FROM RELATIONALITY TO RESILIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY DAKOTA AND OJIBWE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LITERATURE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Indigenous literatures offer strong vantage points to address environmental injustice, climate change, and exploitation of marginalized populations in experiential terms. This dissertation approaches Indigenous environmental justice through a trans/national, tribally specific framework, examining contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe texts and offering an intervention into ecocriticism, which often falls short in its engagements with Indigenous literatures. The first chapter explores a genealogy of relationality in Dakota and Ojibwe literary theory and examines the role of nationhood in Indigenous literary studies. The second chapter examines Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* trilogy through a framework of social vulnerability and historical trauma. The third chapter studies Waubgeshig Rice's speculative novel *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, further exploring social vulnerability and resilience through the genres of apocalyptic literature and Indigenous futurisms. The third chapter approaches Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* and Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God is Red* through a discussion of spiritual revitalization, repatriation of Indigenous remains, and resurgence. The conclusion examines the NoDAPL movement via John Trudell's poem "Crazy Horse," connecting these threads of relationality, vulnerability, resistance, and resurgence in the context of a recent

environmental justice movement. The coda looks outward to the ongoing public lands discussion, considering how centering Indigenous relations to land can contribute to that conversation.

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For Addie

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, ECOCRITICISM, AND AFFECTIVE RELATIONALITY

> Native American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together. The protection, teachings, and gifts of our relatives have for generations preserved our families. These relations are honored in ceremony, song, story, and life that keep relations close—to buffalo, sturgeon, salmon, turtles, bears, wolves, and panthers. These are our older relatives—the ones who came before and taught us how to live. Their obliteration by dams, guns, and bounties is an immense loss to Native families and cultures. Their absence may mean that a people sing to a barren river, a caged bear, or buffalo far away. It is the struggle to preserve that which remains and the struggle to recover that characterizes much of Native environmentalism. It is these relationships that industrialism seeks to disrupt. Native communities will resist with great determination. (2)
>
> Winona LaDuke (White Earth Ojibwe), *All Our Relations*

In *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life,* White Earth Ojibwe writer, environmental justice activist, and former vice-presidential candidate Winona LaDuke describes the generative power of Indigenous knowledge systems to resist settler colonialism, industrialism, and environmental violence. LaDuke locates this generative power in the networks of relationality that shape Indigenous cultures, languages, governance systems, and everyday life. These relations are reciprocal and must be responsibly maintained in order for human, animal, and spirit beings to coexist. The relationality that LaDuke describes is dynamic, and is not the static child-of-nature stereotype of the ecological Indian in Western discourses surrounding early environmentalism, an image that continues in the popular myth of untouched wilderness

prior to white settlement of North America.[1] This relationality is learned and practiced through social kinship, cosmology, and spirituality, driven by collective governance systems based on reciprocal responsibility and respect for the relations that make up ecosystems, wherein one relative exploiting another leads to a cascade of damaging disruptions to the coexistence of those relations. Discussions of sustainability, conservation, and environmental justice must therefore recognize the importance of relationality. Mainstream environmentalism and environmental justice discourses have long drawn from Indigenous perspectives to make forceful claims against the exploitation of lands and peoples, but they have frequently done so in ways that romanticize, distort, co-opt, or otherwise fall short of appropriately honoring Indigenous relationality.

From Relationality to Resilience in Contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe Environmental Justice Literature responds to this issue from a vantage point squarely within Indigenous literary studies. This project maps a literary and theoretical trajectory between Indigenous kinship networks that connect human societies to the other-than-human beings[2] that share their homelands, struggles between Indigenous peoples and

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[1] Part of the uphill struggle for Indigenous environmental justice activists and writers is dismantling the ecological Indian stereotype. This project aligns with those efforts, and my discussions of relationality do not seek the restoration of an essentializing Ecological Indian figure; instead, they pursue an understanding of Indigenous relationships to place as guiding Indigenous activism, contributing to cultural vitality and community revitalization. The myth of the Ecological Indian, which has been thoroughly and rightfully contested through scholars including Shepard Krech III, Gregory Smithers, Lee Schweninger, and others, still motivates settler challenges against Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous practices ranging from controlled burning to forestry to waste management when Native actions do not reflect settlers' expectations. The extent to which the Ecological Indian myth retains its hold on public opinion obscures the legitimate efforts of environmental justice activists to oppose harmful projects or invest in economic development—two sites of action that the settler state and its populace frequently set up intense opposition.

[2] Throughout this dissertation I use the term "other-than-human beings" and "other-than-human world" to refer to nature and the environment, or what is often called the non-human world or plant/animal world. Coined by Irving Hallowell and used by scholars including Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher Pexa, the term highlights the relationality through which Indigenous peoples understand the ecosystems that they are part of, in which relations to other-than-human beings are defined both materially and spiritually. This way of acknowledging the world beyond human materiality breaks

settler-colonial nation-states over environmental justice issues and climate change, and Indigenous resistance to ongoing colonial violence. I approach these issues through a study of contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe texts that approach coloniality and environmental injustice from a position of relationality to their specific homelands. Environmental justice struggles are one way that Native communities honor relations, as LaDuke describes, and literature joins that honoring alongside "ceremony, song, story, and life that keep relations close" (*Relations* 2). The teachings and relations that LaDuke sees as binding Indigenous cultures together in the face of ongoing colonial oppression come from the specific relationships that specific Indigenous societies hold to their environments, relationships that are carried through land-based practices, spirituality, language, and cosmologies. I generally refer to these systems as Indigenous knowledge, adopting that term as a broad indicator of the epistemologies and ontologies that perpetuate Indigenous existence despite widespread efforts on the part of settler-colonial states[3] to assimilate and eliminate Indigenous peoples. As Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi

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down the social/cultural/political barriers that Western hetero-patriarchal and religious traditions insert between humans and the other-than-human world, thereby facilitating exploitation of nonhuman beings.

[3] I use settler-colonial state and settler state to refer to the United States and Canada, which have different timelines and legal histories that shape relations between Indigenous and settler communities. I use the term "settler" to refer to non-Indigenous communities and political entities that exist in Indigenous homelands, particularly when those entities uphold power structures that seek to dispossess Indigenous peoples and reinforce settler claims to Indigenous homelands. For the most part, settler communities in my study refer to white-majority towns bordering reservations. However, the term "settler" is complicated in broader contexts of nonwhite peoples who have migrated or been forcibly brought to the United States, histories that intersect with U.S. imperialism and settler colonialism. As Daniel Justice notes, "critics of colour raise import questions about the conflation of willing immigration with forcible transport through the trans-Atlantic slave trade or the flight of refugees from brutal conditions in their home countries...there is a clear desire to distance oneself and one's community from the violent history and continuing practices of settler colonialism" (10-11). However, I follow Justice's contention that we must ground critiques of coloniality and Indigeneity in the difficult history that neoliberal and settler-colonial discourses try to shrug off: "that through force, coercion, trickery, or other non-consensual means, Indigenous peoples lost lives, lands, and livelihoods as a result of non-Indigenous appropriations of lands and territories...We must honestly and clearly name that history before we can untangle the complications that different newcomer populations have

Muscogee) notes, "the knowledges embedded in...deep spatial relationships to homelands have served indigenous peoples well when government policies and programs offered only suffering and sadness," arguing that these knowledges offer a response to the "red alert" of climate change, which is the new wave of removal for Native peoples whose homelands are made uninhabitable (3). Even in the face of removal, Indigenous knowledges reinforce kinship networks by "*renewing relatives*," which Citizen Potawatomi philosopher and environmental justice scholar Kyle Whyte refers to as "both restoring persisting relationships that are part of longstanding Indigenous heritages but also creating new relationships that support Indigenous peoples' mobilizing to address climate change" ("Climate Change" 158, emphasis in original). As Cherokee literary scholar Daniel Heath Justice argues, Indigenous literatures matter as tribal nations revitalize these kinship networks and as writers imagine better futures for Indigenous peoples, for literature is part of the continual renewal of relationships. Following the work of Justice, Whyte, and other scholars of Indigenous literatures and environmental justice, this dissertation intervenes in discussions of the place-based identities and knowledge systems that shape Indigenous and settler communities in often contradictory ways.

From Relationality to Resilience grows out the principle that well-intended generalization does not adequately serve Indigenous communities. The project studies contemporary literary and critical texts specific to the Dakota-Ojibwe border region, a shared, ecologically diverse site of historic and ongoing migrations, conflicts, survival,

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brought into that relationship, or before we can look for the alliances and connections between marginalized communities" (11-12). Recognizing these alliances is important, and this project is committed to unpacking Indigenous histories that are difficult for mainstream ecocriticism to name and process.

and coalition-building. Chapter 2 explains this methodology and offers a literary genealogy of Dakota and Ojibwe literature to build a foundation for subsequent analyses of specific texts and contexts. That chapter unpacks the concerns about relationality and Indigenous sovereignty that Indigenous scholars and recent environmental justice scholars have identified as key to indigenizing environmental justice. Chapter 3 takes up one of the most significant instances of environmental injustice affecting several tribal nations in the twentieth century, the Pick-Sloan Plan, approaching that history via Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* trilogy using a framework of social vulnerability. Chapter 4 turns to an Ojibwe-authored speculative novel, Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, to continue the discussion of social vulnerability and resistance in relation to Anishinaabe knowledge and resurgence. Chapter 5 returns to legal contexts and issues of recognition via repatriation law, theorizing Indigenous alternatives through Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* and the nation-building work of Vine Deloria, Jr. The concluding chapter recenters Indigenous knowledges in another significant EJ movement, #NoDAPL, situating that movement in a larger history of collective Indigenous resistance and reading #NoDAPL through John Trudell's spoken-word poem "Crazy Horse." A coda points to next steps for this comparative methodology and for indigenizing environmental justice literatures.

As the author of a project that is grounded in specific Indigenous homelands at the intersection of Dakota and Ojibwe societies, shared histories of coloniality and resistance, and ongoing struggles for justice, I find it important to clearly articulate my stakes in this conversation. This work reflects my interest in tensions among nations, historical narratives, legal traditions, and commitments to communities both human and other-than-

human. These tensions make up relationality. My focus on relationality through a tribally specific study of Dakota and Ojibwe literatures stems from my personal connection to the lands and histories that ground these literatures. I am a descendant[4] of Spirit Lake Dakota and Turtle Mountain Ojibwe peoples, raised to know and celebrate my Indigenous ancestry but under the practical expectation that much of my life would unfold in a white-dominant world as I share white skin privilege with other light-complected Native and non-Native North Dakotans. I did not pursue interests in exploring my family's genealogy and in broadly studying the political histories in which my grandparents took part until adulthood. My family history and racial identity reflects these tensions and the complex networks of relations across time and space represented in the texts that I study here.

Environmental Justice(s) and Indigenous Sovereignty

Indigenous writers have long confronted the ongoing material impacts of colonization on their communities, articulating the connection between those impacts and colonial dispossession of lands while representing Indigenous communities as sites of resistance, resilience, and resurgence. These narratives of resistance share many of the concerns that underlie the study of literature and the environment, including the ways humans interact with the other-than-human world, the role of environmental imaginaries in social and cultural systems, and the potential for stories to promote sustainable

[4] I use the term "descendant" to reflect that I am not an enrolled citizen of the Spirit Lake Nation. The son of an enrolled father and a non-Native mother, I am the first generation to not be eligible for enrollment due to the tribe's blood quantum requirements. It feels odd to say that I am a "descendant" of Spirit Lake people, as that term brings to mind distant relations whereas I am connected on a daily basis with family members who are enrolled citizens. However, it is important to recognize accountability as a scholar working in Indigenous studies to the rights of nations to decide who is and is not a citizen, regardless of my personal identity.

environmental practices. However, there remains a significant disconnect between ecocriticism, which grew out of mainstream environmentalism, and on-the-ground struggles facing Indigenous peoples, communities of color, and the poor when it comes to understanding the disproportionate harm and unequal vulnerability resulting from environmental changes and climate change. In *The Environmental Justice Reader*, a vital early collaboration of environmental justice ecocritical writers in 2002, T.V. Reed points out that ecocriticism was "in danger of recapitulating the sad history of environmentalism generally, wherein unwillingness to grapple with questions of racial, class, and national privilege has severely undermined the powerful critique of ecological devastation" (145). As Reed and his co-contributors note, writings from environmental justice perspectives harnesses the critical possibilities of studying literature in order to challenge "the worst forms of environmental degradation...enabled by governmental and corporate policies of dumping problems on communities of color, poor whites, and the Third World" (Reed 146). *The Environmental Justice Reader* made its intervention by drawing together perspectives from many marginalized populations, including Indigenous communities, but such a project could not capture the various and distinct ways environmental justice (hereafter EJ) struggles play out for tribal nations given the unique lifeways, cultural systems, and legal statuses that each community holds. As sociologist Kari Norgaard notes, "early self-identified environmental justice efforts included important Indigenous activists, [yet] it has taken longer for the centuries-long fact of Indigenous resistance to colonialism to be understood as environmental justice struggles and longer still for Indigenous values, worldviews, or goals to be reflected in broader conceptions of environmental justice" (19).

In the decades following the interventions of *The Environmental Justice Reader*, scholars have further advocated for particular studies of the inextricable relationship between race and constructions of ecology, which Leilani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams call "racial ecologies." Nishime and Williams "consider nature and environment as relational sites for navigating both embodied racial identities and ecological space and place," "systems that shift and change over time but are always intertwined" (4). Nishime and Williams acknowledge that Indigeneity occupies a "particular place" that "often defies pressure to conform to US racial categories in order stake a unique claim to land and nation" (4). They echo Elizabeth Hoover, who notes in her study of exposure to industrial toxins affecting Akwesasne communities that "Indigenous communities have a unique stake in the history of environmental racism," as tribal nations hold specific legal status, rights, and commitments as Indigenous peoples under federal law (8). These unique stakes have resulted in tensions with mainstream environmentalism, which Nishime and Williams note is "often understood as universal and postracial" (3). As Athabascan scholar Dian Million argues,

> Environmentalism as a mission contains many wide and various projects that do and sometimes do not understand what the cultures that generate and nurture "sustainable" knowledges pose as law. In that way, environmentalists miss another order of relations that is available to humans living with other life forms, another order of "law." In many ways there is still a disconnect between needing to "save the planet" and what the subjugation of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges (cultures) has served and continues to serve, what is foundational about this subjugation to continuing capitalism as usual. (173)

Million pushes back against the instrumentalization and extraction of these knowledge systems, calling for Indigenous-driven movement toward healing and decolonization even as the neoliberal politics of reconciliation strive to diminish forceful critiques of subjugation and capitalism. “For the EJ movement,” David Pellow argues, “the battle for global sustainability cannot be won without addressing the ecological violence imposed on vulnerable human populations; thus social justice (that is, justice for humans) is inseparable from environmental protection” (5). As environmentalism frequently overlooks these nuanced, specific concerns and commitments of Native communities and the intersections of Indigenous knowledges and law, EJ falls into a similarly complicated position, particularly when it comes to precisely defining justice and assessing environmental rights and responsibilities.

This issue of precision has created challenges for EJ studies as the environmental justice movement garnered scholarly attention and mainstream visibility. EJ encountered theoretical tensions as justice models of fairness, distribution, recognition, and rights drew attention away from the key issues of self-determination and accountability for systemic inequity that the movement made visible. David H. Getches and David N. Pellow assert the importance of remembering what conditions the EJ movement grew out of, focusing “on communities that exhibit traditional characteristics of disadvantage—where high poverty levels, large populations of people of color, or both are concentrated” (5). Environmental injustices, Getches and Pellow argue, are borne by those who are at a “disadvantage” compared to others, namely the poor and people of color, including Indigenous communities. Getches and Pellow circle back to the important conditional basis of environmental justice claims as the movement met resistance from anyone who

felt that environmental decision making was not wholly participatory, as "ensuring adequate participation may be a fundamental goal of environmental justice, but it is not the only one" (23). The notion of fairness, Getches and Pellow note, is not the crux of EJ, especially as people whose privilege secures them positions of influence in most communities cite "unfairness" in decisions meant to protect marginalized citizens who lack mobility and resources to combat harmful environmental projects. The concern expressed by Getches and Pellow, however, is the risk of expanding the bounds of EJ to the extent that the movement loses momentum. They argue that EJ should be defined on an operational basis, so that each disadvantaged group can articulate their struggle in specific terms rather than conforming to an external rubric.

Indeed, an operational approach to EJ is important for addressing Indigenous EJ issues, since tribal nations have unique, complex sets of relationships to the United States government and state governments. As legal scholar Sarah Krakoff notes, "virtually all Indian tribes clearly fit into Getches and Pellow's definition of groups who come to the table with 'palpable and endemic disadvantage,' stemming from a long history of discrimination, exclusion, and deliberate attempts to destroy their cultural and political communities" (162). However, the key difference between Indigenous nations and other groups engaged in EJ struggles is sovereignty that predates the founding of the United States, wherein Indigenous nations are recognized as "domestic dependents" subject to Congressional plenary power.[5] Indigenous nations face a perpetual struggle to practice that sovereignty in the form of self-determination and self-governance. As such, Krakoff

[5] Not all Indigenous nations are federally recognized, but the framework for federal recognition establishes that Indigenous nations hold sovereignty, which was necessary for the federal government to enter into treaties—however exploitative they were—and justify those treaties as legally valid, nation-to-nation agreements.

defines EJ for tribal nations also as matters of sovereignty: "Environmental justice must be consistent with the promotion of tribal self-governance. Environmental injustice occurs when tribes fail to receive support in their efforts to control and improve their reservation environment" (163). Krakoff develops a test for classifying an issue as one of environmental injustice: the issue must involve both the degradation of an Indigenous nations' environment and the issue must involve a non-Indigenous party attempting to undermine Indigenous sovereignty. If these two conditions are not met, the issue is not one of EJ. While these legal frameworks for assessing and defining EJ for tribal nations have contributed to some degree of legal remedy—or at least a measure of accountability—these legal discourses do not reflect the notions of law and sustainability that Indigenous knowledges contribute, per Million. These legal frameworks are rooted in capitalist and possessive frameworks of relationality, which at their core conflict with Indigenous relational principles.

One of the most promising models of justice theorized in EJ studies is distributive justice, though it is itself grounded in capitalist frameworks that convert Indigenous homelands into resources to be possessed and redistributed. While distributive models of EJ have some applicability to tribal nations, which must participate in the broader economic system of generating resources from a land base, the notion of possession creates tension among Indigenous communities—an issue that the last two chapters of this project take up further. The key issue, according to Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville), is that distributive models of justice do not acknowledge the fundamental relationship between colonization and environmental injustice and that coloniality creates the need for Indigenous EJ in the first place. Gilio-Whitaker notes that "colonization was not just a

process of invasion and eventual domination of Indigenous populations by European settlers," contending that "the eliminatory impulse and structure it created in actuality began as an environmental injustice" (12). Gilio-Whitaker calls for a framework of EJ beyond capitalism:

> one with a scope that can accommodate the full weight of the history of settler colonialism, on one hand, and embrace differences in the ways Indigenous peoples view land and nature, on the other. This includes an ability to acknowledge sacred sites as an issue of environmental justice—not merely religious freedom…Overall, a differentiated environmental justice framework—we could call this "Indigenized" EJ—must acknowledge the political existence of Native nations and be capable of explicitly respecting principles of Indigenous nationhood and self-determination. (12)

Indigenized EJ, according to Gilio-Whitaker, centers the specific land-based cosmologies and epistemologies that define relationality for each Indigenous society, and is committed to restoring those relationships. Environmental injustice, for Native peoples, is not only an issue of distribution of risk, benefit, or resource, and is not adequately reflected in settler legal systems that created the conditions for environmental injustices. Indigenized EJ emerges also from a position of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and community capability outside the colonial politics of recognition and distributive models of justice.

While arguments for distributive justice frameworks in mainstream EJ are useful for confronting the individualistic, capitalist ideals of settler states that contribute to environmental exploitation that disproportionately affects people of color and the poor,

distributive justice does not reflect Indigenous kinship structures based on responsibility and relationality. Distributive justice requires recognition of rights and sovereignty by the settler state as a dominant sovereign, contributing to the uneven power dynamics between Indigenous nations and settler states. As Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues, relying on settler recognition of Indigenous claims to political autonomy, sovereignty, or in this case justice "reproduce[s] the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (3). According to Coulthard, the contemporary liberal politics of recognition do not change the "relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state," which have "remained *colonial* to its core" (6). Therefore, appealing for recognition within a distributive model of justice reinforces the authority of the settler state that creates conditions of environmental injustice in the first place. Addressing the shortcomings of distributive modes of justice, David Schlosberg and David Carruthers point to frameworks of justice based on "community capabilities," which responds to the fact that Indigenous environmental justice movements "do not limit themselves to understanding injustice as faced by *individuals*; justice for *communities* is often at the forefront of their interests and protests" (17). They continue, "For indigenous communities using environmental justice as an organizing frame, the collective experience of injustice—the impact on the abilities of communities to function and renew themselves—is absolutely crucial" (17). Schlosberg and Carruthers offer an important contribution to environmental justice criticism that acknowledges the shared experience of EJ for Indigenous peoples as a struggle for existence, which they code as functioning and renewal. They also point to common ground for Indigenous communities and other

communities of color facing environmental injustice in which struggles for community capabilities merge as collective pressures against neoliberalism, capitalism, and extractive industries driving climate change.

Like Krakoff, Schlosberg and Carruthers are attentive to the interconnection of Indigenous environmental justice movements with broader movements for sovereignty and self-determination. This complex interconnection has created problems for prior environmental justice scholarship:

> Indigenous environmental justice claims are embedded in broader struggles to preserve identity, community, and traditional ways of life. These studies confirm that indigenous demands for environmental justice go beyond distributional equity to emphasize the defense and very functioning of indigenous communities—their ability to continue and reproduce the traditions, practices, cosmologies, and the relationships with nature that tie native people to their ancestral lands. (13)

Schlosberg and Carruthers articulate some key issues for Indigenous EJ: namely resistance to distributive models of justice and the larger struggles to protect identity and lifeways as a resistance to settler colonial assimilative policies. They identify "relationships with nature" as one of these; I contend that relationality is central to all of these concerns as it is fundamental the practice of reciprocal responsibility. Whitefish River Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor argues that "[a]n Anishinaabe understanding of environmental justice considers relationships not only among people but also among all our relations (including all living things and our ancestors). Environmental in-justice, then, is not only inflicted by dominant society upon Aboriginal

peoples, people of colour, and people in low-income neighbourhoods but also upon Creation itself" (28). Anishinaabe environmental justice acknowledges the "agency and entitlement" of these relations, wherein "all beings of Creation, including people, have relationships and responsibilities" (30). Mainstream environmentalism and anthropocentric EJ frameworks position humans as actors shaping (and harming) environments, creating a power dynamic that necessitates policies to protect vulnerable ecosystems and the people who are also harmed by inequities in agency and power. Schlosberg and Carruthers point to a more holistic framework of community capabilities, which acknowledges the role of cosmologies in how Indigenous thinkers like McGregor position Indigenous environmental struggles within a larger set of relational concerns, which include reciprocal responsibilities between humans and the other-than-human world.

Indigenous EJ rooted in a politics of reciprocity that comes out of Indigenous knowledges presents an alternative, non-exploitative view of human-environmental relationships to settler capitalism, which on a global scale has contributed to greenhouse gas emissions and resource depletion. Asking what academic discussions of Indigenous knowledges do for Indigenous peoples, Kyle Whyte points out that Indigenous knowledges come out of an embodied practice that is both individual and collective, the combination of which offers governance value: "Place-based, embodied existence is important in the theory of resurgence because it points to ways of life in which Indigenous peoples do not depend in morally problematic or unjust ways on the resources and recognition of surrounding settler states" ("Knowledges" 68). Whyte's sense of "place-based, embodied existence" and Wildcat's notion of "deep spatial experiential"

knowledge (15) echoes McGregor and LaDuke's assertions that Indigenous knowledges speak to another kind of embodiment, one that holds together memory and place-based identity. That embodiment also facilitates a politics of environmental reciprocity, a philosophy of and approach to collective governance founded on relational environmental sustainability instead of the potential for manipulating environments to generate capital.

Indigenous knowledges as a politics of reciprocity also offers a way for Indigenous nations to seek sustainable self-determination that asserts sovereignty within a framework of responsibility rather than rights. As Jeff Corntassel argues, rights-based discourse does not adequately support sustainable self-determination:

> Sustainable self-determination as a process is premised on the notion that evolving indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, relationships to homelands and the natural world, and ceremonial life can be practiced today locally and regionally, thus enabling the transmission of these traditions and practices to future generations. Operating at multiple levels, sustainable self-determination seeks to regenerate the implementation of indigenous natural laws on indigenous homelands and expand the scope of an indigenous self-determination process. (119)

Echoing Whyte, Coulthard, and Wildcat, Corntassel recognizes the role of other-than-human beings in Indigenous epistemological and ontological governance systems facilitates the revitalization of those governance systems through self-determination. Corntassel sees the rights discourse that Indigenous nations have pursued as a venue for asserting sovereignty as constraining, since rights discourses center the settler state as the sovereign that grants and defends rights as entitlements while undermining Indigenous

sovereignty as a commitment to responsibilities between relations. As Kari Norgaard argues, "Indigenous perspectives on environmental justice reframe the dominant environmental justice discourse from a focus on 'equality' or 'rights to clean water or air' to one of caretaking responsibilities that are disrupted by natural resource policies of the settler-colonial state" (19). A discourse of responsibility instead of rights emphasizes the importance of relations rather than distribution of resources, which for Corntassel should be the central logic of international relationships between Indigenous and other nations. These issues of rights, distributive justice, and legal definitions of EJ and environmental racism are important given the unique and complex legal dynamics that Indigenous nations must navigate, dynamics that form the backdrop of this project.

Decolonizing Ecocriticism

Scholars in the fields of Native American literary studies, critical Indigenous studies, ecocriticism, environmental justice studies, and the larger disciplines of Ethnic Studies and literary theory and criticism provide the groundworks for my intervention into Indigenous environmental justice issues as they are imagined and explored in contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe literatures. As T.V. Reed and the editors of *The Environmental Justice Reader* point out, mainstream environmentalism has regularly failed to adequately include the perspectives of marginalized peoples in its efforts to separate humans from certain environments that were defined as "nature." The field of ecocriticism brings these issues to academia, growing out of the cultural definitions of human, other-than-human beings, and material space, often overlooking the unique relationships between Indigenous and other land-based peoples and their environments in

favor of theory that reflects white privilege and access to Indigenous homelands. That said, ecocriticism's extensive interrogations of the social and cultural processes that construct such divisions, that determine what matter counts as human and what matter counts as environment, and that define relationships between peoples and their environments can support the efforts of Indigenous writers and EJ advocates as they describe the unique relations between their communities and their homelands.

This dissertation's engagement with the field of ecocriticism aims to decolonize these conversations by adapting points of inquiry from ecocriticism in service of Indigenous EJ as movements built around three central priorities: the reclamation of Indigenous lands, the recovery of Indigenous land-based knowledges and practices that are adapted for future resurgence, and accountability for environmental injustice on the part of the settler state. My use of the term decolonization considers Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's argument that decolonization should not be used metaphorically as a synonym for resistance by communities of color against capitalist, Christian, or white hegemony: "When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks" (3). They continue, "decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (35). In my interventions into ecocriticism and its intersections with Native literary studies, I highlight the limitations of ecocritical frameworks not to invalidate them but to

point out where they are not yet "accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity," even if many scholars are engaged in critical, anti-racist, and social justice-minded scholarship. This is especially vital as the framework of decolonization is becoming popular in ecocriticism, just as it was popular in the social science and education fields that prompted Tuck and Yang's essay. Some ecocritical invocations of decolonization will inevitably generate productive critiques of colonialism that show meaningful support for Indigenous sovereignty, but the popularity of decolonial frameworks will also lead to less accountable scholarship that is in service to settler discourses and that only superficially acknowledges Indigeneity as the lifeforce of the decolonial.

Ecocriticism expanded as a discipline in the early- and mid-1990s, with Cheryll Glotfelty noting in 1996 that so far the field "has been a predominantly white movement" that "will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (xxv). Glotfelty and other scholars of ecocriticism may have been surprised to learn that in Native Country, those connections existed long before the birth of ecocriticism, and that the issue may have been one of gatekeeping more than of encouragement. Responding to this issue, Joni Adamson wrote the first monograph drawing ecocriticism and Native literary studies together: *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* (2001). Adamson critiques ecocriticism's emphasis on texts that "strictly separate nature from culture," an emphasis that she argues holds "little promise for cultivating concrete social and environmental change" (xix). Adamson advocates for studying multiethnic texts for their rich portrayals of communities and cultures that disrupt human/nature binaries,

seeking out how "the differences that shape diverse cultural and literary representations of nature" challenge "mainstream American culture, environmentalism, and literature," offering "new, more multicultural conceptions of nature and the environment" (xvii-xviii). Adamson studies American Indian literatures to develop these ideas, but she approaches Indigenous literatures as a firm believer in multiculturalism as vital to contemporary literary criticism. While Adamson's analysis of Native literature through an ecocritical lens was new to its time, her study instrumentalizes Native literatures to advance the fields of ecocriticism and multiethnic literary studies.[6] Native literature offers Adamson a vehicle to expand ecocriticism, but the critiques she offers are not aligned with Native literary studies' commitments to serving Indigenous communities.[7] However, Adamson productively suggests that ecocritics could "help us understand how power relations are produced through social action and how these relations acquire the particular significance they do in certain places and situations. In this way, ecocritics would facilitate the formation of alliances by framing human experiences in ways that encourage us to be responsible to each other and to the places we inhabit" (83). Adamson

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[6] At the time of Adamson's book's publication in the early 2000s, multiethnic literary studies was growing in popularity, but the field itself drew some scrutiny. As Jodi Melamed argues in *Represent and Destroy*, multiethnic literary studies can misguidedly serve what she calls "official antiracisms," which are neoliberal acknowledgments of diversity and multiethnic contributions to literature and society that do not destabilize the structures of power that reinforce Western hegemony. Melamed argues that literature has been the site of contesting and creating public consciousness about race under neoliberalism. She argues that notions of education as a creator of "global citizenry" is problematic as neoliberal capitalism still relies on the subjugation and displacement of the poor, people of color, and Indigenous populations: "These antiracisms have functioned as unifying discourses for U.S. state, society, and global ascendancy and as material forces for postwar global capitalist expansion" (1). While Adamson's intervention in *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism* pushes back against U.S. hegemony and structures of power, her investment in multiculturalism, especially in education and academia, aligns with the official antiracisms that Melamed challenges.

[7] See Cook-Lynn's essays "The American Indian Fiction Writer: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty" and "Who Stole Native American Studies?" for an overview of the discussions surrounding the usefulness of Native studies and Native literary criticism to ongoing struggles for sovereignty and social justice for tribal communities.

sees great possibility for Indigenous literatures to contribute to a fuller sense of responsibility and relationality, concepts that underlie ecocriticism's commitments to environmentalist ideals.

Echoing Adamson's critiques of ecocriticism for missing opportunities to engage more rigorously with Native communities, Lee Schweninger offers a historical overview of Indigenous literary representations of environmental ethics in *Listening to the Land: American Indian Responses to the Landscape* (2008). Schweninger's book explores the contradictory scholarly discourses surrounding Native peoples and environmental issues in history, American studies, and ecocriticism. These discourses, he argues, contribute to stereotypes of Native people as inherently environmentalist, holding special relationships with nature that mystify non-Indians, a stereotype that Shepard Krech III calls the "ecological Indian."[8] Schweninger notes that scholarly efforts to disentangle the stereotype from actual Native cultural relationships to place and other-than-human beings results in oppositional frameworks that do not reflect the complexity and cultural specificity of Indigenous environmental knowledges and relations. In his monograph, Schweninger examines the "ways in which [American Indian authors] profess and

[8] Shepard Krech III's *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* takes aim at the stereotype of the ecological Indian, which is collectively beneficial to ecocriticism, environmental studies, and Native studies. However, Krech sets out to prove that Indians weren't actually good stewards much of the time—that they caused excessive destruction through burning to control animal migration and pushed buffalo toward extinction. Krech concedes, however, that Native belief systems did not align with Western values of conservation and preservation. He generalizes those belief systems as based on the expectation that the natural world would replenish itself indefinitely if respect and ceremony were recognized. Krech interrogates the widespread understanding that settler colonialism and the development of Western settlements did more damage that Native peoples had, more or less validating that claim but suggesting that settlers only amplified the destruction caused by Native populations. While attendant to the distinctions between Native epistemologies and Western beliefs, Krech makes troubling moves to absolve settlers of guilt for genocide or environmental injustice. Likewise, Krech is quick to point out inherent contradictions within Indigenous communities regarding development projects and land use rights, as though his reader expects Native communities to be unified behind political issues.

articulate their complex and nuanced sense of an ethical relationship with the earth while at the same time often confronting and even refuting imposed stereotypes of American Indians as nature lovers or as children of the wild who worship a Mother Earth goddess," arguing that Native writers "simultaneously embrace and deny a land ethic stereotype themselves" (2). Schweninger sees a productive tension in literary articulations of Indigenous relationality, and embarks on a wide-ranging survey of texts that represent human-environmental relationships, arguing that "the literary scholar must...address questions about how knowledge of the stereotype helps one better read and more fully respond to those Native American authors who do profess an ethical relationship with the earth...a profession that is complex and deserving of focused and careful investigation" (10). Schweninger's book offers a comprehensive overview of how Native writers articulate these ethical relationships, establishing a strong foundation for analyzing literary texts as making EJ interventions.

In the years following Adamson's and Schweninger's monographs, the ecocritical study of Native literatures, art, and newer media expanded to include global Indigenous studies. In an update to Adamson's *American Indian Literature*, Adamson and Salma Monani co-edited a collection titled *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos* (2016), which further unpacks the diversity of relationships and cosmologies that inform struggles to support the rights of the natural world. Adamson and Monani bring together a rich array of writings, visual pieces, and analyses that reflect many genres and modes of inquiry. In their introduction to the book, Adamson and Monani propose the framework of cosmopolitics as a contemporary global movement to recognize the "intergenerational, evolutionary space and time required not just for the

survival of all species, but of the recognition of the 'rights' to life for all humans and nonhumans" (7). In this context of cosmopolitics, the authors suggest that Indigenous artists contribute cosmovisions to the environmental humanities. They offer a vital point that "[t]o recognize Indigenous cosmovisions as participating in everyday and situated projects is to also comprehend them as dynamic epistemologies"—ever-changing, evolving continuations of Indigenous knowledge as aspects of Indigenous life (8). They continue, "[Indigenous cosmovisions] are always in the process of being interpreted. Thus, it is imperative to understand that cosmovisions are not essentialist or simplistic answers to ecological crises. Grounded in context, they can be limiting or liberating in their ethics and their politics as applied to other 'persons'" (8). Adamson and Monani acknowledge the agency of other-than-human beings, which is a key principle of Indigenous EJ.[9] However, they reproduce the discourse of rights that Indigenous EJ scholars like Whyte and McGregor problematize as obfuscating Indigenous relationality based on reciprocal responsibility.

The problematic framework of environmental rights (as opposed to reciprocal responsibilities) that is common in mainstream EJ leads to other shortcomings in Adamson and Monani's approach to Indigenous EJ, particularly their organization of the collected essays under the headings "resilience," resistance," and "multispecies relations" (10). Adamson and Monani explain, "*resilience* articulates Indigenous response to centuries of politically enforced extermination, assimilation, and marginalization; *resistance* highlights active struggles for self-determination and sovereignty against

[9] Also speaking to this sense of agency for other-than-human beings, Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi) examines the animacy of the other-than-human world through Anishinaabemowin, which represents nonhuman objects in verb form rather than as nouns, a linguistic system that Kimmerer calls "the grammar of animacy" in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (55).

cultural and eco-genocide; and *multispecies relations* illuminate the philosophies that undergird Indigenous ecological literacies often applied in the practice of resilience and resistance" (10). This framework, while useful for breaking down the complex idea of cosmovisions, is reductive. "*Resilience*" as "a response" to genocide and oppression is simply existence, with cosmovisions not necessarily reflecting the extensive loss suffered by Indigenous peoples or the trauma of ongoing colonial violence (this is an issue that the third chapter of this project interrogates). "*Resistance*" is a more productive framework for Indigenous responses to settler colonialism and environmental injustice and serves as a more precise analytic than "eco-genocide." As Patrick Wolfe argues, "Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal" (387), manifesting as a structure, not an event that "destroys to replace" (388). As Gilio-Whitaker notes, settler colonialism perpetuates environmental injustice as a structure of erasure; ecological destruction must be situated within this structure and not simplified as metaphoric "genocide" (which perpetuates the kinds of issues Tuck and Yang raise about widespread use of "decolonization"). Finally, "*multispecies relations*," which I simplify as relationality, is a common thread between Adamson and Monani's collection and this dissertation's contribution as a study of Indigenous EJ writing. However, this project does not pursue a generalized philosophy of "Indigenous ecological literacies." Instead, this dissertation offers a specific analysis of contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe literature as reflecting the struggles of two specific Indigenous peoples who share a specific, oftentimes contested, region of North America.

Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies is a valuable contribution to the environmental humanities, and each individual piece contributes to the growing field of

global Indigenous studies. However, the project's vision as articulated in Adamson and Monani's introduction suggests that it brings together these works of global Indigenous studies to extract the authors' "cosmovisions" for the advancement of ecocriticism, again putting ecocriticism and its commitments over the ongoing priorities of on-the-ground Indigenous EJ movements: sovereignty and self-determination. This does not suggest, however, that studying Indigenous texts that meet the classification of environmental humanities is not a productive way to discuss and advance these priorities. In his essay "'What Can I Tell Them That They Will Hear': Environmental Sovereignty and American Indian Literature," Lee Schweninger argues that such assertions of Indigenous relationality and ethical commitments are part of larger Indigenous resistance to colonization. He notes that relational ethics highlight the differences between Indigenous knowledge systems and "the West's general unwillingness to accept the validity of...Indigenous knowledge," arguing that "[i]n representing and insisting on the validity of alternative Indigenous viewpoints...American Indian writers can be seen to take part in a form of decolonization, insisting on sovereignty" (217). Schweninger draws on McGregor and other Indigenous studies scholars who center relational responsibilities between humans and other-than-human beings in their discussions of Indigenous knowledges and traditions. He notes that Indigenous writers approach these issues of relationality, environmental sovereignty, and activism in unique ways based on the intersections of their peoples' particular knowledge systems and traditions with coalitional and inter-tribal environmental sovereignty movements.

Schweninger approaches his scholarship with a wide comparative framework, which is productive in that it brings together diverse voices and cultural perspectives

through one critical inquiry, offering an Indigenous-centered version of the multiethnic framework that Adamson promotes. As important as Adamson's and Schweninger's early interventions were in the field of ecocriticism, their broad comparative methodologies hindered their work's capacity for deep analysis and substantive theorizing that is necessary to contribute to struggles for Indigenous sovereignty on nation-specific terms, which is fundamental to Indigenous environmental justice movements. Broad comparative frameworks risk collapsing specific principles and knowledge traditions. Frequently, scholars of ecocriticism who engage with Indigenous literatures do not bring to their work the nuances of specific tribal-national traditions, often drifting toward generalized "Native American" or multiethnic studies of literature and EJ, which is a problem that Schweninger directly confronts. After all, the kinds of risks facing White Earth wetlands and Standing Rock's water supply from multinational oil companies differs significantly from the various mining projects that have exposed tribal nations whose homelands are deemed "sacrifice zones" across the United States and Canada to toxic material.[10] *From Relationality to Resilience* resists such generalization by grounding its EJ-informed analysis in the material, affective dimensions of the project's focal texts. The aim of this methodology is to offer a vision of environmental justice in the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands and to imagine an environmentalism that recognizes intertribal relations and that captures the lived conditions of and resistance to colonization.

[10] In her 1998 book *The Tainted Earth: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*, Valerie Kuletz maps the history of nuclear mining, military testing, and nuclear waste storage in the deserts of the Southwestern U.S. Kuletz examines these areas as zones of "sacrifice" that assumes these areas are empty and expendable, when they have actually been occupied by Indigenous and Chicanx peoples since time immemorial.

No More Death Songs: Affective Relationality and Environmental Justice

In "Beyond the Water Line," Phyllis Young, a Dakota community organizer and environmental justice activist from Standing Rock, argues that the front line of American Indian social justice struggles is the protection of Indigenous homelands, much as the color line became the major focus of Black American political theory the early twentieth century following W.E.B. DuBois. Writing ten years before her nation's struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline, Young describes her path to becoming an advocate for EJ long before the #NoDAPL movement. She begins her story by explaining the significant environmental changes forced upon Dakota, Lakota, and other Indigenous nations along the Missouri River under the Pick-Sloan dam projects, including at Standing Rock following the 1958 inundation of the reservation's riparian forests to create Lake Oahe.[11] Young remembers the experience of watching waters flood her people's lands, recalling that "[o]ld men sang their death songs when they heard the rushing waters coming in on a cold January night" (89). Young later noted that the inundation "destroyed the June rise," the time of year marked by "the beauty of the river rising in the springtime" when one could hear "the birds sing and all the sounds of nature, and you could smell, feel, and hear the water" (89). June rise was an affective experience of seasonal change, marking the renewal of plants, medicines, and animal life along the riverbanks, all of which sustained the people's lives for another year and renewed their relational commitments.

[11] The Pick-Sloan project, designed to stabilize seasonal flooding in the Missouri River basin and generate hydroelectric power, displaced citizens from several tribes that had been isolated to reservations in the mid-nineteenth century: Fort Berthold, Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, and Lower Brule. A termination-era policy, the Pick-Sloan projects furthered the disruption of traditional land-based communal lifeways among Plains tribes by the General Allotment Act, which broke up communal landholding and opened reservations to non-Native settlers. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's fiction represents Dakota life during this period, joining other Indigenous literary confrontations of dams and their disruption of relational networks, including Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms,* Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, and D'Arcy McNickle's *Wind from an Enemy Sky*.

Young writes: “Sometimes I go back just to sit on the bank of the river to try to hear what we used to hear when we were small, but I can’t hear it anymore. So I can feel some of the pain our grandfathers must have felt when those waters cascaded down over our land” (89). Young feels the lack of familiar sounds and sensations of life on the floodplain during June rise as painful, depicted through affect. Young ties her feeling to the childhood memory of June rise, still resonant years later because of the traumatizing effect on her and the elders of losing the lands that sustained their community even after their confinement to the reservation. As deeply held relationships to place are disrupted by similar projects that alter or destroy ecosystems, settler states create what Kyle Whyte refers to as “our ancestors’ dystopia,” a period marked by climate destabilization, the loss of species, and the loss of cultural practices. For the elders who witnessed catastrophic changes to their homeland by the federal Pick-Sloan project, this was the end of a world that called for the singing of a death song.

Indigenous environmental justice writer-activists like Phyllis Young call attention to the urgency of climate change in different ways, including Whyte’s dystopic framework and Daniel Wildcat’s “red alert,” in which he calls for “paying attention to the life surrounding us” to recognize the experiential knowledge necessary to mitigate the effects of climate change (15). For Wildcat, this experiential knowledge facilitates non-exploitative, place-based practices that sustain relationships between societies and their environments. The interruption of knowledge and practice parallels the dystopia that Whyte articulates, with both thinkers calling for acknowledgement of Indigenous voices and perspectives. Yet Wildcat’s sense of experiential knowledge and Whyte’s dystopic framework point to an epistemological and ontological position of affect, of *feeling* the

urgency of climate change and *embodying* relationships that are upheld by Indigenous traditions.

My theory of affective relationality builds on Dian Million's felt theory of Canadian Indigenous women's writing that reshaped discourses around the intergenerational trauma of residential school abuse and ongoing structures of coloniality. Million argues that First Nations women created "new language for communities to address the real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures," facilitating social change and community empowerment (57). Million asserts that "felt experience [is] community knowledge, knowledge that interactively informs our positions as Indigenous scholars" (57). As felt experience is shared among members of a community, events that impact the entire community are experienced collectively and can be captured through narrative affect. Million continues, "Personal narrative and personal testimony empowered individual experience, and 'bearing witness' was a powerful tool. The growth of this emancipation narration comes into being in a complex political moment" when "the mainstream white society read Native stories through thick pathology narratives. Yet it is these same stories that collectively witnessed the social violence that was and is colonialism's heart" (59).[12] Million outlines a dynamic wherein Indigenous peoples give voice to their lived experience through affect that bears witness to colonial violence,

12 In Million's work, that imposed definition is one of pathology, necessitating Western discourses of "therapy" in service of neoliberal reconciliation politics. Coulthard critiques these kinds of reconciliation efforts in his work on the settler politics of recognition, and Audra Simpson (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk) responds to issues of recognition and reconciliation by examining refusal as an affirmation of Indigenous sovereignty.

thereby pushing back against mainstream narratives that attempt to define Indigenous experiences in disempowering ways.

Million's critiques of reconciliatory, settler-driven discourses around trauma echo broader resistance to white, neoliberal strategies of locating racial violence as past events. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* studies narratives of slavery and trauma in legal discourses, art, film, and literature, contributing the theory of "the wake" through the word's many interpretations, including the disturbance of water behind a ship, a period of shared grief following a death, and consciousness. She argues that "to be *in* the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding," continuing that "rather than seeking a resolution to blackness's ongoing and irresolvable abjection, one might approach Black being in the wake as a form of *consciousness*" (13-14). Like Million and other Indigenous studies scholars, Sharpe resists narratives that slavery's injustices are distant history, as those narratives contribute to stereotypes of Black abjection and lead to the continued disinvestment in Black communities and restrictions on Black participation in society. This anti-black narrative dynamic echoes anti-Indian sentiment in the U.S. and Canada, calling for Indigenous and Black voices to name injustice and claim representational space through affect in order to resist racism, which Sharpe sees as a singularity, an infinite distortion by a gravitational force that is climatological. She argues, "antiblackness is pervasive *as* climate. The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies" (106). Affective relationality as a vocalization of Indigenous EJ similarly points to new ecologies under coloniality, implicating structures of racism and

antiblackness in climate change, ranging from the transformation of Indigenous lands and disruption of lifeways to the ongoing displacement of Indigenous peoples due to rising sea levels and desertification to the exclusion of Indigenous nations in oil pipeline permitting processes.[13]

In order to uphold extractive capitalism, settler colonialism must locate slavery and genocide in the past while turning to deracialized frameworks of anthropogenic climate change. It is up to Indigenous and other writers of color to envision environmental justice beyond the singularity of antiblackness and settler coloniality. My critiques of work like Adamson and Monani's *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies* come out of a sense of resistance to frameworks that aim to condense rich, robust, diverse narratives of affective relationality and environmental justice interventions into a holistic idea of Indigenous cosmovisions. Such scholarship risks commodifying Indigenous knowledge and the contributions of Indigenous scholars and artists to the ongoing efforts to restore and sustain relational networks in their communities. This project resists generalization by examining the felt experiences of environmental injustice by specific communities. The kinship networks, knowledge systems, and particular EJ struggles of specific communities are made visible through narratives of affective relationality and nuanced, culturally specific visions of resistance.

Working from this critical positionality, *From Relationality to Resilience* uses the lens of affective relationality to examine contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe

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[13] In *To Be a Water Protector: The Rise of the Wiindigoo Slayers,* Winona LaDuke discusses the dismissal of Ojibwe objections to the Line 3 pipeline replacement project, which was pushed through Minnesota regulatory agencies by Enbridge, the Canadian company that is the majority-owner of the Dakota Access Pipeline. As at Standing Rock, the treaty rights and sovereignty of Indigenous nations are routinely ignored by regulatory bodies of the settler state.

environmental justice texts. These texts deploy affect as a rhetorical strategy to offset disaffected settler-colonial conceptions of land as resource or property, including legal discourses of law, justice, and EJ. These discourses are part of the larger structure of settler colonialism, which Tuck and Yang argue is built on "epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence," a process in which "land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property" (5).[14] Affective relationality leverages Indigenous knowledge in opposition to these processes, enabling Indigenous writers, artists, and activists to recover the relational networks and commitments that define EJ in terms of responsibilities rather than rights. Affect and relationality are mutual epistemological constructions that underlie EJ activism at large through reference to the importance of human-natural "harmony," "balance," and "reciprocity," terms that tend to lose precision the more frequently they come into use. For Indigenous activists, these are not environmental buzzwords but are deeply held cultural principles that govern human-environmental relationships.[15] Indigenous EJ claims that arise from these positions activate what Alexa Weik von Mossner calls readers' "capacity for empathy strategically in order to encourage readers to feel moral allegiance with the victims of environmental injustice" (Weik von Mossner 79). Affective relationality serves as a nexus for Indigenous knowledges and long-term governance

[14] Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca) addresses this dynamic in "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," which I discuss in the final chapter of this project.

[15] As I discuss in Chapter 4, these relationships are complicated when tribal nations engage in resource development, oil production, and extractive industries. There are certainly tensions within Native communities around these issues, as discussed by Vine Deloria Jr. in *God is Red*, where he notes that engaging in these activities risks spiritual conflict—however, such activities are sometimes necessary to provide for citizens in a larger global context.

structures, facilitating justice of and for the land aligned with the self-determination of Indigenous nations.

