

Resources Packet 2: Settler Colonialism & Decolonization

Some of your excerpts from the first packet discussed the role of education, research, and knowledge in processes of colonialism and settler colonialism. In a sense, colonialism (including settler colonialism) was a process of not only colonizing land, but also colonizing minds. This is a topic many postcolonial thinkers have written about, such as Edward Said, Franz Fanon, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a world-renowned Kenyan writer and academic who writes primarily in the Gikuyu language. He describes how his choice to write in Gikuyu is part of an on-going process of 'decolonizing the mind' (the title of his most famous book). His book on the topic is incredibly influential in addressing how colonialism shaped language and ways of knowing. As Carole Boyce Davies writes about Ngũgĩ's *Decolonizing the Mind*, the book "has always been a staple required or "go to" text for the discussion of the nexus between language and coloniality." Or as Ngũgĩ himself wrote, "History moves on, theories of liberation march alongside it, but without our languages we will remain trapped within what literary critic Adam Beach calls the English metaphysical empire."

What do you think it means to decolonize the mind? What might the mean to those who have been colonized (and their descendants)? What might mean to those who colonized (or their descendants)? In what ways is your own mind colonized? How might you decolonize your own mind?

However, in indigenous thinking, decolonization as a process often goes beyond just a metaphor for changing the way we think. Instead, decolonization points to particular ideas about the return of land and recognition of native sovereignty. In this sense, decolonization can't just be used as a catch-all for all sorts of social justice projects. As Tuck and Yang describe, decolonization is something specific:

(read some sections from Tuck & Yang)

Decolonization is not a metaphor

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Abstract

Our goal in this article is to remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization. Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to "decolonize our schools," or use "decolonizing methods," or, "decolonize student thinking", turns decolonization into a metaphor. As important as their goals may be, social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decenter settler perspectives have objectives that may be incommensurable with decolonization. Because settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, non-white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and rehabilitation that actually further settler colonialism. The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or "settler moves to innocence", that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity. In this article, we analyze multiple settler moves towards innocence in order to forward "an ethic of incommensurability" that recognizes what is distinct and what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization in relation to human and civil rights based social justice projects. We also point to unsettling themes within transnational Third World decolonizations, abolition, and critical space-place pedagogies, which challenge the coalescence of social justice endeavors, making room for more meaningful potential alliances.

Introduction

For the past several years we have been working, in our writing and teaching, to bring attention to how settler colonialism has shaped schooling and educational research in the United States and other settler colonial nation-states. These are two distinct but overlapping tasks, the first concerned with how the invisibilized dynamics of settler colonialism mark the organization, governance, curricula, and assessment of compulsory learning; the other concerned with how settler perspectives and worldviews get to count as knowledge and research and how these perspectives - repackaged as data and findings - are activated in order to rationalize and maintain unfair social structures. We are doing this work alongside many others who - somewhat relentlessly, in writings, meetings, courses, and activism - don't allow the real and symbolic violences of settler colonialism to be overlooked.

Alongside this work, we have been thinking about what decolonization means, what it wants and requires. One trend we have noticed, with growing apprehension, is the ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences, supplanting prior ways of talking about social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches which decentre settler perspectives. Decolonization, which we assert is a distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects, is far too often subsumed into the directives of these projects, with no regard for how decolonization wants something different than those forms of justice. Settler scholars swap out prior civil and human rights based terms, seemingly to signal both an awareness of the significance of Indigenous and decolonizing theorizations of schooling and educational research, and to include Indigenous peoples on the list of considerations - as an additional special (ethnic) group or class. At a conference on educational research, it is not uncommon to hear speakers refer, almost casually, to the need to "decolonize our schools," or use "decolonizing methods," or "decolonize student thinking." Yet, we have observed a startling number of these discussions make no mention of Indigenous peoples, our/their struggles for the recognition of our/their sovereignty, or the contributions of Indigenous intellectuals and activists to the theories and frameworks of decolonization. Further, there is often little recognition given to the immediate context of settler colonialism on the North American lands where many of these conferences take place.

