RE-MEANING THE SACRED: COLONIAL DAMAGE AND INDIGENOUS
COSMOLOGIES

by

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Abstract

Indigenous ways of knowing are dependent on an inheriting process both amongst humans and between human and non-human being. These multi-relationships cross material and immaterial borders as sites of knowledge production. This manuscript will interrogate how three particular Indigenous cosmological relationships have been purposefully re-meaninged by colonial institutions: 1) How Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee origin stories have been abstracted into a distinctive epistemological versus ontological site; 2) How Anishnaabe spirit worlds are impacted by colonial relations, and how state institutions benefit from the re-meaning of these worlds; and 3) How Indigenous sovereignty in Canada is imagined from a statist perspective, and how these polices have re-meaninged the sacred relationships within a cosmological understanding of Haudenosaunee governance. The re-meaning of sacredly-held Indigenous relationships is both accelerated by, and contributes to, a practice of reducing upon Indigenous and non-human societies. Throughout expressions of colonialism on Indigenous territories (the academy, the state, Indian policy), Indigenous knowledge is consistently either dismissed or appropriated. This reduction of Indigenous knowledge continues to bolster functions of the state as related to the elimination of the "Indian Problem" via reducing the "Indian" to an adaptive subject.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction:

As an Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee woman who is also a student of sociology, I found the theoretical domains and discussions I encounter(ed) both inspiring and disappointing. My mother is white and my father is Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee, and with this I wear a particular type of white privilege, and other ways (i.e. spaces I occupy), there are times I do not. I grew up in different urban settings, visiting the reserve often. My mother chose to have me baptized at the age of eight in the Anglican church, and then soon after this went to live with my father where I was brought up in Midewiwin ceremonies (Anishnaabe). I now live in Six Nations of the Grand River (Haudenosaunee).

When I would engage Indigenous ways of knowing during some of my sociology-based discussions on knowledge production as a Ph.D. student, reactions vacillated between genuine interest and annoyance. Even upon encountering interest, discussions seem halted, as this was often new terrain. But I did learn a lot. I learned about the fringes and how this could be a powerful place. I learned about hegemonic processes and normative standards. And certainly learned that questioning how knowledge is constituted was provocative at best and at worst, sometimes made me a foreign invader of the discipline. The irony of a non-displacement was not lost on me. Indigenous cosmologies would have to be first recognized in order to then be displaced. Rather, Indigenous content was frequently understood through a lens of cultural or legal interventions on population-based data, a hopeless character in a colonial story.

The dilemma of theory versus praxis was a frustrating point for me. Social theory, an abstractive process, could exist independently of being materially situated (though it could be materially-related). Yet, if Indigenous cosmologies and further, ways of knowing were not only materially situated, but materially produced, how can we speak the same about something different?

The understanding of place has been abstracted in many sociological understandings as a way in which to contextualize distinctions amongst epistemological framings. In the following works, I re-centre and trace "place" as my frame of analysis as determined by material sites of knowledge production and argue that the space in which epistemology and ontology meet is non-distinctive. I navigate this non-distinctive site in three interrogations:

1. If Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee cosmologies are materially produced, what are the consequences for knowledge production?

2. What are the consequences to Indigenous spirit worlds and knowledge production sites amidst the re-meaning and transformation of places by the colonial enterprise?

3. How is Indigenous sovereignty as a concept reflective of place-based knowledge production? How does sovereignty as a state-based mechanism affect risks processes inherent in Indigenous cosmologies?

The Centre as Place

I use the term "place" or "place-thought" as a theoretical/material framing of my research. Place was developed out of an idea inherent in Anishnaabe philosophies: that all things contain spirit and are agential (Cajete, 2000). Elements of creation have modes of communication and exchange amongst themselves and other elements of

creation. In this way, humans and non-humans[1] alike possess the ability to think, act, feel, ponder, communicate, negotiate and participate in governance. Further, these worlds and their capacities for agency are delineated by territory. Our agency, as humans and non-humans, is actively affected by where we come from and the territories that we traditionally occupy. Anishnaabeg believe (as many Indigenous nations do) that we come from land, and further, that we are *of* land. Therefore, we trace our lineage to land itself, the first woman or Earth Woman. When she is altered or transformed, we too are altered and transformed. Not just in our ability to relate to land or how we organize upon it, but our very spirit and agential processes are intrinsically affected.

Place is material and immaterial. Because Anishnaabeg come from place, we too belong to place. The discourse of land and ownership has been fraught with problems of acceptance and interpretation. Many Indigenous peoples describe our relationship to land as one of stewardship rather than ownership (McCarthy, 2016). Yet, in a liberal rights paradigm we are often forced into describing this relationship as one of ownership so that our historical relationship with the land can be organized within a Lockean liberal framework of private and/or collective property. A way beyond this impossible negotiation is to perhaps consider that we as Anishnaabeg or Haudenosaunee peoples belong to land and to territory. Our very existence is determined by land, and the how we operate within the world is through communication with land. Land is physical, emotional, mental and spiritual as are we. Therefore, we belong to her. In this relationship of belonging arises obligations and responsibilities to ensure her survival, and ultimately, our survival. This is not to say Anishnaabeg or Haudenosaunee peoples

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[1] Non-humans for the purposes of this discussion are defined within worlds of creation: the animal world, the plant world, the sky world, the spirit world, the human world, the mineral world. For example, a chair is made of wood and originally of the plant world. While elements of it may contain spirit, it would

do not have claim to land, but that rather land also has claim to us. It is in this claiming, that our sovereignty and continued fight to restore land can be articulated. This is always reflected back against the central fire: Place-Thought. Finally, place or place-thought is central to knowledge production. The material aspects of place act as anchor to knowledge; Indigenous knowledges are not intended to be abstracted from their material beginnings.[2]

The publications in this manuscript aim to extrapolate the theoretical framings/underpinnings found in Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe stories, and consequently problematize these framings in their encounters with colonialism. I anticipate that in this exploration, the non-distinction between where ontology ends and epistemology begins will be crucial. I use the term ontology as Eurowestern sociologists have most recently contemplated it as a form of social "being-ness". As distinguished from Eurowestern philosophers who have traditionally engaged with this idea as the study of what grounds *all* being, I am concerned with how the "social being" is grounded. Nietzsche's "the subject as multiplicity" is relevant to this distinction in ontology. For Nietzsche, the beingness of a subject is reducible only to other assemblages of multiplicities, whether they be affects, bodies, will, etc. This is significant to how I will engage the social being and its ontological beginnings/ends and subsequently depart in my assertions about beings' (human and non-humans) being-ness as inherited materially from cosmological histories.

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[2] "Place-Thought" can also be referenced to as "Place". In the publication, "Smudge This", I use the term "place" exclusively instead of "Place-Thought". The reasoning for this is that as my analysis further developed, it became crucial to not distinguish "thought" from "place". Even in my joining of these terms via hyphenation, there still lied a distinction that was important to remove.

Similar to Nietzsche, Heidegger's (1996) *dasein* as irremovably implicated in one's environment. This non-distinction is helpful (and similar) in many ways to how I will be employing being-ness, yet *dasein* (in terms of the existence of the human) might only be unified through a non-uniformity produced out of multiple external movable constants; the state of *dasein* is contemplated as a single multiple-subject implicated in their environment. The human-environment dialectic is reinforced here, as environment is conceived as "meta" despite its many assemblages, and beingness is contemplated as a human experience, while environment is taken for granted as trivial, mechanistically. One could argue against this criticism, that is, how else would queries about knowing beingness be responsible other than with respect to the human being as we are human beings ourselves? That is, is it not presumptuous to attempt to understand the existence or being-ness of some-thing else? Perhaps, unless one's understanding of the self is informed by the understanding that humans are non-humans, were non-humans, can become non-humans as part of a "human" experience. These teleological distinctions are significant to how ontological claims will be thought throughout my work.

The rhisomatic structure of Deleuze and Guatarri's (1993) becoming is helpful in thinking through the ontology of the social being in this way. The deterritorialization against the strata of multiple assemblages contributes to "dismantling the organism" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1993). During deterritorialization, one might exist in a state of becoming. In Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible… (Deleuze and Guattari, 1993), the human-becoming-animal exists as a nuptial between human and animal born out of human's fascination for animal – this becoming is reducible to a shift or transformation of consciousness. Whether it is *really* experienced

or imagined is not the question, rather that this nuptial is premised as a non-material experience.

I will engage ontology in assumed-to-be understandings such as these - ontology framed as moments of questioning what it is that grounds social beings. How ontology is then thought to be distinguishable from epistemology will be central to my arguments in terms of how Eurowestern thought has abstracted Indigenous cosmologies through distinguishing a non-distinction (of ontology and epistemology). How one comes to know, or the nature of how knowledges are formed, are epistemic questions which have traditionally rested on being distinguished from beingness. My work relies on the understanding that "knowing beingness" is akin to "beingness as knowing". Within this non-distinction lies the contention that place and the stuff of place are necessary to the formation of stories and thus societies. That is, my analysis is framed with an assumption that Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe stories are real and historical, not simply mythical or moralistic.

Stories are material and locatable, and thus Indigenous places serve as sites of material knowledge production. My research examines how a critique of essentialism can be deployed to undermine place-based knowledges, and consequently how colonial attempts to de-essentialize Indigenous peoples from their places has produced a politics of adaptability and survivance surrounding a modified and inherited Indigenous identity. The abstraction of discourse from the "stuff" of the earth, is both foreign and colonial, and has thereby intensified a delocation of Indigenous beings (both human and non-human) from their sites of knowledge production.

I do not contend that this separation has not been criticized within sociological

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discourse. Deleuze and Guattari (1993) and Heidegger (1996) make similar arguments wherein beings and ontology are expressions of an intelligble nature. Thus, all things natural are continually changing and expressing earth's/God's desire. This is where a similar blending of boundaries between epistemology and ontology in a Western philosophical framing occurs. The difference lies in the inheritable and material transmission of agency and spirit between places and beings, as opposed to these worlds of beings influencing one another causally, referentially or imaginatively.

Despite similarities within posthumanist thought, Ecofeminism, and Science Studies in terms of human and non-human worlds colliding, or bounds between epistemology and ontology imploding, a signficant distinction lies between these discourses and Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee cosmologies.   Namely, my assertion that if our stories are taken literally, observed reverently, and are attached to a particular place rather than a particular paradigm, then descendents of that place (both human and non-human beings) inherit expressions of these cosmological beginnings. Another crucial difference is that borders of the epistemological and ontological only emerged after our histories as Anishnaabeg and Haudenosaunee were abstracted.

My research examines how these collisions and implosions have played out in particular sociological discourse which include: posthumanist thought, Ecofeminism, Science Studies, and Indian policy in Canada more generally (this ranges from Indian Residential School policy to Aboriginal rights-based discourses in Canada).

Affronting Liberalism: the Global versus Local

In this section I will outline some of the ways in which posthumanist thought, Ecofeminism, and Science Studies reinforce the collapse of ontology and epistemology,

by reading core texts by key writers in each of these subfields. Posthumanist and ecofeminists are establishing an emerging tradition of critiquing patriarchy inherent in discourse with regard to non-human beings/nature and Othered populations and related ideologies. Many are reluctant to attach essentialized properties to subjects or ontologies out of fear that the tendency to Other and concomitantly intensify hegemony will be re-coded and continue in discourse. One of the trends to alleviate the problematic of borders and relegating the Other is to create space for concepts and voices of the Other to speak. While this is a necessary pervasion to dismantle, the process by which space is created and defined is foremost, essential to the detangling of Western patriarchy. Specifically I was struck by posthumanist Donna Haraway's (2004) usage of Coyote as a Cyborg formation in which boundaries are confused and discursive nodes are excavated. Initially I thought this was an interesting approach to the de-centering process of hegemonic norms and an as alternative tool of analysis. Yet I was reluctant to praise or even feel grateful to her usage as the question of ownership and misinterpretation was emergent.

I assume that Haraway's intention was to unearth the presumed subjugation of an Othered knowledge system to un-privilege the forces of domination and oppression. Part of Haraway's methodology is to create sites of boundary implosion and moments of rearticulation and reformulation. However, it also became evident that the impetus was not to submerge into an alternative way of understanding, but rather to globalize a situated concept for the purposes of aiding in a collective white, Western redefinition of pre-existing norms. The space in which Coyote appears is amidst Western referential points in which the "centre" and the "periphery" are relationally bound by power. It is not that I take issue with the dismantling of patriarchy, rather I find it worrisome that in

order to (in)appropriate, Haraway chooses to appropriate in a way that assumes that her usage and the effects of that usage do not exist in the realm of cultural appropriation and redefinition of situated categories.

Coyote or Trickster can be a shapeshifter, rule-breaker, lesson-maker, etc. In an interview with Donna Haraway (2004) on the issue of Coyote, she states:

> "…Certain figures like the raven and the coyote do work in Anglo culture, as well as in Native culture. We do live in a world that is made up of complexly webbed layers of locals and globals, and who is to say that Native American symbols are to be less global than those produced by Anglo-Americans? Or who is to say that one set of symbols has got to stay local, while all the other ones get to figure so-called globalization? So I think there is a way in which this cross-talk between figurations is politically interesting, although certainly not innocent."　　(329)

Creating space on behalf of the Other is a problematic common in feminism. The sentiment of Spivak's (1988) concept of 'subalternity' where the other has no space to speak perhaps elucidates the need for epistemological spaces wherein the Other has a chance to speak. I do not argue against the idea that subaltern subjects need spaces in which they can speak; rather I take issue with spaces being created via the appropriation of alternative, non-hegemonic ideas as dismantling-tools for constructed borders and dominant ideas. The way to dismantle hegemony is not through the usurpation of non-Western 'ideals', but through the careful implosion of oppressive spaces. It is then that Indigenous people will have the choice to make entry into these spaces or to resist and create/maintain Othered spaces where access from Western eyes is limited.

The 'global' space is not all-encompassing, nor should it be. Something which is local or situated does not necessarily possess these qualities only because of marginalization or Othering; it could be an active choice of deliberate disengagement. Haraway would probably agree that, historically, the cultural appropriation and converse

acculturation of Indigenous peoples has been unjust. What keeps knowledge situated for

us is the land, the soil from which concepts and laws are derived. The historical salvation

narrative that has run through discourse aligned with a rationalization of domination is an

insult not only to our many ontologies but a direct assault on the soil that our feet tread

upon. Haraway attempts to rectify this tendency to further silence the Other and

perpetuate the centre. For example, Stacy Alaimo (2008), while discussing Haraway's

claim that Coyote should be globalized, notes that, "we may imagine, perhaps, that the

trickster coyote needs some sort of space, or habitat, to thrive" (251). The space Alaimo

(2008) thinks Coyote needs is the epistemological and ethical space that Haraway offers

in her work, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege

of the Partial Perspective". But to suggest that Coyote needs such a space is to assume

that Coyote has not already been thriving, since the beginning of time as we understand

it, and amidst continued occupation and oppression is a gross misrepresentation. If

Coyote wanted entrance into a globalized epistemological space, then Coyote would have

(and probably already has) done so. These common misguided beliefs reinforce the

notion of so-called 'subjugated knowledge', which implies that an idea cannot or does not

exist until the dominant are able to hear it.

Turning now to an example from ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva (2014) argues in

her work on the seed, farming, and transnationalism, that the heteropatriarchal processes

inherent in capitalist modes of production and colonialism have engaged a history of

assumptions about gender which insist that:

> "Man was separated from nature, and the creativity involved in processes of
> regeneration was denied. Creativity became the monopoly of men, who
> were considered to be engaged in 'production', while women were engaged
> in mere 'reproduction' or 'procreation' which, rather than being treated as

renewable production, was looked upon as non-production. Activity, as purely male, was constructed on the separation of the earth from the seed and on the association of an 'inert' and empty earth with the passivity of the female." (128)

Shiva's (2014) critique of production and its sexist engagement with land and women as *terra nullius* – inert and empty – is emblematic of not only the all-too-real violence against Indigenous women and lands, but also the violent denials of Indigenous places as real and historical. One of the consequences of this is the denial of place's material ability to bestow and inherit knowledge. Moreover, the equating of women and earth in Shiva's analysis acts to intensify patriarchy, while this same equation of women and earth in Haudenosaunee histories has produced mechanisms of sustainability, reverence and the sacred.

Kim TallBear's (2015) work is situated within a queer inhuman frame. Tallbear (2015) contends that both sides of the nature-culture divide in Western scholarship are defined as manageable categories. This is why Indigenous stories wherein non-human persons do not fit the comfortable Western category of "animal" are troubling. I would add that this unmanageability of Indigenous stories and ways of knowing also comes to be represented as "uncomfortable" or "interesting" in ecofeminist and new materialism discourses. That is, our stories are opportunities for new insights and criticisms of the old world. Even if taken seriously intellectually, often our stories are viewed as a lens to see an already established (old) world, reinscribing the vanishing-ness of Indians, and simultaneously breathing life into the vanishing-ness of Indians; a virtual salvation through global-resuscitation.

The critique of this trend to globalize is extended further by Morgensen (2011) who argues that settler colonialism is a process of universalization that "naturalizes…our 'colonial present'. (Morgensen, 2011, 67) In his analysis of Foucault and Agamben, Morgensen (2011) resituates biopower and governmentality within a settler colonial context. In his analysis, he examines how Western governance offers a "nominal inclusion" of Afghanis and Iraqis into law in order to eliminate difference. If we apply this critical framing of governmentality to Indigenous peoples in Canada, this nominal inclusion is achieved through an explicit inclusion of Indians-only law: the Indian Act The only Act in Canada that explicitly governs one particular race, acts to produce assimilation in its exclusion. That is, in its specificity on governing Indigenous peoples, reaffirms statist dominance over Indigenous peoples, incites resentment from Indigenous peoples about the Act itself, thereby encouraging an abandonment of this colonial policy through piecemeal amendments, and finally, granting entrance into the greater libertarian body politic. Morgensen's (2011) critique is helpful situating how these similar relational frames intensify liberalism as a product of settler colonialism within Indigenous communities.

Kymlicka's (2007) work on special collective rights for Indigenous peoples in Canada is similar, albeit more optimistic about how a liberalistic approach can benefit Indigenous peoples. Indian-only policy (i.e. special rights) that ultimately act towards re-affirming Canada's sovereignty, and the naturalization of liberalism in Morgensen's (2011) 'colonial present'. Coulthard (2007) takes issue with this naturalization, and argues that the sort of liberal pluralism Kymlicka (2000) argues for (as a form of recognition for Indigenous peoples in Canada) is actually an intensification of state

power. Coulthard (2007) writes: "'politics of recognition' to refer to the now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to reconcile Indigenous claims to nationhood with Crown sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the Canadian state."(Coulthard, 2007, 439). This trend of recognition, or Indian-only policy (i.e. we are special!) is simultaneously violent and placating. It offers Indigenous peoples a space to practice culture, so long as the space is not reliant on place. What Coulthard critiques as the 'politics of recognition' is the special recognition of Indigenous peoples as different, and this difference is oriented towards a settler colonial state. As Dennis (2016) writes of the contradiction of colonial sentiment towards Indigenous peoples in his identification of a double-bind: "you must be like us but can never be like us."(Dennis, 2016, 17) – it is the production of this loathing/self-loathing aspect of settler-Indigenous relations that explicitly identifies difference, desires sameness, but accelerates white supremacy.