Through affective relationality, Indigenous EJ writers confront neoliberal structures that perpetuate injustice by articulating the material interconnection between Indigenous communities and the land. Affective relationality resonates with ecocritical theories of new materialisms and trans-corporeality, the theory that Stacy Alaimo developed to attend "to the material interconnections between the human and the more-than-human world" reflected in the "interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures" (2). Alaimo argues that breaking down the material separation of humans and the matter that makes up their environments fosters "more capacious epistemologies" and more expansive ethical conceptions of responsibility toward the material world humans inhabit (2). As Alaimo asserts, "Understanding the substance of one's self as interconnected with the wider environment marks a profound shift in subjectivity" (20). Indigenous writers have long recognized such material interconnection and offer examples of the capacious epistemologies that Alaimo envisions. Janet Fiskio builds on Alaimo's new materialist interventions, describing Indigenous activist arts and dance as "corporeal interventions" that "expose and disrupt" the "operations of neoliberal capitalism that generates" environmental wasteland, "the pervasive violence of settler colonialism, including the ways that environmental racism threatens cultural survival" (101). These theories of trans-corporeality and corporeal intervention provide a means to demystify Indigenous land-based knowledges and relationships with other-than-human beings, shifting subjectivities that have long confined Indigenous contributions to larger theorizing of the environmental humanities.

Harnessing the affective representational power of ontological and epistemological place-based relationality, literary writers and EJ writer-activists like Phyllis Young and Winona LaDuke theorize what Glen Coulthard terms "grounded normativity." Echoing LaDuke's claim from the beginning of this introduction that Native environmentalism involves defending relations with Indigenous lands and other-than-human beings, Coulthard argues that Indigenous struggles against colonialism and capitalism are likewise rooted in land-based relationality:

> [They] are best understood as struggles oriented around the question of *land*—struggles not only *for* land, but also deeply *informed* by what the land as a mode of reciprocal *relationship* (which is itself informed by place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge) ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, nondominating and nonexploitative way. The ethical framework provided by these place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge is what I call "grounded normativity." (60)

Coulthard, LaDuke, Whyte, Young, and the Dakota and Ojibwe writers studied in this project develop theories and critiques of colonial violence and environmental injustices from the grounded, normative practices of their nations and specifically located cultural networks. In these contexts, relationality articulates a way of being on land that is embodied and felt corporeally and cognitively; representing that relationality through writing deploys affect as a call to action to make legible trauma in the wake of colonialism, a structure that continually endeavors to disrupt Indigenous lifeways and

environmental practices in order to silence their opposition to the destruction of their homelands.

Revitalizing the land-based relationships that support struggles against settler colonialism also includes the struggle for cultural self-determination and environmental justice. While affective representations of relationality provide a means for writer-activists to call forth alternatives to Western disaffected ways of relating to place, as Weik von Mossner argues, it also reflects the way place figures in cultural memory. For Phyllis Young and the Dakota and Ojibwe writers studied here, remembering Indigenous homelands, like the flood plain in June rise, upholds an intergenerational connection between the people and the land. That connection is itself a form of Indigenous knowledge, renewing traditions of sustainability through respect and responsibility across tribal-national networks and literary traditions, which the following chapter explores further.

CHAPTER II

THEORIZING THE DAKOTA-OJIBWE LITERARY BORDERLANDS

> The *Anishinaabeg* knew that the white man would punish all Indians for the actions of a few. The white man chose not to tell the difference. The *Anishinaabeg* also knew that the Dakota would need help, that there would be refugees. They were the *Anishinaabeg*'s most honored enemies, and centuries of a border meant generations of war, retaliation, trade, hostages, love, and marriage. A sorrow for the Dakota would be a sorrow for the *Anishinaabeg*. (33)
>
> Winona LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*

> The stories, songs, and rituals still remain and continue to be passed down through the generations. Unlike Western maps whose intent is often to represent the "real," Native narrative maps often conflict, perhaps add to the story, or only tell certain parts...These maps are not *absolute* but instead present multiple perspectives—*as do all maps*. While narratives and maps help construct and define worldviews, they are not determined and always open for negotiation. (25)
>
> Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*

Nationhood and Trans/Nationalism in Dakota and Ojibwe Homelands

The opening chapters of Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* fictionalize the history of the brief U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 from the perspective of Ishkwegaabawiikwe, the first of a series of characters who over the several generations represented in the novel carry the name Last Standing Woman. Ishkwegaabawiikwe is drawn to the borderlands between her people's territory and that of the Santee Dakota, a landscape that both the Ojibwe and Dakota recognize as their homelands. She is interested in the tensions and complications of this space, an Indigenous borderlands[16]

[16] The Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands share some of the dynamics that Gloria Anzaldúa describes in relation to the U.S.-México border, a space defined by "the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture," creating a "borderland...a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (25). As in Anzaldúa's understanding, the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands are "in a constant state of transition" (25) and had been before colonization renamed the space Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

that shapes both Ojibwe and Dakota identity and nationhood. This region is a shared, often contested homeland for Indigenous nations whose presence on the land is storied through cosmologies, maps, and histories. These discourses reflect the "multiple perspectives" Goeman describes above, all of which exist in tension but also in coalition and in constant states of relationality. Dakota and Ojibwe literary history reflects networks of relationality as early theoretical visions of the politics of tribal nationalism that would shape late twentieth and early twenty-first century Native literary studies. These literary traditions shape Indigenous relationships to the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands, informing later movements to uphold sovereignty and resist environmental injustice. This chapter ties the larger interventions of *From Relationality to Resilience* into ecocriticism and environmental justice scholarship to the tribally specific literary methodologies that are necessary to center Indigenous tribal-national perspectives in studies of literature and the environment, the environmental humanities, and environmental justice. Specifically, it describes the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands through the framework of trans/nationalism in Indigenous literary studies, offers a genealogy of relationality through Dakota and Ojibwe literary theory, and examines storied relations through a brief history of Dakota and Ojibwe literatures, which is as expansive and diverse as the landscapes and wetlands that comprise Dakota-Ojibwe homelands.

The Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands are a range of vast ecosystems, including tallgrass prairie, river valleys, and forests and lakes between the high plains and the Great Lakes. Its historic climate ranges widely from hot, dry summers punctuated by forceful thunderstorms to long, harsh winters of blizzards and dangerously freezing temperatures. In the era of climate change, these weather patterns shift to extremes of drought and cold,

yet this difficult place is undeniably beautiful, with its infinite horizon and open skies. These lands sustained life for the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples whose migrations brought them to the area, but the Dakota maintained a forceful presence until the colonial era of early U.S. history, when the region was the site of routine conflict. Ojibwe nations gradually displaced the Dakota from what is now Minnesota[17] onto the plains to the South and West and entered into the fur trade economy with European and American companies, in which the Dakota also participated. The Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands are a site of multiple migrations, displacements, and forced removals—first for the Dakota and then for both the Dakota and the Ojibwe—as settler colonialism restricted Indigenous lifeways to make way for statehood, industry, and the agricultural reshaping of the land.

Following the 1851 treaty at Traverse de Sioux,[18] the Dakota were limited to a narrow strip of reserved lands along the Minnesota River, where they were denied annuities and provisions promised in their treaties. Facing starvation and enduring repeated humiliation, some Dakota men retaliated by attacking white settlements, sparking a military conflict that eventually led to the largest mass execution in U.S. history at Mankato of 38 Dakota men and, later, two additional men. Spirit Lake Dakota scholar Christopher Pexa describes this pivotal moment in Minnesota statehood and Dakota history as an "ethnic cleansing campaign," which "was spurred by the infamous call of Governor Alexander Ramsey in a special session of the Minnesota legislature

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[17] As historians Gwen Westerman (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota and Cherokee) and Bruce White explain, "Minnesota" comes from the Dakota "Mni Sota Makoce," or "Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds."

[18] The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux was signed by Sisíthuŋwaŋ and Waȟpékhute leaders, authorizing white settlement of most of southern and western Minnesota. The same year, Dakota signed the treaty of Mendota, opening 24 million acres to settlers. For more information on Dakota treaty history, see Westerman and White's *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*.

convened on September 9, 1862, for 'the Sioux Indians of Minnesota' to be 'exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state'" (62). The aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War involved mass incarceration of Dakota men, assaults on Dakota noncombatants by settler militias and vigilante mobs, and the relocation of surviving Dakota to reservations in North and South Dakota. In LaDuke's fictionalization of this period, quoted at the opening of this chapter, Ishkwegaabawiikwe rescues a Dakota woman whose children are killed by U.S. soldiers and whose husband is captured and later executed. Ishkwegaabawiikwe brings the Dakota woman, Situpiwin, into her family as "her most honored enemy, her war trophy, her sister" (34). LaDuke's narrative representation of shared Dakota-Ojibwe homelands and borderlands speaks to the layers and intersections of Dakota and Ojibwe histories, cosmologies of place, and ongoing resistance against settler colonialism as a system of dominance. LaDuke's narrative also offers a women-centered relational vision of coalition and kinship between two Indigenous nations who have shared periods of conflict and periods of alliance before, during, and following colonial intrusions into their homelands.

These trans/national relationships are part of the separate Dakota and Ojibwe nation-building that makes the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands a space in constant transition. Indigenous trans/nationalism is a critical framework that acknowledges the importance of Indigenous nationhood but that recognizes "the linkages, conversations, cross-references, and movement of ideas, practices, and obligations between indigenous nations" as theorized by Joseph Bauerkemper and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Turtle Mountain

Ojibwe) (8).[19] This chapter and broader dissertation draws upon these two complimentary approaches to Indigenous literary studies: American Indian literary nationalism and Indigenous trans/nationalism. As a project focused on the literatures of two specific sets of nations, *From Relationality to Resilience* owes much to the ongoing work on Indigenous nationhood that follows the forceful scholarship and advocacy for Indigenous resistance, self-determination, and sovereignty by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Dakota), Craig Womack (Creek), Robert Warrior (Osage), and Jace Weaver—questions of nationalism as a mode of resurgence have dominated Native literary studies. According to Womack, Indigenous nations long practiced systems of belonging and governance that resemble Western frameworks of sovereign nations, and he argues that such frameworks make literary study a valuable contribution to the revitalization of Native communities: "Native literature, and Native literary criticism, written by Native authors, is part of sovereignty: Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images. Tribes recognizing their own extant literatures, writing new ones, and asserting the right to explicate them constitute a move toward nationhood" (14). Womack's *Red on Red* offers a literary history of his Creek Nation, constructing a Creek-specific theory of nationhood that has offered a foundation for tribal nation-specific studies of other Indigenous literary traditions such as the studies of Cherokee nationhood by Daniel Heath Justice and Kirby Brown.

While nationhood has always been a part of Indigenous literature and governance, widespread scholarship on Indigenous literary nationalisms follows Elizabeth Cook-

[19] I follow Bauerkemper's use of the typographical slash, which he argues "signals both the sovereign integrity of Indigenous nations and the relations that move between and across them," even though his co-authored essay with Stark uses the term "transnational" (396).

Lynn's forceful critiques of Native literary criticism and creative writing that, in the 1980s and early 1990s, emphasized identity and hybridity over the material and political struggles of Indigenous communities. As Native literature expanded in the 1970s and 1980s following what many called the Native American renaissance, Cook-Lynn saw in the growing body of Native writers

> few useful expressions of resistance and opposition to the colonial history at the core of Indian/White relations. Instead, there is explicit and implicit accommodation of the "West" that has resulted in what may be observed as three intellectual characteristics in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry: an aesthetic that is pathetic or cynical, a tacit notion of the failure of tribal governments as Native institutions and of sovereignty as a concept, and an Indian identity which focuses on individualism rather than First Nation ideology. ("American Indian Intellectualism" 67)

In her early concerns about sovereignty and the future of Native communities, Cook-Lynn challenges narratives that emphasize brokenness or dysfunction and calls for texts to explore collective rather than individual Native identity. Cook-Lynn's strong critique was met with much resistance regarding intellectual and artistic freedom and the diverse experiences of Native people that may position issues of identity and belonging in American or multiethnic contexts over issues of tribal nationalism.

Her concerns about literary and artistic exploration of Native identity and hybridity, however, reflect the emphasis that identity has on legal discourses that tenuously recognize Indigenous peoples as politically and culturally distinct from the rest of the U.S. populace. As Kirby Brown argues, Cook-Lynn saw identity as "not simply a

function of culture, consciousness, or discourse, but also of sovereignty, citizenship, territory, and the indigenous politics of recognition," which is "not to suggest that other markers of identity are unimportant to Cook-Lynn, or that nationhood, in a political sense, is the horizon of experience for Native peoples. It is simply to acknowledge that identity claims have political implications for tribal sovereignty and are thus better left to the authority of tribal nations themselves" ("Identity, Culture, Community, and Nation" 288). This authority includes self-determination, or the ability of nations to define who they are and what constitutes citizenship. As Scott Lyons argues, tribal nations "need a more precise language for characterizing people who are not us (and also people who are us); it should be a language that, like Ojibwe, differentiates between groups based on how they live," not who they are, a definition of nationhood based on dynamic responsibilities and actions rather than on rigid identities (*X-Marks* 163).

This Indigenous-centered approach to nationhood mirrors Indigenized EJ as growing out of commitments to reciprocal relations and responsibilities, not necessarily rights, and opportunities for intersectional coalitions with other communities of color. As Scott Lyons argues, Indigenous nationalisms[20] offer a unique intersectional opportunity: "if you do wish to be a stronger nation, then situate your desire in coalition with other oppressed peoples who are seeking the same" (*X-Marks* 162). Lyons' call for what he

[20] It should be made clear that Indigenous literary nationalisms, which map decolonial political trajectories grounded in specific Indigenous traditions that can be revitalized and mobilized in service of Indigenous peoples today, are unrelated to racial or ethnic nationalisms that pursue exclusionary or eliminatory campaigns to restore phenotypical, religious, or linguistic purity. This can be a difficult line to walk, as Indigenous nationhood advocates for revitalization of tribal languages and the right of nations to define its own citizenship requirements (which may include blood quantum). However, these areas of sovereignty and self-determination do not inherently aim to oppress perceived Others, and generally do not follow ideologies of purity and exceptionalism, as in white nationalism. Instead, self-determination offers Indigenous nations the ability to, as Scott Lyons puts it, "require what you want to produce," such as commitments to study language and culture as part of citizenship (*X-Marks* 171).

terms “realist nationalism,” or nationalism that recognizes the diversity of Native communities today (*X-Marks* 140), and builds upon one of the first critical articulations of Indigenous literary nationalism by Simon Ortiz. Ortiz argued that Indigenous writers simultaneously consider “their people’s self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources” and “look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S.” (12, cited in Lyons *X-Marks* 160). Ortiz sees tribal nations (and Native writers as ambassadors of those nations) as responsible for giving voice to the needs of Native people, the shared experience of coloniality by other oppressed peoples, and the other-than-human beings who are also exploited by colonialism. Lyons’ idea of realist nationalism follows this argument, suggesting that Indigenous nationalists “must always remember that they belong not only to Indian nations but to a larger society as well. They belong to a world” (*X-Marks* 160). Lyons interrogates the ways colonialism is a shared, collective experience for Indigenous peoples, yet is also experienced differently and specifically by distinct tribal nations. These communities, he notes, are themselves diverse and deserving of nuanced, inclusive frameworks for theorizing and discussing nationhood.

As Indigenous nationalism risks mischaracterizing Indigenous communities as rigidly defined and essentially distinct from other nations and peoples, Bauerkemper and Stark call attention to the intersections of Indigenous communities as contributing to the kinship structures and socio-political alliances that make up nations themselves. LaDuke’s version of trans/nationalism, captured in the relationship between Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin, reflects the way “[k]inship systems...allow for

bordering nations to cultivate productive obligations toward one another through socio-familial structures that transcend political and territorial lines" (3). According to Bauerkemper and Stark,

> [T]hese transnational networks facilitate—rather than undermine—the ongoing production and maintenance of Native nations and their relationships with one another and with other polities. Centering Native nations in this way suggests a conceptual reconfiguration of transnationalism that dispenses with the primacy of the nation-state as a scholarly parameter while also recognizing both the import of indigenous nationhood and the ongoing colonizing impact of settler nation-states. (9)

Bauerkemper and Stark call for critical positions that acknowledge the intersecting relationships between Indigenous nations, moving discussions of Indigenous nationhood in the direction that Leech Lake Ojibwe scholar Scott Lyons advocates as representing culturally, linguistically, racially, and politically diverse "actually existing Indian nations" ("Actually Existing" 294). This chapter joins these discussions of Indigenous nationhood and literary imaginaries that reflect the histories, lives, needs, and relations between existing Indigenous communities, contributing to tribal nation-specific methods of literary analysis to support this dissertation's engagement with ecocriticism and EJ scholarship.

The contemporary writers whose texts are the focus of following chapters continue the rhetorical interventions and imaginings of Indigenous nationhood and trans/nationalism within the context of settler colonialism's structural violence against Native communities and lands. In his history of Ojibwe political action in the 17th

century, a period when Indigenous nations maintained control over the Great Lakes region through trans/national alliances, Michael Witgen describes one ceremony in particular that reflected the ways in which Indigenous communities defined their homelands through trans/national relations in order to resolve conflict. Witgen describes the 1660 Feast of the Dead, a ceremony that the Ojibwe at Gichigamiing (Lake Superior) borrowed from the Wyandot, desiring "to end the bitter warfare between their community and the Dakota and the Muskekowuckathinuwick, and replace it with a new relationship," thereby concluding "the cycle of raiding and counterraiding that killed off their young warriors and saw their women and children taken into the villages of their enemies as slaves" (31). As Witgen describes it, the ongoing conflict posed a threat to sustainable life for each of the communities, threatening their individual nations and their collective control over the region. The feast of the dead involved two weeks of "dancing, games, gift exchanges, ritual adoption, and arranged marriages between members of the different bands," culminating in a feast in which "the living dined alongside the corpses of their dead relatives, consumed all the food in the village, and then gave all of the goods that they had accumulated to their guests as gifts," after which "the dead were interred in a common grave" (31). Witgen argues that "the Feast of the Dead represented a rebirth," "the possibility of uniting a landscape divided by violence and warfare. Relatives shared a sense of responsibility for one another" that involved agreements on hunting, fishing, and rice harvesting to "generally sustain the life of the community" (31). The ceremony also reflects a moment of trans/national merger in which Ojibwe, Dakota, and Muskekowuckathinuwick families were combined and deceased relatives were buried together, sharing the same grave as they shared the same homelands. While this

ceremony did not end broader conflicts between these nations, it does indicate that Dakota and Ojibwe peoples possess a shared history tied to their homelands that involves the trans/national "flows of intellectual, cultural, economic, social, and political traditions between and across...boundaries" that Bauerkemper and Stark describe in their theory of Indigenous trans/nationalism and sovereignty (6).

Bauerkemper and Stark's emphasis on trans/national relations heads off a common critique of sovereignty as a framework for contemporary Indigenous activism: that sovereignty is itself a colonial construct (as is the construct of the nation and discourses of nationalism) that does not adequately reflect complex relations between Indigenous groups. Trans/nationalism complicates notions of sovereignty or nationhood in isolation. According to Witgen, the Feast of the Dead ceremony was

> an act of political self-determination that redrew the boundaries of Anishinaabewaki, Indian country, the homeland of the Anishinaabe peoples. What makes this event remarkable is that it captures a moment of political imagination that represented a rebirth and expansion of Native power and social identity at a time and place usually associated with the expansion of European power. (32)

While Witgen centers Anishinaabe history in his description of the Feast of the Dead, the ceremony reflects a diplomatic decision on the part of each of the Indigenous nations involved that was in service to future generations of Dakota, Anishinaabeg, and Muskekowuckathinuwick. This 17th century ceremony shows that before colonization threatened their lifeways and sovereignty, Indigenous nations were already deeply engaged in trans/national relations. This dissertation's methodology emerges from these kinds of trans/national relations that shape written and cultural accounts of the Dakota-

Ojibwe borderlands and the struggles for environmental justice that erupt after centuries of settler colonialism. Like the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands, other Indigenous borderlands, and the narratives and maps that Goeman describes in her work, EJ struggles "help construct and define worldviews, [yet] they are not determined and always open for negotiation" (25). Indigenous EJ literatures imagine futures that are grounded in relationality and that move those relations toward unknown horizons and possible futures.

Like ceremonies, stories offer understandings of Indigenous governance through trans/national relations and relations to place. According to Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, the law—both federal and Indigenous—is a function of stories. Stark argues that "stories shape who we see and interact with the world. They lend insight into the ways in which we see our communities as well as how we see ourselves within these communities. The power of stories is found in their ability to outline and clarify the connections people have to their place, their people, and their history" (260). She sees stories as simultaneously generative and dangerous, reflecting the fallibility and inherent goodness of humans that is reflected in Nanabush/Nenabozho stories.[21] Stark continues, "The wondrous and dangerous character of stories, their ability to injure or to heal, is perhaps most clearly seen in the legal narratives that constitute federal Indian law in the United States" (262). This dynamic goes both ways, with Ojibwe literature offering a powerful space for imagining resurgent legal and governance structures from within

[21] Nanabush (also spelled Nenabozho and in other ways) was dreamed into being by the Anishinaabeg borne of Sky Woman's children. As Basil H. Johnston explains, "Nanabush represented themselves and what they understood of human nature," representing the Anishinaabeg's character as "good beings who meant well" but who "were often deflected from fulfilling their good intentions and prevented from living up to their dreams and visions, not out of any inherent evil, but rather from something outside of themselves" ("All There Is" 8). Despite this, Nanabush and the Anishinaabeg remain "fundamentally and essentially good" ("All There Is" 8).

Anishinaabe thought, as in Winona LaDuke's 1997 novel *Last Standing Woman* (the subject of a later chapter) and Louise Erdrich's 2012 novel *The Round House*.

Indigenous literatures and narratives of EJ build on the power of stories within Native societies to assert sovereignty for the betterment of all Indigenous and land-based peoples, reflecting Bauerkemper's vision for trans/national frameworks as a way to signal "both the sovereign integrity of Indigenous nations and the relations that move between and across them," relations that include lands and other-than-human beings that make up the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands (396). As Bauerkemper argues,

> The emergent use of transnational frameworks by scholars in American Indian literary studies centrally consists of an insightful and inventive shift toward a complementary, rather than oppositional, configuration of nationalism and transnationalism. Through critical reciprocity, the entrenched nationalist tendency in American Indian literary studies and the transnational turn enhance one another and engender "Indigenous trans/nationalism" as a productive theoretical construct. (396)

Bauerkemper echoes the concerns of scholars like Lyons and Shari Huhndorf, who call out Indigenous literary nationalism's failure to recognize "historical forces (such as imperialism) that increasingly draw indigenous communities into global contexts" (Huhndorf 3). As Huhndorf notes, "The concern of nationalism with cultural and political restoration deflects questions about the economic, environmental, and social changes that ongoing colonization has brought to Native America," pointing out the significant problem that Indigenous literary nationalism has largely excluded the writings and critical perspectives of Native women (3). She notes that the "ways in which colonization

has positioned indigenous women demand a feminist rethinking of Native politics and culture, an ask to which nationalism is inadequate" (3-4). Indigenous EJ writings, examined in this project through a Dakota-Ojibwe context, can productively extend nation-centered commitments to sovereignty to address issues of sexism and sexual violence as attacks on sovereignty.

These critical movements between nationalism and trans/nationalism point toward modes of resurgence and renewed relations and build on the work of Indigenous writers across more than a century of reinvention and resistance. As Kirby Brown argues, resurgence is a process grounded in relations that builds on the political movements of nationhood:

> Recovering a revitalized sense of social and political relations grounded not in the absolute sovereignty of a centralized, coercive state, but in extended family relations; practiced and storied relationships with culture and place; political commitments to distributed authority, consensus decision-making, and a respect for dissent; all organized by lived ethics of inclusivity, hospitality, and reciprocity form the decolonizing core of indigenous resurgence theory and the vision of nationhood it advances. (294)

Dakota and Ojibwe literatures theorize networks of relations that contribute to decolonial futures, raising possibilities for resurgence beyond the limits of coloniality. This relationality is imagined and put to words by writers who navigate the borderlands of their Indigenous nations and the colonial systems that reshape those borderlands. These literary traditions are a microcosm of the broader contribution of Native literatures to claiming space for Indigenous voices, perspectives, cosmologies, and knowledges so that

future generations of Native peoples can see themselves and their futures and can locate strength in their people's histories of resistance.

While Indigenous EJ writing and scholarship points toward decolonial, coalitional efforts among many Indigenous nations, in larger histories of Dakota and Ojibwe nations this has not been the case. Any discussion of the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands should recognize the conflicts of sharing homelands, particularly as the migration that is central to Anishinaabe thought, stories, and society brought Ojibwe peoples in Minnesota into conflict with the Dakota peoples who were already living there. Writing about the period of Ojibwe settlement in the Great Lakes region in the eighteenth century, Red Lake Ojibwe historian Brenda Child notes that "the Ojibwe expanded their territory...founding new communities east of Lake Superior but coming into conflict with the Dakota in the contested transition zone, a verdant region connecting the woodlands and prairie where white-tailed deer and wild rice were abundant" (xviii). Many scholars and writers have addressed the history of conflict between Dakota peoples and the Ojibwe bands, including Witgen and LaDuke, but few scholars approach this history from a Dakota perspective. In the broader history of settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, much of northern Minnesota is recognized as Ojibwe homelands. Indeed, the conflicts between Dakota and Ojibwe bands preceded settler colonization, but the history of that conflict was shaped by colonization as well, especially as both Dakota and Ojibwe communities found themselves in similar struggles against settler-colonial violence and the dispossession of their lands and lifeways. While Anishinaabe peoples came to occupy Northern Minnesota through open warfare and by forcibly displacing Dakota peoples, both Anishinaabe and Dakota nations have been marginalized by federal policy and have

endured treaty violations, environmental injustices, and social and economic problems tied to federal claims of superior sovereignty.

One of the tensions of the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands and in trans/national discussions of that region involves Dakota claims to homelands that were occupied and eventually legally recognized as Ojibwe lands in treaties with the U.S. government, which Scott Lyons views as an x-mark, or an assent under inequal power dynamics. The treaty as an x-mark, for Lyons, is nevertheless an exercise of sovereignty and marks the point at which Ojibwe peoples shifted into modernity as nations. As Wahpetunwan Dakota scholar Waziyatawin points out, however, the federal government "codified and legalized the occupation of Dakota lands by Anishinabe people when they entered into treaties with the Anishinabe. Through treaties, the Anishinabe ceded and reserved for themselves parcels of Dakota homeland" (*Justice* 27). The ceding of contested lands established Ojibwe nationhood in Lyons' study, but also cemented the dispossession of Dakota lands in federal law—the rights and guarantees of Ojibwe-U.S. treaties (however unfulfilled or broken) would never extend to Dakota communities whose lifeways depended on those homelands. Ojibwe peoples undoubtedly brought hardship and violence upon Dakota peoples, which was certainly reciprocated as the Dakota resisted Ojibwe intrusions into their territories. Waziyatawin notes that this violence included depriving Dakota peoples access to traditional foods:

> While Dakota people had engaged in some form of agriculture for centuries prior to Anishinabe and European invasion, Dakota people relied heavily on wild rice and maple sugar as important food sources. While these could be obtained on a much smaller scale in southern Minnesota (patches of wild rice existed along

> small stretches of the Minnesota River, for example), the abundance with which these food sources were found in northern Minnesota could not be replicated. This meant the dramatic loss of subsistence for Dakota people that continues to the present day. (*Justice* 26-27)

While Ojibwe peoples destabilized Dakota life ways in their homelands that are now Northern Minnesota prior to widespread colonization, they were not actors of environmental destruction as the settler state has been since colonization of both Dakota and Anishinaabe peoples. As the Red Power movement grew out of Minneapolis—at the place the Dakota call bdote, where two waters converge—Dakota and Ojibwe activists and leaders created a movement for the betterment of all Native people. While there will always be complications to claiming homelands within the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands, the decolonial future is a collective, trans/national effort built by many communities and nations.

Genealogies of Relationality in Dakota and Ojibwe Theory

Relationality is a central construct for not only this project but also for broader literary imaginings of nationhood and trans/nationalism generated by the stories that hold communities together and reinforce responsibilities to land and other-than-human beings. As an abstraction, relationality conjures warm-hearted visions of interconnectedness and reciprocity that do not necessarily serve commitments to sovereignty or nationhood. How does relationality function as an analytic of the nation? How does it foster reciprocal responsibility? How do specific Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies grow out of relationality, and vice-versa? This section explores theoretical discussions of relationality

in Dakota and Ojibwe literature and criticism to address these questions and set up the inquiries into EJ texts in the chapters to come.

Late twentieth and early twenty-first century Dakota texts reflect a panoply of pressures and commitments to community, from intense opposition to settler intrusion to adoption of Christianity to fierce protection of Dakota relational traditions. Christopher Pexa starts his study of assimilation-era Dakota literature with letters written by prisoners of the 1862 U.S.-Dakota war, many of whom converted to Christianity and, Pexa argues, "adopted and reinvested settler-colonial vocabularies with their own ethical meanings" in a series of "countertranslational moves" (62). The letters that approximately 1,700 Dakota prisoners wrote to their families and relatives imprisoned in different locations constituted an extension of the camp circle, in Dakota called the thióšpaye, "and so reclaim an important basis for remembering, decolonizing, and remaking a wounded peoplehood" (68). Pexa sees the Dakota letters, as "transgressive adoption" of Christian discourse that in its "invisibility or illegibility...stems from a translational withholding that was less an act of resistance than it was a rekindling of Dakhóta ethics and peoplehood that the camps sought to wipe out" (62). The Dakota prisoner letters and the drawings on ledger pages that some Dakota prisoners produced are an early mode of writing that begins the process of "reinventing the enemy's language," to borrow from Gloria Bird (Spokane) and Joy Harjo (Muskogee) (Harjo and Bird).

The thióšpaye shapes Dakota worldviews as a sense of responsibility to the people, a logic that would later inform Dakota constructions of nationhood. Thióšpaye ethics recognize the agency of more-than-human or other-than-human beings such as animals, plants, the land, and spirits, requiring the people to uphold reciprocal

responsibilities to those beings. To develop this framework, Pexa draws on Ella Deloria's definition of Dakota kinship in her 1944 book *Speaking of Indians*: "By kinship all Dakota people were held together in a great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain" (24). She adds,

> I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary—property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. (25)

Deloria's description of kinship reflects her background in anthropology and the broader dialectic of civilization/savagery that shaped much writing and legislation concerning Native peoples. However, her emphasis on being "a good relative" over all else and upholding "a sense of responsibility" speak to the core principles of thióšpaye ethics. These principles would bring Dakota writers and citizens into severe conflict with the expectations of individualism, self-service, and capitalism imposed by the settler state.[22] Following the extensive federal project of constructing military and/or Christian-run

[22] In a later section of *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria argues that the relational commitments that govern Dakota life would impede success within the assimilative system of the United States, advocating that Dakota people remember but not practice these commitments any longer. These kinds of arguments would make her work limited in later movements toward Dakota and broader American Indian nationalisms.

boarding schools and at times forcing Native children to undertake assimilative educations, Native people began to model and write back to mainstream English and American literary forms in a body of literature that often shifts abruptly between expressing assimilationist ideology that seems aligned with white supremacy while at other times levelling harsh critiques of settler colonialism. As Pexa and other scholars of this period note,[23] these writers maintain defiant Dakota or other nation-centered positionality.

The Yankton Dakota writer, musician, and educator Gertrude Bonnin, who wrote under the name Zitkala-Ša, offers forceful critiques of federal policies around allotment and education that reflect thióšpaye ethics, articulating the ways settler colonialism sought to corrupt kinship structures through dispossession, assimilation, and environmental exploitation. Penelope Kelsey notes that "by centering her narrative around domestic issues of home and family," Zitkala-Ša situates her work "within a larger discussion about Dakota nationhood" (66-67). In her well-known autobiographical writings that are discussed later in this chapter, she ties these domestic policies affecting Indigenous communities to broader federal policies that sought to disrupt Indigenous kinship structures. In her short story "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman," Zitkala-Ša illustrates the incommensurability of Dakota kinship and the legal

[23] For examples of book-length studies of Native writers before, during, and after the assimilation period, most of whom leveraged narrative to resist settler colonialism and affirm Indigenous nationhood, see Piatote's *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, Goeman's *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations,* Brown's *Stoking the Fire: Nationhood in Cherokee Writing, 1907-1970*, Lisa Tatonetti's *The Queerness of Native American Literature*, Adam Spry's *Our War Paint is Writers' Ink: Anishinaabe Literary Transnationalism,* Robert Allen Warrior's *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*, Chadwick Allen's *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literature and Activist Texts*, Daniel Heath Justice's *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History,* and Womack's *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism.*

apparatus of allotment, which requires clearly defined lines of familial descent to determine land allotments. An orphan, Blue-Star Woman did not know her parents, and as an adult was not granted an allotment. When she was confronted with the paternalistic legal system, she was expected to provide the names of her parents in conflict with Dakota respect for relations that have passed on: "They were long gone to the spirit-land,--and [Blue-Star Woman] could not understand why they should be recalled to earth on her account" (160). She resists the government's demands "to pronounce her name," recognizing that "the old, old teachings of her race that names of the dead should not be idly spoken" (160). Now an elder, Blue-Star Woman should be able to rely on her thióšpaye, her relations, to assist her with verifying her eligibility for an allotment. However, the settler framework of allotment has warped her community, leading two young "nephews" to extort her to give them half of her allotment if they help her. As allotment pushed Dakota communities toward individual materialism and profit, it disrupted the collective relations that, as Ella Deloria notes, defined Dakota peoplehood and nationhood,[24] forcing people to disavow the obligations that underlie their communities.

[24] Peoplehood and nationhood are two ways that scholars have approached the issue of applying nationalist and sovereignty frameworks onto Indigenous communities. Pexa prefers peoplehood as more accurately reflecting the ways Dakota intellectuals used "popular literary and performance genres to criticize settler-colonial society and, crucially, to remake Dakhóta peoplehood in ways that were largely unintelligible to white audiences except as nostalgic invocations of tradition," tying peoplehood to the thióšpaye ethics that he theorizes (17). Scott Lyons, however, resists what he calls the "problematic peoplehood paradigm" as a way to define belonging in ways that do not reflect the diversity of existing Native communities: "If you do not conform to the model—land, religion, language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and so on...you effectively 'cease to exist' as one of the People" (*X-Marks* 138-139). The nation, while itself a limited framework, is a modern construct that can reflect the diversity of Native communities. I see both terms as useful and limited; I favor the framework of the nation at the same time as I view Indigenous nations as peoples rather than as states.

The kinds of familial and community commitments that shape thióšpaye ethics are also present in Ojibwe literary traditions. However, in the sense that Dakota literary theory centers the thióšpaye as the conceptual logic of relationality, Ojibwe theory centers migration and stories. According to Scott Lyons, "If anything can be considered an enduring value for Ojibwe people, it has got to be migration" (*X-Marks* 3). Lyons describes the "legend of the Great Migration passed down through the oral tradition," which "begins in a time when the *anishinaabeg* were living as one large, undifferentiated group" (*X-Marks* 3). As Lyons recounts the oral history of the Great Migration, the Anishinaabeg[25] separated into "the Three Fires—Potawatomi, Odawa, and Ojibwe" that "emerged and took their leave of one another" (*X-Marks* 3). Lyons continues, "The Great Migration continued, always leaving in its wake new peoples and new communities scattered along the Saint Lawrence and the Great Lakes" as the people followed prophecies and visions of "a Sacred Shell, the *miigis* shell, which compelled them to keep moving" (*X-Marks* 3). The Ojibweg migrated seven times in total, each time establishing communities that developed economies and lifeways based on the particular relations and resources available to them. The sixth of these migrations fulfilled a prophecy that the people would go to a place "where the food grows on water,' referring to *manoomin* or wild rice," which is now both nutritional and sacred to the Ojibwe, as it had been for Dakota communities before Ojibwe migration and settlement in Minnesota, a process that displaced the Dakota westward from their homelands. As Lyons explains, "The Sacred

[25] In my discussion of Anishinaabe nations and literature, I use Ojibwe and Anishinaabe interchangeably, recognizing that Ojibwe peoples/bands/tribes/nations are part of a larger, historic Anishinaabe nation, which also includes Potawatomi, Odawa, Saulteaux, Mississauga, Algonquin, and Oji-Cree peoples. These nations share a common base language of Anishinaabemowin. Since I am analyzing contemporary Ojibwe literature, I am usually referring to Ojibwe people when using the term Anishinaabe, and when I do so I follow the lead of authors in my discussion.

Shell rose on one last occasion, leading the people to the seventh and final stopping point: Madeline Island, a turtle-shaped island, and the same place where the Ojibwe eventually made that fateful treaty at La Pointe" (*X-Marks* 4). This treaty would legally inscribe these land as Ojibwe homelands, even though they are Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands that shaped relational ethics for both peoples.

As Lyons approaches his critique of Indigenous nationalisms through Ojibwe migration stories, the Ojibwe literary tradition is likewise rooted in stories that long precede English-language writings. Margaret Noodin traces that tradition to long before written texts: "Anishinaabe storytelling began *mewenzhaa*, in the long ago, when stones were heard by humans. According to many remembered versions, the first storyteller was a stone who taught humans to transport their minds beyond reality during dark winter months" (176). Noodin sees stories as critical to survival and to movement across "a vast homeland through the seasons," noting that "the ability to visit elsewhere, to step out of time, to look in all directions for connections is part of many Anishinaabe stories and can be found in the writing of contemporary Anishinaabe authors as frequently as the lakes and forests" (176). For Noodin, Anishinaabe storytelling traditions represent movement and vital knowledge. Building on this sense of stories in motion, Gerald Vizenor's theory of transmotion speaks to the cultural and political mobility of Native peoples through their storytelling traditions, which grows from this vital force of stories:

> Native transmotion is an instance of natural reason, and an aesthetic creation, to be sure, but not a literal simile of nature as a resistance to civilization; transmotion is motion and native memories, and not mere comparatives or performative acts. The sovereignty of motion is survivance, shared power, and

> performative transmotion is an ethical presence of nature, native stories, and natural reason. (182-183)

As in Noodin's understanding of early Anishinaabe stories, transmotion represents the "ethical presence" of relations between humans and the other-than-human world as the Anishinaabeg navigate seasonal changes. For White Earth Ojibwe scholar Adam Spry, "the motion that Vizenor describes here is not just the movement through space (although this is a vitally important part of his idea) but movement through time—the ability of a community to adapt to changing circumstances but still assert its existence as a community" (23). Stories as sites of transmotion help the people remember these ethical relationships as they engage in ongoing social and cultural change, migrating and leaving behind markers of their presence.

Taking a different approach, Turtle Mountain poet-critic Heid Erdrich understands the Ojibwe literary tradition as a network of encounters with markers of Ojibwe presence, the signs that ancestors leave behind. Erdrich offers a genealogy of Ojibwe literature that is "guided by a metaphor that involves a play between the notion of landmark literary works and the pictographic marks/signs/presence that Anishinaabe people left/leave/find on rocks and elsewhere" (14). Erdrich develops this idea of presence and encounter through the Anishinaabemowin word name', which is a transitive animate verb that "means to 'find/leave signs of somebody's presence'" (14). Through a critical framework of name', Ojibwe writers "follow our literary ancestors—not with a destination in mind, not with the intent to claim territory, but because we want to know who has gone before us, who now guides us" (14). Erdrich's name' framework approaches Indigenous textuality as genealogies of relationality that establish continuity

between pictographic, oral, and literary traditions, which in turn influences Ojibwe governance. In her travel memoir *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, Turtle Mountain writer Louise Erdrich (and sister of Heid Erdrich) explores Ojibwe islands and waterways in the Boundary Waters region just north of the U.S.-Canada border. Her memoir pairs her love of books as a means of connecting peoples, knowledges, and cosmologies with rock paintings, noting their common linguistic roots in Ojibwemowin: "*Mazina'iganan* is the word for 'books'...and *mazinapikiniganan* is the word for 'rock paintings,'" noting that "both words begin with 'mazin'...the root for dozens of words all concerned with made images" (2). As she views the rock paintings that are markers of Ojibwe presence and teachings, Erdrich finds that "the cosmology is in the surrounding landscape, in the stars, in the shapes of the rocks and islands, and in the mazinapikiniganan, the paintings that the people made on the sides of the rocks" (27). Both Louise and Heid Erdrich note the connection between these traditions of name' in rock painting, oral traditions, and literature, connections that have influenced not only Ojibwe relationality but also American literature.

Turning Stories of Relations into Stories of Justice: An Abbreviated History of Dakota and Ojibwe Literary History

These theories of relationality that underlie Dakota and Ojibwe literary history contribute to ongoing discussions of nationhood and trans/nationalism. Throughout the twentieth century, relationality has also enabled Indigenous literatures to contribute to movements for justice, sovereignty, and Indigenous futurity in the face of settler-colonial violence. Some of these visions of justice are complicated and at odds with contemporary frameworks of sovereignty and self-determination, but they nonetheless speak to the

commitments of Indigenous writers to the futures of their communities. This section touches on some of the major figures of Dakota and Ojibwe literary history, discussing their imaginaries of justice, their visions of community, and their interventions into the settler colonial contexts that impacted Native life during their times. While not exhaustive, this section establishes a foundation for the more extensive discussions of Dakota and Ojibwe EJ literatures to follow.

Dakota Literature from Allotment to Red Power

Sisíthuŋwaŋ writer and physician Charles Alexander Eastman, born in 1858 and prolific in his published writings between 1902 and 1918, has long perplexed scholars looking to writers of his generation for signs of cultural resilience, impacts of assimilation policies, and decolonial activism. Eastman published his first autobiography, *Indian Boyhood*, in 1902, and followed with nine other books. Eastman's life and writings speak to the complex pressures of mainstream publication, federal policies and education systems, and the expectations of predominantly white readers that follow dominant narratives of vanishing Indian life that Gerald Vizenor refers to as "manifest manners," or "the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of *indian* cultures" that "court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization" (vii). Manifest manners are stereotypes, mainstream constructions of indians[26] that make meaningful engagement or policy impossible. Eastman's body of work reflects his knowledge of Dakota and general Native spiritual

[26] Vizenor intentionally signals "indians" as distinct from actual Indigenous people through lower case type

traditions, cultural practices, and kinship relations, often describing these traditions and Native resistance to colonization as noble characteristics. At other times, however, Eastman celebrates Western achievements, knowledge, and religion as superior to these traditions, though he often presents Native counterparts as more ethical, drawing attention to the brutality of colonial violence.

Eastman shifts[27] between ethnographic description of Indigenous life that is incompatible with Western civilization and is therefore fated to disappear, autobiographical narratives of assimilation and education, and critiques of settler coloniality that affirm his agency as a Dakota writer. Pexa sees this movement by Eastman and others of his generation between registers of Indigenous pride and accommodationist rhetoric as an act of translation that contributes to the remaking of "Dakhóta peoplehood in ways that were largely unintelligible to white audiences except as nostalgic invocations of tradition" (17). Pexa argues that writers like Eastman "used multiplicity, a representational shiftiness, to remain part of their own social frameworks while negotiating the possibilities and violences of what up to that point had been settler framings, ideologies, and social forms" (17). Pexa describes this multiplicity and rhetorical movement as "brokerage," with Eastman exchanging Dakota knowledge and identity through the genre of autobiography to create a space in American letters for

[27] Reading Eastman's rhetorical movement is further complicated by the context of his work's composition and publication. Eastman's non-Native wife, Elaine Goodale Eastman, played an editorial role in her husband's writing career, which as Penelope Kelsey notes "has been subject to a great deal of scrutiny and speculation" that has led to suggestions that Eastman did not author his own texts, which Kelsey rejects as unfounded (47). It is unlikely that we will have a clear sense of exactly how much influence Elaine Goodale Eastman had on Charles Eastman's writings, but most likely her influence would push her husband's work in an assimilationist direction. Kelsey notes, "While Elaine had cultivated an appreciation for Dakota culture during her time living among the nation, she was a staunch assimilationist who saw the passing of the Dakota culture as the only choice possible for survival" (49).

Dakota and other Indigenous voices. In order to do so, however, Eastman had to directly engage with the preexisting tradition of "settler framings, ideologies, and social forms" that Pexa describes. Writing from this position of rhetorical and political tension, Eastman expressed what Pexa calls "thióšpaye relationality," or "the conceptual and cosmological implications of how people live moral codes in relation to other powerful persons (human, other-than-human animals, spirits)" (131). In Pexa's reading, "by writing about the land as an affectively rich web of human and other-than-human relatives, Eastman articulates individual citizenship as grounded in richly storied and felt relationships to Indigenous homelands" (131). As a proud Dakota and U.S. citizen, Eastman imagines ethical relationships grounded in a Dakota-specific sense of "civilization," making his references to U.S. civilization—including Western education, medicine, Christianity, capitalism, and politics—also references to what that civilization could be if it embraced Indigenous principles. Such a position requires investment in citizenship in both Indigenous nations and the United States but also critical awareness of the shortcomings of U.S. citizenship as a condition of coloniality.

While Eastman includes such critical positioning in his nonfiction writings, he is far less harsh in his critiques of coloniality than his contemporary Zitkala-Ša, who translated oral stories and published short fiction, autobiography, political critiques, and an opera. Like Eastman, Zitkala-Ša was part of a generation of Native writers educated in Christian and government boarding schools that were designed to rapidly assimilate Native people. In the U.S. and Canada, boarding schools are remembered as sites of widespread abuse and trauma.[28] As Penelope Kelsey explains, "Student testimony and

[28] Denise Lajimodiere's *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* collects personal accounts of boarding school

some official records reveal that boarding schools were often deficient in every manner possible"—they were unsafe, inadequately staffed (often with abusive teachers), and were educationally outdated (63). Kelsey notes, "Concerns about the result of this colonial experiment proliferate, and beyond the emotional damage and cultural disruption created by it, scholarship suggests that tribal communities continue to suffer from the educational methods employed in boarding school settings" (63). It is this context from which Zitkala-Ša made a powerful intervention in fiction magazines at the turn of the century, including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's*. In 1900, she published three fictionalized pieces, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher among Indians," which are based on her experience growing up in a reservation community, voluntarily attending a Quaker boarding school in Indiana, and later working as a teacher at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, the flagship boarding school of federal assimilationist policy. "Impressions" sketches a first-person narrative of an eager young Dakota woman seeking education and opportunity for the betterment of herself and her people, much like Eastman, thereby playing into the popular and publishable narratives of American benevolence through assimilation policies. However, Zitkala-Ša emphasizes her decision's straining effect on her relationship with her mother, and her narrative quickly shifts in "School Days" to a scathing indictment of the boarding school system, abusive teachers and administrators, and inadequate living conditions. Such critiques include her anger at witnessing the death of a classmate to an

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experiences, including the experience of my grandmother at Little Flower School and Fort Totten Industrial School at Spirit Lake. Dian Million's *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* explores the political and discursive aftermath of residential schools in Canadian reconciliation efforts, noting the role of Indigenous women's writing an affect as an important factor in challenging the violent history of Canadian Indian education and policy.

illness, who as her body shut down "talked disconnectedly of Jesus the Christ and the paleface who was cooling her swollen hands and feet," growing bitter and blaming "the hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant woman who was inculcating in our hearts her superstitious ideas" (67). Thus Zitkala-Ša presents a harsh confrontation of the "well-meaning" but "ignorant" advocates of assimilation who had created "the civilizing machine" and the "iron routine" from which students could not escape (66). After her short-lived career as a teacher in "An Indian Teacher," Zitkala-Ša directs her critique to the supporters who visit the schools with "ignorant curiosity," "astounded at seeing the children of savage warriors so docile and industrious," noting that "many have passed idly through the Indian schools during the last decade, afterward to boast of their charity to the North American Indian. But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization" (98-99). Like Eastman, Zitkala-Ša points out the emptiness of settler binaries of civilization and savagery while voicing concern about the risk of "long-lasting death" of Native people—and all people through the grinding machine of settler colonialism.

While Zitkala-Ša's fiction does not offer a hopeful future for reservation life, her post-literary career in politics and advocacy follows similar efforts by Eastman and other Native intellectuals who saw promise in collective organizing. In 1911, Eastman and other Native intellectuals and political leaders founded the Society of American Indians, which Zitkala-Ša joined in 1916 as an elected member, later serving as the editor for its *Quarterly Journal*. The SAI was the first time that Indigenous intellectuals collected their efforts in service to Native people; however, that effort has since been criticized as assimilationist, echoing the tensions between assimilation and preservation of Indian life

that are visible in Eastman's writings. As Robert Warrior (Osage) points out, SAI members were "committed to preserving the memory of tribal life and maintaining what they saw as the laudable values of traditional life, such as honesty and family responsibility. Such preservation, of course, took place only in the context of attempting to live out the ideals of white Western civilization" (8). At the founding meeting of SAI, which Warrior notes took place twenty-one years after the Wounded Knee Massacre,[29] Eastman declared, "I wish to say that really no prejudice has existed as far as the American Indian is concerned," a statement that Warrior sees as the "blinding progressivistic optimism of Eastman and other intellectuals" who advocated for assimilation under pressures of "total dispossession if Natives continued to resist the U.S. government" (6-7). As Dexter Fisher notes, however, "the SAI provided a collective forum for Indians who sought to redress the multitude of inequities they had suffered. Under the auspices of the SAI, Bonnin launched her life's work in Indian reform, lecturing and campaigning across the country for Indian citizenship, employment of Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, equitable settlement of tribal land claims, and stabilization of laws relating to Indians" (xv). After SAI dissolved in 1920, Bonnin continued this work by founding the National Council of American Indians. Shifting away from literary production, Bonnin used her writing and oratorial skills in service of Native peoples through political action, publishing "Oklahoma's Poor-Rich Indians" in 1923, exposing the extortion, fraud, and murder of Osage and Native landowners by corporations and land speculators for oil rights. Her last literary work was *The Sun Dance Opera*, which premiered in Utah in 1913 and on Broadway in 1938.

