



Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture and Technology  
Annual Report 2019-2020

## Territorial Acknowledgment

The Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture and Technology is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we carry out our activities. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations.

Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

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## Message from the Director

Between worldwide climate strikes, panic over COVID-19 and the urgent call of Black Lives Matter, the Milieux Institute was challenged in 2019-20 to rethink the meaning of our work and mandate. As an interdisciplinary practice-based research unit, we rely heavily on working together in our labs and studios. The anti-climax of a campus lockdown in the Spring of 2020 came as quite a blow. Nonetheless, there are new grant proposals underway, a major renovation to our spaces is in the works and we are pondering the possibility of a PhD program.

We also had the 100th anniversary of Bauhaus — the famous Weimar-era art school credited with innovations in art, design and education that survive today. We explored Bauhaus legacies with a weeklong festival of talks, performances, workshops and installations in November 2019. Faculty and students from across our eight clusters gathered for what was less a celebration of Bauhaus, than an intensive, critical interrogation of its legacy. We took stock of prominent eurocentrism in art and design pedagogy, and played with ideas for shaping the future of the Milieux — carrying forward inspiration without the need for genuflection.

The Bauhaus question led to further exploration of the role of research-creation in training students, producing new knowledge and technology, and supporting social and cultural change. We carried out Bauhausian style experiments through collaborative process-based work on virtual reality, artificial intelligence, bioplastics, Montreal's waterways, embodied performance and even pandemic mask design.

In Spring 2020, the Hexagram network, of which we are founding partners, received seven years of renewed funding from the Quebec government. This will allow us to collaborate on rigorously documenting and examining research-creation methodology, with colleagues across Quebec and indeed the world.

Spring also brought the thrilling news that our Indigenous Futures cluster won formal research centre status at Concordia. This is a critical development. We look forward to welcoming more indigenous faculty and students to what is sure to be one of the most vibrant new research centres in Canada. In addition, we committed ourselves to recognizing that Black Lives Matter by expanding access and attention for people of colour at the Institute, and addressing the range of injustices and inequalities that persist in art, culture and technology.

Moving forward, the challenge of a world in crisis remains, but our faculty, staff and students continue working hard with collaborators around the world. There is still a great deal of work to do and we look forward to doing it, together.

— **Bart Simon**, Director of the Milieux Institute

# An Architecture of Encounter

When you put ambitious students and faculty together in a shared space, exchange of ideas and perspectives is inevitable. These encounters often take place at Milieux's many diverse events, community gatherings, and workshops. However, the kinds of encounters Milieux excels at fostering are unexpected, serendipitous.

Each of Milieux's eight clusters has a specific research mandate, and the encounters between them are continuously producing new special projects. Collaborators, from undergraduate fellows to post-doctoral students to visiting partners from around the world, are always bringing in fresh ideas and opportunities that give way to ground-breaking research-creation.

**Speculative Life** works at the intersection of art and the life sciences, architecture and design, and computational media. Its emphasis is on fostering science and technology studies, a focus on ecology and environment, interest in scale and networks, and finally, a commitment to futurity and imagination as critical to design, art, and scholarship.

**Post Image** focuses on creation, production and reflection around current and future image-based practices in our contemporary world. Their work investigates the many aspects of visual representation, photography, post photography and image making, around diverse themes.

**Textiles + Materiality** brings together research creation expertise from textile arts and material culture. The cluster explores technical innovations and diverse forms of social interaction, investigating new ways that materials and wearables can change how we relate to one another and to the world around us.

**LeParc** focuses on performing and temporal arts, with research interests in the creative process, new collaborative practices, sound and music, and intermedia performance.

**Media History** focuses on understanding historical developments in media technologies and communication, ranging from the ARPANET to the ZX Spectrum. Theory and methods of media historiography are central, with a focus on emerging but robust subfields such as media archaeology, variantology, new materialism, circulation theory, and technology writing.

**Participatory Media** is concerned with questions of social justice and accessibility. Members are committed tinkerers and makers who develop prototypes, devices, workshops and outreach events that bring people together through participatory methods in creation, discussion and dissemination.

**Indigenous Futures** explores how Indigenous people are imagining the future of their families and communities by employing art- and technology-making, coupled with scholarly analysis and conceptual development, to illuminate how the challenges of the present can be addressed, in part, through concrete, constructive, and critical dreams of the future.

**Technoculture, Art and Games (TAG)** studies digital games as exemplary objects for cultural research, artistic creation, technical innovation and social mediation, all in the context of an expanding information society and the changing fabric of everyday life.

## Cross-Cluster Projects

**Speculative Life BioLab** is a hybrid research-creation laboratory for the development and facilitation of conceptual and material-based exploration around the changing status of life on the planet and technosphere from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**Immersive Realities Lab** is home to Concordia's only cross-disciplinary virtual reality and immersive storytelling lab, where students and faculty can integrate VR elements in their research-creation projects.

