn't have the technical skills, just learning from them how to brainstorm and come up with a concept, that's something that stuck with me.

When I went back to Native Studies I got a job working as an editorial assistant for Aboriginal Policy Studies and part of that was doing a very simple layout of the journal, but I was able to take a training course in InDesign, so that was my introduction with digital layout and art. And then again, going back to working with the youth for my MA project, I found that you can use different photo design Apps, so I started using the one called Picmonkey. That one just has a lot of tools or templates that you can experiment with, so that was easy for the students to not become overwhelmed with creating from a blank slate but you can pull from templates and examples that are already there. Then I integrated that PicMonkey into a course, I taught Indigenous New Media for two years, in summer offerings, so I worked with the students in my course through PicMonkey and we did photo manipulation, short videos and websites.

I guess with that, in the purpose of layering, there's like a pattern in the ways that I tell my stories through the digital photo collaging or photo montaging which comes from Dwayne Donald, who is a professor in education at the University of Alberta. He does this river valley tour and he talks about how the stories are embedded in the landscape, the historical stories. So he defines this as *pentimento* and it's a process where you're restoring an old painting, and you wipe off the paint that there is another painting; a different painting that's underneath the painting that's on top. So there's like these layering of stories and he uses that as an act of resistance to what is known as Edmonton´s story. When he goes through the river valley, he's exposing these layers of stories, of integrating the language, integrating knowledge about the constellations and how that's a reflection of the landscape that we walk through and how again, there're so many rich metaphors that you can use with the layering. So when I was teaching the course, I wanted students to take a picture and then use the the effects in the PicMonkey App to retell the story, to expose the the colonial layers underneath and to get down to a layer of what is core to their own storytelling in relationship within the confines of the assignment which was the University of Alberta campus. So, it was about where can we expose the layers of that using this particular method or tool?

Sometimes I forget that I've done some of these things. You do these short stints, and I'm talking from my experience, I mean I was in business school and then I was an advertising for two years

and then I went back to do a Bachelor in Arts for three years and then Master in Arts for two years and then working back at the faculty for another three years and then back in the PhD for now three years. So it's broken out into these small chunks and it's important for me to practice finding those threads that really have been there all along and trying to go back and realize this is a very small short story within a very large storied landscape of my life. It's been a work in progress, but I've always been trying to find where I've planted the seeds all along, and I guess, harvest some of the medicines of the lessons that I've learned.

The turning point for me to leave advertising and return to post-secondary in Native Studies and Environment/Conversation Studies, well turning points, was realizing that the stories and media we were creating and promoting, weren't grounded in truth. With that, there wasn't any real responsibility for speaking these stories into being. Our largest client was a major supplier for the oil and gas industry, and we were creating a Health, Safety, and Environment campaign for employees. After meeting with employees at Fort McMurray sites, one employee's comment stuck with me, "why would the company pay to promote safety, health, and recycling when we are literally ripping up the earth for a product that causes pollution and climate change?". Cognitive dissonance, but also feelings of regret that I should have known better. I started looking at environmental studies programs, and then came across the combined degree program between ENCS and Native Studies. My roommate at the time was on her building's condo board, and the president was also the advisor for the Faculty of Native Studies. When she introduced me to him, I mentioned I was leaving advertising to go back to university, and that I was looking into applying to the ENCS/NS program. He convinced me that I could be registered through Native Studies. And this was a time-space that I started returning to myself, figuring out my values, telling stories with responsibility. At times, I still feel uncertain of my center when I'm in a state of (re)(un)learning, but I try to remember to be a better relative, and that takes work everyday. I cringe at some of my past behaviours and words, but I try to remind myself that I have to show up more truthfully in the present and be open for more teachings as I move through this world.

When I'm consciously thinking of how folks are shaping my work, I look to Erin Konsmo, who is a Métis digital artist but also a multimedia artist, and I've worked with them also during my MA project, as they were my community advisor. With that MA program, we had an academic

supervisor, but then we also had a community advisor that helped us with our community governance projects. So Erin has a lot of digital art background and that shaped the way that I approached digital art. Lana Whiskeyjack is also someone that is shaping the way that I approach my craft in the way that she integrates her language learning with her art, and how she approaches it through a seasonal approach, informing how stories are told in certain seasons, and I'm still trying to figure that out. I'm routed back to Wilfred Buck who's a Cree knowledge keeper around constellations and he said that between the winter solstice and then coming up to the equinox here, we're approaching that, that is time for dreaming and the time for sharing stories. So, thinking about what are the seasonal practices that I can integrate into my art, and the way that I share it seasonally and that is still something that I'm figuring out.

I'm starting to create this web of relations of the people that obviously consciously informed my practices, but then also acknowledging that another kind of metaphor for the photo montage or collage and storyboarding is that, with colonialism and capitalism, and how life has become so fast paced, is that we subconsciously consume images every day, and more so if we're working online, like if we're researching. Now, when my office is in my bedroom, I can be working maybe 12 or 14 hours a day, because this is my reality right now. Imagine just going through different websites, you're scrolling through social media, you're video streaming and the amount of images that you are subconsciously absorbing. How does that impact the narrative of what is Indigeneity? We're being sponges of all this information so what is a conscious practice of Indigenous sovereignty or of being with the Land when we're absorbing the environment around us? So we need to make, again, a conscious practice.

In my own truth that's slowly picking up on the Cree language and trying to connect like Lana Whiskeyjack does in connecting the language to art, because within what I'm beginning to learn about the Cree language is that there are root words. And then you put these root words together to describe what looks like a larger word. But again, it's these little stories that make up a big story that is the language and most Indigenous languages are verb based languages, so it's more about the process than nouns. I think that with learning the language, then that is going to influence the way that you practice. So when you're creating, if you can connect that with the language, I think it helps filter or become more body aware when we're living in such violent times, and I have

privilege as hermit so I'm limited to the violence that some folks are experiencing every day, but that's another thing that I have to think about with my art. How is my art addressing or telling the story about how different people's bodies are impacted by colonialism and capitalism? And I'm getting there. I think, where I'm not as competent in my writing, I'm hoping that through a visual representation I'll be able to describe what I see in my mind's eye, and then I can describe it afterwards and connect with people.

To dream of an ideal digital world, I think workshopping is important, and I'm not sure how that will look like, but obviously through the pandemic we can meet online and engage online. I also think about Alex Wilson a Cree scholar from Opaskwayak Cree Nation Nation, it's the same community that Wilfred Buck is from and she mentions that just to point out that, like the cloud and the digital space have a carbon footprint on the environment. So I'm trying to think of ways where we can engage in a digital community or virtual communities with a digital landscape, but also, how do we compensate when we're uploading all these images to what we think is the cloud that in our mind is not there, but it has an impact, and there is an energy to it. And, as part of that energy is greenhouse gas emissions. Part of the media toolkit[5] that I did, and for the master's project was online but on the Land. So that is something that I'm still thinking about, because we share so much through social media, depending on the platform, people respond to photos of people sharing their experiences, or sharing graphics or sharing memes and how that is an important educational tool, but how do I now take this information? I have a body, I'm in a local environment, how can I reach out to the people who may not have access to fiber optic broadband? What are the ways that we can share these images? Or maybe it's just sitting down and sitting around a campfire on the Land and telling the stories because maybe the visuals aren't needed when we're in person together having those experiences. So I'm still in the dreaming phase to see what a digital landscape could look like.

To further explain my MA project, I didn't really have a defined shape of a project when I was coming into it, which is kind of dangerous when you have a required timeline to graduate, but you

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[5] "A Digital Snapshot – A Media Arts Justice Toolkit Approach to Support Indigenous Self-Determining Youth" https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/cjfy/index.php/cjfy/article/view/29391

also have to be flexible when you're going into the community. When I went into the high school where most of the students were Indigenous youth, Indigenous students, and the school didn't have a teacher for a particular time block. So I said, I can sit with them and we can do a media project. Originally it was going to be a photo voice, storytelling project, but I wanted to reflect more on the process, than use the students' images for my research, so I shifted it into a behind the scenes instructional toolkit, where the Alberta curriculum could potentially integrate some of these methods or teaching tools into the curriculum if they needed to talk about digital media or Indigenous self determination.. So that was the process behind just working with the kids every day for five months. It ended up with the assistance of my community advisor, working through some activities, which are seven activities to integrate storytelling and some of that is integrating digital media into learning more about the colonial history of Canada and how that has impacted education, and how these kind of containers or barriers have impacted the way Indigenous youth relate to self determination. So it's a set of activities and stories to integrate that into the curriculum in the end.

At that time it was also integrating media that they were engaging with, for example, streaming The Walking Dead with pairing that with John A. Macdonald hunger or starvation policies. Then relating or condensing the layers together to see how we think of this linear timeline, but when we work again, going back to the metaphor of layering, when we expose that the layers are all entangled together that is how people are still experiencing the impacts of colonial decisions and legislations 200 years ago. This is that condensing of the timeline and showing that, through storytelling and art, that this is very much present in our lives today.

I think non-Indigenous people can contribute with redistribution of resources, like sharing software subscriptions or any training resources, or providing funds to train youth in these certain programs. I think providing or redistributing resources like the Adobe cloud subscription, which is around $26 a month, means it can become quite expensive for people who want to train within those suites of programs. Even some of the apps like PicMonkey. When I was working with the students I bought the annual subscription and that was $200 a year, so it's still quite expensive for folks if they don't have the additional funds to work on their art. On the back end I just let them just use

my login and my password for the entire year and told them to use my account if they wanted to continue working on their art.

Thinking back to the dreamwork too, is that by creating these images, I think about Karyn Recollet, she's a Cree professor at the University of Toronto and talks about the different ways of glyphing, so creating these symbols as portals to imagine Indigenous futurities. So we can think of digital art as a glyph, or a portal, to engage with an imagining of a different future. I feel with social media, like Twitter, and just the bite size videos that we're switching attention spans, it's harder to read longer. I know my attention span has significantly decreased and "pandemic brain" has also impacted the way that we consume information, so images and memes are a way of communicating some dense thoughts through a visual.

Some people say if you share your dreams, then you will never dream anymore. But I don't know if that's maybe a Christian influence to prevent people from sharing these alternate realities, something that connects with other people, so I don't know if it was the church that said "We don't want to hear your dreams". I've started reading a little bit more about earlier anthropological accounts, such as *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* written by Lee Irwin,which is about Plains peoples' dreaming. This book was okayed by Vine Deloria Jr, as he wrote the foreward, so I hope it's an ethical study. that collective dream sharing transformed the culture. I see this as speaking back to this concept of "the vanishing Indian", where Edward Curtis, the photographer, would take photos of people, I think it was in the early 1900s, with this attitude, "before they disappear here's a book, there are photos of all the (he used the term) Indians, like "this is the last shot photos of their culture". But if you think about it, when we integrate dreaming into the culture transformation, it was taken very seriously when people share their dreams and it would inform an idea of how the culture was transforming by just responding, because you're responding to the ever changing environment. So when we're listening to people's dreams, we have an insight of how things are shifting and how that will impact the transformation of culture.

Culture is always in flux and Indigenous peoples have always been using technologies in response to the changing environments and the changes in societies. I believe that if we get back to more

of a collective dream sharing, we can come up with technologies to make our societies better, to make sure that everybody is looked after and cared for, to address pollution and climate change. I think these innovations are in people's subconsciousness and I think that by dreaming and dream sharing, and maybe that's through this art project that I'm working on, then we can learn collectively, which we are already pulling from the aether. There's the Internet cloud, but I think there's this other energetic aether, because for most folks that are online and scrolling, that there's this gravitation to ideas that people are picking up on and I think it's because everybody's kind of tapped in both through the Internet, but also to this other ethereal body. By dream sharing, and whatever influx in groups (you'd want to be in a group that perceived the dream in a good way. I trust most of the people on my social media) I think that dreaming is a technology that has been used for millennia.

In calling myself a creator and transformer, I want to also break down the categories of what is considered art and science, because I think by keeping art and science in two separate spheres, is also detrimental to our Indigenous futurities and how folks can make connections. Gregory Cajete, he is Native scientist and he has done this presentation for the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, and he talks about how in the language there really isn't a description for artists, that is it was just part of practicing, that songs and dance and communicating through visual glyphing was just part of the culture, so there wasn't a separate role as artists. I think about that, even art, if we don't use those words, what are the other words that we can use? And what are the other words that we could use in Indigenous languages that can describe the process of creating and the process of communicating?

I relate to being a transformer with the language like a medium. When I was going through the process of thinking about dreaming, I had this existential kind of spiral because if everything that I'm absorbing is influenced by the media and the people around me and the conversations that I have, then really, what is my own original thought? I am like, no, do we really have original thoughts? but I'm the only one that knows what it's like to be in my body as well as everybody else, so the stories and the conversations, as well as the violence is that is inflicted upon our bodies, these experiences are all held in the body until we tell it through our own perspectives. So it's both original and it's not original.