[29] Eastman was a physician at Pine Ridge during the Wounded Knee massacre and treated wounded and dying survivors. He details his experience in *From the Deep Woods to Civilization.*

As Eastman and Bonnin would join other Native intellectuals to influence legislation and advocate for Native peoples, Yankton Dakota anthropologist, linguist, and writer Ella Cara Deloria approached the questions of Dakota futurity much the way Eastman did, working to preserve Dakota stories and translate kinship traditions to a broader audience and seeing these lifeways as incompatible with modern American life into which Native people would inevitably assimilate. Working with anthropologist Franz Boas, Deloria translated Dakota stories into her 1932 book *Dakota Texts*, following that book with *Speaking of Indians (*from which Pexa draws the working definition of thióšpaye ethics cited above). In the 1940s, Deloria wrote a novel, *Waterlily*, which was published posthumously in 1988 and has since served as a crucial primary text for studies of gender and kinship in the early reservation period. In the novel, Deloria draws from her ethnographic work to reconstruct nineteenth century Dakota thióšpaye lifeways. Reading *Waterlily*, Pexa sees a departure from Deloria's earlier negotiations of "scientific racism and a cult of anthropological salvage that regarded Indigenous peoples, languages, and lifeways as artifacts":

> Her defining of kinship against the liberal individual is a refusal of social constellations where race, class, and gender have converged around heterosexual, monogamous marriage and the nuclear family. By widening the domain of kinship to include animals, spirits, and the land, Deloria disturbs the distinction between nature and culture, and thus sets the stage to recover, as a site of political resistance, a discredited nature that federal Indian law has instrumentalized and regarded only as property. (246)

The fact that *Waterlily*, now Deloria's most well-known work, was rejected during her lifetime suggests that she was imagining possibilities for Dakota literature that were incompatible with the narratives of vanishing Indianness that pervaded mainstream letters during her lifetime. Indeed, the early period of Dakota literature—from the prisoner letters and ledger sketches to the assimilation-era critiques and negotiations of Eastman and Zitkala-Ša to the ethnographic and narrative writings of Ella Deloria—yields a vision of survival and resistance. These writers center Dakota life and relations while expressing uncertainty about the future of Indigenous peoplehood and nationhood in the context of allotment and post-allotment struggles for land and political self-determination. Writing about Eastman, Gerald Vizenor sees this uncertainty as an effect of the significant trauma of that era: "[Eastman] celebrated peace and the romance of tribal stories to overcome the morose remembrance of the Wounded Knee Massacre. Could there have been a wiser resistance literature or simulation of survivance at the time? What did it mean to be the first generation to hear the stories of the past, bear the horrors of the moment, and write to the future? What were tribal identities at the turn of the last century?" (51). This is an important question for scholars to hold in mind as they navigate the various professional and publishing pressures placed on Native writers of Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, and Deloria's generation.

In the wake of allotment and two world wars, Native communities continued to struggle against the logics of elimination that would continue to guide federal policies as tools of settler colonialism, which between the 1940s and 1960s would take the form of termination legislation. Termination sought to discontinue federal recognition of tribal nations and the treaty responsibilities of the federal government, which were seen as a

financial drain and an impediment to assimilation. Termination would mean sudden loss of healthcare, education, and protections from surrounding states that sought resources on reservation lands. The termination era also saw the largest taking of Dakota land in the twentieth century through eminent domain to make way for the Pick-Sloan dams. As Lower Brule historian Nick Estes notes, "When thousands returned home after the Second World War, the enemy threatening their homelands was the very military they fought for. A country that demanded Natives sacrifice their lives in war now demanded the sacrifice of their best lands and their governments" (*Our History* 141). Termination policy included programs to relocate Native peoples from reservations to cities, which would further disconnect families. Relocation backfired, however, facilitating intertribal, pan-Indian organizing on behalf of all Native people through the Red Power movement. As Scott Lyons notes, "Whatever one thinks about the characters or contradictions involved with the Red Power movement, it is undeniable that it changed Indian life significantly" (*X-Marks* 31-32). These changes include the publication of Native newspapers, establishment of tribal colleges and nonprofit organizations, momentum behind tribal land and resource claims, economic development, and spiritual revitalization in reservation and urban communities. Another of the outcomes of Red Power was greater momentum for the establishment of Native American studies programs in universities and the growth of Native Literary studies as an interdisciplinary academic discipline not limited to anthropology. These developments coincide with an outpouring of Native literature, poetry, and drama referred to as the Native American Literary Renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s.

Following Red Power and the Renaissance, discussions of Indigenous self-determination and the revitalization of Native communities shifted away from uncertainty and liminality toward reconstructions of tribal nationhood. One of the best-known architects of this period was Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Dakota), whose political and theological writings brought together the contexts of civil rights, the Red Power movement, struggles over tribal self-determination and sovereignty, environmentalism, and efforts on the part of the federal government to terminate treaty obligations and federal recognition of tribes. Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969) made a groundbreaking intervention into federal policies of the termination era and into popular representations of Native people that obfuscated the claims and demands of Native political movements. Deloria approaches termination as a new stage of the "Indian wars" that were a popular historical subject for bestsellers like Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, stressing that termination legislation was contributing to the health disparities and poverty in Native communities, whose access to health care (which was supposedly guaranteed under treaty) was at threat of termination alongside capacity for economic growth. In addition to these serious political critiques, Deloria brings humor to discussions of sovereignty and self-determination in a novel way. In "Anthropologists and Other Friends," Deloria sarcastically chastises academia and anthropologists, in particular, for leeching off Native communities for self-serving ends, arguing that "Indians have been cursed above all other people in history," for "Indians have anthropologists" to contend with (83). Their work, he notes, informs policy that affects the lives of Native people and therefore ought to reflect a commitment to the communities they study instead of simply making a subject out of them. Instead, their

scholarly debates expressed commitment to what Deloria calls "the anthropological wars, testing whether this school or that school can endure longest. And the battlefields, unfortunately, are the lives of Indian people" (85). Deloria's critique informed the disciplinary commitments of Native American studies to Native communities. While Deloria did not engage in literary criticism in a substantive sense, his critiques of dominant narratives of Indianness rooted in stereotype and early American literature serve as a model for reading the ways Native writers confront and counter such stereotypes while affirming Native perspectives on issues that are relevant to all Americans, including civil rights.[30]

Building on Deloria's strong defense of tribal sovereignty, Crow Creek Dakota writer-scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn made a forceful intervention into Native literary scholarship that in the 1980s and early 1990s focused on identity, hybridity, and the position of Native writers in American literature, arguing that Native writers and scholars should instead be committed to the political movement of tribal nationhood. Cook-Lynn has been a prolific literary and political critic, co-founding the *Wíčazo Ša Review.* She published three novellas, three collections of short stories, and a volume of poetry. Cook-Lynn's creative work sought to materialize the tribal-national vision that she advocates in her criticism, but she is recognized more for her strong critiques of Native literature and

[30] Deloria was resistant to include Native struggles for sovereignty as part of larger civil rights movements. He argues that Red Power and Black Power movements should not overlap, noting that black people and Native people experience racism and the effects of white dominance differently, with Natives retaining political sovereignty and African Americans struggling for equal treatment under the law. To pull the two struggles together (which seems logical as both groups encounter struggles for human dignity from white hegemony) would, for Deloria, diminish the specific demands of each group endangering Indigenous claims to nationhood or land at the expense of arguments for equality and inclusion that animated the civil rights movement. Problematically, Deloria asserted that coalitions with the Black Power movement were dangerous to Urban Indian groups, who he sees as relying on their shared sense of tribal identity as a powerful bond that makes their struggles inherently different from those of the Black Power movement.

literary criticism. These critiques have drawn accusations of essentialism—suggestions that Cook-Lynn holds to a proscriptive definition of Indigeneity that leaves little space for complex identities. As Melanie Yazzie (Diné) and Nick Estes note, however, Cook-Lynn's forceful critiques do not hold up to charges of essentialism, and are well-reasoned within a framework of ethno-endogenous epistemology, "which translates into an analysis of the world from internal tribal perspectives consistent with one's own experiences first and foremost as a tribal person" (12). This "development and growth from within" does not necessarily align with academic principles of objectivity, which Yazzie and Estes note "implies that disciplines like history exist in a politically and historically unbiased vacuum, untarnished by their imperial and colonial origins as instruments of power and domination" (10). They observe that "In a world materially conditioned by historical, ongoing, and violent ruptures to Indigenous life, land, and knowledge, survival of the tribal story is, for Cook-Lynn, the overriding purpose of American Indian studies," and "given the everyday dilemma of simply trying to exist under persistent and pervasive conditions of colonial violence, it is also urgent work" (14-15). Rather than promoting an ideology of whose Native experience is or is not legitimate, Cook-Lynn recognizes the role of stories in Dakota social formation and the power of Native literature to contribute to stronger communities and political resurgence.

Cook-Lynn therefore expresses hesitancy when reading early writers like Charles Eastman and Ella Deloria who to some extent accepted assimilation as inevitable, arguing that "It is not useful for critics to point to anything and everything Indians have written as subversive, activist, or as participating in resistance literature. Some of it simply accepts the political status quo" ("Invention," 406). Cook-Lynn further explains that

> [Ella] Deloria links Dakota identity to ideas of Christianity, which might be expected of a scholar whose work seems more interested in nostalgia for the precious past rather than a reconstruction of the Sioux Nation in political terms. It is essential that we see the difference between Ella Deloria, whose cultural representations assist with forming notions of self, and her nephew Vine Deloria, Jr., whose work in law and politics is essential to the understanding of tribal nationalism. Their academic contributions are invaluable but must not be deformed as we try to discuss their intent. Scholars should approach...Charles Eastman with the same caution. He clearly states his belief in an assimilative future for Indians and the failure of Indian nationalism. ("Invention" 406)

While Cook-Lynn sees frameworks of nationhood and nationalism as incompatible with the work of writers like Eastman and Ella Deloria, these writers undoubtedly created discursive space for literary resistance to allotment and assimilation and therefore settler colonialism more broadly. While claiming these works as decolonial is complicated by the ideological messiness and rhetorical shifts—themselves inventions—of these early writers, their work nevertheless established a foundation for writers who would pursue more forceful decolonial narratives that more closely align with Cook-Lynn's vision. Indeed, Vine Deloria Jr.'s resistance to termination policy, his confrontations of academic and popular misrepresentations of Native people, and his forceful claims for tribal sovereignty and rights to self-determination echo the kinds of interventions Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Ša made into popular venues and Cook-Lynn's literary confrontations of federal policy echo those of Zitkala-Ša.

Following Pexa's arguments about assimilation-era Dakota writings as claims of peoplehood and the perpetuation of thióšpaye ethics, it is reasonable to suggest that the ethno-endogenous epistemology that underlies Dakota nationhood for Cook-Lynn, along with Deloria's political interventions, were made possible because of Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, and Ella Deloria's work to claim a space for Dakota voices in the oppressive space of mainstream publishing and the dominant narratives of Indigenous disappearance. The contributions of Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, Ella Deloria, Vine Deloria, Jr., Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and a host of other contemporary Dakota writers and thinkers including Susan Power, John Trudell, Philip Deloria, John Little, Kenn Little, and Kim Tallbear, are all part of the larger tradition of Indigenous "survivance," which Gerald Vizenor first theorizes "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (vii). In an edited volume dedicated to survivance, Vizenor explains that "survivance is a practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory. The theory is earned by interpretations" (11). Vizenor's idea of survivance supports the forceful resistance of settler colonialism and reconstruction of tribal nationhood as an action, not a condition of existence or mere survival. This sense of nationhood as a lived dimension of Indigeneity resonates throughout Dakota literary history, which despite its diversity and tensions continually centers thióšpaye ethics. In a broad estimation, Dakota literature offers us a vision of what it means to live in good relations and what is at stake when those relations are threatened.

Storied Relations in Ojibwe Literature

Discussions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century Ojibwe writers echo some of the concerns that Dakota studies scholars grapple with when reading and discussing Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, and Ella Deloria: positions on assimilation and cultural preservation, the political future of tribal nations, and maintaining spiritual and land-based practices in the face of colonization. As Margaret Noodin notes, in Ojibwe communities "The Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887 bookmarked a century of cultural erosion and loss" (179). Despite these struggles, she notes, William Whipple Warren wrote a history of Ojibwe people "that is still referenced today for explanations of the western clan system and stories of settlement throughout the Great Lakes," offering "sophisticated cultural theories...based on his knowledge of Anishinaabe stories" that "speak of tradition, politics, and survival" (179). Warren's history was published posthumously in 1885. In 1898, Simon *Pokagon*'s *Queen of the Woods* was one of the first works by an Anishinaabe author that was "a book-length plot of his own, blending autobiography and fiction," a story "written from an Anishinaabe perspective" for "a non-Indian majority" (Noodin 179).

The 1940s saw further translations and writings of Anishinaabe stories by Angeline Williams of Sugar Island, Andrew Medler of Walpole Island, and William Berens of Berens River, among others.[31] These writers, Noodin notes, endeavored to preserve Anishinaabe stories for future generations, and "all of these storytellers preserved distinctly Anishinaabe patterns in their narratives," despite writing for a non-Native audience (180). White Earth Ojibwe scholar Adam Spry complicates the notion of

[31] Noodin includes "John Mink, Prosper Guibord, Delia Oshogay, Tom Badger, and Julia Badger" as storyteller-writers who shared stories with ethnographer Francis Densmore (179-180).

translation as straightforward adaptations of Anishinaabe stories and settler texts and sees literary reconstruction of Anishinaabe stories as a form of dialogism that asserts the "cultural and political authority" of Anishinaabeg:

> By speaking directly to non-Indians, books by Native writers are doing the important work of disrupting the colonial narratives of Indianness for a population most likely to embrace such narratives as truth. What was once a colonial monologue becomes a transnational dialogue in which once stable understandings of identity, temporality, and governance become open to reinterpretation and negotiation, allowing for Natives to shift, if only in small ways, dominant structures of feeling regarding Indianness. (20)

Reflecting on the long history of Anishinaabe storytelling and literary production, Noodin argues that "Anishinaabe literature is an inheritance, a duty, an explanation, and series of questions. It has been jolted by colonialism and remains lit by the energy of storytellers writing today. Stories are ceremony, comedy, and sometimes both at once. They are a record of relationships always being recalibrated, recalled, reconstructed, and revitalized" (183). Noodin's view of Anishinaabe literature emphasizes the movement of stories across cultural perspectives, worldviews, and nations in service of Anishinaabeg continuity. Understood as an "inheritance, a duty," Anishinaabe literature generates momentum toward political interventions and disruptions following the Red Power movement's resistance to Termination policy.

While early Ojibwe literature engaged in processes of translation and trans/national dialogue, more recent texts play with the idea of translation and legibility by revitalizing the ethos of the trickster from precolonial Anishinaabe oral traditions. One

of the most prolific and recognized figures in Native literary theory, Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Ojibwe) built a literary and critical career by disrupting "once stable understandings of identity, temporality, and governance" (Spry 20). Vizenor's creative and critical texts theorize what he calls "trickster hermeneutics," inversions of English-language concepts that create new meanings and point to conceptual issues underlying federal Indian law, sovereignty, and manifest manners. The result is undeniably challenging, slippery prose that resembles postmodernism, satirizing settler colonial society through Indigenous worldviews. Vizenor is most often cited for adopting the legal term "survivance" into Native literary criticism as an active sense of presence that resists colonial domination and appropriation. Through trickster hermeneutics, Vizenor imagines Indigenous presence in speculative contexts that destabilize the foundational assumptions behind federal-Indian law, including manifest destiny, the doctrine of discovery, and paternalistic policies. Vizenor's first novel, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* (1978), parodies Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in a pioneer pilgrimage across a postapocalyptic U.S. industrial wasteland. His satire is grounded in activism at its present moment—in the narrative, the novel is a found text that had been stored in a file cabinet at the BIA headquarters, recovered in the occupation of the BIA headquarters by AIM. In a similarly inventive fashion, Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* (1991) reimagines Columbus as a descendent of Mayans and therefore as Indigenous to the Americas, a concept that shakes the foundation of colonialism and racialized notions of European/Indigenous difference and the "discovery" of the Americas by European explorers. *Heirs* offers a similarly humorous, postmodern approach as *Bearheart* to questions of Indigenous sovereignty, tribal gaming, and repatriation cases. These novels defy straightforward

political claims, yet they center Anishinaabe cosmology and the trickster ethos[32] that can escape the ideological confines of federal law and manifest manners.

Vizenor's extensive body of work—14 fictional texts, 14 poetry collections, ten books of criticism, one screenplay, two autobiographies, and three anthologies—has challenged scholars and has contributed to a sense of invention that defies the strict demands of literary nationalists (though Vizenor certainly contributes to efforts to strengthen tribal nations, helping to rewrite the White Earth constitution) and efforts to tease out liminal, hybrid, or mixed-blood identities. The late writer-critic Louis Owens, a strong proponent of investigating mixed-blood identity as important for situating Indigenous literatures in broader multiethnic literary contexts, suggests of Vizenor,

> If his writing must be labeled, we had better call it tribal utopianism, for in Vizenor's work one finds an undying insistence that Indian people—whatever we call ourselves—are capable of confronting painful truths about ourselves and others and have the abilities necessary to manage our own lives and to construct both a present and a future independent of the authoritative discourse of colonial America that has always sought to infantilize as well as disenfranchise Indians. (156)

Native literature and critical discussions of literary nationalism and trans/nationalism continue this effort by recovering early resistance to the "authoritative discourse" of manifest manners that perpetuates dispossession of Native people, while also imagining revitalization and justice from within Indigenous epistemologies, languages, and

[32] In Vizenor's work, the trickster is a figure who politicizes and satirizes settler coloniality and manifest manners and is distinct from more generalized references to tricksters in non-Native representations of Native cultures.

traditions. Like other imagined societies, the idea of a tribal utopia reflects a journey more than an existing destination, the kind of movement toward tribal-specific values echoed in Anishinaabe migratory history.

The radical imaginaries that set Vizenor's texts apart from earlier Anishinaabe literature, and earlier Native literatures more broadly, influenced writers and artists to imagine possibilities for Indigenous futures that are grounded in Indigenous worldviews. For example, in *The Light People,* White Earth writer-critic Gordon Henry Jr. assembles varying discourses of fiction, poetic verse, and deconstructed legal transcripts to forge a chain of Ojibwe storytelling, echoing Vizenor's satire (and Deloria's humorous critiques) in his fictionalization of the convoluted discourses of anthropology, law, and tribal politics. One of the central elements of Henry's narrative is a stone that mysteriously circulates among various characters; the stone holds together intergenerational relationships and Ojibwe knowledge and inspires new stories and visual art. The stone in Henry's text echoes the first storyteller that Noodin identifies as beginning the Anishinaabe storytelling tradition by teaching humans to transport their minds to other realities during the long, dark winter. The stone and Henry's formal chain of narrative and textual modes also echoes Heid Erdrich's literary theory of name' as encounters with literary ancestors who remind Anishinaabeg who they are. As Erdrich asserts, name' marks ancestral and literary presence, a central part of her sister Louise Erdrich's expansive literary worldbuilding as the entanglement of stories, histories, and genealogies.

Offering a different version of survivance, Louise Erdrich (who is possibly the most widely read Native writer of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries) has

created and continues to contribute to a complex network of relations, histories, and genealogies that maps the trans/national borderlands of Ojibwe and Dakota homelands. Erdrich has written over 30 books across a wide range of genres and forms, and she has also actively published essays and contributions to magazines, newspapers, and critical texts. In her 1987 novel *Love Medicine*, Erdrich first developed a fictional Ojibwe reservation located in Eastern North Dakota and surrounded by fictional white-majority border towns. Her fictional reservation reflects the actual dynamics and conflicts between Native and non-Native communities around reservations in North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, and elsewhere.[33] In an eight-part series following *Love Medicine,* Erdrich constructs a rich, complex kinship network of Ojibwe and white North Dakotans (German, Scandinavian, and Eastern European immigrants who settled the area) who share the reservation borderlands, entangled families whose identities are shaped by both Ojibwe and white society and traditions.[34] This fictional reservation is populated by characters and families whose genealogies and lives overlap across texts and timelines, entangling the material lives, histories, and relations that become incorporated into the history of her fictional Ojibwe reservation borderland.[35] The entanglement of lives and

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[33] Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Winona LaDuke also interrogate these dynamic in their fictional writings, which I examine later in this project.

[34] Erdrich certainly contributes to the Native literary genre of hybridity and identity struggle that the vanguard of Native literary nationalism problematized as weakening claims for tribal nationhood and sovereignty. Erdrich's characters navigate Ojibwe nationhood in terms that reflect Scott Lyons' discussion of "actually existing Indian nations," which are made up of a diverse citizenry that reflects different relationships to tribal language, religion, cultural practices, and politics ("Actually Existing" 294).

[35] Piatote discusses similar entanglements of intimacies, relations, and social connections in *Domestic Subjects,* noting the effects of marriage between Native and non-Native partners on tribal sovereignty and the refusal to give up sovereignty in the case of E. Pauline Johnson's 1913 short story "A Red Girl's Reasoning." Goeman also examines these dynamics in issues of land and Indigenous domesticity in *Mark My Words,* including a reading of Johnson's short story.

histories reflects Erdrich's formal approach to fiction, as she organizes her novels into chapters that shift in point of view to represent the experiences or interiority of specific characters, at times depicting the same events or situations from different perspectives. These chapters are sometimes assembled in temporal sequence, sometimes out of sequence, and often include the writings of characters themselves through journal entries and fictionalized historical narratives. Erdrich's formal technique of narrative entanglement contributes to broader Indigenous "systems of knowledge" described by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith. For Smith, "the idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary Indigenous life," and she argues that these "contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried" (33). Erdrich's fiction captures these contested accounts and systems of knowledge contained in complex genealogies mapped over more than a century of Ojibwe, Dakota, and settler relations in Erdrich's fictionalized borderlands. Her approach to fiction also reflects the legal entanglements of tribal, state, and federal justice systems, which Erdrich interrogates explicitly in three novels that follow her *Love Medicine* sequence.

In her later trilogy—*The Plague of Doves* (2008), *The Round House* (2012), and *LaRose* (2016)—Erdrich undertakes an extensive project of interrogating and imagining justice in the contexts of U.S. settler colonial violence. Read together, the three books theorize Indigenous justice through a process that incorporates Ojibwe history, storytelling, and law. In *The Plague of Doves*, Erdrich's characters confront singular histories that privilege settler exceptionalism over Indigenous presence; in *The Round*

House, an Ojibwe family pursues limited justice in a case of rape by a non-Native man within the existing jurisdictional crisis in tribal communities; and in *LaRose*, two families restore the role of kinship relations in Ojibwe justice systems after a father accidentally kills a child. Erdrich interrogates the limitations of federal and state legal systems imposed on tribal communities and reckons with settler colonial violence through Ojibwe history and tradition. She engages in a process of imagining justice within the limiting context of competing Indigenous and settler colonial legal systems, illustrating the settler legal contexts that leave Indigenous people vulnerable to ongoing cultural, economic, spiritual, physical, and environmental exploitation.

While Erdrich's fiction creates a rich world of interwoven genealogies, tensions, and intimacies, her memoir *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* offers a different sense of her relationship to literary tradition. The book follows Erdrich's travels by boat and car with her 18-month-old daughter in the Boundary Waters and Lake of the Woods areas of northern Minnesota and southern Manitoba, a space marked by Ojibwe name' and by coloniality in different ways by two settler states. In Canada, Erdrich is guided by the father of her daughter, who was a spiritual leader of Ojibwe nations in Canada.[36] She notes that he may be one of the last people to be born on the islands in that area, and that he was "fortunate to know something of the time when his community was intact, when the bays were dotted with cabins and camps, when his extended family lived more or less by the spiritual seasons of the *Midewiwin*, the Grand Medicine teachings, and those

[36] Erdrich names her daughter's father in 2003 version of the memoir but added an afterword about her return to the area in 2013 following his passing. In a beautiful tribute that closes the 2014 edition of the book, she observes the Ojibwe tradition to "not speak the name of those who have gone to the spirit world" (126), explaining that "It is somehow comforting not to speak of the person by name, but just to think of him leaping up rocks, scowling in his piercing way as he concentrates, smiling in delight or kindness, laughing in surprise, carrying his child on his shoulders" (127).

ceremonial teachings formed the moral and social center of the community. The teachings made sense of the beauties and hardships of Ojibwe existence" (26). Her partner would survive an abusive period of assimilative Catholic education, as an adult helping guide other Native people struggling with emotional trauma and addiction to find their spiritual grounding through fasts on the islands. Erdrich's memoir reflects her life's relationships with books as a guiding force to connection, introspection, and learning, but also a much broader sense of Ojibwe narrative and literature as a way to bring the people back to name', back to their storied relationships to their homelands.

Juxtaposing Dakota and Ojibwe literary histories shows how these distinct traditions have emerged from distinct Indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, geographies, histories, and language systems. Brought together in a comparative framework that attends to tribal specificity, Dakota and Ojibwe literatures demonstrate the ways shared lands and histories, especially following colonization, have directed contemporary writers to contribute to common efforts toward revitalization, resurgence, sovereignty, and environmental justice. This is not to say that colonization has homogenized these claims and efforts. Rather, examining these issues through a framework of Indigenous literary nationalism and trans/nationalism makes visible the tribal-specific interventions and claims that correspond to principles of relationality, including thióšpaye ethics and name' as philosophies of kinship and ancestral presence that inform contemporary EJ critiques. The chapters that follow build on these frameworks of nationhood, trans/nationalism, and tribal-specific relationality to examine EJ interventions in specific Dakota and Ojibwe historical and cultural contexts. Indigenous EJ, I argue, must include discussions of tribal-specific sovereignty and

nationhood to create sustainable governance and meaningful decolonial transformations to the legacy of settler colonial domination. The Dakota and Ojibwe writers whose works I study and the broader Indigenous studies scholarship with which I engage foreground this critical relationship between environmental justice and sovereignty.

CHAPTER III

CONFRONTING THE PICK-SLOAN PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE, AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY THROUGH ELIZABETH COOK-LYNN'S *AURELIA* TRILOGY

In her 1999 novel *Circle of Dancers*, Crow Creek Dakota writer-scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn makes legible the environmental injustice of the Pick-Sloan Plan, which disrupted Dakota lifeways, economies, and systems of social relations. She therefore joins a diverse body of Indigenous writers who use literary arts to communicate the complex legal issues and the ongoing, material consequences of settler colonialism in lived, experiential terms. Literary texts like *Circle of Dancers* and Cook-Lynn's broader trilogy also make visible the kinship structures that uphold her people despite environmental injustice. These structures of relations among Dakota and Ojibwe communities and the other-than-human beings that share Dakota and Ojibwe homelands underlie Indigenous resistance to coloniality and the domestic paternalism of the settler state. In Cook-Lynn's case, highlighting Dakota relationality draws readers away from prominent narratives of Indigenous deficiency and damage that shaped American letters through the late twentieth century,[37] reinforcing arguments supporting Indigenous political, economic, and environmental sovereignty, including environmental justice.

Having lived through these struggles as a citizen of the Crow Creek Nation, Cook-Lynn offers an affective, experiential narrative of social vulnerability, which is an

[37] See, for example, Cook-Lynn's essay "Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner," where she confronts Stegner's claims to the American West as his native homeland, therefore ignoring the Indigenous peoples who are actually Indigenous to those lands and perpetuating settler myths of Indigeneity. Robert F. Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* presents the history of literary, scientific, and political subjugation of Native peoples and the power of cultural and discursive stereotypes to inform policy.

academic framework developed in environmental and emergency response fields to articulate the disproportionate risks that communities of color and the poor face during and after what are called natural hazards, including floods, hurricanes, wildfire, harsh climate conditions, and climate change. In part, social vulnerability scholarship debunks the notion that climate change affects all human populations indiscriminately. Social vulnerability scholarship creates a space in empirical models of risk exposure for making visible environmental racism and class difference, but the field does not explicitly theorize or speak to the systemic inequalities perpetuating vulnerability. It is therefore a key framework to support environmental justice claims but leaves much room for specific discussions of factors contributing to social vulnerability. This chapter explores coloniality and environmental injustice as drivers of social vulnerability for Indigenous communities, as theorized in Cook-Lynn's fiction.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's fiction captures the harsh reality of social vulnerability in unwavering terms, laying bare settler colonialism's legal and environmental injustices and their impact on contemporary Dakota life. Cook-Lynn's Crow Creek trilogy consists of two novellas that bookend one novel: *From the River's Edge*, *Circle of Dancers*, and *In the Presence of River Gods*. The three texts are connected by Aurelia Blue, a Dakota woman who lives through the damming of the Missouri River bottom and subsequent displacement of families who for generations lived upon that land, the aftermath of the Indian Reorganization Act and subsequent ineffectiveness of tribal political bodies, the uprising at Wounded Knee in 1974, and the Supreme Court ruling on the illegal taking of the Black Hills in 1980. Cook-Lynn's trilogy tracks the effects of these events on Aurelia's family and community, as well as the racially motivated animosity toward

Native peoples by the non-Native communities bordering the reservation. *From the River's Edge*, set in 1967, follows a trial in which John Tatekeya, a Dakota elder and struggling rancher, seeks damages for cattle stolen by a white rancher. The trial coincides with the end of John's romantic relationship with Aurelia. The trial humiliates John, offering minimal compensation for his losses and further undermining the kinship systems that define who he is as a Dakota. The broader context for John and Aurelia, who experienced displacement from the river bottom at different stages of life, reflects the failure of post-Pick-Sloan programs to turn Native people into industrious farmers and ranchers on parcels that were too small and not ecologically suitable to sustain agriculture. The second and longest of the three texts, *Circle of Dancers*, closely follows Aurelia's subsequent relationship with Jason Big Pipe, a younger Dakota man who faces similar struggles under a federal agriculture program. Jason also grapples with his identity as a relative, eventually following his brother, a traumatized veteran of the Vietnam war, into dangerous activity transporting firearms during the Wounded Knee occupation, eventually returning home but losing his relationship with Aurelia. The third entry, *In the Presence of River Gods*, explores the racial hostility that Dakota and Lakota people face from non-Native residents of the communities bordering South Dakota reservations. The animosity intensifies in the wake of the 1980 Supreme Court decision declaring the taking of the Black Hills illegal. The racial hostility manifests in militia threats to forcibly occupy public lands and in sexual violence targeting Native women, which Cook-Lynn situates within her larger interrogations of federal Indian law and social vulnerability.

Aurelia Blue is the central force of the trilogy: a Dakota woman who Cook-Lynn describes as continually "driven by what the river and the geography and how she is connected to all that has meant to her," for whom "the ruination of the river in her lifetime continues to be her tragedy, and that is because she is kin to the landscape" ("Writing Through Obscurity" 134). The ruination that shapes Aurelia's character followed the construction of the Fort Randall Dam in 1956 and the 1963 Big Bend Dam, two earthen-rolled dams on the Missouri which Nick Estes and Maggie Yazzie note were constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "to facilitate national economic growth (for settlers, not for Native people), required the forced displacement of hundreds of Lower Brule and Crow Creek Sioux tribal members, as well as the inundation of fertile bottomlands and the disappearance of cultural and ceremonial practices associated with them" (13). Writing out of the aftermath of these projects, Cook-Lynn published forceful critiques in nonfiction and creative writing of the federal government as an institution of coloniality that perpetuates injustices against Indigenous peoples through paternalistic policies. Among the paternalistic policies that Cook-Lynn critiques are the failed farming programs that were meant to compensate Missouri River Native communities after their lands were taken and inundated by the dams. Instead, as Cook-Lynn shows, these programs only pushed Native participants into deeper dependency and vulnerability by forcing unsustainable agricultural operations upon them.

This context contributes to the financial struggles of the Big Pipe family in *Circle of Dancers*. Harvey Big Pipe participated in farming and ranching programs after his family was relocated from the river bottomlands to the harsh upper plains to make way for the Big Bend and Fort Randall Dams. Now an elderly man, Harvey and his family

struggle under the burdens of building a pig farming operation that was imposed on them by the BIA without adequate planning. Harvey worked hard into his later years, passing the failing operation onto his son Jason and Jason's partner Aurelia. Following years of devastatingly poor corn harvests, Jason finds himself locked in a struggle with BIA employees who have shut off their electricity in the early winter. In the high plains of South Dakota and North Dakota, often the coldest parts of the United States, unexpectedly losing electricity can be deadly, especially for the many Crow Creek citizens who rely on inefficient electric heat. Jason and Aurelia share their home with Jason's elderly father, yet the BIA refuses to extend credit to carry the family through the winter. The BIA official's reasoning is that Jason and his family had not worked hard enough—for example, they had not walked their fields to pick up fallen corn even though most of the crop was ruined by drought, and the mounting equipment costs were assumed to be attributes of Jason's incompetence as a farmer. Communicating through a patronizing letter, the BIA reasons that "You can't say that you haven't had assistance in your operation…Just think of the Government employees who have spent countless hours with the construction of your hog barn…There was a bit of drinking going on among you and your wife when the new hog barn first started under construction. This is one of the quickest ways to become a failure" (285). The letter reflects long-standing racist assumptions of Indian idleness, alcoholism, and incompetence, with the official assuming that Jason is irresponsible, even though Jason and his father have dedicated a collective lifetime of work (far exceeding the "countless hours" of federal payroll the official complains about) to their family business that simply cannot sustain itself on such a limited scale and in poor growing conditions. In its capacity as a government agency, the

BIA refuses to acknowledge the hardship created by the federal government's taking of the river bottom for the Pick-Sloan, instead making decisions based on racist assumptions. The BIA letter perpetuates two forms of oppression that Native peoples continually face from non-Native institutions: narratives of deficiency and domestic paternalism.

Representations of Indigenous communities that emphasize deficiency or irreparable damage create a trap for Native communities; irreparable damage leaves no space for self-determination or revitalization without federal intervention, while any success on the part of Native people reinforces the paternalistic policies that are designed to "help" communities within the limits of what is authorized by the settler state. In a too-little-too-late confrontation at the BIA office, Jason defends his and his father's work ethic while exposing the hypocrisy and incompetence of the BIA planning officials who designed the program with little knowledge of the Dakota people or the difficult growing conditions of the reservation plains. In doing so, Jason calls out the BIA official's adherence to narratives of deficiency, which Cherokee scholar Daniel Justice argues is the most toxic of stereotypes pervading U.S. social attitudes regarding Native people: "In this poisonous story, every stumble is seen as evidence of innate deficiency, while any success is read as proof of Indigenous diminishment" (3). If Jason would make a living on the program, it would prove that assimilative policies were successful, while the inevitable fact that he fails to make an unsustainable, small agricultural operation financially viable is evidence of Dakota deficiency. Cook-Lynn's critiques of federal policies, I argue, represent the damaging effects of the Pick-Sloan plan and subsequent federal (mis)management of tribal economies through a fictional depiction of social

vulnerability. However, Cook-Lynn's work calls attention to these paternalistic policies not to represent her community as perpetually damaged,[38] but to point toward the Dakota kinship networks and relational knowledge systems that are essential to revitalization and resurgence.

The narratives of deficiency that Justice challenges contribute to federal policies rooted in a sense of paternalism that follows early iterations of federal Indian law and policy[39] and that continues to intrude upon Indigenous domestic spaces. Nez Perce scholar Beth Piatote coined the term "disciplinary paternalism" to refer to the systems of federal Indian law and policy that position Indigenous nations as dependent upon the supposedly superior governance of the federal government, an attitude that extends beyond government-to-government relations and into the domestic sphere of Indigenous families, educational systems, and land-based practices:

> [D]isciplinary paternalism emerged as a legitimating framework for a range of policies, including assimilation-oriented boarding schools and land allotment in severalty, and visited tremendous violence upon indigenous families and domestic

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[38] Eve Tuck extends critiques of damage-centered narratives to research, which she defines as "research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation" (413); she calls for alternative theories of change, such as desire-based research frameworks "concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (416).

[39] The legal history of federal-Indian relations reflects this dominant and racialized logic of paternalism and wardship, from the Doctrine of Discovery, an international legal principle that dates back to a fifteenth-century papal bull, which establishes legal grounds for European nations to seize and colonize lands inhabited by non-Christian peoples. The doctrine of discovery was the foundation of federal Indian law in the early nineteenth century, as established through the Marshall trilogy of U.S. Supreme Court cases: *Johnson v. McIntosh, Worchester v. Georgia*, and *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia.* These decisions diminished Indian rights to property and self-rule, declared inferior political status for tribes as "domestic dependent" nations, and declared unilateral federal authority over Indian affairs. According to Lumbee legal scholar Robert A. Williams Jr., these decisions established a "rights-denying jurispathic force" via "the language of racisms used to justify the discovery doctrine's racially discriminatory legal principles"—for more on this legal history and its resonance with contemporary legal issues, see Williams' *Like a Loaded Weapon* (70).

> economies at multiple scales. A key to asserting federal jurisdiction was the displacement of internal systems of regulation that constituted Indian reservations as distinct geographic and tribal national spaces. (135)

These paternalistic policies resulted in significant vulnerability for Indigenous communities, made clear through Jason's growing debt to the federal government and his subjection to condescending judgment from a BIA employee who does not understand that the federal programs actually worsen vulnerability for Crow Creek participants. Cook-Lynn's intervention confronts these structures of domestic paternalism by connecting them to ongoing social vulnerability created through dispossession of Dakota lands, such as the taking of the river bottomlands through the Pick-Sloan plan. Her engagement with these issues through fiction renders them in lived terms, and while her illustration of social vulnerability gives voice to the intergenerational trauma of coloniality and environmental justice, she does not limit that narrative to a deficiency-driven framework. Instead, she makes visible the issues facing her Crow Creek characters and therein reinforces Dakota knowledge and resilience.

Cook-Lynn's fictional Big Pipe family and Aurelia's character over the course of Cook-Lynn's trilogy represents the actual lived experiences and struggles of Crow Creek Dakota people following the Pick-Sloan plan, articulating in long-form narrative across multiple interconnected novels the conditions of social vulnerability forced upon them by the federal government. Having their power shut off in the dead of winter presents significant vulnerability for the Big Pipe family, who now has to rely on wood burning for heat. When the BIA had attempted years earlier to place Jason and his family in a house with only electric heat, Jason insisted they continue to use the wood stove. His

resistance reflected his father's belief that "certain kinds of heat caused illnesses," that "winter heat, other than that from the cottonwood and ash and oak trees that grew along the river bank and the Crow Creek, wasn't good for his health" (265). Harvey believes the people ought to rely on locally sourced heating rather than the electricity produced by the hydroelectric dams and brokered by the power companies who then determine whether or not residents have access to heat based on their ability to keep up with the bill. After their electricity is shut off, the Big Pipe family and Aurelia are able to continue living in their house because Jason, following his father's desire, kept the wood stove as a primary heat source. By insisting that his family follow Harvey's belief, Jason avoids what could be a deadly situation; wood heat allows Jason to offset the social vulnerability that comes with depending on electricity for winter heat, a vulnerability that has forced several of their neighbors to move out of their homes because of their inability to pay their electric bills (265). Furthermore, the issue of electric and wood heat is complicated by the fact that the dams flooded bottomland forests, which supplied the tribal communities with ample wood fuel. That flooding disrupted the resource that the Dakota required to make it through the winter, creating one context of social vulnerability, and replaced it with hydroelectric power that residents could not afford, which creates another layer of vulnerability. This situation for Jason and other Crow Creek citizens presents a double irony: the dam that displaced them from their homes along the river produces hydroelectric power that those residents cannot afford, even as they are more dependent on electricity for heat than they were when they lived along the river.

Social Vulnerability and the Pick-Sloan Plan

While Cook-Lynn addresses several legal issues related to federal domestic paternalism, her trilogy principally targets the Pick-Sloan plan. The Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program was one of the most egregious environmental injustices affecting tribal nations in the high plains, displacing hundreds of families from the most fertile lands on their reservations to provide hydroelectric power and irrigation for non-Native communities across the upper plains, all without the consent of the tribes affected. Designed to control the unruly, powerful Missouri river, the Pick-Sloan plan resulted in the taking of approximately 365,000 acres of treaty-reserved lands from tribes along the river, impacting another 1,154,814 acres through dams, reservoirs, and transmission lines (Capossela 128). As Vine Deloria puts it, "The Pick-Sloan Plan was, without doubt, the single most destructive act ever perpetrated on any tribe by the United States" (xiv). According to historian Michael Lawson, the dams constructed in the late 1950s and early 1960s displaced 580 families from "rich, sheltered bottomlands to empty prairies" (29). Lawson continues, "their best homesites, their finest natures, croplands, and vegetation were flooded…Loss of not only primary fuel, food, and water resources but also prime grazing land effectively destroyed the Indians' economic base" (29). Dakota and Lakota people who lived along the river's banks were displaced from the areas where they had lived for generations following their tribes' relocation to reservations in the nineteenth century. Those people and their communities were sustained by the diverse wildlife and plant life along the river, relying on their environment for medicine, food, and, not insignificantly in the extreme winter climate of the upper plains, wood for heating fuel. According to Nick Estes, "The results [of the Pick-Sloan Plan] were nothing short of

genocide: by destroying the land—and with it the plants, animals, and water—the dams targeted and destroyed the very nations of people who reproduced themselves upon the soil. In this way, taking land and water also took away the possibility of a viable future" (*Our History* 134). Prior to the Pick-Sloan plan, many citizens of Crow Creek, Standing Rock, and other Indigenous nations along the Missouri were self-sufficient; after the dams, they were forced into a position of increased dependence upon the settler state and therefore a position of social vulnerability.

Pick-Sloan meets the formal definitions of environmental racism and environmental injustice, as twenty-three reservation communities were disproportionately stripped of not only of their most vital reserved lands but also of their water rights and their right to meaningful participation in the planning process. Estes notes that "a third of the residents of Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, and Yankton reservations were removed to marginal lands on the open prairies or were forced to leave the reservation entirely; in either case, they could not reproduce the lives they lived in the lush river bottoms" (*Our History* 138-139).[40] As legal scholar Peter Capossela notes, the legacy of Pick-Sloan and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' control over the dam flows and reservoir levels infringes upon the reserved water rights of the tribes along the Missouri, creating an ongoing legal struggle. Capossela outlines the legal issues of the Pick-Sloan plan as a matter of environmental justice as defined in law, arguing that

[40] In *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, Estes connects the Pick-Sloan plan to termination policies, which sought to relocate Natives from reservation communities to cities, aiming to further break down social and kinship networks for tribal nations. Relocation essentially failed to achieve dissolution of Native communities, instead leading to powerful intertribal and pan-Indigenous activism that contributed to the Red Power movement. Estes includes this context as part of a broader historical lens for approaching the federal government's efforts to continually take reservation lands in ways that echo the earlier allotment and assimilation policy eras.

"Pick-Sloan program negatively and disproportionately impacted the Indian tribes. The socioeconomic hardship facing many of the upper Missouri Basin Tribes is directly attributable to Pick-Sloan" (216). While Capossela and Lawson thoroughly outline the historic and legal contexts and implications of the Pick-Sloan plan, their work has limited reach beyond academic audiences. Adding to their important contributions, reading literary texts such as Cook-Lynn's fiction gives voice to the experiential, affective impacts of the environmental injustice of Pick-Sloan. Writers like Cook-Lynn contribute to public knowledge about Pick-Sloan in a vital way, making visible the lived effects of environmental injustice rooted in structures of paternalistic colonial policy. Cook-Lynn's fiction articulates Dakota experiences in ways law and academic history (which Cook-Lynn has rigorously interrogated over her career) cannot—it also allows readers to grasp the dimensions of social vulnerability following environmental injustices like the Pick-Sloan plan.

As a framework for identifying conditions that make certain groups—predominantly the poor, marginalized, and communities of color—more vulnerable to natural hazards than others, social vulnerability is a productive analytic[41] for approaching Cook-Lynn's work as a set of texts that depict the cascading conditions following environmental injustice. The Big Pipe family's predicament illustrates the ways paternalistic policies perpetuate social vulnerability for the Big Pipe family and for others who are forced to rely on unrealistic farm loan programs and inefficient electric heat after

[41] Social vulnerability as a framework emerges from disciplines of environmental management, fire science, disaster research, and climate science—disciplines that seem distant to literary studies. However, part of the challenge of writing out of empirical research data is adequately capturing the lived experience and implications of that data. I suggest that approaching works of literature through a critical framework of social vulnerability can make visible the text's interrogation of environmental justice issues while applying social vulnerability research in new ways to think about ongoing environmental justice issues.

they were stripped of their lifeways and livelihoods so the settler state could expand farming and hydroelectric power. As Estes argues, "All of the risks, and none of the rewards, of cheap hydroelectricity and irrigation, were imposed on generations of Indigenous people who depended upon their relations to the land and water for life" (*Our History* 133). While he does not explicitly use the language of social vulnerability, Estes captures the core principle of social vulnerability and environmental racism, as Indigenous peoples bear risk without benefit from dams that serve the interests of the settler majority. In the Big Pipe's case, they are socially vulnerable compared to most white farmers and ranchers who live and work in the same area because they are uniquely dependent on the BIA to make a living and cannot generate the money to expand their operations in a system destined to fail.

Social vulnerability is useful for unpacking the Big Pipes' situation, but it is also useful for situating ongoing issues in a larger set of economic and political structures. As Elizabeth Hoover argues, "When the study of EJ is applied to a tribal context, environmental issues cannot be contemplated apart from a recognition of American Indian tribes' unique historical, political, and legal circumstances" (8). Likewise, in applying social vulnerability to Indigenous texts, such application cannot separate environmental injustice, social vulnerability, or the unique circumstances that Hoover notes. It is crucial to recognize settler colonialism as the major driver of Indigenous social vulnerability to environmental hazards—a step scholars are loath to take—in order to hold settler states to account and to reinforcing environmental justice claims.

As an interdisciplinary field grounded in empirical research and practical, actionable outcomes, social vulnerability research investigates how a community's

inherent vulnerability to disasters, weather events, or climate change is magnified by social conditions that disadvantage certain populations, whose limited access to the resources necessary for adaptability makes them more vulnerable to destructive weather events or climactic changes. Social vulnerability scholarship offers one way of approaching these intersecting issues—Indigenous stories, literature, and theory offer additional articulations of hazards, vulnerabilities, and the complex systems of relations between societies and the other-than-human world. W. Neil Adger uses the term "social-ecological systems" to describe the structures that make certain marginalized communities vulnerable, arguing that "human action and social structures are integral to nature and hence any distinction between social and natural systems is arbitrary" (268). According to Adger, meaningfully addressing vulnerability requires a careful assessment of the political and economic factors that contribute to inequity in vulnerability. Adger draws on Kenneth Hewitt's notion of "the human ecology of endangerment" to describe the particular vulnerability of marginalized communities as compounded when environmental hazards meet social inequity (Adger 271). Social vulnerability is multidimensional, impacted by geographic variability and a myriad of causes, including resource dependence, social perception of risk, and social marginalization (Cutter, Boruff, and Shirley; Collins). Flint and Luloff, surveying methods for identifying the myriad drivers of social vulnerability find that mixed methodological frameworks are most effective. At the same time, these approaches must be integrated in such a way that they do not become contradictory or create research "silos" that imply one or another set of methodologies as ideal (Smith et al.). As Eakin and Luers note, the interdisciplinary, historical nature of social vulnerability theory and research yields comprehensive,

valuable insights into diverse communities through combining methods of cultural, political, economic, and geographical research. The conceptual and research genealogy of social vulnerability studies points toward intersecting knowledges at local and governing levels (Carrol and Paveglio), calling for the sharing of knowledge across stakeholder groups to build collective resilience and public trust (Abrams et al.).

Part of theorizing social vulnerability involves contending with historical and cultural constructs of vulnerability and resilience to de-emphasize the notion that disasters affect communities indiscriminately. Indeed, declaring vulnerability indiscriminate would erase the structures that limit the mobility of people of color and the poor, including where they can and cannot live and whether or not they can evacuate in the case of a disaster. However, since social vulnerability as a field is rooted in developing analytics and instruments for understanding uneven risk, few scholars directly connect social vulnerability to environmental justice, even though environmental justice movements virtually always give voice to those who are socially vulnerable. Social vulnerability scholars predominantly focus on developing empirical methods of defining and measuring vulnerability to determine how environmental management agencies can minimize issues of vulnerability with minimal politicization. One exception is Susan Cutter, a leading scholar in social vulnerability studies who established the first index for measuring social vulnerability. In a 1995 article connecting analytical geography to questions of environmental justice, she argues that "the empirical claims for environmental racism are not definitive," noting that debates at the time were concerned with how to "define, classify, and measure inequity" and identifying a need for research "on what thresholds constitute an equity problem, what spatial unit is most appropriate

for exploring equity issues and over what time frame" (119). Furthermore, Cutter notes that "environmental equity is an inherently geographical problem yet we are noticeably absent from the literature," pushing for inclusion of critical geographies in policymaking (119). Cutter is most recognized for developing an index for assessing vulnerability on a case-by-case basis according to the following characteristics: personal wealth, age, density of the built environment, single-sector economic dependence, housing stock and tenancy, race, ethnicity, occupation, and infrastructure dependence. According to Cutter, these factors contribute to social vulnerability as they limit access to resources and reflect social obstacles created by distinct racial, ethnic, or class communities formed in isolation or in competition with privileged communities who receive priority assistance in disaster events. Moreover, these indicators also compound on each other, as low-income communities of color are often dependent upon infrastructure. For example, the Crow Creek Nation in Cook-Lynn's fiction faces vulnerability related to dependence upon electrical service, which many residents can hardly afford due to limited employment options, to heat their homes during the winter; in this case, vulnerability compounds upon itself.

