# The "Art" of the Right to the City: Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning in Pointe-St-Charles

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## ABSTRACT

What does it mean for artists within academia to make art, teach and learn with and in community, in particular the challenged and challenging Montreal neighborhood of Pointe-St-Charles? This article addresses community engagement in "The Point" from the perspectives of a doctoral student and two instructors involved in "The Right to the City" (TRTC), a three-year, interdisciplinary, placed-based teaching initiative of Concordia University (Montreal). Showcasing the student's graphic novella, based on the oral history interview of a longtime resident, this article affirms the importance of reciprocity—learning *with* rather than *about*—within academic and artistic outreach.

Fig. 1: Detail of Emanuelle Dufour's graphic novel, *La nostalgie heureuse de Pointe-St-Charles* (2015), page 1. Emanuelle's portrait of local resident Thérèse Dionne, left. [Translation: … This generation of women, wives, neighbors and mothers of French-Canadian families who built the working-class neighborhoods of Montreal…]

"When time comes, I will pass the graphic novella [*La nostalgie heureuse de Pointe-St-Charles*] on to my grandchildren as an educational tool to help preserve the memory of the community."
— Thérèse Boudreault Dionne (personal communication, 2016)

**W**hat does it mean for artists within academia to make art, teach, and learn with and in community, in particular the challenged and challenging Montreal neighborhood of Pointe-St-Charles? Why take on this work? What is the value to the students, the instructors, and the community members who welcome us? What lessons are we learning from our experience that may be useful in further teaching and learning of our own, or by others in postsecondary institutions?

This article addresses these guiding questions from three perspectives. The first is that of Emanuelle Dufour, Concordia University doctoral student in Art Education, who for the culminating task of a graduate art studio course (Studio Inquiry) sited in Pointe-St-Charles, used local oral history and her own life experience to create the graphic novella whose artwork begins and is the heart of this text. The second is Kathleen Vaughan, artist, Pointe-St-Charles resident, and instructor of Studio Inquiry, and the third is Cynthia Hammond, historian of the built environment, artist, and local resident as well as principal investigator of "The Right to the City" (http://righttothecity.atwaterlibrary.ca/). Named for philosopher Henri Lefebvre's (1980) important writings on social justice in the urban scape, The Right to the City is a three-year, interdisciplinary, placed-based teaching initiative[1] of Concordia University (Montreal, Canada), which unites Hammond with co-investigators and fellow instructors Vaughan, Steven High (History), and Edward Little (Theatre), in association with Eric Craven of the Digital Literacy Project of the Atwater Library, and provides special funding for four tethered classes, located in Pointe-St-Charles.

## Theoretical Framework

The Right to the City's work of curriculum innovation and course design is guided by a theoretical framework that draws on social justice oriented theorists, such as geographer David Harvey (2011), who reminds us that,

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common

rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (p. 23)

Further, we instructors "think with" (Haraway, 2016) writers across disciplines who articulate the importance of place, agreeing that place is best construed as "the articulations of social relations" (Massey, 1995, p. 186)—stories—that link past and present, local and global, and insisting on "foreground[ing] a narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the particularities of where people actually live, and that is connected to global development trends that impact local places" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3). Oriented to posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013), we encourage our students to be mindful of "the aesthetic agency of post-industrial sites in general and of emergent and transgressive ecologies in particular, and extend the concept of the 'right to the city' to a right to urban nature" (Langhorst, 2014, p. 1111). From the arts side, we draw on the work of art historian Lucy Lippard (1996), who sees place as "the locus of desire" (p. 4). She reminds instructors and Right to the City students—a diverse group, many of whom are experiencing both Montreal and Pointe-St-Charles for the first time—that our specificity as incomers matters:

Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all "local places" consist of. By entering that hybrid, we change it; and in each situation we may play a different role. A white middle-class art type without much money will have a different affect and effect on a mostly Latino community than on a mostly white upper-class suburb with more money. S/he remains the same person, and may remain an outsider in both cases, but reciprocal identity is inevitably altered by the place, by the relationship to the place itself and the people who are already there. Sometimes the place, or "nature," will provide nourishment that social life cannot. (p. 6)

We draw on the work of oral history innovator Alessandro Portelli (1991) for the notions of "shared authority" that guide our interactions with locals and—across disciplines—with each other. We work within the "teaching-research nexus" (Jenkins & Healey, 2005), building on the knowledge, credibility, and relationships that have arisen from our own existing teaching, research, and research-creation projects linked to Pointe-St-Charles, adjacent neighborhoods, and place-based work for social change[2] with each form of practice informing and enhancing the others.

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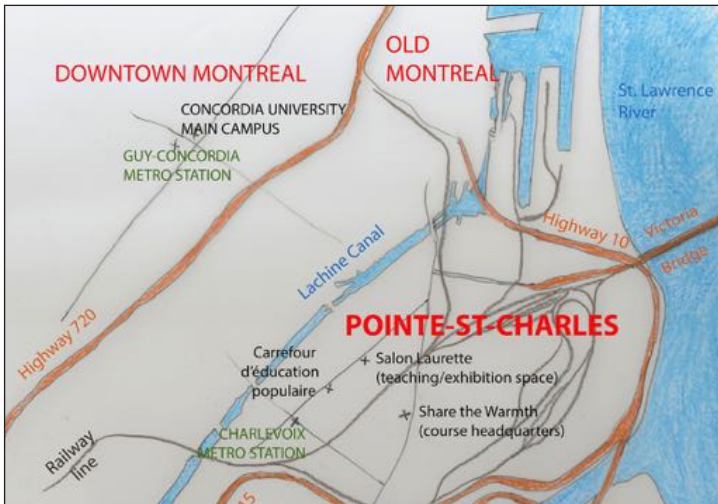
# A Portrait of Pointe-St-Charles



Fig. 2: Map of Pointe-St-Charles including defining neighborhood features and sites mentioned in the text. Map: Kathleen Vaughan, 2016.

A brief description of this special community[3] will indicate its benefits as a location for art-making, teaching, and learning. Described as Montreal's second-oldest neighborhood (after the old city), Pointe-St-Charles is a small (approximately 1.3 percent of Montreal's overall population) neighborhood about three kilometres southeast of downtown. "The Point" lies between the city's core and the St. Lawrence River, geographically bounded by the Lachine Canal to the north, and highways and railway tracks to the west, south, and east.

The history of the neighborhood follows a trajectory familiar to many developed North American cities. Once marshy riverside terrain where First Nations hunted and fished, in the late 17th century Pointe-St-Charles became agrarian land run by religious orders. In the 19th century, the area industrialized with the construction of the Lachine Canal expanding commercial shipping into central North America and prompting building in The Point of factories, manufacturers, mills, railway yards and—at specific moments—a slaughterhouse and the city dump. Residential accommodation grew alongside industry, with workers imported from Scotland and Ireland to help dig the Canal and build the nearby Victoria Bridge, the first to connect Montreal by rail and road to the mainland, and at the time an engineering wonder of the world. In its industrialized heyday of the 1930s, The Point was home to more than

30,000 people, many Anglophones of Irish origin but also Francophones, a mix that persists. By the mid-1970s, deindustrialization and the closure of the Lachine Canal (superseded by the St. Lawrence Seaway, which could accommodate larger ships) took an enormous toll on the community. Businesses shut down, jobs vanished, and residents moved away in search of work. The population fell to just over 10,000, or one-third of what it once was.