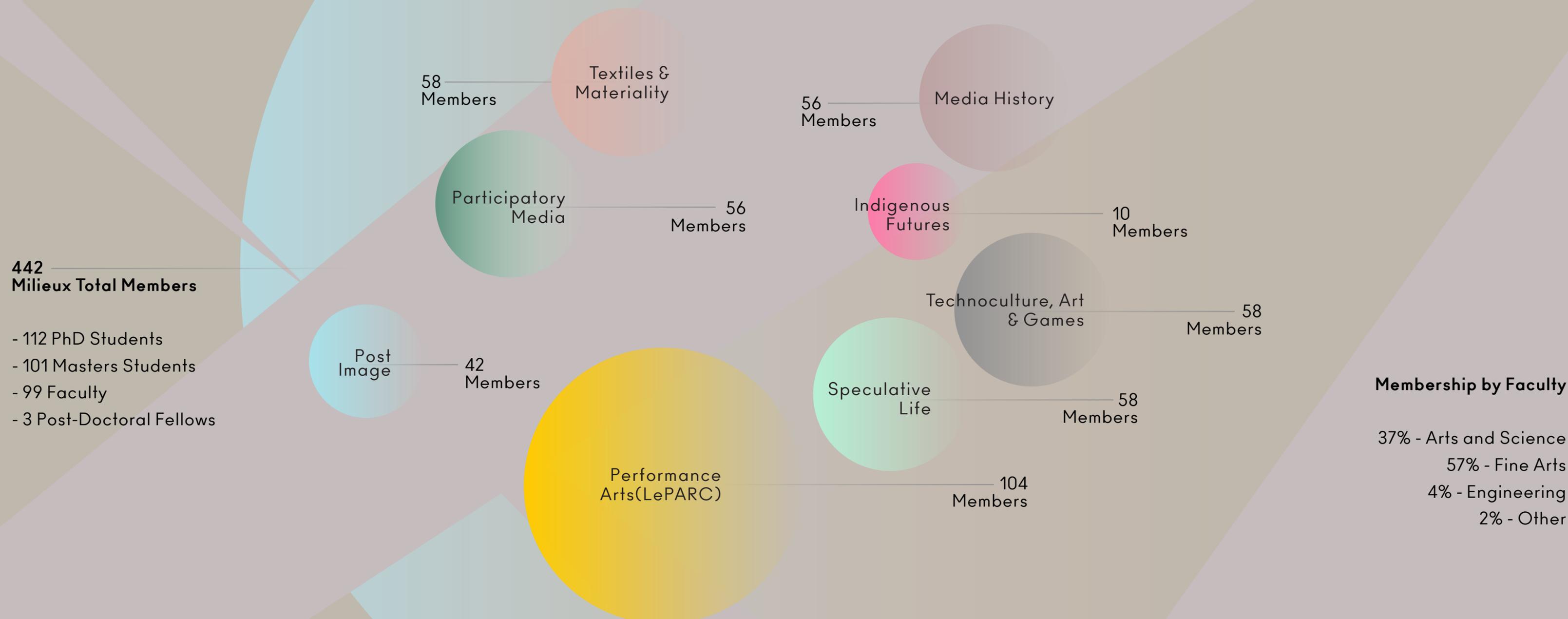
**MilieuxMake** is the natural habitat of Education Makers, a group developing learning communities around maker culture. This makerspace is a third space, in-between the academic lab space and the public sphere, where members of the Milieux community can be found designing, innovating and tinkering with disruptive and open-source technologies.

**Machine Agencies** is an interdisciplinary group of researchers working with various topics associated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and related technologies. The group aims to investigate what kinds of cultural resources are mobilized to define the activities of AI agents in various contexts, such as games and domestic spaces, for example.

**Montreal Waterways** is an Ethnographic research and creation group that aims to reconnect Montreal with its water. In an attempt to bring ethnography closer to home, Montreal Waterways conducts ethnographic research into various "water objects" that make up the city's past, present and future.

**Play the Pain** aims to create patient-partnerships in research-creation via a digital citizen laboratory to capture the narratives of coping with and caring for chronic pain, through playful activities. This project unfolded with support from PERFORM Centre and from members of the Speculative Life, TAG, and LePARC clusters.

## Milieux Membership by Cluster



**442**  
Milieux Total Members

- 112 PhD Students
- 101 Masters Students
- 99 Faculty
- 3 Post-Doctoral Fellows

## Membership by Faculty

- 37% - Arts and Science
- 57% - Fine Arts
- 4% - Engineering
- 2% - Other

## Undergraduate Fellows

For the third year, Milieux welcomed a group of standout undergraduates who became involved in research clusters with the Undergraduate Fellowships.

Undergraduate Fellows are nominated by Milieux's cluster directors in the fall. Fellows receive \$500 each, plus access to all of Milieux's labs and common spaces for the duration of the academic year. The Fellows took part in a Pecha-Kucha presentation open to all Milieux members and faculty. This annual event gives fellows the opportunity to share their research interests and personal obsessions, while honing their speaking skills before an engaged and supportive audience.

Previous fellows have gone on to pursue graduate studies with Milieux, deepening their relationships with research clusters and their members.

Congratulations to the 2019-20 fellows:

Pedro J. Barbáchano (Post Image)  
 Isabelle Champigny (Participatory Media)  
 Maggie Dubyk (Speculative Life)  
 Anastasia Erickson (Indigenous Futures)  
 Sophie Heyen-Dube (Textiles and Materiality)  
 Warsame Isse (Media History )  
 Saskia Kowalchuk (Media History)  
 Kate Markle (LePARC)  
 Negar Nakhai (Textiles and Materiality)  
 John Neufeld (Speculative Life)  
 Alessia Signorino (TAG)  
 Jason Sikoak (Indigenous Futures)  
 Hazel Thexton (TAG)  
 Xdzunúm Trejo (LePARC)  
 Dion Wang (Post Image)  
 Michael Watts (LePARC)

# Events



Photo: Courtesy of TAG Lab

MILIEUX 2019-2020  
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September

• 2019

International Seminar

Contemporary Circus Book Launch & Panel Discussion

Val D'Or - 7th Generation Character Design Workshops

Liveness in Theatre & Games at Play Symposium

Guest Talk: Sarah Brin of Meow Wolf

Many Faces, One Mind: Skátne Tión:nis:  
POP Montreal x LOVE x AbTeC Machinimagraph Exhibition

Microalgae Pigment Extraction & Paper Chromatography Workshop

TAG International Puzzle Hunt Morning Gathering

Welcome Back BBQ for Milieux

Drawing with Threads: Materializing Data Workshop

Designing Creative Voice Bots Workshop with Nicole He

Supercut Politics: Movie Trailers as Templates for Political Advertising

The Port of Santo Domingo: Tidal Debris...