Of course, dressing up in the language of decolonization is not as offensive as "Navajo print" underwear sold at a clothing chain store (Jaynor, 2012) and other appropriations of Indigenous cultures and materials that occur so frequently. Yet, this kind of inclusion is a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonization. It is also a foreclosure, limiting in how it recapitulates dominant theories of social change. On the occasion of the inaugural issue of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society*, we want to be sure to clarify that decolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entrenches 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. The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation. When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor, it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression. Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn't have a synonym.

Our goal in this essay is to remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization - what is unsettling and what should be unsettling. Clearly, we are advocates for the analysis of settler colonialism within education and education research and we position the work of Indigenous thinkers as central in unlocking the confounding aspects of public schooling. We, at least in part, want others to join us in these efforts, so that settler colonial structuring and Indigenous critiques of that structuring are no longer rendered invisible. Yet, this joining cannot be too easy, too open, too settled. Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict. There are parts of the decolonization project that are not easily absorbed by human rights or civil rights based approaches to educational equity. In this essay, we think about what decolonization wants.

There is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization. The too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor) is just one part of that history and it taps into pre-existing tropes that get in the way of more meaningful potential alliances. We think of the enactment of these tropes as a series of moves to *innocence* (Malwhimby, 1998), which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity. Here, to explain why

Decolonization as metaphor allows people to equivocate these contradictory decolonial desires because it turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation. In reality, the tracks walk all over land/people in settler contexts. Though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically. This is precisely why decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity. "Decolonization never takes place unnoticed" (Fanon, 1963, p. 36). Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone.

Everything within a settler colonial society strains to destroy or assimilate the Native in order to disappear them from the land - this is how a society can have multiple simultaneous and conflicting messages about Indigenous peoples, such as all Indians are dead, located in faraway reservations, that contemporary Indigenous people are less indigenous than prior generations, and that all Americans are a "little bit Indian." These desires to erase - to let time do its thing and wait for the older form of living to die out, or to even help speed things along (culturalize) because the death of pre-modern ways of life is thought to be inevitable - these are all desires for another kind of resolve to the colonial situation, resolved through the absolute and total destruction or assimilation of original inhabitants.

Numerous scholars have observed that 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 (Fanon, 1963; Vine Deloria, 1988; Grande, 2004; Brynocol, 2007). The easy adoption of *decolonization* as a metaphor (and nothing else) is a form of this anxiety, because it is a premature attempt at reconciliation. The absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self. The desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore.

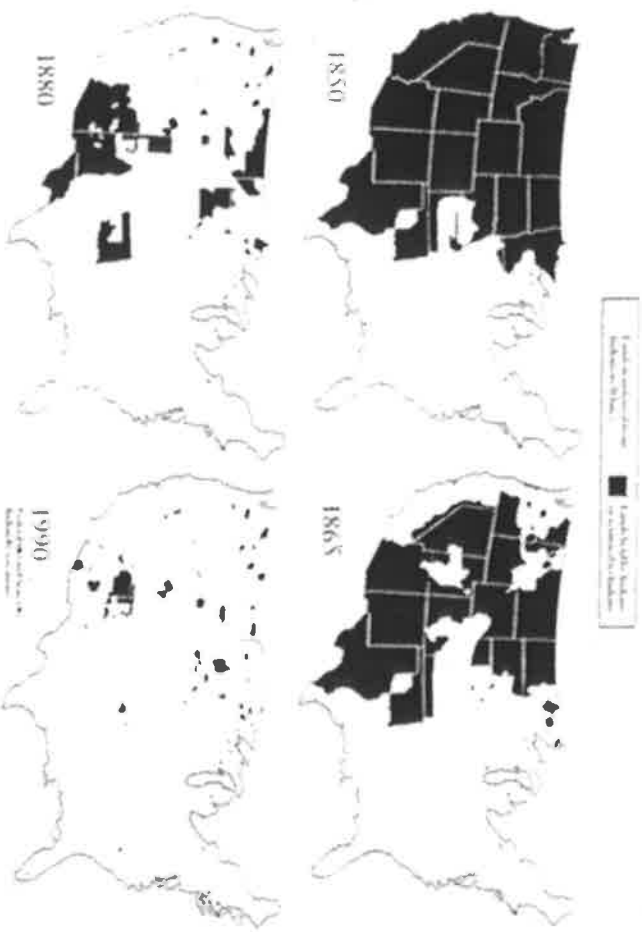
A more nuanced move to innocence is the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization. Calling different groups 'colonized' without describing their relationship to settler colonialism is an equivocation. "The fallacy of using a word in different senses at different stages of the reasoning" (Elymonline, 2001). In particular, describing all struggles against imperialism as *decolonizing* creates a convenient ambiguity between decolonization and social justice work, especially among people of color, queer people, and other groups minoritized by the settler nation-state. 'We are all colonized,' may be a true statement but is deceptively embraceable and vague, its inference: 'None of us are settlers.' Equivocation, or calling everything by the same name, is a move towards innocence that is especially vogue in coalition politics among people of color.