Through the 1970s and since, The Point has faced great economic, social, and environmental challenges. Even now, 40% of the neighborhood's children do not graduate high school, as compared with 17% in the rest of the city (Pathways to Education, n.d.). At the same time, The Point has a remarkable history of community activism. Citizens mobilized in response to deindustrialization, creating popular education institutions, working to improve food access and housing, while building their own health clinic (Le Collectif CourtePointe, 2006). The Point has a deep heritage of working-class organizing, especially by women (Le Collectif CourtePointe, 2006; see also Kruzynski, 2004). In 1973, for example, when the City ignored residents' requests for such basic urban amenities as stop signs and speed bumps, the people of The Point built their own (Le Collectif CourtePointe, 2006). Learning about this sort of urban agency aids students' realizations that it is not just architects, planners, and legacy-obsessed politicians who create tomorrow's heritage. Yet, the heritage of working people is often more nuanced and ephemeral than a major civic building.

Longstanding advocates for affordable low-cost rental housing, Pointe-St-Charles residents mobilized and for an interval enjoyed significant publicly subsidized accommodation: at its heyday in 1996, about 40% of neighborhood housing was community housing of some kind (Vickers, 2013). Today, infill condominium building on small abandoned or empty lots and in the larger, more desirable waterfront spaces along the Lachine Canal is attracting new residents who can afford to purchase units priced well beyond the reach of most locals. Plans for additional new building and consequent population increase (now at almost 14,000) means that the proportion of community housing is projected to drop to about 27% (Action-Guardien, 2013). The shift in the neighborhood is causing some social tensions.

Worth emphasizing is the bilingual nature of The Point, with 56% of its residents being of French mother tongue, and 25% of English mother tongue (a higher proportion than Montreal's 17% average), with the rest of residents having a variety of other first languages (Centraide, 2011). While some local social service agencies serve primarily either an Anglophone or a Francophone population, most work in at least two languages for the common good. The easy accessibility of English in The Point

is important for Concordia students who come from other parts of the globe and count on English to be a lingua franca in the city as it is the language of instruction at the University. At the same time, the obvious presence of French represents the reality of the city's two founding settler languages—and reflects the entitlement of any Quebec university student to submit written course work in either French or English. Students of the Right to the City, regardless of their own preferred languages, are encouraged to respect and if possible respond in the language of the local with whom they're engaging, if necessary by seeking translation assistance from a classmate or instructor.

Thus, in today's Pointe-St-Charles, both instructors and students have much to discover about communicating across difference, urban resiliency, collective determination, and the challenges of inclusion across class and language divides— and about the post-industrial ecologies of contaminated and recovering terrain, water, and air. Our goal was not to teach about a neighborhood, but to learn *with* and *from* this neighborhood and its residents. The Studio Inquiry graduate students in particular are asked to make art—individual, community-based, or collaborative— in connection with Pointe-St-Charles and course thematics.

# Class Structure

The courses of The Right to the City are scheduled for Thursday afternoons through the 13 weeks of the fall term, with timetabling demands meaning that our classes have just one hour in common, 4 to 5 p.m., during which we schedule shared activities and workshops across disciplines, with the bulk of in-class time occurring either before (1 to 4 p.m. in most cases) or after (5 to 6 p.m. in the case of Studio Inquiry) our common hour.

With RTTC's commitment to learning *with* Pointe-St-Charles, we site our classes off-campus in the neighborhood itself.[4] Part of our special funding supports the rental of rather unconventional teaching spaces. Most of our classes take place at Partageons l'Espoir or Share the Warmth (http://sharethewarmth.ca), a social economy project located in the former Grace Church on Wellington Street. In this beautiful old building our students learn not just through readings, discussions, and hands-on exercises; they also learn through proximity, volunteering, and hearing directly from Share the Warmth's clientele how deindustrialization and neighborhood change have shaped their lives, what they remember from the past, and how they are

approaching their futures. We have also held small working groups at Salon Laurette, which for decades served the neighborhood as a local beauty parlor, then more recently (2014-2016) functioned as exhibition space and community office for architect/community organizer and professor Mark Poddubiuk, and was reinvented as of August 1, 2016 as a not-for-profit co-working space for local independent workers.



Fig 3: Day 1 of classes of the Right to the City (2015) at Share the Warmth, with instructors Hammond (left) and High (right) speaking to the specifics of the neighborhood using an oversized map. Photograph: Kathleen Vaughan.

These and other Pointe-St-Charles resources are profoundly important to our students. They can consult the local archive created by The Point's residents and now held at McGill University. They can learn a lot from simply walking the neighborhood and observing both continuity and change. Our students take part in two bilingual audio walks that feature neighborhood residents telling their stories of the Lachine Canal (*Canal*, Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2013) and The Point itself. In fact, *La Pointe: The other side of the tracks* (2015) is a memory-based audio walk that was collaboratively created by that year's RTTC Public History students (Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2015).

Fig. 4: "Speed Dating With History" involves timed retellings of first-person narratives of long-time Pointe-St-Charles residents: just one minute each to get to the heart of the story. Instructor Ted Little (centre) stands with the bell he'll ring to signal the need to change partners once each of the pair has spoken, after a total of two minutes. Photograph: Kathleen Vaughan, 2015.

Working within our weekly shared hour of time, each instructor has led a workshop for the 60 students in all four classes as a way to jump right into the methodological differences between disciplines. We have developed common and twinned activities as well: drawing on the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling's "Stories Matter" database of 20 oral history interviews with Anglophone and Francophone Pointe-St-Charles residents, we devised our "Speed Dating With History" event, which has students draw directly from local, living memory, and share their versions with each other. Specifically, prior to class, each student reviews one resident's extensive (60- to 90-minute) video interview, making notes of key points and developing one-minute's worth of first-person content to speak as an introduction to that individual. These interviewees have agreed not only to the recording of their story, but also to its being accessed and reused within others' scholarly or creative work, an explicit stipulation of their consent. This ethical framework is explained to the students when they learn of the assignment, along with other considerations of ethics in research and research-creation practices.[5]

During class, the students are seated in two concentric rings, and have timed sessions of two minutes each to speak—first one, and then the other, in English or French—the interviewee's story to the listening partner. When the time is up, the bell rings and the students in the outer row shift a seat clockwise, meaning they encounter new partners and new stories—or new versions of a just-heard story, since with a bank of 20 recordings to draw on, an interviewee's name will be given to more than one student. But with each interpreter bringing his or her own experience to the retelling of the story, with each one identifying a particular minute's worth of content to highlight, at the Speed Dating event, every version of the story is different, as the students experience for themselves. They live how history is filtered through subjectivities and place-specificity and bring their own realities to the process. The bell rings and the students shift positions again, and again, and again, each time retelling their "own" story slightly differently and hearing a somewhat tweaked version of their partner's tale.