This is perhaps best exemplified in a very early story of settler colonialism, that of Pastedechouan (Anderson, 2007). Pastedechouan was an Innu man, born in 1607 or 1608 along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. The French had come to what is now known as Labrador by this time and had to adapt to this way of life for basic survival. The mass Christianization that the Inuu would come to experience had not yet taken place. Having come to understand that location was indeed central to an ontological way of being in the world for the Innu, the French determined that a delocalization of young Innu boys like Pastedechouan would serve to help the epistemological objective of the French: transforming the Innu peoples for the purposes of religious and economic exploitation.

In another space and time, Bruno Latour (1999), known for his contributions to science and technology studies, observes two botanists and two pedologists as they attempt to answer the question, "is the forest advancing… or retreating?" (Latour, 1999, 27) The answer to this question is reliant on the testing of the soil. Practices of the old settlement would insist on the separation of the soil from its so-called impurities in order to generate sanitized data. Latour (1999) contends that in the reduction of the soil, it is also amplified in terms of its re-articulation in the world laboratory. Thus, the referent (the soil) circulates throughout space and time, rearticulating its voice in consistently amplified forms through immutable mobilities (i.e. translations of the soil through calculations and mappings while still containing particularities of the soil). But is the voice that Latour argues comes *from* the soil, really being articulated *by* the soil? That is, is the soil's voice autonomous or is it constituted through its circulation in a semiotic network, collective referentiality defined by the body politic?

When the French, specifically a religious group of traders known as the Recollets, had made a proposition to the Innu to bring a young man to France, the Innu understood that this would be an economic opportunity for the community of Tadoussac, in a spirit of mutual cooperation and exchange of knowledge (Anderson, 2007). Thus, an expedition to France of young Pastedechouan was planned. In 1621, he was accompanied across the sea by Father Jean Dolbeau to a convent near La Baumette, France, where he entered the world laboratory. Leaving what would become New France, Pastedechouan traveled to the old country/settlement. The process of translation from economic delegate to Christian insurgent was imminent in the eyes of the Catholic Recollets. Pastedechouan would be placed in the in-between of unfamiliar referential chains. Brought to the

convent by Father Dobleau, Pastedechouan was forced to undertake meaning-making as defined by the Catholic church:

> "Flowers and incense scented the dim, stone-vaulted interior of the church and candlelight from the many white tapers winked on the rich, ornately inlaid cross held aloft in the advance of the grand procession...after re-entering the crowded church, Pastedechouan was stripped, anointed with holy oil and baptized by aspersion near the altar of local Saint Serene. Re-dressed all in white and given a lit white taper to hold, he was crowned with a snowy white baptismal *cresmeau* (bonnet), and 'lifted up into the pulpit, where he was for a long time with the bonnet on his head and a lit candle in his hand.'" (Anderson, 2007, 21)

Entry into the other-world laboratory meant an articulation of voice through a particular chain of actants. The fabrication of these human and non-human actants (holy oil, altar, the bonnet, the grand procession) acted to de-articulate Pastedechouan's voice while supplanting it with the voice of an alternate reality. Through the act of baptism, both the Recollets and Pastedechouan were mutually-transformed. Pastedechouan in that he would begin to articulate a voice which had now become one set adrift, violently dislocated from its home; the Recollets perceived this mediation/event as a mode by which the utility of a now-human could be constructed by an universal mob for the purposes of extending deeper translation into the folding of a hegemonic body politic.

By travelling to France, the local-to-global soil that Latour describes, along with the lab technicians, underwent a similar mutually-transformative process. The soil got to see the world. The scientists to to 'know' this other-worldly soil. It was the epitome of Actor Network Theory: that humans and non-human actants are inextricably engaged in transformative processes with one another. But what about power? Despite Latour's placement of the soil within a network of circulating reference and articulated meaning, the story of the soil remains unfinished. What would happen if the soil had been taken

back to its origin/test site in the Amazon? We can assume that this does not happen very often (I mean that Scientists/scientists return their evidence to its original location). After the soil's emergence into the world laboratory Latour envisions, can it ever return to its previous condition of felicity?

Pastedechouan returned home of Tadoussac after six years of religious inculcation in France. Anti-Catholic propaganda had infiltrated the community due to the encroaching British presence. Meaning had indeed drifted in Tadoussac, despite its unmoving location. A well-respected Innu leader, Mathican Atic, after months of silence from Pastedechouan spoke: "Pastedechouan it is true that you are not very smart because you haven't told us what you learned in France…You must be a man and speak with confidence and wisdom, tell us the things you have seen and learned, in order that we should know them too" (Anderson, 2007, 23). But Pastedechouan did not speak for an entire winter. He had failed both the Recollets and his people. But how could he speak? His people wanted to hear the knowledge he had acquired with respect to economic trading and French political life. He had not been schooled in these areas. The Recollets wanted him to missionize his people, but Pastedechouan did not communicate his 'knowledge', claiming to have lost the ability to speak his native language. Whether or not this claim was influenced by his rejection of the Innu way of life, one can only assume.   What remains apparent is that the voice which accompanied his growth as an Innu boy and the voice imposed by the Recollets were irreconcilable - Pastedechouan died alone, frozen in the forest outside of his home community in 1636 after being rejected by the Recollets as a failed experiment.

Latour's (1999) collapsing of the epistemological and ontological can be seen as part of an effort to achieve more realistic and equitable relations between human and non-humans actors, but this achievement comes along with particular absences in the analysis of power relations. My work contends that this collapse was never-present in Indigenous ways of knowing, until after the imposition of European thought. As our stories and histories have entered a global space, they have either been given special forms of recognition, thereby affirming colonial dominance, or been pushed down as local, fantastical figurations, thereby romanticizing settler colonialism. In both circumstances, we must be like them but we can never be like them.

It is important to emphasize that although the western discourses I have just mentioned – posthumanism, Ecofeminism, and Science Studies -- are further engaged with in this thesis, they are not intended to be utilized as a form of measure or evaluation of Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee cosmologies within colonial frameworks. Rather I operate within these cosmologies both as a form of "talking back" to discourses that have utilized or diminished Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee paradigms, while also engaging these cosmologies as locatable and material.

Other themes that arise from these multiple inquiries are:

- What are the implications of violent and destructive tendencies of settler society towards territory/nature and Indigenous women?
- How has the non-human world (animals, plants, sky, spiritual) contributed to, and continued to inform, Haudenosaunee theories, philosophies, and thefore entire societies?

- Ontology and place: what are the implications of theory when analyzing belief systems from various stories belonging to particular places?

- Is it essentialist to locate theory to a particular place?

- What are the differences between interconnection, causal relationships and agency with regard to human and non-human relationships?

I hope that this research will contribute to change in two ways. Firstly, to contribute widely to sociological debates on the materiality and immateriality of knowledge production. Specifically, to contribute to research in the areas of ecofeminist thought, Indigenous feminisms and the sociology of knowledges more generally. My research is developed out of a particular understanding out of how human, non-human and spiritual worlds are tacitly implicated in one another in the function of cosmological knowledges. It is with this understanding that I hope to interrogate current debates on knowledges and materiality, while also challenging long-held assumptions about the ontological/epistemological divide as it relates to situatedness. Similarly, discussions concerning "Earth Mother/Mother Earth" as being essentialist or gynocentric are areas I hope to intervene on more fully. The tendency to view Indigenous origin stories as metaphors or discursive modes continues to emerge as a new frontier in academia. Yet, when Indigenous peoples themselves enact these same stories as *real*, they are not taken seriously or dismissed as essentialists. Interventions such as this will contribute to conversations about essentialisms in critical race theory. Specifically, I hope to enter dialogues about how essentialisms of race are manifested, not as benefit to dominant society, but rather how material essentialisms of Indigenous cosmologies are oriented within arguments about race-based essentialisms.

While heteropatriarchy is a frame of analysis throughout my research, I hope that this will work contribute to more complicated discussions about how heteropatriarchy is circulated and reinscribed within Indigenous communities, by Indigenous peoples. This is a sensitive and uncomfortable reality. However, in light of increasing gender-based violence as well as buy-ins to extractive industries within Indigenous communities, these conversations about how colonial constructions of gender are adopted are increasingly urgent.

Literature Review

As part of my research I want to interrupt the mythicizing scrutiny that continues to plague Indigenous understandings of territory in terms of how non-human worlds might lend themselves to broader understandings of ownership, sovereignty, and feminism. The premise that land is female for example, when taken seriously, has enormous consequences when observing the concomitant violence on territory and on the female Indigenous body. Similarly, the animal world and all of its ideas and actions are often taken as ruminations of stories and/or creation myths. If we take them to be active elements of reality, the animal world can be interpreted as having extended itself to human consciousness and behaviour, just as humans no doubt have influenced animals. Principles of governance, familial structures and individual roles and responsibilities are just some of the extensions of animals that we are aware of. These themes are discussed as tactile and animate intersections into how the world is acted upon and further, how we as Indigenous peoples evaluate human positionality in our conception(s) of the real.

Beings that are "non-human" have historically been conceptualized by Western paradigms as making up an inferior subcategory of action, progress and intelligence

(Latour 1987, Sturgeon 1997). They are seen as either an impediment or stepping-stone to human advancement, but never as capable of advancement in and of itself. Similarly, Indigenous peoples throughout history have been estimated by colonial forces in relation to what is already established and dominating; thus contributions by Indigenous people in terms of philosophy and action are relegated as "relics of the past" or antithetical to accepted standards.

In many Indigenous cultures, the relationship between human and animal, human and plant, human and water, etc. is one that is revered and often ritualized (Cajete, 2000). From this position of respect, non-human beings are emulated in human interactions, systems of governance, and belief systems. These same relationships in non-Indigenous or Western societies have been ones dictated by consumption and greed (Alfred, 2005). Plant and animal intelligence have really only been regarded as worthwhile by the Western world either as a marketing tool, or because the needs of people have failed to be served by "progress" (i.e. what would be seen as destructive tendencies from an Indigenous perspective). That is, dominant frameworks of the mainstream 'west' tend to instrumentalize and commodify non-human beings (and human beings as well, of course).

Using the framework of the non-human world and its possible contributions to human understanding of society, this research examines not only the consideration of the non-human world, but also the necessity of this world to Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe society. In turn, I hope to understand how meaning is created in terms of Indigenous theories within story. Indigenous stories and modes of philosophizing are increasingly becoming not only accepted by some Western frameworks of understanding, but sought

after in terms of non-oppressive and provocative or interesting interfaces for accessing

the real (Haraway, 2004). This mode of engaging with Indigenous narratives traces

Indigenous peoples not only as epistemologically different, but also as a gateway for non-

Indigenous thinkers to re-imagine *their* world. This might not be such a terrible thing,

except that the non-Indigenous world they are re-imagining remains anthropocentric – the

stories are often distilled to 'mere words', principles, and morals to imagine the world

and imagine humans in the world. What is regarded as Indigenous epistemology

becomes a resource for challenging hegemony and heteronormative practices in certain

Western discourses.

  This appropriation relies upon the mistake of conceptualizing epistemology and

ontology as distinct and/or assuming these instruments of change are not real, but are

fictional and therefore carry universal relevance and reach – how convenient! But these

'instruments' or animals/beings found in Indigenous story are locatable to a place.

Haraway's usage of Coyote is stripped of his home and the 'stuff' of his home and is

pimped out to provocatively engage white guilt and vanquish it wherever he goes! All he

needs now is a roadrunner.

  In order to truly understand and explicate Indigenous formations of theories, we

must first accept the premise that what we are made of as humans determines how we act.

The stuff of place is intimately tied to the agency of the individual. Since different

Indigenous philosophies and practices vary amongst territory, it must also be true that the

stuff of place is thoughtful. This place-thought nexus always exists in all Indigenous

paradigms and is always recognized therein as such. Whether alluded to in

Heideggerian-inspired deep ecology or Ecofeminist thought, this place-thoughtness

remains anthropocentric in that the call to action is about human beings conducting themselves through more nature-inspired processes. Thus, it is about human beings bending themselves down to the ground in an effort to connect to that which is more primal – this is purely epistemological and methodological. What I am asserting is that the stuff that human beings are made of and surrounded by are constantly expressing themselves consciously and actively, thus forming particular, locatable societies. Spirit! The spirit of rocks, of plants, of water resides in all the original descendants of these places, and is differentiated from territory to territory. This is not merely human process-oriented, but nature-ordered. Some would say this is dangerously essentialist. I would say it is the way it is. But perhaps to be less vague, we can think of it as 'pre-essential'. By 'essentialism' I am meaning a particular and definitive stance that in this case expresses the natural beings and processes found in locatable regions of nature. The 'pre' implying that the former not be analyzed through the violence and mistakes of imposed ideas and structures of the West. Rather, Indigenous worldviews existed independently and should not be regarded as a peripheral or in a conquered state of being. This idea will be elaborated further upon in Publication One and Publication Two.

The foremost theoretical framework of my work is based in Indigenous philosophies, namely the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe. This theoretical framing not only grounds myself as the researcher, but will also act as a compass in terms of incorporating sociological theory. My research is largely centred upon the non-distinction of praxis and theory, epistemology and ontology, and humans and nature from an Indigenous perspective. It is important to note that I am not examining the material versus the immaterial, rather I am asserting a non-distinction of this space, while also

interrogating the forced collapse of this space through colonialism. This argument is in contradistinction to Donna Haraway's (2004) discussion of the Cyborg, and more recently to that of Science Studies and specifically Bruno Latour's (1987) web of human and non-human actants, this work is an examination of theoretical and practical thought *prior to* the onset of the classical and contemporary sociological canon. Some may deem this pursuit to be essentialist; but it is important to note that this exploration examines stories pre-dating colonization and the introduction of Western theory and practice, and therefore predating what are now considered to be the dangerous implications of essentialism (i.e. racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc.).

While it is necessary to recognize these cautions, it should not be assumed that this exploration of Indigenous/Haudenosaunee stories and theory will be approached with similar historical violence as has been evident in Western scholarship, especially when this violence was perpetrated largely against Indigenous peoples all over the world. If these separate worldviews (i.e. Western and Indigenous) manifested in the same types of societal structure, it could be assumed that widespread violence and domination would not have occurred in the first place. Correspondingly, it is highly likely that the treatment and interpretation of different types of peoples would not be met with this same violence; to do violence in this way would lead to the destruction of ourselves. This is where 'pre-essentialism' comes in to play.

While there is a growing focus on the feminine and place in academic fields such as Ecofeminism and postcolonial theory, there is a gap in terms of how the agency of the non-human, in this case, nature or territory, is influential in epistemological paradigms of Indigenous peoples. For example, Ecofeminist theory speaks to a type of action within

non-human worlds that is limited to instinct or biology. While gesturing to worldviews of Indigenous peoples and the power of these same non-human worlds, it is usually framed as 'no more than' a story which underscores a philosophy as opposed to a living, breathing account of something "real". Postcolonial theory acknowledges this basic connection between territory and the female body with regards to colonial violence. While this view is crucial to identifying mechanisms of the colonial imperative, there still exists a gap in terms of how this same basic connection influences governance, place, agency, etc. in Indigenous societies. In addition to this, it seems to be a trend to mend binaries and tear down boundaries – this threatens the very differentiation of Indigenous knowledge systems.

It is crucial for the integrity of my research to focus on Indigenous feminist analyses of the feminine and place. In the same vein, Indigenous philosophical thought is incorporated with an emphasis on story, non-human worlds, conceptions of scientific thought, etc. Postcolonial theory is necessary to establish the divisive and violent relationship that has been imposed on Indigenous populations by colonial forces, especially with regards to the strategic violence against Indigenous women. Posthumanist thought and Science Studies is also a focus in terms of providing an account of how Western scholarship has developed beyond humanist conceptions of society, but still lacks a deep commitment to agency, preferring rather to rely on causal relations. Finally, Ecofeminist theory is engaged with not only to situate the advancement of feminist thought, but also to emphasize the process of misinterpretation that continues to plague Indigenous ways of being by Western scholarship.

Indigenous sovereignty within the context of liberal democratic theory is ultimately subsumed into what is deemed as "acceptable" by various notions of liberal tolerance. This tolerance is defined by a rights-based discourse that has propagated an assimilative dichotomy of the individual versus the collective. It is true that colonization occurred on a mass-scale and was justified through large collectives whether they are religious collectives or political collectives. However, it would be remiss to categorize this practice of domination through colonization as a collective value, given that that this collectivist approach was used to gain individualistic ends.

The relationship between Settler society and indigenous peoples has been shaped by a rights-based system as opposed to place-based governance, thereby resulting in imposed liberal (and thus individualistic) philosophy through the usurpation of indigenous value systems in government practices. Rawls (1996) purports that liberalism is able to manage the considerable scope of diverse 'comprehensive doctrines', given that citizens are able to agree on foundational concepts of justice. The idea of comprehensive doctrines is very much alive in today, as Canada continues to pride itself on its multicultural mosaic. In his examination of multiculturalism in Canada, Kymlicka (2000) writes: "A liberal democracy's most basic commitment is to the freedom and equality of its individual citizens." Many of Kymlicka's discussion on group-differentiated citizenship involve issues of language, religion, and cultural practices that contribute to this notion of group-differentiation. These issues are also apparent within the multicultural dialogue in Canada.

Multiculturalism is defined within the area of group-differentiated citizenship, thus reinforcing how indigenous peoples are often compared to immigrants within

Canada. Although Kymlicka (1995) describes indigenous nations in Canada as existing at a multinational level, it is evident that the scope of 'rights discourse' within the context of multinationalism is paralleled with Canada's multiculturalist agenda and results in a redirection of any genuine discussion of sovereignty to merely a tolerance of social differences (Coulthard, 2007).

Furthermore, Kymlicka's (2000) discussion on the lack of equality that exists in Canada towards indigenous peoples is only in regard to politics and economics. This argument sets the stage for a recommendation for *increased* special rights to achieve equitable relations, but makes no mention of distinctive Indigenous forms of governance that are place-based. Sovereignty for Indigenous peoples is narrowly defined within the nation-state of Canada's as allowable and non-threatening autonomy.

Summary of Publications

The above-noted themes are engaged with in the following three peer-reviewed publications:

"Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)". May 2013. *Journal of Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*. Vol 1 (2).