In Cutter's model, being part of a Native American community is itself an indicator of social vulnerability, with that vulnerability expanding based on whether or not a household reflects other indicators from Cutter's list. While it is true that Indigenous communities have been made vulnerable through widespread environmental injustices, simply categorizing Native American status as a marker of vulnerability is problematic as it identifies Indigeneity as the source of vulnerability rather than structures of settler colonialism and extractive capitalism. Cook-Lynn's fiction speaks directly to

this issue; she does not shy away from the social struggles that her community faces, which as I note above are tied to the repeated dispossession of their lands. Her fiction treats these struggles as symptoms of structural injustices of paternalistic policies; likewise, social vulnerability must be recognized within the broader structural dynamics of federal law, policy, and racism. Native communities *are* more vulnerable to environmental hazards and are more economically vulnerable than their non-Native neighbors, but social vulnerability scholarship fails to account for the structural drivers of that vulnerability. Moreover, it is the case that Native communities reflect other characteristics in Cutter's index; in particular, many reservation communities are dependent on single or few economic drivers, are made up of low-income families in government housing, and are dependent on government-funded infrastructure, all of which contribute to Cutter's social vulnerability index.[42]

My analysis of Cook-Lynn's trilogy takes up her approach to social vulnerability in the aftermath of the environmental injustices caused by Pick-Sloan and colonization more broadly. She makes this vulnerability visible through John Tatekeya's struggles to maintain thióšpaye relationality as he is brought into legal conflict with relatives and neighbors, through intergenerational trauma that links contemporary struggles to colonization, and through settler anxiety manifested through sexual violence. At first, these issues seem linked not to environmental injustice but to the laws and policies of domestic paternalism; however, Cook-Lynn links each of these issues to Pick-Sloan, demonstrating that social vulnerability is not exclusively limited to environmental

[42] Of course, these conditions vary widely across Native communities, and individual Indigenous nations are pursuing creative solutions to some of these limitations, which change how social vulnerability would be measured following Cutter's model.

conditions. As her work suggests, vulnerability, federal Indian law, and environmental injustice are part of the same conditions of coloniality.

Limits of Law Under Domestic Paternalism: *From the River's Edge*

The allotments that John and other Dakota lost to the Pick-Sloan plan sets the background for Cook-Lynn's trilogy. She personally experienced this period of significant upheaval when the federal government forced her nation to adopt Western agricultural practices that are incompatible with the ecologies of the high plains. The first novella in the trilogy, *From the River's Edge*, offers a narrative of legal entanglement in which John Tatekeya, a Dakota elder whose home and successful ranching livelihood were displaced by the Big Bend dam, seeks legal remedy against a white rancher who stole his cattle. John's legal struggles are directly tied to the Pick-Sloan plan, which made Dakota people like John socially vulnerable to the harsh conditions of the upper plains and which left them few options but to commit to unsustainable farming and ranching programs. John was a capable rancher before the government flooded his land, but his relocation to higher ground disconnected him from his specific homelands, after which he spiraled financially and socially. Losing the lands where he grew up and built a livelihood is a source of ongoing trauma for John, who "felt great despair" after "he had been forced to move his cattle, his home, and his outbuildings out of the way of the backwaters of the hydropower dam called Oahe, one of several such federally funded dams forced upon the Missouri River" (48). The dam, as a product of settler entitlement, domestic paternalism, and desires to terminate federal responsibility to tribal nations pushed John into a position of dependency that manifests as social vulnerability—John is

incapable of reestablishing his ranch on the exposed, higher-elevation lands to which he was relocated, lands which are unsuitable for a profitable cattle operation. He is therefore less capable of responding to environmental challenges, including drought and blizzards, and is left exposed to threats from neighbors to his cattle and his home. The federal agriculture programs that were designed as part of broader assimilationist efforts to destroy Indigenous kinship systems[43] and promote capitalism and individualism among otherwise community-based peoples actually made most Indigenous participants more vulnerable to the harsh environment of highland prairies and more vulnerable to losing what little land they have left following allotment and further displacement by the Pick-Sloan plan. As Cook-Lynn explores further in *Circle of Dancers,* John's narrative represents the failure of these programs that overlook the impossibility of making a profit on small parcels of dry prairie.

John's loss of his early home resonates affectively through the strong, visceral memory of watching his relatives lose their land. For generations the land sustained John's family; their family had survived allotment, itself a political force meant to divide families and disrupt social organization around the Dakota thióšpaye—clan-based, cooperative living and kinship networks.[44] Yet allotment wasn't enough; the settler state

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[43] In her critique of federal policies and programs following Pick-Sloan, Cook-Lynn joins a strong tradition in Dakota literature of challenging federal paternalism by articulating its futility for Dakota communities. Zitkala-Ša's 1900 story "The Soft-Hearted Sioux," for example, juxtaposes the disruption to Dakota spiritual development when youth are put through Christian boarding school education with the near collapse of animal populations that the Dakota relied on. In that story, young Dakota man becomes a missionary and returns to his community but refuses to hunt to provide meat for his ailing father and ultimately faces death after he accidentally kills a white rancher after desperately killing a cow. Zitkala-Ša's short story sets up the difficult conditions facing Dakota nations long before Pick-Sloan further drove them into positions of social vulnerability by depriving them of the river bottom lands that where many had thrived after adapting their lifeways.

[44] For detailed analyses of allotment, see Beth Piatote's *Domestic Subjects*, Mishuana Goeman's *Mark My Words*, D.S. Otis' *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands,* Jason Edward Black's *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment,* Frederick E. Hoxie's *A Final Promise: The*

needed the river, too: "He saw his mother's allotment, those of all her brothers and sisters, the Poor Chicken land, the Walker and Howe and Shields allotments, and many, many more disappear under the great body of water; thousands of acres of homelands all up and down the river which had nourished the people, now gone" (48). Just as Phyllis Young describes in her reflection on June rise and the loss of Standing Rock bottom lands, Cook-Lynn emphasizes the layers of human communities affected by the dam as focused through experience and memory. For John, the affective memory of watching the flooding of his and his relatives' lands is entwined with the loss of a rich ecosystem that for generations had provided medicine, building material, and food to the Dakota people. Witnessing the destruction of the river bottom is traumatizing to those who honor their relations with the other-than-human world. John recalls that the

> cottonwoods, elms, and ash trees which had stood for hundreds of years along the banks of the river turned white with decay as their roots were swamped. Nothing survived the onslaught. The medicine roots and plants, the rich berry and plum bushes, the small animal and reptiles, were swept away, trivial sacrificial victims of modern progress. (48)

John holds a strong memory of his homelands disappearing as the river is coerced into an unnatural state, inundating forests that sustained life along its banks, a memory of injustice that he relives often under domestic paternalism. As the federal government

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Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, and Angie Debo's *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes.* While this is not an exhaustive list, these authors of varying disciplines speak to the strategic disruption of Indigenous kinship relations as a means of assimilation and also highlight the injustice of opening reservations to non-Native settlement of so-called "surplus" lands left over after allotment processes. The history and dynamic of allotment differ for each state and each tribal nation, but generally speaking, allotment severely limited economic potential for tribal nations as they were stripped even further of their land base, ironically undermining the settler-colonial vision of assimilation via capitalist models of ownership and industry.

displaced Dakota people from their allotted lands along the Missouri river in order to force a dam onto the river itself, the same government forced Native communities like John's further into systems of dependency that created the conditions of intergenerational social vulnerability. This dependency perpetuates the taking of Indigenous lands at the same time as the federal government (as represented by the BIA official who shuts off the Big Pipes' electricity) denies that their policies further destabilize Native communities.

John and Jason, two hardworking Dakota men trapped in a fundamentally flawed federal farming program that pushes them into debt, offer lived examples of social vulnerability following the completed Pick-Sloan plan. However, their vulnerability extends beyond economic and housing issues—often key indicators of social vulnerability in environmental management research—and incorporates the impact of the Pick-Sloan plan and settler colonialism on Dakota kinship systems. Vine Deloria Jr. notes that the Missouri River was important to Dakota survival in the reservation era, as it "provided a measure of isolation and security to peoples who badly needed to be left alone to reflect on the radical changes they had experienced," but also in that it allowed Dakota people to rebuild their communities in keeping with their land-based practices and knowledges (xi). Deloria notes that the river enabled Dakota people to uphold relations even under the pressure of allotment and assimilation: "the families who took up allotments along the river bank retained many of their own ways until the Corps of Engineers confiscated their lands and built enormous dams, which flooded both ancestral farms and ranches and memories, leaving the tribes materially and spiritually impoverished" (xi-xii). Deloria describes the lands taken from Dakota people as "farms and ranches," the most viable forms of economic growth available to Dakota families

living along the rich river bottomlands, but also as "memories," a connection to the riverside passed down intergenerationally. These memories constitute a severe emotional loss to the Dakota people following Pick-Sloan—loss that reaches beyond material and economic struggles and affects the relational systems that inform Dakota social formation. Deloria notes, "the medicines as well as the knowledge of how to use them died when the water rose…the health of the people has declined significantly with the loss of these things, and I cannot help wondering what else must have been lost forever" (xv). While the loss of Missouri River lands constitutes a material loss, according to Deloria, that loss is also spiritual. John and Jason's situations reflect the environmental injustice of the Pick-Sloan Plan as experienced not only economically but spiritually, as the federal government treated Indigenous spiritual traditions, Indigenous knowledge, and land-based cultural memory as sacrificial to Western agricultural growth and settler ambition. By forcing the Missouri River tribes into situations of dependency and vulnerability, the federal government perpetuated its attacks on Indigenous social and environmental relationality, making Dakota communities even more socially vulnerable by depriving them of the lands they require to sustain themselves physically, spiritually, and culturally.

Cook-Lynn makes visible these ongoing legal processes that demean Indigenous peoples by attacking kinship systems, which are the structures of responsibility between citizens and between humans and the other-than-human world that define Dakota life. Much of *From the River's Edge* articulates John's disillusionment with the settler legal system[45] and the trauma John experiences through the process, in which his personal

[45] I use "settler" and "federal" interchangeably when discussing issues of law and state power that by design exclude and oppress Indigenous populations. Federal and settler structures are one and the same.

problems with alcohol and his extramarital relationship with Aurelia Blue are brought forth as arguments against his competence. More demoralizing for John, this attempt at damaging his reputation comes from Jason Big Pipe, a relative brought to testify against him. John sees Jason's role in the trial as a betrayal of Dakota kinship order, a vital part of Dakota life that is undermined by legal dynamics that call upon relatives to speak against one another. As John reflects on Jason's character testimony, John "knew that for some the old, familial bonds of respect for one another, those significant communal codes of behavior as old as the tribes themselves, were no longer held as intrinsically valuable" (70). For John, these communal practices are not only intrinsically valuable, but are intrinsic to Dakota life, and are therefore central to the survival of the Dakota people. The loss of these practices, which preceded colonization and distinguish Dakota citizenship from the Western social structures that were imposed on the Dakota people, are as grave a loss as the loss of land. John further ruminates: "because of the recent flooding of the homelands, the constant moving about and resettlement, and the related destruction of the places where the people were born and buried for century upon century, one generation upon the next generation, it was now a crucial matter" (71). John fears a future without Dakota kinship traditions, which would inevitably lead to the end of Dakota society.

Over the course of the novella, John struggles against trauma to retain his sense of identity and vitality as a Dakota relative. While Eve Tuck cautions against damage-centered approaches to Indigenous life as contributing to "long-term repercussions of *thinking of ourselves as broken*," it is necessary to not ignore the damaging "effects of oppression on our communities" (409, emphasis in original). Tuck further argues that "Contemporary damage-centered narratives (of abuse, addiction, poverty, illness) in the

United States can be directly tied to 400-plus years of occupation of Native lands, genocide, and colonization" (415). Cook-Lynn illustrates this connection between coloniality and social struggles. While her narratives speak to the ongoing effects of trauma tied to coloniality, she centers relationality in these struggles instead of brokenness. Cook-Lynn points to the effects of domestic paternalism and the federal legal system's inability to achieve justice for Native people, registering that injustice through trauma. Her fiction joins other Native women writers who used narratives of affect and trauma to point out the violence of boarding schools and residential schools, which Dian Million studies in *Therapeutic Nations*. *Beyond the River's Edge* offers what Million articulates as "moral affective contestation" with the settler state, "an engagement that requires successful affective argument given the turn to a moral ethos of trauma" (12). Trauma offers a way for Cook-Lynn to connect the struggles of the Crow Creek Nation to settler colonialism, federal law, and Pick-Sloan; these struggles are not tied to the brokenness of Native communities but to the systemic injustices that perpetuate social vulnerability. In the second text of the trilogy, *Circle of Dancers*, Cook-Lynn further unpacks these tensions between giving voice to crushing hardship while also upholding Dakota relationality and thióšpaye ethics.

Relationality, History, and Intergenerational Trauma in *Circle of Dancers*

In *Circle of Dancers,* Cook-Lynn articulates the intergenerational impacts of colonialism in relational and historical terms, showing that Dakota kinship networks and social responsibility have long been a target of colonialism. These networks resonate with Christopher Pexa's theory of thióšpaye ethics. Responding to Dakota scholar

Wazíyatawiŋ's definition of relationality as "a responsibility that relays a culture, and identity, and a sense of belonging" ("Generations" 7, cited in Pexa 65), Pexa argues that relationality is an "important point of entry for engaging how Dakhóta people in the aftermath of the [1862] war found in thióšpaye (literally 'camp circle' but meaning extended family as lived through relationships within and among tribal bands) philosophy and in living relatives the crucial resources for remaking a coherent sense of peoplehood after having been targeted for extermination" (65). *Circle of Dancers* contributes to a theory of thióšpaye ethics in the larger context of colonial violence, environmental injustice, and ongoing trauma for Dakota peoples. In one section of the novel, Lewis Grey Iron, a Crow Creek elder and spiritual leader, is summoned to the city of Vermillion, South Dakota to provide counsel to a young man named Leaper, who has murdered an elderly white man and sexually assaulted the man's wife. This act of violence rekindles white animosity toward Native people living in cities and overshadows Leaper's struggles after suffering a head injury and becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol. While she does not want to get involved, Aurelia and her partner Jason Big Pipe accompany Lewis. Leaper's case would become a high-profile issue in South Dakota, resulting in the first execution in a century. Most importantly, however, Leaper's situation reflects the role of historical trauma in Cook-Lynn's trilogy; using affect to describe Indigenous pain as historical trauma enables Cook-Lynn to directly connect ongoing struggles to settler colonialism. Cook-Lynn's rendering of trauma is not the strategic pathologizing that Dian Million critiques in *Therapeutic Nations* that emerges from Canadian reconciliation programs that must represent Indigenous suffering under colonization as treatable through settler frameworks of healing. Million turns to the

writings of Indigenous women who offer affective testimonies of their struggles under colonialism, noting that their writings portray "colonialism as it is *felt* by those whose experience it is" (61). For Cook-Lynn, healing begins with justice, and justice necessitates the recognition of settler violence and its outcomes in affective terms.

As an elder and carrier of Dakota history and stories, Lewis situates Leaper's case in a larger history of trauma and historic injustice running back to the early nineteenth century and tied directly to land and environmental injustice. The night after he counsels Leaper, Lewis shares stories in the Dakota language late into the night, allowing the group—and himself—to process Leaper's actions and his certain fate. Lewis starts by noting that "This was all Yankton Dakotah land" that drew the interest of white explorers and hunters for its sizable buffalo herds, explaining, "We, of course, had known of this fact in our homelands and we had always taken care to treat the buffalo and the elk sacredly but to the whites, it was great news" (238). "In the mere lifetime of a man," Lewis notes, "the buffalo were no more…that is the legacy of the white man" (238). After white hunters and soldiers "exterminated the buffalo and the elk with their repeating rifles," Lewis explains, "the Indians said that routes for these soldiers and hunters should not be provided. Not by treaty. Not for any reason. They were, our relatives told everyone, the enemies of all living things and they would bring disaster into the world" (238). Lewis outlines the source of conflict that spans the early years of South Dakota statehood to the present moment in the context of the mass slaughter of the buffalo, a process that facilitated the establishment of railroads and industrial development, as buffalo hides (often the only part of the animal harvested by white hunters) were used to make belts for industrial machinery (Lott 176). The mass slaughter

of the buffalo established a pattern of colonialism: forcing environmental change to make Indigenous peoples dependent upon the federal government and worsen their social vulnerability, all for the benefit of settler communities, a pattern that would be repeated in the Pick-Sloan plan.

As Lewis tells it, throughout the 1800s the Dakota witnessed a significant environmental transformation that forced them into poverty and dependence upon settlers, and the subsequent wars that the Dakota fought were not simply over territory but over a responsibility to defend their homelands from these "enemies of all living things" (238).[46] Cook-Lynn pairs the near extinction of the buffalo as a colonizing strategy to Leaper's trauma and subsequent violence. Following the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862 and the subsequent forceful subjugation of Dakota peoples into the twentieth century, Lewis recalls that the last buffalo at Fort Thompson agency in 1902 were four sickly, desperate animals, "crippled, diseased. Pitiful" (239). While assimilation-era narratives by white writers and political figures describe Native life on reservations as similarly approaching extinction,[47] the Dakota people endured and honored their buffalo relatives. As Lewis tells it, the last old bull was "shot with an arrow just before he died,"

[46] The portrayal of settler colonialism as "enemy of all living things" echoes a long tradition in Native literature that includes toxic dumping on Chal Windzer's Osage homelands in John Joseph Mathew's *Sundown* and in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, a large-scale dam and the removal of a sacred being in D'Arcy McNickel's *Wind From an Enemy Sky,* the destruction of forests in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, and the poisoning and social collapse of a coastal community in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*. Each of these writers connect federal policies of allotment, assimilation, and extractive capitalism to environmental injustice, thereby entangling two versions of colonial trauma suffered by Indigenous peoples.

[47] Two essays from 1899 capture this attitude, both published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, a year before Zitkala-Ša's earliest short fiction and autobiographical essays: Henry Dawes' "Have We Failed the Indian?" (Dawes authored the allotment act), an essay that viciously projects the failure of allotment policy as the social inferiority of Native people; and George Bird Grinnell's "The Wild Indian," which romantically depicts the end of life on the plains and the impending dissolution of Native lifeways altogether.

honored by an act that allows the bull to give itself to the people, after which the people preserved the bull's skull for future ceremony (239). In Leaper's story, the Dakota uphold their long-held relationship to the buffalo, even as it seems that relationship may only exist in memory. Even after the incredible hardship the Dakota nations faced in the early twentieth century under the pressure of allotment, suppressed religious practices, and boarding school violence, honoring the sacred relationship between the Dakota and the buffalo would enable the Dakota at Crow Creek to resist assimilation and uphold their social and spiritual identity as Dakota people.

Like that old bull, a remnant of a powerful relative to the Dakota people, Lewis explains that Leaper too must be treated as a relative, even if he is in the hands of the settler justice system. This principle of thióšpaye ethics is difficult for Aurelia to process, with that difficulty revealing the complex critical position of Dakota people under the settler legal system and federal policy, both of which target Dakota relations. "Leaper," he explains, "who has now become a murderer and rapist, is a relative with all of us and of all the tribes who have always lived here, along the river and out into the prairie and into the hills…it is a terrible thing that the young man has done, and he must know that the great spirit weeps for him" (239). While Leaper has committed a terrible act that conflicts with Dakota kinship and governance systems—what might be called Dakota law—he is nonetheless a relative whose suffering deserves to be mourned. While Lewis makes his way through these thoughts, Aurelia feels vaguely uncomfortable getting involved in Jason's family troubles and finds Lewis's stories disconnected, sensing that Lewis is struggling with "the overpowering oppressiveness of living like this," struggling to process his thoughts "from one crisis to the next" (241). Aurelia senses her own

discomfort and Lewis's emotional pain at talking through this history in order to come to terms with Leaper's act, not to justify it but to situate it within the larger suffering of their people.

Aurelia's sense of tension, her affective response as a listener and as a carrier of stories, calls forth a Dakota-specific literary theory in which the experiences and futurity of the people are held in tension through stories and through listening, acts that are integral to thióšpaye ethics. Dakota literary theory approaches conditions of coloniality and environmental injustice through the lens of relationality and communal obligation, applying the governance principles of the thióšpaye to narrative and philosophical representations of Dakota life. In her analysis of Cook-Lynn's Dakota-centered literary theory, Sicangu Lakota scholar Sarah Hernandez notes that Aurelia herself exemplifies contemporary Dakota narrative ontology in that "she actively ensures the survival of the tiospaye by embracing the same role that the Corn Woman played in early Dakota society"—the role of wife and mother,[48] which Aurelia occupies as John Tatekeya's partner in *From River's Edge* and later as the mother of Jason Big Pipe's children (71). Hernandez argues that

> Aurelia's stories have the potential to ensure the survival of the tiospaye. In other words, these two roles are empowering because they allow her to reclaim and revitalize the Dakota oral storytelling tradition for future generations. These two

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[48] Cook-Lynn endured criticism for Aurelia's characterization; according to Hernandez, scholars were "troubled by Aurelia's role as wife and mother, which they tend to view as disempowered and antifeminist" (71). Cook-Lynn responds that Aurelia's strong character is not defined by settler feminism but by her role in her thióšpaye—a central assertion of Indigenous feminist scholars who argue that Indigenous feminisms are grounded in community rather than practiced under the auspices of settler feminist frameworks. I discuss this scholarship in greater detail in my fourth chapter, in relation to Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*.

> contrasting interpretations underscore the importance of applying a nation-centered literary approach to Native literature because it will help situate the content and structure of the text in a tribally specific context. (71)

Aurelia's role as keeper of stories is key to approaching Cook-Lynn's trilogy from a Dakota-specific context, her experience of encountering stories is key to understanding her character. By describing this affective, dialectic experience for Aurelia and Lewis, Cook-Lynn associates the historic trauma that Lewis carries alongside affirmations of Dakota relationality with present-day struggles. Aurelia comes to realize that the stories Lewis shares are not disconnected—they contextualize Leaper's situation in the larger history of intergenerational trauma that spans Lewis and Clark's arrival in 1802, the subsequent mass killing of the buffalo, and the forced dependence of the Dakota people on settler trade and eventually on the U.S. government.

This dialectic experience is part of Cook-Lynn's Dakota-centered literary theory, drawing from Dakota oral traditions, language, and the relational commitments of thióšpaye ethics. Lewis's oral history unpacks this theory, articulating the ways colonialism makes Indigenous peoples dependent upon settler trade and government through environmental change and attacks on Indigenous kinship systems, a process that contributes to social vulnerability. Lewis shares one more story of the time, long ago, when Dakota men "came with 1,400 buffalo tongues because the fur traders had cheated them out of the hides…it is said that they traded the fresh buffalo tongues for whiskey" (242). Lewis explains that because the Dakota medicine men were at that time "held as criminals by the U.S. Government" in efforts to suppress Dakota religious practices, "they were unable to punish them for their crime against the buffalo, a crime that was

unheard of in the old days, but one which the Sioux knew to be heinous and obscene and unforgivable" (242). The actions of these Dakota men were crimes only in a Dakota context—they were incentivized through coloniality and more broadly by the U.S. government, which facilitated the mass killing of buffalo that was central to diminishing Indigenous strength on the plains. Lewis sees this crime as causing the ongoing struggles of Dakota people: "And we have been unable ever since to do anything about ourselves. Such crimes. They continue even today. And our people do not know what to do, how to behave. They do bad things" (242). For Lewis, Leaper's situation follows a century of intergenerational trauma, yet he underscores the importance of practicing relational responsibility—even though Leaper has committed a terrible act of violence and is now subject to mechanics of a justice system that will likely put him to death, as a relative he deserves dignity and deserves to have his case recognized in the larger context of Dakota suffering and survival.

Beyond Lewis, Jason, and Aurelia's conversation at their camp, however, that kind of dignity is nowhere to be found. The local news media and the non-Native community tries to situate Leaper's actions into a broader perceived threat of Indian violence, playing into racist stereotypes such as the comment Aurelia overhears at the courthouse that "These Indians are only a few decades removed from savagery" (233). Lewis, Jason, and Aurelia, however, are trying to situate Leaper's actions in a larger historical context, not to justify his actions but to understand how a relative could fall so far from his relations. Lewis's stories, which seem disconnected to Aurelia, are an effort to understand what has happened to Leaper. For Lewis, Leaper is part of the spiritual punishment brought upon the Dakota for injustices against the buffalo—like their buffalo

relations who nearly died out, the Dakota are experiencing a spiritual sickness that manifests in the many struggles and vulnerabilities that they face. As Page Rozelle argues, "Grey Iron is connecting the sickness of Leaper with that of the buffalo," reading this passage as describing "a spiritual crime of great magnitude" influenced by whiskey (208). Rozelle draws a clear connection between the influence of whiskey on the Dakota men who became wasters of their spiritual relationship to the buffalo to the influence of alcohol and drugs on Leaper, who similarly fell out of his Dakota relations and succumbed to intergenerational trauma and addiction, resulting in his terrible actions. Leaper's case demonstrates the extreme consequences of falling out of Dakota relations, an important part of understanding Indigenous social vulnerability—when relations are undermined or lost, the ability of a community to hold itself together is compromised.

The Intersections of Settler Anxiety and Sexual Violence in *In the Presence of River Gods*

In *Circle of Dancers*, the contrast between Lewis and Aurelia reflects Cook-Lynn's Dakota-centric literary theory as a narrative mode grounded in Dakota oral tradition, thióšpaye ethics, and confrontations of settler colonialism. The novel also theorizes intergenerational trauma by contextualizing contemporary struggles in histories of environmental injustice that includes the near extinction of plains buffalo. Cook-Lynn complicates this depiction of historical trauma in her concluding novella *In the Presence of River Gods*, where she expands social vulnerability to encompass settler anxieties over the U.S. government's unstable claim on the resources drawn from the Missouri River dams—anxieties that manifest through intense anti-Indian hate and the literal

vulnerability of Dakota women to racially motivated sexual violence under a legal system that enables predation on Indigenous women by non-Native men. Following the U.S. Supreme Court case Oliphant v. Suquamish,[49] tribal nations have no jurisdiction to prosecute non-Native criminals who commit crimes on reservation lands. As Mvskoke legal scholar Sarah Deer notes,

> This decision has created a crisis situation in some tribal communities, because non-Indian sexual predators…are attracted to Indian country as they perceive it as a location in which crimes can be committed with impunity. Pedophiles and sexual predators also commit crimes within Indian country because of the vulnerability of the citizens and the jurisdictional gaps. If a non-Indian rapes a Native woman, the tribe has absolutely no criminal jurisdiction to punish the offender. (41)

The murder that Cook-Lynn fictionalizes in *In the Presence of River Gods* occurs in 1981, only three years after SCOTUS's decision that stripped tribal law enforcement of jurisdiction over non-Indian violence committed on Native land. Cook-Lynn expands the framework of social vulnerability beyond environmental hazards to include legal hazards, which are of course caught up in environmental and geospatial networks. Both Pick-Sloan and Oliphant v. Suquamish dealt major blows to Indigenous sovereignty, and both

[49] In their 1978 decision in Oliphant v. Suquamish, the Supreme Court found that tribal police have no jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit a crime on reservation lands. The issue at the heart of the case was a drunk driving infraction, but the consequences of the decision have left tribal courts unable to prosecute much more severe crimes occurring on reservation lands. Jurisdiction instead lies with state police or federal law enforcement and courts—however, since rape cases are rarely straightforward, prosecutors frequently fail to pursue them, leaving most unsolved or unprosecuted. The aftermath of this case has been taken up in several textual modes, including Louise Erdrich's 2012 novel *The Round House*, Cherokee lawyer-playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle's 2017 play *Sliver of a Full Moon*, and on the screen in the non-Native TV show *Longmire* and film *Wind River*.

issues are part of the bigger structure of coloniality. Cook-Lynn therefore establishes that social vulnerability reflects the structural injustices of settler colonialism.

That structure was built on violence targeting Indigenous women and families, but the legal debates surrounding the planning of the Pick-Sloan project and over the Oliphant v. Suquamish case cannot represent this violence. Literature, on the other hand, can employ narrative to represent the lived effects of these issues, just as it can represent social vulnerability in affective terms. Sarah Deer notes the limits of legal discourse and data-driven analytics, contrasted with the knowledge "we gain from experiencing something; visceral knowledge that can invoke the physical senses and the genius of memory" (14). As Deer establishes through her examination of case studies and legal decisions, neither empirical nor experiential knowledge is entirely capable of articulating the impacts of rape on victims, families, and communities nor of wholly representing the trauma of rape to outsiders.[50] Moreover, Deer echoes Tuck's critiques of damage-driven research, arguing that data "has largely been used to critique Native society and enforce dehumanizing stereotypes…the scientific process and the use of the data can seem dehumanizing, exploitative, and pointless" (15). Deer points out that "national numbers

[50] In a *New York Times* editorial following the publication of her novel *The Round House*, Louise Erdrich speaks to the challenge of relating in vivid terms the vast body of case law and legislation that shapes the legal context of her and Cook-Lynn's work. Erdrich offers a visual representation of the shared trauma of sexual violence in Native communities through shawl dances at Minneapolis area powwows: "The shawls, a traditional symbol of nurturing, flow toward the earth. The women seem cloaked in blood. People hush. Everyone rises, not only in respect, for we are jolted into personal memories and griefs" (Erdrich). The image of women and men dancing to honor victims and survivors of sexual assault represents the affective relationality of Indigenous communities around the issues of sexual violence and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Erdrich writes, "We dance behind them and with them in the circle, often in tears, because at every gathering the red shawls increase, and the violence cuts deep" (Erdrich). Her editorial advocates for provisions to the Violence Against Women Act that would grant tribal courts jurisdiction over non-Native rapists and stalkers, poignantly noting that "[w]hat seems like dry legislation can leave Native women at the mercy of their predators or provide a slim margin of hope for justice" (Erdrich). Erdrich here raises the problem of representing trauma by working to change "dry legislation" juxtaposing that critique with the affective image of red shawls as a means of articulating the trauma of rape on victims and communities.

are flat; they lack dimension and stifle future exploration. For Native women, surviving rape is a journey with texture and dimensions that are shaped by history, language, and ceremony" (15). Literature and art offer a way to synthesize data and empirical knowledge with experience and affect, merging the contexts of federal Indian law and history with the material realities that Native women endure at present.

In the Presence of River Gods reflects this representational potential, as Cook-Lynn pairs the increased threats of violence against Native women—itself a form of social vulnerability—to the growing racist hostility among white communities surrounding South Dakota reservations in the early 1980s. The narrative is set in the wake of the 1980 Supreme Court decision that declared the taking of the Black Hills a violation of treaties with Oceti Sakowin, and therefore illegal.[51] This judgment marks a tipping point for white racism in the communities surrounding South Dakota reservations as non-Natives are pushed by their own legal system to reckon with the legitimacy of their ancestor's settlement in Dakota and Lakota homelands. Aurelia describes the efforts of white citizens and politicians to dissolve Indian governments as part of ongoing hostility among white residents in border communities: "The whites in the area had looked down on the Sioux and had harbored a resentment of the Lakota/Dakotah ownership of land for two hundred years. There were still unsettled conditions in Indian Country, and the recent lower court decision saying that the white immigrant ancestors were thieves of Indian land sent them into a kind of collective white rage" (357). These

[51] In *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of claims by Oceti Sakowin and Indigenous activists that the Black Hills had been taken illegally. The Supreme Court called for remuneration of the original amount offered in 1877 plus interest, which is currently valued at over $1.2 billion dollars. The Lakota and Dakota nations of Oceti Sakowin have refused to accept the settlement. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz notes, "That one of the most impoverished communities in the Americas would refuse a billion dollars demonstrates the relevance and significance of the land to the Sioux, not as an economic resource but as a relationship between people and place" (208).

hostilities lead to harassment and outright violence targeting Native people, reflecting a perception of vulnerability among non-Native farmers that manifests as settler anxiety. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang note, "Indigeneity prompts multiple forms of settler anxiety, even if only because the presence of Indigenous peoples—who make *a priori* claims to land and ways of being—is a constant reminder that the settler colonial project is incomplete" ("Decolonization" 9). The Black Hills decision is a reminder of this incompleteness. Fueled by uncertainty and stoked by the delegitimization of their claims to South Dakota as settler homelands, some white residents band into militia groups who claim an entitlement to use public lands and resources for their individual benefit.[52] Part of their settler anxiety stems from the federal government diverting water from farms and communities to coal mining, which one local political leader claims will cause "the land left unused [to] waste away" (363). This argument, made out of a false perception of settler vulnerability, actually illustrates the unsustainability of Western agriculture that depends on significant irrigation diverted from the Missouri river. It is not the land that will "waste away" but the farming operations that altered the landscape—over time, the land will return to tallgrass prairie, to its permacultural state prior to colonization. What politicians and anxious settlers fear is the reversal of settlement and the restoration of Indigenous ecologies to Dakota and Lakota homelands.

The settler anxiety that Cook-Lynn depicts in *In the Presence of River Gods* reflects the logic of settlement outlined by Citizen Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte: "settlement seeks to erase Indigenous peoples' collective capacities as a means of

[52] These perceptions of vulnerability and unfairness on the part of settlers that I call settler anxiety echoes the later occupation of Burns Paiute homelands, held by the federal government as the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, by followers of Ammon Bundy.

incising settler ecologies. In doing so, the goal of settler campaigns is to actually eliminate themselves *as settlers*" ("Food Systems" 155, emphasis in original). According to Whyte, settler colonialism endeavors to modify colonized lands to make "the territory *their* homeland, which literally involves making manifest the permanence and/or inevitability of their relationship to the landscape, from settler origin stories that seek to justify their arrival and development of the land to the political formation of their own polities" (155, emphasis in original). This process of inscription involves transforming lands to fit settler colonial demands in such a way that Indigenous peoples who draw life from their relations to the other-than-human world are made socially vulnerable as those relations are targets of settler campaigns. As Indigenous survivance, resistance, and the rare favorable Supreme Court decision show, settler coloniality is itself an unsustainable project. The failure of Pick-Sloan to provide the irrigation promised by the federal government (a familiar position to tribal nations) underscores the fragility of settler colonialism and amplifies settler anxieties. [53]

In the decades following the Pick-Sloan Plan, it becomes clear that rural non-Native residents are not the primary beneficiaries of the project after all, even though the project enabled them to establish farms and ranches with short-term success. As John and Jason learn the hard way, the white farmers and ranchers realize that farming is

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[53] The irrigation programs implemented after the construction of Pick-Sloan dams were poorly designed and underwent widescale changes and rollbacks. Capossela explains that the Garrison irrigation plan was "a huge and inefficient inter- basin transfer of water. Numerous large canals would crisscross the plains in North Dakota with drain irrigation run-off directed into Canada's pristine Hudson Bay basin. The canals and other project facilities would remove thousands of acres of productive dry-land farms out of production and destroy valuable prairie pothole wetlands. The project's estimated cost at $334 million, to be repaid mostly by Pick-Sloan power revenues under the generous repayment provisions of Section 9 of the Flood Control Act, rendered it economically infeasible" (170).

unsustainable without significant irrigation, and they perceive both an entitlement to the dammed waters and a sense of vulnerability to the external forces that make their livelihoods possible. As settler anxiety grips non-Native farmers, their perception of vulnerability leads to acts of violence targeting any being that threatens to destabilize settler futurity. The prime target, of course, is Indigeneity and Indigenous women in particular.

Cook-Lynn juxtaposes two very different iterations of settler violence in one chapter: attempts to exterminate prairie dogs, which thrive even in drought conditions and serve as an easy target for frustrated farmers, and the rape and murder of a young Dakota woman. As acts of violence on extremely different scales, both reflect settler anxiety. Cook-Lynn weaves these acts of violence together with the increased tensions over water rights, much the way she weaves together attacks on Dakota kinship systems with environmental injustice and social vulnerability in the first two texts: "At the very moment the girl ran for her life, and the prairie dogs were being annihilated on the South Dakota prairie, an old water rights lawyer from Washington, D.C., was meeting with the tribes in Rapid City, South Dakota" to discuss options for challenging the Army Corps for tribal water rights (432). While it seems odd to juxtapose the killing of prairie dogs and Native women in order to illustrate the structural violence of settler colonialism, the metaphor offered by prairie dog killing is apt. Prairie dogs are notoriously hardy animals who thrive in difficult conditions on the plains—their nuisance to farmers echoes the way nineteenth century military leaders claimed that Native communities warranted similar

extermination[54] in the racist equivocation of Native people with animals considered pests by settlers. Cook-Lynn reverses the stereotype, pairing the literal widespread (and legal) killing of prairie dogs with the structural violence facing Native women. While federal law and policy cannot conceptualize these ideas as connected, for Cook-Lynn, they are deeply intertwined and rendered in environmental terms—the attitudes that make prairie dogs scapegoats for drought conditions also directs hostility toward Native communities and particularly Native women. This juxtaposition serves as another example of Cook-Lynn's Dakota-centered literary theory, building on Lewis's association of the extermination of the buffalo with widespread military attacks on Dakota communities in the nineteenth century. In both cases, settler futurity necessitated the elimination of human and other-than-human beings who already claimed those lands as home: Indigenous peoples, buffalo herds, and prairie dog towns.

As do the first two texts in the trilogy, *In the Presence of River Gods* approaches these critiques of coloniality via affect. Aurelia also connects sexual violence to the river transformed by the Pick-Sloan dams, with the violence committed to the river continuing as violence targeting Native women:

> No one would know for nearly twenty years who was responsible for this outrage, what had happened to the young girl; that she had been brutally beaten, raped, and killed and then disposed of in the choppy river like so much refuse. In retrospect, it is possible to speculate that it must have been done by those who possessed a deeply felt hatred, a racial hatred of Indian womanhood, their faces hot, their large

[54] See Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* and Jeffrey Ostler's *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas*.

> white hands grasping and cruel, their feet and legs flailing in the coarse dirt, the smell of exploding gunshots choking their lungs. (439)

She imagines the violence that ended the young woman's life not as a distant spectator but in material, affective terms, using the physical descriptors "hot," "flailing," and "coarse" and noting the smell of gun powder. There is not much speculation in Aurelia's mind when it comes to this crime and its implications for her community, who suspect "the white men who hung around Indian reservations," those who Aurelia argues are a sign of "degradation" (441). He sees in them a "problem of racism and how they think about Indian women…It's historical. It's always been like this," noting that "It's a way of despoiling the dignity of Indian communities, to treat the women like they are worthless" (441). Aurelia first associates settler violence with ecological violence in the juxtaposition of farmers attempting to exterminate prairie dogs with the young woman's abduction, rape and murder. Then, as details of the woman's murder surface and her body is found, Aurelia situates the manifestation of structural racism through sexual violence with the "coarse dirt" of the Crow Creek lands abutting the "choppy river," another site of colonial ecological violence and no longer the thriving riparian bottomland that it once was.

These forms of settler violence are inseparable in Aurelia's mind—they are part of the same structure that pushes Native people into positions of vulnerability. Referring to "global destruction" of ecosystems as "the site of the 'wound'" of Indigenous trauma (172), Dian Million argues that "the abject heart of colonialism and neocolonialism and their practice of capitalism, is *gendered violence"* which is "perpetrated by individuals and polities in times when heteronormative order is threatened" (177, emphasis in

original). As Leanne Simpson argues, sexual violence is central to settler colonialism's efforts to "remove Indigenous peoples from our territories," bearing "the intergenerational staying power to destroy generations of families, as they work to prevent us from intimately connecting to each other...They destroy the base of our nations and our political systems because they destroy our relationships to the land and to each other by fostering epidemic levels of anxiety, hopelessness, apathy, distrust, and suicide" (*Always* 93). Sexual violence is therefore a central component of the logic of elimination in settler colonialism, targeting women as the core of families, communities, and nations. Simpson continues, "They work to destroy the fabric of Indigenous nationhoods by attempting to destroy our relationality" (*Always* 93). Joining these critical juxtapositions of sexual violence, dispossession, and environmental injustice, Cook-Lynn contributes an affective, experiential depiction of the traumatizing effect of sexual violence on Native communities. As in *Circle of Dancers*, in which Lewis Grey Iron processed Leaper's situation through story and history, Aurelia must turn to Dakota knowledge to process the threats of settler violence against her community and her family.

Aurelia must again reconcile abject violence following social vulnerability with efforts to uphold Dakota kinship systems and does so through story. After the young Dakota woman's body is found in the river, Aurelia is confronted with the difficult task of discussing the murder with her children. She tells her son, Blue, "not to worry about where the young woman had been, what had happened, and who was responsible," explaining that she "was simply unlucky, that things happen, that bad people do bad, horrific things" (444-445). Aurelia finds it necessary to simplify what happened "because the merciless crime was unfathomable to her, and she was not sure how to tell him that

the whites in the community were responsible, that their hatred for Dakotah women was a sickness in them, and that she and the family would have to go on living amongst them" (445). Aurelia struggles to comprehend the murder and the scope of white patriarchal hate, yet in explaining to her children the hard realities of racism and violence that their people face she returns to the teachings that uphold Dakota communities. She explains that she is certain the killers were not Dakota because of their people's relationship to the river: "they had always believe that water was a place of origin; that fish were their distant ancestors; that they would never violate the river…that the dances and songs and gestures of the river were ways of language" (445). Not only does Aurelia believe that Dakotah men could not commit this kind of violence against their people, but she also emphasizes that Dakota culture, land-based knowledges, and relational systems make it impossible for a Dakota person to disrespect the river as giver of life.

Aurelia is not pursuing a logic of exceptionalism or essentialism in her explanation—she is not suggesting that Dakota men were incapable of violence because they are Dakota—but noting the importance of relations between people and lands in Dakota cosmologies. Even though Leaper committed great violence following an untreated head injury and extended period of addiction, he did so partly because he was disconnected from his community. His act, and his permanent disconnection from his people once he enters the criminal justice system, is itself a tragedy following generations of trauma under settler colonialism. In the case of the young woman whose disappearance was minimally investigated and whose murder went unsolved for two decades, violence was intentional and emerges from "deeply felt hatred" on the part of the men whose "racial hatred of Indian womanhood" reflects their perceived vulnerability as settlers on

Dakota lands at a moment when their generational claim to those lands is called into question (439). In her attempts to console her children and herself, Aurelia reinforces her role as carrier of stories, which in this case offers ways of coping with violence. After explaining Dakota relations to the river to her son, “She told him one story after another in an effort to help herself, stories that could not be verified and that he probably could not understand fully but that he nonetheless listed to attentively” (445). Aurelia cannot resolve this violence other than to console her children and remind them of who they are as Dakota people. Aurelia’s ongoing role as storyteller, as keeper of history, means she will confront struggles throughout her life to reconcile what cannot be reconciled: the limits of justice under settler colonialism.

Mapping the Limits of Social Vulnerability

Over her career Cook-Lynn has been celebrated as a major force in critical Indigenous studies for her contributions to literary nationalism and her rigorous (though often harsh) critiques of other Native writers. However, her fiction has drawn less attention and critical interest, and she would later express ambivalence toward her creative work, feeling that she was bringing vital issues into literature in a way that few other Native writers were doing, but also that her fiction fell short of achieving her vision of Native literature as a force for sovereignty. Following the publication of *From the River’s Edge*, Robert Houston of the *New York Times* panned the novel for what he considered an "inappropriate and pedantic narrative voice,” dismissing her direct confrontation of political and systemic issues (35). Cook-Lynn faced criticism for her overt engagement with what non-Native readers consider political issues; for Native people, those issues

call into question their very existence and ability to thrive as nations. Defending Cook-Lynn, James Stripes argues that "Houston's critique reveals how the ideology of a work that does not attempt to mask its ideology behind modernist aesthetics remains hidden from certain readers," a struggle that writers of color in settler states have long faced as their work is dismissed as prioritizing politics over aesthetics (166). In her essay "Writing Through Obscurity," Cook-Lynn notes that her decision to offer no resolution in her fiction reflects the current state of struggles for sovereignty, suggesting that the lack of resolution and the lack of identity struggle in her work made her books less marketable compared to other prominent Native authors at the time.[55]

Her literary aim in the *Aurelia* trilogy, she asserts, is to interrogate justice through narrative techniques that do not follow conventional plot structures; therefore, she sees her work as experimenting with genres of crime fiction over a long historical period, approaching settler colonialism and environmental injustice as a series of unaccounted crimes committed by the federal government since the early nineteenth century. In "Writing Through Obscurity," Cook-Lynn defends her authorial decision to not offer the kind of resolution to her novels that readers expect as reflecting her political commitments as a literary scholar:

> There is a difference between authors of Indian novels who merely tap into an American guilt or an American racism as they tell Indian stories, and those

[55] Cook-Lynn's literary criticism calls out Native writers who she saw as appealing to white interests in identity conflicts and magical realism, in particular criticizing Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and Adrian Louis. She argues that Alexie and Louis "catalogue the deficit model of Indian reservation life," offering "little or no defense of treaty-protected reservation land bases as the homelands to the indigenes, nor do they suggest a responsibility of art as an ethical endeavor or the artist as responsible social critic" (68). She has encountered much pushback for these critiques as essentialist and stifling artistic freedom for Native writers; however, these critiques reflect her own commitments to tribal nationhood, which she sees as essential to Indigenous futurity.

> authors who really engage their audiences in serious issues of land restoration and reform, or survival issues of one kind or another. Because the function of plot is conflict and because the consequence of plot is resolution, the structure of the three novellas of *Aurelia*, which does not serve those ends, is significant and intentional and purposeful in determining fictional realism and must not be ignored or thought to be flawed. (137)

While Cook-Lynn's self-criticism that her structure "not...thought to be flawed" does not make her exempt her from critique, that structure reflects the reality that struggles over sovereignty are unresolved; therefore, a Dakota-centric approach to confronting these issues must acknowledge that reality. Cook-Lynn's intentional lack of resolution is, of course, common in postmodern and contemporary literature. It also points to the limits of academic frameworks like social vulnerability, which attempts to position communities between vulnerability and resilience. While social vulnerability offers a useful analytic for reading Cook-Lynn's trilogy, her trilogy in turn offers a productive critique of resilience as the goal in mediating social vulnerability.

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, emphasizing social vulnerability, itself a concept which evokes images of fragility and lack, can risk perpetuating narratives of Indigenous communities as chronically deficient, as broken or irrevocably damaged. This trend in Indigenous studies suggests that instead of emphasizing damage and trauma, researchers should acknowledge or center the resilience of Native communities in their narratives of Indigenous life. Resilience is also a key metric in social vulnerability scholarship; whereas social vulnerability reflects the disproportionate risk of marginalized communities to natural or climate hazards, resilience reflects the ability of

those communities to respond to a disaster and remain intact. Scholars in the field also refer to resilience as "adaptive capacity," or "the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before a system changes to a radically different state as well as the capacity to self-organise and the capacity for adaptation to emerging circumstances" (Adger 268-269). Resilience reflects whether a community can resume the same level of economic and social activity as prior to a disaster, whether or not it retains its citizens, and what other changes occur as the community responds to natural hazards or disasters.

Adaptive capacity takes on a unique meaning for Indigenous communities, whose very existence is proof of resilience following generations of colonial violence and policies targeting Indigenous relational systems and lifeways. For Indigenous communities, adaptive capacity reflects knowledge redundancy (how many people carry vital forms of knowledge like language, land-based practices, and stories), relational practices, and reciprocal responsibilities to the other-than-human world. In order for settler colonialism to claim Indigenous homelands as settler homelands, it must make Indigenous people socially vulnerable by disrupting those systems. For Kyle Whyte, discussions of Indigenous vulnerability must confront the extractive industries that harm both Indigenous peoples and contribute to climate change while also reckoning with the methods by which settler states undermine Indigenous adaptive capacity. As Whyte argues, "climate injustice against Indigenous peoples refers to the vulnerability caused by ongoing, cyclical colonialism both because institutions facilitate carbon-intensive economic activities that produce adverse impacts while at the same time interfering with Indigenous people's capacity to adapt to the adverse impacts" ("Déjà vu" 18). Centering Indigenous perspectives on vulnerability and resilience, as Whyte and Cook-Lynn do,

complicates academic frameworks of scales and indexes that aim to quantify vulnerability without contending with coloniality.

Social vulnerability and resilience also get caught up in discussions of historical trauma, which Dian Million critiques in her discussion of public acknowledgment of Canadian settler colonialism as "a pathology, a wound," noting a political shift in which "healing encompasses Canada's dialogue with Indigenous peoples, moving the focus from one of political self-determination to one where self-determination becomes intertwined with state-determined biopolitical programs for emotional and psychological self-care informed by trauma" (6). By emphasizing settler notions of trauma and healing in the Truth and Reconciliation process, Canada deflects forceful assertions of Indigenous sovereignty in favor of a framework of recognized trauma that is treatable through settler therapeutic processes such as listening forums and government studies. Such a framework emphasizes the supposed brokenness of Indigenous communities and aims to fix that brokenness without destabilizing the power dynamics of settler governance. In this discourse, assertions of resilience minimize damage, creating a dialectic between two imposed frameworks, neither of which are capable of articulating the dynamics of settler coloniality.

Following Million, Deborah Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation of California) emphasizes Indigenous experiences over generalizations of trauma. These experiential narratives, she notes, adopt affective registers to critique colonial violence and injustices in tangible rather than expository ways, representing the felt experiences of colonialism. Miranda calls for

> a lens other than brokenness, a lens in which that brief moment of empowerment is not handed over to the oppressor as soon as it is expressed. In short, a lens that does not use our pain to indict us as impossibly damaged communities incapable of living outside paternalistic governance of bodies and lives, but rather uses the empowerment found in our own Indigenous experiences of pain as the materials to rebuild our selves and our world. (381)

Miranda uses this lens to read the archived stories told by Esselen-Rumsen storyteller and Indigenous historian Isabel Meadows in the early twentieth century, but Miranda's approach to narratives of suffering under colonialism not as evidence of "impossibly damaged communities" but as empowered and engaged in a process of rebuilding Indigenous worlds offers wide application in Indigenous literary studies.