Through Speed Dating With History, students thus "live" the ethics of engaging with oral history: How does one best honour another's story? Does one "perform" the person or recount a selection of facts? How does one's own positionality affect what one chooses to portray about the person interviewed? Whose story is being told? Students report the experience to be surprising, exhilarating, and magical.[6] For some, it becomes the basis for their culminating academic or creative coursework. With scholars such as Becker (1982), Deleuze (1996), and Csikszentminhalyi (2015) emphasizing the input of social interaction into the creative process and the underlying importance of collective experiences and memories within the making of one's own voice, "Speed Dating With History" provides ripe raw material.

# The "Art" of the Right to the City

Building on their cross-disciplinary, in-course activities, readings, and neighborhood engagement, the artist-researchers of Studio Inquiry are asked to develop a creative work that draws on course thematics for exhibition in Pointe-St-Charles at the end of the course. This work is positioned as "research-creation," the term used in Canada[7] to indicate research that is conducted through artistic practice; oriented to addressing a particular research question using methods and procedures that can be articulated; and linked to relevant discourses of scholarship and art-making. This framework distinguishes research-creation from the normal sort of inquiry that any artist might conduct as s/he develops artwork, being more

extensive, more explicit, and more reflexively engaged with questions of method and context. With about 15 years of history, research-creation is relatively new in Canada, and gaining ground in academia as a viable approach to MA and PhD studio-based theses and dissertations. Creating their artwork for Studio Inquiry can become a first engagement with research-creation for many emerging graduate artist-researchers. Students can draw on the expertise of their instructor, Dr. Kathleen Vaughan (2005; 2009; 2015b), who has an extensive background in theorizing research-creation through her own artistic practice, whether in textiles, collage installation, map-making, or graphic novel form. With much of her own work being place-based and as a long-time core member of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (and, with Hammond, incoming Centre co-director), Vaughan draws on her own experience and broader intellectual/creative contexts in working with students to develop their individualized understandings and formulations of research-creation.

It is along these lines that RTTC doctoral student Emanuelle Dufour positions her own practice in graphic novellas as research-creation, recognizing that the making of comics, just like any other artistic medium, arises from and contributes to the production of culture (Brienza, 2010). The artist's picturing of people and fragmented life stories contributes to the gathering of data for a multipurpose analysis, while offering a broad potential for reflexivity and alternative knowledge production. The blend of oral history and auto-ethnography within such research-creation projects offers the opportunity to present the artist's own experience, therefore revealing his or her own subjectivity, while bringing into focus what might seem to be an external subject, but is in fact a component of our collective human experience. As theorist Boukala explains, comic making is something more than the visual transposition of a given issue or theme. It is, in itself, a multi-layer visual form of knowledge, which is capable of producing collective representations, rendering nuances, and inducing social and cultural transformations (Boukala, 2010). Within comics or graphic novels, the boundaries between the self and the others become merged into the words and images of a single piece: a graphic memory piece. Therefore, graphic storytelling or graphic memoir offers real potential, particularly as regards to affective resonance, collective identification, and sociocultural encounter both within and away from one's nation: "For both scholar and the teacher, comics can be an invaluable resource in exploring cultural diversity and how it has historically defined our nations" (Royal, 2012, p. 79). And in terms of the Right to the City, comics—born as they were of the introduction of mass media, specifically in the newspapers of the late 19th century—can be seen as an ultimate urban form of art: "Only in its representation through art, and especially through the comic form, which makes its underlying coherence as well as its insurmountable heterogeneity palpable, urbanity really seems to come into its own" (Ahrens & Meteling, 2010, p. 13).

Dufour offers such a mix of urbanity, history, and auto-ethnography in the graphic memoir that she created, linking her own family's story to that of Thérèse Dionne.

### An Introduction via Academia

*On a beautiful Wednesday morning in September of 2015, I was first introduced to Mme. Thérèse Dionne. She was sitting in front of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling's camera back in 2010, and I was leaning over my computer screen playing and replaying the video of her over and over again. I had the pleasure of watching and listening to Mme. Dionne's memories of her 78 years of life in The Point. If, at the end of the day, the experience had gotten so perfectly immersive that I realized I had in some ways integrated her narratives into my own personal account, Mme. Dionne herself was unfortunately unable to form any memory of this first and one-way encounter.*

*Just like every other Art Education graduate student and our counterparts from departments of Theatre, Art History, and History enrolled in the Right to the City seminar, I was invited to draw one name from many, selecting from a little pile of paper sitting on the edge of the main stage at Share the Warmth, the community centre where most of our classes were held. These names belonged to participants of a series of oral history interviews conducted by the Oral History and Digital Storytelling Centre in collaboration with Parks Canada and the Canada Research Chair in Oral History, held by Steven High. Each of these names was linked to a 60- to 90-minute individual interview that had been uploaded online, with restricted access and formed part of the Stories Matter database of recorded life histories. After being apprised of the ethics stipulations that allowed the use of these interviews, students were asked to immerse and appropriate one-minute's worth of testimony by the participant whose name they had drawn in order to prepare for the "Speed Dating With History" workshop.*

*In my case, the encounter with Thérèse Dionne further led to the making of a short graphic novella, an interpretative collage of drawn archival images which aims to pay tribute to the historical community of The Point. In a wider sense, my graphic novella also pays homage to the generation of working-class women born in Montreal during the interwar period. My project has the layers of an onion, with the innermost core depicting one's individual narrative and successive layers broadening expressions of collective memories: Mme. Dionne's, The Point's, working-class industrial Montreal's, those of many French Canadians' cultural history, and so forth. Because my work of research-creation was created in French, responding to the French-language interview of Mme. Dionne, my co-authors here and I decided for the purposes of this article to*

leave my original artwork intact, but offer an English version of the content after each novella page. Thus, the graphic memoir is inserted page by page, below, followed by a translation of the penned text and reflections on the making of the work.