I'm still figuring out the theory/practice of research creation and I am thinking about how my practice is related to what the scholarly definition of research creation is, but it's not just creation, it's transformation. Being a transformer means taking that information and reflecting and sitting with it, but also knowing that we can change anytime, if we've made a mistake or just that we have the ability to change or transform at any time. There is some privilege in saying that, but I also hope to create space where people feel that they can change or they can transform into something that is their ideal version of themselves.

Dream Digital Storytelling

March 12, 2021. pawatamowin. ᐸᐊᐧᮎᒍᐃᐧᐣ. *the act of dreaming. January 19, 2020.*

I was not on Earth. Located in "outer space" in an observatory, I observed the movements of stars, planets, and distant galaxies. I seemed to occupy the role of a priestess, an astronomer, a magician/witch, a shapeshifter, and a lover/companion. The observatory was situated between two rooms where lovers from all galaxies travelled for my healing touch. The textiles in the rooms were sensually lined with lush furs, velvet fabrics, and moss.

Tattooed on my body were maps of galaxies as well as instructions for time-space travel in different languages. These tattoos glowed as light or fire underneath my skin and shifted and moved across my body as I engaged with my observatory tools. My skin also glowed when I engaged with my lovers.

My observatory tools animated and shapeshifted with my touch. I wore a necklace that looked like an astrolabe with an amber stone placed in the middle which acted both as a tool and a source of protection. The astrolabe had symbols that looked like the Cree syllabics star chart - nehiyawewin. As I rotated the spheres/circles to orient to a particular galaxy setting, the syllabics that lined up also created a word. The word became an orientation for the speaker with time-space.

Part of my responsibilities were to monitor two satellites which stored specific DNA related information for our collective societies and needed to be stored off the planets. The two satellites that were of importance were named C-01 and S-01.

In the midst of tracking these satellites, I experienced a vision of the Milky Way Galaxy. The planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars were aligning, which could open a portal for interdimensional space-time travel.

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I've been reflecting on dream doulas as a way of a citational practice. With this reflection practice, I've been trying to summarize, at the least, a weekly exposure/influence summary. We curate our lives through our social media, and at this time, our social cohorts. This content and relationality shapes our reality. We are also shaped by and respond to oppressive and violent institutions and social norms; these experiences are intimate and are stored in our body.

Back to dream doulas, I intuitively feel, I birthed this with Lana Whiskeyjack's practice of integrating art and language learning. This vision also came into being through Karyn Recollet's kinstillatory relating and landing practices. The landing here is a safer soft, luscious, and sensual place to land. A place of infinite possibilities and ways of becoming.

5. Joaquín

Yaviche, Oaxaca

My name is Joaquín Yescas Martínez. I am Xhidza, a Zapotec from the Rincon de la Sierra Norte, Oaxaca. I am a digital activist of Indigenous languages, activist of Free Software, of the philosophy of free culture, hacker ethics and community philosophy. I am also a technician, announcer and producer at Radio Bëë Xhidza, Aire Zapoteco. I am an audiovisual producer and recently co-founder of the Xhidza Collective, where I coordinate Xhidza Telecommunications.

I don't know where to start my story, but I'll start with the radio. Some time ago, in 2006, when I was 6 years old, I began to be part of the radio. In reality I was not part of the group, but I always accompanied my uncle and aunt who were in the group of youth who wanted to do it and I liked listening to their talks about what they wanted to do. In the following years, some of them began to attend workshops in different parts of Oaxaca and the country to lay the foundations of how to develop a project and how to get this initiative up and running. Among contacts that arose out there, they managed to specify several things for the radio: get the equipment, how they were going to coordinate the group of young people and how they were going to support the radio.

Several of those things arose from different projects that they obtained with other allied organizations. The most expensive equipment, which was the radio transmitter, was obtained from an organization that donated the equipment. It was expensive equipment for the radio that they were going to test, so they decided to exchange the equipment with another community in which my uncle Oswaldo (who was from the radio team) had already worked to start with a smaller team, because the other radio was one already supported by the community. They tried to present to the community the radio project that they were going to start in Yaviche, but the community did not have the resources to maintain it because it could barely maintain the resource that was destined for other basic issues and they decided not to use it for what was needed in the community radio.

That was how they decided to ask the Community Assembly for permission to start radio as a collective and to find a way to finance the equipment. It was in this way that they got and started

doing radio on December 12, 2009. At that time it was called *Xhbëchhi* radio. I remember why they invited me to be part of the group to do the children's program because they wanted to have one like that in the programming. I started with my voice and they managed the teams: I would talk, tell stories, and that was how I formally began to be part of this team that was doing radio. Afterwards, several people from the community had told them that they did not want it to be called Xhbëchhi, because it sounded ugly, it was "radio of the cornered people", and it was an Elder who proposed to call it *Bëë Xhidza*, or radio Aire Zapoteco. There we started with Radio *Bëë Xhidza*, and I think it was at that moment that my journey as a communicator, hacker, technician and activist took its course. It all had to do with radio in 2009.

I always liked doing radio and I have liked television and film, so they are two things that have always been part of me since I was a child: listening and watching, and wanting to do what happens on television and on the radio. That is why it made me happy to be part of the youth group to start doing it. I say that everything took shape from there, because many things have emerged from the radio. What I always liked was listening. First, mainly, commercial radio stations, since that is what was in the region at that time. Different frequencies came from the Veracruz radio, which is the closest thing here. And listened.

When we went to work on the field, I carried my radio. My uncle had thrown away a radio equipment that according to how it no longer worked, and I asked him if he could give it to me because it was in the trash. I asked him if he could take it with me to check it and he told me that he no longer had a solution, but that if he wanted it to play, I could take it. I was like 7 or 8 years old and I took it with me, I really did not know how to fix that equipment, but I was reviewing: I opened it, did several things, I connected it to the power and *voila!* it worked again. I don't really know what I did, but it worked. At that time two revelations arose within me: that eagerness and ability to fix electronic things, at that time without knowing anything. I say that two things came from there because from there I also began to always listen to the radio, apart from the fact that we had one at home, I had one of my own where I always listened. I was always a listener, but I also wanted to do that, so I used to play as if I was on the radio. That's why when the radio started, I approached the team and was grateful that they also invited me to be part of the group. That is why I think I have liked listening and doing radio so much, as well as the desire to be able to repair electronic things.

I say that I was also a listener and I also liked to watch television. We didn't have a television until 2007, but since we did, I liked it. Everything was for records and analog television, so what I saw there I liked and I said "I want at some point to get to do that, be in a movie" and that remains to be done, but I am already on the right path. In terms of radio, this is what I have been doing since then because I have liked listening, sharing information, music and stories. In short, that: the passion for listening and doing radio.

I think fixing the radio was one of the occasions that made me feel… not technical or hacker, because I didn't know all those terms, but I could fix and repair things like that. Later I was collecting things to repair. Back then they had few electronics issues, they were radios with an analog system and not like they are now. But I think that is the meaning of being a hacker, and I discovered it later by reading and researching. A hacker is someone who seeks to try to solve a problem in any way possible to help other people. It is a more ethical conception of what it is to be a hacker, of trying to find the flaws and fix them, not like what is known as a hacker who steals or does strange things on the Internet.

From being at the radio, several paths have opened up for me in the same direction. I was also learning more about the Land, because within the radio we did a space for experimentation with the Land. Oswaldo did training for promoters such as the Escuela de Promotoras y Promotores Agroambientales (EPPA) and I participated, because from the radio we tried to share and show that it was not just words or sayings, but that many things could be done, such as organic processes and various experiments with the Land regarding the seeding and harvest of different types of crops: how it was sown and what were the sowing techniques to improve the crops, and various other tools and techniques. Also to make an improvement between the Yaviche corn with one that came from Chiapas, and to do it in a way that was not transgenic but rather of seed selection, and it was possible to get a better seed to sow in the community. Now it is known as the seed of Chiapas, it is commonly shared and sown.

This also meant a step to technology. At that time we used private operative systems such as Windows, until we met Peter and Maka in a radio meeting. We started the conversation and we learned what they were doing, and about starting a community telephony in Yaviche due to the need we had in the community to have one that could also be cheaper and locally owned. One of the first issues was that both local and long-distance calls were expensive from the one telephone

booth in the community. The same for the radio, because the people who called to send a greeting had to walk there. To make those clals Communication over the Internet and over the phone was very complicated.

From the moment I met Peter, the opportunity came to set up a community telephone in Yaviche. Although I did not start the process, because it was Oswaldo, I began to listen to what they were talking about. When they came to test the equipment it caught my attention to see what they were doing, and it helped a little in what they needed. With all that approach they were sharing things with me about what they were doing and what were the things they were using. I saw that they were writing codes on computers and it caught my attention, and they were sharing that they use Free Software because I had never seen it. They shared with me that it wasn't Windows, that it was Ubuntu, and I was interested. They left me with several doubts that solved by researching and seeing what was on the Internet in relation to Free Software. First I understood what software was as such, what Ubuntu was, and later I learned about the philosophy behind Free Software, that philosophy of wanting to study, share, modify and use the software. And I started testing.

Everything was happening out of our needs. We had an Internet cafe in the community and I attended it with another colleague and several people. By the time it was my turn, computers were old and didn't work as they did in their early years, so I tried to see what I could do to fix it. Technicians from another community had to come because there was a technician who knew how to repair and install Windows, and at one point he called us and told us that the computers would come to an end. They were thus falling one by one, when I found out about Free Software I was testing with those that according to they were no longer going to work, but oh surprise! They came back to life. Not like before, but they managed to work. Through Peter and Maka, some friends came to help us do the installation and explain more in depth what it was. They sent a friend, and he came once with his partner and they shared with me various things about the software and the distributions for different computers and it was a great fan of what I was learning. Two years ago I found him at the "Latin American Festival of Indigenous Languages on the Internet" in Guatemala, I showed him what he was already doing and learning since then.

After that I was researching and learning on my own. So I was learning and repairing the computers that we had and later the computers that some people in the community wanted to repair. I always shared the idea of Free Software with them, they wanted Windows and I sent them to a man who

did it, but from there I put Windows aside and made everything free and open in the facilities and everything I did. When I started it didn't make as much sense to me, I was just surprised that it had revived computers. It wasn't until I got on the Internet and really learned about the philosophy behind Free Software. I discovered that in theory it was illegal to install Windows on so many computers and I did not know those limitations, I never thought it was illegal to download it because it was on the Internet. When I knew that, I realized that everything had been "illegal" and that all of this was more free, with complexities, but free in several ways: from use, the ways that could be done or improved and how I could share with others persons. It made sense to me.

From there, everything started walking towards what I have been doing since. In the cybercafé youth came to use the computers to do their school work. Not so many children like today, because in schools they did not use computers. I saw how, for the youth, it was difficult for them to do various things, from the basic to the complex. I realized that I had several opportunities in the community by being close to the radio, to Oswaldo and the cybercafé.I realized the opportunity that I had to know these things and that I could share them. For the young people it was an economic loss to have to pay an hour to be there, so what I did with them was to do workshops on weekends for those who wanted to use the computers. At that time not many of the youth came, I think they were ashamed that a child like me taught them to use a computer. But boys and girls my age came and it was interesting to share how it was used. With Windows I did not have that vision, until I met Free Software that I had this vision of wanting to share everything I was learning. So I started the workshops on weekends about Free Software.

Later, in 2014, my uncle signed me up for "Digital Activism in Indigenous Languages Gathering", seeing what I was doing in relation to the workshops and Apps that I was designing with Scratch. He signed me up to keep learning and share what I was doing. I did not know that it was a meeting for people over 18 years old, and I was 13 or 14, so when I arrived the organizers of the event were surprised. It was in Oaxaca City, and I had already been there for the first time in 2010, but not within the city but for some agricultural courses. Therefore it was the first time that I was alone in the city and did not know anything. It was at that meeting that I met again with Raymundo, and I was happy to speak Xhidza better than the last time I had seen him in Guelatao a few years before.

The first time I met Raymundo he thought I spoke Xhidza, but I was just learning. He had spoken to me in Xhidza and I tried to answer him and he was surprised that I did not know how to speak

it well, because he did. In other communities, many people were taught by their parents to their children and later learned Spanish. They were different contexts of each community. I say this because when he spoke to me in Zapoteco, I felt the need to continue sharing with other young people and other children that opportunity that we have to be able to communicate and speak in another language, in one that has come for thousands of years. The same I was sharing it with the radio.

