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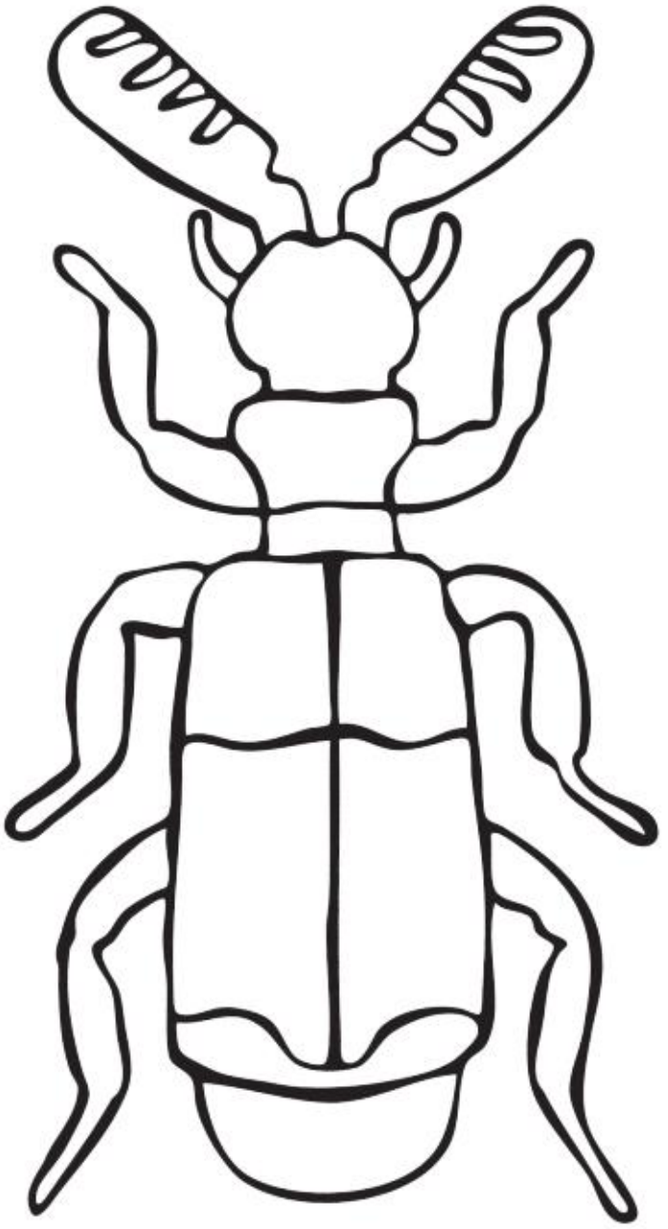

the story of how one activist group kept ourselves safe and strong in the face of movement infiltration

Mining Injustice Solidarity Network

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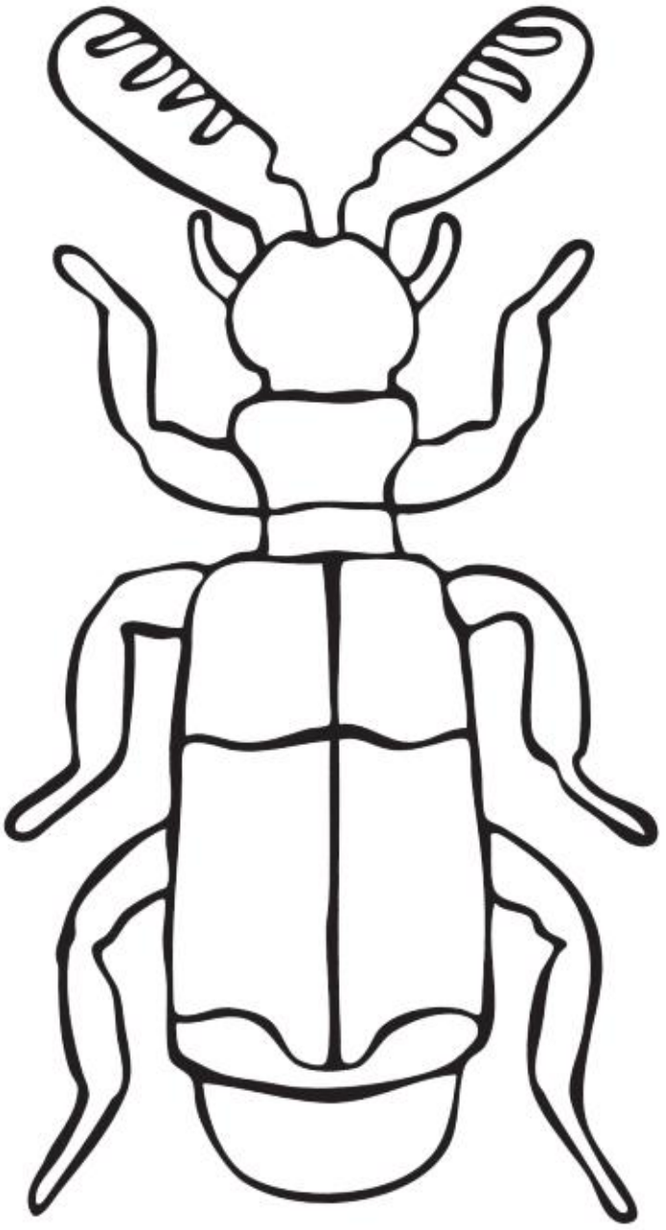
The cover illustration depicts a Cerapterus pilipennis, or Ant Nest Beetle. These beetles use a variety of methods to infiltrate ant nests, where they live among the colony, prey on its members, and trick the ants into raising their young.



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READING GUIDE

Read this if you want to know more about who we are and why we wrote this.

In this section we examine policing in Canada and models used for large events such as the 2015 Pan Am games.

This section tells the story of how we came to suspect two people who joined our group in the lead up to the Pan Am Games of being infiltrators.

This section details the process of kicking them out of our group and includes an annotated transcript of the conversation we had.

We went public with our story in a mainstream newspaper; here we explain our strategy and considerations when telling a journalist our story.

If you read only one section let it be this one. We explore how this experience has changed the way we think about security culture and how important building communities of care and trust is for the safety of our movements.

There is a lot of great writing in the world about movement infiltration and policing, find some of it here.

Towards the end of 2014 we started to suspect that two members of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network were not who they said they were.

Introduction

We are in a moment of unprecedented visibility and public concern on the matter of police brutality and police profiling in communities across North America. While recent movements like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More have made an incredible impact on the level of mainstream attention to issues that had previously been marginalized and ignored—namely, the criminalization, harassment, and sometimes deadly targeting of Black and Indigenous communities by police in the US and Canada—these groups have also faced vitriolic backlash on many fronts. At the time of writing this zine—summer 2017—we are seeing a rapid surge in vocal, confident white supremacy in the city of Toronto, which has made the public conversation on race and policing even more volatile. Nonetheless, we seem to be experiencing a sea change in public discourse around the role that police play in upholding the status quo of capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy.

While more and more people know about certain aspects of the "police problem" in North America, the issue of undercover policing—though it too is highly racialized, widely experienced in activist circles, and increasingly targets Muslim communities—remains mostly discussed behind closed doors and around kitchen tables. This phenomenon is the focus of our writing here.

Towards the end of 2014 we started to suspect that two members of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN)—the mining justice group we are a part of—were not who they said they were. In the beginning of 2015, we kicked them out of our group, quite certain they were undercover police. In the summer of 2015, an article about our experiences was published in a mainstream Toronto newspaper. This is that same story, but this time around we are using our own words and political analysis rather than framings that are palatable to mainstream media.

Before we share the details of our story it's important to introduce ourselves, our reasons for writing, and the context in which we write. We write this as four people of the multitudes who have experienced state surveillance. We are writing and sharing our particular experience because we know that so often, for a variety of reasons, many people can't talk about what they've been through with undercover police and other manifestations of state surveillance. We feel that we are in a position to take the risk of saying some things out loud. We are not writing this as advice; it is a very particular story that won't necessarily apply to other people or organizations.

IF NOT COPS, THEN WHO?

This piece largely assumes we were infiltrated/surveilled by state actors, and digs into the implications of that. There are however other possibilities of who our shady new members may have been. One option is privately hired corporate infiltrators, who we know have gotten involved with MISN before. For example, in 2017, a friend overheard a man on the subway bragging that he had been hired to infiltrate MISN through a private company contracted by a major mining company that's been protested by MISN and others for its human rights record. We are also overtly surveilled by mining companies all the time, such as the constant presence of someone with a video camera filming our protests outside their offices, or when company executives we've never met recognize us and address us by name.

Even if it were the case that our infiltrators' salaries were paid for by a mining company, we know that the lines are increasingly fuzzy between state and corporate infiltration/surveillance. In the mining-impacted communities we work with around the world there is a long history of overt collaboration on intelligence-gathering between mining companies and local/national police forces, including through Memorandum's of

The reasons we're writing this are both emotional and political (which isn't to say that emotions can't be political). For example, when we

were in the thick of this experience the thought of eventually writing it all down helped us cope with all the complicated emotions that went along with feeling surveilled. When we were deep in "strategy mode" leading up to confronting the suspected infiltrators, we ultimately decided that, in order to prioritize our collective safety, a lot of the emotional and interpersonal processing we needed to do would have to wait until the infiltrators were removed. Writing this has been an opportunity to process together and think more deeply about what we have learned and how we have changed since this happened.

Politically, we feel it is important to share our story for a number of reasons. We want to break the cycle of silence around experiences of state infiltration/ surveillance and share our experiences in a way that is accessible for those outside our immediate social circles. Often stories like ours circulate as gossip and rumours, which can help to keep us safer but can also lead to paranoia and the spread of false information. There are many valid reasons why people can't or don't speak openly about their experiences of infiltration. But if state security agencies are collecting information about us we feel we should also be sharing the information we have collected about them amongst ourselves, including our knowledge of their language, adopted personas, and tactics. Sharing this information gives us insight

IF NOT COPS, THEN WHO? CONT.

Understanding (MoU's)[1] and police forces being hired[2] out as private security for mine sites. And here in Canada, in the spring of 2017, documents released through access to information requests confirmed two important things that many had already suspected. First, that the state's espionage network involves coordination between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), provincial and municipal police forces, the National Energy Board (NEB), Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and departments including Public Safety, Natural Resources, Transport, Indigenous Affairs and Defence. Secondly, and of greater concern, that these departments in turn share the information they gather with numerous mining and energy sector companies. A National Observer article went so far as to say that "the evidence suggests the federal government has, in effect, become the security arm of the energy industry."[3] Given this context of state-corporate collusion on intelligence gathering, even if we were certain of who infiltrated our group, we could never be sure which agencies or corporations the intelligence might be shared with and to what ends.

into their infiltration strategies, which builds our power and keeps us safer. We also hope that our story adds an element of lived experience to current research and writings on contemporary trends in policing. In particular, we hope this story can act as both a broad critique and a very specific cautionary tale, illustrating what organizing looks like when state surveillance in the name of "risk assessment" increasingly penetrates our personal-political lives.