Drawing with Threads: Materializing Data Workshop

Nunatsiavut: Our Beautiful Land,  
exhibition at La Guilde

Yelling at Computers: A talk by Nicole He

Textile Quotes

Workshop: Introduction to VR Development

Memory keepers III | Nujimikwite'taqatijik III,  
exhibition curated by Glam Collective

MilieuxMake Workshop:  
Cloning Plants - An Introduction to Micropropagation

October

Play the Pain Workshop

The Ultimate Goal: A Bauhaus adventure in Minecraft project launch

Back from the Field with the Concordia Ethnography Lab

Cruise Ships & Containers: Towards a Literary

IFC Presents: Chihiro Guezebroek's talk on  
Peace-Fiction and Pre-Mediating Decolonization

MilieuxMake Workshop: Cyborgs of the Web: An Introduction to Blender

A Walk in LePARC with  
Hanna Pajala-Assefa

Introduction to the Laying Machine Workshop

MilieuxMake Workshop: Soft Robotics

A Walk in LePARC with Ruth Little

Inuit Futures in Arts Leadership:  
The Pilimmaksarniq/ Pijariuqsarniq Project's  
Second Annual Gathering & Institute

iNuit Blanche: A Gallery Crawl

IFC Presents: Riel Bellow's "I'm Has Been"

Lost in Pixelation: Conversations on Research Narratives,  
Research Creation and Digital Spaces

Immersive Reality Lab Meeting

Milieux Annual General Meeting

IF game developer awarded "Best Emerging  
Digital or Interactive Work" at imagineNATIVE 20

Ecotone 6: Post/Colonial Ports:  
Place and Nonplace in the Ecotone

The Merit of Making Workshop

Playback: Genealogies of Interactivity Symposium

Lost in Pixelation: Conversations on Research Narratives,  
Research Creation and Digital Spaces

TextilesTradeTime Symposium

Get-together for BioLab / Critical Materiality Group

Stickers and decals workshop

Transitions (4-day Intensive Workshop)

Get-together for BioLab / Critical Materiality Group

Alternative Designs for the Internet public discussion

Phonesia workshop  
with Anatoli Vlassov

November

Algorithmic Warfare as an Apparatus  
of Recognition - Lucy Suchman Talk

Synthetic Forever: The Afterlives of Clothing, A Talk by Kristy Robertson

Alternative Designs for the Internet public discussion

Music + Access Workshop

Transitions (4-day Intensive Workshop) [MilieuXBauhaus]

Book Talk: "Bauhaus Futures" with Molly Wright Steenson

MilieuxMake Workshop: Tactile Sound

Music Making Workshop

Climate change Policy & Aging:  
Masterclass with Sonja Klinsky

Performance: The Power of the Spill Csenge Kolozsvari + Rodrigo Velasco

MHRC Workshop with Angela Zito

MilieuXBauhaus

GAMERella 2019

Performative Talk: From Creator to Curator: How Creative AI  
Changes the Relationship With the Machine Frederik De Bleser

The Syllabus Deconstruction Collab - Session One

Performing in the Publicnessless City Christopher Willes

Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics

Haunted Bauhaus: Occult Spirituality

Towards Transgenic Structures, Talk by Jacqui Beaumont

Bare Conductive Touch Board  
Workshop with Jane Tingley & Skawennati

Performative Talk: Inverse Power of Wavelengths  
Alessandro Carboni

Open studio & Dance Performance + Interaction: Danses Kaléidoscopiques

Panel discussion: Dance, Space and Women in Bauhaus  
Allison Peacock + Hilary Bergen + Julie Richard

Milieux Open House [MilieuXBauhaus]

The Quandaries of Machinic Subjectivity  
in Guattari's Chosmosis, A talk with Gary Genosko

Interactive Textile Project

Imagining an AI Commons: A one-day workshop

Immersive Reality Lab Presentation: Liquid Perceptions

Workshop with Matthijs van de Port

December

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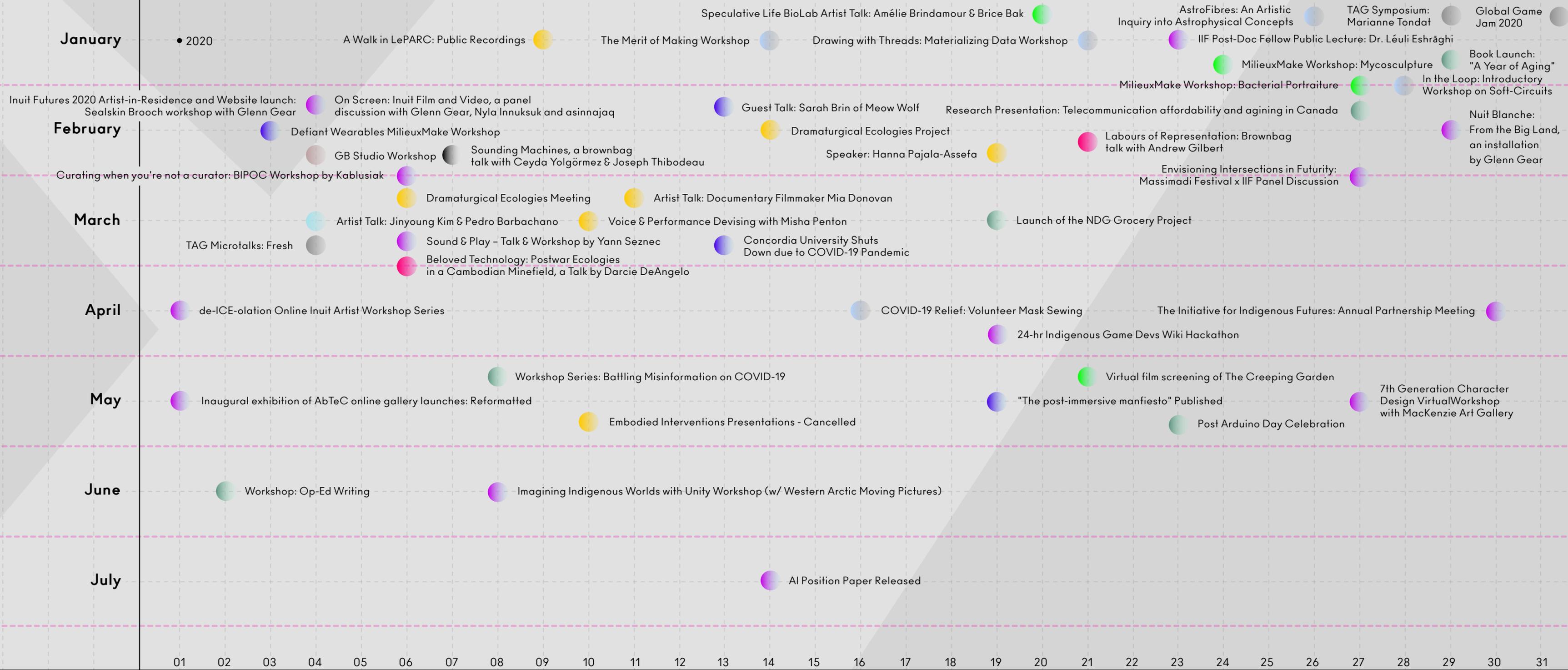
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From November 5 to 14, 2019 the Milieux Institute marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the legendary German design school, Bauhaus, with the MilieuXBauhaus Festival. Milieux's graduate student researchers, much like the Bauhaus students of a century ago, are interested in the fundamental engagements between art, culture, technology and design.

