

Individuation: A Heroic Journey through the Canadian Shield

by

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ABSTRACT

The Precambrian Shield is a geological landform that pervades the collective unconscious of Canadians. The thesis explores how elemental architecture in collaboration with the Shield can manifest a threshold condition in which a modern day hero myth can be enacted in the Canadian wilderness. Through the lens of Joseph Campbell, Tom Thomson and the archetypal structures of the Finns and Algonkians, a design proposal is derived for a Waterway Park in the Algonquin region that expands the mandate of the Ontario Parks System. In the realm of psychology, Carl Gustav Jung defines individuation as a universal quest that encourages facing and overcoming ones internal demons in order to live a more integrated existence. Located in Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park, this proposed experimental pilgrimage retreat connects a series of primary and secondary paths to cabins, a sweat lodge and a chapel. This model illustrates a method of inhabiting a protected wilderness site that can be applied to existing and future Parks to inspire a condition of corporeal and spiritual rejuvenation in Ontario's near North.

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Dedicated to my family
Mom, Dad, Gargi & Vivek.

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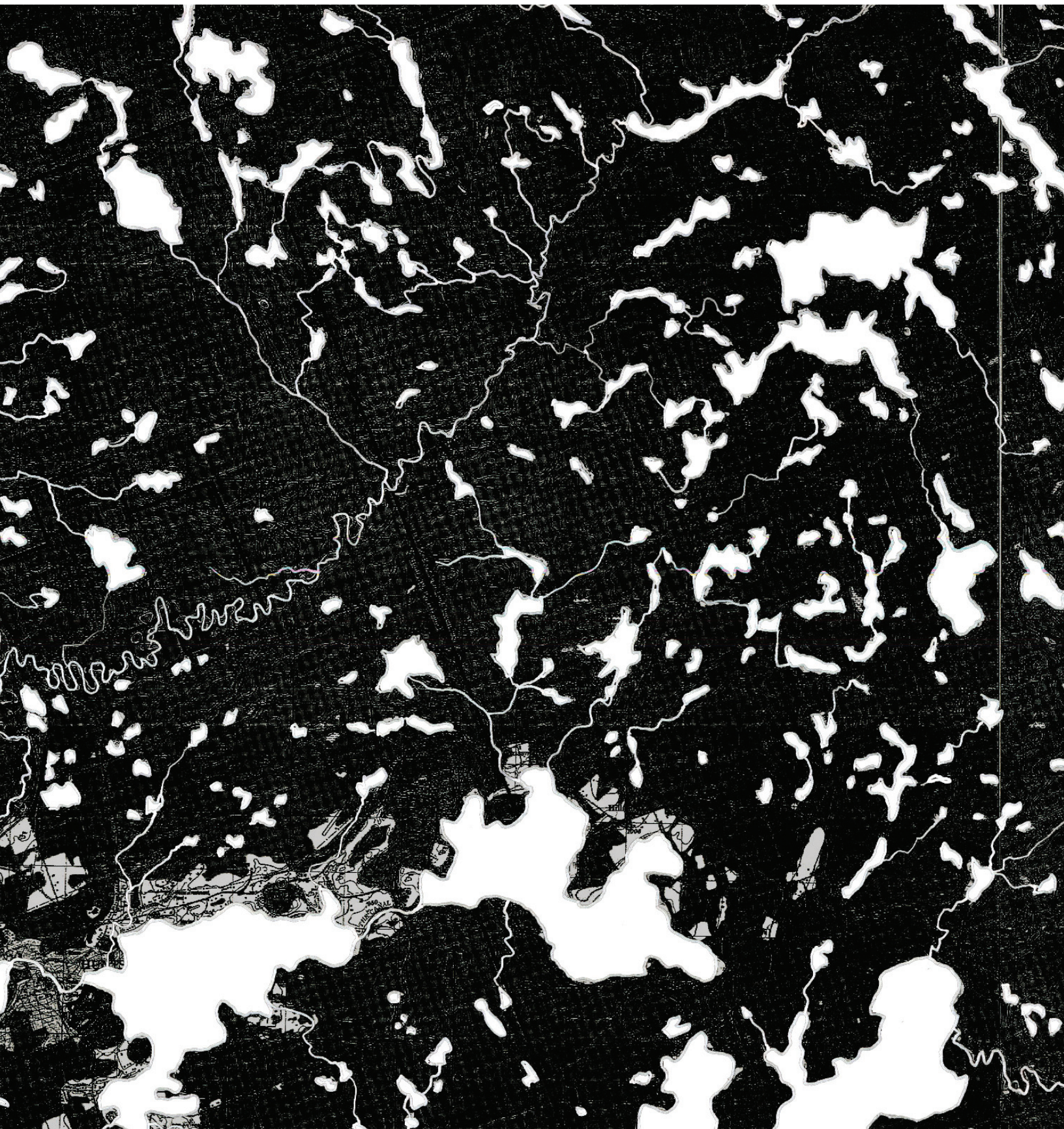
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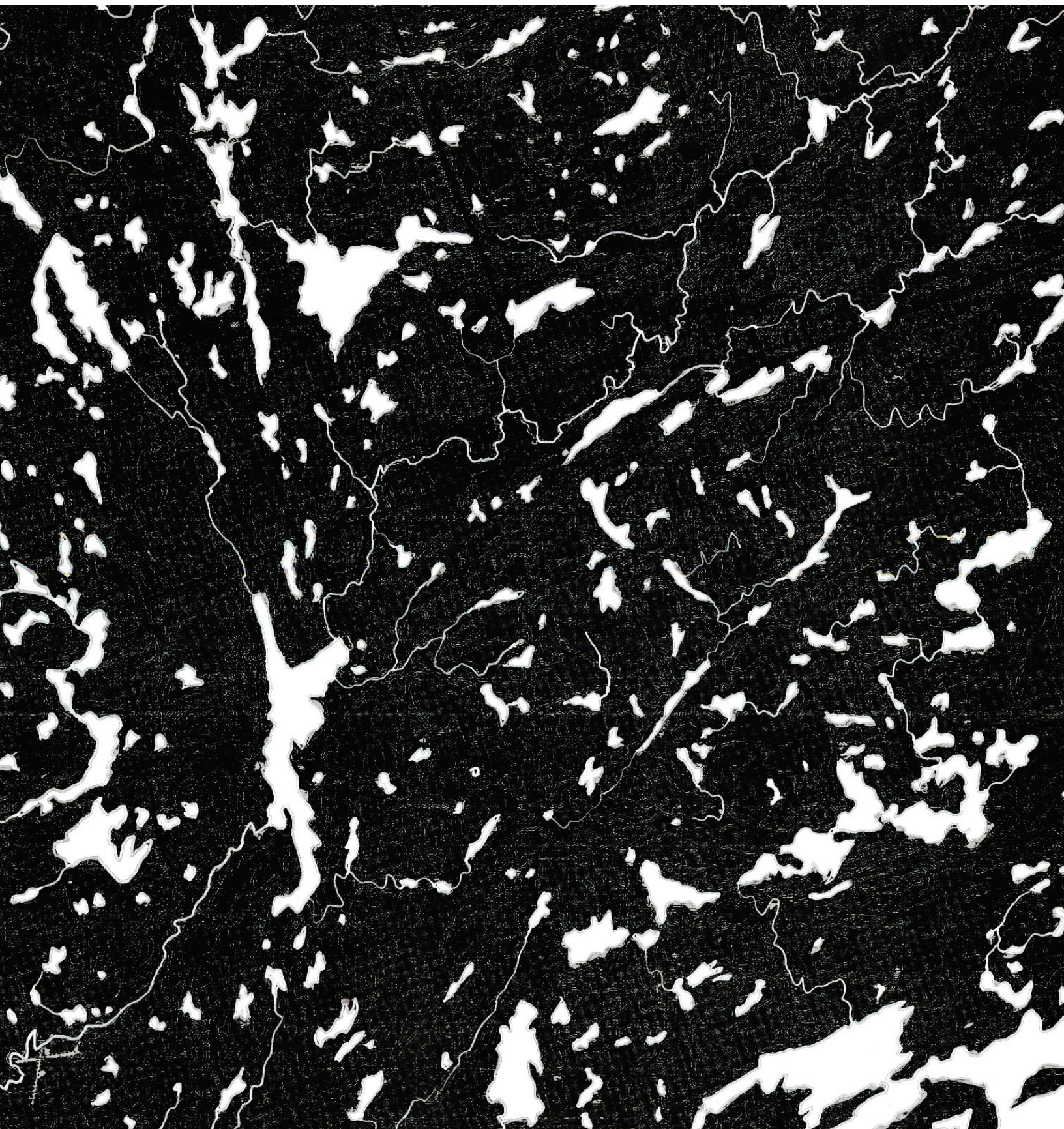
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PROLOGUE

The hero leaves his home and descends into the belly of the Earth to confront his deepest and darkest fears. After countless struggles he ascends to natural earth and is transformed by this experience. Upon returning he is called to relay the story of his triumph over his internal demons that have manifested as external ones in the physical underworld. The emancipation of the hero signals a significant rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. This story has been told in many forms for centuries throughout the ancient world and into the twenty-first century. The hero's journey is a universal one that speaks to every individual regardless of gender, race or social class. The myth of the hero proposes that in order to transition from childhood to adulthood, the individual must recognize and overcome a myriad of obstacles and fears; thus breaking down the ego so that it can be reborn anew. However, when the individual is unable to confront his fears and successfully complete his rite of passage at any stage in life, his process of maturation is temporarily paralyzed, and as a result, his psyche is debilitated.

The thesis explores the notion of healing the internal psychic landscape of the fallen hero, through an immersive architectural journey through the scarred landscape of the Canadian Shield.



0.2 Oxtongue River

INTRODUCTION

The Precambrian rock formation known as the Canadian Shield is an ancient and mythic landscape that has formed part of the physical and psychic geography of our nation. In 1842, the Geological Survey of Canada was founded to systematically explore, map and estimate the potential of this seemingly 'barren' landscape of the North.¹ What they found was that the Shield was a repository of preserved ancient history as well as minerals rich with economic possibility. What the Geological Survey failed to qualify was that the Shield had also been deified by the autochthonous people of Ontario for over 2000 years and was a site of religious pilgrimage. The Manitou, or great spirits who were thought to dwell in these caves, offered guidance and medicinal healing to the Algonkian pilgrims who sought vision quests in its sanctuary.² By understanding the mandate of the Ontario Parks System and proposing that it expand its definition to incorporate spirituality, the thesis offers a scenario in the Oxtongue Ragged Falls Provincial Park where a heroic pilgrimage, framed by architecture, has the potential to manifest into a moment of both individual and collective transcendence.

As Canada grew in population, writers, filmmakers and artists attempted to deal with the immense scale and power of the wilderness, explaining that the chasm between civilization and the wild figures prominently in the development of our national psyche. Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven were lauded as heroes as they individually and collectively became pioneers exploring the Canadian landscape and exposing the uncharted frontiers of the 'true North'. Their paintings quickly became iconography that the government embraced and promoted, arguably as propaganda, to establish a symbol of national unity.³ The Jack Pine by Tom Thomson became synonymous with a Canadian ideal of braving the harsh and alienating wilderness with stoic determination:

*"In the popular imagination and the mythos of a new Dominion, the twisting, windswept single tree [...] came to symbolize a pioneering spirit crystallizing at the edge of an unknown space."*⁴

- Matthew Teitelbaum

Thomson was undoubtedly a hero in our midst and before his untimely death in 1917, he had created over a hundred original works that captured the spirit Ontario's near North, specifically Algonquin Provincial Park. The life of Thomson echoes the archetypal hero myth described by Carl Jung in his theory of the collective unconscious. Jung supposes that humanity shares a past, present and future consciousness that manifests itself in various archetypal forms.⁵ According to Joseph Campbell, who elaborated on Jung's theories, the hero myth is a universal preoccupation that describes a ritualistic journey into the unknown to implicate the death of the infantile ego and support the process of individuation.⁶ As a Canadian hero, Thomson struggled with alcoholism and depression and sought the solitude of the unknown North to transcend his corporeal limitations. He went alone into the wilderness and interpreted this land of growth and decay as a revelation. Like the heroic figure of the ancient Greeks, he dwelt in the forest as if it were a threshold between humanity and the divine world. Going up North was akin to a religious experience and walking, canoeing or painting his way through nature allowed Thomson to regenerate himself as both an artist and individual.⁷

The Algonkian tradition of purification is best explained through their symbolic architecture of the sweat lodge. By following a set of prescribed rituals, the sweat lodge is a religious portal for native people into the supernatural world. For the Shaman, the *sweat* is a ritual that he or she must undergo before embarking on a vision quest. According to prehistoric petroglyphs and pictographs that remain visible on cliff faces in the Provincial Parks of Ontario, the Shield was commonly a healing landscape used by the Algonkian tribes for vision quests and as a site to glean medicinal cures from the Manitou.⁸ Recognizing the Shield as an ancient formation that has facilitated the heroic myth of the Algonkians strengthens the notion that the near North region of Ontario can once again become a place for corporeal and spiritual healing.

Enacting a pilgrimage into a landscape of trees, lakes and rocks is rooted in a culture more established than Canada, namely that of Finland. For the Finns, returning to the primordial forest is a cultivated tradition that reinforces their

national mythology and deepens the collective psyche.⁹ The sauna is a vernacular architecture that emerged from the desire to immerse oneself in the natural world through a civilized means. It is the modern architectural response to the sweat lodge and provides many of the same functions. Incorporated into the secular daily life of the Finn, the sauna has become a sacred cleansing ritual that serves both the individual and the community. By erecting similar architectural intersections in the Canadian Shield, it is possible to recall both the Finnish and the Algonkian quest for authenticity via a defended landscape.

After the First World War, the world was reeling from an unprecedented global catastrophe and the government was intent on unifying Canada by creating a unique national identity.¹⁰ As early as 1885, companies like the Canadian Pacific Railway, were providing passage to travel into the unchartered wild, in an effort to market a truly authentic Canadian experience.¹¹ In an effort to promote tourism in Canada, the government propelled the notion that the citizens of the industrial age could find a respite from their inauthentic lives by visiting the wilderness of the North. A landscape that they insisted was both therapeutic and spiritual.¹² The National and Provincial Parks that were established in Canada, propelled the tourist economy and provided the average city dweller an opportunity to connect with the landscape and identify him or herself as truly Canadian. Today the original mandate for the Ontario Provincial Parks has been lost or supplanted by the official policy, which reads:

*The goal is to provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, and to protect provincially significant natural, cultural, and recreational environments, in a system of Provincial Parks.*¹³

By designing a programme in the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park that elaborates on the original Ontario Parks mandate of therapy and spirituality, a situation can be created where an individual can come to the Park with the express purpose of embarking on a personal hero's journey. The design proposal includes creating paths that link secluded cabins in the forest, a sweat lodge and an open-air chapel. The thesis contends that by implementing an archetypal pilgrimage in a wilderness setting, it is possible to provide a modern threshold in which Canadians can connect to their landscape and rejuvenate themselves.

*"In order to rise up, the hero must first descend into darkness, into the ocean or the labyrinth, there to confront the deadly antagonist face to face. It is a task we must all face at some point in this miraculous passage we call life. To accept the challenge gives us the chance to become true men and women, heroic and divine; if we avoid it, we remain victims of the labyrinth, aimlessly wandering its dark passages until sooner or later we are devoured by the beast of oblivion."*¹⁴

- Raymond Murray Schafer

1. Hjartarson (2005, 212).
2. Stone (2005, 45).
3. Hjartarson (2005, 212).
4. Hjartarson quoting Matthew Teitelbaum's "Sighting the Single Tree, Sighting the New Found Land" (1991, 71). Hjartarson (2005, 214).
5. de Laszlo quoting Jung (1959, 287).
6. Campbell (1988, 15).
7. Murray (1998, 51).
8. Rajnovich (1994, 10).
9. Edelsward (1991, 53).
10. Wilson (2005, 229).
11. Wilson (2005, 227).
12. Hjartarson (2005, 216).
13. Ontario Provincial Parks Policy Guide
14. Schafer (2002, 158).



1.0 A man engages in the sublime experience of reading on the Canadian Shield. A landscape that itself can be read like a book to uncover millions of years of the Earth's secrets.