Cook-Lynn, whose work predates these contemporary critical discussions of resilience, self-determination, and trauma, nonetheless takes up these issues in her fiction and criticism. For Cook-Lynn, literature should name the injustices of colonialism, and she does so in experiential terms throughout her trilogy; literature should also reinforce self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous nations, embedding the experiences and struggles of individual characters within the broader histories of their nation. Cook-Lynn's depiction of trauma through John, Aurelia, Lewis, and Jason represents the collective struggles of the Crow Creek Nation following Pick-Sloan. Her trilogy emphasizes these issues as social vulnerability, yet her work glimpses what could be called resilience in the commitment of Aurelia to rebuild her family and community as a carrier of stories and Dakota relationality, as she raises her children to be aware of the people's relationship to the river as giver of life. Cook-Lynn resists the damage-centered

and deficit narratives that surround Indigenous struggles in the twentieth century, such as those fictionalized by Leaper's act of violence and that underlie the rape and murder of the young Dakota woman, by situating these acts within larger histories of colonialism and Dakota resistance. In doing so, Cook-Lynn honors the suffering of Indigenous peoples under the pressures of colonization, social vulnerability, and domestic paternalism through affective descriptions of their suffering, giving voice to the consequences of federal policy that the non-Native public would rather ignore.

However, despite that suffering Cook-Lynn's Dakota characters uphold their commitments to relationality. Following his legal ordeal in *From the River's Edge*, John Tatekeya drives to the river just before sundown to remind himself of the *unktechies*, who are the spirits that sacrificed themselves so that the Dakota people could exist.[56] The trial leaves John even more disillusioned with the legal reality that has shaped his recent months and he feels that "his life was changed irrevocably just as the river had been changed for all eternity" (127). John sits by and watches the "great ponderous waves on the gray water," which make him think of "the remarkable *unktechies*" who "taught the Indians what they needed to know about religion" and who are still in the river awaiting the prayers and drums of the people (127-128). John cannot separate this moment of spiritual introspection from his memory of walking "to his mailbox in water up to his knees…when part of his lands were flooded," when he had to console his panicked

[56] As Cook-Lynn tells it, the unktechies "at the beginning of time, ripped off first one arm and then the other and flung them into the water. One was a female figure and the other a male" (127). In her essay "You May Consider Speaking about Your Art," Cook-Lynn notes the importance of unktechies to ceremony as "that body of creative expression which accounts for the continued survival and development of a people, a nation," noting that "the people who gathered to perform this ceremony a hundred years ago did so at risk of their lives...They imagined the grief of the Unktechies who arose from the water, hundreds, perhaps thousands of years ago, to give the people a religion and then went deep into the Earth to listen for the sounds of our drums, songs, poetry, and prayers. The people wept and sang of their own grief and sorrow" (60).

daughter yet shared in that panic "as they and others from the community watched from the hills" (128). John's feelings of spiritual connection to his community and his ancestors are entwined with the affective experience of losing his lands to the Big Bend dam. Even so, the spiritual connection that John maintains by practicing Dakota relationality, by participating in ceremony, and by keeping Dakota songs alive offers him a powerful source of strength: "At last, sitting slumped in his pickup, he knew that he would not be among those who were driven from this land by such violence. He knew that he would stay here. Die here. Because of the *unktechies*" (128). John finds a sense of peace while looking into the water, which is simultaneously a sign of vitality and trauma, of loss and survivance, that reminds John that his life is a gift granted to him by the *unktechies*, upheld through ceremony. In this brief moment of solace, John locates himself in the Dakota kinship structures that reinforce his nation.

Upholding relationality is essential to John, Aurelia, and the Dakota peoples who maintain their reciprocal responsibilities with their community and other-than-human beings. As I have argued in this chapter, social vulnerability is a deliberate part of settler colonialism's disruption of Indigenous land-based relationality but is not by itself a sufficient framework for understanding Indigenous environmental justice struggles. Even as Cook-Lynn renders the suffering of the Crow Creek Dakota following Pick-Sloan in affective terms, that representation is not one of brokenness but one that honors the suffering and the deep ties between Indigenous peoples and the relations that teach them how to live in good relations despite the pressures of domestic paternalism that aims to break down Indigenous relational systems and despite the ongoing structures of social vulnerability that the Dakota people face. Cook-Lynn's trilogy presents relationality as a

source of strength for her characters, as a center that grounds them to their community in resistance to colonization. The following chapter continues to examine the role of relationality and Indigenous knowledge in speculative fiction that imagines resistance to colonial violence and social vulnerability, imagining resurgence within a context of settler apocalypse.

CHAPTER IV

MINO-BIMAADIZIWIN AS RESILIENCE IN WABUGESHIG RICE'S *MOON OF THE CRUSTED SNOW*

Trauma and resilience are two ends of a dialectic that often confines Indigenous writers, as illustrated by Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* trilogy. Pressures toward representing trauma without overshadowing resilience or representing resilience without forgetting the immense loss following colonialism put efforts toward meaningful Indigenous resurgence in a stranglehold. This pressure stems from the tendency of settler depictions of trauma and resilience to only offer weak acknowledgement of colonization (frequently euphemized as migration, settlement, expansion, or manifest destiny) as a past event, failing to recognize coloniality as a structure of violence enacted through legal systems built on white supremacist principles and widespread environmental injustice. Furthermore, settler discourses of trauma and resilience fail to recognize that settler resilience is built on Indigenous vulnerability and on the ongoing disruption of structures, relationships, and practices that contribute to Indigenous resilience.

Social vulnerability scholarship offers a useful framework for exploring the material consequences of settler colonialism and environmental injustice for Native and other marginalized communities. Rigorous interrogations of trauma and resilience must follow. Indigenous critiques of resilience approach the term with caution, for resilience can serve as a marker of reconciliation on settler terms, which in turn casts doubt on social vulnerability as an adequate theoretical framework to critique coloniality. Discourses of resilience can further depoliticize the settler state's role in driving social vulnerability by defining social vulnerability as a nexus of environmental,

socioeconomic, and geographical issues, ignoring systemic violence and dispossession. Discourses of trauma, on the other hand, force conversations about vulnerability and colonialism into a framework of healing and reconciliation on the terms of the settler state, as discussed in the prior chapter. As Cook-Lynn's fiction and nonfiction writings demonstrate, intergenerational trauma is a legitimate index of social vulnerability, particularly as that vulnerability manifests through federal legal and political structures.

This chapter examines the limits of these discourses while exploring possibilities for resurgence in Indigenous speculative fiction (hereafter spec-fic), a mode of writing that combines realist elements with imagined, or speculative, situations and concepts, often in alternate realities, timelines, or future timelines. Speculative fiction includes the genres of science fiction, fantasy, horror, utopian/dystopian narrative, and apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic narrative. Spec-fic also includes decolonial and antiracist genres of Afrofuturisms, Chicanafuturisms, and Indigenous futurisms.[57] As David Gaertner puts it, "In many ways Afrofuturism and Indigenous Futurism are pragmatic antidotes to contemporary reconciliation narratives, insofar as they look towards the future survivance of Indigenous peoples and people of colour within a system that, reconciled or not, continues to inflict violence against their bodies" (Gaertner). In the context of climate change, spec-fic has also been taken up through cli-fi, which is science fiction that explores the consequences of climate change and of widespread environmental harm through speculative, dystopian, or otherwise imagined climate futures. Through a reading of an Anishinaabe spec-fic novel, this chapter examines the potential for speculative fiction to confront the limitations of trauma and resilience

[57] Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon coined the term Indigenous Futurism, building on the earlier work of Afrofuturist writers and thinkers.

discourses by approaching these concepts and the genre through the Anishinaabemowin principle of mino-bimaadiziwin, which loosely translates as the everyday pursuit of a long, healthy life in relation to other-than-human beings.

In Indigenous spec-fic and cli-fi, the future struggles of Indigenous peoples correspond to the kinds of vulnerability that the last chapter outlines: the lived experience of intergenerational trauma of colonialism paired with attacks on relational systems, land-based practices, and legal systems that put Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, at risk of violence and exploitation. Indigenous spec-fic offers complex visions of resilience and resurgence, however, as traditional and environmental knowledge systems come back into focus, as lessons from ancestors empower Native peoples living in the climate future, and as Indigenous communities are positioned to thrive while the settler state collapses. The notion of resilience that Indigenous spec-fic imagines for Indigenous peoples offers productive support for actual resurgence yet requires theorizing resilience in Indigenous rather than settler terms. This chapter enters this discursive matrix, exploring the imaginative possibilities of Indigenous spec-fic to revise discussions of resilience, trauma, and resurgence.

Wasauksing First Nation Anishinaabe writer Waubgeshig Rice offers a literary interrogation of these issues in his 2018 spec-fic novel *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. For Rice's fictional Anishinaabe community, which is forced to undertake significant transformations as the settler state collapses following a mysterious energy crisis, land-based practices and Anishinaabe knowledge systems provide a source of resilience and resurgence that allows them to resist the threat of settler violence and rebuild their governance systems in a return to the relational practices of their ancestors. As a work of

fiction that imagines an Indigenous future within the larger context of climate change, colonization, and settler dystopia, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* offers a decolonial imaginary[58] that theorizes resilience and resurgence in Indigenous terms. Rice's novel confronts settler colonialism and environmental injustice as enmeshed threats to Indigenous life, showing that relationality, land-based practices, and Anishinaabe knowledge upheld through everyday actions facilitates resurgence even as settler society collapses.

Rice's novel explores what resurgence can look like once Indigenous nations escape the pressures of settler colonialism that perpetuate social vulnerability through oppressive power structures and environmental injustice, re-centering relationality as the continuity of Indigenous life. As Jeff Corntassel, Taiaiake Alfred, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua, Hokulani Aikau, Noenoe Silva, and Devi Micina argue in their introduction to *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, resurgence is made possible by the "everydayness" of Indigenous life: "Indigenous nations and communities are strengthened and perpetuated by the everyday actions that express and nurture their relationships to lands, waters, language, sacred living histories, and the natural world...These seemingly small actions are significant in informing both the micro and macro processes of community resurgence" (18). These scholars recognize relationality as the vital force that perpetuates Indigenous life in the face of colonial violence. Their theory of resurgence marks a nuanced divergence from the notion of resilience; relationality serves as a form of

[58] My use of the term "decolonial" recognizes the intervention of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang that I discussed in the last chapter—decolonization is not taken metaphorically. As I use it here, decolonial imaginary refers to the dismantling of settler colonial structures of dominance and the recovery of Indigenous knowledges and land-based sovereignty as imagined in spec-fic.

resilience against colonialism, but resilience alone cannot capture the experiences of coloniality that have shaped Indigenous life in irreversible ways.

While it is appropriate to describe those intergenerational, collective experiences and the irrevocable transformation forced upon Indigenous communities as trauma, as social and emotional damage passed between generations, emphasizing trauma draws attention away from coloniality as an ongoing structure of violence and vulnerability. As Cook-Lynn's trilogy demonstrates, settler colonialism attacks Indigeneity by disrupting relations between humans and other-than-human relatives, targeting the ethics of relationality that shape Dakota life and resilience. Discussions of trauma must recognize this structural attack on relationality rather than simply advancing narratives of damage, deficiency, or dysfunction. Acknowledging trauma is an important step toward recentering Indigenous knowledge, land-based spiritual practices, and networks of relationality in frameworks of healing and resurgence.

Indigenous literatures, including spec-fic like Rice's novel, reverse the harmful discourses that perpetuate colonization as a structure of erasure. Even though spec-fic generally offers powerful imaginaries for rethinking human relationships with the other-than-human world, particularly in the wake of climate change, the genre routinely excludes Indigenous perspectives and histories in its imaginings of human-land relations.[59] This is particularly the case for dystopic fiction that explores what

[59] When I read non-Indigenous spec-fic, cli-fi, and post-apocalyptic narratives, I often ask, what happened to Native people? Frequently the worldbuilding that occurs in these literary forms imagines Native communities out of existence, suggesting that as soon as the collapse/disaster/major event occurs, Native people simply vanish, and their homelands are subsumed into a post-apocalyptic frontier. For example, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* follows a group of characters across a post-apocalyptic Western landscape with no mention of or encounters with Native peoples, even as Lauren imagines a future for her community out of place-based ecological practices that are rooted in Indigenous knowledges. Similarly, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* explores the implications of desertification, water diversion, and capitalization of water in a dystopian future with only passing

ecocriticism scholars call the Anthropocene, referring to the current geological epoch in which human influence has achieved irreversible changes to the Earth's ecological and climactic systems. It may be that Indigenous peoples and perspectives are typically absent from mainstream dystopic fiction, cli-fi, and literatures of the Anthropocene because non-Native theories of the Anthropocene and dystopia are not immediately translatable for Indigenous communities.[60]

Indeed, Indigenous peoples are living in what their ancestors would consider dystopic: a future in which the other-than-human world is exploited and in which settler colonialism continues to target Indigenous relations, which mark the end of lifeways. In "Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises," Whyte suggests that speculative narratives of dystopia are useful for describing colonization's disruption of lived, everyday Indigenous relations to other-than-human beings:

> Different forms of colonialism, of course, whether through environmental destruction, land dispossession or forced relocation, have ended Indigenous

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mention of Native treaties. The first season of the television show *Lovecraft Country*, which is deeply steeped in science fiction culture, features an Indigenous two-spirit character for about a quarter of an episode before ze is brutally killed by a primary character, sparking social media critiques of the show as perpetuating damaging stereotypes of Native characters, and women in particular, as disposable, critiques echoing back to E. Pauline Johnson's late nineteenth century confrontation of tropes of Native feminine death and Rayna Greene's early essay in Native literary studies, "Pocahontas Perplex," which speaks to the distorted representations of Native women in European and settler literatures. That *Lovecraft Country* confronts the overt racism of 1950s America and the country's history of slavery head on, the show's brief, violent storyline for its only Indigenous character is troubling.

[60] In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Kathryn Yusoff challenges scholarly discourses of the Anthropocene as overlooking legacies of racism, antiblackness, and colonialism. She argues, "To be included in the 'we' of the Anthropocene is to be silenced by a claim to universalism that fails to notice its subjugations, taking part in a planetary condition in which no part was accorded in terms of subjectivity. The supposed 'we' further legitimates and justifies the racialized inequalities that are bound up in social geologies"

> peoples' local relationships to thousands of plants, animals, insects, and entire ecosystems. While these relationships often continue to be enacted through Indigenous peoples' living memories…they have stopped as relationships involving direct ecological interaction. ("Dystopia" 226)

Whyte notes that the ancestral dystopias that Indigenous peoples have endured are different from the dystopic visions that non-Native science fiction offers, articulating a theory of "living Indigenous science (fiction)" as "a philosophical place of intergenerational dialogue that unfolds through finding and empowering those protagonists who can inspire and guide us through the ancestral dystopias we continue to endure" ("Science (Fiction)" 233). Rice's protagonist, Evan Whitesky, serves as that inspirational protagonist within Whyte's vision of living Indigenous science (fiction). Evan is committed to learning his people's land-based practices from elders while also actively learning Anishinaabemowin and practicing subsistence hunting respectfully and appropriately. Evan therefore upholds positive relations to his fellow Anishinaabeg, a commitment that involves his service in a public works capacity. Evan makes a conscious effort to recover Anishinaabe knowledge and land-based practices that have been vital to his people's survival following forced removal from their homelands prior to colonization. The skills that come from these practices become increasingly important as the community unexpectedly loses power and connection to the outside world, which has suffered a mysterious apocalyptic collapse.

Rice's fictional Gaawaandagkoong Nation survives the settler apocalypse thanks to community members who are committed to keeping their people's practices of reciprocal responsibility and knowledge alive, including language, history, and

subsistence hunting as fundamental to living as good relations. In these and other ways, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* joins a rich and growing body of Indigenous speculative fiction. Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon identifies the strong political force of Indigenous science fiction, which she refers to as "sf," as offering greater opportunities for imagining decolonization than realist forms. Dillon argues,

> Indigenous sf authors often write "fiction" that allegorizes the facts of historical trauma in an effort to promote social justice. Their storytelling represents "decolonizing methodologies," "Indigenous self-determination," and "survivance." Survivance rejects the notion that Indigenous peoples ought to remain content that they survived colonization; self-determination compels Indigenous peoples to define their own identities and to regain lost sovereignties; decolonizing methodologies reflect the participation of scholarly activists in this enterprise. ("Global Indigenous Science Fiction," 378)

Dillon sees in Indigenous sf[61] the kind of creative work that Vizenor theorizes as survivance, including the possibilities for transformative visions of Indigenous futures that spec-fic offers. Building on Dillon's work on Indigenous sf, I argue that Indigenous spec-fic names colonial violence and gives voice to the trauma endured by Indigenous peoples while also, most importantly, imagining a decolonial future that reflects ongoing movements for self-determination, sovereignty, and environmental justice. For Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice, Indigenous spec-fic offers "an extension of the possible, not the impossible; it opens up and expands the range of options for Indigenous characters" that moves beyond realist limits that often contribute to narratives of damage or deficit

[61] I follow Dillon's use of "sf" instead of my own preference for spec-fic when referring to her discussion of the genre.

(149). Justice offers his own term for Indigenous spec-fic, "wonderworks," which he argues better aligns with Indigenous relational epistemologies than the terms speculative fiction, fantasy, or science fiction (152). For Justice, "It's in Indigenous wonderworks that some of the best models of different, better relationships are being realized, and it's these stories that give me hope for a better future...I think wonderworks help us become better ancestors, as they allow us to imagine a future beyond settler colonial vanishings, a future where we belong" (152-153). For Justice and Dillon, Indigenous sf/spec-fic/wonderworks center relations and decolonial methodology in processes of imagining Indigenous futures. Relationality is the root of this imagining, as contemporary peoples envision themselves as ancestors and recognize that they are the outcome of their ancestors' prayers and anticolonial imaginings.

Dillon, Justice, and Whyte's theoretical and philosophical approaches to Indigenous futurisms emanate from relationality as land-based practices and cosmologies that differ from non-Native speculative imaginaries that frequently ignore Native presence. Justice cites Dillon's introduction to *Walking the Clouds*, a groundbreaking anthology of Indigenous spec-fic, where she argues that Indigenous sf "returns us to ourselves by encouraging Native writers to write about Native conditions in Native-centered worlds liberated by the imagination" ("Imagining" 11, cited in Justice 155). Justice emphasizes "difference, not as deficiency, but as *distinction*," as key to wonderworks, arguing that they are "rooted in the land—not generic landscapes but specific places with histories, voices, memories. They carry the past forward. They give us a future, even if it's only an imagined one. But without that imagined possibility, it's all too easy to believe we don't belong there, and that's a road to a very frightening place

indeed" (156). Indigenous spec-fic creates a sense of belonging in a genre of imagination that typically ignores Indigenous presence, bringing to spec-fic strong literary traditions of decolonization, nationhood, and trans/national coalition-building within and across tribal communities. These movements resist stereotypes of deficiency and the erasure that is so common in non-Indigenous literary genres, including spec-fic, instead imagining possibilities for resurgence. Such imaginings also engage in questions of resilience, offering productive complications of that idea that are grounded in land-based relationality and everyday resurgence, not the reconciliatory aims of neoliberalism.

Rethinking Resilience: Grounded Normativity Meets Indigenous Speculative Futures

As a broad concept, resilience can be used to describe the intrinsic, tensile strength of cultural systems and land-based practices. Glen Coulthard refers to these land-based knowledge systems as "grounded normativity," which uphold relational structures that underscore Indigenous nations. However, resilience discourse also raises problems as a broad analytic that can be mobilized for different agendas, including settler colonial reconciliation as a strategy to evade accountability for state violence. As noted in the last chapter, Tuck and Yang theorize settler moves to innocence as "those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all" ("Decolonization" 10). Tuck and Yang see this as a desire "to be made innocent, to find some mercy or relief in the face of the relentlessness of settler guilt and haunting," noting that "directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous

peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept" ("Decolonization" 9). Celebrating Indigenous resilience (which is really just existence in the face of a history of genocidal violence and perpetual laws attacking Indigenous sovereignty) positions settlers as reconciled with their ancestors' colonizing actions, even as settlers continue to benefit from that legacy of violence.[62] The notion of resilience softens and evades a direct acknowledgment of colonial violence as a structure, in Patrick Wolfe's terms, rather than an event. Resilience suggests that the significant losses suffered by Indigenous nations are of little consequence to Indigenous peoples today; their resilience suggests they should be able to "get over" past injustices.[63] More insidiously, discussions of resilience that ignore coloniality suggest that Indigenous peoples would do well to assimilate to settler lifeways, including relying on power generated through technologies imposed on environments that transform ecosystems and contribute to climate change, as in Rice's novel, since the supposed resilience of the settler state is built on these technologies.

The limits of resilience are also clear in social vulnerability research's tendency to not identify coloniality as a driver of vulnerability.[64] In broad terms, social resilience

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[62] Calling Indigenous peoples resilient is a patronizing way to describe their survival of centuries of colonial violence. As Cheyenne-Arapaho writer Tommy Orange puts it in his novel *There There*, "don't make the mistake of calling us resilient. To not have been destroyed, to not have given up, to have survived, is no badge of honor. Would you call an attempted murder victim resilient?" (137).

[63] Cutcha Rising-Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, Karuk) offers an apt response to this idea of "getting over" colonialism in her blog post "Why I Teach 'The Walking Dead' in My Native Studies Classes." She argues, "When we stop talking, when we stop remembering, when we stop honoring that past, we become ignorant of how that past is the present, is the future. We cannot be complicit in erasing the past by 'getting over it.' In these words, when we speak to our survival, we are sending strength to those who fought, bled, died, and refused to 'get over' what was happening to them. We also refuse to accept that it can, should, or will happen to us. We stand up. We fight."

[64] I attribute the absence of rigorous engagement with coloniality to a lack of familiarity with settler colonial or Indigenous studies among science and social science scholars as well as funding from federal sources which calls for different kinds of interventions than Indigenous studies typically offers. As such, Whyte, Daniel Wildcat, Robin Wall Kimmerer, John Mohawk, and other Indigenous scientists and scholars of Indigenous environmental sciences offer vital voices to the discipline.

refers to the adaptive capacity of communities to hold together in the face of external environmental, climate, or disaster threats. Kyle Whyte builds on this idea, offering the concept of "collective continuance" as the ability of Indigenous peoples to adapt to ecological changes or natural hazards. According to Whyte, "Collective continuance refers to a society's capacity to self-determine how to adapt to change in ways that avoid reasonably preventable harms," noting that "in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions...which predate 'Western' concepts of social resilience, seasonal round governance systems are highly flexible webs of relationships. The relationships are based on particular responsibilities that each party in a relationship has" ("Ecology" 131). Social resilience for Indigenous peoples, according to Whyte, stems from these reciprocal relationships that create interdependency between the people and the other-than-human beings, as well as widely shared knowledge that creates redundancy, offering "multiple options for adaptation when changes occur and for being able to guarantee sufficient opportunities for education and mentorship for community members" ("Ecology" 132). The principle of redundancy conflicts with settler-colonial structures of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and class hierarchy that isolate knowledge and responsibilities to certain roles only accessible based on gender, race, and/or class. As settler colonialism endeavors to disrupt Indigenous knowledge systems, it also diminishes redundancy, contributing to loss of land-based knowledges, languages, and relational practices and imposing settler logics of individualism and capitalism onto tribal nations.

After more than a century of colonization, the need to recover knowledge and re-establish redundancy—to make that knowledge widely held and accessible—has been a rallying cry for Indigenous EJ activists and Indigenous communities, including

individuals like Evan Whitesky in Rice's fictionalization of these dynamics. Imagining environmental justice requires restoring networks of relationality and knowledge systems that ensure redundancy and movement away from logics of possession. As Leanne Simpson notes, Anishinaabeg societies did not follow these hierarchies and logics of possession: "within Nishnaabeg thought, the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment*. Indigenous bodies don't relate to the land by possessing or owning it or having control over it. We relate to the land through connection—generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear *relationship*" (*Always* 43). Building on Coulthard's work, she argues that "the opposite of dispossession within Indigenous thought is grounded normativity. This is our power" (43). Indigenous resilience, therefore, is founded on grounded normativity and reciprocal relationships, not strictly possession of land or capital (which economic resilience requires under colonialism).

Moon of the Crusted Snow sets up a productive critique of settler-colonial discourses of resilience, including collective continuance and the false resilience that plays into neoliberal politics. The Gaawaandagkoong Nation, a remote Northern Anishinaabe band, has in recent years enjoyed stable electricity and connection to the outside world through internet and phone service. These connections come at an environmental cost, as the electricity is supplied through hydroelectric power generated by a dam that the band authorized within the coercive framework of Canadian policy whereby the band must acquiesce to such projects in order to provide resources to its citizens. Given the band's remote location, having continuous electricity allows citizens to power electric heating systems and enjoy television, household appliances, and

computing technology, which makes communication much more convenient and accessible. In the framework of social vulnerability studies, the community has shifted from a position of great social vulnerability without these capabilities to one of ostensibly greater resilience. Before the band's connection to the hydroelectric power grid, they had to truck in diesel fuel from the south to operate a generation facility, which supported the community off and on during the long winters. This system required extensive financial planning on the part of the band council and consumed significant amounts of fossil fuels, making the band dependent on an industry that contributes to the dispossession of Native peoples across the U.S. and Canada. The band therefore finds itself in a position of celebrating access to more stable hydroelectric power instead of fossil fuels. Now, citizens are more relaxed, running electric heaters instead of harvesting wood for heating fuel and shopping at the local grocery store instead of hunting, gathering, and gardening. However, this sense of stability is not actually resilience, especially as the people grow ever more distant from the practices that their ancestors maintained to allow the people to survive in the harsh Northern exposure.

The transition to hydroelectric power illustrates the uneven power dynamics that reinforce settler social resilience while diminishing Indigenous resilience, at the same time as the Gaawaandagkoong Nation welcomes the convenience of the settler technology as a positive development. This dynamic echoes Whyte's understanding of settler colonialism as "a social process by which at least one society seeks to establish its own collective continuance at the expense of the collective continuance of one or more societies—just one of its injustice-making features," noting that this process is not accidental ("Ecology" 136). While connecting the community to the hydroelectric grid

makes certain aspects of life easier for the community, doing so decreases the people's ability to sustain their livelihoods through Anishinaabe land-based practices and knowledges such as hunting, gathering, and harvesting wood fuel, which are difficult but instructive practices. This negative effect of settler technological infrastructure diminishes collective continuance for the community. Whyte argues, "For Indigenous peoples under settler colonialism, wrongful domination is locatable at the intersection of settler intent to undermine Indigenous collective continuance (and hence Indigenous ecologies) through disrupting the qualities of relationships that are constitutive of collective continuance and that facilitate social resilience or adaptive capacity. Settler colonial domination undermines social resilience" ("Ecology" 136). Connecting the Gaawaandagkoong Nation to hydroelectric power further establishes the economic network of energy production, therefore increasing the resilience of the settler-colonial energy economy that requires further dispossession of Indigenous lands.

This issue of collective continuance and social resilience comes into focus for the Gaawaandagkoong Nation once access to settler provisions and energy infrastructure abruptly and mysteriously stops. Rice immediately sets up a tension for the band in that some community members and leaders like Evan are eager to uphold Anishinaabe land-based knowledges that contribute to self-reliance, while many others rely on the luxuries of electric heat and store-bought food. Rice sets up a problematic dichotomy in this point of the plot in which tradition and land-based practices are central to Anishinaabe life, while modern technology and services risk the degradation of Anishinaabe knowledge. This dichotomy reinforces logics of assimilation, only in reverse: in order to resist colonization, Indigenous peoples must resist technology and movement into modernity.

Scott Lyons describes this binary of modernity and indigeneity as a problem for Indigenous activism, noting that tensions between Native groups that identify as "traditional" and those who embrace "modern" life are detrimental to Indigenous movements. Critiquing this binary in a case study of his own Leech Lake Ojibwe nation, Lyons argues that "the decolonization project is actually strengthened and not weakened when indigenous modernity is embraced," noting that the concept of decolonization is itself a product of modernity ("Actually Existing" 305). Lyons continues, "an embracement of indigenous modernity requires a different relationship to the past, one that does not seek to go backward but instead attempts to bring the past forward" (305). The first part of Rice's novel situates the plot within this binary, embracing both Anishinaabe tradition and modern modes of practicing Anishinaabe relationality. However, Rice also situates vulnerability within the nation's broader dependence on fossil fuels and hydroelectric power, two energy infrastructures that require destruction of ecosystems and dispossession of Indigenous lands.[65] As Reuben Martens notes in his analysis of *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, this dependence is forced upon remote First Nations communities in what he calls "energopolitical violence" that results in petro-melancholia as access to fossil fuels and hydroelectric power is cut off.[66] As the nation survives the winter, they find that their future will require the recovery of the land-based

[65] Rice does not discuss alternative modes of energy production—solar and wind generation, for instance—but these alternatives offer much more sustainable ways for Indigenous communities to build energy infrastructure. Winona LaDuke has long been an advocate of these energy projects as an alternative to fossil fuels.

[66] Mertens adopts his framework from a concept that Stephanie LeMenager developed to describe the affective political and social reaction to events like the BP oil blowout which point to the fragility of fossil fuel infrastructure and the economic structures that depend on it. This framework resonates with the issue of dependence on hydroelectric power and, in earlier years, diesel and gasoline that limits community resilience in *Moon of the Crusted Snow*.

knowledge and relational commitments that reinforce Anishinaabe resilience, adapted to a post-apocalyptic context that includes technology.

If Anishinaabe knowledge and nondominant relations to the other-than-human world contributes to the community's resilience, its newfound reliance on hydroelectric power and grocery services diminishes that resilience and increases dependence on the settler state. Soon after they are disconnected from the outside world, the community suffers losses and food scarcity. It becomes clear to Evan and his peers that intergenerational teachings offer the people an opportunity to thrive now that the settler state has, it appears, collapsed. In this speculative narrative, the band's resilience does not come from its recent connection to settler infrastructure, but from the knowledge systems that has enabled their community to survive despite significant hardship from colonization and removal from their homelands. This is at odds with settler colonial logics that technological progress, energy development, and infrastructure can only improve livelihoods. For Evan's community, land-based relations are the original infrastructure. As the first blizzard following the outage bears down, there is little panic in the community: "Survival had always been an integral part of their culture. It was their history. The skills they needed to persevere in this northern terrain, far from their original homeland father south, were proud knowledge held close through the decades of imposed adversity. They were handed down to those in the next generation willing to learn" (48). Evan notes that his people's migratory practices to survive in challenging Northern terrains offers the basis of resilience in harsh winters and, by extension, to destabilization following the collapse of the settler state. Migration and survival skills are part of broader

Anishinaabe knowledge, which for Evan is a source of pride that must be upheld through the commitment of those "willing to learn."

Evan's efforts to learn and practice Anishinaabe knowledge contributes to actual resilience, which for his community *is* Anishinaabe knowledge: language, spirituality, and land-based practices.[67] In the opening scene of the novel, Evan hunts a moose, working to harvest enough meat to sustain his family through the long winter around the corner. After taking the moose, Evan offers a prayer of thanks and puts down tobacco: "Great spirit, today I say miigwech for the life you have given us...Miigwech for my family. And for my community. Miigwech for our health. Chi-miigwech for the life you have allowed me to take today, this moozoo, to feed my family" (4). Evan feels awkward offering the prayer in mixed English and Anishinaabemowin, "but it still made him feel good to believe that he was giving back in some way," and in Evan's prayer he "promised to keep trying to live in a good way, despite the pull of negative influences around him...As he took from the earth, he gave back. It was the Anishinaabe way, as he understood it" (4-5).[68] Evan's negotiation of Anishinaabe life in his present moment

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[67] Rice presents these elements of Anishinaabe knowledge and resilience in tribal-specific terms. Other Indigenous studies scholars and Native writers have situated indigeneity within land, language, and spiritual practices, including Simon Ortiz and N. Scott Momaday. What indigeneity and peoplehood means in specific tribal context changes from nation to nation, especially for nations who no longer have speakers of their language or who have been removed to lands far from their homelands. Indigeneity does not cease to exist when these things are lost.

[68] Mertens notes several references to hydrocarbons in this passage, from the plastic bag that Evan keeps his tobacco in to the four-wheeler he uses for transportation, arguing that "every element in the chain from Evan's moose kill to bringing the animal home is intertwined with hydrocarbons—even though he himself believes that 'It was the Anishinaabe way'" (201). Mertens' critique reflects the impossible modernity/tradition binary that Lyons troubles, as by Mertens' logic the material aspects of the hunt (Mertens ignores the more vital spiritual side of Evan's actions) and his use of plastics cancels out the practice of relationality, making it impossible for Evan to live as an Anishinaabe person. This is a troubling argument from a European scholar policing Indigeneity. While Anishinaabe and other Indigenous activists have formed strong opposition to fossil fuel extraction and exploitation, there is nothing inherently contradictory to Indigenous peoples using hydrocarbons just like any other citizen.

involves an ongoing effort to practicing a cultural commitment to living "in a good way," bringing the reciprocal relationality that he understands as "the Anishinaabe way" into the future. As in Cook-Lynn's Dakota literary and political theory, for Evan the recovery of Anishinaabe knowledge is a philosophical, discursive learning process of giving thanks, reflecting on his feelings, and making an effort to resist the "negative influences" that follow trauma and coloniality. It is an effort to rebuild ethical relations, which takes active effort just as it takes effort to hunt for his family's subsistence instead of purchasing food harvested from another place. This effort is a reciprocal exchange, taking "from the earth" and giving back.

Evan's commitment to living "in a good way" reflects the Anishinaabe principle of mino-bimaadiziwin.[69] As Winona LaDuke explains, mino-bimaadiziwin is the core tenet of Ojibwe environmental justice efforts: "Our commitment and tenacity springs from our deep connection to the land…continuously reaffirmed through prayer, deed, and our way of being—*minobimaatisiiwin,* the 'good life'" (4). White Earth scholar Lawrence Gross argues that "*bimaadiziwin* is at least one unifying concept proving continuity in the worldview of the Anishinaabe from the past into the modern era" (15). As colonialism endeavors to disrupt practices that uphold positive relations, it takes effort on the part of Indigenous people like Evan and his relatives to bring spiritual and practical knowledge back to the people to restore resilience and mino-bimaadiziwin. Gross continues, "In the modern age, *bimaadiziwin* is helping the Anishinaabe to

[69] As with other Anishinaabemowin words, there are many different spellings of mino-bimaadiziwin, including versions that drop "mino-" which as a prefix translates as "good," with "bimaadiziwin" referring to life or living. I use the spelling offered in the Ojibwe People's Dictionary project maintained by students and faculty of the University of Minnesota department of American Indian Studies. When quoting other writers, I maintain their chosen spelling.

reconstruct their worlds in the postapocalyptic period. Of course, the old world of the Anishinaabe can never be recovered in full, but concepts such as *bimaadiziwin* create a bridge from the old world to the new" (16). For Evan, recovering Anishinaabe knowledge and putting it into practice through respecting the gift of the moose connects him to a much longer history of his people's practice of mino-bimaadiziwin, which recognizes interdependent ecological relations as essential to resilience.[70]

Mino-bimaadiziwin as a literary device and decolonial analytic similarly rejects universal humanism and colonial frameworks of temporality that disrupt relationality between humans and other-than-human beings, including spirit beings. St. Croix/Leech Lake Anishinaabe scholar Cary Miller highlights the latter relationship between humans and *manidoog*[71] in her approach to resilience and mino-bimaadiziwin:

> The Anishinaabeg lived in a very harsh environment. Starvation in the late winter months always threatened *mino-bimaadiziwin*. The only way to ensure *mino-bimaadiziwin* in all seasons was through establishing relationships of interdependency as widely as possible—including extended family in neighboring communities, and spiritual entities...The standards applied to mutual obligations

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[70] By grounding Evan's character in the practice of mino-bimaadiziwin, Rice offers an example of the "goodlife writing" that Mexican American literary scholar Priscilla Solis Ybarra theorizes, which "embraces the values of simplicity, sustenance, dignity, and respect" that emanate from land-based Indigenous and Mexican American communities through literature (4). According to Ybarra, goodlife writing offers a decolonial response to mainstream environmentalism in that "it embodies two core values of decoloniality: (1) a consistent rejection of the modern ideology of universal humanism and linear progress, and (2) a deviation from chronological and single-dimensional approaches to time and place," arguing that "Chicana/o writings offer ways of thinking that do not require the legacy of modernity that accompanies coloniality and brought about the destruction that called for environmentalism in the first place" (25-26).

[71] A variant spelling in English is "manitous," which uses -s to indicate plurality whereas Anishinaabemowin uses -g to indicate plurality, as in Anishinaabeg, which refers to people who are Anishinaabe.

> between human beings also applied to the reciprocal obligations between humans and all other inhabitants of the cosmos. (121)

Mino-bimaadiziwin is essential to surviving the harsh winters that Anishinaabeg face, and it depends on respecting reciprocal relations to other-than-human beings. Collective continuance and social resilience therefore require Anishinaabeg to uphold these cultural practices, but as Whyte argues, settler colonialism disrupts all of these aspects of Indigenous existence. As collective continuance and mino-bimaadiziwin are undermined by settler colonialism, recovering and revitalizing Anishinaabe knowledge becomes vital, however limited that recovery may be in the context of historic and ongoing colonial violence.

As a genre that reflects the conditions of coloniality, intergenerational trauma, and the loss of traditions while also imagining decolonial futures, Indigenous spec-fic offers a way to bring the past into the future. The opening scene in which Evan honors his people's relations to the moose that provide sustenance grounds the novel in Anishinaabe knowledge and mino-bimaadiziwin, not yet introducing the imminent collapse of settler technological infrastructure that makes up the speculative quality of the narrative. Grace Dillon sees this kind of engagement with Indigenous knowledge through spec-fic as drawing attention to Indigenous science and environmental practices, both of which support sustainable relations. She notes that Indigenous science is grounded in relationships and knowledge passed over thousands of years, which is quite different from Western scientific methods ("Imagining" 7). For Anishinaabe peoples, scientific knowledge was practiced in everyday life. Dillon explains that "In Anishinaabemowin, the word *gikendaasowin* begins to measure the prevalence and depth of scientific

discourse. It is botanical knowledge, knowledge of the land, but it is also knowledge itself, teachings and ways of living. Storytelling was the medium of choice for transmitting and preserving traditional knowledge" ("Imagining" 8). Gikendaasowin, which in simplified terms translates as knowledge, provides a key context for the speculative narrative that unfolds in *Moon of the Crusted Snow*: Anishinaabe knowledge enables Evan to help his community transition to an unexpected power outage and shortage of food and supplies. Anishinaabe knowledge, perpetuated through living mino-bimaadiziwin and in good relations with other-than-human beings, are carried in the prayers of Evan's ancestors that reinforce Indigenous resilience in the face of removal, colonial violence driven by assimilative efforts, and attacks on Anishinaabe spirituality.

Evan's commitment to learning and perpetuating Anishinaabe knowledge connects him to similar efforts on the part of his ancestors, whose prayers empowered their descendants to survive. During an early band meeting to discuss the situation and the necessity to ration food and conserve diesel fuel, Aileen Jones, an elder in the community, opens the meeting by smudging the space and the people following the band's protocol for community events and council meetings. This purifying practice of burning sage and allowing each participant to cleanse themselves in the smoke "had once been forbidden, outlawed by the government and shunned by the church" (53). Under the pressures of assimilation, the band struggled to maintain spiritual practices after "the ancestors of these Anishinaabe people were forced to settle in this unfamiliar land," a shared experience with Indigenous peoples in the United States that Cook-Lynn describes through John Tatekeya and Lewis Grey Iron's juxtaposition of environmental injustice, intergenerational trauma, and attacks on Dakota spiritual practices. In Rice's approach to

this dynamic, the community maintained its spiritual practices thanks to elders like Aileen who "kept the old ways alive in secret. They whispered the stories and the language in each other's ears, even when they were stolen from their families to endure forced and often violent assimilation at church-run residential schools...They had held out hope that one day their beautiful ways would be able to reemerge and flourish once again" (53). Evan has the opportunity to learn and practice Anishinaabemowin and his people's land-based lifeways and recognizes that practice as a responsibility to his ancestors and his descendants as vital parts of his community. The hope that elders hold out is not just that they can practice smudging at community events and governance meetings, but that the community can thrive along with the "beautiful ways" that are carried through Anishinaabe knowledge.

Linking ancestors to future generations of Anishinaabe people, this passage offers two modes of narrative foreshadowing through this everyday act of Anishinaabe spiritual life. First, its description of the colonial violence that suppressed Indigenous spiritual practices, which Aileen experienced firsthand, foreshadows the apocalyptic experience that faces all people in this new, uncertain future. This apocalyptic moment is not new to Indigenous peoples, as the ancestors who survived widespread violence and oppression survived an apocalypse. Second, the intergenerational hope that Anishinaabe spirituality and knowledges "reemerge and flourish" foreshadows the decolonial possibilities of the narrative as a work of speculative fiction: without the assimilative systems of settler society bearing down, threatening to continually dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and knowledge systems, resurgence on Indigenous terms is possible. These two examples of the literary technique of foreshadowing illustrates the intergenerational

connection that spirituality and Anishinaabe knowledge provides Evan and his community, while also illustrating the way Indigenous sf writers like Rice can use fictional narrative to articulate the intergenerational experience of colonial trauma, which the following section unpacks. In this new post-settler future, Indigenous peoples are in a position for resurgence. That resurgence certainly isn't a return to Anishinaabe life before colonization, but it does imagine the possibilities for Indigenous knowledges to sustain life when the oppressive structures of coloniality are dismantled. As the outage continues, the nation's remoteness protects it from the dangers of the urban areas of the south, which descend into violence and chaos. However, despite the collapse of settler society, the vestiges of the structural violence against Anishinaabe life and governance remain, reminding the people of colonial trauma and necessitating resilience to a very old threat: the wiindigoo.

Apocalyptic Familiarity: Settler Colonialism, Trauma, and Wiindigoo Threat

As a work of postapocalyptic speculative fiction, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* engages the narrative possibilities of the genre to articulate the intergenerational experiences Indigenous nations under settler colonialism. For scholars like Kyle Whyte and Lawrence Gross, the notion of apocalypse offers a framework for thinking about the violence of coloniality and intergenerational trauma. *Moon of the Crusted Snow* shows that in the "post" of post-apocalyptic lies potential for resurgence and Indigenous futurity that employs a non-Native framework to theorize resurgent Indigeneity. As April Anson argues, "though the settler form of the apocalypse genre is limited to a linear end of a (white) world event, apocalypse can frame Black and Indigenous futurity and futurisms

within the structural context of the settler state. They can move our imaginations through, and indeed beyond, the whitewashed horizons of settler time and space" (58). *Moon of the Crusted Snow* offers the kind of imagining that Anson writes about: a future in which Anishinaabe knowledge empower a community toward resurgence in the face of settler apocalypse. Interrogating apocalypse as a lens for critiquing coloniality allows for a deeper understanding of resilience and relationality, for apocalyptic loss and postapocalyptic survival are matters of renewing relations.

As the winter drags on, the leaders of the Gaawaandagkoong Nation ration the band's food cache and explore options for what comes next and for what future the community can create out the settler state's apocalyptic collapse, which is never clearly explained. Leaving the settler apocalypse unexplained shifts focus away from the events that led to that collapse and allows Evan and his community to focus on their struggles and futurity, and hints at the possibilities for Indigenous resurgence. While the disconnection of electricity and telecommunications puts the community in immediate danger over the winter months, if they can hold out, the nation stands to regain and imagine sovereignty in a way impossible under Canadian dominance. Evan's peers express concern about what this apocalypse means for their community, but elders offer a different perspective, since they and their ancestors experienced apocalyptic conditions through colonization.

As settler colonialism aims to destroy Indigenous relationships and land-based practices, coloniality is indeed apocalyptic from an Indigenous perspective. White Earth Ojibwe scholar Lawrence Gross uses an apocalyptic framework to reckon with social and emotional struggles of Native communities, referring to intergenerational trauma as

"post-apocalypse stress syndrome" (128). According to Gross, between contact and the end of the reservation period, "American Indians have seen the end of their worlds...A culture cannot go through this type of trauma and not expect to suffer some impact," arguing that "post-apocalypse stress syndrome...can be thought of as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) raised to the level of an entire culture. As with an individual suffering from PTSD, the challenge for a culture is to go through some type of recovery. That process principally entails rebuilding the cultural world" (130). This rebuilding process involves recovering what settler colonialism sought to destroy while building a new world, a new future, much like the imaginative possibilities of spec-fic. *Moon of the Crusted Snow* approaches trauma through a similar lens as Gross describes, with the speculative narrative of settler apocalypse offering a space for rebuilding and renewing relations on a community level.

As the Gaawaandagkoong Nation comes to terms with the uncertain, apocalyptic times ahead, the experiences of their ancestors offer a way forward. Kyle Whyte theorizes the different generational perspectives of dystopia and ecological struggle in "Our ancestors' dystopia now: Indigenous conservation and the Anthropocene," offering an Indigenous-centered contribution to critical discussions of the Anthropocene, conservation, and environmental justice. As Whyte notes, some theorists emphasize climate destabilization as the transition point of the Anthropocene, while others argue that the Anthropocene began in the 16th century with the advent of colonialism and intercontinental commerce (206). Whyte's intervention in discussions of the Anthropocene identifies the dystopic narratives that often articulate the key issues of the Anthropocene as resonant with Indigenous peoples' experiences of colonialism. Whyte

argues that the Anthropocene present and future that Indigenous peoples are experiencing is their ancestors' dystopia. For example, "settler colonial campaigns in the Great Lakes region have already depleted, degraded, or irreversibly damaged the ecosystems, plants, and animals that our ancestors had local living relationships with for hundreds of years and that are the material anchors of our contemporary customs, stories, and ceremonies" ("Dystopia" 207). For the Indigenous peoples who experience these destructive, apocalyptic transformations, the material future for their descendants is dystopic as relations are strained or made inaccessible.

Like all Native and First Nations communities, the elders and ancestors of Evan's nation experienced such severe changes to their freedom and lifeways that, as a community, they survived an apocalypse under settler colonialism. As Whyte's framework suggests, the notion of apocalypse resonates differently for Indigenous elders than in popular discourse: Indigenous apocalypse describes not the collapse of settler societies and global technocratic economies but the colonial experience of the disruption of land-based relations. After the winter has set in, Evan pays a visit to Aileen Jones, the elder who offered a prayer at the community meeting. As they discuss how the younger community members are coping, Aileen explains that the Ojibwe language doesn't even have a word that represents the apocalypse or the end of the world. She explains that in the perspective of elders, their world "ended when the Zhagnaash [white man] came into our original home down south on that bay and took it from us" (149). For Aileen, the end of the world is not the end of human life but the end of the relationships that make the Anishinaabe people who they are, relations based on specific homelands that are disrupted when the people are forcibly relocated and when the lands themselves are

transformed by colonial industry. Aileen continues, "That was our world. When the Zhaagnaash[72] cut down all the trees and fished all the fish and forced us out of there, that's when our world ended. They made us come all the way up here. This is not our homeland! But we had to adapt and luckily we already know how to hunt and live on the land. We learned to live here" (149). Aileen describes the collective continuance that Anishinaabe science and land-based knowledge supports, which allowed the people to adapt to their new, harsher environment as settler colonialism transforms their former homelands.

As discussed earlier in this project, the transformation of Indigenous homelands into settler homelands involves destroying networks of relationality and ecosystems to set up settler infrastructure, whether farms, dams, or pipelines. Whyte notes that "as a means of carving out settler homelands from indigenous homelands, waves of settlers harnessed industrial means, from military technologies to large-scale mineral and fossil fuel extraction operations to sweeping, landscape-transforming regimes of commodity agriculture," processes that have reshaped ecosystems "to such a degree...that it is hard to recognize anything 'indigenous' about them" ("Dystopia" 208). Whyte argues that the process of transforming Indigenous homelands into unrecognizable places that are then inscribed as settler homelands corresponds to the ways in which "many scholars and activists describe setter colonialism as a structure of oppression that erases indigenous peoples" ("Dystopia" 208). In her conversation with Evan, Aileen identifies the clearcutting of forests, overfishing, and forced removal of her ancestors as an effort to erase her people and the lands and relationships that give them being. Despite this

[72] Simply translates as "white man."

apocalyptic experience, her people were able to adapt their land-based knowledge and practices to survive, even as they bear the trauma of experiencing the end of their former world. In apocalyptic and dystopic terms, and in opposition to less critically-informed notions of resilience, actual resilience does not displace trauma; it is tempered by it.

The community continues to struggle with the trauma of settler colonialism, an apocalyptic disruption of relational systems that necessitates recovery in a spiritual and emotional sense, but also as the revitalization of language, spirituality, and cultural practices in keeping with mino-bimaadiziwin. Again, recovering these targets of colonialism does not mean reversion to pre-colonial conditions, but rather grounds Indigenous futurity in tradition and Indigenous knowledge, taking the past into the future. In her work on Indigenous spec-fic, Dillon describes recovery as an issue of balance, citing Lawrence Gross's idea of post-apocalypse stress syndrome as "the state of being *aakozi*, Anishinaabemowin for 'he/she is sick' and, more to the point, 'out of balance.'" Dillon argues that "Native Apocalypse is really that state of imbalance" and that "Native apocalyptic storytelling...shows the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in its effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin. This is the path to a sovereignty embedded in self-determination" ("Imagining" 9). Further describing his theory of post-apocalypse stress syndrome, Gross argues that the social problems that Indigenous communities face, including increased morbidity, high rates of suicide, and substance abuse are linked to post-apocalyptic stress syndrome.[73] Gross notes, however,

[73] Gross explores this idea within a specific discussion of Anishinaabe religion, worldview, and ethnographic studies of mino-bimaadiziwin, which he refers to as *bimaadiziwin*. As I argue in the last chapter, the social, economic, and public health issues facing Indigenous communities are also tied to systemic social vulnerability as settler states disrupt systems of relationality that support community health and spiritual, physical, and emotional wellness.

that “To say a world has collapsed does not necessarily mean the associated worldview has died as well, arguing that Anishinaabeg “are building a new world order, based in part on the worldview of the past. One important component of this process is *bimaadiziwin”* (23). Practicing mino-bimaadiziwin contributes to Anishinaabe collective continuance in practical terms but also in imagining better futures, a process that requires the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and adaptation of those knowledge systems to decolonial futures.