There were several things that I understood and it was until 2012 that I knew how to speak Zapoteco, or Xhidza, in this specific region. As a kid I understood it, but did not know how to speak it. I didn't see it as important because I just didn't need to learn it. Everything changed when I was on the radio because I felt that need to share information in my language, in our Xhidza language. So I started learning with my grandparents. My parents know how to speak it, but they still did not feel the need to want to share it because of both my grandparents and my parents trauma from everything they lived before: they were forbidden to speak the language, they were charged money if they did. It was a deeper problem, they did not talk about it at school, only among themselves because it was what made it easier for them to talk. My parents kept speaking it, but they didn't feel the need to. When I entered the radio and felt that need, it was with my grandparents who I learned with to speak Zapoteco, and I had a vision with the language: there is a great worldview that contains the language and the culture of great knowledge that is shared from generation to generation. And within the Zapotec there are variants, and within them it is in Xhidza, and within the Xhidza the variants of each community.

I say this because at the meeting I met Raymundo again at the Digital Activism in Languages Gathering, years after having met him, I was able to share with him the things he did in relation to Free Software, like workshops and the use of applications. That meeting was very rich because I learned other things and tools for what he wanted and could do with the language and Free Software. Later I entered a series of workshops called the School for the Common Good, because I wanted to develop a project to get computers, equipment, finance the ideas of continuing to do workshops and Applications. I learned different things, some in relation to agriculture, radio, gender and one of the things that I emphasize the most that I liked learning there was how to facilitate a good workshop and have a good methodology to share what I liked to share , and how to structure a portfolio of a project to apply for awards and funding.

At that time I got funding to have more computers and continue doing the workshops and expand my space to make applications and the things I wanted. I created the Xhidza Penguin School (EPIX) with two other colleagues from the radio station, my brother and a colleague from another community who knew how to speak Zapoteco well. It was how we began to make the school with the name officially, with workshops on the weekends and sometimes during the week, inviting young people who had seen that the children were learning and did not want to be left behind. At that time there were computers and there was already a further advance towards technology and approach to these issues of Free Software. When I entered high school there were computers that I repaired, because they were in a warehouse and that is why I never knew we had computers. I repaired them and they are still working. They were things that arose and through that path that I have had with the approach to technology and all that has made me open my thoughts and reflections and share everything that I am learning in relation to when everything changed with Free Software. Everything changed, but it all started with the radio. Everything has been moving forward at least here in the community and this is where I have been sharing.

On the one hand, I have continued with EPIX with workshops and sharing in other communities, such as Tlahui, and in other spaces and in the community itself in schools and the Free Software camp in 2019. On the other hand, I have continued with the radio and currently I have a romantic music program. It is a diverse program of reflection, curious and interesting facts, now from Monday to Sunday every day at night because people have liked it and that is why I have decided to stay every day. That is what I have been doing in relation to radio in addition to being the technician, with everything I have been learning at Techio Learning Program and other workshops, both to help the radio and the community.

Many times the community has had to ask CFE (State´s Electricity Commission) or trained people when they do installations, and they are expensive. I have been able to share this with more of the youth in the community, all in a free way. This issue of "free" (as in freedom) and "free" (as in free of charge) has become complex for me. I have had the opportunity to handle both, free and *free*, share my information freely and do work for certain people without charge. I have had the opportunity to access some scholarships, awards and I have been sustaining myself until now. The

idea has always been to share, and as long as I have the opportunity and resources from the radio, it makes it possible for me not to charge anything I share.

One of the most complicated things has been the economic part. Like getting equipment to do workshops, because we need financing and that becomes complex and a constant challenge. Approaching technology is having the resource to be able to do it, at least that is how it has been in the community. Our income has always been agriculture and today it is a little different because there are other resources that come from the government and there are more jobs that become better but also complex to make places to share. Having the resource is always a challenge. I have been solving it, putting projects together with organizations.

The interesting and beautiful thing is that at least when I was younger, practically my parents took care of the house maintenance and one always works at home helping with different things, but it is different from bringing resources to the house. The luck I have had is getting certain scholarships that allow me to support the family and support myself. Since I entered the radio, I have made different productions that finance the radio and within those I have had some income for myself. So the solutions have been, at least from the radio, to continue producing programs to be able to have the space and share in my free hours, because the work that I have done has not been a paid job. That is one of the main challenges, how to make this sustainable. Lately with everything and the pandemic has become complex, at least with the community, not having space to do workshops. I have focused everything on the Intranet but it is not the same, I will have to see how to continue doing what I want to continue doing.

The idea of the Intranet arose from the need of not having good access to the Internet and also due to the economic issue of the monthly payment that has to be made. We started focusing on the community being able to access content that would be of educational and informative use for those who study at different educational levels. We had the idea and we were thinking and doing, and I had already read about what an Intranet was done but I did not have the knowledge of how it was done. A colleague of those who work in Surco arrived to teach computer science and how technology works and I approached him because he had a lot of knowledge of various things with Free Software. The subject of the Intranet came up and he said that he was going to bring

equipment and he did. When he had to give another course, he brought a small server to start an intranet. With him I was learning and it worked close to the radio, so whoever came to the radio could access the network via Wi-fi to access Wikipedia and other books. The intranet was very small. Unfortunately one day he wanted to give the team a cleaning, and he took it out in the sun and left it on the road and a car passed and crushed the server. Something funny and tragic.

Later he managed to get a small equipment, a Cubie, but it couldn't work and continued with Mariano from the Iktakop Collective in Chiapas, and CEU Xhidza creating the server. In the end the idea of continuing to make the Intranet was a little abandoned, because the colleagues were not so interested, a little because they did not know how it worked and they were simply not used to launching an initiative. Those from EPIX joined and began to support me and so we took it up again and we continue to manage it. Later, to get some financing to improve the intranet infrastructure, the idea of the intranet was joined within Telecomunicaciones Xhidza, the group with the idea of coordinating various telecommunications initiatives. The name we gave to the intranet was *NuestraNet*. It stayed like that for a while but after a meeting I thought that *KieruNet* sounds better, it is "our network" in Xhidza ("net" is for "network", or "threads" in Zapoteco).

The idea is that once the university re-starts running, we can interconnect with other servers and create more and thus create our own network with this domain name, and network of servers. We want KieruNet to be like the main portal of all the servers, in which we can host different Creative Commons and in the future have our own streaming space to share live transmissions and to host our productions and documentaries that we want to do with free licenses. Also in December we want to make the official launch of the XHINE cineclub, as a mix of cinema and Xhidza. I bought a projector and we started doing projections from January and February in the afternoons. Then the pandemic began and getting together was dangerous because people came from other places and we decided to close our space due to the pandemic.

I have had time to think about my dream for several years. One of the things that I think in relation to the Intranet and these new technologies that we have, like 4g and all this, is that at least, to have a technological digital network, that everything is free. From the technologies that are used to the laws that are handled. I understand in a way that the State is in charge of regulating and seeing the

good for the country, but there is still a long way to go for that, for the State to truly support it. As long as the State is the State, it cannot really understand what something communal is, speaking in a general and global way: community in the city and community in localities or towns. Because the State was thought in a different way, in a way of centralizing power. At least what I dream of is that we can at some point create an interconnected Intranet network, where we are the ones who have the rights, not the companies that have the networks and infrastructure, nor the State itself, but that the communities themselves own of all this infrastructure and let us design where it goes, what happens to our networks and what does not happen. At least that is what I have been thinking, create a new network. I know that it is something very utopian, or it seems impossible, but it could become possible if the software and the use that we give to the technologies were looked at from another way. It is to appropriate all this from the communities, including the networks themselves, it could eventually change. I don't know when, but it could. At least it is my dream, to get to change all that. Why not start with us, what are we doing? like these small intranets that we are creating. I see it as possible.

At least when I met Mariano Molox (a Tzeltal teacher that started intranet Yajnoptik), it was there that we talked about the dreams of interconnecting all of our networks. That it was possible, that it is something that has happened with Guifi.net, once we were there dreaming about it. Something that we had talked about was that, that it was very utopian but that at least they already had the infrastructure, and the dream moved forward. If we think about it like this, then an interconnection of people, of the communities themselves, the designs themselves, would change. It is already being done and there are things that we still do not know. When I met Guifi I thought "they already have it". Things are going to change in the future, but at least that's my thought, and my dream is a bit utopian.

This dream, when speaking of community, I am not only speaking of the place where I am right now, but a broader term of community, which encompasses the whole world. Because also within the community, or in my own community, there are things that for me are not right, or that have to improve. We have supported ourselves for many years, I don't know how, but I imagine it must be because of the grandparents and the decisions they made. However, lately the decisions that are made by those of us who are already here and the people who come, not all things are right in the

communities, there are many things to improve. That is why speaking of the community I also speak of beyond that, what we have learned, and those who may be in a city, but there is still a community there and many people have shown it. From there I propose that it is possible. Because there is a community out there and a community here, then with all these places this can be possible. That people can do it from the places they are, thinking of digital sovereignty, in another way of seeing in technological terms.

Because to change all this, you still have to think about the economy, for example, agriculture and many things. At least here what we have thought lately with the pandemic, at least here the community has our land and the seeds to sow them, we can subsist. However, we want and are so interconnected, that it is already a necessity that you need to seek its sustainability. It is something that fortunately is happening for the moment in telephony, it was thought and it is already sustainable at least in terms of how it works, what it pays for and how it works. At least right now it is sustainable, and at least here we are thinking how to make it sustainable in the future. For example, what we have thought about here is telephony, which can support the radio and the Intranet, but how can we make them sustainable without continuing to need financing? In other words, investments will always be needed because we do not have the resources in the communities, but once we have an investment or obtain it, that can be sustainable, both when agriculture in our own communities is better, we return to produce so much for consumption as for export. Thus, there is a higher income for people and that income can be used for something else, to pay for basic things, but still in the future to support more things within the community.

Here we do everything collectively because that is how it has been in the community from our team, the community has given us that trust and support, but there are communities that would not allow it, or would let a group of crazy young people want to do things. Each context and each community is different, so each community has to do it differently. There are also others where they can do it because there are resources and there are trained young people who can do the work from the community. There are others that will be possible from an educational institution. There are enthusiastic young people, with that desire, but who do not have the economic or educational opportunities to be able to reach them, and there are those who do and do not take advantage of them. That is something that needs to be improved.

Thinking here of the CEUXhidza and the Yaviche Communal University, many things can change. I am not married to the idea of university or the school system as such, because it has not worked for me: everything that I have studied in elementary, secondary, high school, has not contributed in my life. At least in the CEUXhidza I have learnt interesting things, and it can improve and has been improving, and it is something that has to continue working. That is why I will continue to do workshops and share through the Intranet and the new technologies that we may have at our disposal, because at least what has worked for me I have shared for others, and it has worked for them. And it is one of those experiences that has not been taken. Elementary and secondary schools have been stagnant, and it is one of the limitations of the system, and it will always continue because that is the way it is, that is how it was built. I don't want it to stay like that, I would like it to change eventually, but as long as that does not happen I want to continue contributing my grain of sand, and share my knowledge in all these areas and to young people regardless of age, because I believe in that. Because dreams... in the same way, you do not need to grow up or to be old to say that your dream is already mature because you are already mature. You can still be a child and have such a mature dream, even if for the eyes of others it is not.

Everything that I have done or what I am doing is because my dream is to have been able to be born in a place where there is all that I dream of in relation to the technological part. Likewise, I have had many dreams in relation to agriculture, health, rights, because on this path that I have been traveling I have been in different areas that I have liked and I would have liked to continue. However, one of the ways that I have found to connect with all of these has been technology, which today is in all of this. It is the perfect meeting point that I liked to follow to be close to all this.

There are many things that remain to be done and to change, to make this sustainable and that it can work in another way. A lot has been going on lately and we will see what happens, now with the pandemic came an example of how it is more necessary to be a community and be united in a way that does not endanger us all. We must continue looking for alternatives among all.

6. Aretha.

Amiskwaciwâskahikan / Kashechewan First Nation

My name is Aretha Greatrix. I was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, or Amiskwaciwâskahikan, but I am also a member of Kashechewan First Nation, which is in Ontario. So I am James Bay Cree. I do a lot of things including filmmaking, content creation, writing, and I am an advocate for Indigenous issues. I do a lot of things.

If I had to say my actual motivation for becoming a storyteller and writer, it was trying to decide what it is that I wanted to do and I wanted to know what was going to make me happy. My mother worked for the Federal Government for 30 years and she hated almost every job she had not because she didn't like the work, because she loved the work. It was just the environments that she was in, that seemed to really suck. She would come home every day complaining about something else about work and I always thought "I want to love what I do". And what do I love to do? I really love reading and writing and watching TV shows and watching films. When I watch those things, I just get lost in the worlds that are created. So more and more, I was like, I want to do that.