We are all white, university-educated people with Canadian citizenship and relative economic security, which means that we are in many ways safer from state violence than others. However, as activists we have varied experiences with state surveillance that gave us certain practical and perceptual skills in this situation. Sam's experience studying, and also being criminalized by, the legal system was an asset to us, as was Rachel's experience supporting human rights defenders facing state criminalization in Guatemala.

There were other factors that allowed this to play out as it did. For example, our emotional skills played a major role; we got through this relatively unscathed because we took the emotional aspects of this very seriously and prioritized remaining a collective. We also all knew each other somewhat before this happened (Rachel and Kate live together, Sam and Kate were in a relationship, and Merle and Rachel had been organizing together for more than a year prior) and had to quickly decide to trust each other. Lastly, other members of MISN (the group that Kate, Merle, and Rachel all organize with) trusted us to deal with this autonomously, believing that we would share what was "need-to-know."

There is also important cultural context about our activist "scene" to consider. We experienced this as activists in Toronto, an organizing scene with scars from being surveilled in the lead-up to the 2010 G20 summit. Part of our impetus for writing this was to respond to feelings of disempowerment that many experienced post-G20. Many of those who were active in Toronto around the G20 have understandably come to find it difficult to trust others in organizing contexts; this has impacted the ways that organizing is done here. We write this to re-open and broaden discussions of security culture and trust in Toronto, and to recognize that our ability to "catch" these infiltrators was in great part due to G20 lessons and legacies that have shaped the culture of Toronto organizing. We also want to share the skills we've learned about security culture and trust in our movements.

Putting these words to paper comes with some inherent risks—there are many forces at play keeping state surveillance techniques a

secret—but we have decided that the potential impact of breaking the silence around infiltration is worth this risk. We have not seen other resources like what we have written here (and there are probably many reasons for this). We likely will never have absolute confirmation that these two people were cops or private investigators for a mining company, but we feel absolutely confident that we made the right choice in kicking them out, and hope that the story of how we did it is instructive to others.

Some Historical Context

Some historical context is needed to properly understand this story. Some of this context is about the ways in which Canadian policing has changed and adapted over the years in response to the increasing corporatization and privatization of public services, shifting internal policing cultures, and changing activist tactics. In Lesley Wood's book *Crisis and Control: The Militarization of Protest Policing*, she articulates:

> While police leaders are now more likely to make formal, explicit declarations about civil liberties and the importance of human rights in a democratic society, an increasingly integrated and privatized field of policing pre-empts and limits those same civil liberties and human rights. This transformation is a result of the way that the logics of public policing are blending with the logics of military control and intelligence .... Police increasingly evaluate protest activity through the lens of 'threat assessment,' grouping it into a larger category that includes terrorism, war, and violent crime. (2014, p. 126)

As Wood explains, a relatively new change in Canadian policing and intelligence-gathering has been an increase of "integration," or communication and collaboration between security agencies (e.g. between CSIS, the RCMP, municipal police forces, etc.). Ever since the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, the Integrated Security Unit (ISU) has seemingly become the dominant organizational model for "securing" large-scale events in Canada. ISUs essentially operate as the "head" of large-scale security operations for major events; they are a multi-agency coordinating body that is formed for each mega-event and ensures that police, military, and intelligence agencies are working in concert with one another, sharing information, and dividing roles among the participating agencies. In terrorism investigations, similarly collaborative taskforces, called Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSETs), are used. After the Vancouver Olympics, this organizational form was also used to structure security operations

for the G20 Summit in Toronto in June 2010 and the Pan Am Games in 2015. The ISU for the Pan Am Games began the planning phase of security provision for the Games in October 2010 (notably, just months after the Toronto G20 Summit).

The Joint Intelligence Group (JIG), typically a branch of the ISU, is concerned particularly with gathering and assessing intelligence about potential threats to event security. It is usually composed of CSIS, the RCMP, and whatever police agencies are involved in securing the event. The JIG coordinates intelligence gathering among these agencies and ensures that each agency tasked with securing major events is aware of the potential threats that this intelligence "uncovers." Undercover operations are typically coordinated within the JIG and carried about by a particular policing agency. It's public knowledge[4] that this model of intelligence-gathering was used to securitize the 2015 Pan Am Games. Since the formation of the Pan Am Games' JIG in September 2014, "threat assessments" (to determine the likelihood of phenomena such as terrorism and protests deemed to be threatening or undermining the Games) were conducted weekly until the Games began.

As we mentioned in the introduction, three us are members of the Toronto-based activist group MISN, a small group that has been active for almost 10 years and that agitates against the violent and negligent practices of Canadian mining companies in solidarity with the communities impacted by their operations both in Canada and abroad. As the Pan Am Games approached, it was impossible for us to ignore the role of the Games' medal supplier, Toronto-based mining company Barrick Gold. Barrick's involvement in providing the gold, silver, and copper was announced in September 2014, and the medals were unveiled in March 2015 at a media event at the Royal Ontario Museum. We had already been talking about trying to leverage the general media blitz surrounding the Pan Am Games to intervene into nationalist sentiments about Canada as a "benevolent" country, but when Barrick's involvement was announced we could hardly believe how much of the story was being left out. Press releases about the unveiling stated that the design of the medals was "meant to highlight unity across the Americas," and was inspired by the unifying force of "land and water and the environment." Even the Royal Canadian Mint's construction of the medals used a special technique called "mokume gane" that "unifies" disparate materials into one final product. But as a mining justice group with ties to mining-impacted communities in vocal opposition to Barrick Gold's practices of perpetrating violence, contaminating water supplies, causing illnesses, and bringing about a

loss of livelihood in their communities, it was obvious to us that Barrick was using this as a propaganda tool[5] to get some good press. Mining reproduces the colonial relationships at the root of Pan-American inequality and injustice; it was deeply ironic that this company could pretend to have anything to do with "unity."

Meanwhile, TO2015 (the organization tasked with planning the Pan Am Games) announced in November 2014 that it was going to be significantly increasing its security budget to $247.4 million, more than doubling[6] the amount that it had initially proposed in its bid for the Games. The Joint Intelligence Group for the Toronto Pan Am Games had met for the first time in September 2014 to determine a security strategy for the Games, and it was around this time that we first met Kat and Alex.

Building Suspicions and Gathering Proof

We first met one of the people that infiltrated our group at a memorial held in late September in 2014 to mark the 5-year anniversary of the death of Adolfo Ich Chaman, a community leader murdered by a Canadian mining company in Guatemala. "Kat" approached one of the organizers, introduced herself, and expressed interest in getting involved. We shared that we had a new members' orientation coming up in the next few months.

About a month later we received an email from a member of another activist group in the city asking us if we'd be interested in attending an "allies meeting" of groups who were planning on organizing around the upcoming Pan Am Games in Toronto. It had been recently announced that Barrick Gold was a major sponsor of the Games, supplying the materials for the medals. After talking about it as a group, we agreed that attending this allies meeting would be a good opportunity for us and struck an internal MISN subcommittee to prepare for our attendance.

On November 3rd, 2014 we held a new members' orientation for MISN, where people who were interested in joining the group could learn more about what we do and how we do it. A couple of us organized and facilitated the event and each took responsibility for facilitating small group discussions to learn more about prospective members and answer any specific questions they might have. In one of these small group discussions, we met Kat and "Alex," who said they were a couple that was relatively new to the Toronto activist community and to social justice issues in general. They spoke in "we" language about their

involvement with MISN, said that getting more involved in organizing was something they wanted to do "together," and seemed pretty naïve about activism and politics in general. We gave them information about our next meeting but didn't expect them to show up.

Alex came to his first general MISN meeting on November 24th, without Kat. At this meeting we discussed the idea of doing some organizing around the Pan Am Games for the first time. He was very enthusiastic about the idea of getting involved in Pan Am organizing and talked about how in the years he lived in Italy he saw the negative impacts of the Olympics on the country and so felt passionate about these issues. He then offered (on behalf of both himself and Kat) to join the Pan Am committee.

> **MERLE:** I was suspicious that Alex only seemed interested in Pan Am stuff. Friends of mine involved in organizing had warned me that organizing around the Pan Am games could mean experiencing state surveillance. I dismissed my initial feeling of anxiety and attributed it to paranoia. But it still didn't sit right with me that new activists apparently interested in "learning more" were so interested in an aspect of our work that was non-introductory.

On December 8th, we held a Pan Am subcommittee meeting at a collective home that two of us live in. Kat and Alex both attended (despite the fact that Kat had not yet come to a general members' meeting). It was a small meeting, with only five people present in total.

> **KATE:** My experience of them in that meeting was that they got in the way of our ability to have a productive conversation, with consistent derailments and off-topic questions. I tried to be sympathetic—they were new to all of this and some of their questions ("what's a check-in?," or "what's a go-around?") did actually point to the amount of jargon that we use in these kinds of meetings. But I generally felt annoyed and frustrated that their new-ness and willingness to "take up space" prevented us from having the discussion we were supposed to be having.

We felt disconcerted by some of the questions that they (Alex in particular) were asking. For example, Alex said, "I know that OCAP [the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty],[7] for example, tends to use some pretty intense methods. But MISN doesn't approve of that, does it?" He also kept name-dropping other activists in the city (sometimes mispronouncing their names, which we would then correct).[8] We were careful not to share information about other groups and organizers despite their questions. At one point in the meeting we were talking about some recent news articles about various aspects of the Games (for example, the fact that a house was being built for gay athletes in the

athletes' village) and during this conversation Kat suggested that we start a Facebook thread to communicate about different places where we could have protests during the Games. The suggestion was out of the blue, and we were already communicating via email, so we said no to that pretty quickly. They also kept speaking as though they were invited to the Pan Am allies meeting that we were preparing for, even though we'd only ever talked about a couple of long-standing MISN members going. They only backed down once we said very clearly that only two of us would be going.

In these introductory discussions we had with them, we were told that they both worked freelance (he "worked for a buddy" as a landscaper, she was self-employed as a dog walker). He told us that he had two kids from a past marriage who stayed with him sometimes. She lived with her sister in north Toronto. They were both very vocal about wanting to help in whatever ways were possible and about wanting to follow our lead. They kept offering unsolicited information about themselves and apologizing for things out of the blue.

After that meeting we debriefed quickly and discovered through this conversation that there were alarm bells going off in all of our heads throughout the meeting. Given our suspicions—that Kat and Alex were perhaps not who they said they were—we thought we should talk to others to get extra insight. After the meeting, some of us talked to Sam, someone we knew who had experience with undercover infiltration tactics during the Toronto G20. After hearing all the details they felt pretty strongly that our suspicions were warranted. They were able to confirm that many of Kat and Alex's characteristics and behaviours were remarkably similar to those displayed by undercover cops tasked with gathering information about G20 activists.

The next day we "friended" both Kat and Alex on Facebook and they accepted our requests right away. What stood out to us right away was the very small number of friends they both had (about a dozen each), the small number of posts they'd made (about a dozen over a year), the lack of interaction with posts, the absence of photos of themselves, and the fact that they had both joined Facebook at the same time about a year ago. Alex's profile picture was a generic Guy Fawkes mask and one of the first pictures that came up on his profile was an image of someone throwing a Molotov cocktail, which seemed pretty strange to us considering that he had only ever come off as pretty naïve and harmless (albeit domineering). He had also already voiced concern about "OCAP-style tactics" (read: threatening tactics, according to the police), so his promotion of a Molotov cocktail-wielding protester

seemed strange. Kat's profile picture was a wordmap with generic words like "freedom," "humanity," "equality," "love," and "fairness."