The program featured one open house, two parties, two performances, nine workshops, 10 screenings, and 13 talks by Milieux members and visiting scholars. The Goethe Institute, SenseFactory, and the Canadian Embassy in Berlin were community partners in producing this cross-disciplinary gathering.



Photos by Alejandro de León



LePARC engaged with the MilieuXBauhaus festival through the frame of embodied practice in talks, performances, and an open house. The Power of the Spill, by Csenge Kolozvari and Rodrigo Velasco was an audio-visual performance incorporating video feedback, live coding and movement-choreography, agitating a visual of life where borders of objects and people became multiple, spilling over and impossible to contain.

The piece is a study on visual perception and how it affects our ways of making sense of the world, aiming to create an alternative lens that acknowledges the vitality of objects, a topology that is cross-species, how seemingly separate entities are in constant exchange, towards a more ecological way of being.

Contributions like Pierre-Marc Ouellete's Kaleidoscopic Dances, invited people into the open rehearsal of the installation-performance work-in-progress. The project, based on historical research on Oskar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet (1922), examined the links between body, image and technology. Visiting artist Frederick de Bleser's performative talk From Creator to Curator: How Creative AI Changes the Relationship With the Machine, explored possibilities and challenges of creative partnership with computers across disciplines.

Technoculture, Art and Games (TAG) brought Minecraft and Bauhaus together by reflexively building a custom-modded multiplayer survival-mode game lasting 30 days. Builders modernized a village in Minecraft by interpreting design principles from the historical Bauhaus, as they encountered the problems of resource extraction and exploitation, the politics of urban renewal, assumptions about material logistics and infrastructure, the negotiation of idealized plans and the situatedness of actions.

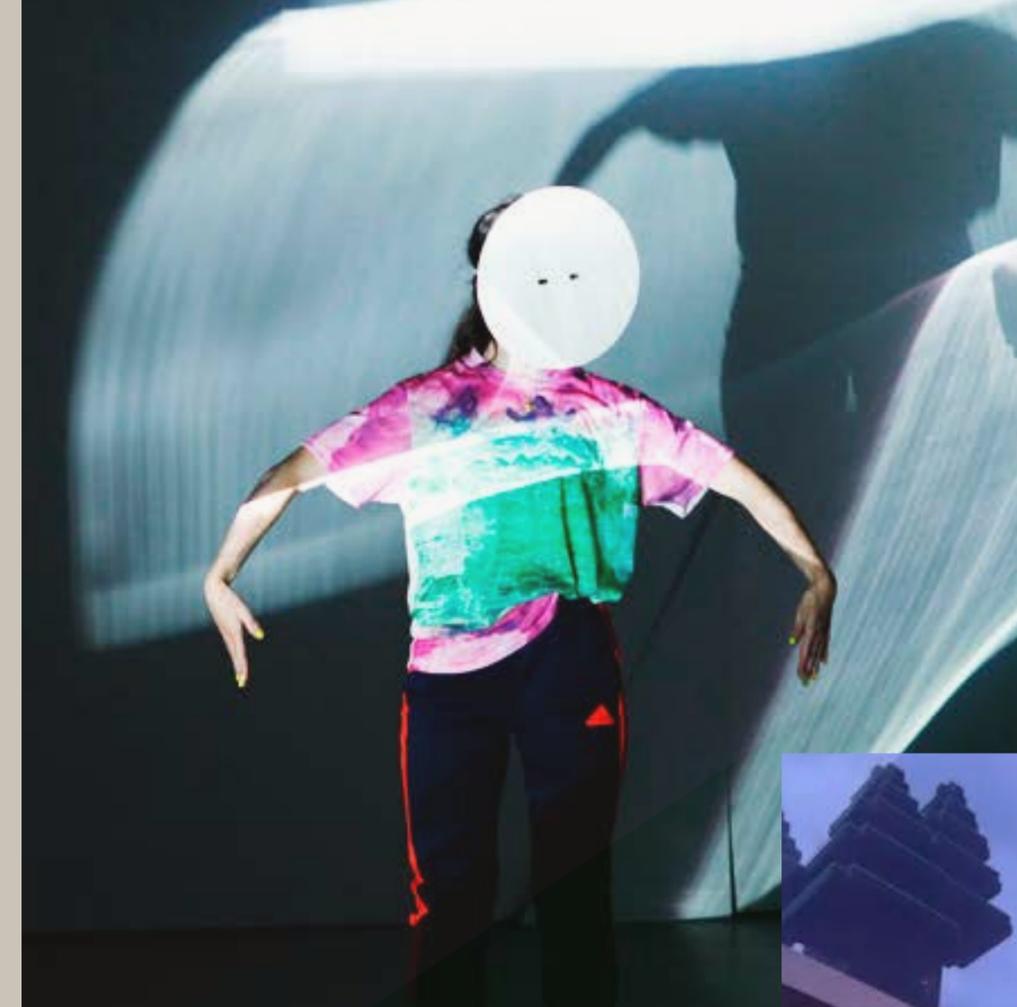


Photo by Manon De Pauw;  
Dancer: Natalie Zoey Gauld.