"Our psyches are a result of the legacy of the preceding generations, a thread of interconnections woven back into the fabric of time. Conscious and unconsciously, we are a product of our past." - Carl Gustav Jung

THE CANADIAN SHIELD

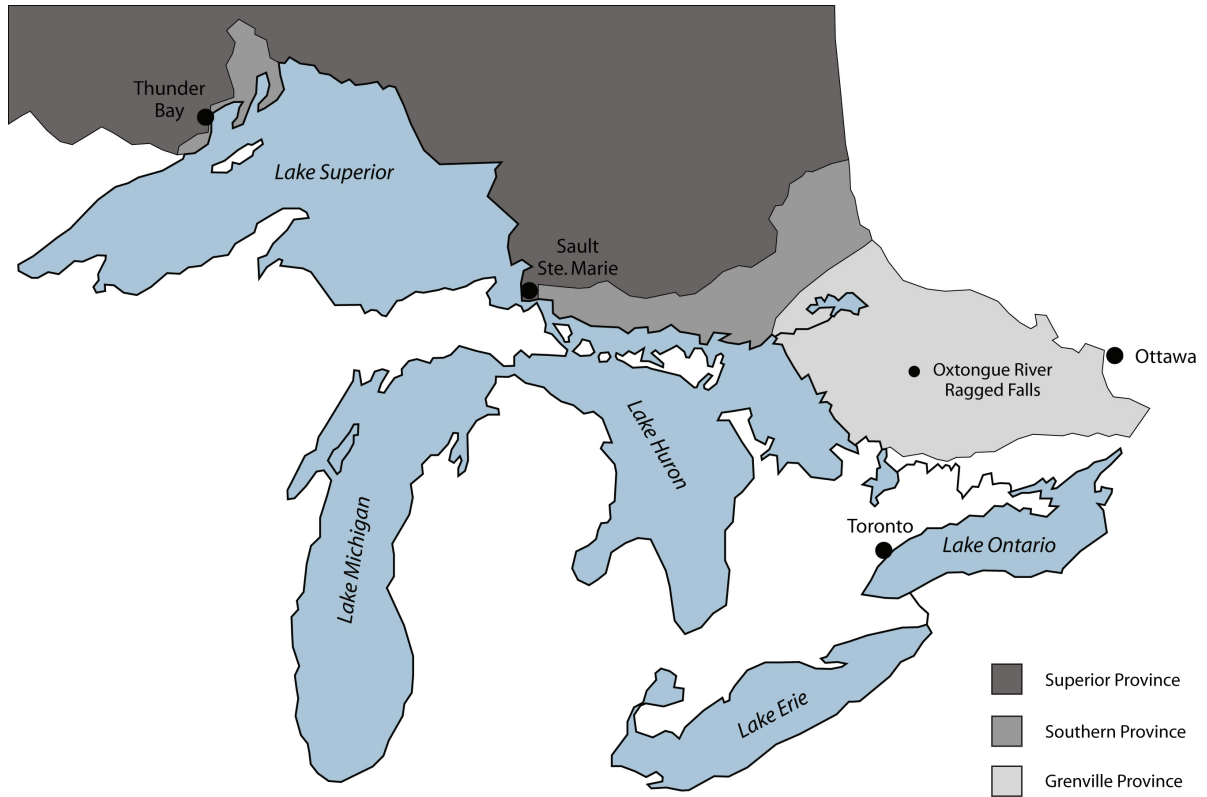
The Canadian Shield is arguably the most formative landscape feature in the development of the Canadian psyche. Named for its resemblance to the shape of protective armour, the Shield's presence is vast and covers over two thirds of Canada's land area. This unique geological landform is gripped with an undeniable psychic force that permeates the consciousness of this nation's citizens. Its immense physicality affects not only those who encounter it, but also those who can only imagine or dream about it. The aboriginal tribes that first established themselves in the region developed myths around the formation of the natural phenomenon and documented its magical qualities as a place for physical and spiritual healing.¹ This cohesive mass with its many rivers and lakes was a source of creative inspiration and sustenance for the autochthonous people, however its inhospitable conditions for the farmers of the agrarian revolution damned it as a barren wasteland. It became characterized as an uninhabitable scar on the Canadian landscape and dictated settlement patterns of future immigrants for decades thereafter. The role of the Shield in shaping our physical, cultural and spiritual identity is paramount and, as a natural phenomenon and symbol is imbued with a deep psychic strength.²



1.1 The Shield covers over two thirds of Canada's land area.

The Canadian Shield is the largest area of raw exposed Precambrian rock in the world. The serene monolithic mass that we associate with the Shield has taken 3.5 billion years to form. The creation of this repository of history was violent, destructive and sublime. Although the Shield is currently characterized as a flat plane, in early geological history it was comprised of a series of mountain ranges in which many of the mountains were volcanically active. This volcanic activity is considered to be the primary reason for the existence of the Shield. As volcanoes and other cracks in the crust erupted, the superheated magma collected, cooled and eventually solidified on the Earth's surface, thus producing igneous rock. The Shield is comprised of three types of rock: igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic.³ Sedimentary rock is formed from weathering and erosion of large landforms such as mountains. This type of rock consists of relatively small fragments that layer on top of one another. Over time the pressure of the layers generates enough heat to cement the sediments into one solid mass. This slow, compressive process of heat and pressure creates metamorphic rock. Specifically the name for the metamorphic rock found in the Shield is gneiss. Gneiss occurs when different rocks layered and sandwiched together melt from the intense heat and pressure underground at depths of 30km. The product of this reaction is granitic magma. When granitic magma moves through metamorphic rock as sills and dikes (horizontal and vertical sheets, respectively), it will turn into what is known as granite. In South-Central Ontario, in the area known as the Muskokas, granite is commonly found exposed along the highways that have been cut through the existing bedrock.

The Canadian Shield covers over 4.8 million sq. km of our country's landmass⁴ and with a similarly diverse geography, every region of the Shield can be characterized by its different properties and conditions. In South-Central Ontario, the rocks belong to a region known as the Grenville Province. Approximately 1300 million years ago, a small continent collided with a much larger one, resulting in the Grenville mountains. Over time glaciers, weathering and erosion relentlessly disintegrated the mountains and revealed the relatively flat rock plane. By learning to read the stratification of the rocks, geologists were able to interpret the markings as a document of time, revealing 3.5 billion years of Ontario's tumultuous past - including the decline of the ice age.³



1.2 The three provinces of Ontario's Canadian Shield. *The site for the thesis is located in the Muskokas, which lies in the Grenville Province of the Canadian Shield. The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is a protected riverine landscape that uniquely marks the point of contact between two distinct types of gneiss.*

The Algonkian Tribe believed that the ancient rock that comprised much of their landscape was endowed with supernatural healing powers.⁴ Paintings that exist on rock faces depict this unique and symbolic relationship between a people and their land.⁵ For the Algonkian men and women, the Shield accommodated the spatial requirements for a solitary hero's journey into the realm of physical and spiritual healing. In the aboriginal world view the Shaman, either male or female, is considered to be a chosen hero who has an inherent connection to the spirit world.⁶ At a point in their late childhood or early youth, the Shaman will seclude themselves in the Shield and refrain from eating, drinking or sleeping until a vision appears. Vision quests are either sought out, or in the case of many Shamans, thrust upon an individual.⁷ If they are successful, this vision will have the power to shift their focus completely inward. In her work, *Ontario's Southern Shield Country*, Kas Stone states that Mazinaw Rock in Bon Echo Provincial Park and Agawa Rock in Lake Superior Provincial Park were sites located in the Shield where a prehistoric Shaman would go to glean medicinal information from the spirits or "Manitou" who were believed to dwell in the rock.⁸ Once the Shaman returns from his heroic journey inward, he will translate his visions into a ritual performance for the tribe. His vision will stay with him all his life and help him to overcome his fears and persevere in the face of adversity. Inside the dark crevices of rocky earth, vision quests were a ritualistic part of Algonkian life and solitary pilgrimages into the belly of the Shield enabled physical and spiritual healing to occur.



1.3 A prehistoric pictograph from the Algonkian tribe at Mazinaw Rock in Bon Echo Provincial Park, Ontario.

Canadian author Barbara Moon describes the Shield as a “*vast waste of space*”; she goes on to say that it is mostly an infertile and deserted landscape that resists human cultivation.⁹ Farmers who attempted to work the land were left with little or no crops. Defeated, cold and on the verge of starvation, they took refuge in the more fertile soils of the southern regions. As a result of the dense and unforgiving qualities of the rock, the Canadian Pacific Railway, one of the major infrastructural elements of our country, was built along the edge of the Precambrian Shield. This significant piece of infrastructure was a key factor affecting settlement patterns in Canada and resulted in the majority of the population in the western provinces settling south of the Shield, between the railway edge and the Canada-United States border. City centres established themselves along the national border followed by transportation, communication and cultural infrastructure such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The notion of a shared linear infrastructural system from the East coast to the West coast fostered a psychic link between Canadians. This invisible connection alleviated the loneliness and fear of the Canadian wilderness, and as men, women and children endured the harsh Northern climate, there was comfort in knowing that in the vast expanse of this seemingly deserted landscape¹⁰, there was a unified collective partaking in a unique and shared cultural identity.

The geography of Canada has a death grip on the subliminal consciousness of its citizens.¹¹ For the average traveler, the Shield is conceived of as a barrier and is mostly forgotten as a tourist destination (Sudbury, Ontario is an exception, as the mining and tourism industry in the region is solely dependant on the riches in the rock). Visiting the Shield can be a difficult task, as roadways, railways lines and air travel is limited. It is a rare example, in Canada, of a wilderness experience not romanticized with the notion of beauty or relaxation; rather it is notorious for its remoteness and extreme conditions such as relentless black flies and cold temperatures. The idea of going up North to experience “a giant rock” is, to the average Canadian, unappealing and foreboding. Throughout our country, there are examples of people integrating and developing a symbiotic relationship



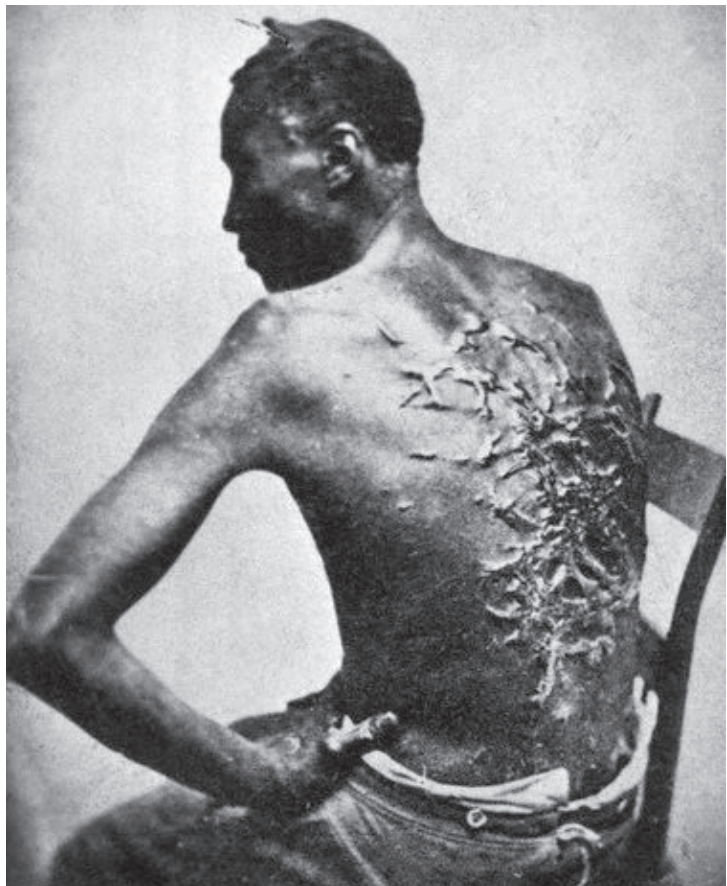
1.4 Diabase ribbons form when shifts in the Earth's crust fracture ancient bedrock, allowing magma to fill the gaps with igneous rock. Lake Superior, Ontario.

with the rocky outcroppings, but for the most part this natural phenomenon is uninhabited and consciously ignored. Like some sort of large-scale blemish, the Shield is conceptualized as an ugly scar on the otherwise pristine natural beauty of our Canadian identity.

A scar on any landscape is an indication of discord that reveals the ravages of time and the violence of nature. Simon Schama in his work, *Landscape of Memory* proposes that the land can be read like a book. It is infused with a memory of the past and can divulge, to its inhabitants, the secrets of historic events that have been inscribed in its layers.¹² If one imagines North America as a large physical body, the Shield is the scar tissue left on this expanse of skin, preserving the external and internal struggles of billions of years in the Earth's lifetime. An indelible marking that forms on the body after an injury is part of the natural healing process to repair the damaged skin. The tissue is often inferior to the original in terms of regeneration, the texture is rougher and has

lower functional quality; hair cannot grow on skin that has been scarred. The Shield is also an environment of inferior regeneration, vegetation grows sparsely and cultivation of the land is next to impossible. Just as the Shield is a physical manifestation depicting eons of natural processes, it could be argued that it also manifests a psychic memory of these processes, one that binds together the layers upon layers of metamorphic debris.

If we compare the Precambrian Shield to the human psyche, the foliation (i.e. banding) of debris, that has hardened and solidified, tells the story of a violent geological history. This layering of debris is comparable to the accumulation of memories and experiences in the realm of the internalized human landscape. As we learn to decipher and sort through



1.5 African Slave 1863.

these layers, the psyche builds up a shield of its own to defend itself from painful experiences. While this defense mechanism acts to preserve the self, it also can become a hindrance to our psychological development. In recognizing that our individual growth is dependent on breaking through the defended psyche we can learn to confront our past fears and move forward as a means of cultivating a deeper understanding of ourselves.

*"Our psyches are a result of the legacy of the preceding generations, a thread of interconnections woven back into the fabric of time. Conscious and unconsciously, we are a product of our past."*¹³

- Carl Gustav Jung

Carl Jung proposes that our psyche is something that we inherit from our ancestors. We possess an internal landscape that has been encoded and imprinted with the intricate and rich inner lives of the ancients, quietly guiding us as we navigate our present reality. For Jung, the human psyche is rooted in the collective story of humanity. For Canadians, the Shield is rooted in our collective story as inhabitants of this country. By analyzing the unique physical past of this ancient artifact and the role it plays in shaping how we inhabit the landscape, we can speculate about its significance as a prominent symbol in the Canadian psyche.

1. Rajnovich (1994, 10).
2. *A Dictionary of Symbols* (1969, 874).
3. Bastedo (1994, 15).
4. Bastedo (1994, 14).
5. Rajnovich (1994, 14).
6. Campbell (1988, 85).
7. *Ibid.*
8. Stone (2005, 44).
9. Moon (1970, 24).
10. *United Nations World Population Prospects of 2004 states that Canada reports one of the lowest population densities in the world, estimating only 3.2 inhabitants per square kilometre.*
11. Moon (1970, 8).
12. Schama (1975, 56).
13. Barrie quoting Jung (1996, 3).



2.0 (c. 1914) *The Red Maple* by A. Y. Jackson, a member of the Group of Seven. Painted from a sketch he did at the Oxtongue River.

"The North was uncanny, awe-inspiring in an almost religious way, hostile to white men, but alluring; that it would lead you on and do you in; that it would drive you crazy, and, finally, would claim you for its own." - Margaret Atwood

THE CANADIAN ARTIST

The wilderness is a pervasive theme in the imagination of the Canadian artist and is featured prominently in many of our great cultural works of art. The threatening otherness of our landscape preoccupies the spirit of the artist and the work that is produced from such fixations is reflected in the tone and content of our national art, literature and filmmaking. The Group of Seven was a collective of young men who set out to establish a distinct *school* of art in Canada.¹ They tirelessly explored and painted the nations' undiscovered and unclaimed wilderness in an effort to capture the essential spirit of the Canadian landscape. In our cultural myth, these men were the heroes that helped to invent the collective identity of what it means to live in Canada and be identified as Canadian. Tom Thomson, a prolific Canadian painter, was posthumously the inspiration for the Group of Seven. His life was symbolic of Northern Ontario and his paintings evoked an understanding and reverence for the land. Thomson's adventures in Algonquin Provincial Park and the mystery surrounding his death have inspired the speculation that his life embodied the myth of a Canadian hero.

*"The priority of vision, the theme of anxiety, and even the fear of that vision involves the landscape as unknowable and a source of crisis of knowledge, and the imaginary placement of human presence in a space so immense and alien that it threatens humanity itself, these enchaind themes underlie many interpretations of the landscape in Canadian art and literature."*²

- Bart Testa

Recurring imagery of a hostile and indifferent wilderness pervades the work of Canadian poets, writers, filmmakers and artists. Writers, such as Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye, remind us that as Canadians we are part of a historical lineage that has a reverence and a deep-seated fear in the land that have we claimed as our own.³ In his experimental film *La Région Centrale*, filmmaker Michael Snow explores this theme and develops a technological apparatus to confront our landscape objectively, rather than subjectively. His camera, set on a 360 degree rotating axis, mediates a primal encounter between human consciousness and the harsh alien landscape of Northern Québec. The result is terrifying and his film renders the viewer completely unable to make sense of our place in the land. In Northrop Frye's work, *The Stubborn Structure*, he describes the "garrison mentality", which he qualifies as the impetus behind our conscious and unconscious fear of the Canadian landscape:

*"Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier', separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting - such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality."*⁴

- Northrop Frye

Gaile McGregor builds on the notion of the garrison mentality and suggests in *The Wacousta Syndrome* that Canadian identity is governed by the impulse to recoil from the vast, threatening otherness of our landscape. In an effort to shield ourselves from the overwhelming reality of our insignificance, McGregor emphasizes that we are prone to building "the enclosure" to establish a sense of place amidst the sprawling vista.⁵ Historically, the symbolism of the enclosure and the frame are iconic in depicting the Canadian experience. The frame is the means through which we impose a rational order on the seemingly ruthless and chaotic spirit of the landscape. By framing nature, the artist attempts to reduce the threat of the vast landscape to a manageable scale and subdue the fear that exists in the collective unconscious of our citizens.