Despite the fact that they said they were both new to social justice issues, the only Facebook events that Kat had attended all pertained to activist issues that have been historically targeted by Canadian policing and surveillance—explicitly anarchist events, events about black bloc organizing, resisting police violence, land defense, and a panel about the Pan Am Games. Her "likes" were mostly animal rights groups, land defense groups, a group related to Occupy, and MISN.

They each had one Facebook friend who at least one of us knew. We spoke to these friends and it turned out that neither one knew Kat and Alex at all. Before we even told one of them what was going on, they said: "The profile looks fake."

> **MERLE:** Talking to these friends made me realize how serious it would be if Alex and Kat really were surveilling us. I felt simultaneously unsure of who I could trust and a strong sense of worry about what others might also be experiencing.

We continued to pay attention to their behaviour but didn't immediately kick them out of the group. At this point it was December. MISN decided to have a holiday party on December 20th, since we usually only saw each other in meetings. Kat RSVP'd but Alex said he couldn't come because he had to take care of his kids.

We each spent some time during the party trying to get to know Kat better and understand her story. She told us that she grew up in a small town near Kitchener, that she worked for herself, and that she and Alex had been dating for about a year, starting about the same time she moved to Toronto. She came off as very friendly, sincere, and motivated by empathy for the suffering of people and animals. She was also asked about Alex, his kids (whose ages she, admittedly, "wasn't too sure of"), and both of their motivations for joining MISN. She couldn't seem to give a clear answer about Alex's motivations for joining MISN, aside from the fact that he's just a "very passionate person" who gets swept up in things. We asked her some questions about events she'd claimed to have attended and her answers were inconsistent from what we knew about her from Facebook—she told us that she had never been to activist events before MISN events. After one particularly awkward conversation with Sam where she seemed stuck on her answers to things, she abruptly got up to go to the bathroom. After returning from the bathroom, she promptly left the party. Just before leaving, she asked Kate to confirm the date of the next Pan Am allies meeting, which

she seemed to know off the top of her head even though she wasn't even invited to it. This, along with her seeming so freaked out by her last conversation at the party and her not seeming to know much about her partner, definitely threw up red flags for many of us. When the party was over we jotted down some information about what she had said (and were really glad to have these notes later).

In the new year, leading up to our next subcommittee meeting, Alex went out of his way to ask for the minutes from the Pan Am allies meeting that he hadn't been invited to. We never sent him these minutes. Kate also felt unsafe inviting them back into her home, so we had our next Pan Am subcommittee meeting in a public café on January 13th. Merle and Kate met up before the meeting to develop a facilitation plan, mostly because we had work to get done and Kat and Alex had derailed the last meeting. In our earlier engagements with Alex, we'd observed that he consistently spoke on behalf of Kat (even when she was there to speak for herself), and had already made it pretty clear that he had no problem with speaking out of turn, interrupting other people, and paying little attention to the stated agenda. As MISN is a group of mostly women, these recognizably sexist behaviours stuck out to us, so we wanted to have a plan to avoid rewarding this behaviour. It turned out that we definitely needed it.

Despite the fact that we clearly articulated in advance and at the beginning of the meeting that this meeting was about defining our goals and vision for our Pan Am organizing, Alex kept pressuring us to identify what our specific plans and tactics were going to be, and what the nature of MISN's tactics have been historically. Even after we made a point to give him a clear definition of the difference between goals and tactics, he kept pressing us for this information. Throughout the meeting, Kat emphasized the importance of not alienating anybody through our tactics, making sure that people impacted by the games "knew we were there for them." Neither of them really had any concrete ideas of their own as to what they were hoping to get out of this organizing. Another MISN organizer who had never met them before attended this meeting and confirmed that she found their behaviour to be quite strange.

At this point we all felt pretty sure that they weren't who they said they were, but we couldn't be absolutely certain at this point. The "proof" we'd collected so far was suspicious when understood as a cluster of facts, but each individual item was totally explainable when viewed on its own. However, we knew from the G20 conspiracy case that undercover cops have "handlers"—other police officers that "supervise" the undercover officers and keep in regular contact with

them while they are in the field. Undercover officers typically meet up with their handlers after every meeting or social event they attended in an undercover role. It became clear that if the handler somehow made themselves known to us, then we would have definitive proof that Kat and Alex were, in fact, cops.

On January 18th, about a week later, we had a general MISN visioning meeting that Alex and Kat both attended. At the beginning of the meeting, Kat mentioned that her neck was really hurting her. As we started a visioning activity, Rachel began taking photos of people engaging in the activity to post on social media later. Directly after Rachel did this, Kat said that her neck was hurting too much, and she and Alex left immediately mid-way through the meeting. Kate texted Sam (who was nearby) to let them know that Kat and Alex were suddenly and conspicuously leaving and Sam was able to watch them as they entered a nearby subway station. Sam looked through the glass walls of the station as Kat and Alex went through the turnstile. As Alex went through, he turned around and seemed to notice Sam standing outside, even though the two had never met before and Sam was standing in a small crowd of people. Sam watched Kat and Alex pay their fare and go down onto a platform. Just before the train arrived, Alex doubled back up the stairs from the platform, coming face to face with Sam. Sam retreated to a farther part of the station and saw that, when the train came, Kat and Alex did not get on it. Alex then pulled out his cell phone, even though he was underground (this was before there was widespread cell service in the subway system). At this point Sam decided to leave the subway station and, as they exited the station and got only a few metres from the entrance, two police cars came zooming up to the station with their lights on. Three or four police officers ran out of the cars and into the station. Sam continued to walk away to a safe place.

> **KATE:** Though we felt certain that Sam wasn't doing anything illegal by following them, we knew that illegality wasn't a necessary condition for getting arrested or messed with by police. I was really nervous. I eventually got a phone call from Sam letting me know that they were safe at a friend's house and that they were going to stay there for a while until they felt more confident that they weren't being followed.

For Sam and Kate, this was the confirming evidence they needed in order to believe with conclusiveness that Kat and Alex were undercover cops. The two felt that the likelihood was slim to none that two police cars could *happen* to be responding to an emergency at Christie Station at the exact same time that this was happening.

SAM: I had just left the station, which was otherwise fairly empty and there was no emergency happening at the time that the police could have been responding to. It seemed much more likely that the two cars were on-call as Kat and Alex's handlers or backup, in case there was an emergency situation with Kat and Alex that they might need to respond to.

The whole situation felt suspicious; even if Kat and Alex were just spooked by seeing Sam and called the police, there were so many facts that didn't line up. Why would the sight of Sam have alarmed them so much? How did Alex even recognize Sam, when they had never met before (while Sam was already known to police for their organizing work and as a target of the G20 police infiltration)? How could they have placed a phone call to the police when they were underground? How and why would two cop cars show up with their lights and sirens on within seconds in response to a call from a civilian?

What had happened really freaked us out and it became evident to us how important it was for our safety to keep a strong commitment to clear communication and relationship maintenance throughout this process.

A few days later, Kat contacted Merle over Facebook. She asked Merle if she could call her; Merle's initial reaction was to call the others and try and figure out what to do.

MERLE: I had a feeling she wanted to talk about what happened and I felt very torn up about whether to respond and how. After speaking with others it seemed initially that a response wasn't worth the trouble, as a phone call could potentially open me up to more surveillance (they didn't have our phone numbers yet). Later I responded because at that point a small part of me still worried that perhaps they weren't infiltrators and were actually just some naïve new activists we had really alienated.

Merle responded via Facebook message saying she was busy and asked what Kat wanted to talk about. Kat again asked to talk on the phone and Merle, still questioning whether it was wise, held off on responding until the 20th, apologizing for her absence and asking to keep the discussion on Facebook Messenger. Kat responded with a long message telling Merle that she thought Sam was following her and ended by asking: "I just wanted to see what you know about Sam or how well you know them." It was clear to all of us that her central objective in messaging Merle was to gather information on Sam.

MERLE: I felt very alone throughout this experience. I was able to talk with Kate, Rachel, and Sam about my feelings but our communication had broken down a bit at this point. I was afraid of my family and friends experiencing

surveillance if they knew what was going on. Despite this fear I broke down and told my mom what was happening and dealt with a lot of guilt around whether I had exposed her to state surveillance.

I am someone who is fairly open about my own experiences with gendered violence and at the time was volunteering at a sexual assault crisis line. I thought that was possibly why Kat reached out to me. I was very uncertain about whether that was because she legitimately wanted a listening ear or because she perceived that it would be easier to manipulate me.

RACHEL: At this point, I had a lot of conflicting feelings. Now that I was convinced that Kat and Alex were definitely not who they were pretending to be, and were likely cops, I felt a huge amount of guilt that by having them over to our house a few times I had put my housemates at risk. I also had no clue whether I should be worried about our house being bugged in some way, or whether this was me being excessively paranoid.

I also felt like a number of my concerns were really different from the rest of our group's, and was nervous about our group process and how we would figure out what to do next. My background in witnessing/experiencing surveillance came from some really different contexts from the rest of our group; while living and working with land defenders and environmental justice organizations in Guatemala, I had seen many different forms of surveillance and violence by cops and other groups hiding their identities. The types of precautions I had learned to take in this context of solidarity work were primarily geared towards protecting people who were at risk of being kidnapped, assassinated, or facing other threats to their bodies or their families. In comparison, the risks we and others in MISN faced felt smaller, so I think I had trouble feeling like I was on the same page as my friends and co-organizers, and was definitely assessing risk differently. I had also witnessed situations (both abroad and in Canada) where the process of accusing someone of being an infiltrator had devastating effects on group cohesion and function and had put people in real danger. I think this meant that I was at times more worried about this possibility than about whether or not Kat and Alex actually were infiltrators. I was deeply worried that in the process of sussing out Kat and Alex (and in any future actions we might take concerning that) that we might cause lasting harm to MISN.

Kicking Them Out

At this point we were as convinced as we could be that Kat and Alex were undercover cops (or some other sort of infiltrators) and we also felt that we were subjecting ourselves, our fellow organizers, and allies to unnecessary threat by continuing to associate with them. So, we decided it would be best to confront them and kick them out of MISN. We debated pretty extensively about the best way to kick them out of our group in a way that both minimized risk and maximized the

likelihood of finding out what was really going on. We decided to initiate a Pan Am committee meeting at a café where Kate, Merle, and Rachel would confront them and ask a number of questions.

To prepare for this, we met a bunch of times to plan out what roles each of us would play and compiled a list of questions (constituting a loose script) for us to ask them. We wanted to maintain the tightest control possible over the interaction and we felt that creating roles would help us stay calm under pressure and not freak them out to the extent that they wouldn't answer our questions. Kate was designated as the "question-asker" and general driver of the conversation, Rachel was designated as the person to step in to smooth things over if anything got tricky and the person to formally kick them out of the group, and Merle was to hang back so she could keep a cool head in order to ask the tough question: "Are you cops?" We agreed that no matter how the conversation went, we would make sure not to let it end before directly asking Alex and Kat whether they were cops or with CSIS (the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Canada's spy agency), and informing them that they would have no further association with MISN.

