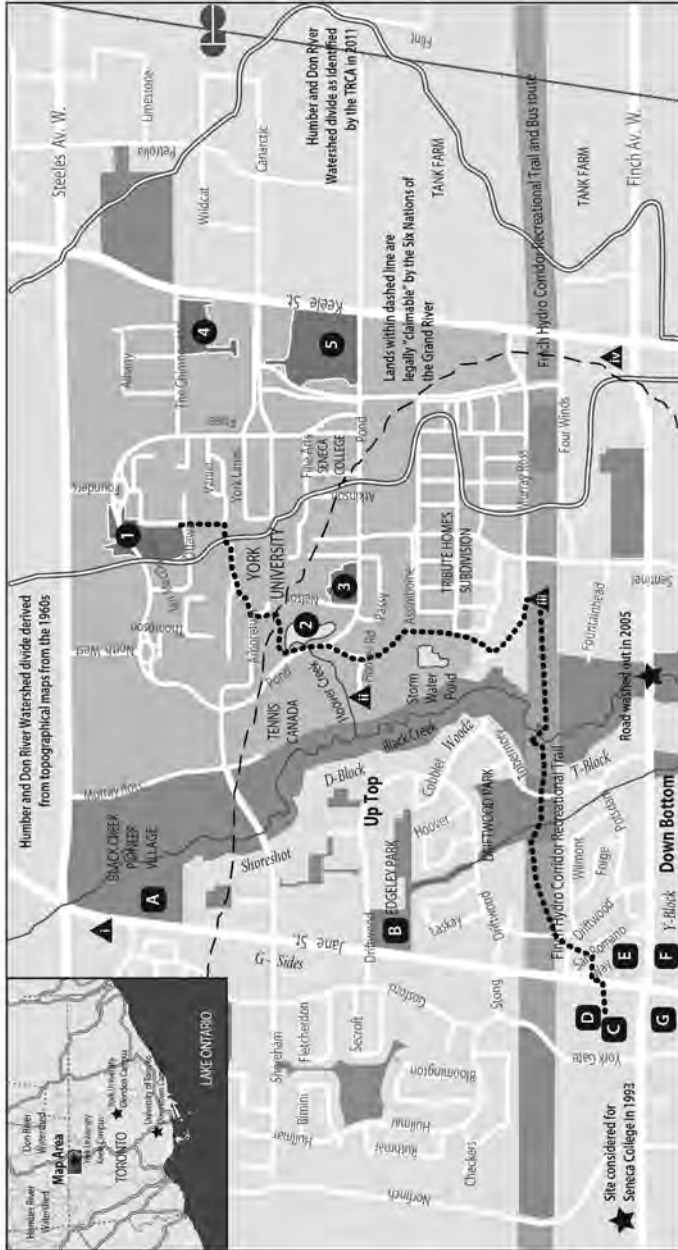


WALKING FROM YORK UNIVERSITY TO JANE AND FINCH



- 1 Boyer Woodlot
 - 2 Stony Pond
 - 3 Osgoode Woodlot
 - 4 North Keele Woodlot
 - 5 Boylton Woodlot
 - A Kaiserville former site
 - B Hoover House
 - C Parsons archaeological site
 - D Elia former site
 - E Pallisades Housing Complex
 - F Jane Finch Mall
 - G Norfincht Shopping Centre
- A Everdale Environmental Learning Centre Farm Project
 B Driftwood Community Centre
 C Yorkgate Mall
 D York University TD Community Engagement Centre
- A Kaiserville former site
 B Hoover House
 C Parsons archaeological site
 D Elia former site
- A Pallisades Housing Complex
 B Jane Finch Mall
 C Norfincht Shopping Centre
- 0 km 0.5 km 1 km
- Walk Path

6. ON STOCKADES AND BRIDGES: FROM YORK UNIVERSITY TO THE JANE AND FINCH NEIGHBOURHOOD

L. Anders Sandberg

In this account, I write, walk, move through, and interpret sites at and close to my place of work: the Keele campus of York University, and the nearby Jane and Finch community. Both sites have documented institutional and social histories, but have received little attention from environmental historians. Both communities are located in the northwest area of the City of Toronto, in an area bounded by Finch Avenue to the south, Jane Street to the west, Steeles Avenue to the north, and Keele Street to the east.