"Smudge This: Assimilation, State-Favoured Communities and the Denial of Indigenous Spiritual Lives." 2016. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*. Vol 7 (1).

Forthcoming. "What is Indigenous Sovereignty?" in *Questioning Sociology*. Eds. George Pavlich and Myra Hird. University of Oxford Press.

Publication One: Themes

Spirit

Place-Thought

Obligation to communicate

Determines agency within creation

Societies and systems become extensions

Epistemology-Ontology Divide

Separates constituents of the world from how the world is understood

Limits agency to humans

Exclusionary relationship with nature

Table 1.1

The estimations and evaluations of our cosmologies by colonial thought (largely, white and heterosexist) has categorized Indigenous ways of knowing as separate from the stuff of our existence. This is not accidental nor without motive. The foundation for Eurowestern thought is to separate, evaluate and categorize (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). The consequences of this are manifold. Important ones for this discussion include disembodiment and appropriation.

Systems of thought that are based on an epistemological-ontological divide understand agency much differently than those that do not make this distinction. A common understanding of epistemology is reflective of a Cartesian dualism, wherein one's perception of the world is experienced as distinct from what is in the world, or what constitutes it. Thought and ideas are reserved for the one perceiving – humans. All other objects, actants or beings in the world may have an essence (Latour, 1987) or an interconnection with humans, but their ability to perceive is null or limited to instinctual

reactions.

The epistemological-ontological divide removes the *how* and *why* out of the *what*. The *what* is left empty, readied for inscription. Epistemology has many representations in its ideological formations: Science, Christianity, Eurocentrism, Marxism, communism, and so forth, as frameworks of knowingness. Ontology too contains many variables: do objects have an essence? What is in the world and how do its parts formulate a society. All of these concerns are by their very nature pursuits of human quandary and based on a capacity for reason. These distinct domains operate under a Kantian assumption that humans must be separate from the world they are in, in order to have a perception of it. This is one theoretical structure to understand the world and its constituents. It necessitates a separation of not only human and non-human, but a hierarchy of beings in terms of how beings are able to think as well.

The human-made distinction between what and how/why is not an innocent one. Its consequences can be disastrous for not only non-humans, but humans as well. If we lay this framing atop of nature, humankind is elevated outside or above the natural world. The reasoning being that perception is a gift or trait bestowed to the human mind, and most certainly not something possessed by a stone or a river. A river may act (i.e. flow) but does it perceive or contemplate this? An Anishnaabe perspective would respond in the affirmative. As we can see from the process of colonization and the imposition of the epistemology-ontology frame, our communication and obligations with other beings of creation is continuously interrupted.

Colonial violations are those destructive acts in which the colonizer has imposed upon Indigenous peoples. These acts are not only ostensibly "justified" via colonial

abstractions of Indigenous cosmologies, but the abstraction of colonialism's own disembodied politics. These acts are measured against the political will and colonial objectives of the state, which I argue, can only be achieved through the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, their agency and consequently, their land. Colonialism is but an empty idea without resources and labour. It thrives off of the death of ideas, peoples and non-humans. Without these components, colonialism is nothing. Its power is derivative, un-sacred and reductive. While its manifestation creates a dependency upon the state by Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2005), this dependency is a consequence of its own dependency on us. The god-trick (Haraway, 1988) of the colonial system presents itself as powerful and authoritarian. Yet, its only claim to this power is by the sheer existence and subsequent dispossession of us. It needs first to recognize and then attempt to destroy to acquire any power at all. When perceived from this vantage, it is a weak and pitiful system, albeit far-reachingly violent. This publication examines how place-thought is oriented, transformed and ultimately re-meaninged given the presence of a violent, foreign, disembodied system.

Publication Two: Themes

Forthcoming. "Smudge This: Assimilation, State-Favoured Communities
and the Denial of Indigenous Spiritual Lives." *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*.

Colonialism is alive, but it is not sacred. It is the manifestation of a foreign disembodiment. It was dead from the beginning albeit, still dangerous. In this way, I find it is important to understand the continued violent pursuit of our continued physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dispossessions by the state and colonialism more generally.

The lifecycle of a human being begins in the east: where children are welcomed into the world and begin their development. In terms of the life cycle of our cosmologies, the spirit world too is the juncture at which world begins to take shape. These two components of the east are crucial to how life cycles will unfold.

Firstly, I discuss how Anishnaabe spiritual elements are represented in terms of place. I examine traditional Anishnaabe stories that focus on spirituality or the spirit world to contribute to a deeper understanding of how we view spirituality. The nature of Anishnaabe spirituality and how it is tied to a notion of place. Anishnaabe stories that pertain to the spirit world and how the spirit world informs an Anishnaabe worldview are central in order to provide a greater understanding and context to how we see the world.

Secondly, I explore what happens when place-based Anishnaabe spirituality encounters colonialism and the Christianization of Indigenous lands. I argue that mass Christianization of place-based spirituality is in and of itself dislocated and therefore, a foreign spirituality to Turtle Island. I discuss how a displaced and foreign spirituality has attempted to transform this spiritual connection to place, and ultimately to re-mean place. This was exemplified through the Indian Residential School System in Canada.

Finally, I critique the consequences of this attempted re-meaning of the spiritual lives of place and children in terms of contemporary relationships Anishnaabeg have with the spirit world. The consequences are indicative of how our spirit world is potentially colonized, through an inherited disconnection of spirit from place. A continuing pattern of colonialism relies on the presupposition that human beings and cultures are adaptable. This politics of adaptability serves to further entrench the growing gulf between place and thought, and therefore land and its peoples. Adaptability surfaces as a moment of

celebration for Indigenous peoples, that we continue to exist and can even thrive after such traumatic histories. While this may be true in some cases, it also serves to contribute to the assumption that Indigenous peoples *can* be separated from their land and cosmologies and adopt a foreign lens of seeing the world. The consequence to this is not surprising: both a rationalization of removal and assimilation by some Indigenous peoples and a commitment by the state to push us as far as we can be pushed while patting our heads for an adaptable nature. I term this trend as "Boardroom Smudging".

Publication Three: Themes

Forthcoming. "What is Indigenous Sovereignty?" in *Questioning Sociology*. Eds. George Pavlich and Myra Hird. University of Oxford Press.

In this publication, I define the different ways in which Indigenous sovereignty is framed in Canada. I trace a specific form of Indigenous sovereignty, the Kainere'ko:wa (or *The Great Law)* of the Haudenosaunee and assess relevant statist objectives with regard to Indigenous peoples in order to present how the ongoing trend of colonialism and assimilation is being packaged. Whether it is the multiculturalist agenda of the state or rights-based approach to self-government, I use these political moments to draw out underlying discourse on how dispossessive politics continues to rely on colonial abstraction and violations of our cosmologies.

This publication emphasizes the longevity and nuanced nature of the *Kainere'ko:wa.* This is done purposefully to dispel myths that continue to circulate with respect to Indigenous nations as being "savage" or unsophisticated prior to contact with Europeans. For example, the matrilineal political system with regard to the power of

Clan Mothers to install and remove hereditary chiefs is discussed. Additionally, the power Haudenosaunee women wield in terms of property and economy is presented.

This article articulates the long-standing relationship with the United Nations (formerly the League of Nations) that was maintained by the Haudenosaunee. The title of Deskaheh (a Cayuga title) was held by Levi General in the 1920's. During this time, Deskaheh traveled to the League of Nations in Geneva against the wishes of Canada to represent the Kainere'ko:wa as the basis for as an independent, sovereign Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Further to this, I critique the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as it pertains to Indigenous sovereignty.

The dispossessive politics of the state with regard to Indigenous sovereignty are aimed at dismantling these types of historic, pre-colonial and place-based sovereignties. Specifically I argue that while self-government options in Canada do in fact *increase* the level of autonomy of First Nations, they also stand in contradistinction to the oppressive and racist regulations of the Indian Act. Thus, the so-called increase in powers is still dispossessive in nature when compared to Indigenous governance systems and constitutions that pre-date the Indian Act.

Finally, I relate this denial of both access to land and recognition of sovereignty to the libertarian de-gendering of Indigenous governance systems and consequent rise to violence against Indigenous women. I compare this refusal to recognize the power of Indigenous women to the similar refusal to respond to the violence done upon them.

Indigenous sovereignty is framed as place-based and spirit-driven, and therefore can never be wholly eliminated or distilled by the state, though it is neither recognized as the former.

CHAPTER TWO: Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)

Introduction

According to Haudenosaunee, Sky Woman fell from a hole in the sky. John Mohawk (2005) writes of her journey towards the waters below. On her descent, Sky Woman fell through the clouds and air towards water below. During her descent, birds could see this falling creature and saw she could not fly. They came to her and helped to lower her slowly to waters beneath her. The birds told Turtle that she must need a place to land, as she possessed no water legs. Turtle rose up, breaking through the surface so that Sky Woman could land on Turtle's back. Once landed, Sky Woman and Turtle began to form the earth, the land becoming an extension of their bodies.

Amongst the Anishnaabe, a similar history is shared. Leanne Simpson (2011) retells the Anishnaabe Creation Story, within the historical framework of the Seven Fires of Creation. The two fires that I would like to relate to this idea of Place-Thought, is the Fifth and Sixth Fire. In the Fifth Fire, Gizhe-Mnidoo (the Creator) placed his/her thoughts into seeds. In the Sixth Fire, Gizhe-Mnidoo created First Woman (Earth), a place where these seeds could root and grow.

Before continuing, I would like to emphasize that these two events took place. They were not imagined or fantasized. This is not lore, myth or legend. These histories are not longer versions of "and the moral of the story is….". This is what happened.

These Creation histories can sometimes take days to describe. For the purposes of this article, I would like to focus on a common historical understanding of the origin of the human species - the spiritual and the feminine. These historical accounts, two of

many, speak to the common intersections of the female, animals, the spirit world, and the mineral and plant world. What constitutes "society" from these perspectives revolves around interactions between these worlds rather than solely interactions amongst human beings. Both of these accounts describe a theoretical understanding of the world via a physical embodiment – *Place-Thought.* Place- Thought is the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.

Given this, Indigenous perceptions of whom and what contributes to a societal structure are quite different from traditional Euro-Western thought. The evaluation of human interaction and culture has been a concern of traditional sociology since its inception and has led to the definition of what constitutes a society or various societies. The idea of "society" has revolved around human beings and their special place in the world, given their capacity for reason and language. Though this idea of society is still largely attributed to human relationships, in recent times we can see the emergence of non-humans being evaluated in terms of their contributions to the development and maintenance of society.

This article will examine how agency circulates inside of two different frames: Place- Thought (Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies) and epistemological-ontological (Euro- Western frame). My intention is both to emphasize a differentiated framing of Indigenous cosmologies as well as to examine our rich and intelligent theories found in these cosmologies.

As an Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee woman, my worldview is continuously

tested against the colonial frame. It is therefore an important task to imagine and strive

for our original instructions, which are located in what Susan Hill (2011) describes as

the "pre-colonial mind". Given this constant conflict, it is necessary to tease out what

the land's intentions might be, and how she tries to speak through us.

Reclaiming our frame

Our understandings of the world are often viewed as mythic by "modern" society, while

our stories are considered to be an alternative mode of understanding and interpretation

rather than "real" events. Colonization is not solely an attack on peoples and lands;

rather, this attack is accomplished in part through purposeful and ignorant

misrepresentations of Indigenous cosmologies. In order to demonstrate this, let us

examine how First Woman (Earth) and Sky Woman are translated through a foreign

epistemological-ontological divide.

Frameworks are designs of understanding and interpretation. They are the basis

for how humans organize politically, philosophically, etc. Frameworks in a Euro-Western

sense exist in the abstract. How they are articulated in action or behavior brings this

abstraction into praxis; hence a division of epistemological/theoretical versus

ontological/praxis. The difference in a Haudenosaunee or Anishnaabe framework is that

our cosmological frameworks are not an abstraction but rather a literal and animate

extension of Sky Woman's and First Woman's thoughts; it is impossible to separate

theory from praxis if we believe in the original historical events of Sky Woman and First

Woman. So it is not that Indigenous peoples do not theorize, but that these complex

theories are not distinct from place.

Below is a visual representation of these two separate framings. On the left is a

depiction of how an Anishnaabe and/or Haudenosaunee cosmology might be represented. On the right, the process by which a Euro-Western meta-understanding can contribute to colonization of these Indigenous cosmologies:

Spirit

Place-Thought

Obligation to communicate

Determines agency within creation → Societies and systems become extensions

Epistemology-Ontology Divide
↓
Separates constituents of the world from how the world is understood → Limits agency to humans
↓
Exclusionary relationship with nature

Table 1.1
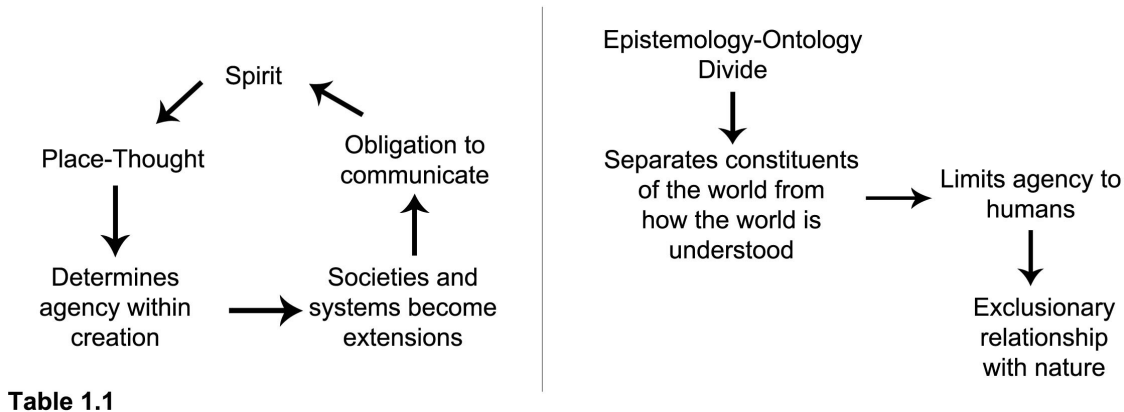
The above figure is not intended to be a universal model of how all Indigenous peoples think, believe, etc. Rather, it is simply a depiction of the crucial differences between Indigenous and Euro-Western processes. The visual on the left describes the animate nature of land. To be animate goes beyond being alive or acting, it is to be full of thought, desire, contemplation and will. It is the literal embodiment of the feminine, of First Woman, by which many Indigenous origin stories find their inception. When Sky Woman falls from the sky and lies on the back of a turtle, she is not only able to create land but becomes territory itself. Therefore, Place-Thought is an extension of her circumstance, desire, and communication with the water and animals – her agency. Through this communication she is able to become the basis by which all future societies will be built upon – land.

In becoming land or territory, she becomes the designator of how living beings will organize upon her. Where waters flow and pool, where mountains rise and turn into

valleys, all of these become demarcations of who will reside where, how they will live, and how their behaviours toward one another are determined. Scientists refer to this as ecosystems or habitats. However, if we accept the idea that all living things contain spirit, then this extends beyond complex structures within an ecosystem. It means that non-human beings choose how they reside, interact and develop relationships with other non-humans. So, all elements of nature possess agency, and this agency is not limited to innate action or causal relationships.

Thus, habitats and ecosystems are better understood as societies from an Indigenous point of view; meaning that they have ethical structures, inter-species treaties and agreements, and further their ability to interpret, understand and implement. Non-human beings are active members of society. Not only are they active, they also directly influence how humans organize themselves into that society. The very existence of clan systems evidences these many historical agreements between humans and non-humans. Clan systems vary from community to community and are largely dependent on the surrounding landscape. For example, whale clans are not present amongst Indigenous nations where there is no access to seawater. The structure of societies is demarcated by territory, which again, is an extension of Sky Woman's original circumstance. She is present in the relationships between humans and humans, humans and non- humans, and non-humans and non-humans.

Human thought and action are therefore derived from a literal expression of particular places and historical events in Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies. The agency that place possesses can be thought of in a similar way that Western thinkers locate agency in human beings. It follows that if, as Indigenous peoples, we are

extensions of the very land we walk upon, than we have an obligation to maintain communication with it. A familiar warning is echoed through many communities, that if we do not care for the land we run the risk of losing who we are as Indigenous peoples. When this warning is examined in terms of original Place- Thought, it is not only the threat of a lost identity or physical displacement that is risked but our ability to think, act, and govern becomes compromised because this relationship is continuously corrupted with foreign impositions of how agency is organized. Colonization has disrupted our ability to communicate with place and has endangered agency amongst Indigenous peoples. The pre-colonial mind was confronted with a form of diminutive agency, and the process by which we ensured our own ability to act and converse with non-humans and other humans became compromised. A disruption of this original process goes beyond losing a form of Indigenous identity or worldview and how it is practiced – it has become a violation of Sky Woman's intentionality.

The epistemological-ontological divide processes agency much differently. A common understanding of epistemology would describe it as one's perception of the world as being distinct from what is in the world, or what constitutes it (Descartes, 1996). Thought and ideas are reserved for the one perceiving – humans. All other objects, actants, or beings in the world may have an essence (Kant, 1999; Latour, 1987) or an interconnection with humans, but their ability to perceive is null or limited to instinctual reactions.

The epistemological-ontological removes the *how* and *why* out of the *what*. The *what* is left empty, readied for inscription. Epistemology has many representations: there is Science, Christianity, Eurocentrism, Marxism, communism, etc. Ontology too contains

many variables: do objects have an essence? What is in the world and how do its parts formulate a society? All of these concerns are by their very nature pursuits of human quandary and based on a capacity for reason. These distinct domains provide evidence that humans are assumed to be separate from the world they are in, in order to have a perception of it[3] (Kant, 2008). This is one theoretical structure to understand the world and its constituents. It necessitates a separation of not only human and non-human, but a hierarchy of beings in terms of how beings are able to think as well.

The man-made distinction between what and how/why is not an innocent one. Its consequences can be disastrous for not only non-humans but humans as well. If we lay this framing atop of nature, humankind is elevated outside or above the natural world. The reasoning being that perception is a gift or trait bestowed to the human mind, and most certainly not something possessed by a stone or a river. A river may act (i.e. flow) but does it perceive or contemplate this? An Anishnaabe perspective would respond in the affirmative. As we can see from the process of colonization and the imposition of the epistemology-ontology frame, our communication and obligations with other beings of creation is continuously interrupted.

For example, in the Christian origin story, we see how the interaction between a female (Eve) and non-humans (Serpent, Tree of Knowledge, apple) led to the damnation of all future humankind (Oh, that nosy woman!). It also meant that the garden, in which they were able to reside, quickly became a place where humans were cast out. They were no longer *of* their surroundings, but outside of them. The result has many consequences,

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[3] For more information, please refer to the subject-object argument from Immanuel Kant's Copernican Revolution in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.

but two significant ones for this purpose emerged.