Moreover, Aileen’s instruction through story offers solace to Evan while capturing the generic possibility of Indigenous spec-fic: providing new ways of understanding coloniality and imagining Indigenous futures grounded in Indigenous knowledge. After Evan explains that some community members are describing the Southern outage as an apocalypse, Aileen responds, “Yes, apocalypse. We’ve had that over and over. But we always survived. We’re still here. And we’ll still be here, even if the power and the radios don’t come back on and we never see any white people ever again” (150). As in Cook-Lynn’s *Circle of Dancers*, Evan learns to approach his current situation and struggles within a larger historic framework, much like Lewis helps Aurelia and Jason to come to terms with Leaper’s violence through stories. Lewis offers that broad historical-narrative lens through which he comes to terms with the present issues facing his relatives, just as Aileen shares the history of hardship brought upon the band by colonization. Out of that narrative practice, Aileen draws the core message that will help her community endure this change: the reminder that the reserve is not the band’s homeland. This exchange between Aileen and Evan situates an sf narrative of survival and resurgence within the larger context of colonization as a series of apocalyptic

experiences that shape each generation differently. Moreover, he speculates what the path out of trauma that Dillon describes might look like. Rice therefore offers an Anishinaabe-centric apocalyptic narrative, as the community's strength and its resilience come from language, spirituality, and land-based practices of relationality as collective continuance.

The people's future depends on collective continuance, which necessitates more members of the community to learn how to live both collectively and in a self-reliant manner, also requiring them to unlearn the conveniences of settler infrastructure that disconnects people from their land-based knowledge systems and the skills those traditions offer. While Evan is committed to keeping Anishinaabe knowledge alive, such commitment is not widespread, especially after the band was connected to the hydroelectric grid. In his study of *Moon of the Crusted Snow,* Reuben Martens describes a dying community in which "the Indigenous decolonized future is lost at the hands of the forcibly instilled petro-subjectivity, petromelancholia, and settler-colonial violence, illustrated by the youngsters on the reservation who fail to recover Native traditions in order to survive the post-Apocalyptic future" (208). Martens fails to recognize the role of relations in sustaining Indigenous life beyond settler infrastructure, falling into to a binary of modernity/tradition from which Martens cannot envision a future for Indigenous peoples. Evan's community may face a challenge in re-learning land-based practices and self-reliance to survive the harsh winter, but again there is ancestral precedent as the community was removed from southern lands to the far North, after which the band had to adapt their lifeways to a harsher environment and greater social vulnerability.

The stories and teachings of ancestors are all the more important as the people face another, more insidious threat of colonial violence that is familiar to the Anishinaabeg: the wiindigoo. A few weeks into the winter, a white survivalist named Scott follows two Anishinaabe college students who escape the city and return home on a snowmobile, their tracks leading him to the community. Evan immediately dislikes the arrogant and condescending Scott, who convinces the tribal leadership to allow him to stay since he is a skilled hunter and, as he claims, can help the people live off the land. For the people, land-based skills are part of practicing mino-bimaadiziwin; for Scott, those skills are leveraged to assert domination. Evan soon finds that Scott does not know how to actually live in respectful relation to the land, and that his presence will harm their community. Facing the unanticipated need for a larger cache of meat at the start of winter, Evan, Evan's father Dan, and their relatives Isaiah and Jeff take Scott on a hunt. The Ojibwe men practice hunting as an honor to the relations between human and animal beings and bring Scott along to verify his professed hunting skills. Scott expertly tracks and kills a moose, but instead of respecting the moose's sacrifice, he exclaims, "Fuckin' got'im! Woohoo!," breaking into the excited profanity of a trophy hunter. Scott shares, "It's been a long time since I bagged a moose in the winter. They're basically like sitting ducks out there, eh?" (124). Scott's behavior is opposite the respectful hunting practices that uphold Anishinaabe relationships between the people and the limited but sufficient wildlife that sustains their community. Jeff explains that they don't usually hunt in winter: "It's not the Anishinaabe way to take more than you need. Back in the day...we only did it when we needed to. Only during the desperate times" (125). For Evan's community, moose aren't trophies to be collected or treated wastefully or disrespectfully.

Rather, they are relatives that give their life so that the people may live, deserving of respect. The moose hunt with Scott makes visible his tendency to value individual achievement and ability—having the skill and power to kill a moose—over a sense of responsibility to relations in keeping with mino-bimaadiziwin. Jeff's comment that it is only appropriate to hunt in winter during times of desperation also foreshadows Scott's threat as a wiindigoo: a greedy cannibal who threatens the community from within. As Anishinaabeg who respect their responsibility to the other-than-human world, which includes hunting only during appropriate times, Evan's companions are familiar with the dangers that humans face under desperate conditions.

In Anishinaabe cosmology, the wiindigoo is a spirit that possesses humans when they become so desperate during the long, hungry winter that they consume human flesh. Wiindigoog become ravenous, embodying the danger of human greed, growing larger and more insatiable until they are treated or killed. As Basil Johnston (Nawash Unceded First Nation) writes, "the Weendigo represented not only the worst that a human can do to another human being and ultimately to himself or herself, but exemplified other despicable traits. Even the term 'Weendigo" evokes images of offensive traits. It may be derived from *ween dagoh*, which means 'solely for self,' or from *weenin n'd'igooh*, which means 'fat' or excess" (*Manitous* 222). Scott's gleeful killing of a moose, which certainly does not respect relations between the community that has received Scott nor the beings they depend on, shows his exploitative tendencies. Those tendencies put Scott at risk of disconnecting from the people he has entered into a relationship of reciprocal responsibility, as the band accepted him into their community and expect him to

contribute to their collective survival. In her discussion of minobimatisiiwin and the interdependency of human and other-than-human beings, Cary Miller notes,

> In obtaining human assistance through the expansion of social networks to new families and communities, one also allied with those other-than-human persons who aided them. However, these alliances needed close supervision, because community members could jeopardize relations with *manidoog* beings if they ceased to maintain accepted standards of personal and social conduct. (121)

Scott clearly does not maintain acceptable conduct, therefore exposing the community to reprisal. While Scott's behavior can be written off as cultural insensitivity that reflects his ignorance as a settler who treats the moose as game and not as a relative, within the Anishinaabe worldview of Rice's novel, his behavior incurs significant consequences as Scott's greed and exploitation grow and as he becomes a wiindigoo. As the winter progresses, temperatures drop, and the community's food and wood stores are depleted, Scott strategically undermines the leadership of the band council, Evan, and fellow citizens who look to Anishinaabe knowledge to hold the community together. In doing so, Scott serves his own interests as a survivalist, feeding his self-interested and narcissistic desires for power at the expense of the community he feeds on. As Margaret Noori notes, "The *wiindigog* are creatures of the far north that represent all that opposes health and survival"—the antithesis of mino-bimaadiziwin (44).

While the band leaders are busy helping the community survive the winter and figuring out what action to take come spring, Scott quietly takes over an apartment building on the perimeter of the community and begins corrupting young community members, including Evan's wayward younger brother Cam. Scott offers his new allies

alcohol and cigarettes that he had stockpiled in the city and brought with him, anticipating its value in a post-apocalyptic economy but also echoing the currency of fur traders and land speculators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When Evan goes to check on Cam, he finds his brother inebriated with several friends, ignoring the band's order to keep electricity usage to a minimum. Evan is invited by a friend, Sydney, to join the group for a drink, which is "the last thing he heard before blood rushed to his face and ears, drowning out sound [...] Sitting on the opposite corner with Sydney's cousin Jenna on his lap was Scott" (131). Confronting Scott, Evan explains that Jenna and her young sister Tara were too young to be drinking with him, hinting at Scott's intent to sexually exploit the young women. Evan "had known that the cigarettes and free-flowing booze would lead back to Scott. Scott hadn't been in the community long, but rumour had it that he was the man to go to if you'd run out of smokes or alcohol. He had somehow concealed a decent supply of vices in those hard cases he towed from the south" (131-132). Using his postapocalyptic currency to gain control over the group of youth, including Evan's "naive and vulnerable" brother, Scott exploits the struggles that Gross describes as part of post-apocalypse stress syndrome, including alcohol abuse. Scott capitalizes on the stereotype of drunken Indians to gain power as a colonizer, repeating the tactics of early settlers and fur traders to destabilize Indigenous communities and to undermine them politically. Scott targets vulnerable young people and gains their allegiance by providing them an escape from the stress of the long, dark winter. However, his exploitation leads to the death of Jenna and her sister: after the party, the young women freeze to death walking home during the night. Evan is unexpectedly

confronted with his people's social vulnerability and the hazards of the winter cold, and Scott has amplified that vulnerability.

As Evan and his companions grieve the young women and begin to realize the danger Scott poses, the settler drives an even deeper wedge into the community's leadership. Scott assumes a shadow control over the community, sowing doubt among citizens who are growing hungry and distrustful. After bringing Jenna and Tara's bodies to the band office where they will be stored until spring, Evan and Isaiah encounter Scott and Terry, the band chairman. Before Evan can explain Scott's behavior the night before, the group hears incoming snowmobiles. They drive out to meet four hungry, visibly weak newcomers. Phillips, the leader of the group, begs for food, and Terry explains that they are a small community stretched thin. Desperate and irate, Phillips moves toward Terry and Scott shoots him, exclaiming to the others, "Now you fuckin' listen to this chief!...No quick moves! If you want to come in here, it's on our terms!" (141). Appalled, Terry tells Scott, "You didn't have to shoot him. You had no right to shoot him. You're an outsider here, too, remember," unsure of how to proceed with the others (141). Evan realizes, "Terry's lost control...He just handed it over to Scott" (141). In this moment of tension and confusion, Scott asserts his role as a decision maker in the community, making a display of power over Terry and the other Anishinaabeg. Seeding paranoia that there will be more outsiders attempting to come into the community, Scott strategically undermines the band government's control over distributing food stores and maintaining order among the hungry and restless community. As the community runs low on food and as people die and are moved to the storage shed where they are laid to rest until Spring, Scott suggests to Terry, "I know where we can find something else to eat, and I think you know

what I mean," after which he "stood up and smiled, his mouth cavernous and dark behind his big teeth 'Chi-miigwech for your time, Chief.'" (182). Rice's characterization of Scott, who mocks the band's social vulnerability in their own language, hints at his monstrosity. Scott's gaping mouth and big teeth suggest a physical representation of the wiindigoo's desire to consume human flesh. In Rice's approach to the wiindigoo narrative, however, Scott seeks to corrupt the Nation by feeding their own dead to them, which might ensure survival but would violate the people's relational governance structures, especially their responsibility as relatives to one another and to the manidoog. As a settler-wiindigoo, Scott encourages the Anishinaabeg in this moment of impending desperation to abandon the relations that define them as Anishinaabeg.

Evan gradually recognizes Scott's behavior as monstrous and positions his threat to consume the community within his people's cultural memory, which includes Anishinaabe science, knowledge, and wiindigoo stories that are part of Anishinaabe epistemologies. After a violent confrontation at the band offices over the food cache where Scott implies that the band could eat their dead relatives, Evan starts building a secret shelter in the woods that his family could flee to if necessary, "a backup, in case he and his family needed refuge from whatever turmoil might eventually consume his community" (184). Evan falls asleep before the fire, and in a dream is transported to the storage building where the bodies are kept. He opens the door to find only the blankets used to wrap the bodies. He hears "a deep guttural growl" behind him:

> A feral odor, like a rotting heap of moose innards, wafted briskly into the garage. A tall, gaunt silhouette stood in the doorway, outlined by the scarlet blizzard behind it. The smell made him gag. The creature hunched forward. The hair on its

> broad shoulders and long arms blurred the lines of its figure. Its legs appeared disfigured, almost backwards. But its large, round head scared him the most [...] It was disfigured yet oddly familiar. Scott. His cheeks and lips were pulled tight against his skull. He breathed heavily through his mouth, with long incisors jutting upward and downward from rows of brown teeth. His eyes were blacked out. (187)

Evan's dream renders Scott's exploitation in monstrous terms as the wiindigoo, the man transforming into a beast, blurring the boundary between the storied creature and Scott as a literal wiindigoo. In that blurred boundary lies the warning that Anishinaabe knowledge offers Evan and his community: that wiindigoog are a constant threat. In his work on monster theory, Jerry Jerome Cohen argues that "The monstrous body is pure culture...the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns'" (4). Cohen continues, "the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received" (4). Cohen argues that the monster is a distorted mirror of society—of the community that receives the monster through cosmology, lore, or popular culture. Rice's depiction of Scott as a monster participates in the monster tradition that Cohen studies, as the threat of settler colonialism even after the collapse of settler society. Scott's role as a wiindigoo, therefore, reflects Anishinaabe cultural renderings of greed that corrupts relationality, that which makes the people human.

After his dream, Evan realizes he must challenge and possibly destroy Scott, the settler-wiindigoo, before he destroys their community. In order for his people to survive,

this threat must be eliminated. At the novel's climax, Evan, Isiah, and Tyler confront Scott at his compound after discovering that one of the bodies is indeed missing from the storage site, as his dream suggested. Among Scott's group are the white newcomers, one of whom, Meghan Connor, is disgusted by Scott, sharing with Evan's partner Nicole that "[Scott] seems to be getting bigger, though I know that's not possible," as "the rest of us are getting skinnier" (162). As Scott becomes more powerful, he appears to grow, as does the wiindigoo in Basil Johnston's telling. When Evan, Tyler, and Isaiah go to the compound, he finds Scott and his followers, including Evan's brother Cam, outside their building cooking unidentified meat in a stew over a fire—meat that Evan suspects is from a human body. The confrontation escalates into a shootout: Scott shoots Evan, and as he turns to shoot Isaiah and Tyler, Meghan Connor kills Scott with a hunting rifle. This act by a white refugee to the Anishinaabe community speaks to the broader resonance of land-based knowledges. Even as Meghan does not necessarily recognize Scott as a wiindigoo, she does recognize his monstrosity and does not hesitate to kill him. Contrasted with Scott, Meghan recognizes her reciprocal responsibility to the nation that has accepted her, reflecting the trans/national possibilities of Indigenous spec-fic. In the decolonial imaginary of Rice's novel, Indigenous nations hold space for non-Indigenous allies who accept their relational responsibility.

Scott's death ends his intrusion into the community, his presence an embodiment of colonization as represented by wiindigoo lore. He sought to strategically undermine Anishinaabe relations, including those between Evan and his brother, and between the band's leadership and the people, thereby repeating the process of colonization's disruption of Indigenous self-governance and collective continuance. While Scott does

not literally become a wiindigoo in the monstrous sense, Rice teases the boundary between portraying Scott as a figurative or literal wiindigoo, playing with the genre conventions of spec-fic. In Rice's approach to the genre, the speculative element is the mysterious collapse of Canadian settler society, an event that is never explained. Making Scott's wiindigoo monstrosity visible through Evan's dream, Rice follows Anishinaabe traditions that approach dreaming as a way to understand the interplay between human, other-than-human, and spirit beings, which sometimes requires different states of consciousness. As Cary Miller notes,

> The Anishinaabe worldview, through stories, ceremony, and tradition, emphasizes the importance of reciprocal social relationships that extend the notion of kin far beyond biological relatives, the need for gifts or blessings from *manidoog* (spirit-like beings from outside of oneself), the permeable line between animal and *manidoog*, and the close relationship between the Anishinaabe people and the natural world around them. (119)

According to Miller, dreaming allowed human consciousness to inhabit that "permeable line" between beings, allowing the people to receive gifts from the spirit world, which they reciprocate through practices that honor their relationship to *manidoog*. Evan practices that relationship to the best of his ability and receives the dream of Scott as a wiindigoo so that he can understand Scott's threat as identifiable through Anishinaabe cosmology.

From Resilience to Resurgence

Evan's recollection of Anishinaabe wiindigoo lore allows him to recognize Scott's threat to his community and lead his community to a promising future as they leave their reserve and migrate to their ancestral homelands in the South, where they will be better able to sustain their lifeways and further restore their Indigenous communal knowledge systems. In this open-ended conclusion, Rice connects his spec-fic narrative to a much larger tradition of migration and movement that shapes Anishinaabe history and narrative traditions. As Scott Lyons notes, migration "produces *difference:* new communities, new peoples, new ways of living, new sacred foods, new stories, and new ceremonies. The old never dies; it just gets supplemented by the new" (*X-Marks* 4). Lyons refers to the traditions of migrations that were central to Anishinaabe life as "a people on the move" (*X-Marks* 4). Migration as a logic of Anishinaabe cultures and narrative traditions is itself a signpost of Indigenous futurity, linking Anishinaabe knowledge to Indigenous spec-fic. In Reuben Martens' pessimistic reading of the novel, there is no "potential for an Indigenous future" due to "irrefutable impact" of settler politics (208). Martens' analytical frameworks are settler colonial studies and ecocriticism, with Grace Dillon the only Indigenous scholar he cites; his reading[74] is telling of the limits of ecocriticism and settler colonial studies to envision decoloniality, resurgence, or survivance without recognizing the vitality that comes from relations. Martens studies an Anishinaabe novel without centering Anishinaabe knowledge and cosmology. Centering Anishinaabe knowledge points to the migration narrative as more

[74] Martens' reading is actually a misreading—his argument assumes that Evan dies at the end of the novel (he does not) and that the community is in hopeless position (they are not). These missteps suggest that Martens did not read the Epilogue to the novel, which is paginated in a separate section following the final numbered chapter.

crucial than petromelancholia, which is a productive framework for an ecocritical reading of the text but leads Martens down a path to no Indigenous future. Instead, Martens centers a settler analytic in which hydrocarbons and colonialism have utterly doomed the community, echoing other extinction narratives that continually amuse Indigenous readers who still have not gone extinct.

Counter to Martens' reading, Evan's community actually faces a promising future in what is a settler dystopia. The novel's end marks a reversal of the Indigenous dystopias inaugurated under settler colonialism, envisioning Indigenous resilience based on respectful relationships with the other-than-human world that are grounded in responsibility rather than resource extraction. The settler colonial apocalypse is environmental and climate-driven, as the Nation is moved to a place that cannot sustain the community—the harsh, rugged terrain of the north that is unsuitable for settler life. For Evan's community, relocation was a strategic disruption of his people's traditional lifeways, land-based practices, and knowledge systems. As Aileen explained to Evan the people endured and adapted to their new, restricted territory, finding new methods of subsistence and finding new medicines. Centuries of migration made adaptability and resilience necessary through mobility of relationships and commitments to the other-than-human world. This adaptive resilience would be compromised by the community's gradually increased dependence on settler infrastructure and unsustainable energy sources, including diesel power and later hydroelectric power that itself required the disruption of waterways and destruction of wetland ecosystems. This reality was the ancestors' dystopia: false resilience through the comforts of settler coloniality that left them vulnerable to settler-wiindigoo violence.

Furthermore, Rice's Indigenization of spec-fic depicts the contrast between Anishinaabe science, knowledge, and cosmology and unsustainable settler dominance, exemplified by Scott's exploitative presence and the widespread environmental transformation that he benefits from as a settler. Scott is a product of what Winona LaDuke calls "wiindigoo economics," which are "an economic system that destroys the source of its wealth, Mother Earth" (LaDuke, "Cannibal Economics"). LaDuke uses the wiindigoo as a metaphor for settler economies that exploit Indigenous peoples and lands with the help of government agencies that streamline fossil fuel development. Writing in opposition to TransCanada's efforts to build the Keystone XL pipeline, LaDuke argues that the black snake that is the oil pipeline industry will eventually consume itself, for its environmental hazards and unsustainable construction methods outweigh the economic gains of transporting tar sands oil more efficiently. Rice's novel does not explicitly address oil pipelines, yet the wiindigoo economics that LaDuke describes results in the collapse of the Canadian and ostensibly U.S. settler states, which grew their economies at the expense of the other-than-human world. Scott, who benefitted throughout his life from the wiindigoo economics of settler states, perpetuates the logic of wiindigoo economics as he abuses and exploits the community that hosts him. In much the same way that LaDuke defines wiindigoo economics, Scott engages in actions that would eventually destroy the source of his wealth in his apocalyptic present, the Gaawaandagkoong community. As a vestige of settler colonialism, once Scott no longer poses a threat, the community can position itself for resurgence by migrating to their former homelands.

The novel's epilogue sees the surviving members of the community preparing for that migration to the South, to the homelands that Aileen describes as sustaining good life for the people prior to forced removal. However, the decision to abandon their current townsite is bittersweet, for the people only know their remote Northern community as their home. Come Spring, however, "it became clear to them that they were never supposed to last in this situation on this land in the first place," and "they decided to take control of their own destiny" (212). There is no reason to stay in their reserve territory, as "The collapse of the white man's modern systems further withered the Anishinaabeg here. But they refused to wither completely, and a core of dedicated people had worked tirelessly to create their own settlement away from this town" (212). Evan is one of those who have worked to create a new place for the people to live, enacting a migration that supports part of collective continuance the tradition of Anishinaabe peoples who migrate as part of their collective continuance and larger networks of relations. As Whyte notes, "Migration suggests that relationships of interdependence and systems of responsibility are not grounded on stable or static relationships with the environment. Rather, these relationships arise from contexts of constant change and transformation," ensuring "the possibility of continuity" ("Ecology" 129). The decision to move South is pragmatic—it will be easier to live through less harsh winters and in areas where plant and animal sustenance is more readily available—but the decision also marks resurgence for the community, which now self-determines its future on Anishinaabe terms. In the unwritten future of self-determination and collective continuance, Rice offers a suggestion of resilience that is absent from non-Indigenous science fiction: Indigenous nations are

capable of thriving as settler societies collapse, taking with them the structures that endeavor to disrupt Indigenous relational practices and knowledge systems.

Spec-fic often articulates (perhaps inadvertently) the fragility of settler societies that are founded on environmental transformation and unsustainable development following industrialization, suggesting that settler colonial structures cannot endure significant environmental catastrophe. Indigenous peoples, however, have already survived such catastrophes, including settler colonialism. Indigenous sf therefore imagines the decolonial possibilities of a settler apocalypse, but in doing so offers visions for actual resurgence. Grace Dillon suggests,

> It might go without saying that all forms of Indigenous futurisms are narratives of *biskaabiiyang,* an Anishinaabemowin word connoting the process of "returning to ourselves," which involves discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world. ("Imagining" 10)

Dillon points out the regenerative potential of Indigenous sf to imagine ways to process the intergenerational trauma of "post-Native Apocalypse" reality and to recover, as Evan does, resilience through Indigenous relationality. Without the pressures of the Canadian settler state upholding colonial structures, Evan's community is positioned for resurgence. Rice theorizes this resurgence through a speculative narrative, but resurgence is also theorized in environmental justice and sovereignty movements driven by Indigenous activism but upheld by everyday Indigenous life. In their theory of resurgence, the editors of *Everyday Acts of Resurgence* argue, "Resurgence also entails a

consciousness of being in a daily struggle to regain rebellious dignity...these transformational moments regenerate and invigorate Indigenous nationhood as well as our community and individual health and well-being...it is these quiet, transformational, intimate actions that occur on a daily basis in ways that are seen and unseen that form the basis for revolutionary shifts" (18). Resurgence recognizes the power of everyday action, both individual and communal, as the foundation of resistance to colonialism and as critical to adaptation to changing environments. Recognizing these everyday practices of relationality—of resurgence—speaks to the power of Indigenous communities to respond to trauma and recognize the resilience that comes from the prayers of ancestors and the practice of good relations.

These acknowledgments occur on Indigenous terms and are not assigned through settler discourses of reconciliation but rather through decolonization that includes the reclaiming of Indigenous lands (and land-based knowledges). As Tuck and Yang argue, decolonization must not be treated metaphorically—it is inherently a process of re-establishing Indigenous land base. Leanne Simpson notes that for cultural and political resurgence to occur,[75] land must be at the center of that process: "From within Indigenous thought, however, the cultural and the political are joined and inseparable, and they are

[75] Simpson notes that promoting cultural resurgence instead of political resurgence is convenient to Canadian discourses of reconciliation, which do not change power dynamics between the settler state and Indigenous nations: "Cultural resurgence can take place within the current settler colonial structure of Canada because it is not concerned with dispossession, whereas political resurgence is seen as a direct threat to settler sovereignty" (49). Simpson continues, "Culture as a modifier de-politicizes resurgence into the realm of neoliberalism (this can be a culture practice but not an economic or political one)...Cultural resurgence can be read as compatible with settler colonialism because it fits within an inclusive narrative of Canada as a multicultural society" (50). Cultural resurgence creates a problem similar to that of discourses of resilience: it is certainly important in larger movements toward resurgence even as it offers a convenient way for Canada to vocalize support for Indigenous peoples without making substantive change to its policies.

both generated through place-based practices—practices that require land" (*Always* 49-50). Simpson recognizes dispossession as a fundamental mode of colonial violence that directly connects to sexual violence and systemic abuse through assimilation educational institutions and legislation, abuses that contribute to the post-apocalypse stress syndrome that Gross describes and that layer trauma on top of environmental injustice and forced removal, which itself constitutes Native apocalypse and ancestral dystopia.[76] In her contribution to *Everyday Acts of Resurgence,* Cree-Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket argues, "our capacity to survive and to live sustainably over time has been dependent on the way in which we understand our relationships with our environments and other beings that we share our lives with. By seeing ourselves as co-constituted through and directly responsible to these relationships, we have managed to learn from our environments and adapt to our ways of being to new developments and challenges" (31). Starblanket argues that Indigenous nations have been able to adapt to changes forced upon them by colonialism and environmental injustice: "The configurations of our lives have been context-dependent and dynamic, in large part due to the underlying relationality that characterizes our worldviews and spirituality" (31). According to Starblanket, the distinct worldviews and spiritual systems that contribute to Indigenous land-based practices provide the capacity for Indigenous peoples to endure these changes. These worldviews and spiritual systems, which can be described as ontological and epistemological, also make up Indigenous knowledge systems that are embodied in everyday life; as Starblanket puts it, "Embodying this relationality through our future ways of living can represent a powerful form of resurgence" (31).

[76] Thomas King offers a very useful overview of legislation that aims to erase Indian status in Canada and the U.S. in the fifth chapter of *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative.*

As Rice's narrative makes clear, resurgence calls for the dismantling of settler colonial power that continue to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands. Environmental justice struggles, which take up relational responsibilities to the other-than-human world in defense of Indigenous homelands, are a front line of resurgence. Furthermore, resurgence offers a productive way to approach the complex discourses of resilience and trauma, which can oscillate between necessary and problematic depending on who engages them and for what purpose. If used for the purposes of settler reconciliation,[77] these discourses aim to undermine Indigenous claims to land and sovereignty. When used by Indigenous peoples, these discourses can name and confront colonial violence and its impacts on Indigenous communities, including social vulnerability and environmental injustice, thereby identifying barriers to resurgence. Indigenous spec-fic further imagines this path by exploring the power of Indigenous knowledges to re-member the relationships disrupted by colonization. Re-membering offers two modes of resurgence: the recovery of Indigenous knowledges and the re-membering of the Indigenous body politic. Re-membering allows Anishinaabeg, for example, to pursue mino-bimaadiziwin, the good life, which in turn upholds collective continuance, following Whyte's take on adaptive capacity or social resilience. In the next chapter, I take up this idea of re-membering through Indigenous spiritual resurgence and one of the most recognized works of Indigenous environmental justice literature: Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*.

[77] Dian Million, for example, sees reconciliation as serving the aims of neoliberal politics that must celebrate multiculturalism and disavow racism as part of a colonial past.

CHAPTER V

RE-MEMBERING THE SOVEREIGN BODY IN WINONA LADUKE'S *LAST STANDING WOMAN*

> The future of mankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibilities to all living things. Who will listen to the trees, the animals and birds, the voices of the places of the land? As the long-forgotten peoples of the respective continents rise and begin to reclaim their ancient heritage, they will discover the meaning of the lands of their ancestors. That is when the invaders of the North American continent will finally discover that for this land, God is Red. (301)
>
> Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red*

In his conclusion to *God is Red*, Vine Deloria, Jr. connects the ongoing recovery of Indigenous spiritual traditions to intensifying activist movements in defense of Indigenous lands. Deloria compares Christian theology and history with diverse Indigenous spiritual traditions, arguing that since Christian religions emerged in relation to European homelands, justifications for settler governance and entitlement to land as resource rooted in Christian doctrines of discovery and manifest destiny are anachronistic in North America, where land-based religious systems and practices have existed long before European contact. Deloria approaches this intervention through the context of Red Power activism and struggles for religious freedom among Native nations, efforts that continued after the publication of *God is Red* in 1973. These struggles, along with the work of Native intellectuals like Deloria, led to the passage of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the 1989 National Museum of the American Indian Act, and the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. These laws recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to practice distinct religious and spiritual traditions and establish a framework for the return of ancestral remains, funerary objects, and sacred items looted or stolen over the centuries. NAGPRA, in particular, establishes the rights of

federally recognized tribes and Native Hawaiian groups to repatriate remains and objects taken by anthropologists or otherwise held by museums and government agencies that receive federal funding. The law also prohibits the removal or disturbance of remains or cultural objects on federal or tribal lands without tribal permission. NAGPRA does not, however, apply to privately owned lands or collectors.[78]

NAGPRA and other laws acknowledging the rights of Native people to spiritual practices and the protection of their ancestors' remains are the result of decades of struggle and mark an important shift in the treatment of Native peoples as objects, particularly in academia. However, even well-intentioned laws like NAGPRA carry limitations. As Winona LaDuke explains in *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*, decades-long decolonial struggles that led to NAGPRA have raised critical questions about limits of federal law to dismantle academic racism and facilitate actual decolonization:

> Debates on how the past is understood and what the future might bring have bearing on genetic research, reclamation of mining sites, reparations for broken treaties, and reconciliation between descendants of murderers and their victims. At stake is nothing less than the ecological integrity of the land base and the physical and social health of Native Americans throughout the continent. In the end there is no absence of irony: the integrity of what is sacred to Native

[78] NAGPRA has led to tensions between some academics and Native people, as in the dispute over the so-called "Kennewick Man" whose remains were found along the Columbia river. As Robert Anderson, et al. note, "this 9,300-year-old skeleton became the subject of intense and emotional litigation. Indian tribes from the Columbia River basin made a claim for ownership under NAGPRA, and federal officials determined that the remains should be granted to the tribes. Scientists objected and sued for the right to study the skeleton, arguing that their findings would provide important information about the history of human habitation of North America" (822). LaDuke notes that "Scientists opposed to his reburial seem to argue that if the ancestor is old enough, the law does not protect him" (80).

> Americans will be determined by the government that has been responsible for doing everything in its power to destroy Native American cultures. (11)

Under the veneer of self-determination and rights discourse, laws like NAGPRA gesture toward reconciliation, yet the ongoing struggles with coloniality persist and the importance of Indigenous-centric modes of healing and recovery becomes obvious. Repatriation under NAGPRA is ultimately a settler concession founded upon recognition of Indigenous personhood and the right of Indigenous peoples to possess their ancestors—a deeply problematic conceptualization of Indigenous relationships to ancestors and to their lands.

As Indigenous studies scholars note, a system that reinforces the settler-colonial politics of recognition will never achieve healing, recovery, or justice. Glen Coulthard offers an extensive critique of the politics of recognition in *Red Skin, White Masks*, arguing that Indigenous sovereignty that depends on recognition under neoliberalism ultimately upholds the political dominance of the settler state. In her earlier work on neoliberal politics and affective narratives of Indigenous trauma, Dian Million examines the hollow recognition of Canada's reconciliation campaigns, which acknowledge self-determination claims yet approach healing in Western therapeutic terms, not on Indigenous terms. Such reconciliatory gestures, she notes, lack substantive changes to policy: "self-determination may continue to be valorized symbolically, but it has no necessary guarantee in practice in neoliberalism" (22). Noting the limitations of Indigenous sovereignty under recognition, Coulthard calls for "resurgent politics of recognition" (18), which he argues "explicitly eschews the instrumental rationality central to the liberal politics of recognition and instead demands that we *enact* or *practice*

our political commitments to Indigenous national and women's liberation in the cultural form and content of our struggle itself. Indigenous resurgence is at its core a *prefigurative* politics—the methods of decolonization prefigure its aims" (159, emphasis in original). In a later interview for the journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*, Coulthard explains that "in order to be recognized you have to make yourself like the power structure that is recognizing you"—while achieving necessary change through laws like NAGPRA is a form of progress, change within the confines of colonial recognition will not necessarily support Indigenous sovereignty or resurgence. Since recognition requires Indigenous nations to replicate settler power structures, it becomes impossible to engage in decolonization.

Critiquing the uneven power dynamics of recognition-based laws like NAGPRA, LaDuke addresses issues of collecting Indigenous remains and sacred objects, repatriating remains and objects where possible to tribal communities, and the ongoing tensions between academic and Native sovereignty in her nonfiction writings on struggles to protect and recover the sacred—lands, knowledges, and practices. Her fiction takes a different approach to these issues, imagining decolonial possibility beyond repatriation by centering Anishinaabe spirituality, language, and land-based practices instead of participating in colonial politics of recognition. Her novel *Last Standing Woman* situates repatriation within a larger framework of Indigenous recovery from settler colonial violence, also speaking to the limitations of repatriation as a recognition-based law. LaDuke shows that NAGPRA must be approached as one of many turning points on a long arc of settler colonial history. That moment is a minor part of much larger movements toward resurgence and reconnecting a community with its ancestors not only

materially but spiritually, a process I call re-membering the sovereign body. Re-membering brings together relations that appears lost to colonial violence—ancestors, ceremonies, languages, and relationships between Indigenous peoples and the other-than-human world. These relations are central to sovereignty and decolonization.

Re-membering also raises the question of what justice looks like, and in LaDuke's novel that question includes environmental justice. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang approach the concept of re-membering as vital to ongoing struggles among communities of color toward justice: "demands for justice re-member; they are a kind of ghosting that refuses to forget abduction, violation, displacement, dispossession, and death. They also re-member the fragmented social body back together as life that matters in ways beyond the ontological cages of pained plaintiff or object in need of subjection" ("Justice" 7). As in Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* trilogy, LaDuke engages in a process of re-membering legacies of colonial violence as systemic environmental injustice, including the dispossession of White Earth Ojibwe homelands and ongoing threats to wetlands and forests on the White Earth reservation. Re-membering also contributes to rejection of the politics of recognition, as Tuck and Yang note that "Some communities reject the very logics of (state) administration of justice and instead assert sovereignty of selves, communities, land, and living in ways that are right. These efforts exceed the formal meanings of justice" ("Justice" 4). *Last Standing Woman* fictionalizes struggles that certainly contribute to larger environmental justice movements, but the novel also theorizes justice as an issue of tribal sovereignty. The novel demonstrates that sovereignty as a defining quality of nationhood shifts discourses of justice from rights and entitlements to responsibilities and actions.

As a novel centering Ojibwe women warriors, *Last Standing Woman* calls into question the male-centered root of repatriation and its emphasis on property rather than relations. The English word "repatriate" borrows from the Latin "patr," or father, and shares the root with "patrimony," which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "Property inherited from one's father or passed down from one's ancestors." Frequently, the legal discourse of repatriation treats ancestral remains—literally Indigenous bodies—as property that federally recognized tribes hold rights to. Etymologically, the root "patr" reinforces the authority of churches and patriarchal structures of power, including federal law. Shifting these concepts to the feminine root "māter," or matri- claims space in the English language for a thinking about the recovery of ancestors, sacred objects, and lands as relations. Opposite "patrimony" is "matrimony," which carries a very different definition per the *OED*: "senses relating to the joining of two people in marriage. The state or condition of being married; the relation between married persons." Whereas "patrimony" denotes an inheritance or entitlement to possession, "matrimony" reflects relations, commonly between two people who commit to a life together.

The notion of matrimony better reflects the relational obligations of Indigenous communities than patrimony; I therefore offer a different approach to repatriation: rematriation, which recognizes the recovery of ancestors and sacred objects as the return of relatives and as part of larger efforts toward re-membering and making whole the sovereign Indigenous body politic. Legal scholar Steven Newcomb (Shawnee-Lenape) sees in rematriation the restoration of "living culture to its rightful place on Mother Earth," returning "people to a spiritual way of life, in sacred relationship with their ancestral lands, without external interference" (3). He argues, "As a concept, rematriation

acknowledges that our ancestors lived in spiritual relationship with our lands for thousands of years, and that we have a sacred duty to maintain that relationship for the benefit of our future generations" (3). In discussions of recovery and decolonization, the "sacred duty" of rematriation centers responsibilities instead of rights and entitlements, aligning with the ethics of relationality that underscore Cook-Lynn's and Rice's novels.

Likewise, centering responsibilities instead of rights in discussions of justice and sovereignty coheres with visions of Indigenous nationhood. Scott Lyons, for example, calls for tribal-national citizenship (instead of enrollment or membership) as a mechanism for tribes to create the actions and commitments they seek in their populace, including language revitalization and commitment to cultural recovery. He notes that "citizenship connotes certain kinds of actions, like *rights* (which are to be exercised), *responsibilities* (which are to be met), and *duties* (which are to be performed)," arguing that "the calculus of national benefit looks like this: *the actions of citizens benefit the nation, which benefits citizens*" (*X-Marks* 173, emphasis in original). The actions that define nationhood and citizenship for Lyons are embedded in mutual and reciprocal responsibilities, not in entitlements or patrimony. In their synthesis of Indigenous feminist theories, Mailie Arvin (Kanaka Maoli), Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill (Klamath) argue, "Indigenous communities' concerns are often not about achieving formal equality or civil rights within a nation-state, but instead achieving substantial independence from a Western nation-state—independence decided on their own terms" (10). As Leanne Simpson argues in *As We Have Always Done*, such independence is "nationhood based on a series of radiating responsibilities" (9). These terms of independence are not a mirror status of Western nation-states but envision sovereignty as the ability to uphold

responsibilities between human and other-than-human beings. Daniel Heath Justice calls these relationships "the tribal web of kinship rights *and* responsibilities" as part of "an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships" (24). These relationships and the governance structures that are built upon them are specific to each tribal nation; as Kirby Brown argues, Indigenous nationhood is "more than an imagined community constituted through discourse," reflecting in its diversity "the complex matrix of historical, cultural, geographic, and relational dynamics of Indigenous peoplehood" and "the multiple ways in which Native peoples reckon identity, community, and belonging" (6). The extensive body of scholarship on Indigenous nationhood outlines a shift from rights to responsibilities in pursuit of sovereignty on Indigenous terms, yet these discussions owe a great debt to Indigenous feminisms, which theorize these discourses in relation to Indigenous lands and Indigenous bodies.

By shifting the focus from rights to responsibilities, rematriation reflects the interventions of Indigenous feminisms in response to the combined threats of settler colonialism, racism, and patriarchy on Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous feminisms recognize the importance of feminist resistance to gender-based violence but push back against mainstream feminism's incompatibility with Indigenous sovereignty and the construction of gender in specific tribal contexts.[79] As Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill argue, "there cannot be feminist thought and theory without Native feminist theory. The experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous women are not on the margins;

[79] I use the plural form feminisms to acknowledge the diversity of matriarchal traditions in different tribal-national contexts. While Indigenous feminists offer vital intersectional and decolonial visions, coming together around issues including the widespread violence against Indigenous women (#MMIW) and environmental justice movements including #IdleNoMore and #NoDAPL, there is no universal Indigenous feminism.

we have been an invisible presence in the center, hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years" (14). As Indigenous feminisms make visible these gendered logics, it also points to the dangers of replicating those logics through Indigenous nationalism. Kim Anderson (Cree/Métis) speaks to these risks and the greater importance of collective responsibility in Indigenous feminisms:

> If Western feminism is unpalatable because it is about rights rather than responsibilities, then we should take responsibility seriously and ask if we are being responsible to *all* members of our societies. If we are to reject equality in favour of difference, then we need to make sure those differences are embedded in systems that empower all members. If we see feminism as being too invested in Western liberalism and individual autonomy, then we need to ensure that our collectivist approaches serve everyone in the collective. (88)

Anderson's emphasis on collective empowerment offers a new way of viewing nationhood and sovereignty in which constructions of nationhood must not replicate Eurocentric models of patriarchy. Also addressing the shortcomings of Indigenous nationalisms, Shari Huhndorf argues, "the myriad processes by which colonization has positioned indigenous women...require a feminist rethinking of Native politics across tribal boundaries, a task to which nationalism, as critical discourse and political practice, is inadequate" (113). Luana Ross (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) contributes to this concern that "we cannot afford to privilege nationhood and race over gender," noting that her "notion of indigenous/feminism seeks to empower communities. It includes female, male, and other genders. My indigenous/feminism privileges storytelling as a way to decolonize and empower our communities" (50). For Arvin, Tuck, Morrill,

Anderson, Ross, and Huhndorf, sovereignty is an important issue that must not be undermined by uncritically adopted white feminist principles. However, nationalism and sovereignty must not supersede the roles of women in leadership and resurgence.

Rematriation centers the vital role of women in Indigenous sovereignty, working within the tension between nationhood's shortcomings and Indigenous feminism's defense of sovereignty, particularly the sovereignty of women's bodies. As Leanne Simpson argues, sovereignty necessitates the health and self-determination of Indigenous women and access to uncontaminated lands, and therefore requires environmental justice:

> Sovereignty is the ability to keep our bodies safe from violence; to use the best of both indigenous and Western medicine to care for ourselves; to define and identify our bodies, sexuality, and relationships the way we see fit; and the capacity to express those identities freely without fear of violence or reprisal. It means the freedom to decide if we want to give birth and when and how. It means we must have the support to breastfeed and that our breast milk is free of contamination, which means that our land and water must also be free of contamination. It means the freedom and support to raise our children with the support of our families and communities, with free access to our lands, our Elders, our languages, and all aspects of our cultures. ("Place" 20)[80]

Indigenous feminisms hold that visions of Indigenous sovereignty that do not center women as givers of life and that do not strive for the environmental conditions that allow them "the means to live fully and responsibly as an Anishinaabeg person or as indigenous

[80] Simpson draws from Akwesasne Mohawk EJ activist and midwife Katsi Cook, who has for decades pressed for accountability and cleanup of toxic sites near General Motors factories and other industrial sites. Elizabeth Hoover's *The River is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community* foregrounds Katsi Cook's work to mobilize frameworks of environmental justice in service to Akwesasne.

Peoples" are not visions of sovereignty that will sustain Indigenous futurity (21). Million notes that Indigenous women are the central targets of colonial violence historically and in the present, arguing that "violence against Indigenous women is a key index to a hollowing out of any Indigenous self-determination in Canada and the United States, as it poses a loss of integrity to women's and the Indigenous nation's body/social body" (23). Also situating sexual violence in larger issues of Indigenous sovereignty, Sarah Deer argues that "rape affects more than the individual victims; it has an impact on the entire community. Women play significant roles in tribal communities, culturally, spiritually, and politically, and have been referred to as the 'backbone' of tribal sovereignty. Sovereignty thus suffers when the women suffer" (13).

Last Standing Woman offers a vision of decolonization that echoes the requirements of gendered sovereignty that Simpson outlines—access to lands, elders (and Indigenous knowledge), language, and cultural practices including spirituality—while also positioning sexual violence as central to settler colonialism's attacks on Indigenous sovereignty. This chapter unpacks these issues by constructing a framework of rematriation as re-membering the sovereign body and using that framework to read LaDuke's novel alongside Vine Deloria Jr's *God is Red* and *Custer Died For Your Sins*. In these early works, Deloria offers a productive commentary on the importance of spirituality in Indigenous activism and resurgence, which *Last Standing Woman* reciprocates through narratives of re-membering in various forms: the return of White Earth remains following NAGPRA, the recovery of White Earth homelands, and the rematriation of Ojibwe spirituality. These spiritual practices, specifically drum ceremonies, establish a continuity of decolonial resistance from the late nineteenth

century to a fictional activist movement set in the 1980s. They also reflect a trans/national alliance between Dakota and Ojibwe nations following the Dakota-U.S. war of 1862, bridging Ojibwe resistance to assimilation and dispossession in the nineteenth century to women-led movements to defend White Earth lands in the late twentieth century.

Bringing Ancestors Home: Possibilities and Challenges of Repatriation Following NAGPRA

Last Standing Woman spans a period of White Earth history from 1862 to 2018 (concluding 21 years beyond the novel's 1997 publication) and brings together several key issues facing the White Earth nation at the turn of the twenty-first century, including ongoing racist violence from white residents of the White Earth reservation, efforts to log White Earth's remaining forests, sexual violence against Native women, and repatriating ancestral remains removed during the early reservation years. Before further developing rematriation as a framework for understanding these intersectional issues of law, history, and trans/national relations in LaDuke's novel, this section examines her fictionalized representation of repatriation and her critiques of anthropologists who contribute to settler colonial dispossession of White Earth lands and ancestors. LaDuke presents repatriation as a necessary part of re-membering the sovereign body by reconnecting Ojibwe relatives to the lands of the White Earth nation. Repatriation is part of a larger process of healing, yet it is an imperfect solution as it reinforces the authority of the settler state to transfer ownership of relatives. Her novel imagines a decolonial future

beyond the politics of recognition, exploring Indigenous-centered interventions beyond the limits of federal law.

LaDuke echoes Deloria's critiques of academic violence against Indigenous communities, depicting the objectification of White Earth Ojibweg in the name of academic freedom and the desecration of sacred sites. Deloria became rather famous for his critique of anthropologists in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, in which he outlines the field's detrimental effects on movements for Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty and argues that "the massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today" (86). Deloria's intervention points out anthropological obsessions with defining who Indigenous people are or were, noting that these debates oscillated between studies of Native peoples as bilingual, bicultural, folk people, or, as in the case of the Oglala "warriors without weapons," debates that would shape federal policy but not at all contribute to the material needs of Native people (95). In other words, the field of anthropology as it related to Native populations invented and contested its own ideas of Indigeneity in a self-perpetuating academic vacuum to the detriment of real Indigenous communities.

Joining Deloria's forceful critiques of academia, LaDuke fictionalizes the actual Smithsonian anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka in the early timeline of *Last Standing Woman*. Ales Hrdlicka visits LaDuke's fictionalized White Earth reservation in 1915 to conduct a series of tests to determine which Ojibwe are "full blood," and which are "mixed blood" through phrenological measurements and a fingernail scratch on the chests of the subjects, also exhuming and removing Ojibwe remains for archiving and further study

(65). This narrative is based on actual historical fact; as LaDuke explains in *Recovering the Sacred,* the real Ales Hrdlicka actually implemented these eugenic research methods at White Earth on behalf of the Smithsonian Institute, and his "work was instrumental in the creation of 'blood rolls' on the timber-rich and fertile White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. His data was used to categorize 'mixed bloods,' whose land could then be alienated under federal Indian policy" (71). In LaDuke's novel and in the greater context of Hrdlicka's visits to the White Earth nation, academics are part of a network of settler-colonial institutions that systematically dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their lands via racist logics of purity. Deloria argues that the taking of Indigenous lands is the core reason for the social and economic issues facing tribal nations, which anthropologists eagerly theorize and vigorously debate at conferences and in publication. For Deloria, academics were instrumental in creating the problems that they pursue in their scholarship. Indeed, the long historical arc of *Last Standing Woman* captures the white supremacist logic that underscores anthropological entitlement to Native bodies and lands and that carries into the 1980s and into issues of repatriation, years after Deloria's critique shook the foundations of anthropology as it relates to Indigenous studies.

LaDuke's repatriation narrative in *Last Standing Woman* involves two cases of looting: first the remains taken by Hrdlicka in 1915-1916, which are recovered from the Smithsonian following NAGPRA, and the other an unresolved a case of a settler who claims ownership of Ojibwe remains as private property, selling archaeological rights to an unnamed Minnesota university in 1989. In the later narrative arc, Warren Danielson, a white farmer who lives within the bounds of the White Earth reservation, finds several grave houses in a forested area of his lands, which were formerly Ojibwe allotments

purchased through coercive tactics during the allotment era. Danielson sells the graves to archaeologists who then covertly exhume and remove several bodies and funerary objects without notifying the White Earth nation. In a conversation with another white resident of the reservation, Danielson brags about his "secret," as he calls it, sharing that he "got a good deal with the university [to] let their students dig up [his] old field there and pay [him] a little something for the privilege of playing in the dirt" (138). Danielson acknowledges that "they say there's some nice old beadwork and a few old squaws out there" (138). The other party to the conversation is a man who as a teenager attempted to rape a Native woman but as an adult only vaguely dislikes Indians; he concedes that it can't hurt to make money digging up graves, though he feels ambivalent, sensing that Danielson has crossed an ethical line even though all of the settler landowners are enraged that their lands are now legally contested (138). Danielson presses for discretion because he knows the descendants of those buried on his land and "don't want any of those old Indian drunkards coming after my scalp" (138). Layering racism upon sexism in his boasts of desecrating Ojibwe graves in a conversation between two white men who devalue the sanctity of Indigenous women's lives and bodily remains, Danielson is motivated by what LaDuke calls "a peculiar kind of hatred in the northwoods, a hatred born of the guilt of privilege, a hatred born of living with three generations of complicity in the theft of lives and land" (126). Danielson's Indian hating escalates when the federal government informs him and other non-Native landowners that their titles to certain plots of White Earth lands are invalidated because of illegal transactions in the allotment era (126). Between Hrdlicka's "scientific" determination of full and mixed-blood Ojibwe eligibility to White Earth allotments and the illegal seizure of allotments that were resold

to settler farmers whose descendants still live at White Earth, the intersections of academia and the law enabled settlers to dispossess the White Earth people to the point that 90% of the lands on the White Earth reservation were owned by non-Ojibweg (180).