York University was conceived and built as an affiliate of the University of Toronto in 1959 but received independent status in 1965 to accommodate the massive wave of students seeking a university education in the 1960s.¹ Initially housed at Falconer Hall at the University of Toronto's downtown campus (Map), York University moved to Glendon College (Map) (where it still maintains a small campus) in 1961, and then transferred its major activities to the Keele main campus in 1965. Over 50,000 students now study at York University.

At the same time as York University was planned and established, the Jane and Finch community was conceived as a mixed neighbourhood that would house middle-income families in traditional subdivision housing and lower-income families in modest rental apartments and townhouses, as well as low-priced condominiums. The federal government acquired the lands in 1954, plans were made in the 1950s and 1960s, and building began in the 1960s.² The new development was created to meet the flood of new immigrants that was coming to the Greater Toronto Area. Written histories of Jane and Finch are largely confined to local community members' reflections on the area's past as indigenous home, farming frontier, suburb of single-family bungalows and high-rise rental housing units. Most of the scholarly literature, by contrast, focuses on the community's reputation as a place of crime, social deviance and drugs.

We lack conventional environmental histories of the York University campus and the Jane and Finch community. The general assumption is that both York and Jane and Finch were built quickly in farmers' fields, located in a bleak part of Toronto, and exhibit an impersonal high-modernist architecture and an automobile-centred lifestyle with wide roads and huge parking lots. In such an environment, it is difficult to escape the hot and humid summers and cold and windy winters that are part of the southern Ontario climate regime. The York campus has many critics. University of Toronto professor and urban critic Mark Kingwell, for example, suggests that York only finds its identity via its "suburban isolation."³ And York historian John Saywell offers a terse one-sentence judgment: "York suffered more than most universities because the dreariness of its natural and built landscape had a deadening effect on students and faculty alike."⁴ The Jane and Finch community is similarly described as desolate and poorly integrated with its physical environment. One observer writes that the community is a "fragmented and ambiguous landscape [that] severs all connections with the surrounding community."⁵

I will suggest, though, that the York campus and the Jane and Finch community are intricately linked to the social, economic and physical metabolism of the Toronto urban region and its changing and contested planning conventions. If these environments are isolated and dreary, they were planned and produced that way for a reason. Meanwhile, faculty, students and residents have challenged the prevailing dominant images and options open for planning their non-human environment. In fact, the campus and its neighbourhood is a microcosm of the larger Toronto region, with its own lessons to tell.

I use the concept of the stockade or palisade to explore the York campus and the Jane and Finch community. A dictionary definition of a stockade is an enclosure of tall walls made of sharpened logs placed side by side vertically to provide security. The stockade in this instance provides protection for groups inside the enclosure from outside threats. Another meaning is a prison, with those kept inside considered a threat to the outside world. A third definition is of a decorative feature that may serve as an aesthetic device or as a symbol of a private or exclusive space. But stockades can also take discursive shapes: mental, legal, or other forms that shut out, close in, or signify a border. Material and metaphorical stockades include and exclude in stark and subtle but often powerful ways. Shedding light on them may help us see the world through a different prism and to imagine different

possibilities. The walked and sensed landscape has the power to tell such stories, revealing landscapes of power in which some dominate while others are marginalized and obscured. These stories also have the potential to tear down stockades and build broader communities. Conflicts and tensions between a university (the gown) and the surrounding community (the town) may include property, traffic, noise issues and the conceptual distance between the thinking in the ivory tower and the actions of the “real world”.

The Michael Boyer Woodlot (Map 1)

I begin my walk at the Michael Boyer Woodlot, formerly the Vanier Woodlot, at the northern edge of the campus. It is one of four woodlots (Map 3, 4, 5) on the campus. The woodlots reflect both the impacts of development on nature and nature’s agency. A campus planner recently described the campus woodlots as “remnants from the time when this land consisted of small fields farmed by individual families. At that time ... farmers retained a portion of their land as woodland for water-control management. The woodlots also provided a source of firewood.” He went on to state that “[t]he woodlots are part of the original fabric of the University ... and they remain integral to the concept of York.”⁶ These comments convey a harmonious evolution of the campus forests from farm to campus woodlots. By contrast, three York scholars contend that the woodlots survive only because of their unfavourable topography and drainage.⁷

Thus, unfavourable topography and drainage served as a stockade against agricultural development. The woodlots consequently continued to serve some of their original ecological functions. For example, in a 2011 interview with Michael Boyer, a retired Professor of Biology, he indicated that the Boyer woodlot (named after him because of his efforts to conserve the woodlots) housed two ponds when the university was first established. These ponds served as resting places for migratory birds and as a habitat for a colony of wood frogs. Boyer also pointed out that silver maples, now up to 150 years of age, were still growing in the woodlots along Keele Street.