Firstly, humans were positioned into a world in which they were able to reside over nature. Secondly, and interdependently, humans resolved that communication with nature held disastrous effects (Tree of Knowledge, the Serpent) and so inter-species communication became quite limited if not profane. In this worldview, agency became associated with human-human interactions. Societies were built upon domination over nature because of a perception that human arrangements with the animal world were unnecessary, if not dangerous. From an Indigenous perspective, though, the same interaction between a female and non-human has different results. For many Indigenous peoples, being aligned with the animal world was a position that was treated with respect and honour (Sioui, 1992). This relational paradox created a point of devastation, where our most sacred elements (land and women) were violently corrupted with a false profanity.

Conversely, in many Indigenous origin stories the idea that humans were the last species to arrive on earth was central; it also meant that humans arrived in a state of dependence on an already-functioning society with particular values, ethics, etc. (Benton-Benai, 2010). The inclusion of humans into this society meant that certain agreements, arrangements, etc. had to be made with the animal world, plant world, sky world, mineral world and other non-human species. Therefore, being associated with animals, whether it be through clan systems, ceremonies, or beings that acted as advisors, transpired from a place of reverence. In the Haudenosaunee origin story, Sky Woman becomes curious and falls through a hole in the sky and she is safely brought down to earth by different birds who land her on the back of a turtle. With the help of other animals, they are able to

create territory, and the beginning of humankind.

Both the story of Genesis and the story of Sky Woman tell of a world that existed before humans. Both tell of a woman and non-humans interacting to create significant changes in creation as well as for humankind. In the latter, the relationship between animals and this female is regarded as sacred and ritualized over generations. This relationship also becomes the foundation for future clan systems, ethics, governance, ceremonies, etc. In the former, the female becomes responsible for all the pain of childbirth and resentment for being cast out of paradise. The interaction of Eve and the Serpent results in shame and excommunication from nature. Additionally, future dialogue and communication with animals becomes taboo and a source of witchcraft. It is at this point of conflict where thought, perception, and action are separated from the supposed inertia of nature.

Governance, agency, and non-- humans

If we begin from the premise that land is female and further, that she thinks - then she is alive. If the most elemental female is conceived of as being responsible for pain, shame and excommunication, then doing destruction upon her does not seem that bad. In fact, maybe she even deserves to have violence done to her. After all, her curious nature compromised the life human beings could have had, but cannot experience because of her irresponsible actions – thus the basis for resentment. Any obligation to be empathic towards her is no longer necessary because this dominant worldview instructs that the feminine is synonymous with disappointment and stupidity. It is no surprise then, that amidst a Euro-Christian construct, land and its designations are silenced. Many Indigenous peoples wonder at how much destruction has persisted throughout the decades

by the colonizer without any significant attempt at stopping. If you belong to a structure where land and the feminine are not only less-than, but knowingly irresponsible, violations against her would seem warranted.

When thinking about agency with reference to Place-Thought, where can it be located? I find it in animals, in humans, in plants, in rocks, etc. How did I come to think that these different entities and beings had agency in the first place? From stories/histories. For example, an event took place, perhaps, between a bear and a young woman and from this meeting an idea about a clan system came to be. Or maybe Three Sisters, named Corn, Bean and Squash decided to make an arrangement about how they would live together. Maybe it seems like I am telling stories but really I am commenting on two examples of historical events that took place in a particular location, at a particular time, where consciousness, thought, desire, and the imagination of all individuals is in action.

In an epistemological-ontological frame, Indigenous cosmologies would be examples of a symbolic interconnectedness – an abstraction of a moral code. It would be a way in which to view the world – the basis for an epistemological stance. From a Haudenosaunee worldview, this is what happened. Further, Haudenosaunee systems, peoples, territories, etc. are affected by this relationship between the Three Sisters. It is more than a lesson, a teaching, or even an historical account. Their conscious and knowing agreement directly extends to our philosophies, thoughts and actions as Haudenosaunee peoples.

These types of historical Indigenous events (i.e. Sky Woman, the Three Sisters) are increasingly becoming not only accepted by Western frameworks of understanding,

but sought after in terms of non-oppressive and provocative or interesting interfaces of accessing the real. This traces Indigenous peoples not only as epistemologically distinct but also as a gateway for non-Indigenous thinkers to re-imagine their world. In this, our stories are often distilled to simply that – words, principles, morals to imagine the world and imagine ourselves in the world. In reading stories this way, non-Indigenous peoples also keep control over what agency is and how it is dispersed in the hands of humans.

Over time and through processes of colonization, the corporeal and theoretical borders of the epistemological-ontological divide contribute to colonial interpretations of nature/creation that act to centre the human and peripherate nature into an exclusionary relationship. Land becomes scaled and modified in terms of progress and advancement. The measure of colonial interaction with land has historically been one of violence and bordered individuations where land is to be accessed, not learned from or a part of. Conversely, Anishnaabe Elder Fred Kelly (2006) states:

> If you listen to our Creation story, invariably we land on the back of a turtle. In our case, why do we call it Turtle Island? Well, this is the island that we were placed on, but in addition to that, to demarcate it, the Grandmother that lights the night sky, commonly called or colloquially called the Moon, in her full glory, comes out thirteen times a year – four seasons. Not twelve – thirteen times. And this is when she kisses the Turtle…Now look at the Turtle. Count the platelets on the back of a turtle. Thirteen. That is why we call it Turtle Island. Now, the difference in concepts with Euro-Canadian law is the concept of ownership and property rights. Wherein Euro-Canadians talk about property rights we talk about territory. It is the closest relationship. And it's the relationship to Mother Earth. So therefore if you understand Sacred Law and the Great Law, that you are an integral part of Grandmother Earth, then is it conceivable that you could sell her? Firstly, to sell her is tantamount to selling yourself. Can you do that? Not under Great Law, not under Sacred Law. So therefore, you can't sell your Grandmother. It's just not allowed. Let me put it another way - it's unconstitutional. It's against the law - it's illegal. So under Indigenous law it is not possible to sell any part of Grandmother Earth, because we have a sacred relationship to her. You are a part of that. (2006, p. 11)

Our truth, not only Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee people but in a majority of Indigenous societies, conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil. The land is understood to be female: First Woman designates the beginning of the animal world, the plant world and human beings. It is the femininity of earth itself that institutes all beings as literal embodiments of localized meanings (Trask, 1999; Pesantubbee, 2007). In our understanding of how life began (as human beings), it is accepted that creatures, land and earth had existed long before us. Could Place-Thought be the network in which humans and non-humans relate, translate and articulate their agency? If I, as a human, am made of the stuff of soil and spirit, do I not extend to the non-human world beyond causal interactions? And what of these non-human – non-human relationships that demarcate various roles and responsibilities of human beings?

If we begin from the premise that we are in fact made of soil, then our principles of governance are reflected in nature. Sharon Venne (1998) writes:

> Our spirituality and our responsibilities define our duties. We understand the concept of sovereignty as woven through a fabric that encompasses our spirituality and responsibility. This is a cyclical view of sovereignty, incorporating it into our traditional philosophy and view of our responsibilities. There it differs greatly from the concept of western sovereignty which is based upon absolute power. For us absolute power is in the Creator and the natural order of all living things; not only in human beings… Our sovereignty is related to our connections to the earth and is inherent. The idea of a nation did not simply apply to human beings. We call the buffalo or, the wolves, the fish, the trees, and all are nations. Each is sovereign, an equal part of the creation, interdependent, interwoven, and all related. (p. 23)

Kaagoogiiwe-Enaakoonige (Anishnaabe for "Sacred Law") literally translates to

"the eternal important circular decision" (Kelly, 2006). The female earth or the feminine is intrinsically tied to the notion of sovereignty and how humans interact with non-human creatures in the formation of governance. Venne's description of sovereignty as being tied to responsibility or obligation to original instructions from the earth, lends to this idea that the feminine is not only to be respected but is looked upon as a source of power and knowledge. Sovereignty is not just a contested idea (located within an epistemology); rather, it is an essential obligation in the continuation of our selves. Conversely, this source of power is often conceived as a part of subjugated knowledge systems by Western categorizations of hierarchy. So what happens when the all-powerful centre attempts to create a de-subjugated space via non-human interactions?

A subjugated agency for non-- humans

Because land is so vital to the formation of Indigenous societies and function of human beings, I want to explore how this element is traced in terms of agency by non-Indigenous thinkers – specifically Science Studies and Ecofeminists. Both discourses are considered to be progressive in terms of introducing the role of non-humans into Euro-Western thought. For example, Bruno Latour's (1987) Actor-Network Theory is built upon the premise of interconnecting referential chains of humans and non-humans, and how these connections recognize mutual exchange/effect.

Haraway's *Situated Knowledges* (1988) attempts to implode the centre where knowledge production (epistemology) is generally grounded in heteropatriarchy. Her work contributes a valuable discussion on how the localized knowledges, of what she terms as subjugated peoples, provide a space where the dominant boundaries of this heteropatriarchy can be imploded. However, Haraway resists essentialist notions of the

earth as mother or matter and chooses instead to utilize products of localized knowledges (i.e. Coyote or the Trickster) as a *process* of boundary implosion: "I like to see feminist theory as a reinvented coyote discourse obligated to its sources in many heterogeneous accounts of the world" (Haraway, 1988, 594). This is a level of abstracted engagement once again. While it may serve to change the imperialistic tendencies in Euro-Western knowledge production, Indigenous histories are still regarded as story and process – an abstracted tool of the West.

It is not my contention that Euro-Western thinkers are inherently colonial. Rather, the epistemological-ontological distinction is oftentimes the assumptive basis by which Euro- Western arguments are presented upon. It is this assumption that, I argue, creates spaces for colonial practices to occur. We can see how Euro-Western thought is beginning to embrace the contributions of the non-human world; however, the controversial element of agency is often redesigned when applied to non-humans, thereby keeping this epistemological-ontological divide intact.

Alaimo (2008) describes the following: "Dirt demonstrates an agency without agents, a foundational, perpetual becoming that happens without will or intention or delineation. In fact, dirt, a rather indiscrete substance, is necessary for the emergence of less diffuse life forms" (p. 247). Thus, dirt acts. It does not think necessarily, nor does it want or desire, but it is constantly fulfilling its intention. It is necessary for other life forms to survive; it provides a space for life to emerge. Yet this type of agency is hierarchical; it is dependent on the belief that humans are different based on our ability of will and purpose. Dirt is acknowledged as an actant at best, no longer an afterthought but still limited with regard to ability. How does dirt affect me? How do I affect dirt?

These are the questions that underscore the agency which is limited to a human- centric quandary.

Alaimo further states that dirt may not be elevated to the status of "family member", but at least elevated to "something worthy of proper care and feeding" (2008, p. 254). Consumption, ownership, etc. are conceptualized as the basis for trans-corporeality in the process by which borders are constructed and solidified. In this relationship with dirt, humans are responsible to land the way an owner might be responsible for a pet. This type of dirt is not First Woman; it is a plaything asking for attention.

Vicky Kirby (2008) goes further in her understanding of dirt and agency by stating: "…it goes without saying that nature/the body/materiality preexists culture/intellect/abstraction, and furthermore, that the thinking self is not an articulation of matter's intentions" (p. 216). Kirby insists upon a particular Cartesian dualism in which human intellect and intentionality are distinctive from the corporeal. It is not that one is not dependent on the other, for if humans had no flesh, they would have no body and thus would not possess the ability to intellectualize. However, Kirby argues that intellect or what constitutes culture is beyond the body and is therefore distinctly apart from the primordial. This taken-for-granted conceptualization of nature and culture is a problematic that has been re-coded in discourse time and time again – that humans are uniquely distinct from nature in their capacities. Interconnectivity is permitted, but only insofar as distinction from the thinking human and the acting natural world. True, the borders of flesh and soil rub up against each other but this does not mean one is guided by the other. The border where human-as-the-centre begins still exists and

continues to determine the bounds for capacity and action.

Interestingly, Kirby concludes that it is dangerous to attach action to natural cause because this would detriment the uniqueness of humans and in fact perpetuate a continuum of 'progress' rather than pockets/sites of politically-minded agents. She writes:

> Natural determinations will seem like a prescriptive return to something from the past, something undeniable and immutable. In the former case, when we explain our thoughts and actions as cultural products and effects, we are also emphasizing that we are active agents in our political destinies. By embracing the notion of natural cause and determination, however, we run the risk of reducing what seems so special about the human condition to evolutionary happenstance, or nature's caprice. (p. 217)

It is true that natural cause and determination in Euro-Western colonial history have acted to rationalize and justify mass violence, biological racism, sexism and de-culturation. It is these consequences of colonialism that have propagated racist and violent forms of oppression, enclosing whiteness into the centre. Dismantling these ideas allows what is dominant to be questioned and pulled apart so that concentrated hegemonic ideologies become diffused into   the spaces where borders and boundaries are confused and permeable. Yet Kirby's claim of the special-ness of humans apart from natural determinations disregards Indigenous conceptions of human and nature, while at the same time implying that natural cause and determinism are random and therefore unintentioned.

Similarly in Science Studies, many scholars have begun to redefine agency to solve the problem of the man/nature dichotomy. For example, Bruno Latour's (1987) Actor-Network Theory is built upon the premise of interconnecting referential chains and mutual exchange/effect is granted to the non-human world. Nash (2005) states that if

agency is dislocated from the mind where thought and will reside, then agency can be granted to non- humans. Similarly, Lockie (2004) argues that if agency does not include consciousness or thought, but instead that these attributes are located in the *relations* between two individuals, then everyone and thing can possess some level of agency. Albeit, once more, the problem of subjugated agency remains redefined. These interpretations of agency place humans and non- humans in an interconnected web of cause and effect, where the plane of action is equalized amongst all elements. Agency, however, acts outside, within, and in between this web through carefully re-designed definitions where humans possess something more or special.

These levels of agency are a product of the epistemology-ontology paradigm. Imbedded within it, as demonstrated, is the idea of human ownership over non-human things, beings, etc. The inclusion of the non-human, in this case dirt/soil, has been causal or instinctual in nature. Meaning that, although the dirt/soil has been granted entrance into the human web of action, it is still relegated to a mere unwitting player in the game of human understandings.

However, if we think of agency as being tied to spirit, and spirit exists in all things, then all things possess agency. In the words of Elder Fred Kelly, our origin stories state that Sky Woman was able to communicate with the animals and vice versa. Our ability to have sophisticated governance systems is directly related to not only the animals' ability to communicate with us, but their *willingness* to communicate with us. Vine Deloria (2003) argued that all human events are referenced to land or with land in mind. This is not intended, at the outset, as political strategy (though it works as one); rather, it is something that we all hold as sacred. Spirit is contained within all elements of

nature (Sioui, 1992) and therefore, we, as humans, know our actions are intrinsically and inseparably tied to land's intentionality – quite a counter position from notions of diluted formulations of agency.

How colonization operationalizes agency

What happens when soil is removed from territory? What happens when flesh is taken from the body? More importantly, what happens to the territory after its resources are excavated? Shopping malls and paper mills - a literal excavation of thoughts are forcibly transformed into objects of the colonial imperative. Those crops became their crops, that tree became their trees and so on and so on. Once the voices and thoughts of these two essential categories of creation (the feminine and land) are silenced and then corrupted, the acquisition and destruction of land becomes all the more realized.

From a theoretical standpoint**,** the material (body/land) becomes abstracted into epistemological spaces as a resource for non-Indigenous scholars to implode their hegemonic borders. The excavated First Woman and all of her teachings, ontologies, and actions are interpreted as sexy lore and points of theoretical jump-offs to dismantle and dissect that which oppresses. Noël Sturgeon (1997) writes:

> It is not necessary to make essentialist, biologically determinist
> arguments about the connection between women and nature in the case
> of Native American women; rather, their cultural traditions and their
> economic practices can be seen as making positive connections between
> nature and the feminine, as well as nature and the masculine. (p. 119)

Yet what happens when Indigenous ways of relating to land are based on an essential and literal connection to the feminine? Does this mean we are indulging stereotypes or perhaps we are naïve? Or worse still, validating the centre by being reactionary?

Smith (2005) describes the violence of Indigenous lands and Indigenous women

as being essentially tied to one another. The techniques of this violence were and are used by settlers as strategies to govern Indigenous people (Stoler, 2002). Many Indigenous societies, at the time of contact, were matriarchal in composition, a key point of cultural and political difference with the incoming settler population (Sioui, 1992; Maracle, 1996). In order to gain access to not only territories, but to also facilitate change within the order of Indigenous societies, women were both utilized as a means of infiltrating societal structures, as well as being the object of violent subjugation through rape, removal of children from the home (i.e. residential schools), and death (Brand, 1981; Smith, 2005). This evidence suggests that the "Indian Woman" was both necessary and problematic to the colonial imperative, given her powerful status in many Indigenous societies.

The epistemology-ontology divide diverts agency away from land and other non-human beings. In this framing, the dominant society in North America points to disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous women in prisons, as sex workers, the victims of physical and sexual violence (Smith**,** 2005**)**. At the same time, land is increasingly being excavated, re-designed, torn apart. Is this merely a coincidence? Of course not. The feminine and land is fundamental to our extensions as people (Gunn-Allen, 1992). So, in an attempt to conquer such people, where would you start? Our land and our women, disabling communication with Place-Thought, and implementing a bounded agency where women are sub-human/non-human. Colonialism is operationalized through dismantling the essential categories of other societies.

Further, Euro-Western discourses have often attempted to remedy historical mistakes of biological essentialisms (i.e. scientific racism) by rejecting what are

considered to be essentialist arguments. For example, some Indigenous female writers have been accused of being reactionary or gynocentric, implying they edge on a dangerous essentialism. However, essentializing categories of Indigenous cosmologies should not be measured against the products of Euro- Western mistakes. Nor should Indigenous peoples be the inheritors of these mistakes. Rather, to decolonize or access the pre-colonial mind, our histories (not our lore) should be understood as they were intended in order for us to be truly agent beings. To disengage with essentialism means we run the risk of disengaging from the land.

Sky Woman and First Woman return home

As Indigenous peoples, it is not only an obligation to communicate with Place-Thought (ceremonies with land, territory, the four directions, etc.), but it ensures our continued ability to act and think according to our cosmologies. To prevent these practices deafens us. It is not that the non-human world no longer speaks but that we begin to understand less and less. This is why, despite five hundred years of colonialism, we are still not fully colonized and we are still continuing to fight; we have within us the ability to communicate with the land but our agency as Indigenous peoples has been corrupted within this colonial frame.