So I started by going to school. Originally I was going to be a web designer, because I thought I liked designing things. I like creating stuff and I took a course that was digital interactive media which just happened to have an element of filmmaking in it. We learned how to film and edit and do stuff like that. I ended up doing an internship working for web design. At that time, there was more and more things coming out like "Oh, anyone can do web design here! We created these platforms", so the need for an actual web designer was starting to die out. I realized too, that a lot of people were creating their own businesses and I needed either more experience or more education to start a business, so then I was like "Okay, I'm going to go back to school" and I was looking at the programs and again I was like reevaluating: What did I want to do with my life? What's going to make me happy? I still wanted to create, I still wanted to write and I still wanted to do all these things. So I ended up going to school to be a writer. And I was like, I'm going to write more, because I actually really did like the filmmaking. So I went to school, I did a bunch writing courses, and I loved it. I definitely love writing, I love creating information, I love sharing

that. And during this time, I actually started working for non-profits as a summer student and through there, I started doing advocacy for Indigenous People, especially Indigenous Youth.

While I was going to school, I was also being introduced to how "can I advocate and support and push initiatives forward to help our People?" and I think the first project I ever did was a documentary on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Residential Schools, a topic that was so close and important to me. My mother is a Residential School survivor, my grandfather went to Residential School. I've countless family members that went to Residential School, and they were involved in the TRC. And even my mom, because of her experience and the abuse she suffered, she even got additional money for the abuse that she had. So I wanted to educate people more about Residential School, because I remember in just casual conversations anywhere with whether it be school or anything, people not understanding the weight of what actually happened at Residential Schools. So, for me, I wanted to create something that educates people and lets them know that these are real people in real experiences and it really impacted their lives. I didn't even realize how it impacted my life until doing films like this. I just learned so much about myself.

The process for creating *Journey Towards Reconciliation* actually started as a small project and then just kept getting bigger. Originally we had gotten a grant to record the process at Grand Station in Edmonton, which is an LRT or transit station. There was this mural depicted of Bishop Grandin, and depicted the priests kind of coming into a First Nation community and the RCMP taking a child away from its mother and a nun holding a child. That piece was supposed to be in honor of Bishop Grandin, but talked about Residential School and was very traumatic to other people. There were a lot of arguments and protests about the piece and saying that it was offensive and needed to be removed. Part of the TRC of Canada was holding seven events around Canada, and the seventh and final stop was in Edmonton. During this time the City Council and a whole group of people decided that instead of removing the piece, they got artist Aaron Paquette, to create a second piece that would talk to this piece on the other side of the wall. So we were asked to find Indigenous and Francophone youth to basically record and document the process but also help in the creation of this art piece. We had trouble actually finding Francophone youth, but we found the Indigenous youth so we had them working on it. It was the Francophonie community that were supposed to find Francophone youth and they didn't, so we ended up moving forward just with the youth that

we found. They were involved in creating the art piece with their hands, they did the pictographs in the image. They actually worked on it, and then we also taught them filmmaking.

Through the whole process we kept asking them if they knew what "reconciliation" meant, and they had no idea, so we kept asking them over and over again. Then we thought, maybe we'll do more and get them to interview more to discover what this is, so we could figure out what "reconciliation" was through their eyes. Through the whole process the film just kept getting bigger and bigger. And we realized we needed more so we ended up sending them to other events, like plays being done and the TRC event itself. We kept sending the youth with cameras and we showed them how to use it. And we said "Go capture stuff, go capture people, go talk to people" and they talked to everyone, they talked to people on the street, they went to events, they talked about shows. Then we were constantly getting them to interview each other and say "You've been to these events, now, do you understand what reconciliation means?" And the whole time, no one really understood what reconciliation meant. And so that was the whole process of just keep asking. Everyone kept asking, "What does reconciliation mean to you? What does it mean to you?"

In the beginning I did more of the logistics things, I carried the budget and made sure people had staff and made sure we had camera equipment. I didn't do much of the teaching, I was there filming and helping with filming sometimes and I helped them draft and come up with interview questions. I didn't do any of the teaching, but working with the youth was really awesome. Also they are youth if you tell them "Hey, we have to film this. And we have to be here by this time"... and the amount of times people were late or didn't show up. Also, we paid them each time that they were there. If we only asked specific youth to come because we only needed certain youth, then there were times when (because they knew they would get paid if they showed up) they would invite someone and they came with friends. So, budgeting wise, it was like that was another person that we had to pay because they showed up and it ended up being we had nothing for them to do. So they basically sat in the audience because they showed up. I mean, for some of the youth this is one of their first jobs and they were actually getting paid for it, so I can understand why they were just kind of eager to show up and be paid. But we didn't need the extra person. Especially in shoots where it was very small and we just needed a camera or something like we didn't need multiple people. We had a core cast, which was four or five core people and they were extra people who

needed extra help, and they were usually the extra people so they knew that they wouldn't be on set all the time.

It was definitely interesting. Even now, when our film was in film festivals, we didn't have it as a youth project, almost like a youth program but at the end of the day, like they directed it, they kind of envisioned it. I mean, they did the interviews and they did all the stuff but they really didn't actually craft the story because we did invite them into the editing room to help us craft the story, but they couldn't make it. So we ended up doing it ourselves. We ended up crafting the story and we guided them everywhere we needed to go, but we wanted it to feel like it was theirs, so we did give two of the youth the director title. Although, in hindsight, we probably should have made ourselves the directors and made them assistant directors or something like that because anytime you put the film into festivals, they want to contact the director and even just having them attend any of the screenings...again, they're youth. A lot of them didn't show up, or they weren't sure if they could show up.

One time we did a screening and we were going to have a panel discussion afterwards. We specifically made it so that 100%, we knew they were going to be available and everything was good. They were going to be there because we wanted to arrange it so that all the youth could be there. And a couple of them had been going to school so their schedules got really busy. But when it came time to it, I think a day before the screening, the majority were there and one was like, "Sorry, I decided to like go home". We also paid them an honorarium for coming to speak so it was sad. But that was the nature of working with youth, because it's very erratic, I still equate it to like herding cats. Sometimes it's like trying to get them coordinated on the same page, but when they do show up, it's magical.

When we created the film and we edited it and put it all together, it had expanded from the original vision, which was just documenting the creation of this art piece to the whole TRC itself. We also then provided background information about what is the TRC because even then, some people knew that the trc event was happening, and a lot of people didn't know and it was a very huge thing, but most people didn't even know the events were happening until it happened in their city. So yeah, it was a very strong process, and also even the process of making the film even for myself, and just watching how other people reacted to the film that itself was the learning experience because I say this all the time, but the two years after the film that we made was in film festivals

around the world, when I would go and watch from the audience, I would cry every time even though I was in the room when we were editing it, putting it together and crafting the story. And I had watched it for over and over and over again, streaming it and screening at places and experiencing with other people. Every time I cried. I think after two years, I finally was able to watch it without crying, but even then, it's like I'm fighting back the tears trying not to cry. Because it is really emotional, you don't understand the weight of the impact of Residential Schools, and I think that was my hope: I really wanted people to see the impact of Residential School because I've always known it, I can't tell you when I knew that my grandparents went to Residential School or when my mother went. And I can't tell you when I learned that she also suffered abuse there, because I've known it for such a long time. I've seen it impact her life and how she thinks about school, how she made us weary of teachers, and just school itself. School wasn't a good place in her mind, so we kind of absorbed that in a way. So, for me, her whole experience impacted my life in many ways and I wanted people to understand that. I'm hoping that through the film, they can see the impacts.

So I started getting into filmmaking, and doing these heavy topics. It was after that that I was like, this is important, but I also want to be a storyteller to make people laugh. So even for my own sanity, I was like, "What kind of things can I create that builds community and makes me laugh and creates like a support system?" Because even this own film I felt was traumatic to myself. So then I just thought "How else can I make other content that basically gives me that self satisfaction of doing something that I love, but also keep building community?" because for me that was part of my advocacy work: building community and building supports and letting people know that there's a community for you. So, recently, I started doing streaming online. During this pandemic, we can't really go out anywhere, and as an introvert I didn't mind it at first, but this is bad, even I am like "I can't wait to be out with people". But I found a community online that I really connected with, and they were streaming, and then we were playing games, and it started to become my evening wind down was playing games with my friends and talking to them. And we'd play games sometimes and just talk about anything, something that bothered us, or whatever. It was like building that community of support in a time that we needed it.

So I started streaming online, and not only do I play games, but I also do like just talking and I realized that I had been able to create a platform and through that platform, I've been able to

educate and again, advocate and educate people about Indigenous issues and about just Indigenous people in general. I hope I'm creating a safe space where people feel comfortable. In November, it happens to be Native American Heritage Month and or Indigenous Heritage Month in the States. It's kind of like Black History Month as a thing in the States but in Canada we do it too, because we're just so close and we adopt the same kind of highlights. So, all of November, I wanted to highlight different aspects of games and different talks and conversations. Two things happened. First, I wanted to find other Indigenous streamers so I made a document where I would find them, I'd put them in a document, I'd want to know if what their channel is, who they are, where they're from, and ended up posting a couple of games also with Indigenous people as well. I had a game called *Among Us*, and we played an Indigenous or Native *Among Us* edition.

Secondly, I also researched games with Indigenous themes or Indigenous People, and just had conversations about them. For example, there was a game called Civilization Six and basically, in this game, one of the DLCs (which is like a special game where you unlock characters) is Chief Poundmaker. I was researching it and found out that they didn't get full permission from the family to use his name or his likeness, and even his likeness is not correct. Also, the whole point of Civilization Six is you go to a place, you take it over, you start building your house there, the locals try to fight you back but you defend your house from these people. So it's very colonialistic. And in this game you can basically get a DLC, and Chief Poundmaker was one of those people that you can unlock. So you can be Cleopatra, or Caesar, like all these people from history, and they picked this one specifically. In the game we talked about how the concept of colonization would go against everything that Chief Poundmaker stood for, because he's a very important person in Canadian history and in Indigenous history. So, to reduce him to the same ideologies that they were using for colonization was not in his memory, it was basically using him as an icon or as a trope, but not fully coming from his perspective. We talked about that in the game. I played with my friend Arsan who had played the game before and was walking me through how to play this game. We talked about it, we talked about Indigenous identity and how the process of asking for permission to use Chief Poundmaker´s likeness wasn't done properly, and how it could have been done, and how possibly if they had done it, how could they have made it? And how could they have incorporated Indigenous perspectives and protocols of how we think about Land and the relationship to Land.

We just played a game for three hours talking about everything, about how we think about Land and how it's very reciprocal, like the relationship between us and the Land and how that would have reflected in how that could have gone. We ended up educating a lot of people about different things and we found resources online as well. There's this App that you can use where you can find out whose Land you are on, which will help with Land Acknowledgments. We claimed that if you live in North America, you should know whose Land you're on. That was an idea and I had talks like this throughout the month, highlighting not only other Indigenous streamers, but other games with Indigenous elements, and in talking about it and constantly bringing it up of how games can be a good educational tool, and how if they're going to use Indigenous people how they need to properly ask.

The other game we played in hindsight is called *Never Alone*. It is a game that was made from the people in Alaska. And it was made *with* the people. They're the ones who helped create it and craft it and like Knowledge Keepers and Elders, and people from the community help tell the stories. And we talked about how the process of how they incorporated the culture and the stories into the game, because you're playing this game as this little like Inuk boy and as you're going through you unlock chapters, and each of these you unlock there a little clip of a video from the community telling a story from that community. And it becomes a story that you're unlocking as you're going through this game. It is a very beautiful game and it's like a perfect example of how they worked with the community. Instead of saying "We're doing this for your benefit, without actually consulting or working with the community".

In streaming, while you're playing games and having these discussions, you have a chat that people are interacting with you, and asking you questions or saying hi or talking about the game that you're playing. And then as they watch, they redeem or earn points. So we call them "channel points". The more you watch, the more points you get, and you can create redeem for those points. So one of the redeems that I created was "Ask me something about Indigenous People" and people have been redeeming that and asking, and it can be about anything. People have asked me about food, Two Spirit or just wanting to know something, or didn't know what to ask and then asked for random facts. To me, that's an engagement that has created that space in that environment for them to ask those questions, because it's literally "I'm asking you to ask me". I've also just kind of been having random talks with people, and invited them to talk about certain topics. I basically

take them from any of the conversations I have with the people but I'm constantly building an audience of people who understand why I'm there and what content I'm creating. I am creating a podcast as well, which I do want to start recording on my channel and I think one of the first conversations I had was," I'm creating a podcast, what would you like to see on it? It's going to be about Indigenous issues. What would you like to see? And what would you like me to talk more about?" So there, I was able to have that back and forth engagement and that's going to help me guide where I'm going to go with the podcast.

That's where I am today, I love creating safe spaces, communities, worlds, whatever it is through content creation or writing or just filmmaking in general. And I think, for me, that is all part of storytelling. It is just creating educational or even just worlds or communities that people can get lost in.