However, once the university began its rapid construction, the natural stockades of the woodlots succumbed to development pressures. Planners largely saw the campus as void of nature and as a clean slate for development (figure 1). Development destroyed the inflow and drastically altered the outflow of water. A sustained and balanced moisture-regime was transformed into one of spring floods and summer droughts. Soils

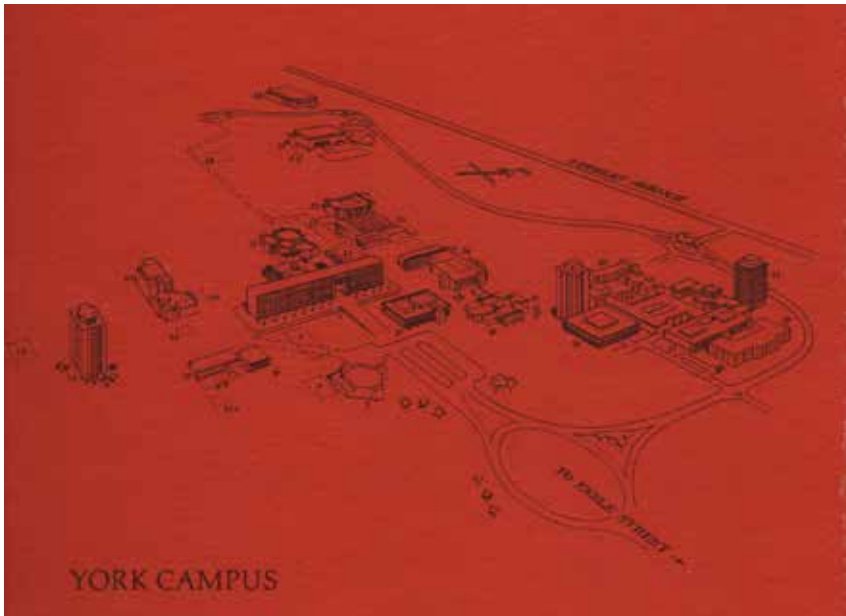


Figure 1

Campus map from 1968 appearing on the undergraduate calendar. Note that the map, apart from a few trees, contains no physical environment, and that the woodlots are completely absent. The campus is imagined and portrayed as a tabula rasa welcoming development. Drawing courtesy of York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collection, York University Archives Calendar Collection (F0158). ASC01043.

shrank greatly, exposing feeder roots and larger, buttress roots. Trees were consequently affected: “Both the deep-rooted, larger-trunk-diameter tree species and more shallow-rooted juveniles succumbed – the former probably to improper drainage, the latter to summer drought.”⁸

The woodlots faced other threats. One appeared early when extensive construction forced meadow voles that had lived in the agricultural fields to invade the woodlots, where they caused extensive damage. The situation was relieved somewhat by feral cats but there were not enough of them to make a dent in the meadow vole population. The traffic associated with the construction boom on the campus also affected the woodlot and the local flora. The trucks carried disease vectors that damaged trees and plants. For example, ninety per cent of the elm trees that lined campus roads became infected by and succumbed to Dutch elm disease. In contrast to

the University of Toronto, where urban forester Erik Jorgensen adopted measures to fight the disease, at York nothing was done.

But the deterioration of the woodlots has not gone unchallenged. I look out over the Michael Boyer woodlot and note many new trees planted around its periphery. In the northeast corner, silver maples have been planted and have grown to maturity. Here the new tree plantings are meant as a stockade, buffering the original stands from outside disturbances.

There have also been attempts to tackle the problem of poor or excessive drainage in the woodlots. At the back of the Boyer Woodlot, university engineers installed a concrete shield that reaches three metres underground to avert the escape of water from the northern pond. At one point, the University even brought in tank loads of water to maintain the water level in the pond.

While it appears that the woodlots on campus are now protected, and are named and seen on official campus maps, they still face threats that extend beyond pollution, floods and droughts. In the fall of 2012, a section of the Michael Boyer woodlot was cut to make room for an athletic stadium built to accommodate the 2015 Pan American Games hosted by Toronto.