**La nostalgie heureuse de Pointe-St-Charles**
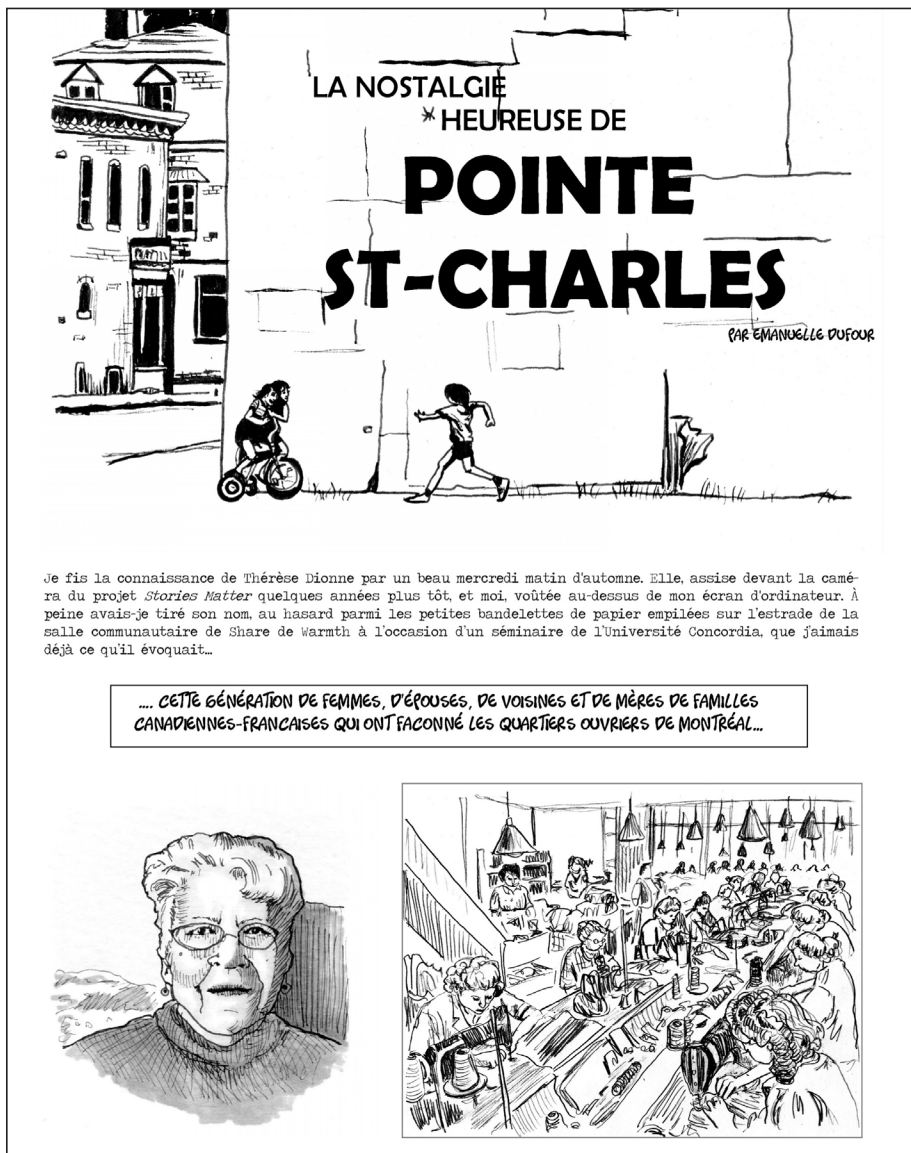**The happy nostalgia of Pointe-St-Charles**



Fig. 5: The happy nostalgia of Pointe St-Charles

*As soon as I read the name I had randomly selected, I was transported to a distant yet familiar universe. I liked Thérèse Dionne's name for what it evoked in me and I liked the woman that appeared on my computer screen for the strength she embodied. Thérèse Dionne: the daughter, sister, spouse, mother, neighbor, and one of the French-Canadian working-class women who contributed to the rise of The Point, moving from kitchens and diapers to factories, and then home to stovetops and sinks. This was a generation of women survivors, born between two wars, resourceful enough to brave the odds and adapt to the tides of change.*
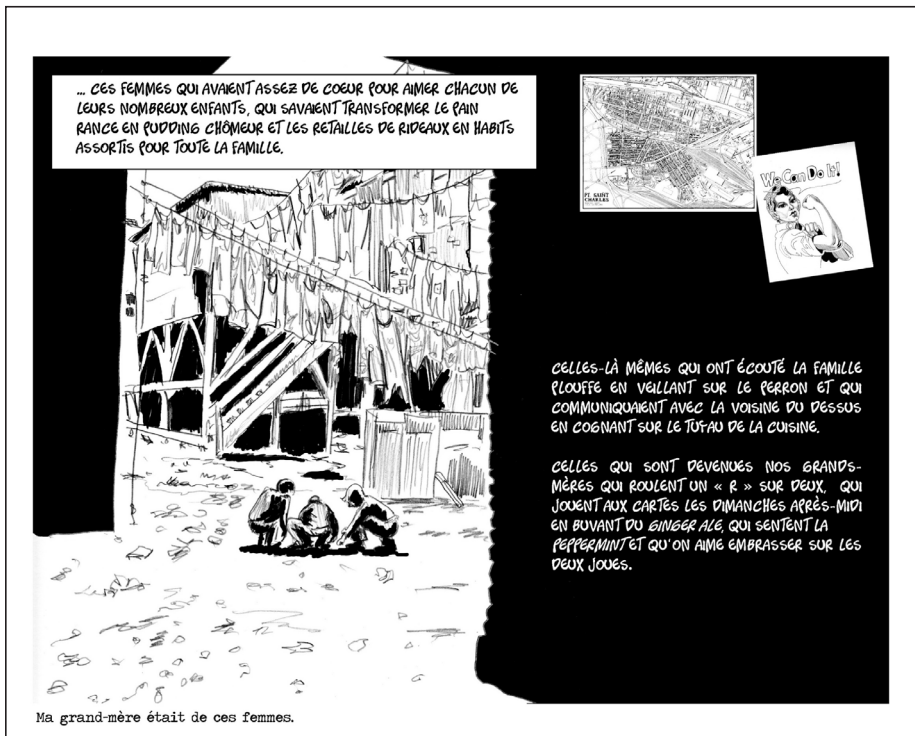


Fig. 6: A generation of women survivors

> Née au coeur du quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, elle fut d'abord Mireille Ranger, fille de la douce Fleur-Ange Ranger, puis devint un jour Madame Cantin, mère de 5 beaux enfants et finalement… notre chère Mimi d'amour.

Fig. 6 (cont.): A generation of women survivors

Those who had enough heart to love every single one of their numerous children, who could turn stale bread into delicious *pouding chômeur*[8] and transform old curtains into new outfits for the entire family. These were the families and neighbors who watched *La famille Plouffe* TV show, all together, sitting on the front porch, and who communicated between households by knocking on shared kitchen pipes. These are the women who have now become our grandmothers, who roll one "r" out of two, who love playing cards on Sunday afternoons while sipping ginger ale poured from the can into depression glass cups, and whom we love to kiss on both peppermint-smelling cheeks.

One of this generation of giant-hearted women was my own grandmother, Mireille Ranger, born in the heart of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, a working-class neighborhood that easily compares, with its similarities and particularities, to The Point. Daughter of Fleur-Ange Ranger, she soon became Mme. Cantin and even Mme. Jean-Claude Cantin, mother of five. She took back her maiden name after her divorce, while becoming a grandmother of eight and thereafter being known as… our dearest Mimi.

Fig. 7: Mireille ("Mimi") Ranger

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On the 12th day of September 2015, only a few days after my encounter with Thérèse, Mimi took her last breath surrounded by her loving children and grandchildren.

