



Ensemble Nomad.e, Season 5: Collaborative Residency  
Emily Rose Michaud & Gail Bourgeois.

## Ensemble Nomad.e, Season 5: Collaborative Residency

Project Grant Summary to create new interdisciplinary visual artworks within the local Outaouais bioregion through outdoor seasonal research to take place July 1 – October 1, 2022.

### Project Summary:

I will work with veteran visual artist Gail Bourgeois in a collaborative residency under the banner of our collective project Ensemble Nomad.e from July to October 2022. Gail and I have a shared, long-standing and abiding interest in social movements and interconnected ecological systems. The region's watersheds have sustained human and non-human life forms historically, and are in constant dialogue with cultural and economic activity. Rivers, shorelines, rhizomes, trees, creatures, water levels, seasonal changes, humans, history and culture have connected us to an ethos bigger than us. This understanding has been crucial to our respective, and evolving, creative practices.

It will be our sixth year working together, making interdisciplinary visual work that emerges from sessions spent at specific outdoor locations through the Gatineau region, learning from the interaction between non-human ecology and human activity. We will create works from various media such as field recordings, writing, drawing, maps, performance, installation and sculpture. At the core of our work is an enchantment with seasonal transitions and our use of diverse media. Our multidisciplinary approach is a tool to translate -- in nonlinear and intuitive ways -- how we interact with the geographical place in which we live. The benefits of experiential learning from the land is a fundamentally integrated endeavour, as place-based artmaking allows us to apply learning across disciplines and senses.

We are particularly interested in the human life that gathers around the Ottawa River watershed (on unceded Algonquin territory) by two major tributaries, the Gatineau (Té-nagàdino-zìbi) and Outaouais (Kitchissippi) Rivers. We choose outdoor sites in the Gatineau Park to be present during daylight hours at the same location each week, before moving on to a new location the following week. We will bring a minimum of supplies, which is aligned with our research practices in the way that we work with found objects and materials, while respecting the natural environment. Our activities include drawing with watercolour and inks on paper and board, writing, making personalized maps and photographs and field recordings. We will draw with found pigments, incorporate found objects into our drawings, take photographs and videos of the water from our canoe or hand-made raft (that I built for this project), collect natural materials and create ephemeral sculptures upon the sites we work.

Aided by our partnerships with the National Capital Commission (NCC), La Fab - Centre des arts, de la culture et du patrimoine de Chelsea (La Fab) and Ayatana's residency programs (Biophilia - Ecology of Wild Places and Submerge - Marine and Freshwater Wildlife), we will reach a public in an experimental and generative context. These collaborative partnerships will inspire the direction of our work -- NCC allows access to various sites in the Gatineau Park and stay for prolonged periods in nature; La Fab gives us an opportunity to work in inclement weather and participate in the cultural hub of their studios; and Ayatana's programming offers us time in creation with a scientist as our guide as well as exposes us to a network of international artists informed by science and ecology so we may further our research in water science within the bioregion.

Our research with Ayatana and time at La Fab and NCC sites will culminate in a public exhibition of works in progress at La Fab's studio spaces. These works will be accompanied by a series of community-engaged events (artist talk, creative workshops) as part of La

Fab's Culture Days programming in September 2022. The programming includes workshops to bring participants into our process and onto the land, where we'll teach them how to make personalized maps, draw with natural pigments, observe patterns, create sunprints, found-object art, write reflective journals. Some questions to guide the workshops include: How does your project reciprocate with the land? How will you use what you learned to give back to your community? What are the potential environmental impacts of your project? How could the learning continue after this time?

Through exploration of the sites and interviews with regional specialists in their fields (artists, activists, writers, historians, citizen groups, researchers, botanists, biologists, riverkeepers), we aim to examine and rethink our relationship to the unceded Algonquin territory upon which we work. How might our efforts counter the isolation of a society steeped in colonial violence that takes without giving back? How might creations shed insight on our role in the larger ecosystem? Community initiatives whose involvement and collaboration we anticipate include: Amis du Ruisseau de la Brasserie; Association des Résidents de L'Île de Hull; Ottawa Riverkeeper; and Nibi - a youth-led water advocacy group.