The Stong Pond (Map 2)

My next stop is at the Stong Pond, named after one of the first white settler families (figure 2). It is a stormwater pond connected to drains and underground concrete pipes that collect the rainwater and snowmelt that accumulate on the campus through the seasons. It was built at an early stage in the history of the campus when half the campus drained into the Humber River Watershed to the west and the other half into the Don River Watershed to the east. Hoover Creek, a very small tributary, drains Stong Pond to Black Creek. At that time, the Stong Pond fulfilled its function by collecting storm water from the Humber Watershed; it remained partially filled most of the time, and for parts of the summer was nearly empty. However, once the campus was developed, roads built and paved, and soils compacted by heavy equipment, the meandering stream that crossed the campus into the Don River Watershed had nowhere to go. The South Keele Woodlot, now called the Boynton Woodlot, and Pond Road were flooded, threatening the trees in the woodlot and disrupting traffic on the road.



Figure 2

Parts of Stong Pond and Arboretum looking south. The high-rise buildings in the distance are graduate student residences. Photograph courtesy of York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collection, Computing & Networking Services fonds (F0477). ASC01040.

In response, the Arboretum Committee, a group of faculty members, administrators, and university engineers, advised the University to divert streams flowing into the Don River Watershed into Stong Pond and, ultimately, into the Humber River Watershed. In the Boynton Woodlot, for example, drains were placed to carry away excess water to Stong Pond. The consequence of the change in drainage pattern is that the stormwater of the whole campus now drains into Stong Pond and the Humber Watershed.

The diversion solved the problem of the flooding of Pond Road, but created another problem. Stong Pond became inadequate as a stormwater pond because it was always full, with a steady stream of water flowing into Hoover Creek that became seriously eroded. In 2005 the “inadequacy” of Stong Pond became evident when a serious storm flooded the campus and Black Creek overwhelmed a culvert and caused a portion of Finch Avenue south of the campus to collapse. The storm dumped 103 mm of rain in one hour over a stretch of North York and neighbouring areas. In comparison, Hurricane Hazel deposited 53 mm of rain in one hour in 1954.⁹ Stong Pond has since been expanded to handle future storms and floods that may affect the campus. Interestingly, in the maps describing the watersheds of the Toronto region published by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, the York University Campus area along with a strip of land east of Keele Street are included in the Humber River Watershed (Map). Such map representations naturalize what is in fact an artificial drainage pattern.

Stong Pond thus represents another form of stockade: the enclosure and funnelling of stormwater and snowmelt into drains and buried concrete pipes and ponds allowing for development to occur around and above these subterranean structures. It is an effective way of manipulating nature into submission, leaving a maximum of land area available for development. At the same time, this approach channels debris and pollutants from hard surfaces into water bodies, involves huge capital expenditures to build and replace infrastructure, and is likely to fail when faced with a changing and more extreme climate.

The Stong Pond expansion and the engineering philosophy it represents ignores a water-sensitive urban design. The alternative is to take responsibility for local water drainage patterns by adopting measures like limiting development, disconnecting downspouts, building wetlands, swales, and green roofs, avoiding or removing impermeable surfaces, and planting trees and other flora to absorb moisture.¹⁰

The Hoover Homestead (Map ii)

I now cross the ring road that circles the Campus. I walk down Hoover Lane and at its end I see a farm house tucked into the forest at the bank of Hoover Creek. The farmhouse is called Hoover House and is named after one of the area’s pioneer farming families (figure 3). The farm house was allegedly saved from the bulldozers by John Conway, the Master of Founder’s College,



Figure 3

Hoover House remains as a stockade on the York University grounds, having served as the private residence of a number of university administrators. Photograph courtesy of York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collection, York University Photograph Collection (F0091). ACS02056.

and his wife Jill Ker Conway, who insisted on living there rather than in a new residence from 1965 to 1975. Built with an unlined earth cellar from 1812, the house itself was a refuge for mice, squirrels, and skunks, and its surroundings provided a sanctuary for a “colony of woodchucks” and “a single sentinel hawk owl” (that kept the rodents in check).¹¹ On one occasion, Jill Ker Conway even spotted “an old grey wolf, a silent shadow moving by.”¹² It was a stockade from the busy construction on the campus, a place the Conways considered as the “only site [on campus] for entertaining guests...”¹³

As I ponder the farmhouse in front of me, I see another set of stockades, material as well as discursive. As German-speaking Loyalists from Pennsylvania settled the campus area in the early nineteenth century, they relied on surveyor’s lines and concession roads as borders to their lots.