Still from "The Ultimate Goal:  
A Bauhaus Adventure in Minecraft"  
by TAG Lab



## TextilesTradeTime Symposium

In October and November 2019, the Textiles + Materiality cluster hosted a symposium that explored the histories, presents and futures of textiles across multiple sites, with a focus on Tiohtiá:ke | Montreal as a locus of trade across cultures, nations, fibres and moments. The keynote speaker was Crystal (Mikinaak) Migwans, an Anishinaabe of Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory and a doctoral candidate in Art History at Columbia University. She is doing research on natural fiber weaving traditions in the Great Lakes, with a focus on museum objects as relatives, and the place-making labour of customary artforms.

Artists and scholars within and beyond the university considered Indigenous textile traditions; the role of textiles in colonialism; local or global labour and environmental textile implications; artistic and technological innovations in textiles; and speculative spheres.

Courtesy of Textiles + Materiality



## Filmmaker Mia Donovan on documenting vulnerable subjects

Mia Donovan, an award-winning Montreal-based filmmaker who received a BFA in Photography at Concordia University, spoke at Milieux at an event organized by the Post Image Cluster. Donovan spoke about documenting sex workers. Her 2011 documentary, "Inside Lara Roxx," tells the story of a young woman who contracted the most virulent form of HIV upon entering the sex entertainment industry.

Because of the political nature of her films, she wants the context of the time period to be understood by viewers, which she addresses by the inclusion of archival footage for which she seeks permission. Donovan enables agency by giving her subjects voice through first-person perspective. Not only does an audience hear people telling their stories, but viewers also gain access to Donovan's perspective, as her own voice appears in the film behind the camera.

Photo by Maggie McCutcheon



## Machine Agencies, Speaker Series

In December 2019, the Machine Agencies group held the AI Commons Workshop, which sought to develop a commons-based vision for the future of AI.

Without clear direction, AI risks becoming privatized and at odds with a common world. A commons approach to AI seeks to mitigate these harms, just as commons approaches in other areas have intervened in environmental devastation and the privatization and commodification of knowledge. This shift in understanding has been greatly informed by indigenous scholarship and indigenous people's histories, epistemologies, and practices, which offer a wealth of approaches to the management and preservation of common resources, material and otherwise. The workshop, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Center for the Study of Citizenship, featured five experts and group discussions about how artificial intelligence can be oriented toward the common good.

Sophie Bishop, Courtesy of Fenwick McKelvey

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## Transitions: A field intensive at La Station

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Transitions was a four-day field intensive inspired by Bauhaus and led by the Speculative Life cluster. Students and faculty traveled to La Station, the decommissioned Nun's Island gas station (1969) designed by Mies van Der Rohe (last principal of the Bauhaus), which has been recently converted into an intergenerational community centre (2011).

There, they collectively imagined and proposed material and ecological transitions toward post-Anthropo-/Capitolo-cene futures.



Deep Listening soundwalk' with Tricia Toso  
Photo by Matthew-Robin Nye

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# Workshops

Every year, Milieux organizes workshops that get students rolling up their sleeves to both teach and learn new skills and ways of approaching problems. Here is a sampling from this year's offerings

*"My involvement with clusters, specifically Textile & Materiality and Le PARC, has acted as an inspirational lifeline for me in many ways, especially during the pandemic. It has been great to step outside of the Master's thesis bubble to take in talks about fatbergs, read and discuss the social significance of certain dyes, transform personal illustrations into patches using the tajima with Genvieve, and participate in the week-long LabO event with Le PARC. The space provides a unique opportunity for individuals to play and explore beyond lines of reason."*

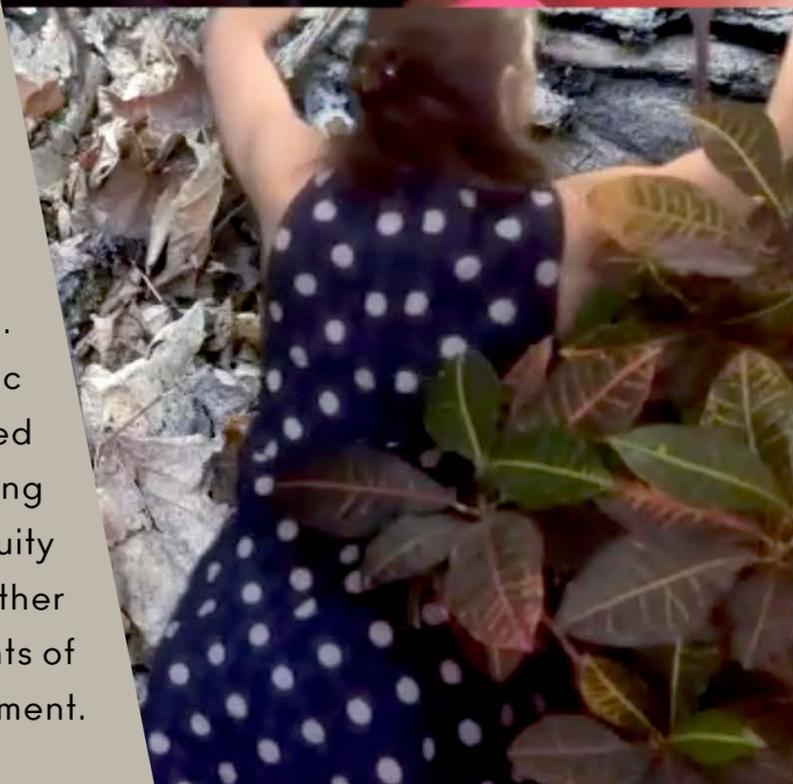
*— Tricia Enns, MDes Student in the Department of Design and Computation Arts*

## Embodied Interventions: Re-oriented explorations

LePARC used the premise of artistic encounters from Embodied Interventions to create a frame in which its members could join together for creative explorations and interventions during the COVID-19 lockdown. Encounters were mediated by a core group of participants in group video calls, which became exploratory performances and discussions in and of themselves. These discussions also sparked further research-creation in public and private spaces.