In Table 1.1, it was demonstrated how Indigenous cosmologies and the Euro-Western epistemology-ontology divide process agency differently. Our cosmologies (and the theories within them) are righteously different and cannot be separated from the stuff of nature. When an Indigenous cosmology is translated through a Euro-Western process, it necessitates a distinction between place and thought. The result of this distinction is a colonized interpretation of both place and thought, where land is simply dirt and thought

is only possessed by humans. If we operationalize this distinction, we as Indigenous peoples risk standing in disbelief of ourselves. Even amongst ourselves it can be easy to forget that our ability to speak to the land is not just an echo of a mythic tale or part of a moral code, but a reality. Whether this forgetting has been forced upon us, or our ears have become dull to the sounds of the land speaking up through our feet, it is now incumbent upon us to remember. This is not a question of "going backwards", for this implies there is a static place to return to. However, given that the concept of time for us was never linear, we possess the ability to access the pre-colonial mind through the ability to travel in dreams, to shapeshift, to understand what might happen tomorrow, etc. Our teachings tell us that we travel through, under, above. So it is not a question of accessing something, which has already come and gone, but simply to listen. To act.

I hope in this article I have emphasized some of the important ways in which obligation and responsibility denote a commitment to the land, not just because it is a part of me (or you) but also because it continues to be removed, cemented, or ignored. Listening to what she tells us is not only about a philosophical understanding of life and the social realm, rather it is about a tangible and tacit violence being done to her - and therefore to us. I hope that this discussion will lead to conversations about bodies in action and how gritty flesh is elementally moved to protect and reclaim territories.

We will need to continue to resist the growing tendency to both be subsumed into de- essentialized epistemological spaces as well as fight against the dislocation of our thoughts from place. To this end, flesh becomes action not because it is material but because it must do so for ears to remain open and low to the ground. Only if the land decides to stop speaking to us will we enter the world of dislocation where agency is lost

and our histories become provocative Indian lore in an ongoing settler mistake. Luckily for us, First Woman has shown herself to be much more intelligent than this by writing herself into our flesh.

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CHAPTER THREE: Smudge This: Assimilation, State-Favoured Communities and the Denial of Indigenous Spiritual Lives

The survival of Indigenous peoples and our traditional practices is generally measured on a scale of demise versus adaptability (Vizenor, 2008). Regarded historically as a doomed race, it is still surprising to many that we continue to exist at all. The quandary of this circumstance is usually resolved in the demonstrated ability of Indigenous peoples to adapt. Adapting to the ongoing theft of our lands, continuing to practise our traditional ceremonies despite intense missionizing operations throughout our territories, and so forth. This politics of adaptability are reminiscent of Coulthard's (2007) politics of recognition — the reconciling of Indigenous peoples to the settler state's processes of domination. This paper will interrogate how Anishnaabe[4] spiritual practices have been abstracted and evacuated from place in a continued effort towards the assimilation of Indigenous communities. I will undertake this examination in two lines of inquiry.

Firstly, the spiritual violations present in the Indian Residential School (IRS) system will be discussed and framed as a method of inscribing a new, assimilated identity onto Indigenous children. I argue that displaced forms of Christianity that were central to the British colonial project and perpetuated colonialism through making universalist claims are incommensurate with place-based Anishnaabe spirituality. The attempted disembodiment of place from its spiritual life through forced Christianization contributes to a denial of Indigenous ceremony, thereby interrupting the process of inheriting. In turn,

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[4] The Anishnaabe are one of the largest nations in North America. Anishnaabe homelands include territories in the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, as well as in the American states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The Anishnaabe include the Ojibway, Algonquin, Odawa, Chippewa, and Saulteaux peoples (see Minnesota Historical Society, 1973).

this dislocation has fostered an environment wherein the politics of adaptability (assimilation) are intensified. As Canada attempts to transition to a less explicitly violent relationship with Indigenous peoples, the Indigenous ceremonial practices that were once proscribed during the IRS era are currently not only allowable, but engaged with.

Thus, my second line of inquiry will address more contemporary functions of Indigenous ceremony as they relate to assimilationist goals of the state. I explore the effectiveness of Anishnaabe ceremonial life amidst colonized places, specifically in industrialized, urban communities. This discussion problematizes the assumption that our process of inheriting is amenable to the challenges produced by colonialism, thereby resulting in so-called reconciled communities.

My contention is that residential schools and urban centres are significant material fabrications of colonialism, both of which accelerate an assimilationist agenda, and both of which are actively produced in contravention of Indigenous spiritual relationships. The inheriting of transformed, colonial places interrupts our ability as Anishnaabeg[5] not only to communicate with all aspects of community (including the spirit world), but may actually transform our spirit world. It is therefore necessary to trace how Anishnaabe spirituality is understood, and how it is subsequently considered both deniable and welcome by the state.

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[5]*Anishnaabe* refers to the nation of peoples; *Anishnaabeg* refers to the people belonging to this nation.

Place and Inheritance in Anishnaabe Cosmologies

It should first be noted that the Canadian colonial project has always relied on the disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples from their territories which, in turn, eradicates senses of community. I aim both to situate traditional Anishnaabe understandings and protocols within the pre-colonial mind[6] (Hill, 2012), and to examine the consequences of violent interruptions to these traditional understandings and protocols. Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island[7] have always maintained protocols that negotiated how newcomers would be incorporated into society, which included the sharing practices of distinctive Indigenous knowledge, as well as members of one nation living in another nation's land. While the implications of forced relocation and urbanization cannot be underestimated, I intend to trace place and inheriting as situated[8] realities.

Secondly, Anishnaabe spirituality varies from place to place. Multiple Anishnaabe territories across Turtle Island exist and therefore spiritual practices are differentiated in terms of the landscape of place (various clan systems, ceremonies, rituals specific to elements of that territory, etc.). As well, Anishnaabe spirituality may be differentiated in terms of how and why ceremonies are practised. The complex nature of this spirituality is emblematic of how place and the relationship with place are both particular and nuanced through Anishnaabeg communities. This paper will not explicate the nature of differences among these layers of Anishnaabe spirituality; rather, it refers to Anishnaabe spirituality as a function, which is central to our cosmologies.

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[6] The "pre-colonial" mind concerns the act of understanding Indigenous concepts and traditions in a non-reflexive frame, that is, not informed or reflected by and against colonialism.
[7] Turtle Island refers to the continent of North America. Many Anishnaabeg refer to Turtle Island when speaking of their homeland because of the sacred place the turtle holds in creation stories.

[8] I use the term *situated* in identifying localized knowledges (see Haraway, 1988).

Colonial mapping in Canada has attempted to sever the spiritual and material relationships between inhabitants of place. In this attempted severing, the understanding of place has been perverted into a resource-based relationship with land. Coulthard (2010) provides a crucial re-centring of place and its scope:

> It is a profound misunderstanding to think of land or place as simply some material object of profound importance to Indigenous cultures (although it is this too); instead it ought to be understood as a field of relationships of things to each other. Place is a way of knowing, experiencing, and relating with the world – and these ways of knowing often guide forms of resistance to power relations that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place. (p. 79)

The field of relationships that Coulthard (2010) refers to, I argue, is a mechanism of inheriting. Place, then, is the material and non-material space of inheriting. It is also reinforces the notion of how communities are structured: community is a network of tacit relationships anchored in particular geography and knowledge systems.

Place is both birth and inheritance. According to Anishnaabe beliefs, humans are of the land. The land is our first mother, and first woman (Simpson, 2011). She is not a myth, or a story. She is our history and our material, biological mother. Therefore we are of her. Our materiality, spirits, minds, and emotions are all interconnected and share a material connection to land. In this birth, we (and other beings) inherit throughout our lifetime. Place includes stories, histories, meaning, territory (land, waters, rocks, air), humans, non-humans, the spirit world, protocols, and governance systems (Johnston, 1987). It is the basis for our cosmology and how we relate within a society. When we bury our children's placentas in the earth, it is both a recognition and introduction of this new being to place. When we bury our people at the end of a lifetime, they return to the land and become part of the process of inheriting through their bodies and their spirits.

All new beings carry the knowledge of beings before them. The relationship we have to place is also one that we have with ourselves. When place is altered, we are altered as current and future inheritors. If this altering is a form of disembodiment, what we can bestow is limited to what we have adapted against.

The spirit world inherits as well. It is the receiver of our prayers, offerings, and communication. For example, in the smudging ceremony(or simply, "smudging"),[9] which involves the burning of sage as a purification cleansing ritual so as to cleanse the person's mind, spirit, body, and emotions of negative energy, we are asking the spirit world and the spirit of the sage itself to aid in our emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental cleansing. The sage that is burnt is materially cleansing these parts of ourselves. The spirit world is engaged in ceremony with us through the usage of sage, and correspondingly the spirit world can also affect us and other beings through dreams, signs, and ceremonies. This shared affectual relationship is both accommodated by place and embodied in place — the basis of which is reciprocity. For many Anishnaabeg, our spirituality is essentially tied to place as are the spirits of our ancestors (both human and non-human). We conduct ceremony for them, and they conduct ceremony for us. Place is a space of exchange, which invites the question: In the presence of a reciprocal and interdependent relationship, when place is altered, is the spirit world altered as well?

In order to begin to understand our spirituality, it is essential to examine how non-humans are engaged within Anishnaabe societies. Firstly, non-humans are active agents who founded society (Benton-Benai, 2010). They are not separate from the political, the

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[9] Smudging is a purification ceremony Anishnaabeg have always practised, but is not limited to the Anishnaabe. It is also a common practice in some other Indigenous cultures.

social, the private, or the public. Animals, the sky world, the water world, the plant world, the rocks, the spirit world — all pre-existed humankind (Benton-Benai, 2010). They are not species and elements reacting to instinct. Rather, these worlds represent sophisticated, functioning, self-governing societies. These societies have ethical structures, and inter-species treaties and agreements. Further, they possess the ability to interpret, understand, and implement. Human beings were the last to arrive on earth, according to our creation story (Benton-Benai, 2010). As founders, non-humans directly influence how humans organize themselves into a given society. The emergence and subsequent inclusion of human beings into society was negotiated through councils of non-human beings. For example, in one understanding of Anishnaabe clan systems, the Fish Clan represents the intellectuals, teachers, and scholars (Benton-Benai, 2010). The identification with this clan among humans was not merely based on the observation of fish traits. Rather, this relationship was determined by fish themselves — an agreement to regard human beings as kin, and vice-versa.

It follows that we as Anishnaabeg are extensions of the very land we walk upon, and therefore have an obligation to maintain communication with it. The nature of this obligation also cautions us that if we do not care for the land, we run the risk of losing who we are as Anishnaabeg. Smudging is one aspect of this communication and obligates us to use material elements of place for this exchange, and affirms the embodied relationship we have to place.

If we accept that as Anishnaabeg we are of the land, and that land is alive, then it follows that our thoughts, systems, and understandings of the world are essentially tied to place. It is not just a physical displacement that is risked through continued dispossession

of lands: our ability to think, act, and govern also becomes compromised. Colonialism has disrupted our ability to communicate with place and has endangered agency amongst Indigenous peoples (Cajete, 2000). During the initial period of colonization of Indigenous territories on Turtle Island, Christianity and capitalism were fundamental in transforming our many places. Place was (and is) confronted with a form of diminutive agency wherein non-humans have been considered to be non-rational and non-spiritual, and by European estimation, so were we (Smith, 1999). Over time, through assimilationist tactics and violence, our own ability to act and converse with non-humans and other humans became compromised. The consequences of this extend beyond losing a form of Indigenous identity or worldview and how it is practised — it has resulted in a violation of land's intentionality.

Place and inheriting in relation to the spirit world can be understood through the story of how Nenaboozhoo created the spirit world. Storyteller Isaac Murdoch (2014) of Serpent River First Nation retells this story. Nenaboozhoo was born of a human woman whose father was the spirit of the western wind:

> Nenaboozhoo noticed that all those spirits were just roaming endlessly in the sky, and thought, "I think I know what to do." Noticing that a turtle was pouting by a rock, Nenaboozhoo said, "Why don't you do me a favour, you're so beautiful and you're so gifted, why don't you bring me some nice beautiful stones from the edge of the lake 'cause I want to use them." The turtle was mad because when Nenaboozhoo was creating the earth he didn't include turtle, so turtle was jealous and he felt left out. As the turtle was at the edge of the lake, Nenaboozhoo grabbed him and threw him far out into the lake. The turtle was very angry and swam to the bottom and sat right in the middle of the lake. When that turtle came up for air Nenaboozhoo shot his arrow at it, and of course that arrow hit that shell and when it did, startled turtle and all that mud that was on that turtle's back and tail flipped up into the sky. And they say it created *Jibiiy Miikan*, the sacred path in the afterlife that went from east to west.

> The mud that was on turtle's back and tail had come from Nenaboozhoo's grandmother Nokomis's medicine that was all scattered at the bottom of the lake. It was her medicine that got flung right across the sky. Nenaboozhoo knew that, and said, "Here is a sacred trail and to finish this I'm going to make a place for those who departed." Nenaboozhoo walked down the path that goes from east to west, and at the end he created the spirit world. They say he was there for a long time creating everything and he made it very beautiful, even more beautiful than the earth, they say. All of the rocks were gorgeous, the trees, the animals and their colours were absolutely pure. So that's how the spirit world came to the Anishinabe, and they say that when someone passes away, their spirits go through the eastern door, and they travel south and out the western door. And they say that his brother, the brother that was born as a black stone, wanted to look after that place up there. So Nenaboozhoo told his brother "I will send you there, and that will be your place to look after." (p. 10)

Nenaboozhoo is part human and part spirit. He is regarded by Anishnaabeg as aiding in creation. Weaver's (1997) discussion on polycentrism among Indigenous communities is helpful in understanding the implications of the above story and the possibility of multiple spirit worlds. These multiple worlds are indicative of each cosmology as being universally held to local places. Each cosmology had a sacred right to its own existence and was to be respected by descendants of other cosmologies. This dynamic of respect and interdependence can be applied to the spirit world as well. In the story of Nenaboozhoo, we are told that he created the spirit world where the wandering spirits of the territory could be organized and continue to live, finding new purpose.

If we apply Weaver's (2007) claim that there are multiple cosmologies belonging to particular territories, then we must also consider that there are indeed multiple spirit worlds that are locatable and accessible through distinctive places and particular cosmological beliefs. A multiplicity of worlds does not preclude meaningful interaction or exchanges between them; rather, multiple spirit worlds have their own beginnings and internal processes that are particular to territory or *place*.

Further to Weaver's (2007) point, the multiple points of centrism or spirit worlds would be created out of material places. For Nenaboozhoo, he used a turtle, the lake, mud from the bottom of the lake, and an arrow to create the spirit world. All of these elements are familiar and locatable for the Anishnaabeg. In addition, Nenaboozhoo's powers are born of both a human (his mother) and the Western wind (his father). This power manifested itself into a place where spirits (including those of humans) could go after experiencing death (walking through the western doorway).

Finally, the story of Nenaboozhoo tells us that after walking Jibiiy Miikan (the sacred path into the spirit world), rocks, waters, trees, plants, and animals are found within it. Therefore, there is a sacred relationship that human beings have with these companions of place during our time here, and they continue and translate into the western stage of life: death and beyond. The main contention of this reality is that spirit resides in the material bodies of all companions, including ourselves. Given that Nenaboozhoo tells us the spirit world is a direct consequence of the material and physical aspects of place, it must therefore also be true that the spirit world has the potential to be constantly affected by the circumstances and happenings of the material world. The beings of the spirit world can experience the feasts we hold for them in this world and the ceremonies we conduct for them, and they too give to us through ceremony, dreams, songs, art, shapeshifting, and so on. This fluid exchange is not without more dangerous impacts, those impacts being the ones that result outside of acts of gratitude, generosity, and calls for aid. The spirit world receives all that we offer and is affected by place continuously, not solely from one pure moment in its time of inception (Dei, 2000). Since colonization began, we have been witness to rampant destruction of place, and some of us

have become contributors to this destruction. If we know our spirituality can be located on the earthly plane, to what extent can we now access the spiritual, given the damage to place amidst colonialism?

Disembodiment

The colonization of Indigenous places has corrupted, and continues to corrupt, the reciprocal relationship of bequeathing and inheriting between all worlds and their communities: spirit, animal, human, rock, sky, water, winged, and plant. Foreign religious influences have been particularly destructive to this inheriting process. The massive violations against Indigenous peoples and territories by Christian nations during the time of conquest *without* a sense of godly purpose would have been considered the epitome of savageness by these nations, to be sure. Furthermore, the conquering of peoples, places, and spirits was rationalized as a design of sacred obligations. The usage of Christian institutions and doctrine to facilitate the colonial imperative (wealth through dominion over land) was considered a marker of being civilized (Wilson, 2000) — even of divinity. Stephen Riggs, an Ohio-born missionary to the Sioux from 1837 to 1883, stated:

> As tribes and nations the Indians must perish and live only as men! With this impression of the tendency of God's purposes as they are being developed year after year, I would labor to prepare them to fall in with Christian civilization that is destined to cover the earth. (Berkhofer, 1972, p. 7)

The export of Christian doctrine from Europe to the "New World" demonstrates that not only was Christianity abstracted from its original place, but that it was a Christian duty to Christianize non-Christian places. Christians are instructed to: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be

saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15–16, English

Standard Version). The doctrines of Christianity are transportable because its divine

nature is spiritual — and the spiritual is thought to be unconstrained by place. It is not

only transportable, but valued as inherently good; as something that should be sought

after and spread throughout the world. The implications for dispossession of Indigenous

lands are not subtle. The reasoning for non-located spirituality serves to not only

transform Indigenous lands into Christian ones, but to disconnect us from our

cosmologies.

I do not contend that the many religious denominations of Christianity do not hold

particular places as holy or sacred; Bethlehem and Jerusalem are just some of the places

that are regarded in this way (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2007). However, the

transportable nature of these denominations is not commensurate with the cosmological

view of Indigenous places. Deloria (2003) writes:

> Just as the temporal world religions find a place for sacred sites, so spatial
> religions deal with the passage of time and the increasing complexity that it brings
> to human societies by attached stories to the sacred places … The hazard that
> appears within the spatial conceptions of religion is the effect that missionary
> activity has on its integrity when it tries to leave its homeland. Can it leave the
> land of its nativity and embark on a program of world or continental conquest
> without losing its religious essence in favor of purely political or economic
> considerations? Are ceremonies restricted to particular places, and do they
> become useless in a foreign land? (p. 69)

Deloria (2003) questions not the validity of Christianity itself, but rather the efficacy of a

religious system once it has been transported to a foreign land. So, if we can briefly

suspend the context of colonialism or the violent effects that Christianity as a system has

had on Indigenous communities, and question the stability of a substantive belief system

outside of its sacred places, the effectiveness and purposefulness of this system is called

into question. The stories inherent in Christian doctrine therefore become historical references to foreign places when distributed to unknown worlds.