*"Canadian poetry is at its best a poetry of incubus, the source of which is unusually exposed contact of the poet with nature which Canada provides. Nature, is seen by the poet, first as unconsciousness, then as a kind of existence which is cruel and meaningless, then as the source of the cruelty and subconscious stampeding within the human mind. Nature is consistently sinister and menacing in Canadian poetry."*⁶

- Northrop Frye

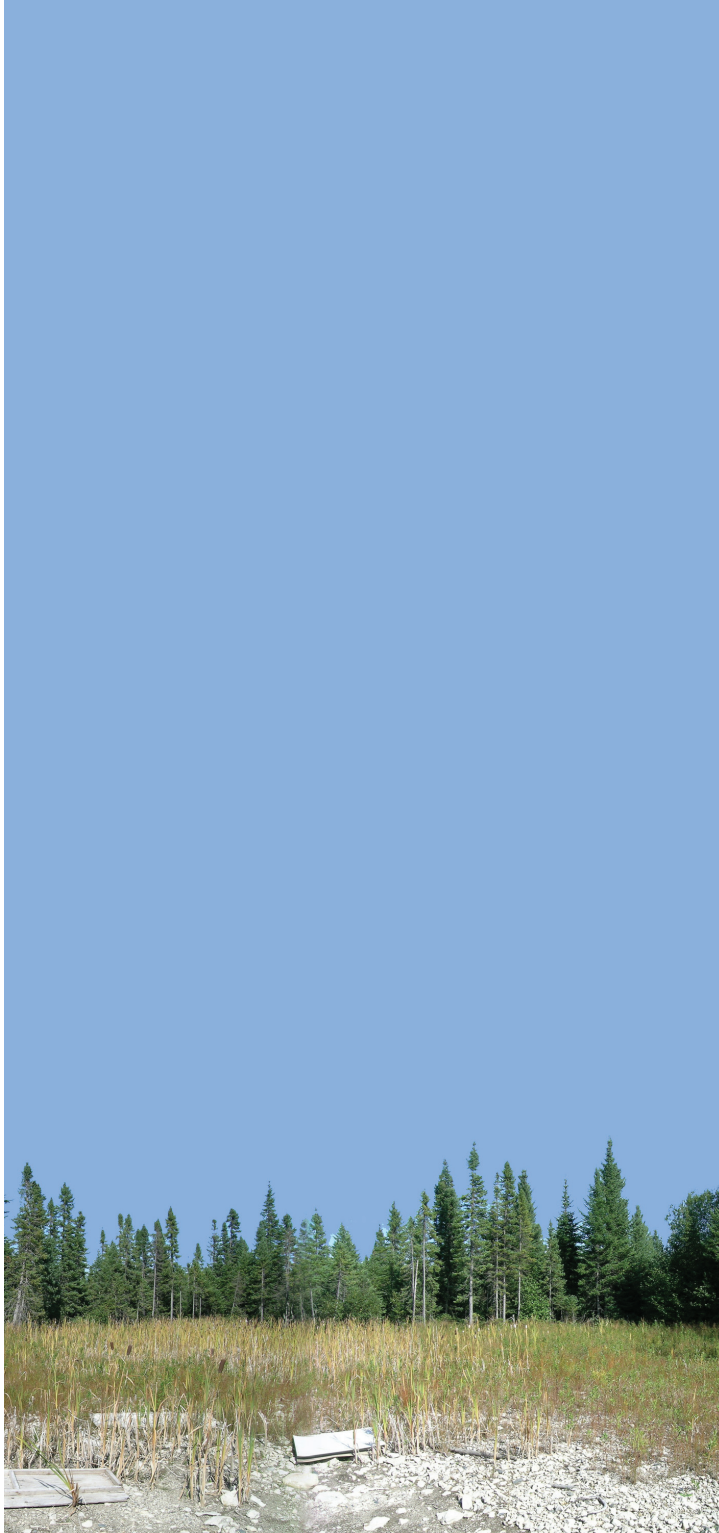
*A poem by Canadian author Christopher Dewdney from his anthology entitled Radiant Inventory,*⁷

Ten Typically Geological Suicides

1. *Standing naked over the vent of a thermal geyser that erupts periodically.*
2. *Throwing yourself into molten lava.*
3. *Placing your head at the bottom of a children's slide with a pull-string attached to a stick propping up a large granite boulder perched at the top.*
4. *Licking the radium from the faces of old watches.*
5. *Standing under a projecting horizontal ledge of limestone and waiting for the slab to fall. Constructing a small shelter to facilitate waiting in comfort.*
6. *Eating a lethal dose of beach sand.*
7. *Taping and burning lumps of coal to your body.*
8. *Injecting liquid gold into your veins.*
9. *Slitting your wrists with quartz crystals.*
10. *Wearing a uranium belt.*

*"The North focuses our anxieties. Turning to face North, facing the North, we enter our own unconscious. Always, in retrospect, the journey North has the quality of a dream."*⁸

- Margaret Atwood



2.1 Moose Factory, Ontario.



2.2 (c. 1920) Members of the Group of Seven. Left to right: Frederick Varley, A.Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Barker Fairley, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, and J. E. H. MacDonald. *Arts and Letters Club*, Toronto, Ontario.

The Group of Seven attempted to reconcile the relationship between Canada and the North by making pilgrimages into the wilderness and promoting the existence of a previously unknown land. The group was formed in the 1919, a few years after Tom Thomson's death, and consisted of Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J. E. H. MacDonald and Frederick Varley. These men were largely inspired by the "*limitless vista*" oil paintings of Thomson, as well as his love of the North.⁹ The terrain that these explorers traveled consisted mostly of "*a land of rocks, water, pine trees in various stages of growth and decay*".¹⁰ As a collective they had one unifying theme, but each individual artist brought a unique perspective and style to the canvas. The ultimate mandate was to capture the self-possessed energy and uncontrollable force of nature that they felt was palpable in the spirit of the land.¹¹ While their primary ambition was to explore and bring back scenes of the natural world, they quickly developed into a national icon that was embraced by a captivated Canadian audience.

In his life and work, Tom Thomson left an indelible mark on Canadian culture and was ordained a national hero after his tragic demise. Growing up in Owen Sound, Ontario, Thomson developed a love for the natural world at a young age. Due to a childhood illness, he spent a great deal of time walking in the countryside recuperating and learning about the different plants, trees and animals indigenous to the area. Sketching and painting was part of his home life and his artistic talent was not recognized as anything special or unique. As a young man, Thomson lived and worked in Toronto and other major cities as a commercial artist. While he was working in Toronto in 1912, Thomson made his first trip up to the newly enclosed Algonquin Park and began, in earnest, to sketch the land that lay before him. These first sketches were indicative of the subject matter that the Group of Seven would later adopt as their own. The Northern landscape spoke to Thomson on a deep conscious and unconscious level and he began dreaming of leaving the city and moving into the Park. From 1912 to 1917 he made countless trips by train to explore and document the more than five thousand square kilometres of bush, rock and river. Sherrill Grace writes about Thomson in her book *Inventing Tom Thomson*, "his story – or aspects of that story – have come to signify a myth of nation, and the man himself has been transformed into the symbol of a set of foundational Canadian values such as manliness, solitary independence ... and the curiosity and courage of the explorer (on land and on canvas)".¹² Up until his mysterious death, Thomson produced hundreds of sketches and paintings that evoked the spirit of Northern Ontario; thus cultivating a renewed interest in the Canadian wilderness as a site for pilgrimage and enlightenment. In *The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*, Margaret Atwood remarks that the death of Tom Thomson signifies an exemplary moment that defines our relationship to the North.

*"Tom Thomson's death was found significant because it fitted in with preconceived notions of what a death in the North ought to be. [...]. The North was uncanny, awe-inspiring in an almost religious way, hostile to white men, but alluring; that it would lead you on and do you in; that it would drive you crazy, and, finally, would claim you for its own."*¹³

- Margaret Atwood

*"Often, in the romantic notion of the wilderness, there is a primitive man or natural man who serves as the mediator between the civilized world and the wild."*¹⁴

- Gaile McGregor

The wilderness as a dangerous condition has a major role to play in the shaping of the Canadian identity. Its scale relative to the population of the country is terrifying and largely unmanageable. Our creative community has a long tradition of drawing inspiration from our barren and foreboding landscape. Poets, writers and filmmakers are continually enraptured by the threat of the Canadian wilderness and the vast space that accommodates our existential loneliness and desperation. The Group of Seven was a group of men that sought to subvert the notion of fearing the wild and transformed the alienating landscape of the North into a portrait of the sublime. They were inspired to do this because of Tom Thomson. An interpreter and mediator of the natural world, who initiated the heroic pilgrimage into the great outdoors. His love of nature and his ability to capture the essence of this region of the Canadian Shield on canvas made him a revolutionary for painters, in both style and content. His prolific body of work, was only heightened with the news of his tragic death in Algonquin Provincial Park. Soon after his mysterious demise, the myth and legacy of the artist began to supersede the actual life of the man. Tom Thomson was no longer simply an artist exploring his country; he became a national icon who embodied the North and symbolized what it meant to be Canadian.

1. Testa (1989, 2).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Testa (1989, 4).
4. Frye (1970, 289).
5. Testa (1989, 10).
6. Frye (1971, 141-142).
7. Dewdney (1988, 73).
8. Manguel quoting Atwood (2007, Massey Lectures).
9. Murray (1998, 48).
10. *Ibid.*
11. Testa (1989, 2).
12. Grace (2004, 5).
13. Atwood (1995, 19).
14. McGregor (1985, 8).



3.0 Human embryo In utero at 26 weeks.

"We have not even to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero path. And where we had thought to find the abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world." - Joseph Campbell

THE HERO MYTH

The psyche is an innate repository of myths, dreams and symbols. It is the greatest of all cosmic wonders, without which the world as we know it would not exist. *“Every science is a function of the psyche and all knowledge is rooted in it.”*¹ Alluded to as invisible realm within the mind, Carl Jung believed that the psyche is a mechanism that records experience and influences desire; subsequently influencing human behaviour. Jung theorized that as a species, we share a psychic reservoir of knowledge dating back to prehistoric time, a phenomenon that he referred to as the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious can be characterized as a library of symbols that has served to establish the foundation myths of civilization. These symbols manifest in our unconscious mind and define the characteristics that comprise our personal and collective mythology. Myths that have emerged from the imagination of humanity, are based on a set of psychic patterns that Jung refers to as archetypes. One such archetype, that appears universally in all cultures is referred to by Joseph Campbell as the hero myth. The hero is a symbol for the transition from childhood to adulthood and describes the process of individuation. As the hero embarks on a difficult journey into the unknown, he conquers his internal demons and is psychically renewed to manifest a more integrated existence, ultimately for the greater good of humankind. Religious pilgrimage and the hero myth share a parallel methodology, which include: separation, initiation and return. It is a deliberate spiritual act that manifests the journey of individuation and is supported by ritual, sacred architecture and landscape.

The unconscious has the power to offer insight into the mystery of the human condition. Psychologists believe that both in structure and function the psyche is as complex as anatomy of the human body and determines how we interact amongst each other and with our external environment. Carl Jung supposed that the psyche, which consists of the ego and the unconscious retains and processes every single experience since birth. He went on to postulate that the psyche operates within a universal framework, in which every individual is preoccupied with distinctive desires and fears unique to his inner life. The success or failure of the maturation of the individual is dependent on his ability to deal with the preoccupations of the ego and surmount the obstacles that he will experience during his lifetime. Breaking down the ego and its defense mechanisms is paramount during the process of maturation because it allows for a balance to form in the power struggle that occurs between the ego and the unconscious. This scenario is emphasized ubiquitously in the myth of the hero and manifests itself in the realm of literature, cinema and video games. The hero must overcome his internal demons, that often manifest externally in order to transcend his existing condition and live with a greater level of integration. Once the defended psyche is experienced and broken through, the hero is renewed and he is able to become a greater resource for his community as well as himself.

Symbols, dreams and mythology originate from the psyche and are resources that pertain to the emancipation of the soul.² Carl Jung believed that these types of "*spontaneous eruptions*"³ that emerge from the depths of the human spirit, share a universal symbolic content and he sought to identify these symbols as the language of the unconscious. Through these iconographic elements, he proposed that humanity shares a psychic link to the spiritual lives of its ancestors. Jung refers to this link as the collective unconscious,

*"I have chosen the term the "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual, but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra personal nature which is present in everyone one of us."*⁴

- Carl Gustav Jung

The existence of the collective unconscious procures the possibility of a universal set of thought processes that are common to every culture, yet differ in the articulation of details according to contexts of geography and culture. For example, in an Algonquin myth, a young boy has a vision that a stranger wearing a plumed hat challenges him to a wrestling match. The stranger orders the boy to kill and bury him and then tend to the spot where his body will be planted. In time, corn begins to sprout from that spot where the plumed stranger was buried. A similar folk tale recurs in Polynesia, in which a beautiful woman encounters an eel who transforms into a human and becomes her lover. The lover orders her to kill him, cut off his head and bury it in the ground. A coconut tree sprouts from the spot and becomes a significant source of food for the tribe.⁵

These myths are significant not only for their similarity but because they indicate a synchronized shift in consciousness for two separate societies as they transition from a hunting culture to an agrarian one.⁶ Creative expression, ranging from the cave paintings of primitive man, the tribal ritual of storytelling and the literary works of medieval masters, illustrates that over time our art reveals recurring preoccupations and patterns. Jung recognized these patterns as a general set of types that the human mind instinctively combines from several different archaic symbols. He referred to these persistent types as archetypes and believed that they could provide the necessary insight and guidance to reorient the lost human soul.

*"[Archetypes are the] forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myth and at the same time as autochthonous individual products of unconscious origin."*⁷

- Carl Gustav Jung

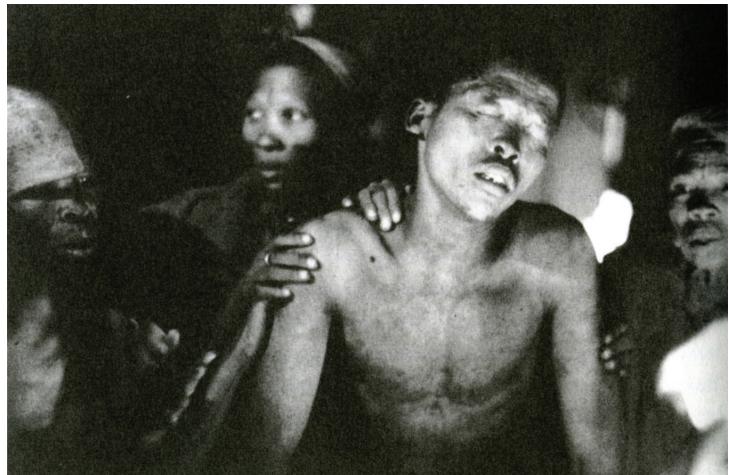
The myth of the archetypal hero has been repeatedly documented by different religions, cultures and nations (i.e. the Algonkian Shaman). He represents a profound transformative experience that is universally understood to benefit both society and the individual.⁸ Archetypes can manifest in various forms such as in myths, dreams and rites. Jung theorized that each archetype represents an ideal inherent in human nature that will recur and regenerate in the psyche over time through various media. Joseph Campbell uses this theory and applies the archetypal model to ancient and modern examples of cultural myths. In his interview with Bill Moyers he says, “[Myths] are the world’s dreams. They are archetypal dreams and deal with great human problems.”⁹ He goes on to say that all myths have the same theme, namely individuation, which is best exemplified by the hero myth. In his work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he examines the great works of mythology to uncover the underlying principles of the hero’s journey. Campbell reveals that the hero myth echoes the cyclical process of death and rebirth and is an intrinsic part of all human life. In order for the individual to find emancipation from the relationship that he has cultivated with his ego, he must find a way to penetrate and renew the ego many times over until desire and death is no longer feared. The hero archetype is inherent in the human psyche and manifests itself during the critical moments when we are called to examine our own limitations. The hero myth inspires the possibility to confront the the past and live more richly in the present.

“We have not even to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero path. And where we had thought to find the abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.”¹⁰

- Joseph Campbell

In the *Power of Myth*, Campbell supposes that the greatest act of heroism occurs at birth.¹¹ The physical and psychological transformation of the human embryo during its gestation period is similar to the hero's journey and this particular rite of passage embodies the concept of relinquishing one realm of consciousness to embrace another.¹²

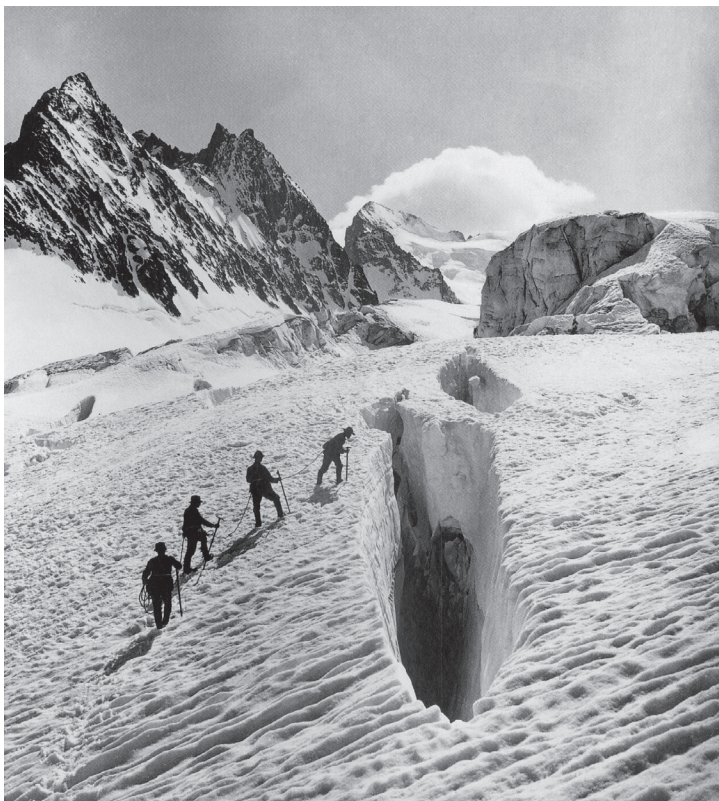
The myth of the hero can be described as follows, the hero leaves his home and descends into a perilous situation to confront his deepest and darkest fears. After he has defeated the obstacles that he will encounter along his journey, he will ascend to natural earth reborn. The hero will then return home and relay his struggles and triumphs to those he had left behind. This universal myth is indicative of the heroic transition from childhood to adulthood and the myriad of trials that one has to recognize and overcome as he moves from one stage of life to another. The hero must allow for his infantile state to die so that he can be reborn into a state of maturity and return home an adult. In tribal cultures, initiation rituals are performed to instigate the death of the infantile psyche. The act of circumcision, for example, allows a boy to consciously start his physical and emotional transformation as he enters into manhood. In Australia, the aborigines enact the myth of the hero during puberty when boys are taken from their mothers and are given over to their fathers for their initiation into the hunt.¹³ They are taken into sacred caves where they drink blood and older tribesmen perform their circumcision. They are instructed about great



3.1 (c. 1950) A Shaman who has achieved a state of altered consciousness is supported by the men and women of his tribe. South Africa.

myths as well as the mythology of the tribe and are told from that point on that their childhood is over. In the act of circumcision, the body of the child dies in order to enable the body of the adult to carry him forward into the next stages of life. Unlike tribal cultures, modern lives lack specific places and rituals that implicate the death of the infantile ego.¹⁴

An initiation ritual that embodies the notion of individuation and has been practiced in almost every major religion is pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is one of the deliberate spiritual acts of healing that a pilgrim makes to honour himself and the divine. The religious pilgrimage and the hero myth share a parallel methodology, which include: spiritual preparation, separation from daily life, obstacles along the way, arrival at a sacred place and a return to society in a transformed state. It is thought to be an inner and outer journey that takes the pilgrim or hero to a foreign destination and inspires a more spiritual and grounded reverence for the divine world and ones place in it.¹⁵ There are several reasons why pilgrimages



3.2 (c. 1880) Climbers cautiously approaching an Alpine crevasse. Glacier Blanc, Le Dauphiné, France.

are made by millions of people around the world, such as: healing, penance, an escape from a mundane existence, to test faith and for spiritual development. The destination is often either to a place of sacred architecture or a sacred landscape. In the case of sacred architecture, it is considered to embody the role of myth in our culture and facilitate the enactment of collective ritual.¹⁶

Ritual often informs the design of a space and its architectural form. Thomas Barrie purports, in his work *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, that meaning in sacred architecture occurs at three levels: site, composition of form and ritual. Site is a monumental factor in the equation as it influences the mood and level of inclusion that the surrounding environment has on the experience. The form of sacred architecture is often austere and abstract, ideally to create an unconscious synthesis of the site, the building and the occupant. The architecture acts as a stage that accommodates the enactment of myth through ritual, thus creating a space for physical and spiritual transcendence. While sacred architecture can be a profound experience in its own right, the real power lies in the way we arrive to the site, namely the path.