We were genuinely worried that we might be arrested if our "confrontation" was perceived as aggressive and Kat and Alex panicked. As a safety measure, we arranged for a friend of ours who worked in movement legal defense to sit quietly nearby so they could observe the interaction. Sam was also sitting in the café at another table. As an added precaution we also asked a friend of ours with no affiliation to our activism to sit nearby, uninvolved in the interaction, so she could contact friends and family in the unlikely worst-case-scenario that all of us were arrested. It turned out that, besides the owner, we were alone in the café; just Merle, Kate, and Rachel and our three friends who were all sitting at other tables minding their own business.

Kat and Alex eventually showed up to the "meeting," but they were half an hour late. We audio-recorded this conversation using our cell phones and ultimately made a transcript of the entire interaction. What follows is an exact record of our conversation that evening, annotated with some of our observations.

KATE: I just wanted to give you a heads up. I know that there was some, like, confusion around Sam, and I wanted to just warn you that they're going to be waiting here at the café for me because we're going somewhere after this. And I didn't want you to be, like, thrown off before we got that resolved or whatever.

We had debated a lot whether Sam should be in the room when we confronted them. We wanted a pair of outside eyes that knew what was going on, but we were worried that Kat and Alex would freak out when they saw them. Saying this was our way of reducing that risk.

ALEX: That... sorry? Who's going to be waiting?

KATE: My partner Sam.

ALEX: Oh, okay. Fair enough.

KATE: Yeah, just so you know.

ALEX: Oh, okay. No, no.

KAT: It was just weird... right? Like, it was just one of those things—

ALEX: [Interrupts] They spoke at a Christmas party, and then it was like... came and...

KAT: Like, I went to go say hi and then they just... ran.

ALEX: Ran.

This is not at all what happened.

KAT: Like, I thought... at first I was like, did I offend them? Or, like, were they... are they upset? And then I was like... is it because I'm... is it because [*Alex's*] with me now? Like...

KATE: I honestly have no idea—

ALEX: [Interrupts] I just—

KATE: Maybe we can talk about it afterwards or something. We have a lot to kind of like... chug through.

RACH: [Unintelligible] before nine.

KATE: That's okay, things happen.

MERLE: You guys are going out tonight?

KATE: Yeah, I just have plans with friends later.

[Coffee arrives, more small talk, real talk starts again in a bit.]

KATE: So, yeah—

ALEX: [Interrupts] 'Cause you said... it sounds like we're... you're gearing up... based on the email, so—

In our email initiating this "meeting," I had said "Yes, we should definitely meet—it's been awhile! Pan Am is coming up quickly and we should probably start working on an action plan. It looks like the membership of our committee is changing, too, so we should probably check in about how work is being divided."

KATE: Yeah, we're definitely excited to have the chance to, like, start moving forward. And yeah, like, actually a pretty important agenda item today is we were hoping to ask you guys some questions.

ALEX: Sure.

KATE: Because we're, like, moving into actually wanting to get things done and we just realized we don't actually really, like, know you very well.

ALEX: Sure.

KATE: So, if that's okay with you.

ALEX: Absolutely.

KATE: And... it's, like, kind of awkward, but... like, we know you guys are, like, in a relationship and your lives are super intertwined, but I'm hoping that you can kind of answer on behalf of yourselves? It's really important—like, rather than answering for each other. Because it's just, like, important to us that we get the chance to, like, know and trust you as individuals as we move forward.

Because Alex had a history of speaking "for" Kat, we were hoping we could create conditions where they couldn't cover for each other—where they both needed to speak on behalf of themselves. We thought that this would make it easier to spot inconsistencies in their stories.

ALEX: Sure.

KATE: And, like, as individual members of the group.

ALEX: Mmhmm.

RACH: It's something that's come up for us with couples before, where we've realized that we don't know—like, if you're not on different committees, we don't know each person as an individual MISN member. But, like, there's a whole history to that.

KATE: Yeah, for sure. So... if that's okay—

KAT: What do you guys want to know?

KATE: Um... yeah, we just had some questions about some things we've noticed, or like— just pieces of your history that we don't necessarily know about.

ALEX: Okay.

KATE: And, like—I know we're friends on Facebook, and I was wondering why you both joined Facebook at the same time?

ALEX: Well—I'm not—well, I can answer. She was in a not-so—I'm new to it. And she was in a not-so-good relationship before, so it was kind of like—leave that behind.

Despite promising to speak on behalf of himself, one of the first things Alex did under stress was to launch into talking about Kat's history of intimate partner violence on her behalf.

KATE: Right.

ALEX: And I was new to it, so that's why. I mean, we—you guys know we met in the summer, so... it was one of those things. All right? Am I speaking out of turn? I don't want to... sorry, I probably shouldn't have divulged her history, sorry about that.

KAT: And to be honest, like, I don't really want to get into that.

KATE: That's—you don't have to.

RACH: Yep!

KATE: That's totally fine.

ALEX: Yeah. Sorry, I think I spoke out of turn. I apologize.

KAT: No, that's okay. Yeah.

KATE: And is that the same answer as to why you have the same, like... not very many friends on Facebook?

ALEX: She's the reason I got Facebook. That's really—

KAT: I dropped my life. Right? So.

KATE: Okay.

ALEX: Mmhmm.

KAT: That's what it is.

KATE: Cool. I'm wondering—did you go to the Anarchist Bookfair?

Their Facebook profiles showed that they attended the Toronto Anarchist Bookfair.

KAT: Did I go to what?

KATE: The Anarchist Bookfair.

KAT: Yeah.

KATE: Okay, and—

ALEX: [Interrupts] Which one?

KATE: The Anarchist Bookfair.

ALEX: The Anarchist Bookfair [mispronounces it]? The one at... the one on Gould?

He's playing ignorant, yet remembers the exact street that the fair was on.

KATE: Anarchist Bookfair.

ALEX: There was the one on Gould... no—

KAT: Like, U of—

ALEX: Yeah, it was at Ryerson.

KAT: Yeah.

ALEX: Yeah, last year. Yeah, yeah.

KATE: Okay. And I just know... I know both of you are, like... you've said before that you're, like, pretty new to all of this stuff, so I'm just wondering how you found out about it?

ALEX: About...

KATE: If you're, like, new to social justice issues, how you found out about the Anarchist Bookfair?

ALEX: It's open source. It's open, right? Facebook, and... you look at... I—it's funny, I even have one of my—one of my followers is, like, the Socialist Party in Italy. Why? Because I'm just interested in that kind of stuff.

Kate: Of all of the things that they said during this interaction, this short sentence for me is one of the biggest pieces of "proof" that they're cops (or something similar). During this conversation I didn't know what "open source" meant in the context of policing and was confused about what the Anarchist Bookfair had to do with open source software. Now, looking back, it feels like a HUGE deal that he said this. And he immediately corrects himself to say "open" instead of "open source." What are you even talking about, buddy?

KATE: That's—

ALEX: That's really it.

KATE: So you knew to just search for the Anarchist Bookfair, then? That's how you found out about it?

ALEX: No, I—it comes up. Do I keep track of how I...? No.

KATE: Okay.

ALEX: Okay?

KATE: Alex, I'm wondering how you know [name of friend from No One Is Illegal]?

ALEX: [Name]... yeah, he's with No One Is Illegal.

KATE: How did you meet him?

ALEX: I didn't. He accepted—when I asked to join No One Is Illegal, he was the one who accepted me as a member, or whatever you want to call it.

This doesn't make any sense. Alex seems to be saying that our friend automatically became his Facebook friend when Alex requested to join the NOII group.

KATE: So then... you joined the group, and then you added him as a friend?

ALEX: No. He accepted... he just accepts it as a... No One... [name] as No One Is Illegal, or something.

KATE: Okay.

ALEX: It wasn't... it wasn't a friendship. It came through No One Is Illegal.

KATE: But you're friends with him on Facebook.

ALEX: Okay. Then... it wasn't a friendship request. It must have been via... through No One Is Illegal.

RACH: We've just never seen people with so few Facebook friends. Like, it's really confusing to us... we're just trying to get to know you guys, and just want to know why you have so few Facebook friends.

KAT: I don't know what to tell you, like... I'm barely ever on it.

ALEX: I follow some of the Italian things... you can tell that some of mine are Italian, and... that's it. Really.

KATE: I have a, like, similar question as to how you know—

RACH: [Interrupts] Would you be open to using it, like, for MISN purposes? I'm just thinking, like... with MISN, like, we organize a lot on Facebook.

KAT: Yeah.

ALEX: Yeah.

KAT: For sure.

ALEX: Other than reading some things, there's no—I'm usually not on there. Really. And you know that I don't post much. I just— it's a form of some communication, it's a form of searching things, but that's really it.

KATE: Sure, okay.

ALEX: I get notices from my Italian newspaper. It's a quick way to read some of the... some More—

RACH: [Interrupts] But who are the people you guys hang out with in Toronto? Like, why don't you have them on Facebook? Like, I just have never met anyone who has, like, so few Facebook friends.

KAT: Well, I came to Toronto from Waterloo, right? And like I said, I left that whole life in the background, like...

RACH: Where'd you live in Waterloo?

KAT: Do you know where the university is?

RACH: Yeah.

KAT: The apartments on [street name].

RACH Oh, okay.

The way he keeps saying stuff like this was really weird. It just felt like they sat down one day and were like "Okay, you be sure to follow Italian things on Facebook, so they know you're Italian!"

Kate: Rachel starts to go rogue and step out of role a bit at this point (from my perspective). I remember feeling like it was getting out of control and like we were going off-script. I wasn't sure what she was trying to do and felt really upset that she interrupted me to start asking questions that we hadn't talked about asking.

Rachel: In retrospect, I see why Kate felt this way. At the time, I think we had a different understanding of what my role was in the conversation. I felt that I was doing what I was meant to in terms of smoothing out some tricky parts of the conversation, and asking follow-up clarifying questions.

KAT: So... and I bounced around a lot there, too, so there were... like... some people that wondered where I'd gone, or wondered, like, what I was doing when I moved, but I'm just not ready to face that part of my life. And to be honest, like, I feel like a lot of these questions are kind of...

We feel like this was Kat's "panic button" moment. She started acting really victimized and was trying to get us to back off by making us feel bad for asking "invasive" questions.

ALEX: [Interrupts] Personal.

KAT: Personal.

ALEX: They really are.

RACH: Yeah, they're totally personal, but like...

KAT: You know? And, like, the fact that... I don't know, I just feel really awkward.

ALEX: It is. It is feeling a little—

KAT: Like, it took a long time—

ALEX: [Interrupts] —of an inquisition, it really is.

KAT: —for me to be okay to, like, come out to things like this, and now I just feel like we're kind of being attacked.

KATE: We're definitely not attacking you. is is like... it's really important to us to know the people that we're organizing with, and like... we all get asked really similar questions when we started organizing.

RACH: All activist groups in the city are the same way, right? Like, once you get into really organizing with people, like... we wish we didn't have to, like, feel this way, but it's just sort of a fact of— But, like, what does Facebook have to do with—

This was Alex's "panic button" moment. It felt like a last-ditch effort to try to shift the topic of conversation away from the inconsistencies in their stories. In the moment, it felt SO transparently desperate.