The vastness of the "New World" was mistakenly perceived by European newcomers as an unpeopled wilderness, a virtual Garden of Eden. The categorization of Indigenous peoples as "sub-human" further legitimized the Europeans' view of the colonization of land and its inhabitants as progressive and necessary (Smith, 1999). Indigenous peoples and their spiritual lives were viewed as similar to the land itself — *terra nullius.* In a blog post examining the violence against missing and murdered Indigenous women, Sayers (2015) referenced this idea, claiming that the female Indigenous body is perceived by settler society as existing in a perpetual state of *terra nullius.* If we take this comparison and apply it to the spiritual lives of Indigenous peoples at the time of contact, they would be viewed in the same way as territory was — empty and ripe for spiritual fulfilment. This view was operationalized not only in mass-missionary operations during the settlement of Canada, but also in the forced conversions of Indigenous peoples in exchange for food, shelter, and education (Wilson, 2000). For example, industrial schools and day schools, which were in operation before and during the formalized residential school system, were afflicted with violence, forced labour, sexual and physical abuse, or — at the very least — negligence (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013).

The IRS system, which was funded by the federal government and overseen by various churches,[10] isolated children from their families and communities. Attendance of

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[10] The churches empowered to oversee residential schools included Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United.

Indigenous children at these schools from ages 4 to 16 was mandatory under law (Chansonneuve, 2005), and children were vulnerable to continued abuses for years on end in many cases. The effects of these schools still continue today in the intergenerational impacts on residential school survivors and their families (Chansonneuve, 2005).

The churches were empowered by the state to carry out a policy of aggressive assimilation under the Canadian government. The continued presence of distinctive peoples or "Indians" as defined under the law created fiduciary, and thus, economic, obligations of the state that were thought to impede both progress and further access to land. Former Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, was empowered to oversee the IRS system. His objective was to acculturate Indigenous peoples, so that any uniquely held relationship to the land (legal or cosmological) would be dissolved. Scott stated:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone.… Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department. (Titley, 2011, p. 50)

The policy of aggressive assimilation entrenched within the IRS system would only be considered successful if the targeted population of Indigenous children would continue to participate in a process of de-localized inheritance beyond the schools themselves. This would include the erasure of a spiritual relationship to place. Within this process, the ability of Indigenous peoples to inherit is oriented not to place, but rather to a dislocated, normalized mimicry. Notes from the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada describe how the "Indian problem" is properly a lack of whiteness:

The chief obstacles to the advancement of the race are … their ignorance or imperfect knowledge of the language, customs, and mode of traffic of the whites; and that feebleness of the reasoning powers, which is the necessary consequences of the entire absence of mental cultivation. (Canada, 1847, Appendix T)

The assimilation of Indigenous peoples by the state was a failure for many reasons, one of them being that ancient processes of inheriting that pre-existed contact could not be easily replaced by a mocked-up identity. Our inheritance extends beyond the transmission of knowledge as told in stories; it is the material extension of and reintegration of place. This is not a trivial process, and is a consequence of our very existence as human beings. Assimilation continues to be a failure of inheriting — a god-trick borne out of the arriving settlers' desire to create Indians in their own image.

Residential schools did not emerge solely out of the racist intent to "kill the Indian in the child" (Chansonneuve, 2005), or even to instil a core value system predicated on white Christian values. Attempts to assimilate Indigenous children during the IRS era have changed to other, less obvious forms than the pronounced removal of children from their places. Take, for example, the capitalistic approach to viewing land as a resource exploitable for profit, devoid of spiritual characteristics. Milloy (1999) argues that the teaching of industry, and specifically agriculture, was considered by churches running the residential schools to be essential to "breaking Aboriginal spirituality" (Milloy, 1999, p. 53). Teaching Indigenous children to tend crops and livestock fostered a different understanding of how they might relate to land. The residential school system not only introduced a counterintuitive misuse of place, but resulted in a violent severance of spiritual exchange between children and places.

This severing is highlighted in the following story, also retold by Isaac Murdoch (2014), about a young Anishnaabe boy from Serpent River, Ontario:

Now I'm going to tell you a little story. In the Spanish residential school, there was a young boy that died of chicken pox. They say he had lumps on his face and he passed away. So on Serpent River they took that small child and wrapped him in birch bark and they buried him at the old village site. In that old village, there's a big graveyard there, and they wrapped him up in birch bark and they put in him in a shallow grave. But the people in Spanish at the residential school said, "No, he was baptized we have full rights to that body, under god's authority, under someone's authority". They went back to that old Indian burial site and they dug up his grave and they took it back to Spanish and put him in an unmarked grave and of course that's where the grave is now. The fact the people from Spanish stole the body from the grave and put the body in another grave is not unique or strange, because they probably did that all the time. What makes this story unique is they actually documented everything that happened with the family, with the burial, with everything. The French person wrote what he saw down, he said, "When we arrived at the graveside the Anishnaabe were dancing at the grave" and they said 'that they were celebrating the life of the young person, and that they were dancing in circles around the grave'".

On the grave, on top, they had made a little wigwam made out of birch bark and inside that wigwam they had placed food inside. On the west side of the grave they had a fire, and they said that they were cooking on the fire. The ritual of dancing around the grave would last for 10 to 15 minutes, then stop, they'd eat, tell stories then the dance would start again. So, when the residential school people went up to this grave and said, "We have to take this grave." the Anishnaabe said, "You can't bother the body because it's travelling, it's going west, it's going home". That's what he recorded them saying.

"The residential school people said, "We have no choice" and the Anishnaabe said, "If you bother it, maybe Nenaboozhoo will get mad at you". Of course the French people from the residential school laughed, because they felt like they were the boss of everything I guess and at that time they probably really were. The residential school people, started to dig the grave, and again they recorded everything, and what they said was that when they started to dig the grave, the mother was crying at the bottom of the lake. At that gravesite it goes down and there's a lake at the bottom. The Anishnaabe said that the residential school people couldn't understand why she was crying so hard because her son was going to go to heaven and not hell. So of course they took the body and they unrolled the birch bark, and what they found inside the birch bark were supplies. They found dried meat, they found dried berries, they found a little knife, they found a candle, they found a little axe, and moccasins and the boy was painted red. The residential school people had to clean the boy up, they couldn't just bury him like that and so they actually took the body back to Spanish and they washed

the paint off the boy and the put in him a suit of some sort, and they put him in an unmarked grave, and the parents never knew where he was buried. When you listen to that story, it's a very tragic story right? The tragedy is not just the fact that the boy was stolen from our gravesite, but our way of life, how we looked at the spirit world, was also stolen too. Because now all those little boys, obviously their family believed that there was a spirit road that went from east to west, that was taken away from them. (p. 11–12).

The burial rites identified in the story above are anchored in the material and create a point of access from one world to another. The material belongings that the young boy would take with him in his westward walk are not reducible to symbolic representations. This violation, not only in undoing the rites of this young boy in his death, but in his entrance into another world, is a place-based experience. From the removal of the birch bark to the denial of sustenance to him, all participants in this process are deprived of their ability to be agent. This deprivation, couched in a salvation narrative (i.e., that the boy is worthy of a Christian burial) is reflective of the arrogance inherent in assimilationist practices. The Christian rites that were imposed are a form of post-mortem acculturation, an act to de-situate this young boy's materiality and immateriality, thus interrupting the ability of the spirit world to inherit him. In one sense, the spirit world itself experiences its own strain. How do elements of the spirit world accommodate these injustices, similar to the ones identified in this story? The spiritual lives of Indigenous peoples and places were violated during the residential school system era. The hundreds of thousands of stolen children from their families were also stolen from their place of communication with the spirit world.

Arthur Ron McKay, a survivor of Sandy Bay Indian Residential School, spoke of his experience in becoming an altar boy to "try their way". He recounts:

That's how I lost all my … beliefs, traditional things that I knew from my grandfather, the songs that he tried to show me because I knew some songs before I left for school and I forgot all about those songs, traditional songs, Sun Dance songs, even when I was younger, that young I knew and I knew how to do all the little things that the medicines, he used to pick. By this time then I was going back on the last years, I forgot all about those. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 88)

Stories like Arthur Ron McKay's are not uncommon amongst residential school survivors. Many survivors have been able to reconnect to their traditions, but many have not. The place-based role to bequeath and subsequently inherit within families was also stolen, at least temporarily. This fractured dynamic is still present today, as exemplified in the intergenerational effects on survivors and their families produced out of residential school trauma (Chansonneuve, 2005). Given the efforts under colonization to disembody the spiritual lives of Indigenous places for the purposes of state-sponsored assimilation, it is crucial to examine the consequences of these impacts.

Playing Indian?

In the article from which the excerpt below is taken, Winnipeg Free Press journalist Mary Agnes Welch (2012) details historical injustices Indigenous people have been forced to endure by the state. It is through this account that she is able to reconcile the impatience she regularly felt when attending events that were opened with a time-consuming traditional smudging ceremony:

The aboriginal ceremonies where sage or another traditional medicine is burned in a little bowl and passed around so everyone can waft the smoke over themselves … It's for purification, and it's a solemn, slow, peaceful, pungent ritual.… If you're a self-important journalist juggling two other stories who only plugged the parking meter for an hour, the whole thing can make you antsy, especially if the smudge is prolonged by prayers in Cree or Ojibwa by an elder and a drum circle song or two. (Welch, 2012)

In Welch's (2012) original estimation, smudging is a time-consuming and annoying practice. She convinces herself (and presumably, her primarily non-Indigenous audience) that the smudging ceremony should at least be tolerated, given that it is a practice that should not have survived at all. In obliging this type of practice, Welch (2012) concludes: "So, now that I've learned some of the history and how a culture survived against government policies designed to overwhelm it, I'll put a little extra money in the meter, settle in for some drumming and the smudge and say miigwetch[11]." (Welch, 2012). In this case, ceremony is analogous to Indigenous peoples themselves — how can it/they still be practised/alive? What is most significant about her statement is the recognition of Indigenous ceremony as central to functions of Indigenous governance and politics, while paradoxically insignificant to any matters of importance. Welch (2012) echoes the frustrations of settler society more generally; Indigenous ceremonial practices are viewed as inferior in their design and function, and yet are an obligatory part of achieving so-called multicultural tolerance.

In our current times, place does not exist in purity. It may never have, but certainly in pre-contact times, place was closer to how Anishnaabe stories portray its original design, and existed as a self-determining agent. This does not mean a pre-contact state is equal to a pure or innocent state. Rather, place was powerfully engaged with the spirit world, and we as humans were situated in a place of reverence towards this power as opposed to being predatory gatherers of it (Johnston, 1987). It is important not to oversimplify, or imagine that Anishnaabe peoples (and Indigenous peoples generally) were exempt from dissent or irresponsibility. There were wartimes, corruption, and

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[11] "Miigwetch" is an Anishnaabe term and translates into an expression of gratitude or, "thank you".

immoral acts, and there are many stories in many nations that describe such events. However, violations against place were considered punishable, not something to be celebrated as progress. Borrows (1996) re-tells the story of Nanabush (Nenaboozhoo), in which the Deer Nation denies the Anishnaabe access to them for hunting purposes. The Anishnaabe had violated a former agreement with the Deer Nation by disrespecting the bodies of the deer, thus acting without respect or integrity. For Anishnaabeg, our intellectual capacities were operationalized differently because of historic agreements between humans and non-humans, and thus the intrinsic tie to the place and the spiritual life of it.

It is important not to criticize or pathologize the reasons why some Anishnaabeg (and other Indigenous peoples) may not practise traditional ceremonies in this context. Rather, it is critical to understand the function that ceremonies continue to have in relation to assimilation. From a colonial perspective, ceremony continues to be regarded as a polarizing practice.

Indigenous ceremonies were banned by an amendment to the Indian Act in 1884 (Canada, 1884). For almost three-quarters of a century, ceremonies were forced underground, to be practised quietly until this ban was lifted in 1951 (Canada, 1951). It was believed by the Canadian government that these ceremonies were uncivilized and pagan (Milloy, 1999). Yet, Canada found these "uncivilized" rituals to be so threatening that it forbade them. Despite the decriminalization of ceremony, which ostensibly might appear to encourage restoration of Indigenous traditional practices, I argue that the allowance of place-based ceremony was strategic in institutionalizing assimilation further as evidenced by other amendments to the Indian Act made at that time. For example, First

Nations communities were granted permission to take the federal government to court

over land disputes in 1951 (Canada, 1951). Subsequently, the federal government created

the specific and comprehensive land claims process, wherein Indigenous communities

could enter into negotiations with federal and provincial governments to resolve treaty

violations or unsettled land so long as they agreed to the extinguishment of Aboriginal

title (Alfred, 2009). The ability to inherit amongst Indigenous peoples was redefined

under a neoliberal rights-based system. This re-identification was, and is, a process of

diluting place-based obligations as cultural rights accorded by the state.

Places that were once regarded as sacred became paved over or private property.

Indigenous peoples had been relocated to reserves, and the traditional territories that we

once had access to were, and are, increasingly privatized and environmentally corrupted.

How has ceremony transitioned and adapted to this new reality of place? Oftentimes,

Indigenous ceremonial practices are thought of as both a decolonizing act as well as an

indigenizing one. That is, by participating in our ceremonies we are becoming more

connected to our traditional protocols as Indigenous peoples, which consequently makes

us less colonized. This re-embodiment does not exist in a vacuum. As Simpson (2004)

argues, Indigenous knowledge is increasingly becoming a provocative point of

accessibility for settler governments and corporations to more expediently gain access to

Indigenous lands and resources. For instance, the study of Traditional Ecological

Knowledge (TEK) is premised on the notion that Indigenous peoples, globally, have a

distinctive and intimate relationship with the knowledge of Indigenous territories as it

relates to sustainability (McGregor, 2004). Simpson (2004) cautions against the

increasing trend of institutionalization of TEK. She warns that while the recognition of

the value inherent in Indigenous knowledge systems can be productive in terms of sustainability, this recognition also risks making TEK vulnerable to the resource-based desires of the state (Simpson, 2004).

Ceremony in this sense, represents just another function of multiculturalism, a cultural right to be *allowed* by the state rather than serving as the basis for independent societies. It is regarded as something interesting, mystical, and by some accounts, akin to witchcraft (Federici, 2006). As Welch (2012) demonstrates, ceremony is something that can either be appreciated or detested, but it is not considered threatening to state power. In another sense, if we as Indigenous peoples practise ceremony in its most meaningful places, in the most reverent way, and act to implement the consequent messages sent from place, we would surely be regarded as terrorists by the state. When Anishnaabeg participate in ceremony at its most powerful (i.e., allowing place to communicate to us), we are acting against the settler state agenda of silencing or extracting place. Ceremony in this way would emphasize our obligation to protect not only what is left of our cosmological manifestations, but try to restore place to its original place of dignity. This type of restoration in the eyes of settler states is tantamount to a threat against the political, economic, and sovereign will of the nation.

The inviting of Indigenous ceremonial practices into statist spaces extends beyond a so-called agenda of tolerance. These types of invitations represent a working towards assimilated, Indigenous communities that reflect statist ideals. Anderson (2013) provides an analysis of Indigenous peoples citing Hall's (1993) discussion on identity that is helpful in this discussion; Anderson claims that Hall's use of "essence" and "becoming" is helpful in understanding the complexities of Indigenous identity in urban centres.

Essence in this context refers to the common "cultural codes" and "frames of reference" which inform cultural identities. Hall (1993) also argues that these essences are in a state of "becoming"; cultural identities do not exist in a fixed past, but are sensitive to an ever-changing present and future (Anderson, 2013, p. 49). Thus, identity is constantly emerging amidst common and historical categories. Anderson (2013) finds these two seeming paradoxes to be helpful in his discussion on identity amongst Indigenous urban peoples: the authenticity of an Indigenous person should not be measured in terms of an ostensibly more authentic "reserve" identity. That is, the identity of Indigenous peoples living on lands reserved solely for "Indians" under the law should not be considered more authentic than those Indigenous peoples living in urban centres. While this argument may be appropriate in explicating how Indigenous identities are shaped amidst urbanization and colonial processes of ascribing Indigenous membership, I find this same reasoning raises problems when applied to Indigenous ceremonies practised in colonial contexts.

Take for example, the idea that Indigenous ceremony may be viewed as potentially transformative in terms of colonial practices. That is, the practice of Indigenous ceremonies amidst colonial operations might combat the potentially destructive effects of colonialism. Similar to Simpson's (2004) contention about TEK, I argue rather that the institutionalization of ceremony at state and corporate levels is an exercise in the attempted disembodiment of ceremony from place.

In 2007, former premier Gordon Campbell was instrumental in the British Columbia Treaty Process, a comprehensive land claims process that would ultimately extinguish Aboriginal title over Indigenous lands. Campbell was pictured in the Vancouver Sun newspaper, alongside former Governor of California Arnold

Schwarzenegger, blanketed with "ceremonial First Nations blankets" at an economic

summit in Vancouver (Vancouver Sun, 2011; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007).

In Ottawa, Indigenous ceremonial practice with government bureaucrats has become

commonplace. In 2012, at a summit aimed towards "resetting the relationship", National

Chief Shawn Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations and Prime Minister Harper were

being smudged together by an Elder. Prime Minister Harper stated that several Aboriginal

uprisings led to the need to reset the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the

state, and this would include bringing communities fully into Canada's economy

(Postmedia News, 2012). Less than a year later, the Idle No More movement in Canada

arose, an Indigenous movement that critiqued the corporate and anti-environmental

processes that Prime Minister Harper planned to employ to bring Indigenous

communities and lands into Canada's economy.

Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (1999) writes on the problem of co-option: "The

complexity of indigenous-state relations gives agents of the state many opportunities and

mechanisms to move Indigenous leaders away from their communities, politically and

ideologically, and towards the state." (p. 74) I argue that the co-option of Indigenous

ceremonies is purposeful, and designed to construct a more conciliatory form of access to

Indigenous lands. From an historical conflation with witchcraft to a more contemporary

association to access, the practice of Indigenous ceremonies in colonial settings

symbolizes a permissiveness that was never granted.

I term this trend of state-legitimated ceremony as "boardroom smudging".

Boardroom smudging is emblematic of tolerance of Indigenous ceremony versus

meaningful engagement in ceremony's intentions. We know that ceremony is place-

based, and is a method of exchange between humans, non-humans, and the spirit world. The act of ceremony outside of traditional places (for example, in colonial spaces such as boardrooms), can still be meaningful, but could also be a measure of disembodiment (the corruption of the spiritual life of place). This disembodiment is further intensified when it is used for purposes counter to spiritual processes. When the state engages in Indigenous ceremonies with Indigenous peoples to gain further concessions from place (e.g., extracting resources), both place and ceremony become increasingly damaged. This not only compromises meaningful communication with the spirit world (which is affected by the exercises of place), but also can authorize false notions of spirit-prompted engagement and subsequent blessings.