Pilgrimage would not exist without the physical condition of the path. For the pilgrim or the hero, the path is not always delineated, so finding and deliberating over the right path is often characteristic of the hero's experience. The path has a number of varying physical elements, including: edges, continuity, directionality, landmarks and a distinct beginning and ending. Symbolically the form can create particular spatial experiences and events such as going from darkness to light or from entering a constricted space to openness. It is meant to cause a sensation of motion and offer a sophisticated degree of visual scope along the way by enhancing the observer's sense of passage, distance, rhythm and time. Clearly defined threshold conditions, such as a bridge or gate represent the passage from one mode of existence to another. The path, as journey, symbolizes the evolution of self-knowledge and provides an opportunity for introspection and a chance to confront ones real and imagined fears. The journey along the path is thought to be more revelatory than arriving at the destination itself.



3.3 (c. 1995) The *Bartel* bent-wood bridge designed by The University of Nova Scotia (TUNS) architecture students and their professor Richard Kroeker. Sackville, Nova Scotia.

The role of architecture as built form can be distilled into a basic need for shelter and protection from the elements. Its transformative power lies in its ability to consciously and unconsciously materialize archetypal symbols in time and place. In the architectural realm for example, the hero archetype can be realized in a social housing initiative or a rehabilitation project that attempts to foster individual progress and community integration. Carl Jung proposes that by learning to identify the archetypes that manifest in our dreams, myths and architecture, they can function as a resource from which the soul can find inspiration and direction. The hero myth is one such archetype that describes the universal process of individuation. Tribal cultures recognize the importance of individuation and initiate the death of the infantile ego through ritual and custom. The lack of initiation rituals of a universal type in Modern society arguably impedes the maturation process of individuals. While society dictates its own rites of passage, if we are unable to navigate these on our own this can lead to a form of arrested development. As social architecture attempts to embrace those who exist at the fringes of society, a pilgrimage choreographed in the Canadian wilderness is an architectural solution accessible to anyone who needs it and reinterprets the hero myth for the present to serve as a resource and catalyst for rejuvenation and metamorphosis.

1. *de Laszlo (1959, 39).*
2. *de Laszlo (1959, vii).*
3. *Barrie quoting Campbell (1996,6).*
4. *de Laszlo quoting Jung (1959, 287).*
5. *Campbell (1988, 102-104).*
6. *Campbell (1988, 102-104).*
7. *Campbell quoting Jung from Psychology and Religion. Collected Works, vol.11; New York and London, 1958. (1972, 18). Campbell (1988, 32).*
8. *Campbell (1988, 123).*
9. *Campbell (1988, 15).*
10. *Campbell (1972, 25).*
11. *Campbell (1988, 124)*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Campbell (1988, 138).*
14. *Campbell (1972, 11).*
15. *Barrie (1996, 19).*
16. *Barrie (1996, 28).*



3.4 (c. 1450–1516) Hieronymus Bosch's *The Ascent of the Empyrean*. The souls of the saved are transcended to a heavenly light.



4.0 (c. 1916) Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*. Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario.

"He lived humbly but passionately with the wild – it made him brother to all untamed things of Nature. It drew him apart and revealed itself wonderfully to him. It sent him out from the woods only to show these revelations through his art and it took him to itself at last." - J. E. H. MacDonald

TOM THOMSON

Tom Thomson is the embodiment of the Northern hero and an icon in Canadian history. He was an accomplished painter and an alcoholic, with an irrepressible and infectious love of nature who suffered deeply from self-loathing and insecurity. His death, in 1917, was a great blow to the art world and catapulted him into the status of a hero, forever in limbo due to his untimely end in Algonquin Provincial Park. The Oxtongue River is a protected waterway that flows downstream from Canoe Lake, the site of Thomson's death, and has been designated a Waterway Park by the Ontario Parks System. It is a charged landscape that Thomson had sketched and visited many times in his lifetime and became a source of inspiration for the thesis. Thomson felt that time spent in this region was an essential catalyst for both his artistic and spiritual rejuvenation.

Tom Thomson had a connection to nature that fueled his artistic spirit and gave meaning to his isolated existence. He was born in 1877 in Leith near the town of Owen Sound, Ontario. From an early age he had a naturalist's sensibility, which entailed a keen observation and enthusiasm for the natural world. It was said that he saw the land so accurately, that he was able to read a landscape as if it was a contour map laid on the ground before him.¹ As a child he suffered from weak lungs and rheumatoid arthritis and was encouraged by doctors to walk outdoors as much as possible. By turning walking into a symbolic form, he was able to transform his landscape.² Thomson was something of an enigma, known for his kind and generous of spirit, while he was also prone to feelings of guilt, anger and bouts of despondency. Drinking excessively at times, he was a sensitive soul with an artistic temperament who was often overcome with feelings of anxiety and hysteria. In his adult life he worked in Toronto, but he longed to spend as much time as possible alone in the wilderness of Northern Ontario, purposefully distancing himself from friends and family. Participating in a pilgrimage up to Algonquin Provincial Park was a regenerative experience for the artist. He felt that this landscape had the power to refresh him as an artist and as a man.³ Tom Thomson was a solitary individual who spent a great deal of time interpreting Northern Ontario as a transcendent landscape activated by the practice of walking, canoeing and painting.

*"Thomson lived through a real-life adventure, and made his pilgrimage in search of enlightenment. His sketches suggest he found what he sought. The enlightenment lay in two things. On the one hand, he discovered a new place to paint, and hence new imagery, but the best part lay in the inner journey, the expansion of the way he learned to paint."*⁴

- Joan Murray

Tragically, Thomson disappeared during a canoeing expedition on Canoe Lake in Algonquin Provincial Park, July 8, 1917. His body was found in the lake eight days later and the coroner's report declared his death to be an accidental drowning. Those claims have been largely disputed by those



4.1 (c. 1914) Commercial artwork by Tom Thomson.



who knew him, as Thomson was known as an excellent swimmer and canoeist. His lungs were reported to be filled with air, not water indicating that he did not drown, but was dead before he fell into the water. It is supposed that he either hit his head on the side of the canoe while urinating, was murdered by a neighbour or committed suicide. The mystery has never been solved and the fact that the whereabouts of his remains is still unknown, continues to be a source of fascination for poets, authors, filmmakers and artists alike. Since there is very little left of the man, by way of memoirs, journals or intimate anecdotes his life is continuously reinvented for public consumption; in essence the myth of Tom Thomson has taken on a life of its own. The image of him as a woodsman-artist continues to have a profound hold on the public's imagination. In her book *Tom Thomson: Design for a Canadian Hero*, Joan Murray describes Thomson as a historic figure whom satiates a craving in our national psyche for an archetypal hero.⁵



4.2 (c. 1904) Tom Thomson.



4.3 (c. 1917) Tom Thomson fishing.

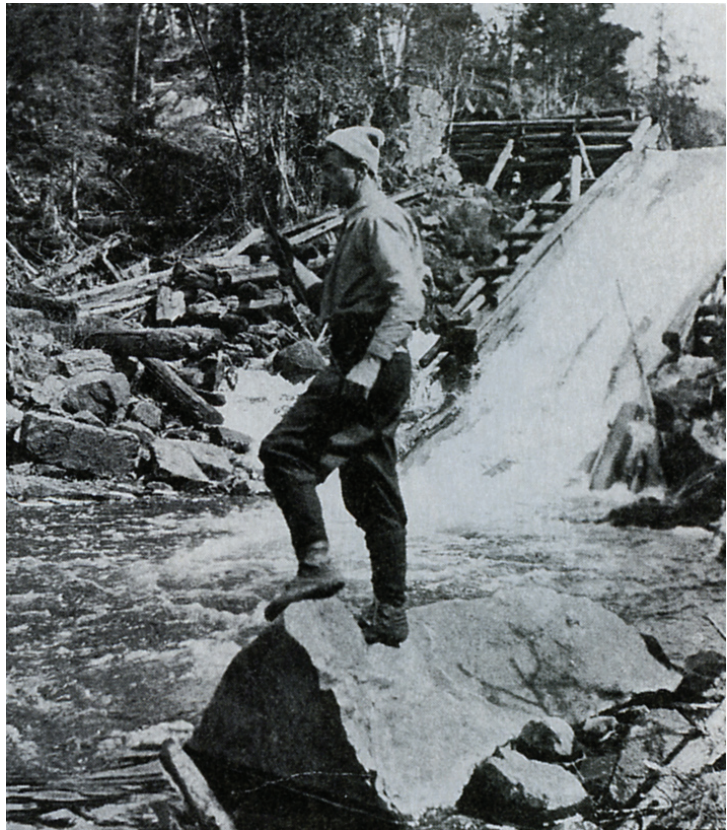
"He lived humbly but passionately with the wild – it made him brother to all untamed things of Nature. It drew him apart and revealed itself wonderfully to him. It sent him out from the woods only to show these revelations through his art and it took him to itself at last."

- J. E. H. MacDonald

The quote on the previous page are the words inscribed on the memorial cairn of Tom Thomson at Canoe Lake, erected by J. E. H. MacDonald, a member of the Group of Seven. The Algonkian people in ancient times would build a cairn marking out a place in the landscape where the deceased would be honoured by gifts of tobacco.⁶ People from all over the world come to Algonquin Park in search of an authentic Northern Canadian experience and are informed of the legacy of Tom Thomson once they arrive. His mythology is everywhere and men, women and children make their first canoe expedition to visit his cairn. Recognizing this gesture and the journey one must take to visit the cairn as an act of pilgrimage that realizes the hero myth of both the Algonkian people, and Thomson himself.

"To achieve a sort of reconciliation with oneself, one must not confront nature, but rather make a spiritual journey through it, enduring its hardships and come out on the other side to fully embrace life."⁷

- Gaile McGregor



4.4 (c. 1916–1917) Tom Thomson at Tea Lake Dam.



4.5 (c. 1916) Tom Thomson, *The Drive*. A painting depicting the log drive at Tea Lake Dam.

Tom Thomson saw nature as a manifestation of the divine world and, arguably, was transported by its complexity, texture and colour. The artist who honours nature as a deity, is often alone in his tireless pursuit to comprehend and portray her essence through various types of media, including paper, film, or in this case, canvas. Upon discovering Algonquin Provincial Park, Thomson was determined to realize his life's work and obsessively painted the Canadian landscape in an effort to bevel the dark corners of his mind. His heroic act influenced the Group of Seven, and together they created a frame through which the public was able to access and confront the pervasive fear of wilderness that affects the collective unconscious of our national identity. Tom Thomson spent much of his time portaging the network of rivers and waterways that formed as a result of the Canadian Shield and from the subject matter of his paintings one can deduce that he often made the trip from Canoe Lake downstream to Bonita Lake, Tea Lake and finally the Oxtongue River, which flows into Oxtongue lake. In 1985 this area was regulated as the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park and is the chosen site for the thesis.

1. *Murray (1998, 17).*
2. *Careri (2002, 19).*
3. *Murray (1998, 51).*
4. *Murray (1998, 52-53).*
5. *Murray (1998, 7).*
6. *Hurley (1970, 11).*
7. *McGregor (1985, 8).*



5.0 Mont St. Alban, Forillon National Park. Quèbec, Canada.

"If we don't transform the wilderness that surrounds us into some kind of transcendent experience, then it will be a forbidden place of morbid, unrelenting death and destruction." - Gaile McGregor

THE FOREST

The architecture of the forest is one of our first mythological and primordial landscapes; an ancient address that pervades the imagination and the dream world. In contrast to the cultivated agrarian landscape, or the grid-like pattern of the cityscape, the forest seems completely foreign to our inherent navigational system of order. For the average city dweller, it is a mysterious and disordered place lurking with shadows and danger.¹ In the context of the hero myth, the ancient Greeks and Sumerians saw it is a place for the hero to test his strength of will, battle demons and transcend his reality. Existing as a prevalent condition in the Canadian wilderness, the forest is a landscape that symbolizes the unconscious and represents an opportunity to both lose and find oneself.



5.1 A path through the forest. Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park, Ontario.

“Those who venture into the labyrinth of the forest are at risk of losing their way, and this lostness can also represent a sense of moral disorientation and disorderly conduct.”⁵

- Yi-Fu Tuan

Yi-Fu Tuan writes, in his book *The Landscapes of Fear* that the etymology of the word “wilderness” comes from the Old English “willed” and “deor”, meaning “wild” and “animal” respectively. Therefore, the word “wilderness” literally means the wild domain of the animal.² The etymology of wilderness indicates that it is a place where human beings are at the mercy of forces of nature greater than themselves. The primitive origin of the dream world has its foundation in the forest. There is a sense of bewilderment upon arrival in the forest we feel lost and unable to find our place amidst the seemingly wild pattern of chaotic growth. The unity of the Cartesian universe fails us, momentarily and we are at the mercy of our senses to guide the way. Navigating this landscape alone threatens our sense of security and evokes imagery of the foreboding that reverberates profoundly with a sense of fear in our psyche. Psychoanalysts regard the absence of light and the roots of the trees to symbolize the darkness and depth of the unconscious.³ The power of the forest stems from its ability to reveal the fear that lies buried deep within our unconscious. Ubiquitous in the realm of fairy tales and literature, the forest is depicted as a dark and merciless place fraught with danger and evil lurking at every turn.

*"The forest is frightening by its strangeness. The forest also frightens by its vastness, breadth and size of its towering trees."*⁴

- Yi-Fu Tuan

The forest has been thought of as a silent, dense and impenetrable stronghold that has housed and contained the wild miscreants of society.⁶ In England, it was common to clear-cut acres of forest in an effort to provide arable soil for farmland. Simon Schama proposes, in his work *Landscape and Memory*, that this violent act was an attempt to eradicate the English landscape of the invisible evil lurking in its recesses. The physical condition of the forest existing independently from the laws and governance of the state, has allowed it to abet countless uncivilized renegades. In Germany, during the Second World War, Nazi soldiers condemned the German woodlands as the site of mass executions. Anyone who did not conform to the newly devised German ideal were banished and massacred in a wilderness area separate from civilized society. The wilderness absolved the Nazis from the laws of human dignity.⁷

*"(The forest) is haunted by dangerous beasts. It is the place of abandonment – a dark, chaotic, non-world in which one feels utterly lost."*⁸

- Yi-Fu Tuan



5.2 An imaginary figure walks through the mythological forest. Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park, Ontario.

The journey of immersing oneself into the untamed wilderness creates a sensation of disorientation, rapture and more often than not, panic, as its inherent sensuality overwhelms our psychic faculties and sublimates as a source of fear in our unconscious. Classical Greece has alluded to the primeval forest as a dark labyrinth that will lead the individual on a discovery of his true self and the nature of the divine. "*Its fog sits in our memory like a place of universal origin.*"⁹ The ancient Greeks believed that access to God was granted through elemental gateways in the forest such as: inhabiting sacred groves, hunting animals and communing with the tree oracle.¹⁰ Through Greek mythology and literature, the forest was a realm of mediation between humanity and the divine world. Typically, the hero in a Greek myth would brave the dangers of the wilderness in order to conquer his deep-seated fears, confront evil and finally come face to face with the Gods. His ability to navigate the treacherous forest would be the great adjudicator of his ability to survive hardship and of his moral character as a man. The ability to defeat external representations of evil would indicate his strength of will to conquer internal demons and he would be granted, by the will of the Gods, permission to continue on a path of divine righteousness. The heroic pilgrimage of battling demons in an unknown territory describes the universal myth of the hero. As the hero embarks on a journey into the forest he will come to understand himself and the nature of the divine; thus conquering his fears and returning to his origins to impart his new found wisdom to his fellow man.