KAT: [Interrupts] You have to... I mean, I'm going to be blunt about it. Let's be honest. is came up after they walked away from us [points at Sam].

KATE: Sorry, what came up?

RACH: What came up?

ALEX: This desire to ask us all... we've been together many times.

KATE: For sure, and—

ALEX: [Interrupts] Right?

KATE: And—

MERLE: But we haven't really done very much organizing together, to be honest.

ALEX: But we've been in your home. And this was never an issue.

KATE: This is just... it's an important next step.

ALEX: Fair enough.

KATE: Like... I think that we can all speak to the place that we're in right now—

ALEX: Absolutely.

KATE: —we can speak to where we're at with Pan Am, and it's just important that we can move forward trusting you guys.

ALEX: Absolutely.

KATE: Yeah. And building trust is a crucial part of community organizing.

ALEX: Absolutely. I agree. That's cool.

KAT: But what don't—I don't understand why you don't trust us. Like, what—

KATE: Oh! That's not what we're saying. We're not saying we don't trust you. It's just that we don't know enough about you to trust you yet. And that's a thing—

MERLE: Yeah, we want to *build* trust, basically.

KATE: Yeah.

ALEX: Fair enough.

Kate: It still makes me angry to read this. "But we've been in your home" was being used as a way of legitimizing himself and to mobilize a sense of trust.

Rachel: I kind of shivered when he said this. It's clear that the implication he was going for was "and therefore you seemed to trust us before," but it felt like an underhanded threat to me.

They calmed down at this point. I think they heard us say "build trust" and saw it as an opportunity, like maybe if they went along with these questions they'd learn things about what we were planning that they didn't have access to before.

KATE: For sure. So one question that I have is... it's been a thing that's kind of come up many times in the meetings that we've had, where you've pretty persistently asked us about MISN's tactics, and I'm just wondering why you've asked that.

ALEX: In...

KATE: In meetings.

ALEX: I've... I've never been... I don't think I've been specific to it. I've asked you more as in... if I'm going to bring ideas to the table, I have to know what you guys... right? I'm not... never asked specifics.

KATE: I see.

ALEX: I haven't. I... what are... and I admit it, there are... I put myself out there saying I don't know, and I'm here to help. But... it was like... what do you guys... I know what you do, like I mean, as far as, you know, the Barrick stuff, and... but it's one of those things... how... I just wanted to know... everybody's got different ways, and it was nothing specific. So. Realistically, I didn't realize I was speaking out of turn, but...

KATE: Okay, cool. And why have you consistently asked us for minutes and documentation from meetings you weren't invited to?

ALEX: No. Thee one time I asked, and Merle replied, was—remember our meeting? We had our subcommittee meeting—

KATE: [interrupts] I do remember.

ALEX: And then—it was on a Tuesday. You were gonna go to the committee and you said... you put it out yourself. at you were gonna give them.

KATE: Sure.

He said this as though he had caught us in a logical fallacy or something. Kate *had* said that she was going to send the minutes out, but that doesn't make it any less weird that he kept going out of his way to ask for them to be sent.

ALEX: That's all I asked. So then I asked in preparation for the next meeting, "Was there anything we should know?" And you said that, "At this point, I'm..."—one of you replied saying "It's not important." So, there you go. That's why I asked. Remember?

KATE: Yeah.

ALEX: You asked—*you* said you were gonna put them out there.

KATE: Okay. And Kat... one of the first—actually, I think the first Pan Am committee meeting that you came to, you suggested that we start a Facebook thread with a list of targets—Pan Am targets. I'm just wondering why you did that.

KAT: Pan Am targets? I don't even remember what you're talking about right now.

KATE: Okay, that's fine.

KAT: Like, when we were at the bakery, you mean?

KATE: No, at my house. The first—the very first meeting.

KAT: 'Cause I remember suggesting setting up a Facebook... like, a Facebook messaging group so that we could email back and forth that way. But I don't remember what you're talking about, targets.

KATE: Okay. Cool. So, the last—actually, I have one more question, and... I'm wondering if you called the cops at Christie station after our last meeting?

ALEX: No.

KATE: You didn't?

ALEX: I told you, we went to the Dufferin... Dufferin and Bloor medical centre, it was closed. And we went into the pharmacy, and that was it. And then we went home.

KATE: You didn't go into Christie station?

ALEX: Christie? Yeah, we went to Christie.

KATE: You went to Christie station.

ALEX: Went over to Bloor and Dufferin—
Dufferin and Bloor...

KAT: To the walk-in.

ALEX: To go to that walk-in, it was closed, we went into the pharmacy, and we went, uh... then we went home.

For those unfamiliar with the area, this is geographically VERY confusing.

KATE: And so when you were in Christie station, did you call the police?

KAT: No.

ALEX: No.

KAT: I told you, after that I had thought about it, because I was freaked out about what had happened. And quite frankly, I'm not that comfortable with... [gestures back to Sam]

Panic button, trying to make us feel bad for her, treating Sam like they're dangerous/unsafe.

ALEX: The part that was... is that we were standing at the stairs waiting for the subway... and when I walked towards the stairs I didn't know who they were. Until they came down to the platform and she recognized them. But I could see that they tucked in behind the wall. I didn't make anything of it until she told me who they were, and that's when we knew something was up.

This is not what happened.

KATE: But you didn't call the police?

ALEX: No.

KAT: No.

KATE: And so my question is, if you didn't call the police, why did they show up very quickly?

ALEX: I have no idea.

KAT: No idea.

They never denied that the police were in the station, suggesting they were themselves well aware that they came in. Despite being down on the platform where absolutely nothing was happening

ALEX: We were on the subway. We were on the subway.

KAT: In hindsight, I should have. Right? Like, I was not feeling safe, and if I had been by myself I probably would've. Right? But we got on the subway, there's no way of calling on the subway. And we didn't do it while we were there.

She was definitely ramping up the concern-mongering here.

ALEX: Yeah, right. There's no reception on the subway anyway.

He seemed grateful that she thought of this excuse. But Sam clearly saw him talking on his cell phone.

KAT: And if I had called the police, like... we wouldn't be here. Like... right? You told me that everything was fine, and I'm trusting that, and I don't know why that happened, but it happened and it made me extremely uncomfortable. And I think that the reason that I didn't call the police is because you told me that everything was fine, and I trusted that. Right?

KATE: Okay. All right, that's what I have.

ALEX: [To Rachel] You're... you look puzzled.

RACH: Yeah. It doesn't make sense to me that you would see someone you'd met before, and your instinct would be "I should have called the police."

ALEX: Because they ran.

KAT: Because they ran!

They started getting really escalated here, and started making no sense.

ALEX: They ran away from her!

KAT: I went to go say hi and they took off! And then Alex said "That's the same person that was ducking in, like, halfway up the stairs."

Sam: Kat did not try to speak to me after Alex saw me on the stairs. She never approached me.

RACH: And your instinct is to call the cops?

KAT: Because they were watching us from the stairs!

ALEX: They were watching us from the stairs. And then when we got to the top of the stairs... we were coming up the stairs—

KAT: [Interrupts] They ran down.

ALEX: They ran down—

RACH: [Interrupts] Do you understand why—

ALEX: [interrupts] No.

RACH: —it does not make any sense—

KAT: [Interrupts] No, I don't.

RACH: —for us to be... feel comfortable organizing with people who I think are going to call the cops on my friends?

KAT: Your friend *followed* me.

This was the most intensely I've ever heard her speak to us.

ALEX: It's—

RACH: I don't know what happened, but—

KAT: [Interrupts] I'm telling you.

ALEX: I'm telling you what happened.

KAT: We were standing on the—

ALEX: [Interrupts] Would you like to ask *them*? They're right there.

He turns around and points at Sam at this point.

RACH: I'm explaining why I looked skeptical.

KAT: Why don't you invite them over here and ask them? How about—they're videotaping us right now.

Sam: I was—attempting to—record the interaction on my cell phone.

RACH: I think this is what's going on—

KAT: [Interrupts] I don't feel comfortable with this, because they're videotaping us right now.

KATE: Why would you say that?

KAT: Because they're holding up their cellphone, videotaping us.

RACH: Videotaping? Like, this is the sort of thing that we are having trouble having trust around with you. Like, that you say these kind of things.Like, this is why we're having this conversation.

KAT: It's freaking us out too.

ALEX: I think... think it's time to go?

KAT: Yeah.

ALEX: I think it's time.

MERLE: I just have one final question for you. Are you cops, or are you with CSIS?

ALEX: No.

KAT: What?

ALEX: I don't—

RACH: Are you cops, or are you with CSIS?

ALEX: [Gets up in Rachel's face] NO. NO.

Rachel: For a brief second, I thought he was going to grab me while yelling at me.

KAT: No! Like...

ALEX: I think we're done.

RACH: Yeah. Okay, well you're no longer MISN members, and we do not want to have any contact with you in the future.

ALEX: Great.

KAT: Okay, *your* friend followed us. And I didn't call the police.

RACH: And we don't want to hear from you, and you'll no longer have any association with MISN.

KAT: That's fine.

ALEX: Okay. Grab your stuff.

[Silence. They gather their things and get ready to go.]

KAT: As females, I would have thought that you guys would understand a little bit better.

Kate: I will remember this moment for the rest of my life.

KATE: Thanks.

KAT: Like, a person follows us into the subway? Whatever.

[More silence, sounds of them leaving.]

After they left tensions were still high. We went for a beer to debrief and to breathe a collective sigh of relief but we were still really worried about what might happen next. We also felt proud of ourselves and excited that we had pulled it off. We knew it was just the beginning of a longer process though; we wanted to be able to talk to other groups as well as our friends and families about what we had experienced without putting them at risk.

Over the next few days, we stayed in touch with each other pretty closely. It wasn't until a week or so later that we re-listened to the recording together. On first listen we were struck by how much we sounded like total assholes and were pretty relieved that there hadn't been any strangers in the café listening to that conversation. We also felt pretty angry about how manipulative they had been; especially the last comment that Kat made to us around expecting more from us as "females." We had some conversations about how moments of letting ourselves step outside of our roles had possibly escalated the tension of the conversation. We decided to wait on having a larger debrief to process our emotions until we had gotten our story out in the media. Writing this zine has been a powerful opportunity to do a lot of that processing.

While listening to the recording we noticed a few pretty illuminating pieces of evidence that further led us to believe that Kat and Alex were cops. We noticed that Alex had used the term "open source" to refer to a Facebook event. We knew that this was a common way for police to refer to certain kinds of information (see the section below called "'Open Source Information:' Using Social Media Against Us"), especially online information. When asked about the Anarchist Bookfair they seemed confused but also remembered the street it was hosted on almost immediately. While these pieces of information on their own didn't seem like much, they added to a bigger picture of misrepresentation.

We have not seen or spoken to Kat or Alex since, and their Facebook profiles are still up but haven't been updated since they were kicked out.