Some of the challenges I´ve found as a content creator is that because of the work I've done, I have met people who want to work with me and want to do projects with me, but I don't think they know the whole scope of work that goes into creating something and they constantly have this assumption that I can do it all by myself. That if they hire me, I can do everything by myself. And I've always been kind of honest, saying, you know, the big projects, like the great quality projects, I create them, I produce them, but I hire other people, I have a team of people that do the work. I technically know how, but it's not actually my specialty, so I have a very rudimentary understanding of how these things work and how to do them. But am I a master of them? No. And I think in the beginning, my desire to help no matter what the project is, I was like " I'll do it", but I always kind of preface it by saying like, it's not like my specialty. And then I do it. And then I realized, again, it's not something that I'm happy about because I'm not like doing what I love.

I think that's a big challenge that I've definitely learned recently is like being more willing to say "No", and letting them know what I need to do to make it a good quality that I would be proud to be behind. And I think being honest with that, and letting people know that it's fine, because I definitely have been asked to be part of projects where, you know, someone hasn't given me all the files, or they think they're giving you a lot of money to work on a project because they kind of want a lot from a lot of money because they think it's a lot of money when you tell them "actually, if you ever want to estimate a project, it's $1,000 per produced a minute. So if you're asking for an hour video, that's a lot of money you should be budgeting for" but instead of a $100,000 budget,

they're like "here's $2,000, go make it an hour film". But then they are an organization, so you're like, "Okay, guess I could do it" because you want to help but at the same time, it's like, am I helping because I feel like I'm setting up an unrealistic expectation? Where you seem to think that filmmaking and actually creating quality content you don't realize how much money and energy and efforts go into the actual project. And it's hard because if it's not your world, you don't know that. I didn't know that without knowing and having support from filmmaking mentors. So, trying to communicate that is probably the hardest. it's also having to say that to someone who thinks they are giving you the "Oh, they're being so generous with their budget that they're giving you" Then you ask them what they want and you're like, actually, this is how much that would have cost. So it almost feels like you're kind of crushing their soul a little bit, because they thought they were doing something so great. And then there's projects that I want to work on, that I have no money towards. So again, I have to do everything by myself and trying to get a level of quality, again, but developing by myself. So more and more, I'm trying to perfect that.

I think another challenge that I've had too is that I do own a business, and you have these two worlds of, I want to just create, but I need to do business stuff, which is I need to write grants, reports, things like that and get money. I have a project that I want to work on, but I need X amount of money to make it actually really good. And I'm like, what grant can I apply for? And how much of my own money am I willing to put in this? Because a lot of grants ask you to match funds. Or, like, what grants are available? And what's the timeframe? And do I really, what are the chances of even getting this grant do I want to spend the time and effort into putting this application and when I think that I´m most likely I'm not going to get it. So that's probably going to be like a good chunk of my time that's wasted. So those are just like simple little challenges.

As a content creator and Indigenous artist I do make a lot of documentaries and films that are about Indigenous issues, but I'm also just a storyteller who wants to tell stories as well. So not everything that I do has to be indigenous. And I think that's the thing where I'm conscious of not being stereotyped, or just like pigeon held into this, like, one area of like," Oh, you do documentaries about Indigenous issues". I want to do other things too, like I want to bring apart other fiction, anything, like just something different. I will always be an Indigenous person, so that will always reflect the stories and the way I write and like the worlds that I will build, but it's not the focus of

an Indigenous specific story. I just happened to be Indigenous and I'm going to bring that to whatever I have.

Recently, there's been a lot of challenges within the film industry itself. We've had not only the literary world, but the filmmaking world, people that come with views or have distance with Indigenous ancestry and now they're claiming to be Indigenous. And they are winning Awards, winning grants, writing films. And I'm all for reconnecting, I think it's cool that you want to reconnect and discover and research your connection to your Indigenous heritage, but why does that immediately translate into how do I benefit off this and how do I then use that towards getting grants? Couldn't you just discover who you are first if that was really what you wanted to do? Is that what you wanted to do? Could you not just do that first? Why does it always have to be "Oh, I found my great, great, great, great, grandfather was Indigenous, I can now apply for this award". Because even in a world as the literary world and in filmmaking we're a booming industry, it's huge for everyone, and then we have these little pockets, and Indigenous filmmaking is pretty small. So someone comes into that world and it's easier, because a lot of things, especially from the TRC, and everything that's happened has put initiative saying "We have to support these projects". Then they step into this world and they're getting them so easy. It's literally taking the place of Indigenous people who have a stronger connection to the community and have a lived experience. I never at one point in my life had the choice not to be indigenous, I was always indigenous. So for me, I think that's a bit of a challenge, because what does that mean? What does Indigenous mean? And how then do we protect ourselves from situations like that? Because the ramifications of everything that has happened, especially with one person, has affected a whole industry and a whole community. And so that has definitely been a new challenge in our community, especially with storytelling.

It is easier to understand and create a strategy, once you actually identify what the actual issue is, and what the problem is. For me, it's being more open and honest with myself. So, for example, the whole idea of, of not only educating but letting people know that filmmaking and creating content is not easy and there's a lot of work that goes into it. I personally only like to do this aspect of it. I don't like to do the whole aspect of it, I only like to do this one thing. So it's just being honest with myself and being honest with others and letting them know that I only want to be content creator, I want to produce it, I want to direct it, I want to create it. I want to hire the people

to do the tasks. I don't want to be the person doing the tasks, I want to be the creative force behind it. With the Indigenous identity, for me, I think it is just writing stories and finding that balance of writing stories that I want to write. And if a topic or something like moves me and I want to create an educational documentary about it, then I should. But if I also want to create a whole fictional world, then I should. And just do that and maybe, and hopefully whatever I write and create, conveys that or I'm more known for my writing than my identity.

As a strategy for the newest challenge, which is the one about Indigenous people or non Indigenous filmmakers, I feel like there has to be a better way to identify who the Indigenous people are in our industry. Making sure that the people who entered it should be held accountable for their actions in some way, especially knowing and not being 100% sure about their background, A strategy for myself when I do Indigenous projects especially, is that I do like to reach out and find Indigenous people. I'm okay with you if you question my indigeneity because I know, I can tell you and I can prove it. And I feel like we should be more comfortable asking people those questions, because you should be proud of it. If someone asked me if I was Indigenous, I'm so proud to tell them how I'm indigenous. That's not a shameful thing for me. It's not a thing that I would get offended by, II love telling people that I'm Indigenous. I tell them in my introductions, I tell people all the time and I have no problem telling you how. I feel the strategy is normalizing that and encouraging other people to do it too. Because I think when you have shame and fearfulness, that's when the people hiding in their shadows kind of fall between the cracks, because no one dared to question it or ask. I think that would be a solution.

To be honest, I have never known anything different than being Indigenous. When I look at the Western world and how they work with one another and their mentality of how things work, I get confused. It confuses me because it is not what I was raised to believe. For example, growing up, my parents didn't ground me. My parents didn't yell at me that much. Well, my mom specifically yelled at me sometimes but when I would go home and spend time with my grandparents, my grandparents never yelled at us. In fact, if you yelled at a child in front of them, you would get in trouble. Because it was this concept that we are all on a journey, and it's just a matter of protecting each other, letting everyone know that everyone has a journey that they need to go on to learn things for themselves, and you need to provide them that opportunity to learn. For me, that's something that I've definitely grown up with. When I'm in institutions, where they're very

structured, like "These are the rules, here they are"I struggle! and I'm like "Why?" Because growing up, it was okay for me to question things. My mother would always tell me "You know, it never hurts to ask a question". But outside my house, apparently asking questions is a horrible thing, questioning people is a horrible thing. I didn't have that growing up. I was allowed to question things and it was encouraged. So it was very different for me.

For me, being Indigenous is not only a mindset but a teaching and all these things that I have grown up with that actually differ from Western society. For me, being Indigenous is about understanding that every single person in this world has a role and a responsibility and even if I didn't know what that was, at the beginning, I had time. And I had time, and I'm on a journey to figure that out. And what I do during that time to figure that out, is just part of the work. For me being Indigenous means I can do that, and I've been taught to do that. I feel like if I was any other person, I don't know if I would be doing these things, because I'm very self-reflective. I'm also part of a very community focused community and culture, so being Indigenous just embodies all that stuff that I definitely am thankful for and I'm proud of.

Because I like creating community first, and I like creating worlds and environments and stuff like that, I want it to be inclusive and supportive and I also want it to be reciprocal. I don't want to just create content because I want to create content. I want to know how you feel about it. I want to know how the viewer feels about it. Do they like it? Do they want to see more of it? Is there something else that they enjoy? I want feedback, I want to know if there's something that you think I'm doing well and you want me to do more of it. I want something that you're like, I wish you would do this slightly differently. I want to know those things too and to be a mutual beneficial thing. I don't want to just create to send out I want it to be a two way street. I want that with both my filmmaking and content. That's why even when I stream I do those things, I'm constantly talking to the chat. I want to know how they're doing, I want them to tell me what they thought was funny, like, you know, I want them to tell me when something makes them uncomfortable. I want them to be able to tell me those things.

To be honest, it's about also sharing things. For example, I also like to also promote other people if you're doing something really cool. I'm constantly like, "Oh, you should read this book, all you need to watch this person. I watched the funniest video yesterday, it just made me laugh so hard and it made my whole day" I want to share that with people. I think, as a society, we could do

that and we do that to some extent. We share funny, Tiktoks and videos, and stuff like that, because we all just want to laugh, and for me, in my Indigenous culture, laughter is medicine. I think people already do that, to some extent.

I think of myself as a bubble, and inside my bubble, I have my family, and maybe I have a couple of friends that expand to their bubble and their families. In that short little bubble my influence is very limited, but when I'm talking about things in the newspaper, or when I am creating content, that is a way for me to reach a broader audience. I think doing things online exposes me to that audience and I've made a lot of friends who are Indigenous. I don't want to create stuff just for Indigenous people, because they know the issues. I mean, they can learn as well but it's more about educating non Indigenous People. Because I feel like the more we spread information, the more hopefully we're building empathy. I want them to understand that my culture is beautiful, our motivations are for that everyone is okay. I want to share that with other people, because even growing up what I learned about Indigenous people and things that I used to think before even educating myself, it was really propagandal almost, against Indigenous people where even I was thought those things. And then when I actually learned myself and started talking to Elders, talking to other people who grew up very traditional and reconnecting to things that I actually did know growing up, but I didn't understand what it meant. It's creating that education, creating that space where people can learn. Because you can't force anyone to learn or to be empathetic towards us, but you can just provide them with the information and let them make that decision for themselves. It might not happen right away and maybe it will.

Chapter 6

Making Meaning

Drawing from DeRocher´s (2018) approach to "polyvocal testimonios," the previous chapter contains each participant's complete and separate testimonio. This narrative framework reveals a collective resonance that "openly positions culture as a contested terrain where multiple truth claims emerge and it is through that multiplicity that we are able to hear important linkages and continuities between sets of experiences, which collectively realize a cautious standpoint" (DeRocher, 2018, p. 64). In this chapter, I will reflect on these testimonios and present what I find from the meanings I make from these multiple truth claims, including linkages and differences between participants from Alberta and Oaxaca. In other words, I will share what I learned from Lilia, Kyle, Kirsten, Aretha, Luna, and Joaquín's journeys and reflections, and how their stories respond to my research questions in this thesis.

I start by sharing the stories I find within their stories: those ongoing experiences of colonization and resistance. Then I share how I find in testimonios the responses to my research questions. First, I present the ways in which participants are using digital tools, all shared as experiences and process-oriented ideas. This is informed from a social shaping of technology approach which allows me to focus on their experiences, tensions, and reflections rather than on the tools they are using. Secondly, I present what I learned from the challenges and benefits of the digital world from participants' reflections, followed by the four main strategies that I found in all their stories enabling them to continue creating according to their own terms and desires: 1) critical, reflective processes and conscious practice, 2) relationships, 3) land and language and 4) collective dreaming. Third, I will present what I learned from their diverse dreamwork or ideation of a digital world. Finally, I will share the advice that these reflections provide for non-Indigenous allies hoping to collaborate with them towards realizing those dreams.

Before I present my main learnings from these stories, it is important to tie this moment of the journey back to my location as where I am standing to find responses to my questions. My location

is not only the standpoint from which I present my research questions, but also where I stand along the process to engage in conversations, actively listen to participants and revisit their stories in written form. This means engaging with a constant self-location and understanding that I am relating to stories through my own story as a non-Indigenous woman collaborating with Indigenous Peoples in media and connectivity processes. From this standpoint I hope to contribute to these reflections by sharing my own findings in relation to these six stories. I also invite readers to pay affective attention to their own findings in relation to these testimonios as it is also my hope that their location will provide them with more and diverse insights and new questions.

The following analysis is the result of the process that I shared with each of the participants through active listening and conversation, followed by transcribing and re-visiting their stories with each of them for review, editing and ensuring ongoing consent in what I now present as their testimonios. In this process I built a close relationship with each of their stories, paid constant attention to my research questions and kept notes that later helped me to "connect the dots" (DeRocher, 2018) of these findings.