In comparison to the city, the forest is an unrecognizable landscape and its lack of navigational order creates a great deal of anxiety and fear in the imagination. The forest has a powerful hold over the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche. It represents a memory of our origins and symbolizes the underlying darkness lurking in the shadows of the human mind. Through out history it has been conducive to abetting the uncivilized renegades of society. And as a result of its ability to exist independently from the laws and governance of the state, the German woodlands became the site of mass graves for the Nazi army. As a realm between humanity and the celestial heavens, the ancient

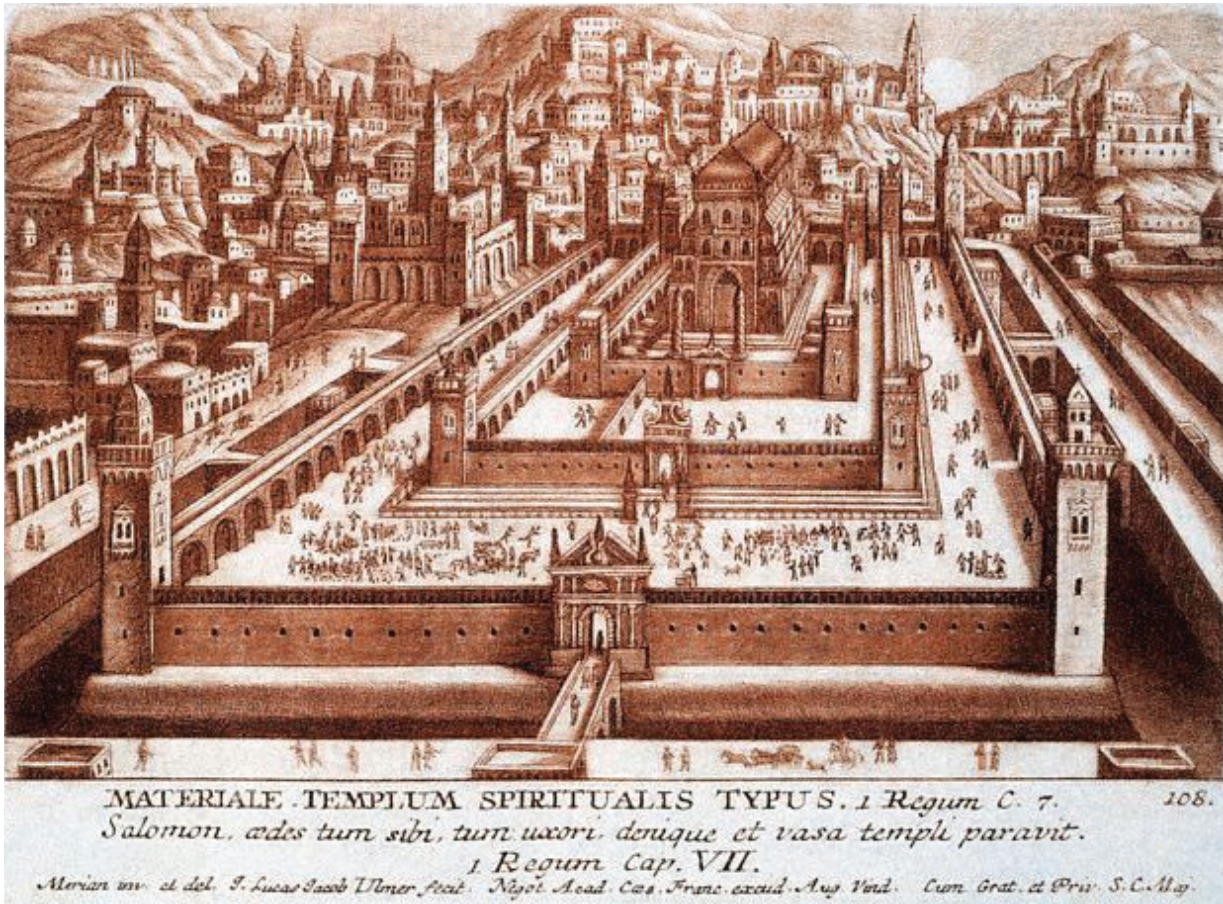
Greeks saw the forest as being a labyrinth in which a hero can find himself and commune with the divine world. The Greek hero's relationship with the forest is often described as an archetypal journey towards individuation. By venturing into the wild domain of the animal the hero is able to undergo a spiritual transformation that allows him to find himself amidst the chaos of the natural world. As Gaile McGregor writes in *The Wacousta Syndrome*,

*"If we don't transform the wilderness that surrounds us into some kind of transcendent experience, then it will be a forbidden place of morbid, unrelenting death and destruction."*¹¹

- Gaile McGregor

However, that same wilderness can become a spiritual place that can reorient the misguided soul.

1. Tuan (1979, 81).
2. Tuan (1979, 80).
3. *Dictionary of Symbols* (1962, 401).
4. Tuan (1979, 20).
5. Tuan (1979, 80).
6. Schama (1995, 57).
7. Schama (1995, 71).
8. Tuan (1979, 20).
9. Schama (1995, 57).
10. Schama (1995, 83).
11. McGregor (1985, 113).



6.0 (c. 1673-1765) *The Temple of Solomon* by Gabriel Bodenehr.

"The axe at my side, in which my arm trusted / the dirk at my belt, the shield at my face / my festive garment, my girdle of delight / a wicked wind rose up and robbed me."

- *The Funeral of Enkidu, The Epic of Gilgamesh*

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

The foundation of civilization began with the notion of a delineated boundary, so that human settlements could subsist and thrive within a real and metaphorical landscape, often enclosed by walls. The walls were often substantial in their construction and were designed to separate civilized society from the uncivilized realm of the natural world. In modern times, the remnants of historic city walls serve as a psychological reminder that what lies beyond the walls is still considered dangerous and wild. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is an ancient Sumerian poem written on twelve tablets that recounts the story of a legendary royal tyrant establishing the foundation myth of his city Uruk. The tale describes the journey of King Gilgamesh as he learns to embrace a wild man named Enkidu, confront his fear of the wilderness and come to terms with his own mortality. This myth is still relevant today with regards to understanding the reconciliatory relationship that exists between nature and humanity. By exploring this example of a universal hero myth, we can use the archetypal character of Gilgamesh to derive a potential outcome for an immersive journey into the Canadian wilderness.

*"The other makes our existence possible."*¹

- Alberto Manguel

Boundaries are seldom defined arbitrarily and most cities were created from surrounding topological conditions and natural land formations, such as hills and rivers. When geographical conditions were not viable to serve as protective edges, city walls were erected to keep enemies out, but also to keep civilians in.² Walls were often considerable in both materiality and labour and were designed as a protective device to exclude the outside world, visually and spatially. One of the reasons that society is so fearful to venture beyond its boundaries, is that this type of protective infrastructure has instilled a fear in the notion of otherness. By creating a powerful insecurity about peripheral areas of wilderness on the edge of a city, such as a forest, citizens are put in a position of psychic vulnerability with respect to nature. Fear has been a method to control large populations for centuries. By instilling fear of the unknown into the psyche of a townsfolk, civil disobedience could be kept to a minimum. City dwellers often feel compelled to follow societal rules, simply to remain under the protection of an imposed rational order. The brick foundation walls of Uruk are indicative of this philosophy and are characteristically strong and impenetrable to separate civilization from wild nature.

The Epic of Gilgamesh describes an unlikely tale of brotherhood between King Gilgamesh and a wild being named Enkidu. Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine and one-third human, mirroring Enkidu who is two-thirds beast and one-third human. Once Gilgamesh learns of his existence from a trapper who has encountered him beyond the city walls, he sends a harlot from the city named Shamhat to seduce him and bring him back to Uruk. After seven days her sex civilizes him and they return to society as husband and wife. After the King insists that he has the right to sleep with the new bride, Enkidu engages in a battle with Gilgamesh to preserve the honour of Shamhat. Establishing that they are equal in strength, the two male figures disengage from the fight and embrace forging a fraternal bond. As time goes on, Gilgamesh tires of city life and insists that the two of them embark on a heroic adventure into the Cedar Forest where they will destroy the demon Humbaba. After the demon dies, the goddess Ishtar falls in love with Gilgamesh. He rejects her

and is punished by her father the God Anu who sends down the Bull of Heaven to kill them. The two heroes defeat the Bull and cut down a tree from which Enkidu crafts a door. It is sent down the river as an offering to appease the gods. The gods decide that someone must be punished for killing the Bull and as a result Enkidu falls ill and prepares for his journey into the Netherworld. Without Enkidu, Gilgamesh must fulfill his heroic adventures alone. After lamenting over the death of his friend he desires immortality to avoid the same fate.

*'Here me, O young men, hear [me!]
Hear me, O elders [of teeming Uruk,] hear me!
I shall weep for Enkidu, my friend,
like a hired mourner-woman I shall bitterly wail.*

*'The axe at my side, in which my arm trusted,
the dirk at my belt, the shield at my face,
my festive garment, my girdle of delight:
a wicked wind rose up and robbed me.*

- Tablet VIII. The Funeral of Enkidu ³

*'[Then I was afraid that I too would die,]
[I grew fearful of death, and so wander the wild.]
What became of my friend [was too much to bear,]
[so on a far road I wander the] wild;
what became of Enkidu [was too much to bear,]
[so on a far path] I wander [the wild.]*

- Tablet X. At the Edge of the World ⁴



6.1 Unidentified tablet from one of our oldest known stories *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

As part of his journey he must cross the Waters of Death and is told to cut down 300 trees and turn them into oars. He is told of a plant that will give him immortality, but that he must go to the bottom of the ocean to find it. He binds stones to his feet and walks along the ocean floor to obtain it, but in the end loses the plant to a snake. The last tablet of the poem recounts Enkidu coming back to life and emerging through a hole smashed in the earth. Gilgamesh is happy to see his friend and questions him about his experience in the Netherworld. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the quintessential hero's myth that symbolizes an individual journey into the unconscious to procure a deeper understanding of oneself.

The process of individuation is a common theme in hero mythology and is evident in *the Epic of Gilgamesh*. Individuation is the transformation that one undergoes during the maturation process from childhood to adulthood. It is indicative of the destruction and renewal of the ego and allows for a smooth psychic transition into a higher state of consciousness. King Gilgamesh is fearful of the forest at the peripheral edge of his city, which is why he has constructed a massive piece of infrastructure to separate himself from the untamed wilderness. When he learns of the beast Enkidu living outside the city walls, the allure to tame such a creature prompts him to devise a plan to bring him to Uruk. Enkidu represents the wild forces of nature that Gilgamesh has painstakingly gone to exclude from his existence. The world outside the walls of Uruk is thought to represent the unconscious realm that the King has been too fearful to confront. In the context of the story when Gilgamesh accepts Enkidu as his brother, he learns to embrace *the other* and embarks on a journey to discover the tangible presence of his hidden self.⁵ Much like the tribal initiation ritual of a pubescent boy, Gilgamesh must endure a painful journey into this unconscious realm in order to face himself and attain a higher state of consciousness. The presence of Enkidu initiates the death of the King's infantile ego and inspires the heroic adventure into the Cedar Forest to destroy Humbaba. By choosing to embrace a quest that challenges our deepest and darkest fears we can begin to traverse the passage that will move us from one phase of life into another. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is symbolic of the need to physically and metaphorically obliterate the walls that keep us from experiencing what lies beyond our cityscape and our psychic landscape.

The Canadian landscape has a pervasive hold on the collective imagination of our country. We identify our physical experience primarily by our seemingly infinite land area, harsh climate and world renown geographical features. From ice storms to flooding, we are constantly reminded that we do not control this landscape that we call home. The Canadian Shield is one feature of our geography that has gripped the subliminal consciousness of Canadians with fear. For many early settlers, it was damned a desolate and barren wasteland, unfit for human inhabitation. Many of our citizens have a reverie for the North and commonly escape the Southern cities during both the summer and winter months to experience the near North. There is a tradition in Canada of actively reconciling our relationship with the wilderness, an olive branch that needs to be extended to the remote regions of the Shield. Architectural projects that seemingly emerge from the Precambrian gneiss, such as Science North in Sudbury and the French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre in Killarney are formulating an experimental and unique symbolic language for architecture in Northern Ontario.



6.2 Science North. Sudbury, Ontario.



6.3 The French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre. Killarney, Ontario.

Both of these projects are adeptly site-specific and speak to the notion of establishing a Canadian architecture working in collaboration with the wild. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu acts as a source of inspiration for Gilgamesh to make a heroic journey into the Cedar Forest. Gilgamesh redefines his existence by learning to accept the other. Part of the thesis proposal is that architecture can also be a tool that enables the acceptance and integration of the other, specifically wilderness. Acting as a source of inspiration for individuals, architecture can support and guide a reconciliatory journey through real and imaginary landscapes.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an ancient text that instructs the individual to deconstruct his conscious barriers and embrace the unconscious realms of his existence. The poem is also a lens through which we are given insight into what calls a hero to embark on a revelatory journey into the unknown. The relationship between King Gilgamesh and Enkidu reminds us that we are often unable to move into another world without the help of a guide. The guide can manifest in various forms and is there to instill a sense of direction and confidence in our quest. For the city dweller, living in a Canadian city, the wilderness is tinged with a pervasive element of fear and anxiety. The Shield in particular is difficult to inhabit because of its harsh and rugged conditions, although projects such as Science North and the French River Centre prove that it can be mediated successfully through architecture. By making a pilgrimage into this ancient geological landscape and immersing oneself in its inherent physical and emotional challenges, the individual can tap into his unconscious fear of the wilderness and similarly to Gilgamesh, attempt to make his existence whole.

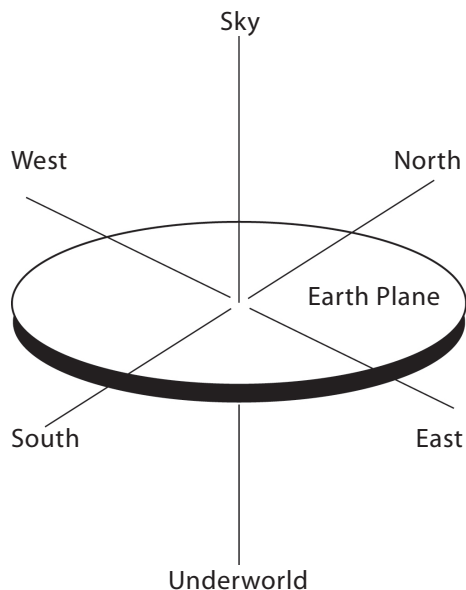
1. *The City of Words: The 2007 Massey Lectures by Alberto Manguel.*
2. *Tuan (1979, 6).*
3. *George (1999, 64-65).*
4. *George (1999, 78).*
5. *The City of Words: The 2007 Massey Lectures by Alberto Manguel.*



7.0 (c. 1993) Designed by Matti Sanaksenaho "*The Empty Space*" Project is a place for meditation in the wilderness for anyone who happens to come across it. Saarijärvi, Finland.

CASE STUDIES

The Finnish sauna and the Algonkian sweat lodge are archetypal structures where the elements of symbolism, myth and ritual are deeply embedded in their functional use and provide the psyche a physical link to the primordial universe.¹ The sauna is a domestic and functional architecture that fulfills the individual and collective desire of the Finn to return to the primitive wilderness. The Scandinavian landscape is similar to that of Northern Ontario² and the sauna set amidst the nation's forests, lakes and granite outcroppings offers the city dweller a respite from the intense socialization of the city. In the industrialized nations, the sauna continues to be a rare secular example of an architecture that cleanses the body of its impurities, releases the inner tensions of the human psyche and strengthens communal bonds.



7.1 Diagram of the *axis mundi*.

The Algonkian sweat lodge is a symbolic dwelling that represents a microcosm of the imagined universe.³ The Neolithic period, which occurred between the Stone Age and the Copper Age, was a time of great human and technological advancement. Many tribal cultures built structures that reflected their changing perception of the world and believed that an effective method to alter human consciousness was through pain.⁴ The aboriginal people of North America believed in a cosmic vertical line or *axis mundi* that linked the underworld, earth plane and sky and provided passage for a Shaman to traverse the universe.⁵ The Algonkian sweat lodge emerged out of the need for the Shaman and his tribe to commune with the spirit world. Through the intense physical experience of the sweat, this sacred womb purifies the body and mind and prepares the individual and the collective for life's great undertakings.

THE FINNISH SAUNA

The Scandinavian people describe the forest as being the formative feature of their development as a nation and civilization.⁶ The landscape of Finland is similar to the parts of the Canadian Shield in Ontario and is dominated by coniferous forests, freshwater lakes and granite. The Finns who emigrated to Canada chose the remote forests of Northern Ontario as the trees, lakes and rock reminded them of home.⁷ The climate of this Nordic region is harsh and severe and comparable to Canadians, the Finns endure a great deal of duress in a stoic manner. Their temperament is one of isolation, self-sufficiency and stubbornness and they often experience the natural world in solitude. Living according to the doctrine of equality, freedom and harmony with nature, the forest has a mythic presence in their collective psyche and wields a power and volatility that has made it the final resting place in Finnish culture.



7.2 *The Empty Space.* Saarijärvi, Finland.

"If a Finn decides to commit suicide, he goes to the forest and hangs himself from a branch of a tree. Only the pines, with wind soughing sadly through them, witness the final act. The forest takes its own as we say in Finland."⁸

- Arto Paasilinna

Rooted in the early Finnish tradition of architecture, is the vernacular typology known as the sauna. Its function and aesthetic have evolved over centuries, but for the Finns, it has always remained a place of physical and spiritual rejuvenation for human life, protecting and accommodating solitude deep in the country's forests. Historically, it was the first thing constructed by a farmer once he had acquired a new plot of land.⁹ The original saunas were individually occupied pits dug into the ground, ideally sited near one of the many lakes peppered across the landscape. As the sophistication of inhabitation progressed, the sauna was erected as an above-ground log house for more than one person and became a place for public socializing and bathing. One of its main uses was to heal the sick, provide a sterile environment for childbirth and to maintain a clean, self-contained area strictly constructed for hygiene away from the main living quarters. For many of the rural communities, the sauna was traditionally the centre of social and family life and aided in the preservation of ancient customs, rituals and beliefs; today, the sauna is found in most private apartments and even in the national Parliament. The sauna is a refuge from the impersonal nature of society and allows individuals to strengthen the bonds between family and community in an intimate and private setting.

The sauna is symbolic of the human desire to return to nature and acts as a threshold between civilization and wilderness. Nature exists as a sacred realm in Finnish culture, therefore when one enters this sanctuary, located deep in the heart of the divine forest, he is able to dwell between the worlds of the sacred and profane and concentrate on the purification of his corporeal being. The size and siting of the traditional sauna are always dependent on its functional needs. The elemental qualities of the sauna are rooted in simplicity and a close relationship to nature. Natural materials, in the construction of the structure, are essential and often include timber and stone. With regards to light, the sauna is typically dark inside to provide a quiet, reflective interior space as well as to accommodate for the nakedness of the bathers. Finnish culture shuns artificiality and aesthetic ornamentation and any move to design large windows to maximize daylight or to provide scenic views, is strictly

prohibited. The interior of the sauna is similar to a monastic experience in its quiet simplicity and is comprised of raked wooden benches for bathers to sit and work up a good sweat. Heat rises and collects near the ceiling; higher benches are generally hotter than lower ones. The average temperature inside is 70°C-100°C and the Finnish ritual of bathing requires that the occupant enter completely naked. Clothing or any kind of eroticism in the sauna is taboo and the reason behind communal nakedness is to enhance the notion of vulnerability and purity. Shedding one's skin, metaphorically, creates an environment of equality as bathers are free from gender roles and social standing.¹⁰ In the heart of the forest, the dark and moist atmosphere creates an extraordinary idyllic space, in which seated and relaxed bathers freely share intimate philosophies in a peaceful and thoughtful manner.