Going to the Media

Once we had kicked Alex and Kat out of the group we talked about approaching mainstream media and trying to get them to cover the story. We felt that we had been incredibly lucky in how a lot of this had gone down, partly because those of us who had been directly engaging

with them were white, with Canadian citizenship and other privileges, partly because of what bad actors they were, and partly because of how minimal their involvement in Toronto organizing was before being kicked out. We know that there are so many stories of infiltration that can never be shared publicly and felt that we were in a better position to do so. We also still weren't fully sure that they were misrepresenting themselves and hoped that a reporter could use their resources to provide us with more certainty.

The timing also felt important to us. As we were in the process of planning to kick Kat and Alex out of our group, a terrifying and dystopian new surveillance law, Bill C-51,[9, 10] was making its way through the parliamentary process of becoming law.[11] It seemed like perfect timing to publicly demonstrate and denounce the spying and surveillance powers the state was already using and explain that what happened to us is something that would only become more common under this new legislation.

We also guessed that we were far from the only group being infiltrated/surveilled in the lead-up to the Pan Am Games (which were four months away at that point). We were hoping that a public article could raise awareness about the possibility of surveillance, as well as highlight the dark side of these Games that were already being celebrated across Toronto and in the media.

We talked as a small group, and also checked in with MISN's larger collective, to think through how we hoped the story would be presented and decide how to go about reaching out to reporters. We decided that we all wanted to be present to chat with the reporter, in part to prevent this from being a profile-type story that focused on one person's "tragic-heroic story." While some of us were stricken with anxiety at the thought of being placed under a media spotlight, we were all really looking forward to the possibility of being able to talk publicly about what had been going on with our friends and allies. While we were skeptical that mainstream media would frame the issues how we wanted, we did hope that some of our core messaging would get across.

Since we were concerned about problematic ways that the media might choose to spin the story, we developed a brief list for ourselves outlining our core points to help us stick to the messages that drove us to take this to the media in the first place. What we *didn't* want included in the story was just as important to us as our core messaging. For example, we didn't want the article to reify the arbitrary divisions between violent and non-violent protest groups[12] (e.g. "Why are they surveilling this non-violent group when we know the *real* bad guys are over there?"). We

didn't want the story to be about the state "going too far" by surveilling a group of nice white ladies (whether or not this characterization of our group is true), as though police surveillance of Black and Indigenous groups isn't also "too far." We also struggled with how to tell the story in such a way that didn't imply that we were "effectively halted" from doing Pan Am organizing—although we had certainly felt a lot of frustration with the energy we ended up putting into kicking them out and keeping ourselves safe rather than organizing, we actually ended up doing some mobilizing we are really proud of and didn't want cops to feel like they'd won! Lastly, we especially didn't want the story to erase or distract from the constant and pervasive criminalization of racialized people, sex workers, drug users, and homeless/under-housed people, for whom surveillance is the norm and not the exception, and who always face increased criminalization in the face of mega-sporting events like the Pan Am Games.

THE CORE MESSAGING WE LANDED ON IS AS FOLLOWS:

Policing and surveillance is spreading into every nook and cranny of our lives.

- Bill C-51 is taking a practice that's common and long-standing and enshrining it in Canadian law.
- We were violated, but that could have been way worse if Bill C-51 was in place.
- They were careful to make sure that they weren't entrapping us, but with Bill C-51 they would have more leeway to do this.
- Imagine a police officer sitting in your living room, watching everything you do and pretending to be your friend.

Mega-projects are used as launching pads to justify and elicit this spread of policing/surveillance (e.g. Pan Am, G20, Olympics, mine/giant industrial projects) and are justified using language of "economic development" and "revitalization." Giant state investments bring giant security investments, which don't end once the games/mines do, but rather broaden and intensify.

As a first step, we developed a list of mainstream journalists who had already been writing about Bill C-51 and sent out emails to them soliciting their interest, one at a time. The plan was to write to a broader list of journalists if we didn't hear back from them.

We didn't hear back from either paper for a little while and then suddenly both were very interested and one reporter in particular was very upset that we were speaking with a competing paper, wanting to be the first to break the story as part of her ongoing coverage of Bill C-51. It was a bit of a mess.

CORE MESSAGING CONT.

- This is a staple of the policing of particular communities, including the mining-impacted communities that we've been supporting for years.
- Connecting this experience to police repression in the communities we support—we've been working for many years with communities who have been murdered/assaulted/ in many ways violated by the police, but this has never happened directly to *us*.

We know this happened to us—what's happening at Jane and Finch? What's happening in the downtown east? etc.

- These are just the beginnings of what we anticipate will be a great deal of violence, heightened securitization and displacement throughout the Pan Am games, and poor, Black, Indigenous, sex working and otherwise criminalized people are going to face the brunt of this.
- We don't know the scope of this investigation. What else could they have done/could they be doing?

Ultimately, we met with a reporter from one Toronto newspaper who seemed interested in getting the full story, doing some actual investigation into who Alex and Kat were, and listening to our concerns. We met with him as a group and individually over the following month. We shared photos, audio recordings, and other documentation we had put together. We requested a commitment on his part not to publish anything from the materials we provided and to use them only to further his own investigation. We wanted to make sure that other people who were involved in the periphery of these events didn't have their personal information shared without their consent—and we also wanted to protect the ultimate identities of Kat and Alex in the very unlikely event that they were not in fact lying to us about who they were. When we met with him individually, we committed to only speaking from our own experiences, saying "you'll have to talk to ___ about that" when he asked questions about things beyond our direct experiences, or things

that we did not personally witness. We each had a particular kernel of core messaging that we focused on trying to communicate.

We all came into these media interactions from really different places. Some of us had a lot of media experience but also had been disappointed or disillusioned with how media had spun stories we were involved with in the past. Others had less media experience and were worried about saying something they didn't mean under the pressure, potentially letting everyone else down. Some of us had been burned in the past by pockets of activist culture in our city that can be harsh and unforgiving. We had some concerns that we would be misquoted, or that the article would frame the story very differently from how we would, and that we might then be publicly called out for saying something problematic.

Ultimately Merle ended up getting interviewed (and quoted) the most even though she was the least excited about doing media stuff. Sam was interviewed specifically about connections between this experience and the G20. It quickly became clear that the reporter was not going to publish the story soon enough to be part of the discourse on Bill C-51 as we had hoped, but was planning on waiting until much closer to the Pan Am Games. We also realized that the writer didn't have as much control as we thought about what ended up in the final article—a lot came down to what the editorial team would approve. Ultimately, the article ended up being published *just* before the Pan Am Games started. We (including the journalist we were working with) didn't know for sure that it was getting published until the day before it came out.

The best part of working with such a big newspaper is that the journalist was able to do quite a bit more investigative research into finding Kat and Alex than we were ever able to. He was required to do this because the newspaper was understandably very concerned about the risk of publishing an article accusing civilians of being undercover police. The journalist's assistants searched public legal records extensively (including birth records, marriage records, etc.), visited dog parks and Italian soccer clubs with photos of Kat and Alex asking people if they knew them (they ultimately spoke with over two dozen very confused dog walkers), knocked on doors in the neighbourhood Kat supposedly lived in in Waterloo, to no avail. They also contacted Kat and Alex directly via email to get their side of the story, with no response. This was very relieving to us, as this was further proof that we weren't just being paranoid. We were clear, however, that we didn't want

the newspaper to publish their photos or their last names, on the now infinitesimal chance that this had all been a horrible misunderstanding.

Once the article was finally published, we had pretty mixed feelings. On the one hand we were relieved—now the story was out and it felt easier for us to discuss it with others. We also got some really nice and supportive messages from family members, fellow organizers, etc., and were glad to see it getting shared around. On the other hand, we were concerned about how our families or workplaces would respond, and the framing of the article also made us feel a little silly (Merle, in particular, will never be able to bake "chocolate chip cookies with rosemary sprigs" ever again, and Kate will never live down the photo of her in the online article looking like she's telling a story about a very big sandwich she once ate).

We had a whole series of follow-up plans but it became quickly obvious to us how burnt out we all were. We needed a break, and despite promising each other we would follow up in some way as soon as possible, we ended up taking several months to get our shit back together, both personally and in terms of our activism (including actually planning Pan Am resistance), before we ended up reconvening to talk about and write what would eventually become this zine.

Lessons Learned

We learned a ton from the experience and this knowledge has had a major impact on our organizing practices. We explore below some of these lessons learned with the hopes that they might also be useful to others doing any sort of activism related to challenging capitalism, colonialism, and/or state authority.

Security Culture without Alienating New Organizers?

Our initial suspicions of the supposed couple that infiltrated MISN formed because these people didn't fit into the norms of our very particular activist crowd. We really worried at first that we thought they were infiltrators simply because they weren't "cool" and didn't know our activist lingo. We want to emphasize that "seeming out of place" is *not* a solid reason to exclude or ostracize people. Ultimately, we moved from these initial suspicions to finally kicking them out only after collecting a *significant* amount of evidence that they were misrepresenting themselves. Lots of people who are new to organizing may not have

knowledge of our jargon and norms; others (including some of us writing this) may be a little bit socially awkward. Many MISN members in particular come to us without any prior experience organizing and we take pride in supporting people in learning about how to confront injustice effectively (which is something we are all constantly learning). Ultimately, this experience has crystallized the lesson that sharing information that potentially puts you at risk should only be done with people you trust. We got to the point where the risk of having these people continue on in our group was simply too large.

Law is Confusing

This section should not be interpreted as legal advice.

After seeking a number of legal opinions on this matter, this is our understanding of the legal parameters of what happened. Under section 129(a) of the *Criminal Code*, it is an offence to "resist or willfully obstruct a public officer or peace officer in the execution of his duty or any person lawfully acting in aid of such an officer." It can be charged as either a summary or indictable offence, with a maximum sentence of two years. In Canada there has not been very much legal precedent on the question of calling out undercover police. The closest case seems to be that of *R. v. Westie*, a 1971 decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal. In that case, a person was convicted for repeatedly warning others of two undercover police officers doing a panhandling sweep on a street in Vancouver despite the officers warning him that doing so amounted to obstructing police. We have come to believe that because Kat and Alex weren't investigating any actual illegal activity—their role was more intelligence gathering than criminal investigation—*R. v. Westie* is easily distinguishable from the situation we had found ourselves in. For Kat and Alex's work to count as criminal investigation, they would need to believe that a particular criminal law had been broken. Intelligence gathering isn't about investigating actual crimes but about exploring the potentiality of crimes (or, realistically in the world we live in, manufacturing crimes). In the context of Bill C-51 and the entrapment of John Nuttall and Amanda Korody in British Columbia (*R. v. Nuttall*), concerns about the state fabricating criminal conspiracies and plots are increasingly warranted. The other important distinction between *R. v. Westie* and our situation is that that case was decided before the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came into being, and so

was not considered alongside the fundamental freedom of expression contained in section 2(b) of the *Charter*.

We also knew of several cases[13, 14] after the G20 in Toronto in 2010 where activists were criminalized for publishing and broadcasting the names of Brenda Carey and Bindo Showan, the undercover officers in the G20 investigations. However, neither activist was ultimately charged with obstructing police. One was charged with Disobeying a Court Order because a publication ban on the real or fake names of the undercover officers was still in effect as the G20 Main Conspiracy Case made its way through court. The other was charged with counseling assault, harassment, intimidation, and defamation.