Not only do White Earth Ojibweg feel the loss of lands for generations after the allotment period, but their ancestors are also deprived of their final resting place on their homelands, removed to archives in catalogued boxes due to a fundamental separation between settler and Indigenous knowledge systems. This spiritual conflict—which for settlers justifies their desecration of Indigenous burial sites for the supposed benefit of settler and Western knowledge traditions—comes down to seemingly fundamental notions of humanity, sovereignty, and the rights of Indigenous peoples to protect their relations. Deloria briefly discusses the ongoing issue of repatriation in *God is Red* to illustrate the divergence of Christian and Native belief systems, and the spiritual implications of desecration in the name of science. Deloria writes of a confrontation between the American Indian Movement and a group of students from the Twin Cities Institute for Talented Youth who sought to excavate a village site in the territory of the Prairie Island Dakota community in southern Minnesota. Deloria relates that the students, "apparently with the best of intentions…believed that if they dug up the Indian village remains they would be paying the highest respect to Indian culture" (30). AIM intervened and "advised the students and newspaper reporters that they did not believe their ancestors had buried their dead for the express purpose of having another culture dig them up and display their bones" (31). For Deloria, the disconnect between a group of white students with academic institutional backing and the Minnesota Native community illustrates settler-colonial hypocrisy: Native remains are valid subject for study and

display, but if Natives dug up a white cemetery, the response would be public outrage. Following this logic, he arrives at the argument that "the general attitude of the whites…was that they were true spiritual descendants of the Indians and that the contemporary AIM Indians were foreigners who had no right to complain about their activities" (31). Deloria offers an ironic reversal of the actual lineages of Indigenous Dakota and Ojibwe peoples in Minnesota and white Minnesotans, yet in doing so he illustrates settler colonialism's aims to erase Indigenous presence in order to inscribe Indigenous lands as settler homelands.

Under the racialized logic of settler-colonial hypocrisy, Native sacred sites are valid subjects of study without the consent of living Native peoples while Christian sacred sites are untouchable, a process that aligns with the broad settler-colonial project of gradually eroding Indigenous sovereignty and rights to claim their homelands as sacred in order to assert settler "Indigeneity" to occupied lands. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill speak directly to the racial implications of this logic, which builds on Patrick Wolfe's critical intervention that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event:

> Embedded in the racial construction of Indigenous peoples in the United States is a eugenic idea, one that has never been effectively undone: that the destiny of First Peoples is to become less Native (thus, less empowered to make land claims) over generations. Within this racial construction, over time, Indigenous claims are diluted and settlers indeed become the native owners of a place. Thus, settler colonialism must be understood as a multi-fronted project of making the First Peoples of a place extinct; it is a relentless structure, not contained in a period of time. (12-13)

Settler colonialism requires, of course, the literal removal of Indigenous people from their lands onto reservations, yet it also involves other settler institutions such as the law and academia, particularly anthropology, to justify the removal of Indigenous remains as property along with the land dispossessed of Indigenous peoples. Defending sacred sites is therefore a twofold struggle: on one hand for the dignity and the political sovereignty of tribal nations to protect their ancestors' material remains, yet also for environmental justice as Indigenous nations assert their right to protect the lands where their dead lay buried.

These struggles highlight how looting of Indigenous graves resonates on affective and spiritual levels, embodied through Moose Hanford, the character who connects the two repatriation cases in *Last Standing Woman*. In 1989, Moose discovers the archaeological dig on Warren Danielson's contested land while hunting. Tracking a deer across a slough and into the woods, Moose finds close to twenty *jiibegamig*, or gravehouses, which were built as the final resting places of Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin, among others. Moose estimates the gravehouses are 80 years old, and notes "obvious care" in the treatment of the contents of the gravehouses, which suggested "government or university researchers" were behind the digging (143). Moose hesitates to consider whose relatives were removed from the graves, as "No one spoke of where his own great-grandmother, Ishkwegaabawiikwe, was buried. He hoped now that he had not found her" (143). Unbeknownst to Moose, Ishkwegaabawiikwe is one of the ancestors whose grave house had been opened, her exposed bones "bleached and in a jumble with clothes, leather scraps, and tattered material still on them" (143). In hers and two other graves, ceremonial objects buried with the bodies—"beadwork, medicine

pouches, and other items" had been taken (143). The experience of finding the disturbed graves is physically and spiritually unsettling—indeed, this is no way for Moose to encounter his great-grandmother. After putting down tobacco for his desecrated ancestors, Moose's "chest hurt now, a deep ache, something that was not merely physical" (143). Moose's experience at the grave site registers in affective and spiritual terms as yet another experience of traumatic loss tied to environmental injustice, in this case the dispossession of 90% of White Earth reservation lands. Moose's response is a bodily resonance of affective relationality, a signal of what Moose knows is a "serious violation in the order of things" (143). For Moose and other Ojibweg who recognize relational responsibility to ancestors, disturbing graves is a severe dishonor, while for Danielson and the anthropologists he invites to exhume the site, Indigenous remains are commodities to be traded just like Indigenous lands.

As Moose's repatriation narrative unfolds, it makes visible the broader affective implications of repatriation as Indigenous people are expected to physically handle their ancestors and therefore open themselves up to further trauma and spiritual harm. In *Recovering the Sacred,* LaDuke points to a major limitation of NAGPRA as a legal attempt to offer redress for settler desecration and spiritual violence in that repatriation itself contributes to trauma as Native communities must relive the violence committed against their ancestors by sorting through bones and funerary objects, including remains of children and infants, in order to put these relatives to rest. As LaDuke notes, "the survivors are separated from all the things that make life meaningful, and the academics get tenure. Communities suffer under an immeasurable loss: the loss of the people, the ancestors, the songs, the ceremonies, and the sacred items that are part of the ceremonies"

(*Recovering* 82).[81] After finding the desecrated grave site on Danielson's land, which the White Earth nation has no legal jurisdiction over and therefore no claim to under NAGPRA, Moose dedicates himself to bringing home other ancestors removed from White Earth by Hrdlicka's team. In 2000, he personally transports remains from Washington D.C. to White Earth following a visit with another White Earth citizen, George Agawaateshkan, to the Smithsonian's Office of Repatriation. At that facility, 20 staff members sort and identify remains for repatriation. They lead Moose and George through a series of fireproof, airtight rooms "where ancestors languished in small boxes the size and length of a femur, the largest bone in a human skeleton," stored and sorted for efficiency in close proximity, treated as archival objects rather than as humans (271). Moose and George begin to feel, and hear, the ancestors around them: "At first it was a hum, somewhere in the back of Moose's mind. Slowly, death chants, lullabies, love songs, and war songs became a composite of music, chants in his mind and ears, as their voices crescendoed. An immense graveyard of the unwilling dead, out of order" (271). This moment mirrors the physical pain that Moose felt when he found the grave site where Ishkwegaabawiikwe was exhumed, only now Moose and George feel the presence of Indigenous ancestors from across the continent. As George hums a song to keep "the music of the others at bay," Moose scans the labels on the boxes: "Inuit, Kiowa, Pawnee, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Florida, Florida, Florida," ancestors removed from known and unknown Indigenous homelands during periods of frantic killing and looting as settlers,

[81] As LaDuke explains in *Recovering the Sacred*, having remains and sacred items returned at first seems like a step toward healing, but the widespread practice in the nineteenth and early twentieth century of applying strong chemicals to preserve leather, fur, and organic materials that make up sacred objects render the objects toxic, making it difficult for Native communities to engage in costly testing and storage, as some of the objects cannot be buried or destroyed safely (82).

missionaries, researchers, and the U.S. military dispossessed Eastern tribes before pushing westward (272). The Smithsonian Office of Repatriation, while inaugurated in an effort to return remains to tribal nations, is a hallmark of the academic chapter of settler-colonial military history.

While the efforts of the Smithsonian to repatriate Indigenous remains is a worthy endeavor to right the kinds of environmental injustices that LaDuke and Deloria describe, it is important to recognize that repatriation itself is a difficult experience for Moose and George. Moose and George spend two full days preparing forty-five ancestors for the journey home, after which they visit a Piscataway man's sweat lodge where they "cried tears that were lost amid their sweat, and prayed to get the smell of death off their bodies before they headed home" (272). The significant task of handling the remains and the affective experience of hearing the spirits in the archive take a heavy toll on Moose and George, necessitating a ceremony before they could proceed with bringing the ancestors home. This struggle is shared by all tribal nations affected by colonial looting of sacred spaces and the ongoing efforts to bring relatives home, and the spiritual healing offered by the Piscataway illustrates the importance of trans/national support networks. Indeed, these trans/national efforts made repatriation possible, and the trans/national relationships between tribal nations before and after colonialism contribute to decolonization beyond the limits of federal recognition. For Moose's family, bringing the White Earth ancestors home was "about re-ordering the world…that violation of the sacred seared their souls for generations and caused a grief that could not be resolved by any Christian prayer. Only now could his family heal; only now could his nation heal" (282). Repatriation is an important step in the process of healing, but healing also requires resurgence and re-

membering other parts of the sovereign body, including the spiritual practices that underlie Ojibwe life and the recovery of White Earth lands.

Repatriation is useful for approaching these other forms of recovery and re-membering but is limited in its adherence to a legal structure of recognition and assent to colonial dominance. LaDuke's repatriation narrative, therefore, calls for an expanded reading of the potentials for decolonization that takes repatriation as a starting point toward greater resurgence. In Steven Salaita's reading of *Last Standing Woman*, he argues that "the recurrent theme of ancestors' bones…can be read both literally and symbolically…While the struggle over these bones of the past actually occurs and is presented as a literal contest in *Last Standing Woman*, its metaphorical qualities are crucial" (23) Salaita continues, "LaDuke is concerned not only with the actual bones of the past, but also with the effort to name and control those bones by correcting the historical mythologies that became institutionalized in the colonial culture" (23). LaDuke's repatriation narrative offers this kind of correction as part of a much larger historical project that interleaves issues of federal law and policy with Ojibwe knowledge and spiritual systems. Laws like NAGPRA affirm Indigenous cultural rights, but force tribes to depend on the politics of recognition that affirm the authority of the federal government as a superior sovereign. These laws may lead to positive change, such as the recovery of sacred items and the connection of younger generations to traditional practices and other laws affirming Indigenous cultural rights. However, these laws are rooted in discourse of rights instead of responsibilities, the latter of which is more in line with Anishinaabe and Dakota thought. Moreover, the legal linguistics of "repatriation," which centers patrimony/inherited property, reflects a male-dominant vision of

Indigenous nationhood that fails to account for the role of women as leaders and literally the source of life for the nation. As Leanne Simpson argues, tribal-national sovereignty must be grounded in the sovereignty of women's bodies. She further argues, "if sovereignty from indigenous perspectives includes our bodies, then it also includes our minds and knowledge system. To me, that means the ability to regenerate indigenous languages, philosophies, legal systems, and intellectual systems...Our ways of thinking come from the land; our intellectual sovereignty is rooted in place" ("Place" 21). As I shift from the limited legal framework of repatriation to a framework of rematriation, which calls forth the theories of resurgence and decoloniality in LaDuke's novel, I theorize rematriation as spiritual recovery and actual decolonization through the recovery of White Earth lands. *Last Standing Woman* suggests that actual decolonization emanates from the leadership and action of Indigenous women, necessitating a shift away from repatriation toward rematriation.

***Aniin Dewe'igan*: Rematriating the Drum**

Last Standing Woman opens with a narrative of trans/national alliance between an Ojibwe and a Dakota woman, a relationship borne of severe trauma and defined by collective healing. Their relationship reinforces their nation's anticolonial resistance to the growing threat of dispossession, as well as spiritual resistance to assimilative violence from the church. Ishkwegaabawiikwe, the title character of the novel, removes herself from an abusive relationship with a husband who falls away from his obligations as an Ojibwe partner. Soon after, she rescues Situpiwin in 1862 during a raid in which U.S. soldiers kill Situpiwin's children and capture her husband. Together, Situpiwin and

Ishkwegaabawiikwe witness the largest mass execution in U.S. history of 38 Dakota men, among them Situpiwin's husband. That same year, a vision of a drum comes to Ishkwegaabawiikwe first in a dream, then in material form to strengthen the community against pressures from the timber industry and Christian missionaries, the two prongs of colonialism that sought to disrupt Ojibwe relationships to the land and to one another. In Ishkwegaabawiikwe's dream, an old woman, her face painted "yellow and blue with thunderbirds across it," holds a drum: "Ishkwegaabawiikwe saw her, and then the old woman lifted up the drum—it was a hand drum, not another—and she showed it to the younger woman. Its face was naked at first, then, as she looked, the old woman's painted face was naked and the drum was painted. Just like that. It had a face" (40). In her dream, Ishkwegaabawiikwe witnesses the consciousness of the drum and understands its role in the community as not just a sacred object but a sacred being and a relative. Ishkwegaabawiikwe shares her dream with Namaybin Minoogeeshig (then her close friend and later husband to both Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin) who helps her make the drum and share it with "the older ones who could *see*—Chi Makwa, her brother Wazhaashkoons, Mindemoyen, those who still remained in the woods, those who had not gone to town nor followed the white man or the white man's god" (40). A vision made material, the drum joins two powerful spheres of Anishinaabe life: cultural practices and spirituality, which Deloria discusses in a broader context as Indigenous religiosity.[82] For

[82] In *God is Red*, Deloria discusses spiritual systems as religions—complex systems of spiritual beliefs that have guided specific peoples over long periods of time. He thereby resists the mainstream notions of Indigenous belief systems as paganism or as primitive superstition that were amplified by anthropological objectification of Indigenous nations and mainstream stereotypes. I don't find it necessary to hold to Deloria's comparative religious studies framework, however, so I approach spirituality as a reflection of cultural practices and philosophy, attending in particular to how LaDuke and Deloria articulate Indigenous relational systems via ceremony and spirituality in their texts.

the drum families, culture and spirituality intersect as a social dialectic that teaches Indigenous peoples who they are in relation to the other-than-human world; culture and spirituality also help people to uphold those relations and resist colonization manifested through military and police violence, assimilative settler institutions, and environmental injustice.

The drum brings together those who resist the pressures of assimilation and facilitates EJ resistance in an era of significant upheaval for Ojibwe and Dakota nations. The relationship between Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin, moreover, reflects the trans/national relationships between the two nations. LaDuke's fictional narrative actually retells a real-life example of such relations. Between 1878 and 1880, a Dakota woman named Tail Feather Woman (Wiyaka Sinte Win)[83] received the drum in a vision and shared its ceremony with the Ojibwe people after surviving a battle between her people and U.S. troops. Tail Feather Woman fled from soldiers on horseback, diving into a lake and breathing through a reed for many hours—some say for four days. As Dakota artist Paula Horne-Mullen tells it, "While under the water, she prayed and was visited by the Creator, who gave her a vision of the Big Drum. It is said she told that the pounding of the drum is to bring healing for the People and bring them together in unity. The Big Drum ceremony that is carried on with the Anishinabe, say it is a great Healing ceremony for their People" (White). After receiving the vision, Tail Feather Woman emerged from the water but was invisible to the soldiers camping nearby. Horne-Mullen explains, "As directed by the Creator she headed east in gratitude with her family [and] she passed on the vision, along with the songs and protocols for the ceremony to the Anishinabe. This

[83] In LaDuke's retelling, the Dakota woman's name is Situpiwin, which she translates as "Tailfeathers Woman" (35).

ceremony still exists with many Societies. She later died while living with the Anishinabe Nations" (White). LaDuke's adaptation of this history makes some major changes: Ishkwegaabawiikwe, an Ojibwe woman, has the vision of the drum and brings it to the people, but only after adopting Situpiwin into her family. The relationship between the two women echoes the relationship between Dakota and Ojibwe peoples that Tail Feather Woman upheld after her vision. The trans/national relationship reflected in Tail Feather Woman's story and LaDuke's fictionalization complicates a narrative that historian Bruce White also challenges, that "Dakota and Ojibwe people were implacable enemies for generations" (White). White explains,

> The history of shared beliefs, shared territory, and intermarriage among the two groups belies the importance given to that myth. Among the Ojibwe, particularly those who lived at Mille Lacs and along the St. Croix River, the Ma'iingan or Wolf clan owes its existence to marriages between Dakota men and Ojibwe women hundreds of years ago. The story of how Dakota people brought the drum to the Mille Lacs people is yet another example of the shared history of Ojibwe and Dakota people in Minnesota. (White)

The relationship between Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin reflects long, intersecting histories of Dakota and Ojibwe nations, who shared ceremonies like the Feast of the Dead that Witgen historicizes and the drum ceremonies brought into the world by Tail Feather Woman. This kind of alliance becomes vital to collective Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism, even as individual tribes engage in their own struggles with coloniality.

As Ishkwegaabawiikwe, Situpiwin, and Namaybin bring the drum ceremony to the people, the pressures of colonization build mounting threats in the form of resource extraction, religious assimilation, and anthropological intrusion—namely Hrdlicka's removal of Ojibwe remains and sacred objects. These threats and conflicts between extractive industries and tribal nations whose sovereignty is already under constant attack by the federal government grows out of the disconnect between Indigenous and Christian philosophy and religious ideology concerning the land and history. In *God is Red,* Deloria approaches American Indian civil rights issues, including environmental concerns and the protection of Native graves and sacred sites, as emanating from Indigenous spirituality. Indigenous belief systems, Deloria argues, are inherently land-based and are rooted in relational obligations between humans and the natural world; he suggests that "the choice appears to be between conceiving of land as either a subject or object," (70), arguing that "American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind" (75). Indigenous peoples center land in their conceptions of self and spirituality, Deloria suggests, privileging spatiality over temporality. Colonization transposes European belief systems onto North America, with the temporal narrative of Christianity reinforcing claims under the doctrine of discovery as the foundations of settler legal exigence, justifying for settler society the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the disruption of Indigenous social and spiritual systems. Despite the settler state's ambitions to eliminate Indigenous peoples, reinscribe their lands as settler homelands, and forcibly converting Natives to Christianity, Indigenous spiritualities endured and, according to Deloria writing in the 1970s, are poised for resurgence.

For Deloria and LaDuke, that resurgence is key to struggles for civil, social, and environmental justice. LaDuke ties the beginning of that history to the assassination of chief Bugonaygeeshig in 1868, after which "it was as if a shadow set across White Earth, a shadow that did not lift for almost one hundred years" (42). Bugonaygeeshig was killed by the wiindigooweeg, exploitative colonizers who sought to dispossess the Ojibwe of their timber and land base, "in hopes of ending what the *Anishinaabeg* knew was theirs. Their ways, their land, and their drums. But the *wiindigooweeg* underestimated the *aanikoobijigan*, the old people, and they underestimated the drums" (43). LaDuke describes the rapid changes to the White Earth nation during the late nineteenth century in Ojibwe terms, using the wiindigoo as a metaphor for the threat settlers presented to Ojibwe communities and locating resistance in the spiritual practices upheld by elders, those who protected the drums. Despite the widespread dispossession and sickness (both physical and spiritual) that colonization brings to bear upon White Earth during this period, the drum helps those who welcome it into their community to thrive: "Those families that had drums, their numbers multiplied and their strength grew. They were determined to survive, to keep their ways, their songs, their medicines. To outwit the *wiindigoo*, the white man" (40). Following the assassination of Bugonaygeeshig, however, assimilative efforts by missionaries and later church officials working in cooperation with the Indian Agent, Simon Michelet, would drive the ceremonies underground, and eventually the drums had to be hidden or were lost to the destructive forces of assimilation.

To the settler agents of assimilation—the government and the church—the drum was seen as dangerous, as was much of Indigenous spirituality. In efforts to hasten

conversion to Christianity, the Indian Agent withheld rations for "any family found to be in violation of the law," rewarding "families who reported violators" with additional rations, therefore sowing mistrust among the families and disrupting the kinship networks that had governed life before colonization (57). Nearby at the Dakota Agency, an institution had been built "to house the so-called 'medicine men' from all of the Plains tribes," tempting Michelet to send Ojibwe spiritual leaders there (56). LaDuke notes, "In the circles of federal Indian policy, tolerance for native religious practices was scorned at best. Indeed, it had been scarcely ten years since the cavalry had silenced the Ghost Dance ceremonies at Wounded Knee" (56). According to Deloria, "by the time of the Allotment Act, almost every form of Indian religion was banned on the reservations…Even Indian funeral ceremonies were declared to be illegal, and drumming and every form of dancing had to be held for the most artificial of reasons," such as to commemorate the fourth of July (251-252). At LaDuke's fictionalized White Earth and across Native country, colonial attacks on Indigenous religions resulted in generations of spiritual dysphoria and trauma, splitting up families as some gravitated toward the structure and community of Christianity and others held to the teachings of their elders. Many others fell away from either spiritual community.

These pressures would result in a century of physical and spiritual violence for the White Earth nation and the dispossession of 90% of the reservation land base. In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Deloria connects dispossession of tribal lands to the systemic poverty, lack of economic development, inadequate education, and insufficient housing

issues affecting reservation communities[84]—issues that he notes are popular among academics to theorize as identity struggles:

> Regardless of theory, the Pyramid Lake Paiutes and the Gila River Pima Maricopas are poor because they have been systematically cheated out of their water rights, and on desert reservations water is the most important single factor in life. No matter how many worlds Indians straddle, the Plains Indians have an inadequate land base that continues to shrink because of land sales. Straddling worlds is irrelevant to straddling small pieces of land and trying to earn a living. (91)

As each tribal nation faces specific struggles that impede their sovereignty (defined by Leanne Simpson as the ability of a tribal nation to adequately support its people's bodily and maternal health needs) dispossession of Indigenous lands becomes an environmental justice issue. For White Earth, that dispossession results in deforestation, damage to wild rice beds and wetlands, and dependence on environmentally and financially unsustainable mass agricultural production. Despite these severe hardships and the continual threat of settler violence, the drum ceremony continues in families resistant to assimilation, those who keep the language and ceremonies alive in private long after the passing of Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin.

In 1990, a group of Ojibwe women led by Elaine Mandamin rematriate the drum in preparation for an activist movement that would include an occupation of the White

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[84] In *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson connects systemic poverty and social struggles to dispossession in a Canadian context: "The 'social ills' in our communities Canadians so love to talk about are simply manifestations of the hurt and trauma from the ongoing violence of dispossession. They are the symptoms, not the disease. 'Fixing' the 'social ills' without addressing the politics of land and body dispossession serves only to reinforce settler colonialism, because it doesn't stop the system that causes harm in the first place" (42).

Earth tribal government offices in defense of the remaining White Earth woodlands and wetlands. The women are White Earth ogichidaakwe[85]—women warriors. The "-kwe" suffix indicates that these Ogichidaa are women. Leanne Simpson theorizes kwe as a method of resurgence, as colonization attacks not only the Indigenous body politic but women's bodies. She argues, "My life as kwe within Nishnaabewin is *method* because my people have always generated knowledge through the combination of emotion and intellectual knowledge within the kinetics of our place-based practices, as mitigated through our bodies, minds, and spirits," borrowing from Glen Coulthard to note that "This internal work is a necessary and vital part of living responsibly and ethically within our grounded normativity. It is my sovereignty" (*Always* 29-30). The White Earth ogichidaakwe chart a course for their community to recover such responsible and ethical living, starting with the rematriation of one of Ishkwegaabawiikwe's drums, which was hidden in the rafters of the Episcopal church, in "the ribcage of the beast" (155). They learn a traveling song from Elaine's grandfather Mesabe and, guided by a custodian at the church who knows of the drum's existence and kept it hidden, the women find the drum. When they gaze upon the drum, they find that it is intact, surprisingly not disturbed by rodents, the beadwork still tight: "Old greasy yellow beads, translucent purples and reds, clan signs, bears, thunderbirds, fish, and the floral patterns told the stories…It was beautiful and the women were breathless, hesitant to touch it" (155). They place tobacco on the drum face, "touching the women from a century before," and sing the song Mesabe taught them, "a traveling song, intended to safely move the people from one place to another" (155). The women rematriate the drum and the ceremonies that long

[85] Ojibwe women leaders, with the Ojibwemowin word adapted from the Dakota "Akicita," which translates as veteran, warrior, and leader.

ago supported Ojibwe resistance, welcoming the drum back into the community as a relative, not as a historic artifact: “These things made the people of White Earth feel a part of their history, not as though their *aanikoobijiganag* were ‘objects’ to look at and ‘things’ to take apart” (274). LaDuke articulates cultural and spiritual objects like the drum as *aanikoobijiganag,* ancestors, highlighting the importance of these items as relatives, not as inanimate objects for study or collection.

The spirit of the drum contains the spirit of the trans/national relationship between Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin, which reflects the real-life connection between Tail Feather Woman and the Mille Lacs Ojibwe nation. These relationships enable both nations to endure the colonial violence of assimilation, which comes at great spiritual and emotional cost, and ongoing struggles for Native communities. These relationships also reflect the ways Dakota and Ojibwe nations exercise sovereignty beyond the recognition of the settler state in nation-to-nation exchange for the betterment of one another as a collective response to colonization. However, the continuity that the drum provides between Ishkwegaabawiikwe’s and Elaine’s generations sets up another resistance movement led by the Ogichidaakwe, this time taking the form of reclaiming the White Earth nation’s government from corrupt politicians. As in Ishkwegaabawiikwe’s day, this resistance effort aims to protect what remains of White Earth’s forests from international logging interests, building from the spiritual commitments of relationality that shape Ojibwe nationhood.

Ogichidaakwe Rising: Rematriating White Earth Lands

Throughout *Last Standing Woman*, LaDuke centers land in her negotiation of repatriation, spiritual resurgence, and EJ struggles. As settler colonialism aims to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and lifeways, decolonization necessitates the recovery of Indigenous lands in tandem with the recovery of ancestors and spiritual traditions. As in the rematriation of the drum, which continues the trans/national relationship of Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin, I approach land recovery as a form of rematriation through the leadership and direct action of a group of Ojibwe women. Those women are descendants of the late nineteenth century resisters of assimilative violence on the part of the churches, the Indian Agent Michelet, and the federal government, violence that led to the dispossession 90% of White Earth reservation lands from Ojibwe ownership. That ownership was only legal, however—ownership on paper but not in spiritual terms. Such ownership was made possible through the legal apparatus of allotment, which broke up kinship-based networks in an attempt to assimilate reservation citizens into capitalistic individuals while making so-called "surplus" lands not allotted to authorized Natives available to white settlers at low cost. In its dispossession of Indigenous peoples for the gain of white settlers and subsequent jurisdictional issues related to fractured tribal landholdings, allotment was an early, widespread form of environmental injustice following the era of treatymaking between Indigenous nations and the United States government. This process did not end with the establishment of the White Earth reservation but continued beyond the allotment era as settlers and land speculators exploited gaps in federal law to obtain dubious titles to lands on the reservation.

As Deloria argues, the dispossession of tribal nations contributes to social issues generations later, as lacking a land base makes it nearly impossible for communities to thrive. For LaDuke, the stakes of rematriation are significant—not only is the recovery of land important to White Earth sovereignty, but it is also vital to the spiritual and social well-being of all peoples. As Cheryl Suzack argues,

> in LaDuke's view, the Anishinaabeg people's right to the land cannot be superseded by secular issues that privilege the relations of law and government over the relations to the metaphysical…the Anishinaabeg people's material and spiritual connections to the land are fused such that they cannot be distinguished through quantifiable blood connections or legally imposed colonial patterns of ownership. (186)

In Suzack's reading, LaDuke approaches colonization in *Last Standing Woman* as a gendered intrusion into Indigenous social orders that imposes patriarchal structures of power and legality that systematically dispossessed the White Earth nation of their lands while seeking to eliminate matriarchal leadership. Echoing Deer and Million, Suzack understands these as combined processes that contribute to widespread sexual violence.[86] LaDuke challenges this framework of colonial land management, asserting that gender and legal constructions of land and sovereignty are inseparable and that the leadership of Indigenous women is essential to decolonization and activism.[87]

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[86] Sarah Deer also describes this process in *The Beginning and End of Rape*.

[87] LaDuke's intervention reflects a consistent critique of the American Indian Movement's failure to include women's perspectives and leadership in its organization, therefore replicating the very same patriarchal dynamics that were imposed on Native communities through colonization. As Gilio-Whitaker notes, "the activism of the 1960s and '70s was cultivated largely by young urban Indians, and while women were involved, it was visibly dominated by men who had become so acculturated to dominant white society they had limited knowledge of their tribes' matrilineal and matriarchal cultures. This translated into sexist, repressive behavior toward women" (116). In response to the exclusion of women in AIM leadership, which Gilio-Whitaker calls "patriarchal colonialism," Lorelei De Cora

These issues call for accountability on the part of the federal government, state regulatory agencies, and tribal governments, but they also make it clear that sovereignty that can only exist when tribal nations have control over their reservation lands, which in the broader context of federal law means tribal nations and its citizens need to be able to legally own and manage their homelands. *Last Standing Woman* traces the strategic legal dispossession of White Earth lands back to 1915, when the Indian Agent at the time facilitated widespread logging on Ojibwe allotments without the consent of the Ojibwe landowners. For White Earth citizens, "It was a mystery to most, save perhaps the Indian Agent and a few timber cruisers, how the Pillsburys, Weyerhaeusers, Steernersons, and Walsh families had the papers to cut the trees, but somehow they did, and they kept on cutting" (67). Namaybin recognizes the voracity with which the timber companies forced their way across the White Earth nation as the return of the wiindigoo. Long before the timber companies started clearcutting Ojibwe allotments, an Ojibwe man who lived along Round Lake turned wiindigoo after nearly starving during a harsh winter and who had taken to eating his family and visitors, "never again to be a victim of invisible death. He ate those who strayed, were weak, or were just plain unfortunate. He ate the bold and the foolish, and he ate the young. He relished in his evil" (68). Namaybin recognizes the same desperation as his people were subjected to a different kind of wiindigoo, one that

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Means, Phyllis Young, Janet McCloud, Madonna Thunderhawk, and other Native women involved with AIM created Women of All Red Nations (WARN) in 1974 (117). While AIM responded to issues of police brutality, the failure of the federal government to honor treaty obligations, and self-determination and sovereignty, WARN extended that advocacy to include "issues pertinent to American Indian women's health, notably the effects of Black Hills uranium extraction" at Pine Ridge, "which was causing miscarriages, birth defects, and various forms of cancer" (Gilio-Whitaker 117). WARN defended the corporeal and gendered sovereignty that Leanne Simpson describes, recognizing that the political interventions of AIM, while important, could not be effective if Indigenous women and families continue to face environmental injustice.

consumes not Ojibwe flesh but the forests that sustain Ojibwe life. In response, Namaybin and his wives Ishkwegaabawiikwe and Situpiwin raid a logging camp, stash the equipment and workhorses and block access to the lake to prevent the transport of logs. When the lumber workers arrive, they find "maybe fifty Indian men and women armed with Winchester rifles, sturdy in their canoes on the river and holding the shores" (70-71). Locking eyes with the angry lumbermen, Namaybin calls across the water, "It is no use to make small talk to a cannibal" (71). Namaybin identifies the timber workers in the only way that makes sense to his community—as wiindigoog, as entities who no longer act as humans should, who exploit the land for profit.

In Ojibwe cosmology, the wiindigoog are people who have succumbed to starvation and lost their humanity. While settler capitalism and greedy, violent settlers engage in practices that make the wiindigoo an apt metaphor for coloniality (as in Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*), wiindigoog are not limited to white settlers. As the broader EJ movement has frequently noted, Indigenous nations generally held pre-colonial governing philosophies that call for the people to resist greed and capitalistic gain at the expense of the land.[88] The various modes of settler industry that target the White Earth Nation during and after the allotment era—including logging, commercial agriculture, and ranching—are made possible in part by the illegal taking of Ojibwe allotments. In LaDuke's narrative, Lucky Waller, a white businessman in nearby Detroit Lakes and leader of the white supremacist group Knights of the Forest, defrauds non-English-

[88] There are also certainly Indigenous peoples who believe it is appropriate to take from the land without a sense of responsibility or sustainability for various and often complex reasons, such as generating individual wealth or objection to traditional governance systems, both products of assimilate education and policies. *Last Standing Woman* captures these concerns through the White Earth officials who make side deals with lumber companies to permit logging, some of whom do so out of personal gain and others out of genuine concern about economic opportunity for their nation.

speaking Ojibwe citizens of their lands in 1916 by offering short-term loans and having them sign papers that transferred their lands to him not as collateral but as a sale.[89] His fraud would open White Earth to logging companies and aspiring non-Native farmers, whose industries would become exploitative of both Ojibwe land and Ojibwe peoples. That exploitation adds legal insult to colonial injury as settlers would clear cut much of the nation's forests, transform ecological systems through unsustainable agricultural processes, and desecrate Ojibwe burial sites. As a result, Ojibweg are left with scant resources to generate economic development and little to no agency over what happens to their nation's lands. Echoing Deloria, Salaita reads this conflict involving Waller as representing "a system of ordinances alien to the Anishinaabeg…Waller's ability to wrest land legally from the natives through a ruse that is upheld by the tenets of American legality connotes, first and foremost, a divergence in worldviews" wherein land becomes material property under the law, something the Ojibweg at that time did not believe, as no individual had the right to "own" land (31). According to Salaita, LaDuke "employs a strategy of cultural and geographical restoration to counter these hegemonic maneuvers of the colonial power" (31). As Mesabe fails in his attempt to reverse Waller's illegal purchase of his mother's land and nearly resorts to violence, she tells him that she did not wish to lose both him and her land, noting that "He cannot keep it forever, it is not his" (90). Mesabe and his mother fall victim to the unfamiliar, rapidly changing discourse of land ownership following allotment, which was itself designed to divest Indigenous peoples of collective lands in order to facilitate assimilation. However, she finds some

[89] Steven Salaita notes that Waller's ruse is based on actual practices that led to LaDuke's great-great-grandmother, who could not read or write in English, signing over her lands under pretense of accepting a loan.

solace in her belief that nobody actually possesses land, though the principle of land ownership and resource extraction would contribute to generations of struggles against the settler wiindigoo economy.

This legacy of dispossession that touches virtually every White Earth family and the infusion of settler capitalism into tribal-national governance lead to the occupation of the White Earth tribal offices, modeled after the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee by AIM which sought to remove a corrupt tribal chairman. In *Last Standing Woman,* the ogichidaakwe who organize the takeover of the White Earth tribal headquarters are the same women who rematriated the drum that in the early twentieth century supported their ancestors' resistance to the encroaching land speculators and logging companies. They connect two generations of Ojibwe-centered EJ action via the same cultural and spiritual practices in defense of the same lands. In the 1980s, White Earth is again faced with pressures from the timber industry to strip large sections of the reservation of its trees, this time with the help of White Earth tribal leaders who have been corrupted by the wiindigoo economic system. The occupation by the organization Protect Our Land follows efforts to persuade the tribal chairman, Lance Wagosh, to reverse his approval of logging permits and the construction of a mill at White Earth. Wagosh refuses to meet with the group, even though they had collected hundreds of petition signatures opposing the permits. In a press conference, the organization makes this statement: "Ninety percent of this reservation is held by interests other than Native People. Our people have been forced into desperate poverty, and yet we watch our natural resources and wealth flow off this reservation, without any benefit to us. Now, the headwaters of the Mississippi River are threatened by contamination. This is our survival" (180). Protect Our Land seeks the

removal of Wagosh from office and a shift in governance away from deals with companies that benefit individual politicians and companies over the people. Their claims are grounded in environmental and economic justice, recognizing that the "desperate poverty" of the White Earth people is linked to the dispossession of their lands.

Protect Our Land's statement acknowledges the potential for economic development through the harvesting and management of natural resources, hinting at one of the tensions that their movement must overcome: the desperate need for economic development on one hand and on the other the importance of protecting lands and ecosystems that are vital to Ojibwe lifeways. Deloria notes the increasing concerns in the mid-twentieth century that natural resource development could compromise the spiritual practices that reflect relations to the other-than-human world, the recovery of which is also important to Indigenous resurgence. Near the end of *God is Red*, Deloria pinpoints this conflict for tribal governments between Indigenous cultural, social, and religious structures concerning the other-than-human world and the material needs of Indigenous communities pushed into positions of severe social vulnerability by colonization:

> We have just begun to see the revival of Indian tribal religions at a time when the central value of Indian life—its land—is under incredible attack from all sides. Tribal councils are strapped for funds to solve pressing social problems. Leasing and development of tribal lands is a natural source of good income. But leasing of tribal lands involves selling the major object of tribal religion for funds to solve problems that are ultimately religious in nature. (258)

Deloria voices concern that tribal governments may further disconnect their peoples from the land-based knowledges and practices that contribute to nationhood. However, as

Deloria notes, there is real need for economic development in order for tribal nations to survive within the larger context of coloniality, and that economic development requires control of lands. LaDuke's fictional movement to reclaim White Earth governance and White Earth lands (and her actual efforts toward these ends through nonprofit organizing) shows that upholding relationality and Indigenous spiritual systems can coexist with land-based economic development, so long as such development does not desecrate relationality. Protect Our Land's public statement reflects such a vision: honoring relations through Ojibwe spiritual and cultural traditions while also creating growth. LaDuke's vision through Protect Our Land therefore answers Scott Lyons' question, "can tribal nationalism speak to the modernity and diversity of actually existing Indian nations?" ("Actually Existing" 307). In LaDuke's approach to these issues, tribal nationalism grounds Indigenous modernity in the knowledges and relational commitments that have shaped Ojibwe life for centuries; to center relationality does not dismiss modernity but holds tribal-national leaders accountable to the distribution of wealth and to justice.

In his lack of accountability to the White Earth Ojibweg he claims to represent, Lance Wagosh is the epitome of a corrupt tribal leader, perpetuating patriarchal power structures and hoarding wealth while his people struggle under extreme poverty. Wagosh and other men on the tribal council accept bribes from logging companies, purchasing expensive pickup trucks and fishing boats, but even more egregiously they shelter a council member who sexually abuses his daughter. The same ogichidaakwe who lead the occupation step in to expose the council member and save his daughter, and together they achieve a conviction in a rare legal victory in cases of sexual violence against Native

women and girls.[90] When faced with Protect Our Land's demands that the logging permits be revoked and that he step down from his position, Wagosh chooses to ignore the environmental and economic justice concerns of his people and in a radio interview refers to the group as "terrorists" who are "destroying federal and tribal property," echoing settler complaints over the AIM takeover of the BIA offices in 1972 (169). Wagosh turns to the legal codes that categorize Protect Our Land as engaging in illegal action following strategic ignorance on the part of Wagosh and the logging companies as both stand to gain from an increase in logging at White Earth. By coding the group as illegal, the federal justice system that Wagosh sees himself upholding draws the FBI and the National Guard to the site, which sets the stage for a standoff.[91] Despite Wagosh and the FBI's opposition to the resistance movement, Protect Our Land holds its ground and is successful in achieving their demands, removing the corrupt leadership and shifting the White Earth tribal government onto a track toward sustainable economic development.

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[90] As Sarah Deer outlines in *The Beginning and End of Rape*, the jurisdictional issues created by mixed land ownership on reservations and systemic erosion of sovereignty by the SCOTUS makes tribal justice systems powerless against non-Native criminals. In LaDuke's novel, Fred Graves carries the trauma of his father, who was raped by a young priest at a Catholic boarding school. While LaDuke marks sexual violence as a legacy of trauma and colonization, she also expresses the need for accountability, and Fred is charged and imprisoned for sexually abusing his daughter, Frances. The process by which the ogichidaakwe hold Fred accountable and put Frances on a path toward healing envisions an Indigenous matrilineal justice framework that operates strategically alongside the federal legal system. In another, darker version of this accountability, Kway Dole, a member of the LGBTQ2 community at White Earth who experienced both acceptance and discrimination, shoots and kills a racist local police officer known for raping Ojibwe women and whom she suspects murdered a member of Protect Our Land, despite no-fire orders from the FBI, local police, and National Guard. Dole's act of violence is an application of justice in a very limited context, as she presumably saw no way for the officer to be held accountable within the white supremacist structure of local police force, which like the tribal council tends to hide the crimes of their own.

[91] The legal dynamics of the situation echo later events at Standing Rock in 2016, as Energy Transfer Partners sought to overcome Dakota/Lakota and broader Indigenous environmental justice claims in order to profit from access to unceded treaty lands, a process that required the legal system to code those environmental justice efforts as themselves illegal, which I discuss further in the following chapter.

The victory of the ogichidaakwe puts White Earth on a track toward resurgence, part of which involves the rematriation of the reservation lands that were illegally sold or otherwise transferred to non-Native ownership. This process is jump-started by Claire St. Clair, who wins $14 million playing the lottery and develops a land trust to buy back White Earth lands. This event occurs in 2000, three years after the publication of the novel, pushing the narrative into speculative territory. In the novel's imagined future, federal law would facilitate "the re-acquisition of more than ten million acres of Indian land across the nation" and between the trust and other negotiations, White Earth would acquire "almost one hundred fifty thousand acres of land," or "over half of the reservation," effectively changing "the balance of power on the reservation" (285). This vision of what could happen if White Earth recovers its lands is mostly idealistic and has not yet come to pass. In 1985 the White Earth Land Settlement Act lead to the return of 10,000 acres of lands to "settle unresolved claims relating to certain allotted Indian lands on the White Earth Indian Reservation" (WELSA), which LaDuke fictionalizes through Lucky Waller's illegal loan sharking. Even after the act, less than 10% of the reservation is owned in trust by the tribe. Following WELSA, LaDuke founded the White Earth Land Recovery Project in 1989 to build on the momentum of what she and others hoped would be an ongoing process of land recovery. The early mission of that nonprofit organization echoes the speculative vision that concludes *Last Standing Woman,* wherein the rematriation of White Earth lands shifts the legal power dynamics of the community and collectively elevates life for White Earth citizens. Even though LaDuke's vision of land rematriation has not yet been accomplished as imagined in the pages of her novel, that imagining articulates the importance of rematriation as a larger process of recovering

ancestors, spiritual practices, and lands as a way to further define tribal sovereignty and re-member the sovereign body.

What (Environmental) Justice Wants: Decolonizing Recognition

As a novel that imagines justice and positive change for the White Earth nation while also speaking to the limits of federal law and recognition, *Last Standing Woman* points to a key tension between the EJ movement, legal systems, and Indigenous activism: meaningful pathways to justice and re-membering the Indigenous body politic. Kyle Whyte discusses the different modes of justice theorized by EJ studies and their implications for Indigenous nations, calling for "recognition justice" as the standard of "fairly considering and representing the cultures, values, and situations of all affected parties" ("Recognition" 200). Recognition justice, he argues, must meaningfully consider the specific tribal values and environmental heritage of tribal nations on a case-by-case basis rather than relying on a singular notion of tribal governance or relations to the other-than-human world. Whyte's work aligns with Tuck and Yang's interrogation of "what justice wants, what it produces, whom it fails, where it operates, when it is in effect, and what it lacks" ("Justice" 3). They situate notions of justice as "a colonial temporality, always desired and deferred, and delimited by the timeframes of modern colonizing states as well as the self-historicizing, self-perpetuating futurities of their nations" (6). Justice, in other words, is an ideal and a goal but not a material reality. LaDuke's long historical arc from 1862 to 2018 undertakes a project of imagining the possibilities and limits of justice, contributing theories of rematriation and community revitalization. These theories carry the momentum of past Indigenous resistance to

coloniality and ongoing Indigenous EJ activism into the future. It also reflects the possibilities of Indigenous literature to imagine EJ futures as the restoration of relationality and Indigenous knowledges while also asserting sovereignty within frameworks of tribal nationalism and trans/nationalism.

Last Standing Woman, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, and the *Aurelia* trilogy also make legible the bodily, affective dimension of these struggles. The powerful image of Moose and George following a Smithsonian employee through a sterile, cold, concrete archive that houses the material remains of generations of Indigenous ancestors, confronted by restless spirits whose songs linger in that space, reflects the power of Indigenous literatures to make colonial violence that is otherwise removed to the historicized past visible through affect. This scene speaks to the formal practice by Indigenous writers to mobilize affect for political means—a quality that scholars have difficulty negotiating through Western literary critical frameworks. For example, Lisa Udel reads *Last Standing Woman* via the genre of the ideological novel, which is fiction that strictly serves nationalistic and political purposes. Udel notes that the "ideological novel embodies and confronts several problems. The novel's desire to prove something, its claims of verisimilar representation, have made it suspect within literary criticism…often dismissed as propaganda and deemed artistically invalid" (77). Udel also reads Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* trilogy in the same framework, suggesting that "the overtly ideological nature of LaDuke's work and Cook-Lynn's prose may explain the dearth of criticism surrounding their work," arguing that "LaDuke's novel suggests that there is a single way to interpret the colonization of Native groups," with Cook-Lynn proposing a similar "monologic viewpoint" in arguing for nationalism over cosmopolitanism in

Native literatures (77-78). Udel argues that LaDuke is more successful than Cook-Lynn at bridging fiction as an aesthetic or creative form with political activism, and therefore more successfully achieves the political aims of literature that Cook-Lynn envisions. In doing so, however, Udel approaches both Cook-Lynn and LaDuke from a Western critical framework that essentializes literature as aesthetic first and political second, a framework that cannot contain Indigenous literatures as simultaneously aesthetic and political.

As Cook-Lynn has argued throughout her career as a literary critic, Native literature can never be separated from the politics of tribal sovereignty and nationhood. Approaching *Last Standing Woman* from a postcolonial studies perspective, Steven Salaita argues that LaDuke's "fiction contains an activist aesthetics predicated on transforming commonsensical mores of the dominant culture. The aesthetics, to borrow a term from Edward Said, are contrapuntal insofar as they appropriate colonial discourse and expose its ethical fallacies. The use of an activist aesthetics has long been a fictive technique in Native America" (30). For Salaita, LaDuke, like many writers of color, "explores and questions the conventional dichotomy between fiction and history," suggesting that there really is no apolitical (or, as gatekeepers of so-called ideological literature demand), purely aesthetic Indigenous writing (40). In *Last Standing Woman*, LaDuke wholly embraces the imaginative potential of fiction in her approach to history: She streamlines the history of Tail Feather Woman bringing the drum ceremonies to the Ojibwe into a narrative of healing and resistance that directly corresponds to the mass execution at Mankato, a traumatic moment for Indigenous peoples in Minnesota. She also

adapts Red Power activism to imagine the productive possibilities of a women-led movement and imagines what land recovery looks like in a White Earth context.

Last Standing Woman is unapologetically political, but expresses these struggles in felt, experiential terms. While he doesn't specifically address *Last Standing Woman*, Lee Schweninger offers a useful perspective on how literary treatments of repatriation are "both political confrontation and a step toward amelioration and rectification" ("Lost and Lonesome" 173). Indigenous writers make visible the colonial violence of settler looting—for anthropological or other reasons—and its effect on Indigenous communities into the present. LaDuke and Deloria's texts reflect Schweninger's argument by confronting the politics of settler removal and the limitations of repatriation under NAGPRA. For example, even though Moose and George bring home the remains that Ales Hrdlicka and Minnesota anthropologists removed in 1915, LaDuke leaves unresolved whether or not their remains and funerary items, which were removed from Warren Danielson's contested property, are recovered. While Moose didn't realize this at the time, the gravesite he stumbled upon included that of his great-grandmother, Ishkwegaabawiikwe, and her adopted relative Situpiwin. Their relationship itself complicates the legality of repatriation requests: while White Earth could make a claim to the remains and funerary objects of Ishkwegaabawiikwe, the archaeologists who exhumed their grave houses could contest the return of Situpiwin, who as a Dakota woman did not have familial ties to White Earth in a Western sense, even though she lived the remainder of her life at White Earth after 1862. In this omission, LaDuke situates repatriation under NAGPRA as part of a larger process of healing without

glossing over the complications and limitations of NAGPRA as a law based on colonial recognition.

Taken together, the legal issues of repatriation under the politics of recognition and the representational politics facing Indigenous writers create a larger need for narrative rematriation, which Indigenous feminisms make possible. Luana Ross notes that "feminist efforts contributed to the resurrection of various Native women's societies. As well, we are beginning to hear the stories of brave women from our communities. Partially because of feminism, women's stories and songs from my community are returning" (46). The stories and leadership of Indigenous women shape the future of tribal nationhood and sovereignty as rematriation recovers ceremonies, stories of relational obligation to the other-than-human world, and Indigenized governance systems that foreground responsibilities instead of rights. These movements galvanize claims for environmental justice, gather momentum toward sovereignty as the recovery of Indigenous lands, and chart a course for actual decolonization. As Tuck and Yang argue in "Decolonization is not a metaphor," decolonization is incommensurable from other allied movements, as "decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks," noting that "easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation" (3). Because coloniality is at its heart an issue of land and dispossession that necessitates the elimination of Indigenous peoples, decolonization must center land and be accountable not "to settlers, or settler futurity" but to "Indigenous sovereignty and futurity," an accountability that demands that decolonization not be performed or imagined in

metaphoric terms. *Last Standing Woman*, as part of a larger body of literature that makes visible the intersecting frameworks of colonial violence and Indigenous resistance, carves out space for an environmental justice that imagines decolonial futures.[92] As the following conclusion argues, works like *Last Standing Woman* generate visions of relationality and responsibility grounded in Indigenous knowledges, affirming the commitments that shape Indigenous epistemologies and everyday Indigenous life—what Corntassel et al. call "everyday acts of resurgence."

[92] As I discussed in Chapter 1, Louise Erdrich's justice trilogy—*Plague of Doves, The Round House,* and *LaRose*—also explores these intersections of law, colonial violence, and Indigenous survivance.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: JOHN TRUDELL, EJ POETICS, AND #NODAPL

As this dissertation has argued, the Dakota and Ojibwe texts studied here contribute to theories of environmental justice in which issues of tribal sovereignty and nationhood are inseparable from struggles to defend Indigenous lands and the recovery of relational commitments to other-than-human beings. The trans/national space of the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands grounds these texts that grow out of Dakota thióšpaye ethics and Ojibwe principles of migration, name', and mino-bimaadiziwin. These texts bridge political ecology and environmentalism through Indigenous EJ literatures opens a conversation between the disciplines of ecocriticism and environmental justice scholarship. These fields offer valuable analytics for unpacking cultural and social relationships between human societies and the natural world and the structures of colonialism, racism, sexism, and class-based exploitation that lead to environmental struggles over equal rights to healthy, sustainable lifeways. These ongoing struggles are crucial. While Indigenous peoples share these concerns and interests, however, each Indigenous society and nation holds a distinct relationship to the other-than-human world grounded in their unique cosmological, spiritual, and epistemological worldview and the trans/national relationships they enter with other nations and peoples.