7.3 A collective of nude women bathe together in a Finnish Sauna.



7.4 Bathers plunge into icy cold waters to restore their body temperature to a normative state. This ritual is thought to improve circulation and stimulate the thyroid gland.

The siting of the sauna with the landscape is integral to the success and enjoyment of the bathing experience. The comfort level in the sauna is largely dependent on the amount of moisture in the atmosphere; therefore water is traditionally poured on hot rocks to generate steam and increase the humidity in the air. Since the intense heat can become unbearable during the process of bathing, a sauna is preferably sited close to a water source such as a lake, river or any other body of water that is safe for swimming. Washing with cold water allows the body temperature to drop and return to its normative state. This cool down process is invigorating for the circulatory system and is a necessary part of the prolonged ritual and enjoyment one seeks while dwelling in the sauna. It is also customary to stimulate perspiration by gently whisking the skin with a twig from the indigenous Birch tree. Strategically heating and cooling the body, the womb-like chamber of the sauna in combination with plunging oneself in the frigid waters nearby is an ancient ritual that is thought to compel the transmutation of the soul. In the sauna, the bather moves from darkness to light, contamination to purity.¹¹

Deeply connected to ritual, the Finnish sauna experience consists of preparation, anticipation and release. Ritual is thought to be the catalyst for transformation and a certified path to transcendence in many cultures. Finland is no stranger to this belief and the art of practicing ancient traditions in a prescribed manner appeals to their conviction that, as social beings, we require a method of healing from the conscious and unconscious stresses of daily life.¹² The sauna is a physical manifestation of this desire to propel the body and mind into a transformative state. One of the common theories of the sauna is that it has the ability to release the deep seeded turmoil that accumulates and resides in the human psyche.¹³ By creating an environment that works on our sensual being through physical stimulation, the ego is temporarily suspended and the mind is able to let go of its superficial preoccupations. Physically cleansed and mentally renewed, the healing properties go far beyond its function as place for bathing and socializing. Amidst the cathedral-like groves of the forest, this austere wooden structure is a place for individuals and communities alike to indulge in the introspective contemplation of the extraordinary.



7.5 Two men enjoying a modern sauna.

THE ALGONKIAN SWEAT LODGE

The Algonkian sweat lodge is a link to the supernatural realm and is an essential component of native spiritual practice. The ritual suggests that a physical and spiritual transcendence can occur by harnessing the four natural elements: earth, water, air and fire. For the natives, earth represents the womb of the divine Mother, water is the giver of life, air is the breath of the ancestors and fire is a symbol of purification.¹⁴ The ancient people used the sweat lodge to pray to their grandmothers and grandfathers and heal the sick. Similar to the ancient Finnish tradition, sweating was considered a sterile and effective method to purify the body and heal the psyche. While the tectonics of the sweat lodge are simple, the profundity of this archetypal structure lies in its role as a place where a Shaman and his tribe can symbolically return to and commune with the spirit world.

Sweats are ceremonial before and after a Shaman leaves his tribe to embark on a vision quest. The Algonkians believe that by cleansing the corporeal being of any impurities, an awareness and connection to the unconscious realms are opened up and strengthened.¹⁵ A traditional sweat takes hours to complete and is typically done at midnight during a full moon.¹⁶ Often sited near a body of water, hemispherical lodges are typically considered temporal buildings that are only constructed in times of need, although there are permanent examples that do stay up year round. Using indigenous materials, the structure is constructed of 8 to 16 birch boughs which are bent into an arc and connected at the intersections with simple ties. The diameter of the circle depends on the number of bathers, but six feet is a typical dimension for 8-12 people.¹⁷ The main entrance faces East to honour the morning sunrise and is low to the ground so that bathers have to crawl like infants in and out on all fours. Once the frame has been erected and the exterior fire for the ceremonial stones has been lit, the lodge is covered



7.6 (c. 1898) Male bathers at the entrance of a sweat lodge.



7.7 (c. 1995) Architect Richard Kroeker and his students at TUNS, experimenting with aboriginal structural connections. Sackville, Nova Scotia.

with materials ranging from leaves, branches, skins, blankets, canvas or sleeping bags. Once the ceremony begins, the dark, hot and moist condition inside the lodge evokes a sensation of returning to the primordial womb.

The ceremonial granite stones that are used in a sweat are heated in a fire for an entire day. They must be completely dry because any moisture trapped inside the stone can cause it to explode. An appointed fire keeper tends to the fire and is responsible for bringing in the heated stones one by one as needed. The fire is located outside the lodge, on axis with the interior central pit which will receive the stones. The sweat is a leisurely form of prayer and commences once the elder leading the ceremony is ready. The bathers crawl into the lodge and sit in a circle on the ground around the central pit. Once everyone is present a leader will begin the ceremony by closing the door and honouring the four cardinal directions as well as the earth and the sky.¹⁸ This establishes an axis mundi with the universe and the sweat lodge is temporarily ordained as a link to the Great Spirit or Manitou; thus indicating that the heated stones can be brought into its centre. A bucket of water and a ladle are present inside the sweat and water is poured on the rocks to generate steam and fill the atmosphere with moisture. Each ceremony is different and prostrating, singing, crying, silence and passing around a tobacco pipe are all acceptable in the circle. After one round has been completed the door is opened and bathers can crawl out into the moonlight and immerse themselves in a nearby lake or river to cool off before re-entering for the next two rounds. The sweat takes a lot out of the bathers and it is customary to prepare a feast afterwards to celebrate and solidify tribal bonds.

The sweat lodge is imbued with symbolism and each ritual associated with the act reveres the divine life force inherent in the natural world. The structural materials such as the birch boughs that are used to frame the space, represent the cycle of death and rebirth. A water drum is used to mimic the sound of Mother Earth's beating heart and intensifies the sense of the being inside a womb. The granite rocks that are purified in the fire are the original material of the earth and are thought to embody the grandfathers of the native

people.¹⁹ As water, sage and cedar are placed in the central pit, the steam and sacred smoke emitted by pouring water on the stones is the divine breath of ancestors communicating ancient wisdom that has been lost. The intensity of the sweat is thought to correlate to the efficacy of the prayers offered, such that this moonlit ritual is often prescribed for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts in the native community.²⁰ This religious invocation is not for the faint of heart and suffering and struggling through the intense heat are a testament to the endurance and perseverance it takes to release the emotion turmoil that builds up in the human psyche.

The Finnish sauna and the Algonkian sweat lodge are threshold conditions that enable a strong physical and spiritual connection to their surrounding wilderness. The vernacular of these two architectures emphasizes an integration with its site, erected using only indigenous materials. Used for centuries, the sauna and the sweat lodge are coping mechanisms to deal with the conscious and unconscious pressures of everyday life. Purifying the body and spirit of individuals and communities, the sauna and sweat lodge offer an overall feeling of well-being while strengthening societal bonds. Through a prescribed series of rituals, these womb-like chambers and their nearby rivers or lakes reinvigorate the circulatory system, resulting in a euphoric feeling of rejuvenation. The impetus of the Algonkians to design a space in which one can be immersed in the natural world came out of a need to commune and glean guidance from the Great Spirit. The Finnish mediated their own landscape of forests, lakes and rocks to establish a long standing tradition of returning to their authentic origins. In Canada the tradition of returning to the wilderness does not exist for the average citizen as we are a relatively young country populated with new immigrants who carry existing ties to their homelands. By creating these types of threshold conditions in the Precambrian Shield, the opportunity to reconcile with our surrounding wilderness will allow new and old Canadians to partake in a national hero myth that will strengthen our individual and collective identity.

7.8 (c. 1995) The Beaverbank Project incorporates a changing area for bathers attending a sweat lodge in the forest. Sackville, Nova Scotia.



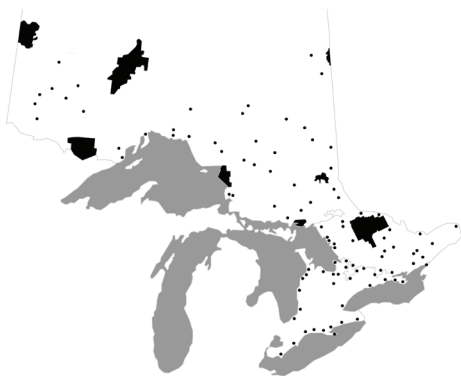
“It was in Denver – which was not a very pleasant city in the early 1940s; there was a great deal of prejudice and racism, and we had a hard time finding a hotel room. When we did find one it was a very dingy, horrible room and Black Elk felt bad about Denver and the hotel; he felt unclean and he wanted a seat bath to cleanse himself of the impurities of that city. I didn’t know how this could be done in a hotel room; but the room was heated by a coal fire, and the fireplace was brick and so old the bricks were falling out of it. He said, “Here, let’s take these loose bricks, and we’ll pull some more of the chimney and heat them in the coal fire,” which we did. Then we took the chairs in the room and put them in a circle, and took all the bedding off the beds and put them over the chairs to make a kind of lodge right there in the middle of the room. We found an old coal scuttle and when the bricks were red hot we put them in the coal scuttle, put that in the little lodge, and stripped down and crawled in; and it was good and hot in there and we sang and prayed and smoked and sweated and it was real good, you know? I think that was the first time a sweat bath has ever been taken in a Denver hotel room; that is typical of the kind of things that happen with these people – the unexpected, breaking with habitual patterns, adds a dimension to life that I think is terribly important.”²¹

- an anecdote about Black Elk

1. *Barlow Rogers (2001, 21).*
2. *Edelsward quoting Lindstrom-Best: 1988, 4 (1991, 133).*
3. *Lewis-Williams & Pearce (2005, 65).*
4. *Lewis-Williams & Pearce (2005, 63).*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Edelsward (1991, 53).*
7. *Edelsward quoting Lindstrom-Best: 1988, 4 (1991, 133).*
8. *Edelsward quoting Arto Paasilinna (1991, 62).*
9. *FBI (2003, 10).*
10. *Edelsward (1991, 36).*
11. *Edelsward (1991, 103).*
12. *Edelsward (1991, 34).*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Bucko (1998, 73).*
15. *Bucko (1998, 53).*
16. *Bucko (1998, 9).*
17. *Bucko (1998, 42).*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Bucko (1998, 31).*
20. *Bucko (1998, 173).*
21. *Cavalli quoting an anecdote about Black Elk (2002, 85-86).*



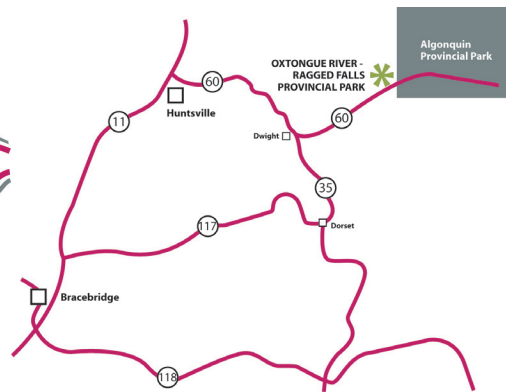
8.0 Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park.



8.1 (c. 2007) The location of all the designated Provincial Parks in Ontario, Canada.

OXTONGUE RIVER RAGGED FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK

The overall mandate of the Ontario Provincial Parks System is to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and cultural heritage appreciation in a publicly accessible natural setting. The Parks System is a collective, that strives to create safe and culturally enriching experiences in distinctive regions of the province for residents and out-of-province visitors. The Oxtongue River is located in the Grenville Province of the Canadian Shield and is considered to be one of Ontario's significant waterway corridors. As part of its history, the river was used by the lumber industry during the 1800s and continues to be a popular portage route for canoeists in the area. Outlined in the Ministry of Natural Resources Management Plan, the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is a vibrant and challenging landscape that is the site for proposed experimental pilgrimage retreat in Ontario's near North.



8.2 The location of the site in relation to some of Ontario's major cities and highways.

The Ontario Provincial Parks System has divided the Ontario landscape into 65 site districts based on biological productivity and distinct landforms. The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls area is situated in Site District 9, the Algonquin Park Site District. The Park is located within South-Central Ontario (commonly referred to as “the near North”) and is 35 kilometres east of the Town of Huntsville along Highway 60. It is 320 kilometres west of the City of Ottawa and 275 kilometres north of the city of Toronto. The entire Park includes 382 hectares of land and water along the Oxtongue River and its boundaries are defined by Crown land 200 metres to the north of the Oxtongue River and 200 metres to the south of the river. To the east and west, respectively, it is bounded by the edge of Algonquin Provincial Park and Highway 60. The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls was established after many years of remaining in the shadow of the well-known Algonquin Provincial Park. The Park was first recognized in the 1950s as a vibrant and valuable recreational zone, however the area was subsequently placed under a Crown Reserve. In the 1970s, the Ragged Falls Reserve was considered as a possible perimeter recreation area for Algonquin Provincial Park. This idea was later abandoned leaving the Park unclassified for the next decade. In 1985, under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, it was officially regulated as part of the

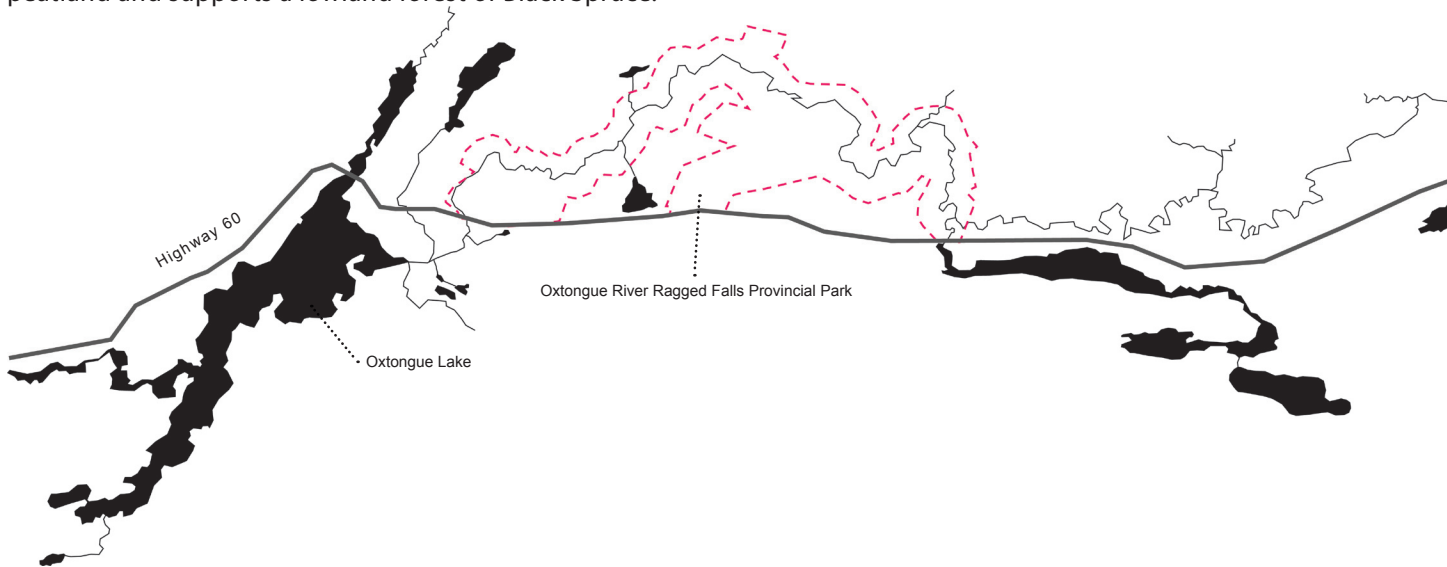
Provincial Parks System and was classified as a Waterway Park. Waterway Parks are defined by their incorporation of outstanding water routes with representative natural features. While the thesis is proposing to build on Crown land, it contends that to develop an appreciation and understanding of a site, one must engage it through a series of noninvasive architectural interventions.

The Oxtongue River is one of Ontario's significant waterway corridors and remains under the protection of the Parks system. Ragged Falls Provincial Park is characterized by a unique riverine landscape that include conditions ranging from extensive wetland to upland areas. The Algonquin region is named for the prehistoric Algonkian tribe that settled in the area approximately 2000 years ago. Due to the difficult conditions of the Shield and the acidity of the soil, the Oxtongue River site has not produced substantial archeological evidence of any prehistoric inhabitation. However, areas such as Bon Echo and Lake Superior Provincial Parks have produced sufficient evidence that the Shield did have a powerful role to play in the mythology of the Algonkian people.

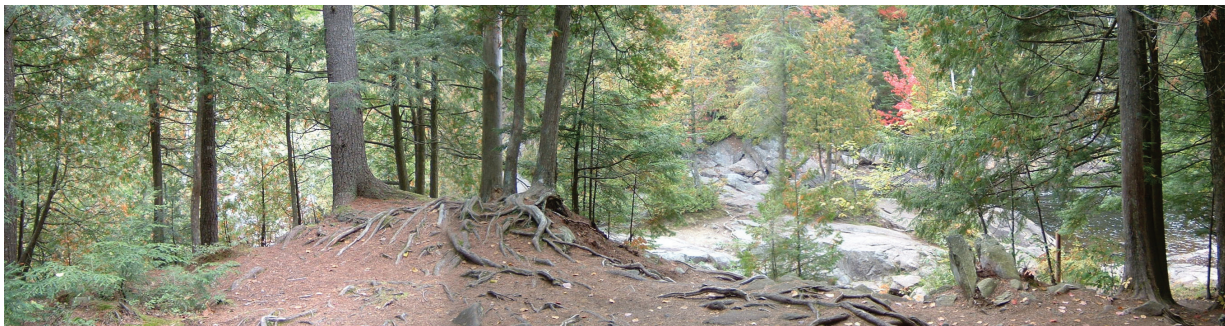


8.3 Oxtongue River Ragged Falls.

Three physiographic units exist within the Park: undulating upland areas covered by a thin, sandy till; glaciofluvial and alluvial deposits associated with the former glacial spillway channel and the present meandering river channel. These three physiographic units define the types of vegetation that grow in the Park. Sugar Maple forests are located in the undulating upland areas. Beech, Yellow Birch and Hemlock are common, in varying proportions, within the region. Maple is found on the well-drained fluvial sands and gravels. Hemlock is found mainly on thin soiled and bare steeped slopes and is also found, along with the Balsam Fir, on deeper sandy areas located in close proximity to the river. The low lying areas along the river are dominated by wetlands and thickets. The eastern portion of the site is extensively peatland and supports a lowland forest of Black Spruce.