This exceptional context surely had a great impact on my encounter with Thérèse and on the depth of my identification with her character. Throughout the making of the graphic novel, Mimi acted as a reflexive and emotional anchor into the cultural areas and spaces that I was aiming to depict without direct experience of my own. With my anthropology background and working, now, with the oral history-based data of indirect sources, I considered reflexivity as the obvious way to create a certain kind of fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1997) that would make it easier to represent the other's cultural experience.



Fig. 8: A special generation of women

... TANTÔT À SON MARI, DIT *CHARCOAL*, FILS DE CAMIONNEUR, QUI, DANS SON JEUNE ÂGE, A PLONGÉ DU PONT CHARLEVOIX DANS LE CANAL LACHINE POUR QUELQUES CIGARETTES MISES EN GAGE PAR SES CHUMS DE GARS...
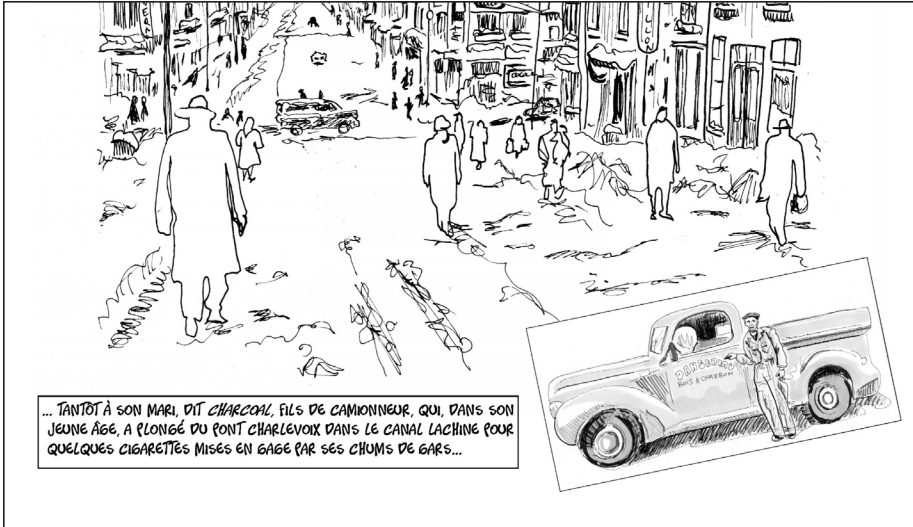
Fig. 8 (cont.): A special generation of women

Mimi and Thérèse both belong to the generation of women who rocked the cradles of our mothers, our fathers, their children… and children of their children.

Throughout her narrative, Thérèse tells cultural anecdotes and the customs of her time, addressing a ghost speaker and referring both to her mother—who used to place a penny "heads up" on the edge of the window on New Year's Eve to avoid being broke in the year to come—and to her sister, who would answer back something like: "We will definitely not be broke, Mama, since we've at least got this penny!" She talks about her husband, who earned the nickname "Charbon" because his dad was a truck driver for Dansereau Bois et Charbon, a Pointe-St-Charles coal company, and who once took a dare to jump from the Charlevoix Bridge into the canal, all for a couple of cigarettes, and her older son, who used to secretly hitch a ride on the train on his way home from school so he could to use his bus fare for a soft drink instead. Thérèse also recalls her own childhood when she and other local kids would, despite the operator's warnings, sneak rides on the swinging bridge, as it rotated to allow boats passage through the Canal: "We didn't have the chance to visit Belmont [Amusement] Park, but we had our own: the Charlevoix Bridge!!!"
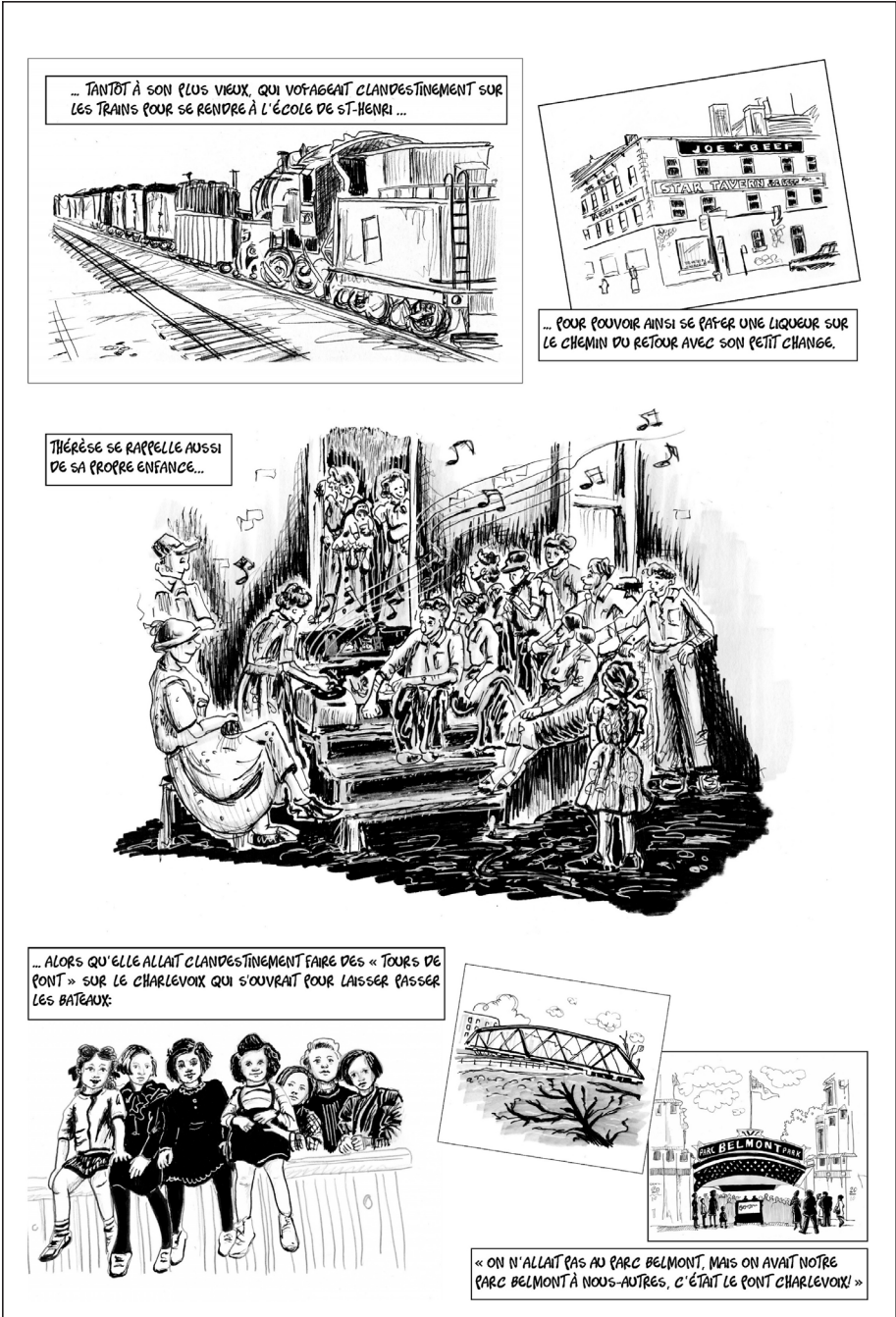
Fig. 9: Cultural anecdotes and customs