Lo Bil's open score interventions, exploring the limits and possibilities of Zoom, are ongoing. Sarah Wendt and Pascal Dufaux's ectoplasmic studies group explorations recuperated elements of a previous project of theirs, lasting about a month. This helped spark the continuity of their artistic practice as well as that of other members during the most isolated moments of COVID-19 confinement.

Photo by Lucy Fandel



## Portraiture in Petri

BioLab hosts a Biosafety Level 1 certified wet lab for working with living and electronic media, hosting both wet and dry 'maker' processes and materials. This year, the BioLab led its first BacteriArt workshop of the year in January. It was inspired by the Jonas Salk bacterial portraits created with TAG's Jess Marcotte, and a workshop developed by WhiteFeather Hunter—as well as research done by one of the lab's homegrown research-creation teams: The Bactinctorium. Lab technician Alex Bachmayer created a workshop designed to explore the use of the pigment-producing bacteria *Serratia marcescens* for petri dish portraiture.



## Play the Pain

In October 2019, TAG faculty member Najmeh Khalili-Mahani organized a two-day community workshop to sketch ideas about how to use art and ICT as instruments for communicating and documenting the diversity of personal experiences of pain and resilience.

It offered various art-therapeutic activities, and allowed participants to discuss the ethical, practical, and cultural tensions around the topic of digital healthcare in the context of treating pain and related anxieties

Courtesy of Najmeh Khalili-Mahani

## Liquid Perceptions

In December 2019, the Immersive Realities Lab invited Milieux members to a presentation of their work-in-progress: Liquid Perceptions. Participants took turns playing the interacting with the experience and offered feedback to its creators, including Olivia McGilchrist, Dougy Herard, Julia Salles, Sayed Tabatabaei, Marco Luna, Bart Simon, and Gada Jane.

Liquid Perceptions is an interactive VR experience about the interconnections between the goals we set and the balance of marine ecosystems. The project was a collaboration with the University of Waterloo.

## Music Making

Open-source electronics and upcycled materials present new possibilities for removing barriers to music. From hacking a guitar to controlling a computer, to forging a theremin out of tinfoil, these instrument-making workshops organized by MilieuxMake in November 2019 demonstrated how new and adapted musical instruments can open up access in novel ways.

*“Over the past year, I have been actively involved with Education Makers, working on the project “Fabric of #MilieuxMake”. Through MilieuxMake, I collaborated with others from multidisciplinary domains. This journey allowed me to develop and advance various skills that are pertinent to the 21st century, such as creativity, complex problem solving, persistence, collaboration and sticking with the trouble.”*

— Houda Jawhar, MA student in Educational Technology



## The Merit of Making Workshop

Embroidered patches have a long and rich history cross-culturally, functioning as symbols of status, achievement, and identity within communities. The Textiles + Materiality cluster held a workshop in which participants were invited to consider what skills and statuses are undervalued within contemporary society. How can a merit badge bring attention to invisible, unseen, or otherwise unappreciated forms of knowledge?

## Beloved Technologies

The Ethnography Lab held a series on Friday afternoons of lectures, workshops and ethnographic experiments. In March, they hosted Dr. Darcie DeAngelo, who presented a fascinating study of the relationships between giant bomb-sniffing rats and their trainers. DeAngelo's work, in addition to being theoretically sophisticated, uses still and moving images in a way that brings complex sensoria of postwar ecologies alive. It exemplified the kind of innovative, multi-disciplinary ethnography the lab promotes.



# Building Community

In good times, partners are foundational to a network like Milieux. In challenging times, they are indispensable. This year, new and old friends came together to host incredible opportunities to build community. Later in the year, when the campus shut down, these bonds held us as we reached beyond the video chat box.

## Hexagram Looking Back, Moving Forward

In 2001, a federal infrastructure grant shared by Concordia and UQAM transformed two floors of our Engineering and Visual Arts building into the Hexagram Institute. This unique platform for research-creation was the crucible for the expanded vision and mandate of Milieux on the one hand and the Quebec government funded Hexagram Network on the other. In 2020, the Hexagram network, under the co-direction of Jean Dubois and Chris Salter, received renewed funding of \$1.8million over seven years across its eight member universities.

The Hexagram renewal brings opportunities for Milieux members to engage with more international collaborators and with peers across Quebec. Seizing this opportunity is about **"re-thinking how social, technical and material imaginaries will respond to our most pressing social and political challenges"**, Salter said.



## New Nature

Milieux partnered with the Goethe-Institut Montreal and several other organizations to launch NEW NATURE, a series of encounters in 2020 between 25 leading climate scientists, artists, and technologists from Canada, Germany, Mexico, and the United States. Working on the forefront of immersive technologies, the project participants – including students and faculty from the Milieux Institute engaged in a series of in-depth collaborations to reflect on climate change and imagine desirable futures.

The project launched online with a series of public conversations and internal workshops, which will continue to manifest in public artist talks, screening series, labs and an online exhibition over the course of 2020.



The Great Lakes region

Still from New Nature

“Video Response” by Olivia McGilchrist

## Knowledge exchange at TAG

The Technoculture, Art, and Games cluster welcomed Yann Seznec, Game Designer in Residence at the Maryland Institute College of Art Game Lab in Baltimore. Seznec’s work focuses on sound, music, physical interaction, games, and building new instruments. At TAG he gave a Microtalk, participated in a weekly game night, and gave a workshop.