8.4 Canoe route from Canoe Lake to Oxtongue Lake, via Bonita Lake, Tea Lake and The Oxtongue River.



8.5 Trees in the Park.



8.6 (c. 1902) Bush Lunch. Algonquin Provincial Park. Ontario.

The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park lies within the Grenville Province of the Canadian Shield. The river uniquely marks the point of contact between two distinct rock types: the biotite gneisses north of the river, and the amphibolite and biotite-hornblende gneiss south of the river. The river flows through an ancient glacial spillway, which drained meltwaters from the Algonquin Highlands into glacial Lake Algonquin. Moving down and out of Algonquin Provincial Park, towards the southwest, the river cascades over several outcroppings of the Canadian Shield, forming waterfalls and rapids along the way, most notably



the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls and High Falls, which have a vertical drop of 25 metres over a horizontal distance of 200 metres and a vertical drop of 10 metres over a horizontal distance of 10 metres, respectively. A major feature of this Waterway Park is a portion of a scenic canoe route, which would typically commence at either Canoe or Tea Lake in Algonquin Provincial Park and continue down the Oxtongue River, ending in Oxtongue Lake. This protected route is significant in the history and economy of the Algonquin Region and is in part a tribute to the determined individuals involved in the lumber industry during the 1800s. During this time, the site provided an inexpensive and ingenious way of shipping logs via the Oxtongue River from Algonquin Provincial Park down to the Muskoka and Trent River systems. The log drive was directed downstream to a mill in Trent and remnants of the historic log chutes and dams still exist within the Park.



8.7 Early tree logging. Algonquin Provincial Park. Ontario.

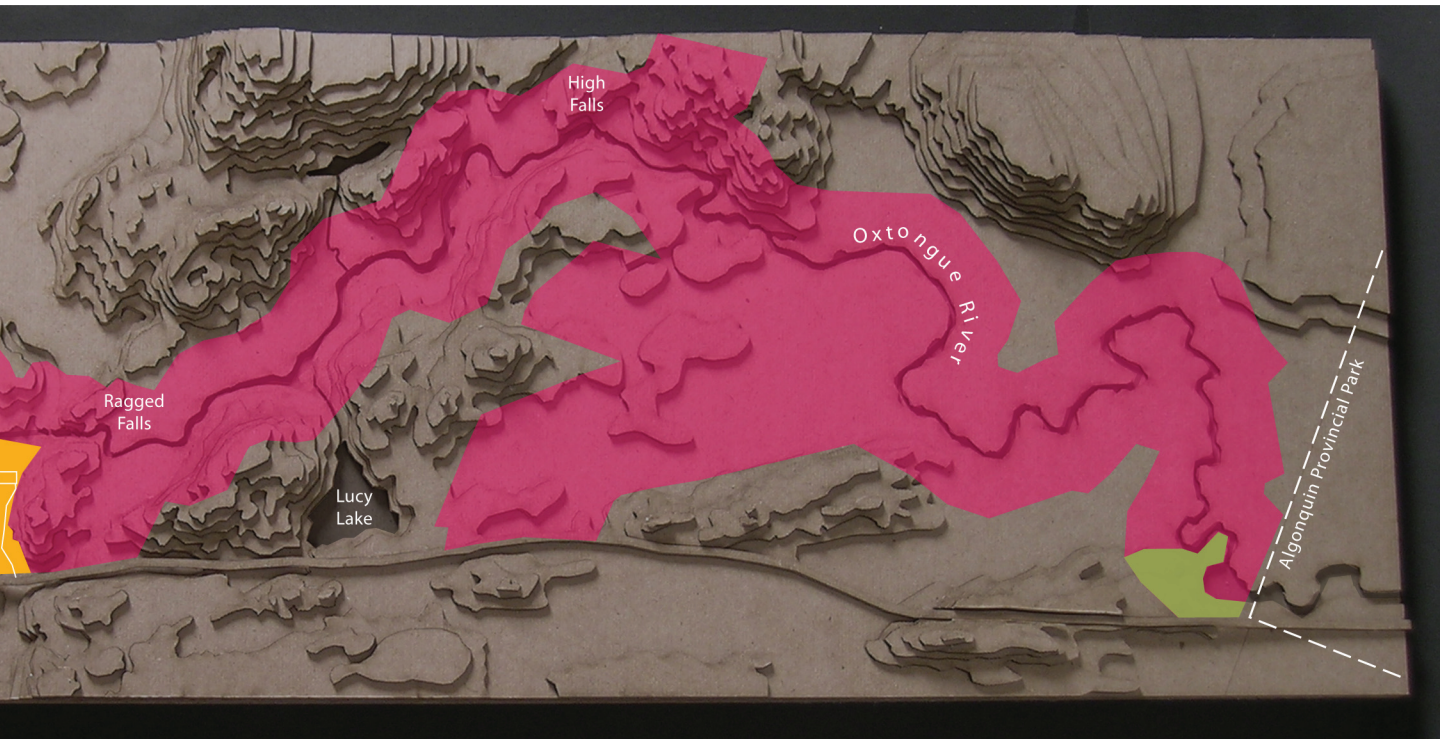
The Park has many desirable attributes as a place to attract and encourage visitors to personally explore the site, however there are significant shortcomings that hinder its potential to become more than simply another tourist stop in the Algonquin region. Currently development in the Park is limited, however the existing amenities include: a parking area for 20 cars, picnic facilities and a trail that has been developed for the purpose of viewing Ragged Falls. The Park estimates that an average of 1500 low-intensity visitors use the site annually for day use and back country recreation (i.e. hiking, canoeing, swimming and fishing). Zoning within the 382 hectares Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park has been allocated as follows: Development Zone (25 hectares), Access Zone (4 hectares), and Natural Environment Zone (353 hectares). The shortcomings of the Park are significant, they include: poor signage at the entrance from Highway 60, the aforementioned loop trail is anticlimactic and there is limited foot access to the entire Park. The best point to view of the Falls is blocked off by a chain-link fence and currently the trail into the Park is only maintained for 1.6 kilometres of its approximate 6 kilometres length. Without any warning, the trail ends abruptly and anyone hiking along hoping to see the rest of the Park is forced to turn back. One way to see the Park in its entirety, is to canoe down from one of the Algonquin lakes. Typically, canoeists make a one or two day portage from either Canoe or Tea Lake.






8.8 Ragged Falls obscured by a chain-link fence.



8.9 The Zoning Diagram for the Park implemented by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



-  Natural Environment Zone (353 hectares)
-  Development Zone (25 hectares)
-  Access Zone (4 hectares)

The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is a Waterway Park that has the potential to become a significant landmark in Ontario's near North. Off Highway 60, the Park is situated relatively close to Ottawa and Toronto and is accessible to many people either residing or visiting the province. Currently 1500 visitors use the site on an annual basis to portage the Oxtongue River and see the Ragged Falls, which is primarily used as a scenic tourist stop on the way into Algonquin Provincial Park. By relocating its entrance, creating new trails and using architecture, a site plan is derived that expands the current recreational and cultural mandate described by the Management Plan of the Park. The design proposal implements site-specific interventions including: cabins, a communal bathing pavilion, a sweat lodge and a chapel that deepen the immersion of the body and spirit into this charged landscape and enact a journey through the Canadian Shield.



8.10 This bend in the Oxtongue River is the site where canoeists must disembark from their canoes and portage.





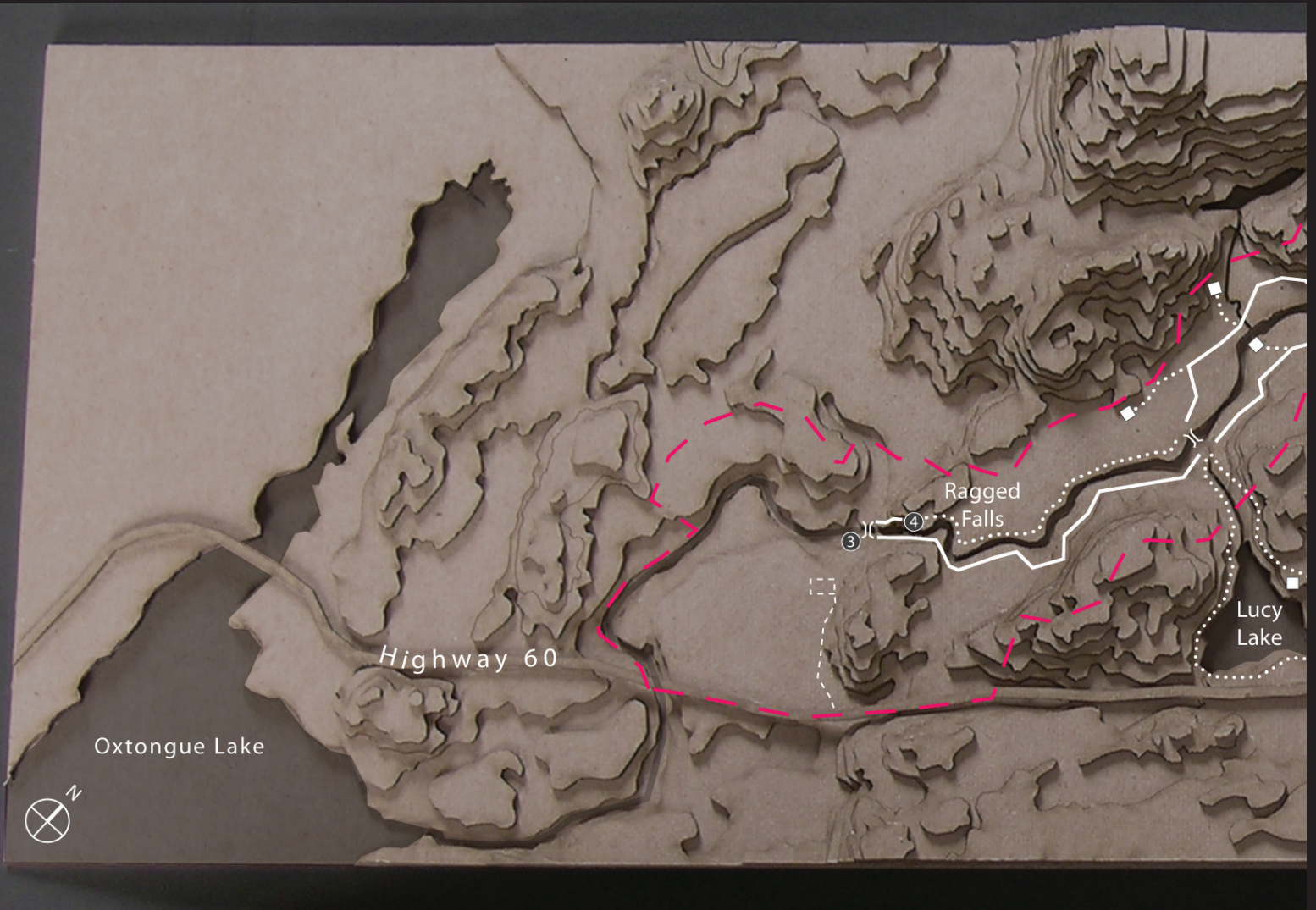
9.0 Chapel interior looking out to Ragged Falls.

THE DESIGN PROPOSAL

The Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is a protected waterway in Ontario's near North and has many of the necessary conditions to become a significant experiential landmark in the Algonquin region. The entire size of the Park is relatively small and its 6 kilometre length can be covered, by foot or canoe in one day or less. Access to the Park is off Highway 60, one of the most well-known and well-traveled roads in the Muskokas. It's natural features, including two waterfalls provide some of the most dramatic elevation conditions in the region. And its relative obscurity in contrast to its neighbour Algonquin Provincial Park makes it an attractive site to visitors who are looking for an alternative to a typical camping or recreational experience. By elaborating on the mandate of the Ontario Provincial Parks: to provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, and to protect provincially significant natural, cultural, and recreational environments, Ragged Falls Provincial Park can implement an experimental proposal that introduces site-specific architectural projects into the Canadian Shield. In the spirit of a monastic pilgrimage, the programme consists of secluded cabins in the forest, a communal bathing and washroom area, a submerged sweat lodge and an open-air chapel. Each element is designed to act on its own and in conjunction with one another to inspire moments of corporeal and spiritual rejuvenation.



9.1 (c. 1930) *The Soul* by Frantisek Drtikol. A figure dives through a spiral of darkness into the light of understanding.





- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| ① Arrival | — — — — — Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park Boundary |
| ② Bathing Pavilion | ----- Existing Parking |
| ③ Sweat Lodge | ————— Proposed Access Road & Parking |
| ④ Chapel | ==== Proposed Primary Trail |
| | Proposed Secondary Trail |
| | ⌋⌋ Proposed Footbridge |
| | ■ Cabin (1-2 occupants) |

9.2 Site model.



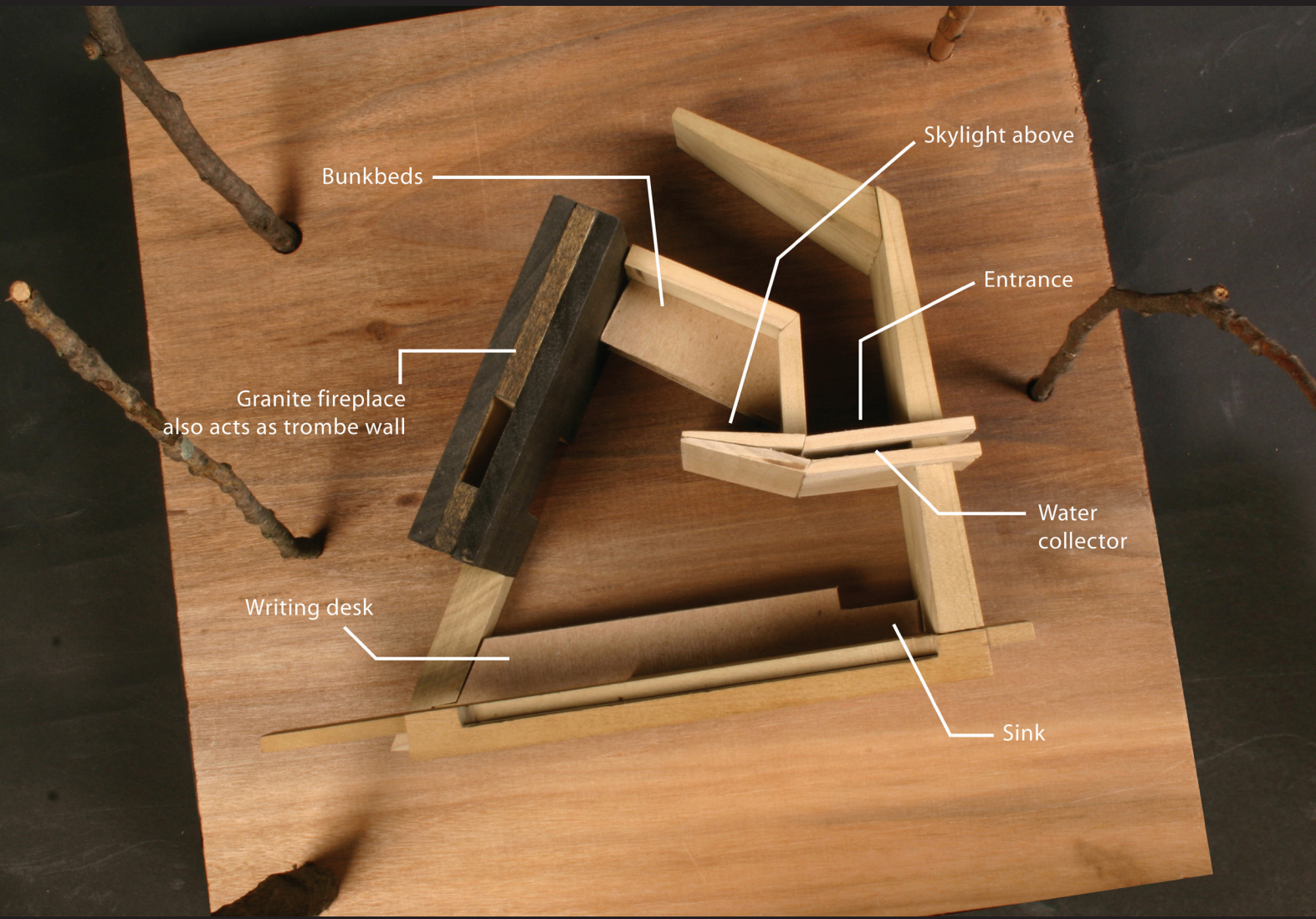
9.3 A new information centre upon arrival in the relocated parking lot.