Stories Within Stories

The testimonios in this thesis are stories woven with other long stories of colonization and resistance that have taken different forms in the Xhidza, Zapoteco and Ayuujk territories within the region of Oaxaca and the Cree, Dene and Métis territories within the region of Alberta. Before relating my findings about how digital tools are being used and resignified by the experiences of artists and communicators in these contexts, I will share the different forms of colonization, capitalism and State violence these testimonios mention as colonial mechanisms impacting the participants' territories.

This section does not respond to any specific research question in the thesis. However, it is important to state what I learned from the broader contexts in which the stories are situated for two main reasons. First, it will situate them in their diverse contexts before I share what I found as linkages between them, and other findings that respond to my research questions. As claimed by Altamirano-Jiménez, "the different social groups included under the term "Indigenous peoples"

do not have a unique trajectory, and their politics are motivated by different aspirations and shaped by different colonial entanglements" (2013, p. 39). For this reason, while being careful not to take a pan-Indigenous approach, I point out again that these stories are those of different self-determined Xhidza, Cree, Dene, Métis, Zapoteco and Ayuujk Peoples and their territories, which are also related to different histories and structures of settler and extractive colonialism in Canada and Mexico. Second, to state the different forms of colonization and acknowledge the broader contexts in which the stories are situated is relevant to understanding the dialectic tensions with digital tools, resistances and creative uptakes through digital strategies.

All participants from Alberta, for example, speak of residential schools or the Sixties Scoop as colonial decisions and legacies that are present as ongoing trauma and abuse, discrimination and dominant narratives about Indigenous Peoples and their territories, as well as ongoing violence impacting Indigenous bodies. Also, Kyle mentioned the *sterilization* of Indigenous Knowledge and the story of the literal sterilization of women as mechanisms of cultural genocide, as well as the hunger and starvation policies made by colonial decision-makers and legislatures through the 19th century. Moreover, Kirsten indicated how current education and institutionalized curriculums have acted as "containers or barriers [that] have impacted the way Indigenous youth relate to self-determination."

Stories from Oaxaca name the educational policies that have long been imposed by the State on Indigenous communities as structures that have distanced them from the Land and their ways of transmitting knowledge and acquiring it, such as the language and its relation to sacred rituals and ways of naming the world (such as plants and constellations). As mentioned by Lilia, even though some of the educational policies are called bilingual or multicultural, "the reality is that if they are not generated and created within the communities, they will not respond to this context community in which we are living, and to the needs that can respond to everything that is raised by our population." Discrimination is also mentioned in different forms, such as Indigenous Peoples having to leave the community to go to work in urban spaces, and families being discriminated against for speaking their language inside or outside their territory and, more specifically, within school contexts. Luna and Lilia speak of another kind of violence in Mexico, by explicitly naming *machismo* as gender-based violence against women. Luna states this in their introduction by refusing to self-identify as a woman as a political exercise and claims that "in a country where so

many women are killed, I stop being a woman to be an *alebrije*, for the safety of my person."

Other shapes of colonization that are mentioned through testimonios located in both contexts are religion and transnational projects and corporations impacting their territories, such as mining and hydroelectric projects extracting "resources" from the Land. In both contexts, the testimonios relate ongoing stories of colonial violence through imposition of educational programs, religion, Land extraction, narratives and imposed languages that do not belong to Indigenous territories. They also discuss different forms of discrimination towards the diverse Indigenous ways of being, learning and living, including spiritual practices, language, kin and relation to the Land. Stories also reveal how many of these colonial practices have been replicated in (and through) media and the digital world, with problems around representation, appropriation, and commodification of Indigenous Knowledge, which I will share in more detail in the next sections.

Digital Tools as Experiences

The testimonios assembled in this thesis tell stories of diverse Indigenous artists and communicators creating and communicating with different tools: community radio, video game and App design, filmmaking, digital collaging Apps, digital storytelling and online streaming. This variety of tools could be a simplified and technologically deterministic response to my first research question on how Indigenous artists and communicators are using digital technologies in Alberta and Oaxaca. However, responding to the "how" informed by the approaches of the social shaping of technology, community informatics and technological re-writing involves a different scope, with attention on the journeys, experiences and the dialectical tensions between the tools and the people, rather than only on the tools themselves. Therefore, beyond the specific uses, I will focus on the broader experiences and reflections I found in relation to the digital tools. I will also focus on how these reflections happen to meet and intersect, despite the diversity of contexts and journeys of participants.

In this context, Indigenous artists and communicators have managed to undertake creative communication processes that are related to broader processes in their communities and territories, such as language revitalization, strengthening of the culture and community memory, sharing of

Indigenous futurities, telling local stories that are not being told in mass media, naming violence and retelling colonial and dominant narratives about the territories, defending women's rights, and ultimately, reconnecting with the Land. The journeys reveal that digital technologies are tools used through broader processes of resistance and claiming other ways of living in relation to others and to the Land.

As shared by Lilia, the primary objective of starting a community radio station in her community "was to communicate and to do so from the community context; to strengthen our culture, language, worldview and philosophy, and to provide information that is clear and closer to the population." Her journey as a woman in radio also reflected other reasons to communicate such as "naming to the community and audience of Jënpoj radio these (women's) issues that were not being addressed from the voice of the male colleagues," such as women's rights, and sexual and reproductive rights. Later on, when radio went "on air" online, Lilia refers to the radio as a tool to strengthen relations with those who had migrated to other territories through music and information and as a tool to revitalize the local language. Ayuujk's orality is part of a longer process of *lucha* (struggle) and resistance as a process that precedes radio. She shares one example: "People have come to share with us on the radio that when they listen to our live programs in Ayuujk and its variants, that generates certain awareness or reflection on how to start using this language to express ourselves. Whether through poetry, music or art, or recognizing the value of working in wood, painting, graphic art: all these expressions that reflect our Ayuujk worldview."

With a similar commitment to language revitalization and community needs, Kyle shares finding an interest in applying media and broadcast skills to Indigenous language revitalization in his community within the Northwest Territories. In a context of high rates of youth suicide in his community, he shares how he realized that "the more that people are connected to their culture, into their language and into their identity, the less they're likely to commit suicide" and engaged in finding ways digital tools could be used to help those living far from their Land and families to reconnect with their language. Also, he stated that "creating tools to help other people learn the language has given me an edge and gives me really cool opportunities to learn and to work with others in exciting ways," also allowing for representation, communication and participation.

Joaquín's journey with community radio and free software and app design reveals a process of

reclaiming sharing and collaborative processes, despite the individual and corporate models of software development and deployment of telecommunication networks. From a "hacker" perspective committed to the common good and community needs, he weaves his emerging relating to community and technology, he weaves his emerging relation to communication and technology towards language revitalization and relation to Land, and the possibilities of "digital activism" with open-source tools, collaborative principles of Free Software and community networks.

Aretha's, Luna's and Kirsten's processes of filmmaking and digital collages and montages reveal deep and collective processes of visual storytelling and re-telling of colonial narratives. One example is Aretha's filmmaking process with youth to recall the residential schools in the story of Canada with their own narrative, and to question the meaning of Reconciliation in their own terms and reflections that are not necessarily those of the TRC process. Another example is Kirsten´s experience using the PicMonkey App to make digital collages "to expose the colonial layers underneath and to get down to a layer of what is core to their own storytelling in relationship within the confines of the assignment which was the University of Alberta campus." Similarly, Luna shares her early process in finding theatre, radio or photography as tools to drive social change. More specifically, she reflects on issues like youth sexual and reproductive rights, and later the *Campamento Audiovisual Itinerante* as a collective filmmaking training experience created for youth "to have a different understanding of filmmaking from understanding the linguistic diversity that this country (Mexico) has, and then all the stories that are not being told and placed on the big screen."

All stories speak of webs of relationships. Mentors, teachers, friends, family members, collective memories, and collaborations with youth and Elders are mentioned in all journeys. Kyle shares an example of the importance of repairing relationships through collaborative processes, recognizing that "it's all about relationships." These webs of relationships are narrated through parents and grandparents encouraging imagination and connection to dreaming through stories, to family and teachers encouraging children to question the world around them. These stories also speak of the importance they find in learning, filming and creating with freedom, and from people's own perspective. In Luna´s words, the filmmaking camp and training process that she is involved with "is about making visible how powerful collective creation is, and the idea of collective creation

comes from having grown alongside such processes with children's music, theater, puppetry and painting." These webs of relationships are core to understanding the uses of digital tools as experiences and collective processes, and as an explicit strategy that I will refer to in more depth in the following section of this chapter.

Limitations and Challenges of the Digital World

As discussed in Chapter 3, digital tools have embedded values that come from the interests of those who design them. As mentioned, these tools are usually in hands of corporations, under capitalist models of power centralization, and are primarily designed and owned by western, white, upper-middle class, cis, heterosexual men. The stories of experiences in relation to language and the Land in which these tools are present reveal a clear dialectical tension of the participant's interests and the ones embedded in the tools. In order to share my findings about the strategies that Indigenous artists and communicators are undertaking to use these tools according to their own terms, I will first name some of the challenges and limitations of digital technologies that I found in their stories.

A limitation mentioned by three of the participants across regions is the extractive practices on Indigenous Lands and water that sustain the physical and material operation and deployment of the digital world. Lilia points out how these material components of digital ICTs as well as the energy required to power them are "affecting the territory of communities that do not have a direct benefit from these technologies, which are rather run by very large and transnational companies that are not benefiting nearby populations at all." In this sense, Kyle calls the dependance of global mining a massive limitation, and shares: "I'm passionate about the idea that 400 years from now, if we create a dependence on using digital technologies to solve all of our problems, as soon as we are not able to reduce, reuse, recycle, and upcycle any of our materials — once we hit that limit — we can no longer mine and keep exhausting these resources." Similarly, Kirsten shares this limitation as a question: "How do we compensate when we are uploading all these images to what we think is the cloud that in our mind is not there, but it has an impact and there is an energy to it,

and as part of that energy is greenhouse gas emissions?"

Another shared area of focus is the policies and regulations that guide the development and deployment of digital ICTs in these contexts. There are some positive outcomes of this work, such as Joaquín's mention of the spectrum set-aside in Mexico that acknowledges the community use of spectrum for Indigenous Community Telecommunications. Kyle mentions a similar achievement and reference in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi in Aotearoa or New Zealand, which allowed Maori people to file a claim for spectrum as a treaty right. In relation to the efforts of Indigenous peoples to secure control of spectrum, he shares a question in the context of Canada and its story with treaties: "Can we renegotiate the Treaties, for instance, so that every Indigenous community has connections to sky and space, and therefore first right to refusal and have access to the spectrum?"

At the same time, Lilia, Joaquín and Kyle reflect on the limitations of the State's role as regulators of telecommunications infrastructures and spectrum. In relation to emerging community-owned connectivity models, Joaquín explains the problem of regulatory models designed by the State: "as long as the State is the State, it cannot really understand what something communal is, speaking in a general and global way of community in the city and in smaller localities or towns. Because the State was thought in a different way, in a way of centralizing power." Lilia shares another limitation about licensed community and Indigenous radio stations: "having a license has its limitations, or advantages and disadvantages, because when you have a document from an institution that is regulating you, it also places obligations on you." These obligations are, as Joaquín also explains, designed by the State and different from communal processes. One clear example she provides is how licensed community radio stations are obliged to broadcast federal radio spots for electoral campaigns, which, in her words "have nothing to do with our reality or community context because here we are governed by the internal regulatory system, and not by political parties."

Moreover, most participants mentioned sustainability as a challenge through different lenses, such as the access to resources and funds required for creative digital processes, such as the purchase and use of digital tools. Joaquín and Aretha refer to the applications for funds as a process that is time consuming and requires a learning process to know how to apply. Other specific requirements

— such as having to have a Facebook page or a YouTube channel — were mentioned by Lilia. Others acknowledge that while it seems more accessible and affordable to access digital tools to create these days with a phone or computer, there is still the limitation of monetary costs.

Aretha shared a particular challenge about funds and budgets in the filmmaking industry in Canada in the context of the TRC, where more funds are being directed to Indigenous filmmakers, but more people are claiming distant Indigenous ancestry to access them. Some of these people are "literally taking the place of Indigenous people who have a stronger connection to the community and have a lived experience" in an unresolved process of identifying who can or cannot apply for these funds. At the same time, Aretha acknowledges another challenge in being stereotyped and limited as an Indigenous artist, and explains: "As a content creator and Indigenous artist I do make a lot of documentaries and films that are about Indigenous issues, but I'm also just a storyteller who wants to tell stories as well. So not everything that I do has to be Indigenous. And I think that's the thing where I'm conscious of not being stereotyped, or just pigeonholed into this one area."