Many of us in the Right to the City classes were both amazed and shocked by Professor Kathleen Vaughan's narrative of her privileged family's unexpected detour to the unfamiliar poverty of The Point when she was a child (see the comic strip insert below, *How I became allergic to grass (and eventually moved to The Point!)*). Thérèse, for her part, never envied the green lawns of richer neighborhoods. At one point, the Dionne family considered moving to the suburbs in order to have a home of their own, but this dream vanished after their first visit: too much grass, too much space, and too little proximity. They turned their backs on this "gilded cage" that seemed to promote individuality over community and found their way back to The Point, that is to say, to their community, surrounded by their neighbors, friends and relatives, more convinced than ever of their belonging.
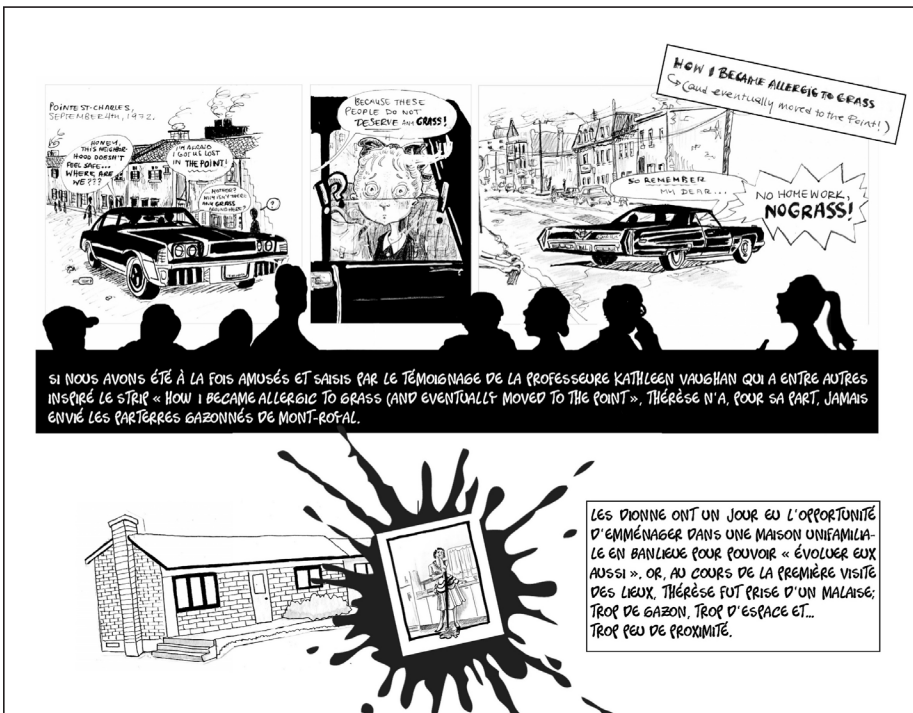


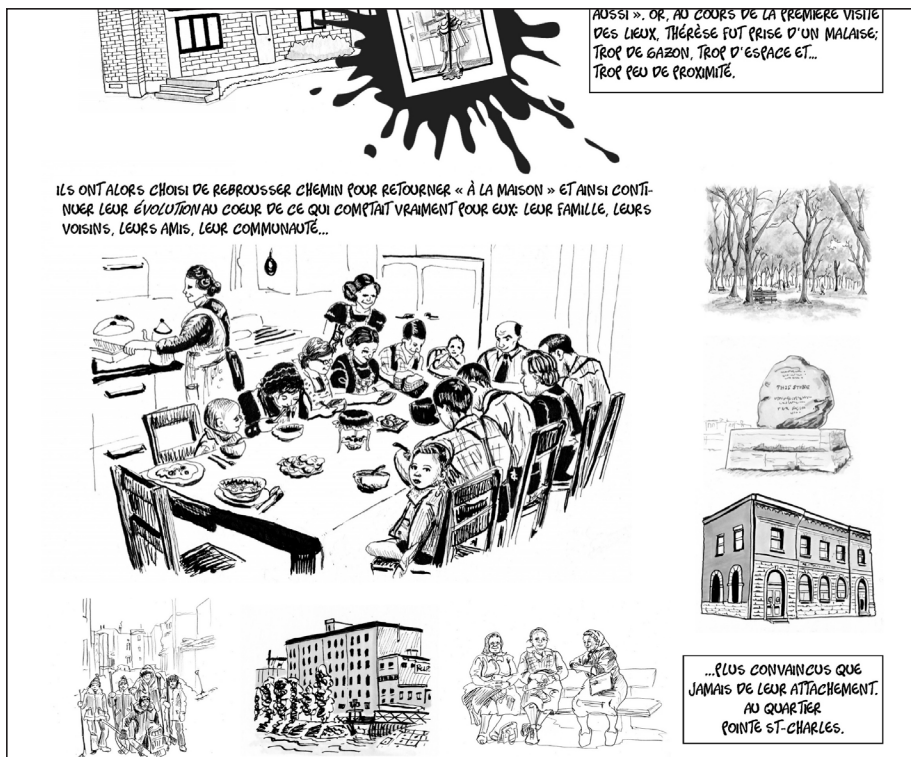Fig. 10: Strong sense of belonging to The Point