Even with their cosmological, linguistic, and spiritual diversity, Indigenous worldviews conflict with capitalist ideology and neoliberal politics[93] wherein the state

[93] This is not to say that capitalist practices cannot coexist with Indigenous relational practices. Economic development, including but certainly not limited to gaming, is necessary for tribal communities to serve their people, and such development must occur within the realities of multinational capitalism. However, the core ideologies of capitalism, such as its reliance on surplus of labor, supply and demand, and objectivistic valuation of human life (as popularized by Ayn Rand) according to what an individual can contribute to society in material terms, conflict with Indigenous philosophies of relationality as reciprocal commitments according to kinship values. For more on economic possibilities within

can acknowledge past wrongdoing, offer recognition of certain rights, and declare reconciliation without producing meaningful action or exercising responsibility to lands or relations. As Dina Gilio-Whitaker argues, EJ movements that emphasize equity of environmental risk and benefit based on distributive models under capitalism are limited in their capacity to reflect Indigenous concerns and claims. She argues, "For a conception of environmental justice to be relevant to a group of people, it must fit within conceptual boundaries that are meaningful to them"—capitalism is not a conceptual framework that is useful to Indigenous environmental justice (24). She continues, "EJ for Indigenous peoples, therefore, must be capable of a political scale beyond the homogenizing, assimilationist, capitalist State. It must conform to a model that can frame issues in terms of their colonial condition and can affirm decolonization as a potential framework within which environmental justice can be made available to them" (25). The texts studied in this project speak to the decolonial ethics of Indigenous EJ in specific neoliberal contexts wherein Indigenous writer-activists reject extractive, capitalistic governance structures, upholding reciprocal responsibilities to the other-than-human world and to Indigenous sovereignty. Such interventions are wholly in line with the disciplinary aims of ecocriticism and EJ scholarship, and it behooves these fields to amplify Indigenous voices and to contribute to tribal-specific critiques of environmental injustice.[94]

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frameworks of sovereignty and survivance, see Gerald Vizenor's chapter "Casino Coups" in *Manifest Manners*.

[94] Such commitments echo critiques of ecocriticism and other environmental studies disciplines, including Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, which situates geology and Anthropocene studies in structures of racialization, critiquing geology as implicit in the commodification of Blackness through the transatlantic slave trade and noting that discussions of the Anthropocene erase this subjection of racialized peoples. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* offers another example of critiquing ecocritical art and scholarship from within Black Studies.

This concluding chapter turns to one more literary text to tie together the project's discussion of environmental injustice as part of settler colonialism: Santee Dakota writer-activist John Trudell's spoken-word poem "Crazy Horse." From the Red Power movement of the 1960s until his passing in 2015, Trudell was a forceful spokesperson for EJ and social justice movements. In *To Be a Water Protector: The Rise of the Wiindigoo Slayers*, Winona LaDuke attributes the phrase "Water is Life" to Trudell, who organized a Water is Life concert tour in the early 1980s (2). Trudell's poetry reflects his activist commitments to Native communities and sovereignty. He situates these struggles in broader explorations of Indigenous ontological knowledge, which he outlines in "Introduction from Somewhere inside My Head," the preface to his collected verse:[95]

> As human beings we use our intelligence to perceive reality
> Dictates how we will use the power of our intelligence
> As human beings it is time to take responsibility for the power of our
> Intelligence. (4)

Trudell's principles of human intelligence, agency, and responsibility reflect his approach to activism, particularly related to struggles for Indigenous sovereignty, social justice, and EJ with AIM and in his later writing career. These principles are particularly visible in "Crazy Horse," a poem that captures the ethics of relationality that resonate across the Dakota-Ojibwe EJ texts that this project has examined. Grounded in relationality—socially constructed relationships between Indigenous communities and specific

[95] Trudell's poetry is largely metrical free verse, often with repeated passages that function like a musical chorus. His poems could be characterized as song lyrics, especially in their recorded form set to music, which is how they were initially released.

homelands that perpetuates Indigenous knowledge systems[96] and reciprocal responsibility—"Crazy Horse" articulates Trudell's EJ vision through an indictment of settler colonial capitalism and its violations of Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous homelands. While these ethical issues resonate with the literary texts studied in earlier chapters, they are also central to on-the-ground EJ movements, including the #NoDAPL movement. This chapter offers a reading of "Crazy Horse" and a social media video that sets Trudell's recording of the poem to aerial drone footage recording the #NoDAPL movement, one of the most significant Indigenous resistance movements against state-backed environmental injustice in recent history.

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is a 1,172-mile pipeline built to transport crude oil from the Bakken oilfields across North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois to a terminal in Patoka, Illinois. Echoing the concerns of Native and non-Native people who rely on the waters of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon note that "a rupture jeopardizes the drinking water of millions of human souls and countless other-than-humans who depend on the river for life"—leaks are inevitable and have already occurred, with the risk to Standing Rock's water supply increasing the severity of social vulnerability for the reservation and surrounding rural residents (1). The DAPL planning process meets the definition of environmental racism as the pipeline was rerouted from its original crossing of the Missouri River north of Bismarck to just North of the Standing Rock reservation, thereby transferring risk of a contaminated water supply from the majority-white state capitol to the majority-Native communities in and

[96] Traditional ecological knowledge comes up in scholarly discourses as a specific approach to environmentalism. In these discourses the phrase is capitalized as Traditional Ecological Knowledge or TEK. I use the term more broadly to represent Trudell's attention to Indigenous modes of thinking about the environment as a relation, following LaDuke and Deborah McGregor.

around the Standing Rock reservation. Representing communities already bearing social vulnerability, the Standing Rock tribal council rejected the revised route in a 2014 meeting with DAPL representatives. As David Archambault II, then-chairperson of the Standing Rock tribe, notes, "Although federal law requires the Corps of Engineers to consult with the tribe about its sovereign interests, permits for the project were approved and construction began without meaningful consultation," which is another key demand of EJ advocates (37). By definition DAPL constitutes an environmental injustice, pushed through on claims that it provides necessary infrastructure to a state dependent on a declining oil-based economy. Estes and Dhillon argue, "there was nothing inevitable about DAPL. The most powerful state in the history of the world, with its military and police hand-in-hand with private security forces, waged a heavily armed, one-sided battle against some of the poorest people in North America to guarantee a pipeline's trespass" (5). Estes and Dhillon connect the militarized police violence of the #NoDAPL movement, which is part of a larger, rampant trend in police violence against people of color,[97] to the much longer history of colonial violence committed against Oceti Sakowin. They also link state backing of DAPL to the environmental injustice of the Pick-Sloan dams that contributed to the poverty and social vulnerability of Standing Rock and other Native communities along the Missouri.

[97] Juxtapositions abound of the unequal policing of white and nonwhite protest movements. Ammon Bundy and other libertarian ranchers, while occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and desecrating sacred lands to the Burns Paiute, shook hands with Harney County Sheriff Dave Ward in a well-photographed meeting in January 2016, while months later police from all across the Midwest would collect to shoot water protectors with sand bags and rubber bullets, spray them with water in below-freezing temperatures, and detain arrested water protectors, including elders, naked in dog kennels. The disparity repeated itself in 2020, as heavily armed far-right protestors stormed the Michigan state capitol with no consequence while peaceful protests of the murder of George Floyd and other Black citizens by police were met with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Even though the #NoDAPL movement could not stop the completion and operation of DAPL, which was fast-tracked by Donald Trump (a notorious opponent of Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice in general), the movement, Estes and Dhillon argue, "provided, for a brief moment in time, a collective vision of what the future could be" (5). They note that "Water Protectors held out against the ritualistic brutality of tear gas, pepper spray, dog attacks, water cannons, disinformation campaigns, and twenty-four-hour surveillance is a pure miracle and a testament to the powerful resolve of the Oceti Sakowin, Indigenous peoples, and their allies" (5). The fierce resistance and strength of the movement echoes the resistance of earlier Red Power activism that led to a shift in public consciousness about Native sovereignty, legal rights, and the failure of the federal government to fulfill treaty obligations. As Estes and Dhillon argue, "#NoDAPL...was not a departure from so much as it was a continuation—a moment within a larger movement, but also a movement within a moment—of long traditions of Indigenous resistance deeply grounded in place and history" (2). This tradition includes the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz, the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties, the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, the 1990 Oka Crisis, #IdleNoMore in 2013, and the Unist'ot'en blocking of an oil pipeline through their unceded homelands (2). The early political confrontations of the Red Power movement have shifted to opposition to oil pipelines as environmental concerns have intersected with Indigenous sovereignty movements, making both environmental justice and Indigenous dispossession and sovereignty front-and-center in larger discussions of climate change and sustainability.

While Indigenous studies scholars like Elizabeth Hoover note the inextricable relationship between struggles for sovereignty and EJ struggles, following #NoDAPL

some Indigenous scholars have pushed back against the collapsing of those two issues. These critiques respond to the frequent oversimplification in mainstream media of #NoDAPL as a solely environmental struggle, occasionally highlighting poverty and social struggles in reservation communities to show the egregiousness of the pipeline project. Such portrayals of the movement repeatedly failed to consider the struggle for sovereignty that was also central to the movement. Diné scholar Andrew Curley notes that the #NoDAPL movement was impeded by confusion about the relationship between Indigenous communities and environmentalism, with too many allies who joined the struggle eagerly playing ecological Indian and too many other allies assuming that the movement was strictly environmental.[98] He argues, "Because there were thousands of people who fought against the construction of DAPL from across the country, there were literally thousands of competing claims to the core meaning of NoDAPL. It is important to prioritize Indigenous claims, especially those of the people from the communities most impacted by the route of the pipeline" (166). While Curley exaggerates that every person opposing DAPL held a competing understanding of the movement's claims, he rightfully argues that "although there are clearly environmental concerns with DAPL, it is also important to remember the longer history of colonial dispossession. Rooting the resistance in Indigenous histories and struggles for the land gives us a fuller sense of what happened and how we can better support Indigenous nations to defeat the empire" (166). As Estes and Dhillon assert, the #NoDAPL movement was built around defending the waters of Mni Sose, a relative that sustains life for Indigenous and non-Native people

[98] See Gilio-Whitaker's discussion of tensions between organizers and leaders at the Oceti Sakowin and other water protector camps with outsiders, some of whom refused to respect Dakota/Lakota protocol or the nonviolent vision of the movement (123-127).

throughout the area. This commitment resonates in "the popular Lakotayapi assertion 'Mni Wiconi': water is life, or more accurately, water is alive" (3). There is a clear tension between the environmentalist and environmental justice claims of the #NoDAPL movement, which are vital in the larger context of climate change, and the key issues of sovereignty that link the movement to earlier Red Power activism and larger decolonial efforts. As Curley points out, detangling these issues can be challenging.

As this dissertation has argued, Indigenous criticism and literature engage with the lived, affective realities of coloniality, contributing to forceful movements toward decolonization by centering Indigenous knowledge and narrative traditions. Indigenous literatures help readers to understand the relationships between environmentalism, sustainability, justice, and nationhood without losing sight of sovereignty. As Estes and Dhillon argue,

> Mni Wiconi embodies the strength and wisdom of ancestral anticolonial struggles imprinted on the land and Mni Sose. It is also situated in the power and leadership of Indigenous youth and Indigenous women, who are foregrounding the way that colonialism functions through race, class, gender, and sexuality to create interlocking systems of oppression. Mni Wiconi simultaneously speaks to the past, present, and future—catapulting us into a moment of critical, radical reflection about colonial wounds and woundings in the spaces between calls to save planet Earth and the everyday sociopolitical realities facing Indigenous peoples. (3)

The #NoDAPL movement called on Native and non-Native people to reflect on the history of colonization, on the United States' dependence on fossil fuel for economic

development, and on the ongoing issues of class, racism, and sexual violence—all of which are exacerbated around oilfield worker camps. The literary texts studied in this project make visible these issues of vulnerability and injustice, speaking to the "past, present, and future" of Indigenous nations. the next section argues, Trudell's "Crazy Horse" offers a similar "moment of critical, radical reflection about colonial wounds and woundings" that Estes and Dhillon recognize in the #NoDAPL movement (3).

"We are the seventh generation": John Trudell's Environmental Justice Ethic in "Crazy Horse"

John Trudell was a prominent member of the Red power movement, serving as the spokesperson of the occupation of Alcatraz Island by the Indians of All Tribes in 1969 and chairing AIM in the 1970s. In 1979, Trudell's wife and their three children died in a fire at his parents' home on the Duck Valley Shoshone Paiute reservation; Trudell maintained that the fire was an act of arson by the FBI—who maintained an extensive file on Trudell—and an attempt on his life, while the BIA ruled the fire accidental. After the devastating loss his family, Trudell turned to artistic work, writing poetry and creating music. Between 1983 and 2016 Trudell collaborated on 23 albums, most of which pair his spoken-word verse to mixed-genre rock, blues, jazz, and hip-hop[99] music by predominantly Native artists. "Crazy Horse" was released on Trudell's 2001 album *Bone Days* and speaks to Trudell's lifelong criticism of the federal government and settler colonialism through issues of environmental exploitation and EJ. "Crazy Horse" offers an

[99] In one of his final projects, Trudell collaborated with the First Nations group A Tribe Called Red on a compilation album, and also collaborated with the Minnesota band The Pines late in life.

Indigenous-centric approach[100] to EJ as a defense of the land *as a relative*, illustrating the fundamental injustice of treating relatives—including human and other-than-human beings—as property. Approaching the poem in relation to #NoDAPL situates the movement in a larger history of Native resistance to settler-colonial injustice and environmental exploitation.

The EJ ethic of "Crazy Horse," which reflects Trudell's lifelong commitments as an activist and artist, takes the form of an anticapitalist critique of settler colonial historicity, replacing that historical mode with an Indigenous-centered temporality that emphasizes intergenerational relationality and responsibilities to the other-than-human world. This ethic resonates with each of the texts studied in this project as a challenge to coloniality that aims to restore the relationality that colonialism attacks.

On a formal level, "Crazy Horse" breaks down temporal and generational barriers to leverage an anticapitalist critique of environmental exploitation in a way that centers Indigenous epistemologies, temporalities, and relational responsibilities. The primary EJ claim of "Crazy Horse" is that humans have no right to commodify and capitalize the other-than-human world, associating such practices with the enslavement and dispossession of Black and Indigenous peoples. Trudell ties the injustice of U.S. slavery as a colonial logic of possession—"Predators face he possessed a race" (15)—to the ongoing injustice of dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their lands and lifeways. Capitalism prioritizes the "material harvest" of natural resources over Indigenous land-

[100] While Trudell's relational ethics align with those of other Dakota writers like Cook-Lynn and Deloria, Trudell's poetry reflects the intertribal, trans/national coalitions of the Red Power movement, which are sometimes described as pan-Indian. While pan-Indianism engages in the collapsing of tribal-national difference that this dissertation pushes back against, in its time it was vital to establishing strong Indigenous communities in cities following the Relocation program that sought to eliminate Indigenous identity by moving young Native people to urban areas. These communities are a vital part of the trans/national networks of Indigenous nations working together for environmental and social justice.

based lifeways. This "material harvest" is part of the settler-colonial strategy of transforming Indigenous homelands into settler property, reinscribing those lands as settler homelands through the systemic elimination of Indigenous people, following Whyte and Wolfe. Mishuana Goeman notes that "a consequence of colonialism has meant a translation or too easy collapsing of *land* to *property,* a move that perpetuates the logics of containment" ("Land as Life" 72). Trudell's repeated EJ message, "One does not sell the Earth/The people walk upon/We are the land" (4-5), approaches land, a powerful concept in Indigenous studies and global Indigenous activism, from an anticapitalist position that recenters Indigenous relations to land. As Goeman explains, "*Land* is a salient term and concept that weaves people together around common understandings and experiences. *Land* within indigenous studies carries a currency beyond a mere reflection of physical landscape or specific location, commonly referred to as the 'geographers' concept of space, or the normative maps that perpetuate colonial claiming and targeting" ("Land as Life" 72). Goeman sees land as "meaning-making place" and "the heart of indigenous identity, longing, and belonging," which is formed by "relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes" and through narrative practice, which Goeman sees as an important area of recovery from settler-colonial violence ("Land as Life" 73).

Trudell's central EJ claim that human commodification of the land is a fundamental injustice is supported by the line of reasoning that the people are the land, that peoplehood and nationhood are formed through these relationships to land and other-than-human beings. Reading an earlier generation of Dakota writers, Christopher Pexa argues,

> As an alternative to settler-colonial views of land as property or space abstracted away from interpersonal, everyday relations, land emerges from these Dakhóta texts as a sociopolitical location, first in the sense of being a trope of Dakhóta historical presence in long-occupied homelands, and second as a place held in common among Dakhóta persons through which the ethical norms of peoplehood may be exercised. (11)

Pexa approaches Dakota peoplehood[101] as formed through relations to land, which the process of assimilation through the reservation system and allotment sought to dismantle. As Trudell writes, "Predator tries civilizing us/But the tribes will not go without return" (34-45), speaking to assimilative policies to "civilize" Native people while exploiting Native lands, bodies, and futures through forced boarding school education, spiritual suppression, and the disruption of kinship networks through allotment. These policies facilitated predatory violence, but their attempts to eliminate Native life would not be entirely successful; as Trudell notes, tribal nations are positioned for "return" through revitalization, activism, and commitments to relations. Moreover, the notion of "Dakhóta historical presence in long-occupied homelands" that Pexa draws from assimilation-era Dakota writing echoes Trudell's sense that Indigenous peoples "will not go without return," that their relationships are more enduring than colonial frameworks of abstraction and commodification of land.

[101] Pexa prefers "peoplehood" to nationhood, arguing that "the vision of becoming modern implied within the term 'nationhood' overshadows other practices of relinking to and articulating the past as an epistemological project for building Indigenous peoplehood in the present," finding that nationhood risks obscuring "other ways of thinking about community, belonging, and sovereignty that are not based in the nation form and in the binds of state recognition" (28).

These lines center Trudell's acknowledgment of Indigenous land-based relationality, nationhood, and cultural identities in his critique of settler environmental injustice, which is itself implicated in capitalism and neoliberal policies that revise but do not move away from extractive industries. In the first verse, which is repeated near the end of the poem, Trudell follows his anticapitalist EJ claim with a series of rhetorical questions, each increasing in incredulity: "How do we sell our Mother/How do we sell the stars/How do we sell the air" (7-9). From Trudell's Dakota perspective and the broader trans/national activist movements he was part of, to sell the other-than-human world and capitalize on relations is as outlandish as profiting from solar systems or air (despite the fact that air quality is directly tied to economic networks that include fossil fuel infrastructure, coal mining and energy production, and industrial pollution). The central ethics of Trudell's questions of how to sell the other-than-human world shows the fundamental conflict between a capitalist line of thinking and Indigenous ethics of relationality.

These ethics of relationality involve not only living relations in the present moment but also relations and commitments that span generations, much like the Anishinaabemowin notion of name' that Heid Erdrich develops into a lens for exploring Ojibwe literary history. The title figure of "Crazy Horse" is a similar ancestral encounter, an affirmed relationship that communicates the legacy of Oceti Sakowin resistance to colonial violence. Just as he challenges capitalist renderings of land as a commodity or as property, Trudell challenges colonial epistemologies in order to recenter Indigenous knowledge as a way to practice relationality across time and space. As Goeman explains,

> Indigenous conceptions of land are literally and figuratively the placeholder that moves through time and situates indigenous knowledges. Conceiving of space as a node rather than a linear time construct marked by supposed shifting ownerships is a powerful mechanism in resisting imperial geographies that order time and space in hierarchies that erase and bury indigenous connections to place and anaesthetize settler-colonial histories. ("Land as Life" 74)

Goeman argues that Indigenous writers, artists, and storytellers engage in the recovery of Indigenous narratives of land as relations that constitute social relationships. These narratives include modes of carrying and representing history, with settler history separating contemporary and past figures as memorable, but not necessarily as relatives.

As a predominant figure in the nineteenth century history of Native resistance to settler colonial intrusions into their reserved territories, the Oglala Lakota akicita[102] and resistance leader Crazy Horse (Tȟašúŋke Witkó) is famous for his response to a Cavalry soldier who asked him "Where are your lands now?": "My lands are where my dead lay buried" (Crazy Horse Memorial). Like Trudell, Crazy Horse dismissed the idea of privately held land and ownership of his homelands, recognizing that his people's relationship to their homelands is intergenerational, shared by the living and ancestors alike. Crazy Horse cannot be a contemporary relative in settler historical terms, but following Dakota/Lakota epistemological and ontological knowledge traditions, Crazy Horse is indeed a relative that his people can consult and continue to learn from. The refrain, "Crazy Horse/We hear what you say/One Earth one mother" (1-3) connects Crazy Horse to those present-day people who listen, especially Indigenous peoples who

[102] As mentioned in Chapter 4, Akicita loosely translates as "warrior," but in contemporary usage refers to veterans, police, and others in protective service of the people, including water protectors.

experience the material realities of colonialism and capitalism as assaults on their nations' capacity to live in good relations to their homelands. Crazy Horse's famous declaration—a message as relevant in the twenty-first century as in the nineteenth—also speaks to the resistant ethics that contribute to Trudell's activism and creative work to defend Indigenous sovereignty and homelands and resonates with the commitments of the #NoDAPL movement as a continuation of Oceti Sakowin's ongoing resistance to colonial domination.

In addressing the poem to Crazy Horse, Trudell challenges the Western historical temporality that separates individuals and events into periods, as in the problematic binaries of traditional/modern Native life discussed earlier through Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. The temporal position from which Trudell addresses Crazy Horse as a relative of contemporary Indigenous people is one in which "Today is now and then" (28), "a day when death didn't die" (30). These lines offer a nonlinear narratological history, which refers not to a static past but to an ancestral continuum. Following Crazy Horse's sense of homelands and ancestors as inseparable, Trudell offers an alternative, Indigenized historicity that can critique colonial violence as an ongoing legacy. The first full verse of "Crazy Horse" makes a blistering indictment of settler colonial history that links the mutually exploitative institutions of slavery and resource extraction. Trudell characterizes the legacy of settler colonialism as a predator engaged in "Possession a war that doesn't end" (16). Trudell here alludes to historic struggles over "property," including the subjection of Black life through the transatlantic slave trade, but also to the ongoing negative effect of settler colonial, capitalist structures that convert land and other-than-human beings into resources and property. As Goeman notes, property "is

distinctly a European notion that locks together...labor, land, and conquest...As such, property is not just a material, but it is also constructed through social relationships" ("Land as Life" 77). Since capitalism requires a surplus of labor and class conflict, including conflict over land as a material commodity, possession of land is an unending struggle.

In the second half of the poem, Trudell's disruption of settler-colonial historicity extends to his critique of capitalist systems and his vision of Indigenous resurgence via restored and re-storied networks of relations. Trudell brings Crazy Horse into a time when

> Today is now and then
> Dream smokes touch the clouds
> On a day when death didn't die
> Real world time tricks shadows lie (29-32)

These lines, which in the printed version of the poem are free of punctuation, reflect Indigenous cosmological and spiritual values of time and relationality as "now and then," encompassing the living and ancestors as occupying the same spiritual space where "dream smokes" of ceremony connect them to one another. "Dream smokes," whether sweat lodge ceremony or burning tobacco, ground the speaker to a spiritual traditions that resists settler temporal and spiritual distinctions between the living and dead.

With its lack of punctuation, "Real world time tricks shadows lie" offers various registers for Trudell's association of time and land: "Real world time" suggests the literal temporality of existence beyond human historicity and definitions of property ownership; "Real world" "time tricks" and "shadows lie" speak separately to the effects of settler

temporalities on the presumption of owning land, which is a ruse in a "real world" sense in that the land ultimately belongs to itself. Alternatively, "tricks shadows lie" taken together spans the history of federal policy, particularly allotment, and its claims under domestic paternalism to "civilize" Native people while actually making reserved lands legally available to settler ownership. The outcome of these policies, as Cook-Lynn shows through her fiction trilogy, is increased social vulnerability for Native communities. Trudell's claims about possession and predation therefore resonate with Cook-Lynn's critiques of federal policy as perpetuating environmental injustice, which contributes to social vulnerability and makes Indigenous women also vulnerable to predatory sexual violence. As Cook-Lynn closes her trilogy with a narrative of sexual violence and the incapacity of federal law to achieve justice, she highlights social vulnerability and sexual violence as fundamental to settler colonialism and directly related to environmental injustice and dispossession of Indigenous communities through the Pick-Sloan plan. Like Cook-Lynn, Trudell doesn't isolate the legacy of exploitative practices like slavery and dispossession to a historicized past—these are ongoing structures of settler colonialism that are embedded in federal policy.

Trudell's articulation of an Indigenous temporality in "Crazy Horse" emphasizes intergenerational relationality as a network of relatives within the broader framework of coloniality and capitalism, in which the settler state is figured as "Predator" and the collective "we"/"us" refers to those who listen to the legacy of Crazy Horse, those who "hear what you say" (2) This relationality also includes ancestors and spirit beings who share with the living "Genetic light from the other side/A song from the heart our hearts to give/The wild days the glory days live" (35-37). As a conversation between the

speaker and Crazy Horse, the poem's mode of address reflects this intergenerational system of relationality that considers obligations to ancestors, unlike capitalist systems that seek to optimize resources and profits for individuals and stakeholders in the present and future. Trudell relies on the abstract Western scientific concept of genetics to represent the thread connecting ancestors to living Native peoples. Doing so associates the spiritual and the scientific, in which genetics become tangible to those who practice relational responsibility.[103] For Trudell, relationality informs the present through a link to ancestral "light," as a gift between hearts. In a similar manner, LaDuke articulates this connection of Indigenous life across generations in *Last Standing Woman* as the rematriation undertaken by White Earth women restores their community's spiritual, cultural, and land-based knowledges. Like LaDuke, Trudell articulates an Indigenous future that brings the prayers and commitments of ancestors to realization.

Thinking of the past in these terms, the "glory days" or (however romanticized) "wild days" do not end; they live on through the present in the experiences of those who follow the traces "from the other side" (38). Trudell thus positions Indigenous knowledge, figured as "genetic light" (36), opposite settler understandings of history and race, articulated as "Red white perception deception" (33). Western ideas of history, a "trick" or "lie," and race a "deception" prove incompatible in Trudell's understanding of Indigenous knowledge, constituting a "civilizing" tactic by a "Predator" (34). As a writer employing English, a colonial language, to represent Indigenous knowledge by combining Western genetics with Indigenous spirituality, Trudell uses Indigenous

[103] Gerald Vizenor offers a similar vision of genetics and nationhood in *Heirs of Columbus* via the formation of the Point Assinika Nation.

knowledge as a decolonizing force in the non-Native discourses that he takes part in.[104] In Trudell's decolonial temporality, his verse contains an articulation of Indigenous knowledge that resonates with Indigenous EJ activism and literature more broadly.

Trudell makes visible the issues of social vulnerability that Indigenous peoples face, giving voice to intergenerational trauma and colonization's disruption of tribal communities and relational networks. Trudell writes of "days people don't care for people/These days are the hardest" (18-19), noting that there are "[t]oo many people/Standing their ground/Standing the wrong ground" (12-14). Trudell speaks to the struggle of convincing the non-Indigenous American public, particularly those whose lives are made comfortable and convenient by settler colonial institutions and industries, that they (and the state institutions that represent settler-colonial interests) are "standing the wrong ground." During Trudell's early activist career, this struggle characterized the occupations of Alcatraz, the BIA headquarters, and Wounded Knee, which Elizabeth Ellis sees as a turning point similar to the #NoDAPL movement:

> AIM's occupation...forced the federal government to take action to reform some of the laws that governed Native people and to acknowledge that Native nations refused to be terminated, ignored, or subjected to racial violence. Furthermore, it brought modern Native people into the homes of non-Indigenous Americans via

[104] Kimberli Lee, for example, examines the potential that Trudell and other contemporary Native musicians offer to educators in Native studies programs, arguing that contemporary Native music represents the voices of Indigenous decolonial resistance. As critical pedagogy projects such as the NYC Stands with Standing Rock syllabus show, Indigenous media offers a rich area for Native studies and Native literary studies to expand its understandings of decolonial media. Such pedagogical expansion can also do the work of "decolonizing ecomedia" and ecocriticism that Sean Cubitt calls for as the dismantling of settler "nostalgia for...an indigeneity that...we Westerners never experienced but is, in any case, a Western imaginary" (283).

> television reports, radio broadcasts, and newspaper columns and garnered international visibility. (189)

Ellis sees the #NoDAPL movement as an "intersectional movement" guided by "flourishing conversations about Native sovereignty, and with national attention via social media" that will "catalyze a forthcoming era of policy reform and/or grassroots networks that will be able to better protect Native communities and territories in ways that the U.S. legal system has thus far failed to do" (189). A key element of this intersectional catalyst is the attention drawn to the #NoDAPL movement through social media, where Indigenous artists, photographers, journalists, filmmakers, and influencers carried the momentum of the Red Power era into a new moment characterized by climate change, militarized policing of people of color, and ongoing assaults on Indigenous sovereignty. The momentum of this new generation, guided by the Indigenous EJ ethics that Trudell articulates in "Crazy Horse," captures the important connection between Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice.

"Crazy Horse" Revisited: Linking #NoDAPL, Social Media, and Environmental Justice

Trudell's anticapitalist claim that "One does not sell the Earth" resonates with the commitments of the #NoDAPL movement; as Estes and Dhillon note, "You do not sell your relative, Water Protectors vow. To be a good relative mandates protecting Mni Oyate from the DAPL's inevitable contamination. This is the practice of Wotakuye (kinship), a recognition of the place-based, decolonial practice of being in relation to the land and water" (3). The environmental justice ethic of "Crazy Horse" and its recentering

of Indigeneity in discussions of land and relationality make the poem a powerful soundtrack for the gathering of "more than three hundred Native nations [that] planted their flags in solidarity at Oceti Sakowin Camp" (Estes, "Fighting" 115). The short film "One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon" documents the arrival of over 200 riders on horseback and 50 runners who travelled from Arizona to Standing Rock, all of whom "gathered to reignite the sacred fire of the resistance camp and establish the 'horn' of the nation, a camp layout where 7 lodges are placed in a circle formation," the first gathering of its kind since the late nineteenth century (Indigenous Rising Media).

The audio track for the video is the entire recorded version of "Crazy Horse," with Trudell's slow recitation of the poem following the rhythm of line breaks and his voice low, intimate, barely more than a whisper. The recording amplifies Trudell's voice over slide guitarist Mark Shark and a traditional song by Milton (Quiltman) Sahme (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs). Michael J. Shapiro describes the layered "homage poem (to both Crazy Horse and the earth)" as "a traditional Native American soundscape—chant-style vocals by Quiltman and drum rhythms—and of a contemporary blend of blues and rock music" (167). Like Trudell's other spoken-word poetry records, "Crazy Horse" brings together several genres of expression that Native people have long participated in.[105] The "traditional Native American soundscape" that Shapiro describes is more appropriately noted as an example of the kind of modernity that Lyons celebrates in Native art and politics. The accompaniment of music and poetry reflects the temporal work of the text of the poem and of Trudell's larger career, including his creation of

[105] See *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World* for a thorough history of Native rock musicians from Link Wray (Shawnee), whose 1958 song "Rumble" influences countless rock musicians, to Buffy Sainte-Marie (Piapot Cree) and Robbie Robertson (Cayuga-Kanien'kehá: ka) of The Band.

Radio Free Alcatraz in Berkeley in the 1960s, bringing together traditional Indigenous language, contemporary music, and English verse as a continuum linking traditional Indigenous songs "from the heart" (37) to future contexts like the #NoDAPL movement. The sounds of "Crazy Horse"—Trudell's spoken word, Shark's guitar, and Quiltman's drum and vocals—come together to form what Comanche scholar Dustin Tahmahkera calls "sonic affect." Tahmahkera argues that "Sonic affect is about far more than just 'sound' or just 'listening.' Sonic affect is also not just about the subjectivity of how certain sounds make us feel certain ways, but rather it is what deeply makes soundings possible and brings forth our expressions of and feelings about sound. Affect is not just emotion; affect is what allows us the capabilities to feel emotion" (Tahmahkera). Tahmahkera's understanding of affect echoes the affective relationality of Phyllis Young and Cook-Lynn's John Tatekeya following the loss of June Rise in the Missouri river bottomlands—Young's essay and Cook-Lynn's fiction offer the capacity for a reader to feel the devastating loss of homelands and the absence of relations that provided lifeways to the Dakota along the banks of the river. As Trudell's recordings bring together music of different sonic and generic registers to create a soulful performance of "Crazy Horse," those same sounds set to video footage of #NoDAPL contribute to entirely different affective capabilities.

The video in "One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon" is entirely drone footage, first of gathered water protectors along the river opposite state police, then of the pipeline itself and the troopers spread out across the hills. The footage is edited to accompany the images of police clad in riot gear with Trudell's lines "Too many people/Standing their ground/Standing the wrong ground" (12-14) and images of the

pipeline construction along a wide slice excavated from the prairie where “children of god feed on children of earth/Days people don’t care for people” (17-18). In the second part of the poem, the footage shifts to documenting the arrival of the runners and riders who circle the central fire and a drum group in a historic gathering of the horn of Oceti Sakowin. The drone steadily climbs, panning from a close-up over the drum group to include the pile of wood ready to ignite the sacred fire of the camp and the movement and the circle of water protectors and horses as Trudell speaks the lines, “But the tribes will not go without return/Genetic light from the other side/A song from the heart our hearts to give” (35-37) before returning to the refrain.

Figure 1. Still images from “One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon.”

The drone footage offers a dynamic, birds-eye perspective of the camp, the gathered water protectors, and the surveillance presence of the state police, representing the #NoDAPL movement in a way that mainstream media could not in its focus on sensational images and police action including shooting rubber bullets, dispersing pepper spray, and ejecting tear gas into the front lines of water protectors. In contrast, “One does

not sell the Earth the people walk upon" shows the impressive extent of the gathered water protectors who voice their collective responsibility to environmental justice even as that responsibility at times shrouded the core issues of sovereignty caught up in discussions of legality, ownership, and treaty rights. The #NoDAPL movement, captured in the growing panorama of a drone flying straight upward, resonates with Trudell's closing lines in "Crazy Horse": "We are the seventh generation/We are the seventh generation" (52-53). Rooted in the Haudenosaunee constitution as part of the Great Law of Peace, seventh generation thinking dictates that decisions made by the Five Nations council should preserve a good life for the next seven generations. Each generation, then, owes its privilege to the upheld responsibility of seven generations past and is therefore responsible to protect the land and other-than-human relatives for the next seven generations. In its broader reference, seventh generation thinking positions the efforts of activists and Indigenous communities during their lifetime as the continuation of seven generations of prayer, which includes resistance to colonial violence and the perpetuation of Indigenous knowledges, languages, and spiritual practices. Through his poetry, Trudell advances this Indigenous environmental justice ethic as a demand that settler and Indigenous listeners/readers practice seventh generation thinking as a movement toward positive relations to the other-than-human world. Trudell lived this advocacy through to the end of his Earth days, to his "day when death doesn't die" (203).

"One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon" was posted to Facebook on November 8, 2016 and generated approximately 24,000 reactions and 2,500 comments. Such responses reflect the role of social media in disseminating content from the front lines of the #NoDAPL movement despite the mainstream local press's continual bias

toward state and police narratives of the movement as illegal protest, criminal trespass, and warranting militarized police presence and surveillance. The video and its adaptation of Trudell's "Crazy Horse" tells a different story of the #NoDAPL struggle, contributing to the movement by harnessing the potential of social media to directly connect on-the-ground water protectors livestreaming their experiences to viewers across the world. As these livestreams went viral, mainstream news media began sending journalists to cover the struggle. As part of a much larger social media presence among Indigenous activists, "One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon" points to a way "to indigenize the Internet and work toward decolonization through traditional indigenous storytelling practices," according to Annette Angela Portillo (126-127). Portillo argues that the daily livestreams from the front lines of #NoDAPL "provided a medium for indigenous people to tell their historical and contemporary sovereign stories to a larger audience" (133). While not a livestream, "One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon" reflects the Indigenous epistemological approach to what Portillo calls "sovereign stories" by documenting the historic gathering of Oceti Sakowin. The video imports Trudell's activism into a new digital and discursive moment, which brings with it struggles to keep allies aware of the specific issues of a movement and which risks appropriation like all other representational mediums. Indigenous activism in the age of social media has much to gain from these powerful tools of dissemination, especially as movements embed Indigenous knowledges and decolonization into social media forms, as in Portillo's analysis and in "One does not sell the Earth the people walk upon."

As the #NoDAPL movement built on the legacy of Trudell and the Red Power movement, it points to a new future for collective and specifically grounded resistance to

colonial violence and dispossession. Jaskiran Dhillon argues in "What Standing Rock Teaches us about Environmental Justice,"

> Our strongest chance of restoring balance on the planet and respecting the interconnectedness of all things, human and other than human, is to fervently advocate for justice for Indigenous communities and return to them the power of governance—which was violently apprehended through war, genocide, starvation, disease, abuse, the dispossession of land, and forced repression of Indigenous communities to reservations. (237)

Dhillon sees the #NoDAPL movement as illustrating that "a fight for environmental justice must be framed, first and foremost, as a struggle for Indigenous sovereignty" (235). As this project has argued throughout, struggles for environmental justice and sovereignty are simultaneous struggles for Indigenous life and continued existence. Estes and Dhillon describe these struggles as everyday acts of resurgence: "The good people of the Earth have always been the vanguards of history and radical social change. Such was the case at Standing Rock: everyday people taking control of their lives" (4). That existence depends on relationality, what Dhillon describes as the "interconnectedness of all things," what Alaimo articulates as "trans-corporeality," and what Whyte calls "collective continuance." These principles and the disciplines that engage with them are critically aligned but must not replicate the hierarchies of power and dominance that characterizes settler colonialism. As the Dakota and Ojibwe writers and texts studied here suggest, to decolonize environmental justice, scholars and citizens alike must amplify the voices of Indigenous peoples but, perhaps more importantly, must also listen to those voices. Our relations depend on it.

CHAPTER VII

CODA: ON RELATIONS, PUBLICS, AND INTERSECTIONS OF INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

From Relationality to Resilience in Contemporary Dakota and Ojibwe Environmental Justice Literature

has examined environmental justice within a framework of nationhood, trans/nationalism, and relationality in Dakota and Ojibwe literary texts, demonstrating how ecocriticism and environmental justice studies can more substantively and more responsibly engage Indigenous literatures. These literatures offer critically different ways of thinking about, relating to, and living in responsibility to lands and other-than-human beings. This dissertation examines issues of social vulnerability, reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure, Indigenous knowledges as a source of resilience, repatriation of spiritual traditions and relatives, and ongoing struggles against projects that perpetuate intersecting injustices against tribal nations and lands. Yet there is more work to be done: studies of Indigenous environmental justice and ecocritical studies of Indigenous literatures must continue to negotiate complex trans/national networks that extend beyond intertribal relations to intersections with other marginalized populations and with public interests.

The prior chapters have explored how issues of environmental justice have been taken up and contested in Dakota and Ojibwe literary texts, and further Indigenous EJ studies must also ground inquiries into specific tribal-national communities and relational networks. National and trans/national-minded ecocriticism and EJ studies must be aware of the legal histories of specific tribal nations, not assuming that all Native peoples experience injustice or exercise relationality in the same ways. This work also requires

scholars to recognize the tensions between modernity and tradition that inform Indigenous life in the present moment. As thinkers like Leanne Simpson, Scott Lyons, Kyle Whyte, Kirby Brown, and Daniel Justice remind us, static frameworks of Indigeneity and romantic ideas of Indigenous relations to nature or the environment will immediately limit the relevance of scholarship to Native communities. Scholarship must not instrumentalize Native life for the purposes of environmentalism or social justice, however noble the intention. Responding to climate change in an equitable and environmentally just manner will require attention to the specific needs, histories, and commitments of Indigenous and other peoples who live in relation to their homelands—climate change is not an issue that transcends race, racism, or issues of justice, especially since it impacts marginalized communities made socially vulnerable through extractive capitalism and colonization.

So too, Indigenous-centered environmental justice scholarship must recognize the networks of alliance and injustice among other folks who face social vulnerability and the negative impacts of colonization, even if those people are not Indigenous. In Chapter 3, I addressed the problems with anthropocentric frameworks of approaching climate change and the end of worlds, pointing instead to colonization as a productive framework for critiquing trauma and resilience. In her book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None,* Kathryn Yusoff shows how the field of geology and the idea of the Anthropocene participates in antiblack racism and global colonization, arguing that "As the Anthropocene proclaims the language of species life—*anthropos*—through a universalist geologic commons, it neatly erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations…the idea of Blackness and the displacement

and eradication of indigenous peoples get caught and defined in the ontological wake of geology" (2). Centering Blackness and Indigeneity in a critique of political geology, Yusoff offers an example of the intersections of Indigeneity and racialization in discourses of the Anthropocene. Yusoff argues that settler-colonial structures of materiality, rights, and extractive economies are critical to racialization's structure of whiteness as human and blackness or Indigeneity as inhuman, echoing geology's distinction between matter as "active and inert," or "corporeal and mineralogical" (2). While Indigenous studies often centers critical issues of sovereignty, nationhood, collective continuance, and cultural revitalization, as a field Indigenous studies and Indigenous EJ have much to contribute and much to gain from larger intersectional discussions of racialization and resistance to racial capital and settler coloniality on a global scale, conversations made all the more vital as we face uncertain climate change futures. The "or none" of Yusoff's work speaks to the importance of including race and injustice in discussions of climate change, a project that brings Indigenous and other racialized populations into a collective space to resist coloniality and capitalist exploitation. *From Relationality to Resilience* has sought to create such a space by attending the nuances of specific tribal-national literary traditions while developing trans/national methods of inquiry out of the intersections between those traditions.

A second extension of this work is the dynamic, ongoing discussion of public lands in the United States, an issue that aligns with the interventions of this project in foregrounding the Indigenous peoples who belong to lands that become sites of non-Indigenous conflict and struggle. While public lands debates frequently involve the outdoor recreation community, industries that wish to drill for oil or mine on public

lands, and conservationists, that debate must also consider Indigenous relations to what are now argued over as "public," including EJ claims. In "The President Stole Your Land: Public Lands and the Settler Commons," April Anson notes the tendency of the outdoors industry to overlook Indigeneity in their advocacy for public lands. She reads a Patagonia ad and subsequent *New York Times* article following the Trump administration's order to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments (in which Trump and his Interior secretary Ryan Zinke served the desires of industry lobbyists while ignoring entirely the concerns of the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition, which worked for years to protect the area). Anson notes that the Patagonia ad and *The New York Times* piece basically erased the efforts of the Hopi, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Pueblo of Zuni, Ute Indian Tribe, or Southern Paiute nations who have defended the lands long before they were granted monument status by executive order at the end of the Obama presidency. She argues that "the article reduces the complex histories of land use, theft, and exploitation of those areas to views of the land as either for environmentalists' leisure activities or the resource removal that supposedly helps the rural working class" (53). While it is expected that Patagonia speak on behalf of its customer base and investors (that is, predominantly white outdoorsy folks) in its ad, the omission of Indigenous voices and perspectives from the conversation shows the importance of knowledge about the Indigenous peoples who belong to so-called public lands. This knowledge includes awareness of the specific tribal nations shaped by these lands, histories of specific colonial actions that made these lands available as public lands, and the historic exclusion of people of color from those lands. Without this

knowledge, even well-meaning outdoor enthusiasts perpetuate coloniality and exercise their own form of taking under the guise of public interest.

There have been recent and important efforts to diversify access to outdoor recreation spaces and public lands, which is vital concerning the historic exclusion and persecution of people of color on those lands. However, these movements must be cognizant of the specific networks of relationality between Indigenous nations and the other-than-human beings that call these spaces home, relationships that make public lands sacred. Len Necefer (Navajo) works through Instagram and broader social media channels under the handle NativesOutdoors to promote Indigenous access to climbing and other outdoor activity. In an interview, Necefer addressed the importance of this relational context:

> I think in the DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] space, I've seen it over and over and over, Native Americans just get lumped together and that's more harmful than it is helpful. I think if we're talking about public lands, we have to be very specific to the people that we're talking about. The issues are very contextualized and localized. Knowing the history, knowing something about the tribes in the area and their significance is really important to being supportive of it because the nuance in these cases really matter. (Byk)

The issue Necefer raises with generalization of Native land-based cultures and histories echoes the concerns I raise in this project about ecocritical engagements with Native literatures forming generalized depictions of Native peoples that serve the intellectual investments and disciplinary interests of ecocriticism over the specific commitments to sovereignty and nationhood that structure contemporary Indigenous life and politics.

Necefer's request that folks know the significance of public lands to the tribal nations who belong to those lands reflects the interventions of writers who approach EJ issues like the Pick-Sloan Plan, NoDAPL, and state-sanctioned dispossession of lands to speak to larger histories of colonization and genocide.

Public lands discourse must also reckon with these histories in its definition of the "public." As Stephanie LeMenager and Marsha Weisiger observe, "When we speak of US conservationism in the context of the public lands, we must acknowledge that the idea of 'the public' has been at times violently exclusionary, and it is an idea constantly being contested and expanded" (12). LeMenager and Weisiger share the history of the Radical Middle, a movement that grew out of early 1990s efforts to bring together environmentalist groups and the Sagebrush Rebels who pushed back against federal control of public lands. As LeMenager and Weisiger explain, the movement is rooted in the pragmatic notion that "the best ideas emerge when diverse stakeholders share their knowledge, concerns, and hopes in an effort to discover common ground and develop practical solutions to environmental problems," noting that the Radical Middle believed "that land users, land managers, and environmentalists have much more in common than we often think" (2-3).[106] The importance of the Radical Middle has come into focus since the armed occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, as has the tensions between land users, managers, and environmentalists regarding the practice of commitments to stewardship and access. While often left out of the space of the Radical Middle, Native

[106] I had the opportunity to join LeMenager and Weisiger, along with others affiliated with the Center for Environmental Futures at the University of Oregon, on a field study in the Wallowa Mountains region that is part of the homelands of the Nez Perce. After interviewing individuals with varying careers involving public lands, I came away feeling that the rural communities near and/or affected by public lands are a microcosm of Radical Middle thinking. Moreover, the communities in these regions often reflect the kind of knowledge that Necefer advocates for, even if some members of those communities do not necessarily support Indigenous land or EJ claims.

communities have much to offer this discussion, as they too have much in common with the Radical Middle's commitments to lands that offer livelihood and that support communities. While it is important that we include Indigenous EJ in conversations around public lands and attend to issues of sovereignty, collective continuance, relational networks, and knowledge systems that are specific to each tribal nation, it is also important to recognize that the commitments and teachings of Indigenous environmental justice writers and leaders benefit all who reside on these lands.

From an Indigenous EJ perspective, there is not yet a clear sense in which U.S.-centered, legal designations of public lands can accommodate Indigenous claims over their homelands, since public lands are caught up in structures of capitalism and coloniality that are, as Dina Gilio-Whitaker reminds us, oppositional to Indigenous relational commitments to the other-than-human world. However, it is imperative that Indigenous communities and histories are part of that ongoing conversation. As LeMenager and Weisiger note,

> The practice of the Radical Middle in regard to the public lands must involve acknowledging and signposting all of the human histories held by the lands, an invitation to all groups with stakes in the lands to serve as comanagers of them, and it must involve making the lands (at least, those not designated as nontresspass sites sacred to tribes) accessible and welcoming to all persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, or level of mobility" (13).

This is an excellent updated definition of the Radical Middle, but I would add that this movement should consider all public lands as sacred to the Indigenous nations whose cultures and cosmologies are shaped by them. Acknowledging the sacredness of public

lands, even if those lands are not under tribal management or control, is an important step toward honoring the commitments of not only Indigenous nations, but also what is important to the stakeholders of the Radical Middle who depend on those lands and the outdoor enthusiasts who revere them. In "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now," Kyle Whyte highlights the role of community and ceremony in restoring species decimated by colonialism in his discussion of Lake Sturgeon restoration in the Great Lakes area by the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. As Whyte explains, non-Native participants who attend events where sturgeon are reintroduced into waterways "do not necessarily adopt the Anishinaabe way of thinking or living, yet they come to feel a sense of themselves as co-occupants of and relatives in a shared watershed" ("Dystopia" 210). These participants come away with a different perspective of the intersections of settler and Anishinaabe histories of the lands and waters where they live, and gain insight into the relations that make those lands sacred to Indigenous peoples.

The discussion of public lands is an ongoing conversation in political and commercial spaces that requires increased awareness of settler and Indigenous histories, and literature helps us to understand how relations to land and the dynamics of the Radical Middle, Indigenous nations, and other communities intersect. *From Relationality to Resilience* has explored literary texts from one such dynamic space, the Dakota-Ojibwe borderlands, examining texts at the crossroads of legal and cultural understandings of land and justice. It provides an example of what Dakota and Ojibwe literary traditions and EJ interventions have to offer to the kinds of discussions and advocacy that motivated Patagonia to take out a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, even if that advocacy does not directly address the issues facing Native communities. These

texts reflect the culturally specific networks of relationality and reciprocity that shape Dakota and Ojibwe communities and lifeways, offering robust visions of Indigenous communities marked by relationality, resilience, and resurgence. In this era marked by climate change and rigorous calls for justice and accountability, attending to the specific histories and relational commitments of Indigenous peoples are vital to imagining collective decolonial futures.

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