Luna's learning journey, first through community-based processes and later through the University curriculum, speaks of the limitations of filmmaking schools and traditional pedagogical processes in relation to community-based processes and the potentialities of exploring film from an Indigenous standpoint, tied to the territory and collective narratives. This is also mentioned by Kirsten, who has undertaken a process of re-creating an arts and media curriculum with youth to understand its limitations and recreate it through Indigenous methodologies towards self-determination.

Besides these reflections on embedded design values, environmental impacts, policy/regulatory limitations, and barriers such as cost, other reflections were shared in relation to digital content and media. Kyle points out a predominant "homogenous colonial bullshit narrative that presents one distinctly capitalist and colonially-reinforcing bias" and links it back to a long story of colonial communications with appropriation of representation and Indigenous Knowledge. He points out a very specific challenge in the relation between Indigenous Knowledge and the digital world, which is that the respect and protection of Indigenous Knowledge — in the form of digital content — and

the knowledge transfer systems online differ from those in the communities, with examples of misappropriation and misuse of Indigenous Knowledge, such as the medicine wheel or sacred drumming sound shared under Creative Commons licenses. He also shares some questions: "If you record out in the woods and a wolf howls, who owns that recording? Or, what's the protocol to respect the wolf for the recording in the same way that you would respect an Elder?" Similarly, Aretha raises this issue as present in video games through misrepresentation of Indigenous characters and narratives, missing "Indigenous perspectives and protocols of how we think about Land and the relationship to Land," with the example of Chief Poundmaker as a character in a video game focused on colonizing other territories.

Misuses inside Indigenous communities are also mentioned as a problem and potential conflict. Lilia reflects on how communicating with digital tools does not necessarily mean communicating something essential or fundamental about her community. "There have been people who have created, for example, false pages with false names in the community, publishing on behalf of the authorities or a public person." Moreover, both Lilia and Kristen reflect on how individual content consumption distances people from the Land and immediate reality. In Lilia's words, "these devices or instruments are distancing us from our immediate reality. Youth wants to know and see what is there on social media and the platforms to which they have access to, and they are increasingly moving away from this reality." Kirsten reflects: "Imagine just going through different websites, you're scrolling through social media, you are video streaming and the amount of images that you are subconsciously absorbing. How does that impact the narrative of what is Indigeneity? We're being sponges of all this information so what is a conscious practice of Indigenous sovereignty or of being with the Land when we're absorbing the environment around us?"

Strategies

This variety of challenges highlights the relevance of knowing and sharing strategies that participants are undertaking to use digital tools under their own terms and desires. As mentioned before, I invite readers to discover more strategies in the experiences shared through these

testimonios. From many possible learnings, I have found five main strategies that I will share next in a linear and separate way. However, I find these to be all intertwined and interrelated.

1. Critical, Reflective Processes and Conscious Practice

Experiences in testimonios tell stories of reflective processes where digital technologies are not approached as solutions in themselves, but as tools to meet other ends. This is reflected in critical questions that are constantly tied to previous uses and adoptions of tools designed outside Indigenous territories, which are used and approached through broader and reflective processes independent of digital tools, such as language revitalization, self-determination, memory, storytelling and sovereignty. In this way, realizing their benefits and challenges leads to a realistic and pragmatic approach to these processes. As Kyle shares "I have known that digital technologies are not the solution, but knowing that they aren't it allows us to embrace what they are. And what they are is a tool. And there's classic Dene and Inuit and Indigenous adaptability and Métis adaptability. That has not stopped us from embracing different technologies for hundreds of thousands of years." Learning from these previous processes is important, he shares, "in terms of living and being symbiotic within the environment and having existing reciprocity and protocol with non-human relations."

Lilia provides a reflection by turning her attention to the content that the tools provide, rather than the tools themselves. From this scope, there is a clear strategy in thinking about the content that users want to access and share, "creating content according to the community context, history, our *palabra,* our language" and how that is possible when conditions are set for people to make use of them more freely. Also, to engage with these reflections collectively, "because a single person cannot do not muc, you need several people, groups and communities that can intervene in these media so that something can be achieved." These reflections are relevant, according to Lilia, "so that our way of life is not lost and that we don't get lost in this globalized world."

Kirsten suggests a "conscious practice" in how tools are being used, and the impacts that they may have in people's dreaming and thinking about Indigeneity and Indigenous futurisms. She also questions categories such as being an "artist" that separates art and science from community life. Therefore, she calls herself a *transformer,* and that involves a constant reflective practice. "Being

a transformer means taking that information and reflecting and sitting with it, but also knowing that we can change anytime, if we've made a mistake or just that we have the ability to change or transform at any time."

I find it relevant to learn from the diverse journeys of all six participants, which reveal crossed and reflective learning paths in which their capacity-building processes of using the digital tools was not an end in itself, but a step in broader journeys through iterations from filmmaking to online streaming, acting to filmmaking, journalism to video game design, and radio to digital activism and app designs. I find process-oriented journeys and ideas in all these testimonios, which involve constant reflection, learning and questioning. As explained by Kristen, "It's been a work in progress, but I've always been trying to find where I've planted the seeds all along, and I guess, harvest some of the medicines of the lessons that I've learned". Aretha shares this reflective process as part of being Indigenous: "understanding that every single person in this world has a role and a responsibility and even if I didn't know what that was, at the beginning, I had time. And I had time, and I'm on a journey to figure that out. And what I do during that time to figure that out, is just part of the work. For me being Indigenous means I can do that. And I've been taught to do that."

2. Relationships

As mentioned before, all journeys tell the stories of webs of relationships. These relationships are also strategies in relation to digital tools used by artists and communicators. All the stories, for example, mention collaborations and learning processes with youth and/or Elders, and ensuring their participation in these experiences: Joaquín sharing Free Software skills and their collaborative ethics with children and youth; Kyle and Kirsten involving youth in projects and workshops as opportunities to create representations that counter homogeneous media representation; Lilia collaborating with other women, youth and girls to participate in radio; Aretha and Luna working on collaborative filmmaking projects with youth so that they can share their own stories, questions and reflections. Similarly, all experiences mention conversations with Elders and the importance of their knowledge and guidance. For example, Kyle shares all his ideas, such as creating CDs or video games, with Elders from the outset to get their approval. Other strategies for continuing are "revolution, beauty, laughter, love, consent, respect to intellectual

property, protocol, love, smudging, ceremony, and laying tobacco and just stopping and acknowledging and breathing with the air, and like, not being a workhorse about things."

Kirsten shares an idea about this process: "I'm starting to create this web of relations of the people that obviously consciously informed my practices." Luna calls it "recycling" to learn what others have already done before, such as their parents and other community members or organizations, or the way they introduce themselves as an *alebrije*, describing a fantastic animal that is a mix of many animals just as we are all the mixture of many others. "I am repeating many things and I do not worry because I feel that what is happening to me is the reencounter with the common sense, the sense of understanding life from another side."

Other relationships mentioned come from external collaborators that have contributed through training processes. Examples include those of film that articulate CAI, or those in Free Software revealed in Joaquín´s story, or those named by Lilia in the process of sharing with women's organizations in various fields, not only in communication but also in the fight for sexual and reproductive rights, rights to the territory, etc. "All these spaces are shaping us and strengthening us as well," says Lilia, such as collaborative processes towards technical training, critical approaches to technology and other articulations with colleagues from other community media in the country.

3. Land and Language

Testimonios reveal experiences with digital tools that have foundational reflections and relation to — and reconnection with — Land and language. Kirsten shares how from her web of relationships, for example, she is learning to approach creation by integrating language learning. This also means a seasonal approach informing how stories are told in certain seasons, as well as knowing the time for dreaming and sharing stories in relation to the constellations. It also means learning how the language influences practice and creation: "So when you're creating, if you can connect that with the language, I think it helps filter or become more body aware when we're living in such violent times."

Lilia and Kyle share their perspective on how the Land is the best way to learn. Kyle shares how his work is related to his interest in reconnecting with his languages, while providing tools for others to do the same, so that these tools — such as films, apps and videogames — are closely related to the process in learning from the Land. Luna refers to being Zapoteco from Guelatao as an advantage when it comes to filmmaking, because "I do know where I come from, and that does make a difference with other people and with other artists, because I don't have to ask myself what I belong to, and that logic of belonging to a culture does feel that it does something very different. It is a privilege." This includes the importance of integrating that privilege in long-term training processes, and the importance of teaching and learning with freedom by replicating that with youth from diverse communities, so that they can film what they see and frame from their own locations.

4. Collective Dreaming

I found this fourth strategy in Kirsten's experience and journey, which related to the dreamwork that nurtured testimonios through one of the interview questions I shared. Kirsten explains:

> Using my imagination was encouraged by my father and my grandfather, they always told these stories and I would imagine them in my mind's eye and I've always been connected to dreaming, which I think is a part of visualizing different possibilities, rather than just the material reality outside, in our external; that there's such an imaginative and, I guess I would call it a technology to imagine within yourself and I think by sharing that, the next step is sharing that with other people who may resonate with your imaginings. I think this is integral to what folks call Indigenous Futurities, to think about what sovereignties could look like through art.

It is important to learn from Kirsten's insights that "culture is always in flux and Indigenous peoples have always been using technologies in response to the changing environments and the changes in societies. I believe that if we get back to more of a collective dream sharing, we can come up with technologies to make our societies better, to make sure that everybody is looked after and cared for, to address pollution and climate change." Joaquín also refers to his dreams — which he sees as aspirations — and claims the importance of dream sharing including all ages and mentions: "you do not need to grow up or to be old to say that your dream is already mature

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because you are already mature. You can still be a child and have such a mature dream, even if for the eyes of others, it is not."

Weaving this strategy with my next research question and findings, I will now share what I learned from the participants' dreamwork of the digital world, as they responded to the following interview question: ***How would you dream of an ideal digital landscape (according to your own experience, terms and reflections)?***

Dreamwork and an Ideation of a Digital World

I find it important to start this section by mentioning that both Lilia's and Kyle's initial response to the above question began with "that it did not exist, but now that there is one..." These responses became relevant and critical to my journey in this research and reflective practice on my research questions. I say this in the sense that I identified my own technological determinism integrated in the question, by framing an ideal within the digital landscape, instead of thinking about a non-technological ideal. I also find these responses to be relevant for deepening a critical approach to the tools and the current expansion of the digital networks as given solutions. In Kyle's words "It would be to go back to 500 years ago. Now that there is such a thing as a digital world — because that concept was meaningless a hundred years ago — my ideation of a digital world, there being one is —I need to speak personally here and say — something that would allow me to reconnect to my language when I'm away from home." Now that there is, claims Kyle, "I would want to be as close to reconnecting to a pre-colonial world as possible" so "an ideation of a digital world for me is something that is also beneficial and cool for communities that makes them want to engage and use it on their own terms."

Lilia follows that first response with a reflection in relation to radio. Her dream, in that sense, would be to use media with complete freedom from regulatory schemes. Similarly, Joaquín's dream is tied to communities — rural, urban, Indigenous — owning and designing their own networks and connectivity models under their own rules, to create another network that is not in the hands of corporations. Similarly, I find reciprocity a core component of Aretha's dream of a

digital world, one that is supportive and inclusive. Aretha also shares building community as a priority, as well as sharing diverse content, as she mentions "we share funny Tiktoks and videos, and stuff like that, because we all just want to laugh and for me, in my Indigenous culture, laughter is medicine."

Luna responded that it is a question for the youth, who grew up with apps and social networks, and that we need to listen to their needs and to how they visualize it. Kirsten shared her response as a work in progress, and shared a reflection around a project that is both online and on the Land: "How can I reach out to the people who may not have access to fiber optic broadband? What are the ways that we can share these images? Or maybe it's just sitting down and sitting around a campfire on the Land and telling the stories because maybe the visuals aren't needed when we're in person together having those experiences."

Moreover, the idea of thinking of digital art as a glyph, or a portal, to engage with an imagining of a different future. According to Kirsten, "when we integrate dreaming into the culture transformation, it was taken very seriously when people shared their dreams and it would inform an idea of how the culture was transforming by just responding, because you're responding to the ever-changing environment. So, when we're listening to people's dreams, we have an insight of how things are shifting and how that will impact the transformation of culture."

Advice for non- Indigenous Allies

Responses to the question *How might non-Indigenous allies contribute to these processes?* took different directions that provide a variety of insights into potential, more appropriate collaborations. Lilia responded to this question with a reflection that I would like to share first as a standpoint for these findings. According to her, the conditions for this dream of an ideal digital world must be generated and thought of by Indigenous Peoples in the context of their processes and *luchas* (struggles), as they have been improving conditions for a long time in other areas such as regulating community and Indigenous media: "I feel that the conditions are also being generated through our own *luchas*. That is, we would not have that recognition as Ayuujk peoples, or as Native Peoples or Indigenous Peoples, from the government institutions or the institutions that are

regulating these spaces if it was not for our own processes."