**Project Timeline:** Activities happen in Outaouais, Western Quebec. Residencies begin at designated sites, Gatineau Park. Access to studio space at La Fab is 10 minutes away from most sites. Research residencies with Ayatana (Biophilia and Submerge) take place from La Fab (virtually) and NCC (on-site research inspired by the week's programming). Our intention is for the works in progress we create in 2022 to become completed works to tour in a traveling exhibition in 2023 to four cultural centres in the region: North – Maniwaki (Château Logue, TBD); West - Pontiac (L'École en Pierre); East - Montebello (Centre d'action culturelle de la MRC Papineau); South - Chelsea (La Fab - Centre des arts, de la culture et du patrimoine).

2022-07-04: Plan steps, confirm timeline, calendar. Discuss technical, symbolic concepts. Finalize sites, begin.

2022-07-04 to 09-16: Site visits 1-6. Continued research, exploration, creation, photographic archives;

2022-07-04: Site 1 (Lac Mulvihill);

2022-07-11 to 07-22: Biophilia residency;

2022-07-18: Site 2 (Lac Leamy);

2022-08-01: Site 3 (Brewery Creek/Théâtre de l'île);

2022-08-15: Site 4 (Sand pits/Horseshoe Bay, Gatineau River, Chelsea, Qc);

2022-08-29: Site 5 (Jacques Cartier Park, Rideau Falls, Outaouais River);

2022-08-15 to 08-22: Submerge residency;

2022-09-05: Site 6 (Parc des Cèdres, Outaouais River, Aylmer, Qc);

2022-09-19: Preparation for public showing: finalize work concepts; arrange temporary display at La Fab; share fruits of residencies through workshops;

2022-09-26: Dismantle experiments, archive final works, write final report. Begin application process to take finished work to regional cultural centres in 2023.

### **Our activities will advance our artistic development in the following ways:**

Ensemble Nomad.e invests in process-based outcomes to create liminal spaces for the production of our own subjectivities, seeking new ways that the science and knowledge of water and shorelines can inform our art practice. This new project represents the next step in Ensemble Nomad.e's work in integrating my training from Indigenous education and decolonizing practices, outdoor experiential education and alternative education pedagogies. All are specific perspectives I have studied thoroughly and am increasingly incorporating into my art and teaching practices. This approach is new for me; it is the first time I'll bring my cumulative experience and acquired technique as artist and educator into creative action with a collaborator, community, nature and place. Our methodological approach is both natural and cultural, seldom recognized by mainstream society or Western standards of success. This collaboration synthesizes different sets of knowledge and presents this perspective with the public through creative production, thereby sharing our process with others. This experiential model is new to me in that it favours hands-on creation, problem solving with the environment in which I find myself and engages with the

landscape in a context that is personally meaningful. I will be drawing from my studies in alternative pedagogy, in which a holistic, non-hierarchical, non-traditional approach is favoured. My research and creation will centre on collaboration, building trust in self and process, and be guided by a self-directed model. In my case, the creation will take form as I choose the subjects and material that will be studied, based on my interests, intentions and encounters with my collaborators. Additionally, the project will allow me to explore techniques and media new to my career, while exchanging conceptually on common themes with my collaborator Gail. Completing this work as a professional artist is a formal opportunity to advance my ideas within an intentional framework and timeline.

Gail and I met in a shared residency and artist talk at the Ottawa Art Gallery thanks to our overlapping research on ecological reference points such as the root structures of plants, and underground fungus networks. The following summer our artistic partnership began as a self-organized series of nomadic residencies. Our multi-year project to visit a new location in each of the warmer months from April to October was born. If we were granted funding, our drawing-based, site-specific work outdoors will develop and the locations we near a body of water will become more rich through the time gained.

The artworks we make are carriers of experience through which we imagine alternative ways of living, making and sharing art as it relates to interdisciplinary, non-traditional media and land art within an alternative, non-institutional art forum -- in our case, the local bioregion. Through practicing deep listening and observation -- to self, fellow collaborators, flora, fauna, weather patterns, seasonal changes, local residents -- our goal is to reconnect to the bioregion in which we live, as well as share our unique process and perspective with the public.