Is there a complicity in engaging our ceremonies in neoliberal efforts to illegally dispossess us of our lands? Does smudging before entering into a land claim negotiation or an oil sands development venture decrease impacts to place, or does it fulfill the colonial fantasies of *terra nullius*? Aldred's (2000) discussion on authenticity is helpful here. Her commentary on the interaction of Vizenor's (1999) "nostalgia" (non-Indigenous peoples longing to be a part of an Indigenous authentic spirituality) and Deloria's (1998) assertion that authenticity is necessary to tie Indigenous peoples to a material place, serves to provide a critical analysis on the emergence of new-ageism and "playing Indian". Perhaps this notion is cloaked in assimilation when practised at a state level, wherein Indigenous ceremonies are disguised as tropes of diversity. While Aldred's (2000) discussion concerns the occurrence of non-Indigenous peoples "playing Indian", I question the potential of Indigenous ceremonies themselves to become vulnerable to this notion of "playing Indian". Indigenous ceremonies carry an inherent ability to effect

change. While I agree that our ceremonies do not rely on (and can certainly resist) colonial efforts, I would argue that the dislocation of ceremony materially from place could produce a transmogrification of ceremony, therefore resulting in a contravention of place's intentionality.

Does this use (or misuse) of ceremony subscribe to the ever-emerging politics of adaptability where we, as Indigenous peoples, are aiding in the design of a space of dispossession? The many traditional Indigenous creation stories throughout the world speak to our locatable and material arrival out of place itself. It is dangerous to assume that our most sacred and traditional histories, stories, and teachings adapt into a state of natural reveal amidst violence, as Hall (1993) might argue. That is, because place has adjusted or transformed through colonial force, the so-called inevitability of this forced relationship may be viewed as naturally adaptive. To practise our ceremonies amidst constraints produced out of colonialism, while understandable and even necessary to some extent, should not be confused with an evolving state of adaptability or unencumbered resilience. As we can see from the story of Nenaboozhoo, the inhabitants of the spirit world and their method of communication with human beings and other non-humans are intrinsically tied to the elements of place. This teaching, and the many others from Indigenous places around the world, are at risk of becoming transformed themselves, and risk a reflexive relationship with colonialism rather than place.

There is no question that ceremony can be powerful wherever it is practised. It is also understood that beneath concrete lies dirt, rocks, and other original inhabitants. The assertion that place is therefore as dignified and powerful as it *can* be (underneath department stores and gas stations) is problematic. For instance, the assertion that

Anishnaabe ceremonies are so powerful that they can withstand the counter-cosmological transformation of place implies an acceptance of this violence. The evacuation of our spiritual, material relationships with land serve the colonial fantasies of who we are supposed to be: something interesting to watch, something that does not impact expediency.

Adaptability is a distraction. The more we adapt, the more we distract from place and what we "become"; that is, our essence as in a state of reveal against external forces (i.e., colonialism). In turn, as humans we are at risk of allowing our ways to become permissive in the continued colonial transformation of place. While this assertion may be comforting to those of us who can no longer access those places to practise ceremony, it is not true resolve; rather, it is resignation to a forced adaptation, not the natural ability of communities to reveal themselves amidst external forces. Therefore, it is not that our ceremonies are not strong enough to adapt and still wield change amidst concrete, rather it is they should not be taken for granted as natural in the colonial transformation of place.

When we engage ceremony in the state's agenda, are we then "playing Indian"? Perhaps we are producing an inheritable nostalgia for place that Vizenor (1999) references, a nostalgia that is borne out of a disembodied sacredness. This is exactly the kind of "Aboriginal" that Canada wishes us to be, and has been training us to be since the introduction of the fur trade, residential schools, and the mall. If we play Indian, Indigenous communities' place becomes a function of commodification, and ceremony risks becoming bequeathed as a naturalized metaphor of this nostalgia.

Conclusion

As Cindy Blackstock (2011) notes, there are more Indigenous children currently in the child welfare system than were in IRS during the height of the residential school system. As of 2013, almost 15% of the national population of children in care (or approximately 27,000 children) are Aboriginal (Assembly of First Nations, 2013). As discussions surrounding how to make this system more equitable and culturally appropriate for Indigenous children and their families occur, it is imperative to consider the impacts on Indigenous identities that are material, spiritual, and tied to territory.

Almost 60% of the national Aboriginal population resides in urban areas, and this proportion will no doubt continue to increase (Statistics Canada, 2011). This trend prompts the need for further discussion in terms of how our cosmologies and their ties to places are considered: Are these ties real or an abstracted cultural construction? Continued material productions of colonialism that are reflective of an evacuation of Indigenous cosmologies from place might produce the conditions for continued assimilation rather than the renewal of the spiritual lives of place's now-cemented constituents. What do we inherit for our families and from places?

The story of Nenaboozhoo creating the spirit world not only produces a belief system, or basis for ideology. When understood with the remembrance that Anishnaabeg are extensions of the land, place is also a function of inheriting. This process of inheriting is dependent on locatable places in its transmission. The introduction of a dislocated religious system was damaging to this process of inheriting. The spiritual lives of the inhabitants of place were the target of severing in order to transform and redefine place

itself as empty and spiritually void so as to convert elements of place to both colonial and Christian constructions. This disembodiment served to not only create wealth amongst Christian nations, but suppressed communicative, relational exchange between the original inhabitants of place.

The IRS system was particularly violent in physically and spiritually severing children from their relationship with place in order to impose an alternative, Christianity-oriented, resource-based history with place. Inheriting amidst the perverse collaboration between church and state was an exercise in transposition — the hopeful (and ultimately failed) inheritability of an assimilated identity. Despite the damage done to place, ceremony is powerful; it too has the ability to transform. Our ceremonies are sacred descendants of place; colonialism is a descendent of nowhere. It is counterproductive to coalesce these contradictory belief systems. Embodied, locatable spirit worlds are dependent on elements of place. If elements of place are the object of state-oriented extractive and de-spiriting processes, meaningful ceremony will always be constrained. Boardroom smudging in these contexts can be described as a subdued communication with the spirit world that contributes to constructed, state-favoured Indigenous communities. The forced colonization of peoples and lands does not produce a natural, evolving reveal amongst inhabitants of place. This would conjure a fallacy of adaptability wherein colonialism is validated as natural and unavoidable, like the changing of the seasons. The danger lies in producing (*not* revealing) permissive societies that are not determined by place's intentions, but rather are motivated to help solve the state's "Indian problem".

Residential schools maintained, and urban spaces continue to maintain, a dynamic of severing with respect to Indigenous ceremonial practices. In the former they were denied, and in the latter they are invited. And yet, in both circumstances, Indigenous ceremonial practices are devalued; they are de-situated, disembodied, and removed from place.

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CHAPTER FOUR: What is Sovereignty for Indigenous people?
Introduction

There are a multitude of understandings of what sovereignty actually is and where it

derived from for Indigenous peoples. From a statist perspective, Indigenous sovereignty

is something that is *granted* by the authority of the state itself (Alfred and Corntassel,

2005). Therefore, it is a sovereignty that is circulated within and by state power. From

an Indigenous perspective, sovereignty for Indigenous peoples pre-existed statist notions

of recognition. And yet, upon encountering Indigenous sovereignties, imperial nations

did recognize the legitimacy of these nations, hence the emergence of the treaty-making

process in Canada. In this chapter, I will examine how Indigenous sovereignty is traced

through three different mechanisms. First, I will explore where Indigenous sovereignty

come from and how was it represented at the point of contact. Secondly, social theory's

engagement with Indigenous sovereignty will be examined. Finally, sovereignty from an

international perspective will be discussed. At the end of this chapter, you will gain

insight into how sovereignty is oriented in oftentimes-contradistinctive frames

(Indigenous and Canadian) and how these frames attempt to manifest sovereignty amidst

colonial confrontations.

In order to gain insight into this perspective it is necessary to explore how

Indigenous sovereignty was designed prior to contact with imperialist notions of

sovereignty. Hereditary Chief of Onigaming, Fred Kelly states:

> The four concentric circles in the sky – *Pagonekiishig* – show the four
> directions, the four stages of life, the four seasons, the four sacred lodges
> (sweat, shaking tent, roundhouse, and the Midewe'in lodge), the four sacred
> drums (the rattle, hand, water, and big ceremonial drum), and the four orders
> of Sacred Law. Indeed, the four concentric circles of stars is the origin of the
> sacred four in *Pimaatiziwin* that is the heart of the supreme law of the
> Anishinaabe. And simply put that is the meaning of a constitution.

For Anishnaabe peoples, like most Indigenous nations, sovereignty is place-based, spiritual and incorporates all elements of creation (animals, rivers, plants, rocks, etc.). The land is considered female, and so women too are regarded as sacred (Green, 2007). The ideas put forth above speak to a constitution that is demonstrated and exercised out of place. Anishnaabe understand their sovereignty as emerging from a cosmology that is particularly locatable. That is, as Chief Kelly explains, to look above and observe constellations at a designated time of day, month and year and derive meaning from what is observed, means that those who look up belong to a particular place below (land) in order to have a designated perspective. While ownership of land is a complex issue for Anishnaabe and other Indigenous peoples, it is understood that people are *of* the land and are responsible for it. This stands in contradiction to the common colonial practice of assuming that Indigenous peoples were constantly transient and therefore land in the "New World" was virtually unstructured and uninhabited (Doyle, 2014). Our responsibility to place is fundamental to notions of Anishnaabe sovereignty. This responsibility is imbedded in the land that we come from - we are citizens of place. This idea becomes problematized when attempts to reconcile land title with the state continue to be unresolved, as I will discuss further in the chapter.

Because the nature of Indigenous sovereignty is place-based, sovereignty cannot be exported to another's land. This would negate the tenets of polycentrism under which all Indigenous nations on Turtle Island[12] exemplified. It would also be materially impossible to do so as our constitutions are founded in place. This understanding of

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[12] "Turtle Island" refers to North America generally, and is used by many Indigenous peoples to refer to their homeland.

sovereignty is lost when evaluated against an imperialistic frame in which Indigenous

sovereignties are observed as archaic or anti-intellectual (Widdowson, 2008). It is better

understood as a completely distinct frame of reference in which colonizing another nation

was an alien idea for the Anishnaabe.

Indigenous sovereignties are not focused on the rights of their citizens, but rather

on the roles and responsibilities individuals have within the collective (Watts, 2007). In

Western terms, this is understood as a form of participatory democracy, wherein

individuals are free to stay within the collective (or nation), or free to leave. This is best

exemplified in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's *Kainere'ko:wa,* or the Great Law.

Social Implications and the Kainere'ko:wa

The Great Law is the constitution of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) peoples and serves as

a basis for Haudenosaunee sovereignty. It originated in the year 1142 (Mann and Fields,

1995) making it one of the longest running democracies in world history. The

Kainere'ko:wa brought together six nations into a confederacy: the Mohawk, the Seneca,

the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Oneida, and eventually the Tuscarora.   These nations

belonging to the Confederacy have considered themselves collectively sovereign for

almost a millennium and operated with the goal of maintaing peace between nations.[13]

The premise of the Kainere'ko:wa was to embrace other nations wishing to live in peace

and participate in this democratic union.

The Grand Council of Chiefs is one of the many democratic processes outlined in

the Kainere'ko:wa (Wallace, 1990). The five nations have a designated number of

hereditary chief titles (or *Hoyaneh* meaning "good men") for each of the clans of the

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[13] There are Haudenosaunee communities both in Canada and in New York State. Most communities are concentrated in southern Ontario and upstate New Work. There is one community where all six member nations live together: Six Nations of the Grand River in southern Ontario.

nations. These chiefs compose the fifty members of the Grand Council. The Onondagas

are the Firekeepers. They are responsible for bringing forth an issue to be tabled at the

Council for discussion. The Mohawk and the Senecas are the Elder Brothers and are

expected to discuss the issue or conflict at hand first. Once they have come to a decision,

they defer to the Cayuga and the Oneida (the Younger Brothers) for a similar discussion.

If both sides come to a mutual agreement, the Onondagas confirm the decision. If the

two sides are irreconcilable, the Council must meet again for two more days in order to

achieve a resolution.

This design is both democratic and sophisticated. The Grand Council is premised

on the idea of peace and common resolution. Though the hereditary chiefs are male, it is

the women who possess the authority to install and remove chiefs. These women are

known as Clan Mothers within the Confederacy. They are considered the heads of clans,

and it is in their estimation to name a chief. If the selected chief fails to conduct himself

personally or politically contrary to the Kainere'ko:wa, she can "dehorn" him, or remove

his title. Haudenosaunee women, like many Indigenous women, are central to

governance. Given their authority over leadership, they also were integral to economy,

social life, child-rearing, and property.

During the Victorian era and arguably even still in contemporary times,

perspectives on gender roles classified women as the weaker sex (Butler, 1988). The

stronger male counterpart was required not only to protect her, but to act on her behalf.

The division of the public and the private domains demonstrated this deference to male

authority. While there is a division of gender roles in traditional Indigenous systems,

they are oriented differently in terms of power:

> In our community, the woman was defined as nourisher, and the man, protector, and as protector, he had the role of helper. He only reacted: she acted. She was responsible for the establishment of all of the norms – whether they were political, economic, social or spiritual…
>
> (Kane and Maracle 1989: 12)

This same "protector" idea when placed in a different frame, constitutes an alternative understanding of gender. Though men are considered to be protectors, it is not due to a stronger intellect or physique. Rather, the "protector" is understood as being responsible for ensuring that the authority of women is maintained. Haudenosaunee women were active contributors in the economy, working in agriculture and developing sophisticated systems of farming that have been incorporated in Europe and all over North America today. They held judicial powers over selected leadership, and could veto any decision made by the Grand Council that might result in war (Wallace, 1990). In terms of property, when a man and woman were married, he was expected to live amongst her family and their property. In the event of separation, he was also expected to leave and was not entitled to any of her property.

Given this example of a equitable and democratic sovereign union, why is it that the Kainere'ko:wa and other Indigenous constitutions have not been inherently regarded as legitimate by the Canadian state? There are multiple intersecting reasons for this. Firstly, Indigenous sovereignties would and are viewed as a barrier to the colonial enterprise, which according to Marx, is the accumulation of capital and establishment of private property. Indigenous communities or legally, "reserves" in Canada are categorized as Crown land and are not considered fee simple property. Canada created reserves for Indigenous peoples in order to establish an apartheid system wherein incoming settlers would be able to flourish.

The reserve system was a result of the historic treaty process that began in Canada in the 17th century. The objective of the treaty-making process from an Indigenous perspective was understood as two sovereign nations negotiating how to live in a shared territory. The *Kaswentha* or more commonly known as the Two Row Wampum, was first negotiated between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (representing the Kainere'ko:wa) and the Dutch in 1613. This treaty was reaffirmed with the British in 1677 in the Silver Covenant Chain Treaty.   It was again reaffirmed, as were all other treaties in Canada, in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The Two Row Wampum signified how two distinct sovereign nations could exist alongside each other into the future:

In the image above, there are two purple rows of wampum and three white rows of wampum (or shell). The purple represented two vessels traveling down the river of life. The vessels were separate and were not to interfere with one another's course. The white wampum represented the three principles of the treaty: peace, friendship and respect. The intention of this international treaty was as follows:

> We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. [Our treaties] symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birchbark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of

us will try to steer the other's vessel. (Wilson 2007: 115)

Sovereignty for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy preceded any contact with Europeans, but again was recognized and ratified by newly forming colonial governments. Further, these colonial governments were deriving *their* sovereignty from nation-to-nation agreements with the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous nations in Canada[14]. This means that non-Indigenous citizens of Canada are inheritors of this treaty relationship as are Indigenous people - we are all treaty people.

Social Theory and Indigenous Sovereignties

In the 18th century when European ideologies began to form a stronghold in Upper and Lower Canada, there was a generally held belief that European modes of politics and religion held a racial and intellectual superiority. Classified as "pagan", Indigenous spiritualities were regarded as deficient and godless (Bönisch-Brednich, 2010). While assumed to be irrelevant to the colonial pursuit, it was very much recognized by the Canadian state that spirituality was central to Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous sovereignty was a barrier to the appropriation of lands. As such, Indigenous ceremonies were banned between 1885 and 1951 by the newly implemented Indian Act of 1876. They were not simply the pagan rituals that the colonial government dismissed them as, but understood as a much more powerful and meaningful point of access between Indigenous peoples and their sovereignties.

Similarly, the primacy of Indigenous women's authority was integral to the dignity of Indigenous sovereignties. Yet, this fundamental difference of gender delegation against the colonial frame was seen as barrier to the colonial imperative. This

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[14] Refer to the Numbered Treaties in Canada for more information.

was played out in Canadian policy up until 1985 when Indigenous women were forced to legally relinquish their Indigenous identity in order to become Canadian citizens (Anderson, 2000). It was further entrenched into policy during the residential school era when Indigenous women were legally forbidden to mother their children: during this period, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes. Consequently, daughters were trained by government and church-run schools to abandon their traditional gender roles in favour of a more Victorian identity wherein they were no longer useful to public/political life (Milloy, 1999).

Despite the closing of the residential school era in 1996, Indigenous women continue to face violence. In Canada, missing and murdered Indigenous women represent the most devastated population. Despite comprising only 4% of the total female population nationally, they make up 23% of the female victims of homicide as of 2013 (RCMP, 2014). Andrea Smith (2005) intersects these high rates of violence against Indigenous women with the continued efforts to suppress Indigenous sovereignties. She argues that because Indigenous women are so intimately tied with power and authority of Indigenous nationhood, they simultaneously exist as the barrier to continued colonial pursuits of Indigenous territory by the state. Therefore, they occupy one of the most vulnerable positions in Canadian society because of the power of Indigenous sovereignty they represent culturally.

Indigenous issues such as these are the areas that sociologists have traditionally been concerned with. That is, analyzing social inequalities as phenomena rather than within the context of "sovereignty". Imperialism has dictated that culture is merely a category rather than a basis for sovereignty, as sovereignty was a special term reserved

for colonial states. Sociology has been primarily concerned with the culture artifacts in pre-contact Indigenous societies as well as sociological phenomena resulting from contact (i.e. issues of poverty, health determinants, access to education, etc.).   That is, how do Indigenous populations fair within a statist frame? This would include orienting Indigenous cultural signifiers and phenomena amidst heteronormative standards of what constitutes "good health", "proper parenting", "justice", etc. It also assumes that Indigenous populations and cultures are framed within and by state regulations - the underlying assumption here being that Indigenous cultures are not synonymous with a notion of sovereignty, rather that Indigenous cultures should operate within the multiculturalist mosaic of Canada.