The surveyor's lines defined a colonial order of territoriality that clearly defined settlers' lands from each other and allowed orderly travel across the landscape along concession roads.¹⁴ The University Campus was part of Concession IV West, delimited by Keele Street to the east and Jane Street to the west. Yonge Street formed the original reference point. Lots were then divided and numbered one and upwards beginning at Eglinton Avenue in the south. By the time the lots had reached Finch and Steeles Avenue in the north, they were numbered 21 to 25. Several campus roads now correspond to the lot lines, including Murray Ross Parkway, Assiniboine Road, Fine Arts Road, and Chimneystack Road. Along the roads, hedgerows divided the lots. Remnants of the hedgerows can still be seen on the campus today. As I look south towards the end of the field at Hoover House, I in fact look at the Boynton-Hoover hedgerow. It was on the lots delineated by these roads and hedgerows that pioneering farmers, the Stongs, Boyntons, Kaisers, and Hoovers, cleared the land and established their farms and orchards. The land was a "closely guarded commodity" that was later divided by split rail fences and then wire fencing.¹⁵ The farm families both shaped and were shaped by their human and physical surroundings. The survey lines, deeds and private property rights connected to the land assigned certain rights to the farmers. They had exclusive rights to their lands (other people did not have access to it), they were free to sell it (or others were free to buy it from them), and they were free to profit from it by selling crops and livestock and speculating and renting out land.

But while property lines, concession roads and side roads dictated that transportation follow a north-south or east-west direction, water courses initially defined and shaped movements in other directions. People typically used the rivers as reference points when moving across the landscape. The towns of Kaiserville (Map i) in the northwest and Elia (Map iv) in the southeast were thus located on strategic points by rivers and streams, one of which meandered across the campus to carry water into the Don River in the east. It took time to redefine such conceptions, a change that only occurred as the roads became passable year-round.

In the 1950s, many of the farmers sold their properties and moved away or retired. They now have their own history, however idealized, some of it contained in the Black Creek Living History Project and at Black Creek Pioneer Village (Map), a reconstructed farm village on the banks of Black Creek at Steeles Avenue and Jane Street.¹⁶

The Parsons Site (Map iii)

My excursion continues. I walk south across a field and pass a stormwater pond to my right and a subdivision called Tribute Communities built in the 2000s to my left. I cross Murray Ross Parkway and enter a hydro corridor. I am now at the Parsons Site, an old Iroquois settlement. The Parsons Site was once surrounded by woodlands that First Nations peoples stayed on and moved through to hunt, fish, gather, and practice agriculture. The site is located on the tablelands of the Black Creek and is part of the Humber Watershed that drains into Lake Ontario.¹⁷ But I cannot see it. The site is completely gone, buried in the soil. The village consisted of at least ten longhouses surrounded by a stockade or palisade for protection from enemy groups. Outside the stockade the three sisters were grown: corn, squash and beans. Compared to villages at other archaeological sites, the communities at the Parsons Site appear to have been settled for a longer period and may also have consisted of several distinct groups. In the 1950s, over 250,000 artifacts were retrieved at the site. But as with other similar villages, the inhabitants did not remain. The long houses deteriorated, the soils were exhausted of fertility, accessible firewood became scarce, and the groups moved on. Hostilities with rival groups may have driven the community from the site. The stockade of the village was thus temporary, laying claim to a particular site and place for a short time, and then leaving it to become a forest meadow suitable for deer pasture until the forest reclaimed it. In memory of a hydro worker who fell to his death, one of the hydro towers overlooking the Parsons site is crowned by a cross. There is no such commemorative sign for the Iroquois village. Archaeologists lament the fate of the Parsons site. The reconstruction of the village and the building of an educational facility were contemplated as early as 1962 but lost momentum as the area was developed and parts of the village destroyed. First Nations communities may be less sanguine about the “reconstruction” of the site: for them letting their ancestors rest in peace may be preferable to having them dug up by archaeologists (figure 4).