From that first standpoint, Lilia shared that non-Indigenous people can contribute to these processes by generating spaces for reflection and acknowledged how that has been relevant for other processes. She comments on sharing critical reflection from other communities and contexts, in spaces like training spaces, such as those that have supported technical capacity building for communicators:

> "Even if they are not Ayuujk communities or Indigenous Peoples, or Native Peoples or whatever they want to call them: they are emerging. Also, from our contexts and realities we are making these reflections to use these technologies, and that is the way in which we have reciprocal support. Others are also critical or alternative collectivities to this world of capital and States, and all in this world that oppresses us."

Kirsten's response is about redistributing resources, "like sharing software subscriptions or any training resources, or providing funds to train youth in these certain programs." Kyle's reflection provides a sliding scale of engaging with Indigenous communities, that goes from appropriation to representation, and from extraction to collaboration. To walk towards collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, he mentions the need to involve communities from the beginning of the process, not in the middle phase. It is also important to ensure that in all steps people are appreciated, named, credited and represented, such as ensuring that knowledge keepers are involved and consulted throughout research projects. Joaquín explains that when he speaks about community, he is not referring to his community, but to all communities from rural, urban and organizational backgrounds. Therefore, the way that non-Indigenous allies can contribute to that ideal community-owned network that he dreams of is by collaborating, sharing, and working together towards that aim. Similarly, Aretha calls for reciprocity in the digital world, to engage

and participate in conversations with respect.

These journeys reveal potential, more ethical ways of engaging with the digital world that connects us to each other, and to our own locations and territories. These stories have different layers of possibilities and potential commitments that can be undertaken as a student, a friend, a user of digital tools, and as a member of an NGO that collaborates with Indigenous media. I speak from my location and leave to all non-Indigenous readers the responsibility (and possibility) of finding their own reflections in relation to their locations, trusting that these stories will provide them with more teachings that I may not be seeing from my own standpoint.

One responsibility is engaging with a critical gaze and acknowledging the long stories of colonization and systemic violence that are replicated in a digital world. This means to start by analyzing our privileges and committing to a consequent reflection of what to do with them, in terms of accessibility both to these tools and to the digital content and features and how we relate to them. For instance, we should be willing to see how this digital world is currently sustained by extractive practices on Indigenous territories. Do we really need to connect when we think we need to connect to the Internet? How conscious and sustainable is our relation to these tools? Whose Land is subject to extraction so that we can store our information in a digital cloud?

This also means learning from participants' stories to reflect on our own journeys and relations, and to identify the possibilities that shape the tools we use through our own experiences and narratives. In the stories, reciprocity was a starting point of any collaborative process, which makes every process relational and collective. This involves engaging and sharing with the collective journeys of others who are critically thinking about digital technologies, through questions and paths leading processes towards a common good. It also involves rethinking content as "content" and relating to what is being shared by these processes with respect, relevancy and an openness to learn and unlearn — to commit to the stories and knowledge through appreciation rather than appropriation, and representation rather than exploitation.

Weaving these testimonios in relation to my research questions was a journey itself, and a process in engaging closer to each participant's journey and to all the testimonios as a polyvocal assemblage. I believe there is an always-open possibility of learning from these stories over time and learning processes, and again, it is my hope that readers find their own learnings from their own location. Next, I will conclude this thesis by sharing what I learned from this entire research process.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

This research journey is one that is bound to stories and relationships. Each of the testimonios presented in this research reveal a diversity of reflective, critical processes and experiences located in Ayuujk, Xhidza, Zapoteco, Cree, Dene and Métis territories, within the regions colonially known as Oaxaca and Alberta. All of them relate to the same digital network of networks through a variety of processes and uses of digital tools, such as filmmaking, video game design, online gaming and streaming, online radio, photo collaging, app design and different uses of Free Software tools. Each of these narratives reveal valuable contributions to the complex and dialectical approaches that examine technology as a tool of power and counterpower, not only through their situated knowledge and reflection but also through experiences that resonate as potential strategies to nurture other's paths towards the shaping and re-writing of technology.

I do not intend to provide a unique analysis or interpretation of these stories, but to share what I learned from them and how I found the responses for my research questions. For this reason, it was relevant in this thesis to present the whole testimonios first, while hoping that the previous chapters had encouraged and committed readers to engage with each of the stories so that the knowledge in them resonates according to their own locations and relation to digital tools.

My intention in this concluding chapter is to share my learnings in the journey of undertaking this research. First, I explain the framework and methodology that is coherent with my motivations and research questions, along with the challenges that come from bringing other people's narratives and relationships into an academic thesis. Secondly, I reflect on the power and relevance that I found in undertaking a narrative-centered methodology to respond to research questions about digital technologies. Lastly, I share my reflections about my responsibilities as a non-Indigenous

ally collaborating with Indigenous media, communicators and artists, hoping to nurture further collaborations.

Finding a Methodology

The questions I present in this work, and the testimonios that respond to them, are the result of relationships and ongoing collaborations in Oaxaca and Alberta. Incorporating them into an academic process turned into a journey itself as I searched for the right methods and framework to allow me to nurture and give continuity to the ongoing conversations and relationships within the thesis project and beyond. I also wanted to continue honouring people's stories and my own commitments to collaborating with diverse Indigenous Peoples, without replicating colonial practices of research interpretation that would fragment those stories into research data.

Finding a methodology that seemed coherent and respectful allowed me to engage with and learn from diverse scholars that have taken an invaluable journey into reframing what research is and can be through critical, relational and respectful processes and outcomes. Engaging with anglophone literature allowed me to learn from the work of Indigenous scholars from territories within settler-States who have named and denounced the colonial violence within the historic relationship between universities and Indigenous Peoples (Archibald, 2008; Duarte, 2017; Kovach, 2014; Simpson, 2017; Tuck, 2009; Smith, 2012). Also, I learned from their claims and strategies to acknowledge other (non-Western) ways of creating and co-creating knowledge.

Inspired by the relational and story-centered Indigenous methodologies, I found this methodology and its relational methods rooted in both locations of my questions: testimonio (DeRocher, 2018; Perez, 2008) as a methodology coming from Latin America, and the conversational method (Kovach, 2014) which I learned during my time in Canada. Finding testimonio as a methodology and writing praxis was relevant to the coherent continuity of conversations and relationships. As a decision to take pre-established relationships as a starting point, I invited people with whom I had already shared questions and dreams, and this was important through every step of the methodology: from inviting participants, through engaging in deep conversations and subsequently reflecting on the text. This was also relevant with the conversational method,

considering that sharing journeys, memories and personal narratives takes trust and long-term accountability. Moreover, knowing people's experiences and thoughts helped me to guide each conversation through prompt questions in a respectful and enriching way.

Engaging with participant's stories through each of the steps described in the methodology chapter allowed me to find the richness in this methodology and cyclic framework, where research is as much about the process as the findings. The follow-up process with participants after the conversation included second Zoom meetings in some cases and email conversations in others. Some expressed surprise in reading their own transcripts after the interview, finding in the transcribed testimonios more than they would have expected to have shared through the conversation. One participant referred to this process as a good way to "steward other's words" and another shared feeling "honoured in sharing thoughts and reflections," and "thankful for questions that help settle some of their thoughts." Some also suggested adding information, clarifying certain statements or removing details after reviewing their transcripts, which was done through a second conversation and a collaborative online document. Some expressed excitement in reading other participants' testimonios.

As shown by Menchu's emblematic book, one single testimonio can be novel-length. One of the limitations of using testimonio in this thesis form is the time and form requirements of the academic framework, which consequently restrict the length of the interviews with each participant to one hour. However, I hope that the length of the testimonio makes them accessible to more readers, and that it remains as an open story that can always be nurtured by their narrators. Linguistical diversity and geographical distance is definitely a strength and a richness in this process. However, it has also been a limitation to potential conversations among participants, which I hope will happen as further steps after testimonios have been shared in English and Spanish with all of them.

As a non-Indigenous person working with diverse Indigenous Peoples' stories, I find testimonio to be a writing praxis that is respectful for three main reasons. First, it is an alternative to traditional qualitative research methods, such as ethnography and data coding, that fragment other's worldviews through a researcher's lens, with the risk of replicating colonial relations and structures. Second, I found that the process of reviewing transcripts with participants is relevant to

ensure ethical representation and relational accountability. Finally, finding a methodology that acknowledges the knowledge in people's experiences and stories is relevant to my location and relation to stories, and to honouring what I have learned through my collaborations with Indigenous media. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, this implies identifying some of the limitations related to my self-location as a non-Indigenous person making meaning of these stories, such as listening and acknowledging the relationship to Land and language that participants shared in all conversations, without having a similar epistemic and ontological experience to place, or sharing my findings on the impacts of colonization, capitalism and digital tools in their territories, with a different — and privileged — relation to State violence that limits the possibilities and potential depths of my own critical analysis. The conversational method was relevant to this process as well, in order to understand the semi-structured interviews as dialogues built from relationships, and to design them with open-ended questions so that participants could take the story in whatever direction they wanted.

The context of Covid-19 is relevant in this research for many reasons. First, because it was mentioned throughout all testimonios in relation to the uses of digital tools as both challenges and opportunities.. Second, it is important to mention how this methodology was adapted to conversations online rather than in person, which also opens up ideas and possibilities of ongoing collaboration across regions through digital tools. Third, it helped to acknowledge the relevance of the knowledge in these testimonios in a global moment where technologies are being placed (and named) as solutions to the continuity of work, school, health and communication in an unexpected context of isolation. This context has revealed various technologically deterministic approaches undertaken by corporations and governments as response to the global health emergency, undertaking digital technologies and connectivity plans as ends in themselves.

Testimonio as Technological Re-writing

The transnational and polyvocal testimonios in this thesis confirm what DeRocher (2018) explains as bringing disparate worlds into critical proximity and epistemological interconnections between sites with overlapping histories. This is revealed in the overlapping reflections, from Oaxaca and Alberta, in relation to long processes of resistance and sovereignty, collective memory, language revitalization, and a shared stance in process-centered experiences in relation to the Land. These

reflections also reveal the complex challenges and benefits that digital tools present in contexts of capitalism, colonization, extractivism, discrimination and ongoing tensions with the State, such as the regulatory limitations for Indigenous owned and operated media, the individual consumption of content that distances peoples from the Land and immediate reality, or hegemonic narratives in the film industry and digital world.

All journeys speak of collective and reflective paths, built from webs of relationships that involve Elders, youth and reciprocal collaborations nurturing the paths of communication and creative processes in different contexts. I found in this process the critical proximity that DeRocher sees happening through transnational testimonios. This was revealed, for example, in the digital strategies to use digital tools according to participants' own terms and desires, with commonalities that I aggregated into four main strategies: 1) critical, reflective processes and conscious practices, 2) relationships, 3) land and language and 4) collective dreamwork.

Another important learning was following DeRocher's (2018) feminist approach to testimonio that recognizes that "memory work" cannot be thought of in isolation from "dream work." I incorporated this by including a prompt question that invited participants to share their dream of a digital world. These questions nurtured the testimonios such that all stories document experiences while providing thoughts about the ideation of a digital world.

I find testimonio to be a relevant methodology to use to continue exploring community informatics and the social shaping of technology approaches. It revealed a pathway into finding stories in the tensions and dialectic relationship between people and technologies, while acknowledging the knowledge in their experiences. I also proved it to be a close and powerful methodology for technological re-writing, in the sense that stories reveal how people resignify digital technologies

through their own localized and reflexive narratives.

It is my hope to have achieved a cyclical, relational and process-oriented journey, and to have seeded new relationships, reflections and inquiries in both participants and readers of this work.

What's Next?

The testimonios in this thesis present important and urgent questions, concerns, experiences and reflections about the digital world and our relation to it, and strategies towards a more sustainable digital future and ethical collaborations. In this journey, the participants were interested in how I reaffirmed the possibility of visualizing future bridges between the experiences of Indigenous communicators in Alberta and Oaxaca, and the potential for dialogue between those who are shaping technology as tools for the resistance of diverse ways of living in relation. One potential next step is sharing all the testimonios with participants, in English and Spanish, along with an open and shared question to all: "Would you see something coming up next?"

To conclude, as I reflect on these learnings, I find simultaneous thoughts about digital technology, research, and my responsibility as a non-Indigenous person collaborating with Indigenous communicators and artists. I find in the learning process important guidelines to continue undertaking research and the use of digital tools, as technologies embedded with interests that can be re-shaped and re-written through experiences and narratives, based on self-reflexivity, relationality and long-term accountability.

It is my hope that this shared journey is a story that contributes to the diverse possibilities of collaboration, to keep dreaming, shaping and re-writing these tools towards a more sustainable way of living.

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