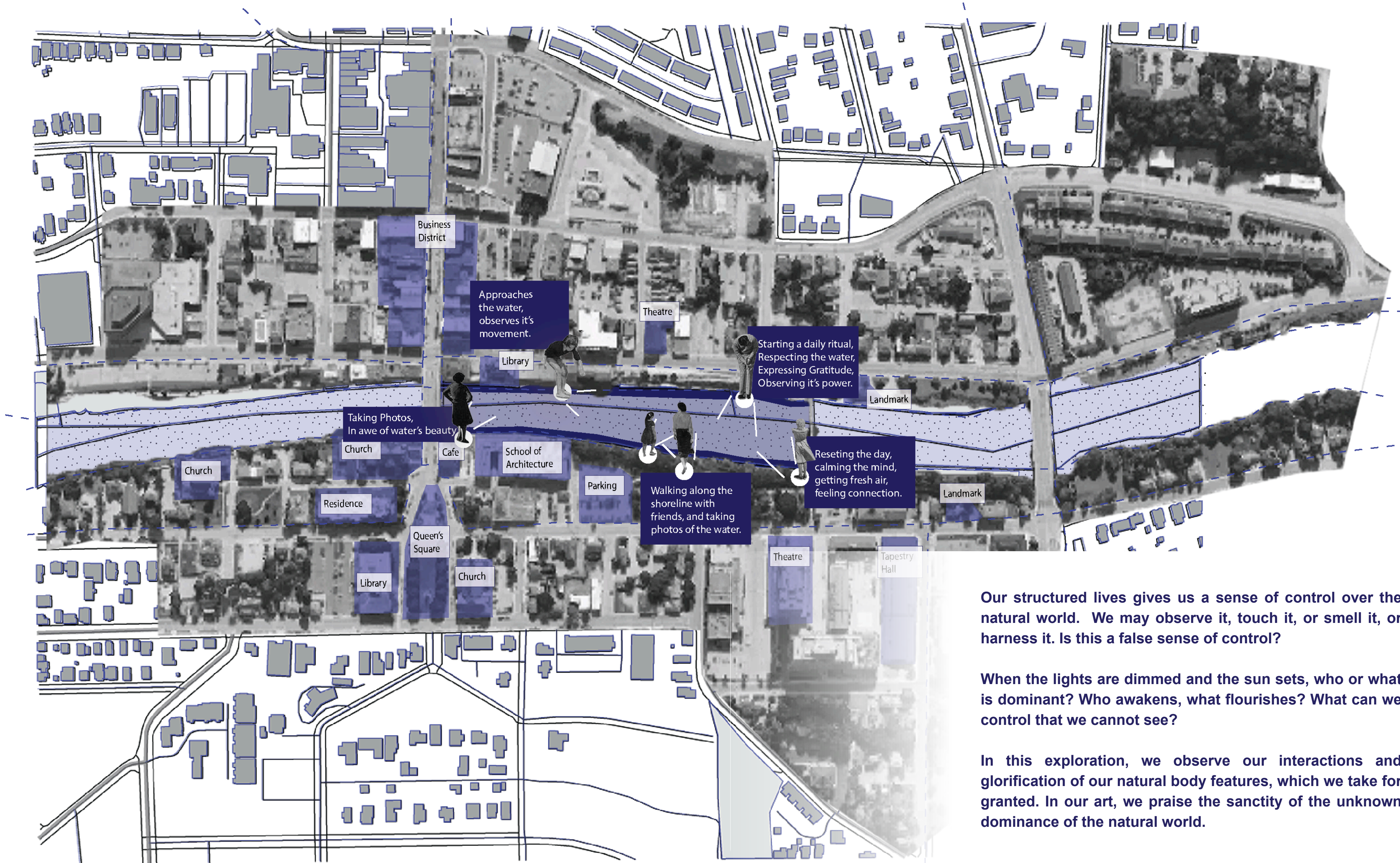


Rituals at the Grand River

CCA Charrette 2026: Night Swimming

Location: 7 Melville St S, Cambridge, ON N1S 2H4



Our structured lives gives us a sense of control over the natural world. We may observe it, touch it, or smell it, or harness it. Is this a false sense of control?