Yet the First Nations are present in different ways. The Mississaugas of the New Credit once claimed rights to the Crown’s acquisition of 101,528 hectares of land that includes an area from Ashbridge’s Bay to Etobicoke Creek in the south, and extends 45 kilometres north at either end, an area that includes York University. They did not, however, seek to repossess land but were looking for fair compensation.¹⁸ In 2010, the Mississaugas accepted a settlement of \$145 million in compensation for lost lands, an amount that gave each band member \$20,000.¹⁹



Figure 4

Parsons site, with a group of archaeologists, 1952. Photograph courtesy of Emerson Archaeological Photographic Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

In addition, under the terms of the 1784 Haldimand Treaty, the Six Nations of the Grand River were given a tract of land nine and a half kilometres deep on each side of the Grand River from its source to mouth. One of these blocks, Block 5, was acquired by the British Crown using York University and Jane and Finch community lands as a security. According to the Six Nations, its members can now lay claim to these lands (Map) on account of the Federal Government's failure to meet the terms of the Treaty.²⁰ On the Keele campus, a local labour union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3903, is actively supporting the Six Nations of the Grand River in this and other land claims.²¹

There is also a growing presence of First Nations at York University in the form of students and faculty members, courses, and programs. One of my colleagues, Robin Cavanagh, an Anishinabe from the Sagamok First Nation, has recently created a fire pit at Stong Pond which he uses as a site of learning for his students.

Venturing Out of the University Stockade

Standing at the Parsons Site, contemplating it as a stockade where the Iroquois once sought refuge, I ponder York as a stockade: a place that shuts out, forming an exclusive island in the local geography. The lands of York University were originally farmlands that in the 1950s were acquired by the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Of these 265 hectares, 193 hectares were sold to the University, 36 hectares were sold to the Metropolitan Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, and 36 hectares were left for residential purposes. York was clearly intended as a separate entity shielded from the surrounding community. This was the convention at the time, but it was also a strong point made by the CMHC chair, Henry Mansur, even as others felt that the University should be more integrated into the local community.²² I scan the map again and note that the Black Creek Conservation lands which border the western flanks of the university form a buffer against the residential areas to the south-east. I also note that the hydro corridor I am standing in serves as a divider between the university community and the residential community (figure 5).



Figure 5

A hydro corridor separates York University from the Jane and Finch Community. The photo was taken on Sentinel Road south of the campus looking west. The hydro tower with the cross, which honours a hydro worker who fell to his death, overlooks the Parsons site. Photograph courtesy of L. Anders Sandberg.

I continue to walk toward the Black Creek Parkland and the Black Creek itself along a newly built bike path. To the left and right of me, I see high-rise residential towers lining the forest of the valley.

They are built on the principle of the tower-in-the-park concept advocated by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. They are managed by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and have conventional street addresses. Some of the young residents who live there know them as “hoods”. When I arrive at the bridge that crosses Black Creek, I glance to my left and I see T-Block (figure 6). If you follow the Black Creek southward to Finch Avenue at this point, you would arrive at the site where the road was washed out as a result of the 2005 flashflood. To the north of me, there are other residential towers, including Woodz, D-Block, and Shore Shot. They are part of a larger complex of hoods north of Finch Avenue that is collectively called “Up Top” (Map).



Figure 6

The photo is taken from a bridge over Black Creek. In the distance to the south is 15 Tobermory Drive, or T-Block, a public housing complex. The bridge and the walking and biking path represent a formal initiative to connect the University and the Jane and Finch community. About a hundred metres to the north, there is a rudimentary footbridge built by unknown people. Photograph courtesy of L. Anders Sandberg.

As I exit the Black Creek Parkland I come to Driftwood Park (Map), a recreational park with well-tended lawns, playgrounds and sports field. I also see single-family bungalows that were first occupied by white English-speaking Canadians, often of a working-class background, many coming from the Atlantic provinces, as well as a large Italian immigrant population. The houses are built along winding roads and cul-de-sacs in a conventional suburban planning fashion.

I continue my walk towards the public housing that is at the very heart of the Jane and Finch Corridor (named after the nearest road intersection) which extends southward along Jane Street to encompass more public housing. The Corridor was part of a city plan that decentralized public housing into the inner suburbs. Similar publicly-subsidized housing units exist in places like Lawrence Heights, Steeles – L'Amoreaux, Eglinton East Kennedy Park, and Scarborough Village.

When arriving at Jane and Finch, I am dwarfed by three publicly subsidized high-rise housing units with approximately 4,000 residents. They are perhaps appropriately called the “Palisades” (Map E), located on San



Figure 7
The Palisades building complex. “Somewhere to house them”. Is it a stockade that has shunted the marginalized into a suburban ghetto? Or is it a group of neighbourhoods with a strong sense of place and a commitment to community? Photograph courtesy of L. Anders Sandberg.