There seems to be more incidents in the United States of people being charged for outing undercover police. This is likely the origin of the common caution, often given in legal rights workshops, that outing undercover police is illegal. Often ideas float up from the US context that aren't actually legally applicable in Canada, and this seems to be the case here.

"Open Source Information"—Using Social Media Against Us

One of our biggest takeaways from this experience was a commitment to taking a second look at our personal social media use from a surveillance perspective. Bill Blair, the former chief of the Toronto Police Service, has toured around the world giving presentations bragging about Toronto's "gold standard" of social media monitoring[15] as a tool for defusing protest. In Toronto and elsewhere, this kind of "open source" intelligence gathering (that is, grounded in the collection of overt and publicly available, as opposed to covert and clandestine, information) is becoming increasingly central to the repression of radical organizing.[16]

It is easy to believe that just because you're not sharing "secret" or "high-risk" information that you are not contributing to intelligence gathering efforts. The thing is, a lot of undercover intelligence gathering these days isn't *just* about tracking and inciting illegal activity—it's working from a broader "risk management" framework that relies on mapping social networks, figuring out who's connected to whom, learning about how we talk, getting information about demos that will help police/intelligence agencies "assess threats" and respond with "appropriate" policing strategies. Social media platforms like Facebook are an ideal way of accessing this kind of information because cops don't need a warrant to access it. If they're looking to your group's public Facebook page for information, then this is "open source" information

for them. Even your private Facebook page is a fount of open source information once you unknowingly add an undercover cop to your list of "friends." Paying attention to who we're adding and what we're saying on social media is one way of having (some) control over whether/how much our information is being used and collected.

It's tricky to know where to go with this, because so much of our organizing these days is really reliant on social media; some of us walked away from this experience with a strict "no more adding strangers to Facebook" policy, while others of us who use their Facebook pages for outreach saw the idea of a "real-friends-only" policy as a more major loss. While making choices about "friend-adding practices" will ultimately be a personal one, it might be worth reconsidering adding strangers to Facebook.

Looking back on our experiences, some things that stood out for us in Kat and Alex's profiles that were early signs of misrepresentation included:

- They had very few friends;
- Any mutual friends they had either didn't know them or used Facebook for promotional purposes and was thus likely to accept any friend request;
- They had no pictures of themselves;
- They had few posts and very little interaction by others with their posts (e.g. few likes on anything, only one person wishing them a happy birthday, no one posting anything to them).

Obviously none of these things means anything definitive about someone—they were just some things that planted the seeds of suspicion.

Performing Activist Legitimacy

Becoming choosier about who has access to one's information on Facebook helps reduce surveillance and also reduces the social legitimization of undercovers' sketchy Facebook accounts. Looking at some of the strategies that we used to determine whether these people were infiltrators, a lot of it was rooted in some pretty common assumptions that most of us make on social media. For example, if Kat and Alex had managed to get more firmly rooted in the Toronto activist community and had 32 mutual friends with us instead of one each, would we have doubted them so strongly? It is likely that this information would have been used as an argument that they were "cool" (that is, safe), despite knowing that people sometimes accept friend requests from people they don't know.

There are other ways that undercover police find legitimization in activist communities. For example, early on in our process of figuring these guys out, one reason why we didn't immediately eject them from the group was because some of us felt that there was safety in knowing what they were up to and that MISN was a relatively harmless space for them to be in. When we described this logic to a fellow activist, however, he pointed out that by continuing to be "MISN members," Kat and Alex maintained their ability to say that they "organized with MISN" as a way of gaining trust and legitimacy with other groups in the city. This could have increased their access to activist networks and ran the risk of making them seem more trustworthy and less like they were "coming out of nowhere."

Using Our Politics Against Us

We have some big fears about including this section, largely because we do not live in a perfect world and we worry about how this will be used to justify oppressive behaviour in our communities. But it's important to talk about the implications of the ways in which the woman cop in this situation used a supposed history of intimate partner violence as a way of explaining why she had no personal history to tell of and as a way of deflecting criticism when we called her motivations into question.

At the MISN holiday party, Kat started making allusions to having been in a "bad" relationship when she lived in Waterloo and before she started dating Alex and this story came out in full force when we confronted them at the café. Her story was that in the course of escaping this relationship she had had to cut off all ties with her former life. This was why she had virtually no friends. This was why she had no history to speak of. This was why we were meant to stay away from asking any "personal questions" of her. This was why "as females," we should have known better than to ask her to account for her weird behaviour.

Let's be honest: it feels terrible writing about this. Despite all the proof we've gathered, it may never be possible to shake the tiny voice in our heads suggesting that we were wrong about everything, that not only have we been weird and hostile towards two real people, but that we've also dismissed the story of an abuse survivor. We don't think that this is true, but the worry remains.

Knowing that undercover cops use stories like this as a way of securing unquestioning entrance into activist communities makes us pissed, as a group of both abuse survivors and people in relationship with survivors. We also know that in the Toronto G20 in 2010, one of the

undercovers made accusations of racism as a way of creating rifts in groups and deflecting criticism. Another used the same story of fleeing an abusive relationship to explain her reluctance to speak of her past. It's obvious that even though having an awareness of and sensitivity to the impacts of systemic and interpersonal violence is one of our biggest strengths in radical communities—we're told "believe survivors" and so many of us do, in dedicated and passionate ways—cops see this commitment as a weakness to exploit. It's also obvious that when there are patterns of oppression in our activist communities, this weakness is exploited as well.

We have so many questions about finding ways to incorporate an understanding of this infiltration tactic into our practice of security culture without being giant assholes by dismissing claims of violence. We fear that this writing will be taken up in ways that really deviate from our intended goals in sharing it, but we also fear what can be produced in a social context where many people know about this phenomenon but nobody talks about it.

We know a few things for sure. One of them is: when somebody tells you that they have experienced intimate partner violence, this is NOT a valid reason to suspect them of being an undercover cop. Let's say it again, for good measure: *somebody telling you that they have experienced intimate partner violence is NOT a valid reason to suspect them of being an undercover cop*. Despite everything that has happened, we still feel that it would have been shitty of us to continue to press for details about Kat's past or act suspicious of her story. We are not detectives and it is not our job to make sure that people's stories of violence "add up." That said, we feel that it is important to speak openly about this infiltration strategy so that others are prepared. It is not the first time it's been used, and it likely won't be the last. It is very powerful—for some of us almost irresistible—to be called on to protect or advocate for a person claiming to be victimized. When Kat messaged Merle saying that she felt scared of Sam after the incident in the subway, it was hard not to feel pulled into an emotional response even though we knew what had actually transpired. We were lucky to have personal knowledge of how this strategy was used in almost exactly the same ways by a woman undercover cop during the G20 when activist groups were infiltrated then. Knowing to expect this as a tactic that Kat might use in the confrontation helped us to prepare better, which really helped us stay on track and avoid getting thrown off when it was ultimately deployed. Through this (mostly emotional)

preparation we found ways to resist her manipulation without entirely sacrificing our feminist politics.

There are things we can do to be proactive about protecting our groups and communities against the use of this tactic. We discuss these further in the "Security Culture in Our Movements" section below.

"Believing survivors" as a politic doesn't mean that all of your security culture practices have to go out the window. If somebody's experiences of intimate partner violence have meant that they feel they cannot tell you a single thing about their entire past (honestly, we have many survivors in our lives and have never met somebody for whom this is the case), then that is absolutely their prerogative. It could also possibly mean that you decide to be choosier about what you organize with them—just like you would with anybody you don't know much about. Or maybe it means that you build trust with this person in other ways. It's possible to ask questions about somebody's life experiences without pressing them for details about their abusive relationships. Fostering a security culture that respects the lives of survivors means finding many different kinds of ways to build trust and get to know somebody, while also keeping in mind that our reactive responses to disclosures of abuse and violence make us vulnerable to police using our experiences of oppression against us.

This is Emotional

This process wasn't easy, at all, nor was it purely about detached, strategic decision-making. The months between our initial suspicions and our final act of kicking them out of our group involved a lot of difficult, often tense conversations where we disagreed with each other a lot, felt unsafe, felt abandoned, felt betrayed, and felt scared and confused, in both big and small ways. At the same time, MISN also emerged from this experience still strong and in good relations with each other. We feel that working to maintain good relationships with your friends/co-organizers while grappling with this situation is incredibly important. This is true because our personal well-being and the well-being of our social connections matter a ton, but also because infiltrators benefit tactically when they plant rifts in our relationships, when "risk" is neutralized because activist groups have gotten so mired in infighting that they cease to be effective. Cops also have been known to purposefully cause conflict as a way of building trust with one organizer by eroding their relationships with other organizers through

gossip and shit-talk. Prioritizing the creation of space for complicated emotions and the strength of relationships is therefore both personally and strategically important.

Knowing that there's a cop in your midst can be incredibly stressful and can make you feel paranoid and unsafe. In our case this played out in a bunch of ways. Many of us felt like we needed to put aside our feelings in order to be "productive" and take action. We worried a lot about fucking up, about whether we could ever trust new people, and about both being too paranoid and/or not being paranoid enough.

> **SAM:** Watching undercover cops come around and buddy up with my friends again five years after the G20 infiltrations rekindled some of the terrible, intense feelings of fear and trepidation that staring down the barrel of the G20 prosecutions engendered. It made me confront the fact of police surveillance being an ever-present part of life for activist-types who seek to impede business as usual. This happening yet again has made me accept that this is the terrain of struggle—that these are the risks and this is the new normal. That's a tough realization to *really* come to terms with. With that said, the vast majority of people in activist communities are not going to be the targets of this sort of surveillance and infiltration. These tactics are too resource-intensive for the police to use on a large-scale. They are used sparingly, but they are to be expected for major security events.

Finding out too late that there has been a cop in your midst can be even worse—there are legacies of trauma in our activist communities stemming from this experience of trusting someone who turns out to be a cop. We need to find ways to balance "being strategic" with taking care of each other and understanding the emotionality of all of this. We did this well in some ways, and failed in others. Our strategy for kicking these cops out of our group prioritized a number of different goals, but one example of an important emotional priority was making decisions that allowed us to be able to talk about what was happening with at least some trusted friends as early as possible. If this ever happens to you, it's good and okay for your strategy to include emotional/relational strategy.

"Why Did They Pick *You*?"

We've had a lot of people ask us why we think we were the ones who were infiltrated if we generally use non-violent tactics and weren't planning anything illegal. We have a couple of (not-mutually-exclusive) ideas.

The Pan Am Games had a giant security budget. They didn't necessarily have to be very selective about where they put their resources. We believe strongly that we most definitely were not the only group that was infiltrated, or that was targeted for infiltration; we were just the only one (that we've heard of) that managed to catch them red-handed, mostly because they were terrible at their jobs.

Timing could be a factor. The Joint Intelligence Group for the Pan Am Games was formed in September 2014, about one month before we had a new members' orientation that was open to anybody. We were probably just the first "easy in" that came up as they began their process of risk assessment.