When the lights are dimmed and the sun sets, who or what is dominant? Who awakens, what flourishes? What can we control that we cannot see?

In this exploration, we observe our interactions and glorification of our natural body features, which we take for granted. In our art, we praise the sanctity of the unknown dominance of the natural world.

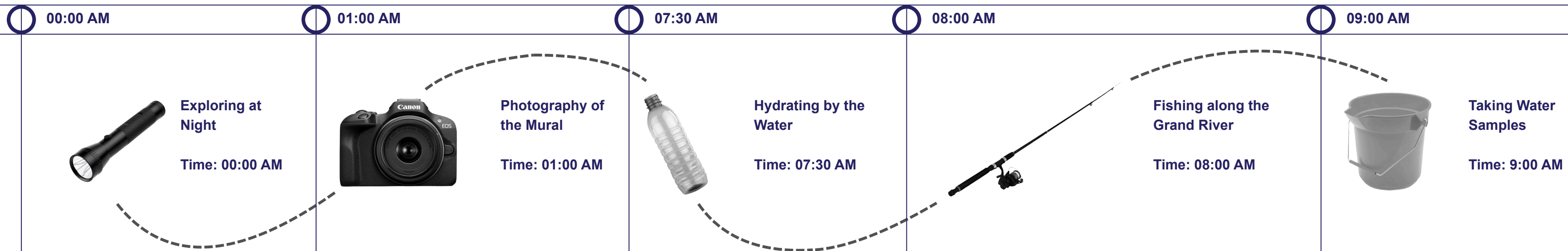


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AS THE MIDNIGHT HOUR PASSES, THE STREETS BECOME MORE EMPTY, CAR LIGHTS GO BY, A PASSERBY WALKS TOWARDS HOME AND ILLUMINATE THE MURAL

AS MORNING DAWNS, PEOPLE RETURN TO THE STREETS, CARS PASS BY THE GRAND RIVER BRIDGE, AND PEOPLE BEGIN TO LOITER, OBSERVE ITS PATTERNS, AND START THEIR OWN DAILY RITUALS.



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Location: 7 Melville St S, Cambridge, ON N1S 2H4

Team: 31

'Rituals at the Grand River' begins from the understanding that the Grand River is not merely a waterbody passing through Cambridge, Ontario, but a living presence that co-creates the rhythms, practices, and relations of the city. Our charrette invited us to reconsider what water is (materially, spiritually, and politically) by observing how humans and nonhumans engage with the river across a full day. At night, the river rests largely undisturbed, holding its own temporalities. As dawn breaks, residents begin to gather, witness, and move with the water: through direct touch, through objects and tools, through transformed flows such as cleaned drinking water, or through multispecies exchanges like habitat-making and fishing for nourishment. These gestures reveal water not as a backdrop but as a collaborator in sustaining life.

The concrete mural proposed in our project is embedded within existing infrastructure, evoking both the long histories carried by the river and the imposition of built forms that have constrained its movement. Designed to illuminate under contact with water at any hour, the mural symbolically restores the river's agency, making visible its spirit, force, and continuous presence even when hidden beneath urban routines.

Today, rituals of encounter with the Grand River persist in new forms: nighttime exploration, photography that immortalizes its shifting moods, nourishment drawn from land and water, and knowledge-making that too often extracts without reciprocity. By foregrounding these interactions, our project seeks to challenge the abstraction of water into a technical resource and instead reimagine it as an animate, relational being.

'Rituals at the Grand River' ultimately asks how we might engage water with humility, listening, moving, and designing in ways that honour its autonomy while cultivating collective care along its edge.

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