**“This was the first workshop I ran as a grad student, and being able to create speculative prototypes of games with students was a fantastic experience. As part of the workshop, I asked students to choose a social issue they were interested in, and was encouraged by their ability to interact with such challenging topics (like microtransactions, facial recognition, the digital divide etc) with maturity and sensitivity to the subject matter.”**

— Yann Seznec

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Courtesy of TAG Lab

# Research Highlights

## Indigenous Futures

Indigenous Futures co-leader Jason Edward Lewis, professor of Design and Computational Arts, co-organized a discussion on artificial intelligence that took place over 20 months, across 20 timezones, during two workshops, and between Indigenous people (and a few non-Indigenous folks) from diverse communities. A landmark paper emerged: **Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence**. It creatively articulates a multiplicity of Indigenous knowledge systems and technological practices that should be brought to bear on the 'question of AI.'

*"We dreamed about tomorrow, and the day after, and 500 years later. We observed protocol together; we ate together; we chanted and sang together. We mapped paths forward that draw on our peoples' long histories of technical innovation and scientific practice, sharing examples of how our traditions offer a wellspring of inspiration for engaging with the world and with each other through the tools we make."*

— From the essay, "The IP AI Workshops as Future Imaginary" by Jason Edward Lewis



IP AI. Quartet. Artist - Kari Noe.  
Courtesy of the Initiative for Indigenous Futures

Members of Ka Lei Milika`a Game Collective from Skins 6.0 at imagineNATIVE 2019.  
Image by Jason Edward Lewis.  
© AbTeC



## Indigenous Futures

In May 2020, the Indigenous Futures Cluster was recognized by Concordia as a Research Centre, based on its robust cross-disciplinary research program. It is an Indigenous-led research centre with a membership of 13 scholars and artists, supervising 31 undergraduate research assistants, 16 master's students and 11 PhD students.

The **Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC)** explores how Indigenous people are imagining the future of their communities. They are interested in narratives, theories, frameworks, and technologies that help society to articulate a continuum between past, present, and beyond. The IFRC supports a mix of research approaches, topics, and collaborations ranging across community collaboration, art- and technology-making, scholarly analysis, experimental pedagogy, and theoretical development to illuminate how the challenges of the present can be addressed, in part, through concrete, constructive, and critical dreams of the future. The centre operates locally, nationally and internationally.

The IFRC is an Indigenous-led environment. It welcomes all researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who engage in research that affects Indigenous communities. It is cross-disciplinary, grounded in research-creation, Indigenous, and normative research methodologies for producing scholarly knowledge. It works in direct collaboration with Indigenous communities worldwide to co-generate knowledge of direct use to them as they seek to support their peoples' thriving. And it actively recruits Indigenous undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows while also supporting non-Indigenous students, providing them with an environment rich in mentoring, support, and collaborative opportunities.



skehiá:ra'ne, áhsen  
é:ni ken akwé: enshená:ton?

## Additional Research Highlights

In the fall semester, Prof. Darren Wershler taught an undergraduate course that made active use of MHRC's Residual Media Depot at Mileux. The depot holds collections of material media and communication technologies, with a focus on early video game consoles from 1972 to 2002. Students, along with three research assistants who were Milieux members, engaged with the collections to reflect on how different technologies affect new media.

In October 2019, Indigenous Futures member Maize Longboat was awarded "Best Emerging Digital or Interactive Work" at the imagineNATIVE 20 festival for his game "Terra Nova." It is the world's largest Indigenous film and digital media festival that honours the work of creative Natives from around the globe.

Photo by Maggie McCutcheon



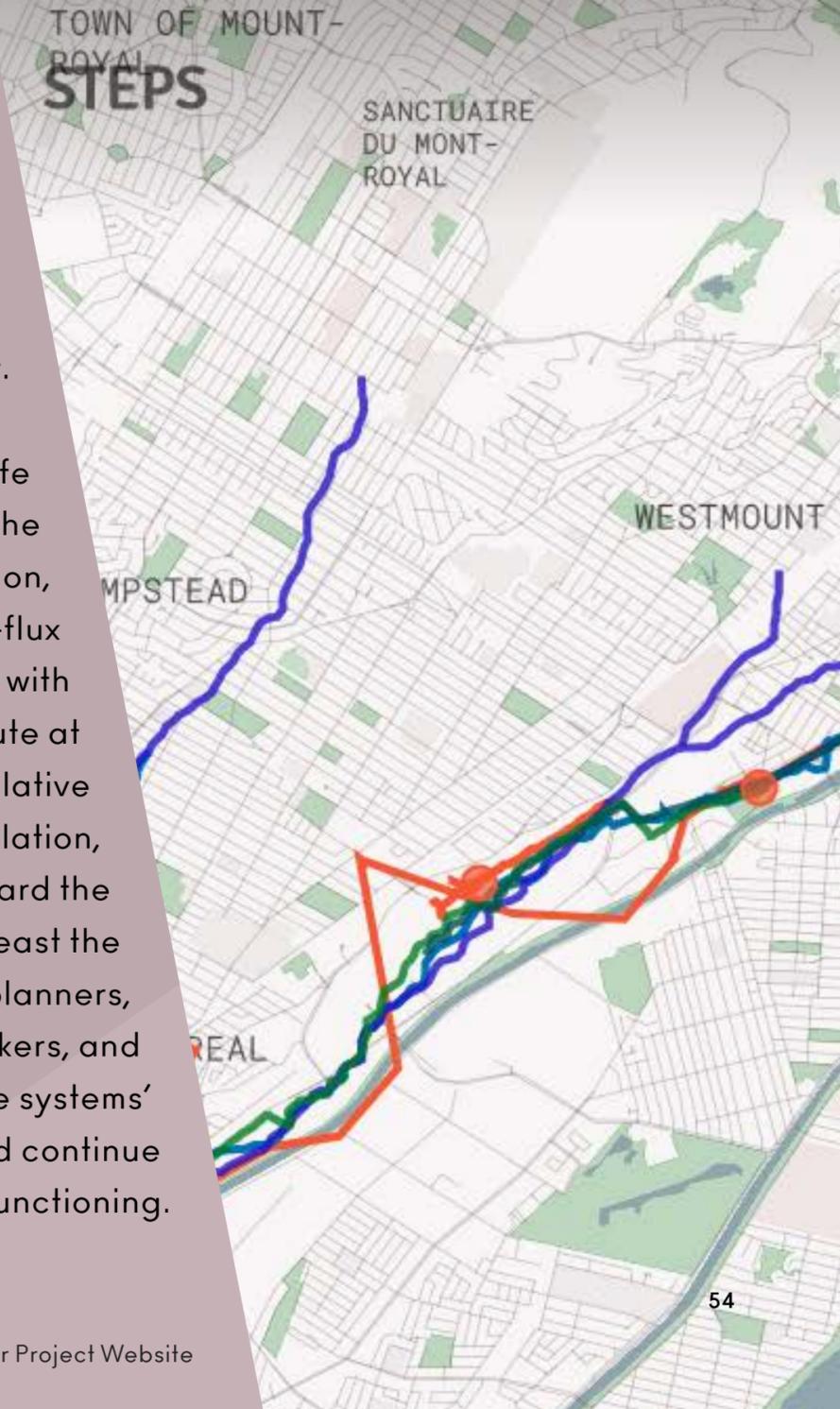
In January 2020, the Montreal Waterways group launched the *Ghost River Project*, an interactive map of one of Montreal's lost rivers. The project pieces together the pasts, presents, and possible futures of Saint Pierre, a major waterway that cut across the West of the island for much of its history.