State-sponsored sovereignty or "self-government" for some Indigenous peoples is tantamount to a rejection of the original teachings and laws of our nations and thereby the adoption of colonial law and rule. This amounts to recognizing the state's power in terms of *how much* sovereignty we are "allowed" within a Canadian frame. Taiaiake Alfred (2005), a Mohawk scholar, rejects the notion that Indigenous peoples should accept a diminutive sovereignty allocated by the state. He argues instead that self-determination is the true pathway towards reconstituting Indigenous place-based sovereignty:

> It is still true that the first part of self-determination is the self. In our minds and in our souls, we need to reject the colonists' control and authority, their definition of who we are and what our rights are, their definition of what is worthwhile and how one should live, their hypocritical and pacifying moralities. We need to rebel against what they want us to become, start remembering the qualities of our ancestors and act on those remembrances. This is the kind of spiritual revolution that will ensure our survival.
>
> (Alfred 2005:32)

Continued efforts to achieve statist recognition will never accomplish a revitalization of

our original constitutional designs, according to Alfred. Rather, choosing to define and practice Indigenous sovereignty within a statist regime would ultimately act to recognize the power that the state claims to wield over us. Thus, Indigenous nations may risk losing the intent and breadth of original systems of sovereignty by choosing "rights" over sovereignty.

The rights-based discourse emerged out of the modern and post-modern age of liberalism. The transition to a more individualist-based society constituted a relationship with the state that was based on the interplay of nationalism and entitlement (Smith, 1999). Will Kymlicka (1995) argues that despite this, there is still a space for multinationalistic ideals within the state:

> Self-government rights devolve powers to smaller political units, so that a national minority cannot be outvoted or outbid by the majority on decisions that are of particular importance to their culture, such as issues of education, immigration, resource development, language, and family law.

Self-government for Indigenous peoples and their communities is a commonly pursued avenue of sovereignty arising out of the land claims process. It arose out of the *Inherent Right to Self-Government* policy in 1995 as a potential solution to land title disputes. This is a constitutionally protected right in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. While the self-government path does increase powers that an Indigenous community can possess, it is out of a process of devolution of state powers, not a restitution of the multiplicities of Indigenous sovereignties. In negotiated self-government agreements, the limited autonomy that is accorded to Indigenous communities cannot equal or supersede the sovereign powers of the state (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 1995). In sum, the orientation of Indigenous sovereignty in Canada (and certainly in other

nation-states) must adhere to the liberalistic undertones of a unified nationalism. This exists in opposition to the original intents of treaty-making which from an Indigenous perspective, framed a relationship of one sovereignty *with* another – not one sovereignty *within* another.

Sovereignty: From Turtle Island to Geneva

On October 25th 1924, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy representing the Kainere'ko:wa were having a council meeting at Six Nations of the Grand River in southern Ontario. Their meeting was interrupted by the arrival of the RCMP, who upon entering the Council House seized several of the wampum agreements that were made with the Crown. From the vantage of the Canadian government, this was an act of symbolic and physical removal of sovereignty for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Confederacy existed as one of the last traditional governance systems in Canada that had not forcibly adopted an Indian Act elected council regime. The traditional chiefs were removed from the House, and the doors were padlocked. Five days later, a new council was created, complete with a newly elected chief and council. Despite the low number of Haudenosaunee people supporting the new Indian Act regime, they received federal support (both policing and fiscal) to install this new system.

The tipping point for Canada's intervention on Haudenosaunee sovereignty might be seen in the year before the raid, when Chief Deskaheh who spoke for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, traveled to Geneva to address the League of Nations (now known as the United Nations) as a representative of the Kainere'ko:wa. Though he had the support of four member nations to speak, Canada contravened this support and successfully removed Deskaheh from the agenda. There is no doubt about the

embarrassment that Canada would have felt at this moment during the international forum. That one of its "citizens" would act to oppose its sovereign claims over Indigenous peoples was perceived as an act of defiance. Deskaheh was heard informally after the forum had closed, but would not be officially recognized by the League. On the issue of sovereignty, Deskaheh stated one year after the raid in 1925:

> To punish us for trying to preserve our rights, the Canadian Government has now pretended to abolish our government by Royal Proclamation, and has pretended to set up a Canadian made government over us, composed of the few traitors among us who are willing to accept pay from Ottawa and do its bidding. My home is on the Grand River…You would call it Canada. We do not. We call the little ten-miles square we have left the "Grand River Country." We have the right to do that. It is ours. We have the written pledge of George III that we should have it forever as against him or his successors and he promised to protect us in it.
>
> <div align="right">(Akwesasne Notes 2005:48)</div>

The wampums were eventually returned to the Six Nations community, but not without the newly elected system being the only recognized form of government for the people of Six Nations by the state. Despite this, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is still in formation today and continues its council meetings and other governance proceedings.

On September 13th 2007, over eighty years after Deskaheh's visit to Geneva, the United Nations announced its new international instrument after twenty-five years of deliberation: the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Four member nations voted "no" to this declaration (which was not legally binding): the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. UNDRIP included 46 articles, which addressed issues ranging from authority over economy and political practices to the rights to have access to traditional territories. These articles were anchored within the framework of self-determination and the rights of Indigenous peoples to determine for themselves how they will live. Self-determination as Alfred (2005)

points out, could be the best strategy for Indigenous peoples going forward in reclaiming their sovereignty. So how does UNDRIP's orientation towards self-determination advance this idea of sovereignty?

UNDRIP was received with both adulation and criticism by Indigenous peoples internationally. Some argued that UNDRIP was a landmark recognition for Indigenous peoples, and could serve as a basis for more equitable policy-making in nation-states (Assembly of First Nations, 2013). However, we know that UNDRIP was non legally-binding, and therefore cannot compel nation-states who adopt it to enforce its recommendations. In terms of sovereignty, UNDRIP ultimately states in the second to last article of the declaration (Article 46):

> Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.   (United Nations 2008: 14)

UNDRIP, while recognizing the need for nation-states to adopt more equitable policies and support a self-determining process for Indigenous peoples, essentially barred any language around sovereignty, unless it applied to state sovereignty. And in doing so, protected the sovereignty of the state.

Interestingly enough, the rationale given by Canada for refusing to vote in favour of UNDRIP initially, was that UNDRIP might act to undermine the special and many treaty relationships it has with Indigenous nations. Meaning, an acknowledgment of a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous nations was cited as a reason to refuse UNDRIP, as it might intervene on previously negotiated sovereignty agreements – indeed

this formal acknowledgement was a surprise to many Indigenous peoples.

Eventually Canada did choose to adopt UNDRIP because of international pressure following New Zealand, Australia and the United States' reversal and subsequent endorsement. However, the building consciousness in Canada towards reconciliation was no doubt interrupted by this initial refusal to adopt UNDRIP and certainly damaged efforts at reconciling to say the very least. One could argue that while the spirit of recognition has improved at the United Nations since Deskaheh's travels, the practice of recognition remains largely the same. The Declaration was a proud moment for Indigenous peoples, where we had the ear of the world in the celebration of unity and that indeed we had not vanished, but were powerful. It remains to be seen however almost a decade later, if Canada will practice the nation-to-nation relationship they proclaimed to the world in 2007. This relationship being a mutually exclusive one wherein each nation recognizes each other across the river.

Conclusion

The narrative in Canada that has been constructed has historically held Indigenous sovereignties as generally archaic and far less robust than European notions of what constituted a nation-state. Yet given the systemic attempts at disempowering these sovereign nations by the Canadian state, this only reaffirms that Indigenous sovereignties were feared because of how powerfully they were expressed in Indigenous societies.

For Indigenous nations, sovereignty never left. For Canada, there remains only one supreme sovereignty. The reconciliation of these two contra-assertions continues to be fraught with complexities. We know that one sovereignty is much younger than the other, and necessitated the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and lands to achieve it.

Yet we also know that Canada entered into a treaty-making process with Indigenous nations, and whatever the intention of this was, the process itself represented a constitutive reality for Canadian sovereignty.

So what is Indigenous sovereignty? It is something that is spiritual, place-based, sophisticated, historic, fought for, alive and practiced. It is also met with objection or distillation when proposed and organized within the Canadian body politic. Yet we know that just as Indigenous nations derive their sovereignty from place and the spirit world, Canada derives its sovereignty from the existence of Indigenous nations. This demonstrates two crucial realities: in order for Canadian sovereignty to be legitimate, the sovereignty of Indigenous nations must be empowered. And lastly, Indigenous nations were not, and cannot be, conquered.

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CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion

A Conversation Between Science and Religion

Now you must understand, use the Right Side for this...

To begin, there was once this big bang.
In the beginning, there was a lush garden.

Then there were these brown, furry things…
Where these brown, furry things lived…

But what matters most is that there were these two-legged beings…
AND, there lived these naked two-legged beings…

And they possessed the ability to use language and had the capacity for reason.
And they were the most special and loved of all things!

Luckily the brown, furry things …
The brown things, like trees and dirt…

Ultimately provided sustenance for the two-leggeds to survive.
Were there to help make the two-leggeds prosperous and successful.

And even the study of these brown, furry things can give insight into the betterment of the two-leggeds.
And even the destruction of the brown, furry things can lead to creation!

Even more interestingly, on their travels the two-leggeds discovered that there were *brown* two-leggeds.
Amazingly, on their spiritual quests, the two-leggeds discovered there were even BROWN two-legged things!!!

Which led to the conclusion (after much experimentation), that there is indeed a link between brown things.
Which helped us to understand (after much penetration), the fundamental connection between brown things.

Now, say it back to me.

In reflecting on a common thread within this research, I am drawn to the idea of reductive practices through a purposeful re-meaning of three sacred relationships. Firstly, material productions of Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee knowledge systems as being materially produced and locatable have (and continue to be) abstracted as theoretical epistemological stances. Secondly, the cosmological understandings of Haudenosaunee (and more broadly, Indigenous) governance systems have been re-ordered through a Canadian legal-political rights-based approach to Aboriginal "sovereignty". Finally, the embodied spiritual lives of Anishnaabe (and more broadly, Indigenous) spaces are recognized in a limited scope of ceremony adapting or reflected within, a colonized, material objective.

In claiming mechanisms of reducing in the aforementioned inquiries, I do not mean reductionism in the sense of reducing a complex set of phenomena to a simpler base or foundation (which *does* happen when studying Indigenous communities). Rather, Indigenous peoples have consistently been viewed (whether in academia, politics or religion) as a complex problem that must be solved. In this resolve, a reduction of our complexities as Indigenous peoples has taken place, in many cases, violently to both enable and protect EuroWestern hegemony. I understand this common solution to be produced out of reductive practices which aim to adapt Indigenous peoples to foreign processes and assumptions. In these techniques of reduction, a re-meaning of sacred relationships held within Indigenous cosmologies emerges. This is achieved first through a disavowal of a sacred relationships via a colonial institution, and then paradoxically, an integration of the object of this disavowal by the colonial institution. In either instance,

each represents the same constant: reducing the meaningness of Indigeneity and elevating/protecting the colonial institution.

This analysis of reducing is applied to the theoretical findings of my research in the following ways. Firstly, the invitation to include Indigenous knowledge into sociological debates is virtually non-existent. Our cosmologies have historically been unengaged with, and certainly were not debated with any academic rigor. Rather, Indigenous knowledges were denied entrance into the academy, and by way of this denial, reduced to population data sets in which we are continuously assessed as failing to succeed or to be healthy.

Yet Indigenous knowledge has found its way into the academy, more specifically, the social sciences. Upon arrival, Indigenous ways of knowing have been consistently abstracted into culturally-relevant epistemic stances or are engaged with methodologically, as more socially just research. I do not mean to assert that there is an absence of social theorists engaging with Indigenous cosmologies, rather that Indigenous cosmologies have still not gained currency within the academy. Some may argue that as Indigenous scholars increase in numbers, so too will discussions about our cosmologies. However, we remain widely regarded as social and cultural phenomena, and in this function of social scientific research we do not pose a threat to more "proper" sites of knowledge production. Indigenous knowledge in academia has often been viewed from a place of mythicism, and scrutinized thus forth. In our close and intimate relationships with non-humans, the knowledge produced out of these relationships is often seen in either a cartoony/new-age frame of analysis, or is treated as evidence that Indigenous humans are still in development – stuck in some sort of Aristotelian dilemma. And so in

an effort to modernize us, our knowledges are consistently reflected within a modernist (colonial) mirror – another reductive measure that protects the centre.

Secondly, Indigenous populations throughout Canada are increasing at a rate of four times that of non-Indigenous Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2011) and Aboriginal[15] and treaty rights are increasingly becoming recognized and defined within the Canadian political regime. The need to intensify reduction amongst Indigenous peoples and our cosmologies in order to protect state interests has become more immediate. Current Aboriginal policy in Canada aims to respond to social scientific evidence that concludes that Aboriginal communities are at an economic, political and social disadvantage.   This policy is directed at creating less dependent Aboriginal communities, but does so via increased dependency on colonial economic means. Whether this is achieved through Aboriginal participation in mining, the tar sands, or forestry, the key to a successful future is through a violation of our very creation stories. Again, we see two sides of the same interest: deprival of entrance into capitalistic-defined terms of wealth is solved through the bestowal of economic efficiency: both outputs reek of colonialism. Creating healthier, more "successful" Indigenous communities (i.e. on a continuum of modernity) will likely skew how success is then measured in social science research via a loop of integration.

The socio-political structure of the Great Law for the Haudenosaunee was spiritually-based, as are many Indigenous governance systems. While the Great Law continues amongst the Haudenosaunee, it is no longer recognized as carrying any authority by the state. Rather, the elected band councils are the recognized governing

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[15] I am purposeful in my usage of "Aboriginal" within this conversation. This term is a legally-defined term by Canada in reference to particular idea of how Indigenous peoples should be regarded/dealth with legally and politically.

bodies of First Nation communities in Canada. First Nation authority is limited to state-defined self-government policy. This policy offers, at best, band-level authority over the extraneous (i.e. marriage licences, limited policing practices), and a shared authority with provincial and federal governments over natural resources. In this framework of governance, policy dictates are reductive in nature. Land claim and self-government processes conflate the governing of state-designed borders (both material and political) with real authority over Indigenous lands. First Nations are ultimately *allowed* to fulfill a statist agenda of economic development and governmental process, thus reinforcing Canada's claims of sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and territories. Similar to a Foucauldian notion of governmentality (Foucault, 1978), the authority of First Nations communities is recognized through a process of enacting assimilative processes upon themselves, thereby directing power to the state. In this mode, we are "catching up" economically to the rest of Canada, somewhere on the verge of modernity.

Finally, Indigenous ceremonial practices face this same form of reductivity. Ceremony was first banned by Canada in the late 19th century, and was reinforced by the statist practice of taking Indigenous children from their communities and breaking them of their spirituality in residential schools. This ban was lifted officially in 1951, and in recent years, Canada has begun to authorize its extractive processes through the use of Indigenous ceremonies. Both of these contra-phenomena accelerate reduction. In the first sense, the banning of ceremony and removal from territory were evidence of a colonial and religious attempt to re-meaning how Indigenous peoples related to land. By removing Indigenous children from their mothers (both human and territorial), this relationship was re-meaninged as both a sense of shame and commodity thereby reducing

both the process of inheriting between parent and child, as well as reducing the physical presence of bodies in territories. In the second phase of Canada-Ceremony relations, ceremony began (and continues) to be reduction oriented. As Indigenous political leaders are invited into economic decision-making processes which justify extraction-oriented activities on Indigenous lands, resistance to this very process is decreased. Though one could argue that resistance movements amongst the general Indigenous populations are increasing, so are placating tactics.

In future research, I will work to ensure that these interrogations contribute to sociological debates on what Indigenous knowledge is, and how it is produced both within and without colonial frames. Debates about how and if Indigenous knowledge should be granted space in academia *are* happening, but they happen on the presumptive basis of pre-determined limits of productive, hegemonic knowledge bases. Sociology, in particular, continues to regard Indigeneity as cultural and/or population-based. In the cultural sense, Indigeneity is observed or wrestled with, but carries no responsibility in terms of its recognition or protection as a material and place-based mechanism. Does Indigenous knowledge belong in the academy? Is the academy too limited to realize it? Is the academy too colonial to respect it? These are all questions that must be interrogated and problematized, but Indigenous paradigms must first be engaged with as sophisticated and valid ways of knowing.

Further, I am committed to effecting more immediate contributions within the Indigenous community in two ways. Firstly, through my work on re-centering First Woman and Sky Woman as real and agent in Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee territories, I hope to work with women in these two nations to discuss how the role of women has

been re-meaninged within our own communities amidst patriarchy. My concern is twofold: in an effort to revitalize Indigenous traditions, a neo-traditionalism is emerging in Indigenous ceremonial and political circles, wherein I will argue, patriarchy is being re-inscribed. Is this a circumvention of the effects of heteropatriarchy in Indigenous communities, or is the continuation of traditional gender roles? I anticipate that these phenomena will have implications on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Aside from my current community organizing on MMIWG, I want to further interrogate this issue of heteropatriarchy in stories. Many Anishnaabeg for example, would be familiar with traditional stories as re-told by Basil Johnston (1976) and Eddy Benton-Benai (2010). The majority of these stories feature boys or men, with women and girls as being secondary, and usually described as "beautiful" or "jealous". Is this a reflection of how stories were told pre-contact? If so, what is our responsibility to our young girls in the re-telling of stories such as these? Would it be anti-traditional to re-tell these stories with women and girls featured? These complicated questions are significant to how we un-meaning what colonialism has purposed.

Questions of ownership and sovereignty are further problematized if we accept that non-humans, and specifically land, are agent. Then, the problem of how Indigenous sovereignty is articulated is further complicated outside of Canada's legal-political system when the conclusion might be: place holds its own sovereignty. As stewards, Indigenous peoples have the responsibility to protect the dignity of places. Perhaps as descendants of these places, Indigenous peoples bear the responsibility of protecting the sovereignty of these places. The Great Law was divinely introduced and is dependent on

maintaining balance of the places we as humans occupy. When we protect these places we are viewed as anti-statist, while it is the mechanisms of the state that are more certainly pro-reduction and anti-Indigenous.

Adaptability, whether it be cultural, material or spiritual is a gimmick of assimilation. Our assertions are sieved through dominant techniques of reduction. They become nicely packaged, pleasing, and sexy. This system of re-meaning is perfectly ordered and takes away much discomfort in receiving the benefits of violence. If race is accepted as a social construction, then a claim taken seriously in which Indigenous peoples are materially and spiritually constructed might be viewed as essentialist, if not racist (somewhere, oh somewhere on the spectrum of the amodern). We are not only pesty - but also a little cringeworthy. Oh well.

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