Fig. 10 (cont.): Strong sense of belonging to The Point

Considering that social bonds can be approached as the living heart of neighborhoods (Gans in Hayden, 1997), a departure from The Point would have represented a rupture from their cultural identification, built from shared experiences and collective memories. "Culture is ordinary" (Williams, 1958, p. 3) and it is within The Point's micro culture, among other families and communities, that Thérèse Dionne took root for more than 80 years. Despite her sweet memories, she expresses no bitterness towards the changes to her neighborhood over the years, perhaps embracing cultural theorist Homi Bhabbha's "time of the now" (in Massey, 1995, p. 3). In Mme. Dionne's opinion, development and new residents do not only mean alienation and disenchantment (Bennett, 2001), but can also be seen as an unavoidable development that also brings improvements and new initiatives. Among other examples, she quotes the Community Clinic set up in the 1970s by a group of McGill University students whose exemplary medical approach was much needed in The Point—and which in turn became a model for community-based health care throughout the province.
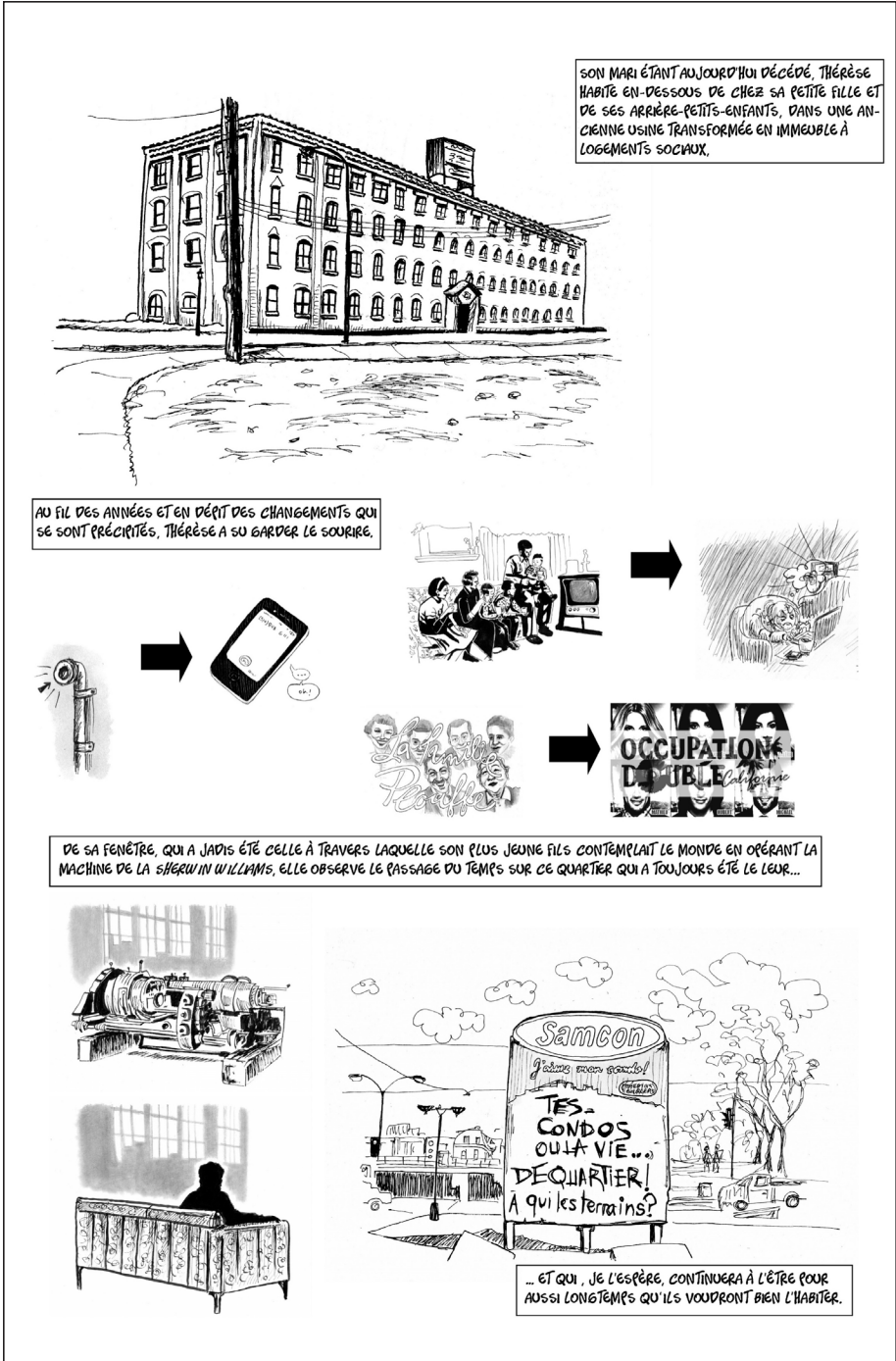
Fig. 11: Changes to the neighborhood over the years

Her husband now deceased, Mme. Dionne has lived for many years in the social housing portion of the former Sherwin Williams factory, right above her granddaughter's apartment and on the very same site where her son used to operate machinery as a company employee. While cellphones have long replaced kitchen pipes and reality shows have for many years superseded the Plouffe family, Thérèse Boudreault Dionne keeps on smiling, witnessing the passage of time in this neighborhood that has always been hers… and within which her people will hopefully feel at home for as long as they want.

# Engaging Community, Education, and Graphic Storytelling

My first idea was to publish the novella within the local newspaper *La Voix Pop*, so that the tribute to long-term residents could be seen by stakeholders, and also to raise awareness amongst new residents about the existence of The Point's vivid history and rich culture—all part of encouraging the feeling of entitlement to make and remake the city as per Harvey's statement at the beginning of this article. While my novella's format did not quite fit the publication's criteria, *La Voix Pop* suggested reporting on the work and providing a synopsis, images, and links to access the novella online (Desroches, 2015). *La nostalgie heureuse de Pointe-St-Charles* was also shown as part of the Right to the City showcase of student works at Salon Laurette (December 5-12, 2015). During the exhibit's launch, 50 postcards displaying different frames of *the graphic novella* were distributed to visitors in order to invite them to "pay it forward" [the tribute to the interwar generation of women] and send a message to their own grandmothers.

Fig. 12: A visitor scrutinizes the printouts of La nostalgie heureuse de Pointe-St-Charles, with postcard take-aways near his right hand. Photograph: Emanuelle Dufour, 2015.

Even so, at the end of the semester, I was deeply concerned. Throughout the many weeks I had been working on the project, I had tried to get in touch with the actual Thérèse Dionne, not only motivated by curiosity, but also to inform her about the existence of the novella. The *life history* interviews having been completed more than five years ago, her contact information was no longer easily accessible, and my own research had determined that Thérèse Dionne no longer lived at the Sherwin Williams building. The *Voix Pop's* publication of the article did not result in Thérèse contacting the paper or me. I therefore had mixed feelings since my project hadn't allowed me to reach directly into the community as I wished.

To remedy this situation, I decided to offer a participatory graphic novel workshop at the Carrefour d'éducation populaire (CEP) de Pointe-St-Charles (http://carrefourpop.org/), a local adult education centre and neighborhood hub. The CEP responded with great enthusiasm to the proposal. On a cold night in February, 2016, the Carrefour organized a comic combo night, starring my presentation and the screening of a movie based on graphic novel literature. Organizers had pinned large prints of my graphic novella to the entrance board, right inside the main door. As the first participants came into the room, on-site community education turned into magic. To my great surprise, I heard many visitors recognizing and identifying Thérèse Dionne among the other drawn characters. She was well-known to most of them and they knew how to get in touch with her. Just as wonderfully, the participants showed great interest in the project and the workshop. A great time was had by all that night. Locals as well as CEP staff members made sure to invite Thérèse Dionne to come to the Carrefour to see the work based on her own memories, which she did shortly thereafter.

And so the partial, one-way introduction that began back in September 2015 with my screening of the video of Thérèse Dionne's interview, finally became a direct two-way encounter, first by phone and then in person. Thérèse Dionne told me that she was deeply moved and expressed a great deal of emotion at the sight of illustrations depicting her own memories. She was proud to show the work to her friends, family, and neighbors. In June 2016, she agreed to be part of the Right to the City roundtable organized as part of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies Annual Conference (Vaughan et al., 2016), where her input and stories were greatly appreciated.