Romanoway (figure 7). The local youth call them “Palasades”, and they belong to the larger complex of public housing units called “Down Bottom” south of Finch Avenue. During parts of the day, they cast long dark ominous shadows on the ground. The complex was intended to accommodate the lowest income groups. The first tower was a rental unit, built privately but financed by the CMHC. Rents were set low and it was stipulated that prospective tenants not have a combined income more than four times the rent.²³ The other two buildings were to be condominiums for which the federal government provided funding for low down payments and reduced monthly payments. An advertisement for the units in 1976 featured a young white family on bikes smiling happily in front of the complex.

Several narratives surround the Palisades complex. One narrative describes the area as a planning vision and promising idea gone awry. In the 1950s, city planners conceived of the Jane and Finch Corridor as an integrated community where people from different socio-economic groups could co-exist. At the time, however, serious doubts were expressed about the initiative. Older residents of the community, those living in the neighbourhoods I have just passed, for example, expressed the following at the height of the building boom in the mid-1970s:

... we wish to bring to the attention of the Council of the Borough of North York a serious situation existing in Ward 3. Many residents and groups are deeply concerned over a proposal for high-density residential development of land at Jane and Finch. They fear the attraction of several thousand additional people at this time would intensify already serious problems related to the public services and facilities, social conditions and quality of life in the area.²⁴

Forty years later, the current general perception of the area seems to confirm the fears of the residents. At Rap Dictionary, an online dictionary for hip hop slang, I read one rather typical description of the Palisades housing complex:

The Palisades are three high-rise metro housing buildings located in the middle of Jane and Finch ... It has a high level of new immigrant residents, high youth unemployment, and a recent rise in youth related crime. In addition, the area faces a series of urban challenges, including gang-related violence, poverty, interracial tensions, and crime.²⁵

The United Way's study *Vertical Poverty*, referring in particular to high-rise apartment buildings, confirms the continued lack of social progress in high-poverty neighbourhoods. The study states that the percentage of low-income families residing in such areas, which include Jane and Finch, has increased from 17.8 in 1981 to 46.3 in 2006.²⁶

The bleak social environment is replicated in the relatively few connections to the non-human environment. In the Jane and Finch area, the Black Creek Watershed remains the most polluted in the Toronto region. There are few contemporary references in the local media to community gatherings at the Black Creek for a picnic and a swim as was common during the farming era. These stories convey a picture of the Jane and Finch community as a stockade or palisade, a place to confine the marginalized and racialized.

Critical scholars have argued that such negative imagery of the Jane and Finch community misrepresents the community. These critics claim that the surrounding city, including biased reporting by the media, has unfairly labelled the community as troublesome, an image that has then become self-fulfilling.²⁷ They tell a different story about Jane and Finch. Carl James describes the intersection as a multicultural area where some 75,000 people of various ethnic, racial, religious and generational backgrounds interact, play, and work with each other.²⁸ Life revolves around several malls: the Yorkgate Mall (Map C) to the northwest, the Norfinch Shopping Centre (Map G) to the southwest, and the Jane-Finch Mall (Map F) to the southeast. For the most part, the malls contain small businesses that are almost exclusively owned and operated by people of racial minorities. The Jane and Finch intersection is also the focus of multicultural events, parades and celebrations that defy its portrayal as "a dark, dangerous passageway, a deadly stretch that unlucky immigrants must travel to reach a 'better' life in which they will live the immigrant American dream."²⁹ As I walk into the hustle and bustle of the well-maintained Yorkgate Mall, I marvel at the commerce and activity at the place.

The website Jane-Finch.com documents community initiatives and activities, with YouTube videos showing young rappers singing with the neighbourhood in the background. I read on the T-shirt of one of my students "Jane Finch Community Festival – Drum it Up – Out of Many Nations One Community – Bringing Neighbours Together." Here, the arts are playing their own role in community building.³⁰ Murals on two of the buildings of the Palisades complex celebrate the women of Jane and Finch (figure 8). In June



Figure 8

The photo above is part of a set of murals at the entrances of two of the high-rise towers on San Romanoway. A few years ago, they were part of the BeLovEd movement, a public education campaign partnering with several community members and agencies that used the arts to raise awareness and responses to violence against young women. Photograph courtesy of L. Anders Sandberg.

2012 I attended a play called *Known to Police* about the Jane and Finch Community that railed against racial profiling as well as the outside attempts to rebrand the community as *University Heights*, which many residents see as an effort to gentrify the area. Yet there was also a positive message in the play that celebrated the community, or communities, at the Jane and Finch intersection, to build community spirit, to fight internal problems, and to foster independence and a unique sense of empowerment.