In January 2020, Speculative Life co-director Orit Halpern published the essay "Hopeful Resilience" in *Accumulation*, a project by Daniel A. Barber and e-flux Architecture, produced in cooperation with the Princeton Environmental Institute at Princeton University and the Speculative Life Lab. In an age of massive accumulation, Halpern notes that a turn toward the concept of resilience since at least the 1970s offers hope for the planners, entrepreneurs, policy makers, and environmentalists that shape systems' ability to absorb shock and continue functioning.

Photo: Ghost River Project Website

## GHOST RIVER

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Machine Agencies faculty Fenwick McKelvey and Jonathan Roberge (INRS) were **awarded two major grants** for the Algorithmic Media Observatory. The first is a 4-year SSHRC Insight Program grant that will support the study of how AI is changing regulation. The second, totaling more than \$2.4 million, is a highly competitive grant from the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society to support multinational collaboration with partners in Germany, France and the UK on how AI, as a sociotechnical phenomenon, is being integrated into our societies.

**In April 2020**, MA student and TAG cluster member Scott DeJong co-authored a paper with the leaders of the Ageing + Technology + Communication research group that was published in The Computer Games Journal. The paper discusses findings from a project that sought to raise awareness about elder abuse and mistreatment by creating an "escape room" game around that theme.

Courtesy of Scott DeJong

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**In May 2020**, Barbara Layne, co-leader of the Textiles & Materiality Cluster organized a crew of 35 volunteers to sew more than 2,500 cloth face masks for donation. Meanwhile, Ann-Louise Davidson, leader the Education Makers, launched a Face Mask Challenge, calling on students to create new face mask designs. They had the opportunity to work with world-class experts in fibres and filtration, and will present their final prototypes and discuss the challenges they faced and facts they uncovered in late 2020.

**In May 2020**, "The Post-Immersive Manifesto," co-authored by Bart Simon, was published in the International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media. The manifesto is the result of a five-year collaboration with the UK-based interactive performance company ZU-UK, and an open invitation to rethink the "immersive" trend together.

Barbara Layne and Frederic Guilhem, Courtesy of Frederic Guilhem

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# More About Milieux

## Staff

**Bart Simon**  
Institute Director

**Chris Salter**  
Associate Director

**Ann-Louise Davidson**  
Associate Director

**Harry Smoak**  
Head of Operations and Coordination

**Marc Beaulieu**  
Head of Technical Support and Infrastructure

**Kathryn Jezer Morton and Danielle Douez**  
Head of Communications

**Jennifer Muir**  
Administrative Support

**Abbie Rappaport**  
Social Media

**Geneviève Moisan**  
Textiles & Materiality Technical Support

**Marco Luna**  
Immersive Realities Lab Technical Support

**Alex Bachmayer**  
BioLab Technical Support

**Rodrigo Velasco**  
Annual Report Graphic Designer

**Steering committee for 2019-20**

- Jonathan Lessard**, TAG
- Pippin Barr**, TAG
- Peter van Wyck**, Media History
- Haidee Wasson**, Media History
- Jason Lewis**, Indigenous Futures
- Heather Igloliorte**, Indigenous Futures
- Orit Halpern**, Speculative Life
- Kregg Hetherington**, Speculative Life
- Giuliana Cucinelli**, Participatory Media
- Kim Sawchuk**, Participatory Media
- Marisa Portolese**, Post Image
- Daniel Cross**, Post Image
- Joanna Berzowska**, Textiles and Materiality
- Barbara Layne**, Textiles and Materiality
- Angelique Willkie**, LePARC

**Steering Committee for 2020-21**

- Rilla Khaled**, TAG
- Pippin Barr**, TAG
- Haidee Wasson**, Media History
- Peter van Wyck**, Media History
- Jason Lewis**, Indigenous Futures
- Heather Igloliorte**, Indigenous Futures
- Orit Halpern**, Speculative Life
- Jill Didur**, Speculative Life
- Kim Sawchuk**, Participatory Media
- Marisa Portolese**, Post Image
- Dan Cross**, Post Image
- Barbara Layne**, Textiles and Materiality
- Kathleen Vaughan**, Textiles and Materiality
- Angelique Willkie**, LePARC
- Eldad Tsabary**, LePARC

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