CABINS

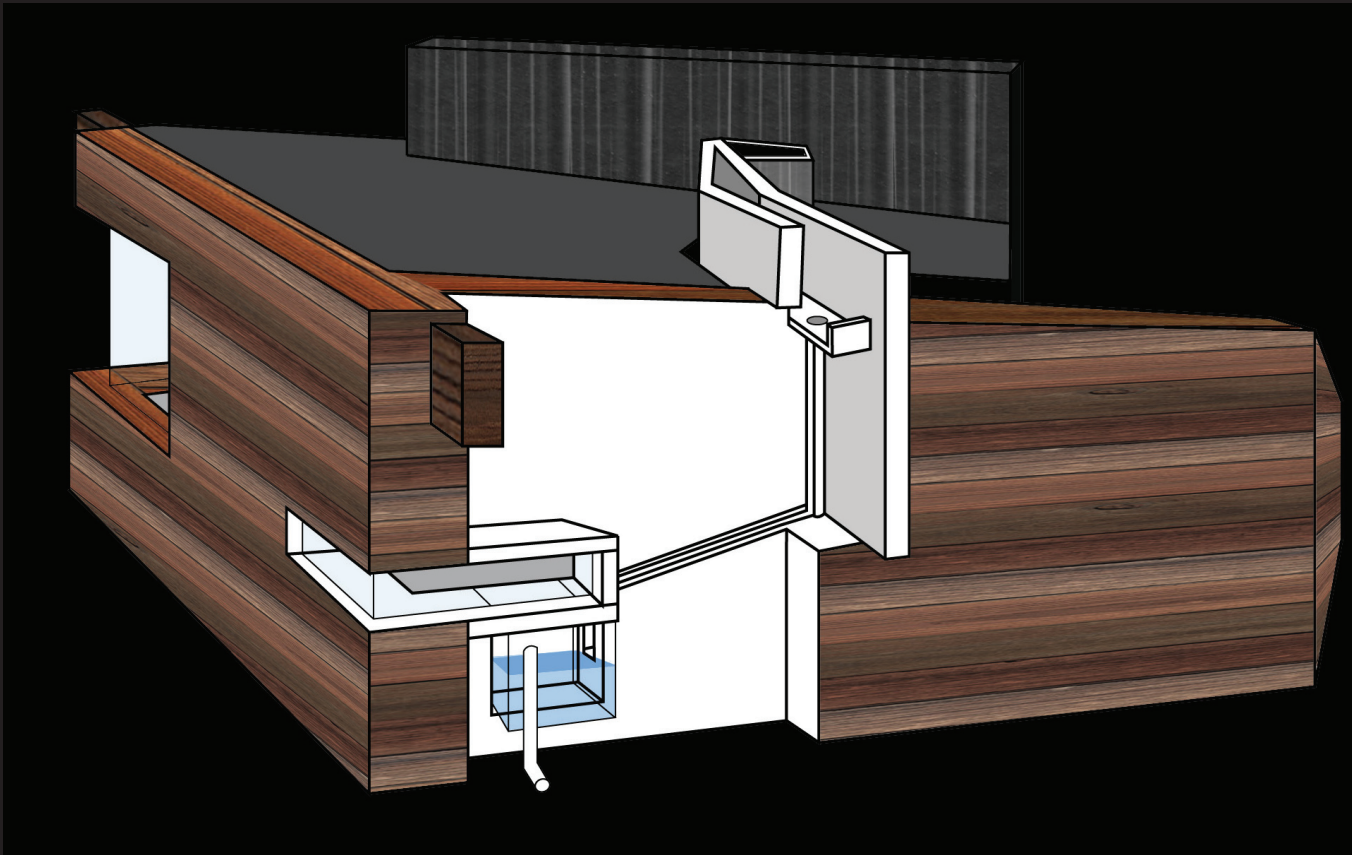
The cabins are located near the beginning of the path and are placed in conjunction with Lucy Lake, cliff-sides, the Oxtongue River and the forest. The architectural language is meant to evoke the notion of the shifting planes of the Shield and is constructed primarily out of Red Cedar, but also uses local woods such as Black Spruce, Balsam Fir. They are compact, but at roughly 350 square feet each cabin provides enough room for one or two people to move around comfortably. Each cabin has built-in furniture which include a sink, a desk, bunkbeds and a granite fireplace. The fireplace, which will be south-facing in all the cabins, acts as a trombe wall storing thermal heat during the day and releasing it at night. Glazing is minimal and is designed to accent the various functions of the building, including: washing, working or sleeping. Each cabin would also be equipped with a water tank where rainwater could collect from the sloped roof and come down a pipe fitted into the wall. The cabins are dispersed through the Park and their respective designs respond to the various site conditions that they occupy.



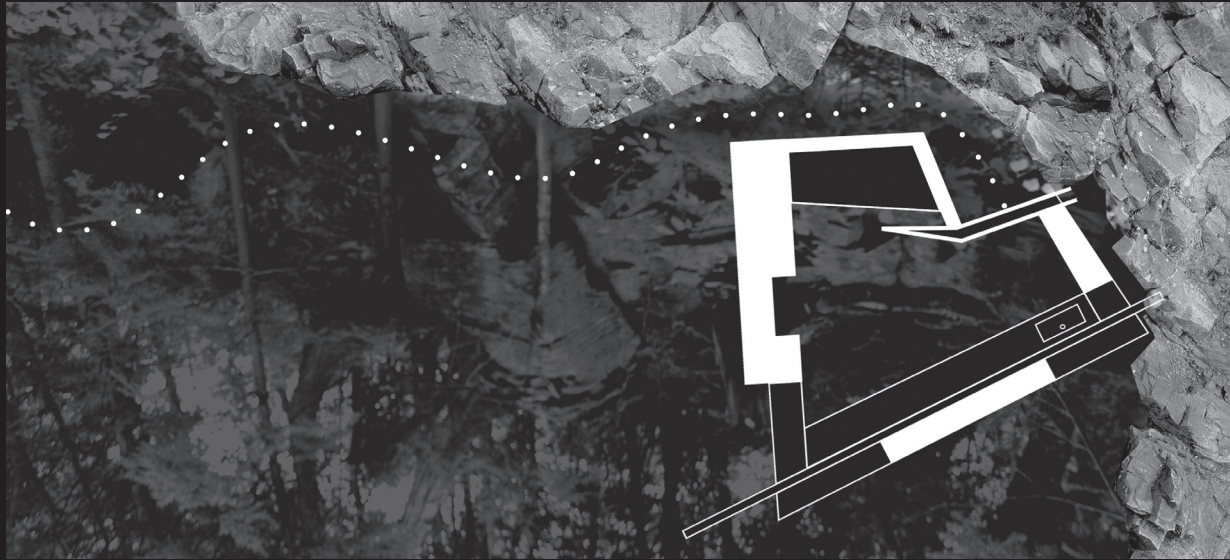
9.4 A model of a typical cabin.



9.5 A bird's eye view of a typical cabin.



9.6 Detail of the water collector.



9.7 Cliff-side cabin uses the existing contours of the Shield to create an entrance into the cabin.

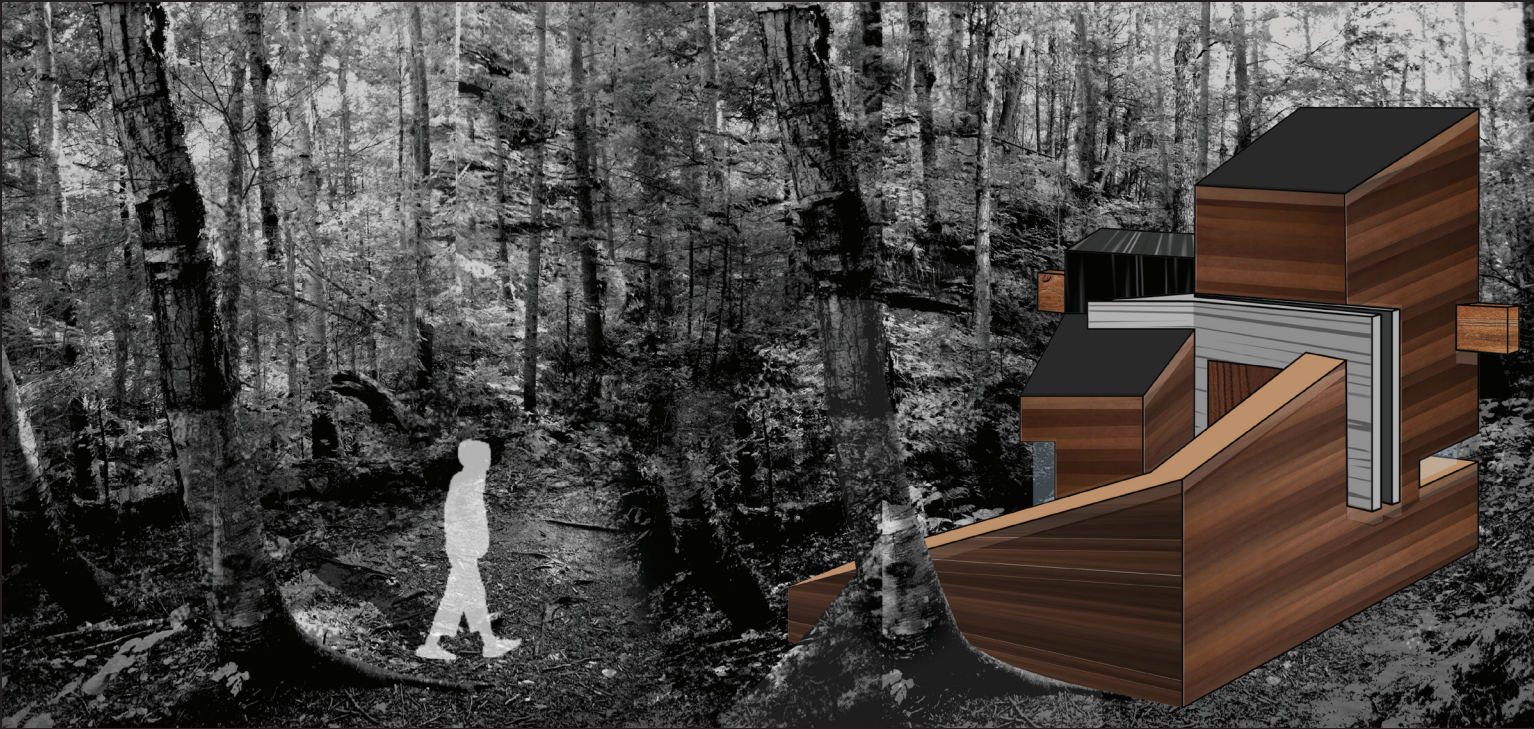




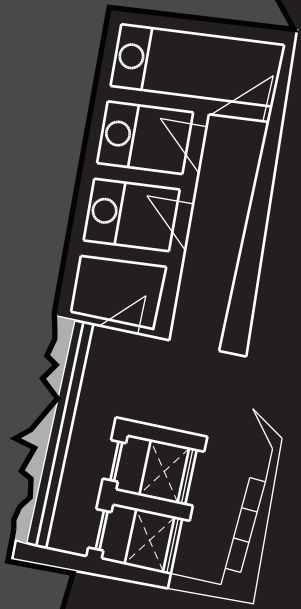
9.8 Lakeside cabin on Lucy Lake.



9.9 River cabin, a sectional perspective. These cabins sit along the Oxtongue River with a dock for canoes.



9.10 Forest cabin, designed with a smaller ground floor is compensated with a loft space that has views out to the surrounding treescape.



COMMUNAL BATHING PAVILION

The design includes a public washroom and shower area that is centrally located near High Falls. The granite and Red Cedar pavilion acts as a place to socialize and interact with other visitors, while providing proper lavatory facilities for day visitors. It contains minimal facilities, including ground-source heated water and composting toilets.



9.11 Communal bathing pavilion located near High Falls.



9.12 Sweat lodge model.



9.13 Sweat lodge section, a moonlit ritual that fosters a dialogue with the supernatural realm.

SWEAT LODGE

The sweat lodge is a phenomenological structure that establishes an axis mundi with the underworld, the earth and the sky. A sweat is an ancient act of piety that prepares the body and spirit for an encounter with the supernatural world. Located at the base of the waterfall where the river meanders relatively slowly downstream towards Oxtongue Lake. The main lodge is an ovoid chamber constructed out cedar strips with a central pit in the middle. It is half-submerged into the earth and has a low entrance which bathers have to crawl into. The change area is constructed out of black cut-stone and contains four change rooms. The polished granite walls act as a wayfinding devices to the entrance of the sweat lodge as well as to the river's edge for bathers who need to cool their bodies after an intense sweat. The area between the change rooms is where the main fire pit is located. In many cultures cleansing the body is customary before entering a sacred building. The sweat lodge, which itself is a sacred ritual for the Algonkians, purifies the body and spirit before one can embark on a heroic journey into the unknown.





9.14 Footbridge made of Cedar planks that forces visitors who cross it to be aware of their step.

THE FOOTBRIDGE

The footbridge is intentionally precarious in its design. It is meant to recall the feeling of using stepping-stones to cross a river. Constructed out of Red Cedar planks, half of every third and fourth plank is removed. This creates a gap which visitors have to mind by either jumping, straddling or side-stepping as they cross over to the other side. In sacred pilgrimages a threshold condition such as a bridge represents the passage from one mode of existence to another.





9.15 Chapel model.



9.16 Chapel overlooking Ragged Falls, made of timber members and interlaced with copper strips.

CHAPEL

The chapel, which is the culmination of the path is a place to contemplate Ragged Falls and the journey up until that point. The original inspiration for this chapel came from looking at Algonkian birchbark canoes. Stripping away the skin with the skeleton remaining, the idea was to overturn the canoe in its elemental form and turn it into a sacred site. Constructed out of arching timbers found on-site, the new skin is 6 inch copper strips that will be interlaced through the trees and characteristically weather over time. Natural copper metal was a precious resource for the early Algonkians and was extracted from the Canadian Shield over 2000 years ago. In contrast to the submerged, dark and moist sweat lodge it is placed above ground and the reflective quality of the copper responds to both sunlight and air. Emerging from the surrounding forest and with a view looking out to Ragged Falls dwelling inside this abstracted form is meant to create an unconscious synthesis of the site, the building and the occupant. There are 8 benches inside the chapel that encourage visitors to watch, listen and partake in a moment of individual or collective reflection before they continue on their journey.



CONCLUSION

The Canadian Shield is a site where symbolic architecture can emerge to delineate a modern threshold in which visitors can enact a modern day hero myth. Through the lens of Joseph Campbell, Tom Thomson, The Epic of Gilgamesh and the ancient architecture of two primitive cultures, a design proposal is derived for a Provincial Park that expands the definition of its existing mandate. Located in the popular Algonquin region of Central Ontario, Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is the location for an experimental and nature retreat where a series of primary and secondary paths connect cabins, a bathing pavilion, a sweat lodge and a chapel. This model is an example illustrating how a protected wilderness site in collaboration with architecture can create a condition of corporeal and spiritual rejuvenation in Ontario's near North.

The Canadian wilderness has a prominent role to play in the national psyche. A pervading theme in the work of our writers, artists and filmmakers it is consistently described as a vast and forbidding landscape fraught with unrelenting anxiety and fear. The desire to either deny or embrace this realm exists within all of us and is rooted in our collective unconscious. The Precambrian Shield that covers over two thirds of our land area is a particularly challenging condition that has defined and shaped human settlement patterns in Canada. And while its presence is ubiquitous in our geological and geographic history, it proves to be an aspect of our identity that many Canadians have no means of accessing, although it does allow for one of the most popular and picturesque landscape conditions in South-Central Ontario - the Muskokas. As both the ancient Algonkian people and Tom Thomson from the Group of Seven depicted in their rock art and oil paintings respectively, this landscape has a palpable healing spirit available for anyone who wants to see, feel or touch it.

Tom Thomson is recognized as a Canadian hero for being a pioneer and interpreter of the North. His story as well as that of King Gilgamesh can be described as the quintessential hero's journey, according to Joseph Campbell. Campbell

uses Carl Jung's theories of the collective unconscious and archetype to demonstrate that universally, the hero myth is an antidote for the debilitated human psyche. When we are unable to confront our ego and move forward with our lives we require some kind of physical ritual or initiation that will aid in the regeneration of the infantile ego. Primitive cultures employ tribal customs such as circumcisions or vision quests to inspire a metamorphosis in a young individual. Concerned with the lack of initiation rituals in our technological society, the thesis attempts to manifest a rite of passage in a forest beyond our city walls that challenges our fear of the wild and supports individuation. Utilizing the site of the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park, an architectural model is set up that enacts a modern hero's journey through the Canadian Shield.

In response to the increasing pressures of living in expanding cities such as Ottawa and Toronto, the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park is a protected waterway that provides a respite from the metropolis and has the potential to become a significant experiential landmark in the near North. By implementing site-specific architectural interventions in a similar fashion to a monastic pilgrimage, each piece can exist on its own, but belongs to a larger whole. The architecture, the path that connects them and the rituals that will emerge from using the cabins, the communal bathing pavilion, a sweat lodge and a chapel will be elemental in deepening the level of appreciation of the site as well as procuring a new way of interpreting the mandate of the Provincial Park. It is important to clarify that the thesis has enormous respect for the original mandate of both the National and Provincial Parks System and emphatically believes in the tradition of protecting significant wilderness regions in Canada. By expanding the notion of how to inhabit and perceive the Parks, the thesis is proposing an experimental model that retains the existing characteristics of the site and mediates them through architecture. Ideally, this type of model or approach could be applied to any existing or new protected wilderness site that is similar in character to the Oxtongue River Ragged Falls Provincial Park and is designed using collaborative architecture that engages meaningfully with its environment.

Collaborating with the Provincial Parks System to develop a new architectural approach would realistically come with its share of limitations and set backs. In creating this site plan for example, the development zone was too small and the entire Park needed to be incorporated into the scheme, as well as Lucy Lake which is situated beyond the Park boundary, to enrich the design proposal. The proposed model conveys only one site strategy and future iterations would include an alternate design proposal and/or an alternate site (i.e. Bon Echo or Agawa Rock Provincial Park). These proposals would also need to include modified schemes that would take into consideration maintenance, cost, success of implementation as well as impact on the environment. This proposal is solely outcome based and the long term benefit and satisfaction of the user would determine the actuality of this type of proposal being built by any group or organization, specifically the Ministry of Natural Resources who governs the Ontario Parks System.

The perception of the wild as a transcendent force on our national psyche is a long standing tradition in Canada. As a culture we identify and preoccupy ourselves with the overwhelming reality of our landscape, which is dominated by the ancient and massive Precambrian Shield. While architecture has been the means to frame and manage living in this vast and threatening landscape, the Shield defies confrontation from the architectural community and is an emblem of mystery in our physical and psychic landscape. By breaking through the Shield and revealing its essential character, there is an opportunity to challenge and renew the definition of architecture, while also bringing Canadians closer to a truth and mythology that will inspire our individual and collective identity.

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