Black Creek has also become a site of regeneration. The Black Creek Conservation Project is a long-standing project that seeks to reconnect the Jane and Finch community with restoration of the Black Creek. One of my York University colleagues, Ellie Perkins, has for some time worked on a project connecting the university and the Jane and Finch community. Two of our students have conducted walks along the Black Creek for a similar purpose. And in this volume, Fridman et al. describe an initiative by the Everdale Environmental Learning Centre (Map A) on the banks of the Black Creek at Jane and Finch to operate a profitable farm working with low-income housing residents, new Canadians and youth. In a recent strategy, the Sustainable Neighbourhood Retrofit Action Plan, the goal of the organizers is to channel resources into urban forest enhancement, stormwater management, vege-

table gardens/rain harvesting, and energy conservation and renewables.³¹ There have also been efforts to improve the built environment. Since 2001 an alternative planning process, SafeGrowth, has achieved considerable success at the Palisades building complex. The process is based on the principle that neighbours planning for themselves in consultation with prevention experts, police and security, can build a better and safer community.³²

The City of Toronto, the province of Ontario and various public and private institutions have been instrumental in providing assistance for community projects. Previous city administrations designated priority neighbourhood status to a number of areas in the inner suburbs of Toronto, including Jane and Finch. The neighbourhood contains a plethora of community, family, youth and faith-based organizations and a history of funding projects. In his recent biography, former Mayor David Miller honours several of the community members who have led such efforts at the Jane and Finch.³³

The private sector is also involved in these efforts, including Tennis Canada's support of tennis instruction for Jane and Finch youth (the Rexall Centre, Tennis Canada's venue for the Rogers' Cup, is located on the York Campus), Home Depot's provision of building materials for a playground, and Cineplex Odeon setting up a local cinema complex.

At the Yorkgate Mall, York University houses its TD Community Engagement Centre (Map D), an institution sponsored by the university and TD Canada Trust, that seeks to build bridges between York University and Jane and Finch. The engagement centre follows a series of York University initiatives seeking to achieve similar but not always the same objectives.³⁴ The York University Faculty Association, for example, sets aside a small portion of its union membership levy for students in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood to prepare for and attend York University.

Views are divided regarding the public and business-sponsored assistance programs in the area. At a research event sponsored by the TD Community Engagement Centre, I listen to activists express suspicion and criticism of the grants and funds available for neighbourhood improvement, claiming they provide mere band-aid solutions rather than real change for the community. Many opportunities, such critics argue, have been lost. In 1994, there was room for real change when Seneca College was contemplating locating a new campus in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood (Map),

a campus that could have provided close access to jobs and study for members of the community.³⁵ But the Seneca branch was instead built on the York Campus. The decision outraged the community and prompted one worker for an anti-drug coalition to state: “The link is between the college and the university. It should be between the college and the community.” According to some, a similar scenario is playing out with regards to public transit, where York University, after heavy lobbying, is slated to receive a subway extension in 2015 which bypasses the Jane and Finch neighbourhood.³⁶ These events confirm the area’s status as a palisade, stockaded and separated from the neighbouring campus and surrounding city.

Conclusion

York University and the Jane and Finch residential community are liminal or in-between spaces sitting in a place between downtown Toronto and its suburbs and exurbs.³⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, they were places to teach and house a growing population of students and residents in the Toronto urban region. For a moment, the northwest of Toronto was the centre of the urban region, receiving a cascade of public funding and private capital. The erasure of the First Nations people’s presence in the area, and the departure of long-established farmers under the enormous pressure and opportunities of urban sprawl since the 1950s, made the region attractive to development. Since the inception of intense development in the 1950s, there has been little attention paid to the environmental consequences of growth, whether on the campus or in the neighbouring communities.

In the walk I have just made I point to the evidence of the environmental costs to the University in terms of stormwater management and the state of the local woodlots. Remediation efforts are there, to be sure, but they focus on the campus itself rather than its wider ecosystem and watershed.

The Jane and Finch community represents both the social and environmental costs associated with rapid growth. Some of the original plans for the area conceived of closer connections between the campus and the community but were displaced by the conventional plans of setting university campuses apart from their surroundings. The town and gown communities were in many ways planned to be isolated places with little interaction: York University a stockade that shuts out and the Jane and Finch community a stockade that shuts in.

Yet there have been a series of efforts to link the community with the University. There are signs in the landscape that speak for connections and bridges, binding the two communities together in the past, present and future. Walking and talking about these areas can support these efforts.

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