Thérèse Dionne commented that when the time comes, she will pass the graphic novella on to her grandchildren as an educational tool to help preserve the memory of the community. Deep down, I thought that my own grandmother, our dearest Mimi, would probably have done just the same. All in all, my participation to the Right to the City project has proved to be a very rich experience. As an anthropology-trained scholar focusing on alternative education and intercultural dialogue, I was given a new demonstration that postsecondary studies benefit significantly from the integration of fieldwork in terms of in-depth learning and personal development. As an artist, I was pleased to have an additional framework to study the educational potential of graphic memories. Above all, I have been highly moved by my encounter with Thérèse Dionne and the Pointe-St-Charles community. The overall project affirms the importance of reciprocity within academic and artistic outreach.

# Conclusion

Through community placements and collaborative projects, RTTC students have multiple opportunities to interact directly with locals in encounters that enrich the students' culminating course assignments. In the case of Studio Inquiry, that assignment is to develop an individual or collaborative creative artwork that represents their connection to Pointe-St-Charles. Alongside the scholarly and artistic creations of their fellow RTTC adventurers, these works are showcased in a December half-day public event that further strengthens connections with the community. Most prominently in displays at Share the Warmth and Salon Laurette, the Right to the City students have held performances in the park, mounted displays exploring local history, and presented a wide range of creative engagements with neighborhood culture, including graphic novels, maps, sound works, video, collaborative murals, publications, and a major audiowalk. The students are creating works that, at their best, offer:

[a] way of understanding which, in the end, did not try to seal a place up into one neat and tidy 'envelope of space-time' but which recognised that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces. (Massey, 1995, p. 191)



Fig. 13: Panorama shot of the opening of the RTTC exhibition at Salon Laurette, with students' artworks displayed on video monitors, window sills, walls, and tables. Photograph: Cynthia Hammond, 2015.

Through our students' work, the Right to the City now encompasses over 10 community organizations, including the Atwater Library (with core collaborator Eric Craven), the St. Charles Library in Pointe-St-Charles, the YMCA, the Société d'histoire de Pointe-St-Charles, the Carrefour d'éducation populaire, St. Gabriel's School, St. Columba House, and the Pointe-St-Charles borough itself. The community-based and personal artworks created by Studio Inquiry students have been showcased in a catalogue (Carlisi, 2016), and were featured (with their collaborators from Art History)

in the fall 2015 exhibition, *Stories of the City*, in Windsor, Ontario. Thanks to extensive media coverage (Brownstein, 2015; CBC Radio, 2015), the reputation of our project has grown and we are now being asked to connect with organizations in the nearby Saint-Henri and Little Burgundy neighborhoods. Within the university, the Right to the City is being seen as a flagship for a key strategic direction, "Embrace the city, embrace the world." To assess the outcomes of the RTTC and explore future directions for interdisciplinary community-engaged teaching and learning, the RTTC team is planning a *journée d'étude* in fall of 2017, bringing together Pointe-St-Charles stakeholders, past students, and other interested parties from Concordia University. A key question will be how such teaching—which requires additional money and work—can be sustained.

In terms of the project's impact, after the first afternoon of public outcomes in 2014, Fiona Crossling, director of Share the Warmth, commented that this was the first time that a university had come to The Point not to solve problems, but to gather and represent the local history of agency and self-empowerment back to the residents. And so perhaps it is the recognition, or witnessing of heritage, that is transformative. It has certainly been so for those of us involved.

# Notes

1.  The Right to the City has had three iterations in the autumn terms of 2014, 2015, and 2016, and was supported by special funding through Concordia University's Curriculum Innovation Funding (2014 and 2015), the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Teaching and Learning (2016), and the Faculty of Fine Arts (2016). Funding was primarily used for the rental of teaching, break-out, and exhibition/ performance space in Pointe-St-Charles, which allowed us to make a real contribution to our social economy collaborators who welcomed us so warmly. Funding also supported project management for logistical and exhibition/ performance coordination, costs of the final community-based showcases of student work, and other small miscellaneous costs. Total student enrollment was approximately 150 undergraduates and graduates over the three years.

2.  Highlights of the four collaborators' relevant research/creation are as follows: Cynthia Hammond has created collaborative urban interventions in The Point-adjacent neighborhoods of Griffintown and Ville-Marie (Hammond, 2011). She has written extensively about the city as collaborator (Hammond, 2012; 2016; Hammond and Janssen, 2016). Founder and long-time co-director of Concordia

University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, Steven High's overarching research project is The Politics of Urban Change in Post-Industrial Montreal. A resident of Pointe-St-Charles, High has multiple recent publications (in press; 2013) and various projects on the go, many that explore the links between oral history and artistic practices (High & Lewis, 2007). Edward (Ted) Little's expertise is in community-engaged theatre (2008; in press). He developed Concordia's Neighborhood Theatre initiative, in which theatre students work with Montreal neighborhoods to represent local realities, and has an ongoing teaching/research partnership with the Atwater Library's Digital Literacy Project (DLP) and its director Eric Craven, both in turn committed supporters of the Right to the City. Oriented to the political ecologies of the postindustrial city scape, Kathleen Vaughan has a longstanding history of research (Vaughan, 2014), teaching (Faculty of Fine Arts, 2013), and community art education (2013) projects in The Point, with new projects in development. Her research-creation includes textile maps of walks along the gentrifying Lachine Canal (Vaughan, 2015a) and a new exploration of the St. Lawrence shoreline adjacent to Pointe-St-Charles, part of her inquiry as Concordia University Research Chair in Socially Engaged Art and Public Pedagogies.

3. Recognizing that the term 'community' is "stretched to its limit" (Beckley, Martz, Nadeau, Wall, & Reimer, 2008, p. 60), the authors construe community as a place, a learning group, or an ethnic or family identification. With respect to The Right to the City, we consider 'community' to mean the humans, other-than-humans, and built and natural environments that we encounter within the commonly acknowledged perimeter of Pointe-St-Charles, whether these be past or present, actual, or virtual, fact or fiction.

4. Pointe-St-Charles is a 10- to 20-minute bus, subway, or bike ride from Concordia University's main downtown campus, with Share the Warmth about a 10-minute walk from the local Charlevoix subway stop. The proximity to the university is an important factor in our ability to teach in The Point.

5. The Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling offers extensive workshops and training for students, affiliates, and community researchers in ethical practices in oral history, and provides extensive documentation, sample forms, and a list of resources on its website: http://storytelling.concordia.ca/toolbox/ethics

6.  Some History students' responses to the "Speed Dating With History" activity can be read in reflections on the Right to the City website: http://righttothecity. atwaterlibrary.ca/tag/speed-dating-with-history/

7.  A commonly used definition of research-creation is that proposed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the national funding body for postsecondary research:

> An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). Research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator's work, conventional works of technological development, or work that focuses on the creation of curricula. The research-creation process and the resulting artistic work are judged according to SSHRC's established merit review criteria. (SSHRC, 2016)

9.  *Pouding chômeur* is a French-Canadian dessert developed during the Great Depression that is still popular. The batter typically consists of stale bread, eggs, and milk, into which is poured a sugar syrup that during baking creates a distinct sweet layer at the bottom of the pan. The name means "unemployed pudding," reflecting its low cost and humble roots.

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