Historically, undercover cops don't usually start by getting in with the "big guys" (i.e. groups that they feel pose strong risks to public security). Since groups who use direct action tactics that push boundaries of legality tend to have more exacting processes for bringing in new members, groups like us with open, public processes for bringing in new members and a general orientation to trying to be accessible to new activists, are an easy "in." We have seen this happen in a number of different settings, including in the lead-up to the G20 in Southern Ontario. Once undercover cops have established themselves in easier-to-join groups (who are almost inevitably connected to other groups through friendship and/or organizing networks), this legitimizes them in ways that can sometimes grant them access to groups who they perceive as more confrontational and who may pay closer attention to who joins their ranks.

Legality/Illegality: A Harmful Fixation

In discussions of our eroding national standards of privacy, people and groups who understand themselves as "law-abiding" can often be heard saying things like "well, I'm not doing anything illegal, so I don't care if they're watching me." After this experience, we feel even more strongly opposed to this sentiment than ever before.

First and foremost, it is important to remind ourselves that the distinction between illegal/legal is a framework of morality that is developed by the state—not by communities—in order to uphold the unjust power relations of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. There are many things that are illegal that shouldn't be, and many things that are legal that are violent and morally reprehensible. There are entire communities who have been defined as either "illegal" by the state (e.g. undocumented folks), or who are criminalized for

getting their basic needs met (e.g. HIV-positive people, drug users, people experiencing homelessness, etc.). When we applaud ourselves for being law-abiding activists (even if we are), we limit ourselves to superficial framings of morality that actively harm a number of marginalized communities, and we uphold the very power relations we are resisting. We also throw potential comrades who are asserting alternative visions of morality (outside of the state-enforced definitions of legality/morality noted above) under the bus and destroy opportunities to build our collective power in support of those alternative visions.

Are you part of an activist group who generally sticks to legal tactics? Do you feel in any way committed to being in solidarity with groups who use direct action/civil disobedience tactics? Or to groups who have a history of being criminalized no matter what tactics they use? Then it is important for you to start paying close attention to the issue of undercover surveillance and develop some security culture practices for yourself and your group. Groups like you/us are infiltrators' "in" to our networks, as diverse and decentralized as they may be. While our different activist groups may use varying tactics, we are often working towards a similar vision of the world. In order to keep ourselves safe and strong against movement infiltration, all activist groups must resist getting lazy out of a false sense that "we" aren't the "kinds" of activists who are surveilled. We are all in this together.

Security Culture in Our Movements

This experience definitely taught us some things about "security culture" practices that we'd like to share here. A lot of what we'll say in this section isn't new; this stuff has been written about a lot (see the refence list for some awesome resources on security culture that we've drawn on quite a bit in this section).

"Security culture" describes the practices and norms that we build into our ways of communicating, organizing, making decisions, and relating to each other in activist (and otherwise surveilled) communities that account for and anticipate the ways in which organizing and protest is targeted by government surveillance and often criminalized no matter the actual nature of the activities.

At their worst, security culture practices in activist communities can make groups paranoid, insular, ineffective, and self-destructive. But we feel that, at their best, security culture practices are a conduit for us to get better at living our social justice values. Important principles of security culture—e.g. getting to know each other and having real relationships,

building trust, not gossiping/shit-talking, staying away from macho posturing and grandstanding, being strategic, being thoughtful, etc.—can actually help us to foster qualities in our movements that are good anyway.

A really useful example of how this can apply brings us back to the concern we raised earlier of cops using "intimate partner violence" as an infiltration strategy. There are lots of proactive qualities and capacities we can develop to protect ourselves from this tactic that help keep us safe and that are also good anyway. The better our groups are at supporting people with experiences of violence who aren't cops, the better able we will be to respond to cops when they try to use our compassion for people's experiences of oppression against us. This infuriating tactic works because it exploits the ways in which many people panic in the face of community members' disclosures of violence. If we freak out when somebody tells us they've been assaulted or abused, then we will definitely freak out when a cop does the same. But if, as a community, we collectively have the emotional and relational skills to calmly and confidently support survivors and hear their stories, we are creating an interpersonal terrain that is much more difficult to exploit. If a cop accuses your group of endemic racism and you all panic and collapse into a pile of conflict, gossip, and guilt, they win. If a cop does the same and you handle it with maturity, commitment, and accountability, you win.

When it's relevant to them, police are paying close attention to our language, our social networks, our values, and our priorities. This means that when there are weaknesses in our social movements like endemic racism or sexism, these weaknesses can and will be exploited. We should be fixing these problems in our radical communities because these problems are harmful, but an added motivation is that having good relationships, solid conflict resolution practices, and strong mechanisms for accountability can serve to protect us against infiltration. If a single cop dedicated to causing conflict can throw an entire group into interpersonal crisis with just a little shit-talk and a few accusations, we need to try and strengthen ourselves against this. Thus, transformative justice and accountability can be security culture practices.

While this experience has changed a lot of our organizing practices, it was reassuring to us to see that many aspects about MISN's existing culture really protected us from getting even more fucked over than we were. Even though we weren't necessarily looking at these things as "security culture practices," and even though there were a lot of

things about security culture that we needed to learn fast and on the fly because we didn't understand ourselves as very at-risk before, we saw in practice that some of the key ways that we operate helped us deal with this much more painlessly than if we held different values. As an explicitly feminist group that grounds itself in an ethic of care and good relationships, we know that misogynists make great informants[17] and that trust can't be built on a foundation of interpersonal violence. The trust that we had cultivated in our group also meant that when we said to the MISN collective, "listen, this thing is happening and we don't know how much talking about it will put you all at risk," others believed that we would handle it well and let us take the lead on coming up with a solution without micromanaging.

There are two other concrete ideas that this experience has really shifted and crystallized for us: one is thinking about "knowns" and "unknowns" when bringing new members into a group, and the other is about entitlement to information.

It was really important to us that this experience not make us paranoid monsters when it came to bringing new members into MISN in the future. Even though sometimes we still feel a bit paranoid, it helps us to understand the difference between "automatically suspecting that somebody is misrepresenting themselves" and "not knowing enough about somebody (yet) to confirm that they are who they say they are." Rather than building toxic "in-groups" and "out-groups" in our activist collective and being suspicious of all new members, we now orient ourselves towards really getting to know new members and seeking out information that will help us shift them out of the "not enough information to confirm that they are who they say they are" category and into the "almost certainly they are who they say they are" category in our minds. What information is relevant enough to warrant that shift will probably be different for everybody, but some examples of things we tend to look out for are: Are they the childhood friend of someone you know? Have you met their mom (or a similar figure)? Have you met their kid? Do they exist on the public record already (e.g. have they been interviewed by the media, have they published a book, do they have a high school yearbook photo, etc.)? Have you seen proof of the jobs they have? Can somebody in the city they come from vouch for them? etc. Obviously none of these things can be understood as "absolute confirmations" (there are horror stories of well-respected anarchist authors being found out to be white supremacist infiltrators and undercover cops having kids with activist women), but they can be understood as useful points of data. These things also won't help to

establish whether somebody is a paid informant, which is a whole other story we don't have many answers for here.

This sort of careful inquiry has come to be a pretty calm mental process for us; it's not like we're super stressed out being around people when we don't know that they are not cops. We're friends and co-organizers with lots of people who we don't know for sure are not cops—we just might not organize certain kinds of things with them or share everything with them. Having good security culture practices doesn't have to feel weird and scary all the time. As the CrimethInc. collective says in their zine about security culture:

> Having a security culture in place saves everyone the trouble of having to work out safety measures over and over from scratch, and can help offset paranoia and panic in stressful situations—hell, it might keep you out of prison, too. The difference between protocol and culture is that culture becomes unconscious, instinctive, and thus effortless; once the safest possible behavior has become habitual for everyone in the circles in which you travel, you can spend less time and energy emphasizing the need for it, or suffering the consequences of not having it, or worrying about how much danger you're in, as you'll know you're already doing everything you can to be careful. (n.d., 1)

Another good way to support security culture is to get comfortable with the feeling of not being automatically trusted, to try and shake any sense of entitlement to others' information, and to actively see the value of slow processes of trust-building. In short: we need to learn to be okay with people wondering if we're cops. If you join a new group and people aren't immediately forthcoming with all sensitive information, that's actually a good sign as long as the group has a dynamic rather than static understanding of trustworthiness. It can be really difficult not to take it personally when people don't automatically assume the best of you, and not to wonder "what is it about me that makes them not trust me!?" Common ideas about democratic decision-making dictate that everybody should be a part of every decision ever, and it can feel really good to be brought into "in-group" conversations. But if good security culture with a dynamic understanding of trustworthiness entails a constant process of gathering information that will help you decide that somebody is probably not misrepresenting themselves, it's important to give that process time and to invest in your own process of being trustworthy. In an ideal world, if Kat and Alex weren't infiltrators and were asked if they were, they would not have reacted defensively with "No! No!" They would have expected us to wonder this, understood the importance of our wondering, and either worked to help us find the

information we needed to believe otherwise or just given the process more time.

A lot of these things are difficult to shift because it's all about safety and trust, which we tend to be reactive around out of a sense of self-protection. But when we pay close attention to the decisions we're making around these things and try to be more thoughtful, intentional, and proactive, we can create the kinds of strong communities that are safe(r) from infiltration and surveillance.

Endnotes

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7 Ontario police have had a weird fixation on OCAP ever since what is commonly called the Queen's Park Riot in 2000. There is some record of Waterloo Regional Police officers training to become part of

the 2010 G20 Integrated Security Unit and using the lessons learned from policing failures surrounding this 2000 protest as a case study for how to communicate well, take good notes, and tell the difference between "protesters" and "anarchists" (Wood, 2014, p. 157).

8 These kinds of questions are as much about gathering information about social networks as they are about gathering information about risk. Correcting them on the pronunciation of people's names showed that we knew these people, or at least "of" them. Kat and Alex seemed to know a lot of activists' names for two people who were supposedly new to the movement.

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Acronyms

CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
G20	The G-20, or Group of Twenty, is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies. We are referring to the G-20 meeting in Toronto in 2010
INSETs	Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams
ISU	Integrated Security Unit
JIG	Joint Intelligence Group
MISN	Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEB	National Energy Board
OCAP	Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
Pan Am	Pan American Games, also referred to in the zine as the Games
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
TO2015	The committee facilitating Toronto's 2015 Pan Am Games

References and Resources

The following publications are readings that we found really useful in learning more about this stuff. Maybe you will find them useful too.

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Thank You!

Thanks so much for taking the time to read through all of this! We hope it was as helpful for you to read as it was for us to write, and that it will prompt further conversations in your organizing community. This is hard stuff, but it's not impossible to navigate if we remain thoughtful and committed to our values and each other.

We also owe a big thanks to the many pals who supported us through the experience of dealing with infiltrators, who talked out various sections of this document with us, who read over and edited this, and who helped out in a bunch of other ways. Thank you!

About MISN

The Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN) is a Toronto-based activist group that organizes to draw attention to and resist the negligent practices of Canadian mining companies, who comprise over 75% of mining businesses worldwide. In solidarity with affected communities and in response to their calls for support, we:

Educate… the Canadian public on mining injustices in Canada and around the world.

Advocate… for stronger community control of mining practices, and in support of self-determination in mining-affected areas.

Agitate… against corporate impunity and in support of substantive regulatory change.

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