Colonialism is marked by its specializations. In North America and other settings, settler sovereignty imposes sexuality, legality, raciality, language, religion and property in specific ways. Decolonization likewise must be thought through in these particularities.

To agree on what [decolonization] is not: neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny... (Cesaric, 2000, p. 32)

We deliberately extend Césaire's words above to assert what decolonization is not. It is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all of these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the reparation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice.

We don't intend to discourage those who have dedicated careers and lives to teaching themselves and others to be critically conscious of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, xenophobia, and settler colonialism. We are asking them/you to consider how the pursuit of critical consciousness, the pursuit of social justice through a critical enlightenment, can also be settler moves to innocence - diversions, distractions, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege.



NATIVE LAND: 100%. RESERVATION LAND: 2.3%.

Figure 1.2. If Native land were [is] divided like Native land

Settler colonization can be visually understood as the unbroken pace of invasion, and settler occupation, into Native lands: the white space in figure 1.2. Decolonization, as a process, would repatriate land to Indigenous peoples, reversing the timeline of these images.

Conclusion

An ethic of incommensurability, which guides moves that unsettle innocence, stands in contrast to aims of reconciliation, which motivate settler moves to innocence. Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future. Reconciliation is concerned with questions of *what will decolonization look like? What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler?* Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework.

We want to say, first, that decolonization is not obliged to answer those questions - decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. Still, we acknowledge the questions of those wary participants in Occupy Oakland and other settlers who want to know what decolonization will require of them. The answers are not fully in view and can't be as long as decolonization remains punctuated by metaphor. The answers will not emerge from friendly understanding, and indeed require a dangerous understanding of uncommonality that un-coalesces coalition politics - moves that may feel very unfriendly. But we will find out the answers as we get there, "in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give [decolonization] historical form and content" (Fanon, 1963, p. 36).

Decolonization offers a different perspective to human and civil rights based approaches to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an "and". It is an elsewhere.

Andrea Smith: "the undoing of privilege occurs not by individuals confessing their privileges or trying to think themselves into a new subject position, but through the creation of collective structures that dismantle the systems that enable these privileges."

What Decolonization Is, and What It Means to Me

"Decolonizing is about reclaiming what was taken and honoring what we still have."



(selections)

BY TINA CURRIEL-ALLEN
MARCH 4, 2018

In this op-ed, Tina Curriel-Allen, a Xicana/Boricua poet, writer, and activist, explains decolonization for those who may not be familiar with the term or process. It is important to note that Tina is writing from California, in what is now known as the United States; her family comes from California, other parts of the U.S., and parts of Mexico. She is not attempting to speak for all peoples with regard to decolonization but rather for the community she is a part of, as well as the elders and teachers she says she's fortunate enough to know.

How do those who have been colonized go about decolonizing? It is in the interest of the colonizer to divide and conquer, to separate us from community, so speaking from a place of *we* is necessary when talking about decolonization. It is as political and communal as it is personal.

We communicate by how we dress, through feathers, fabrics, jewelry, and other things. We also try to view the world and one another differently, to honor the sacred in all of us. We can see with more than just our eyes — beyond what can be "seen" or proved. Taste is through things like tobacco and through the kinds of foods our relatives are and grew for generations. These foods are more common than you might think — things like corn, beans, chile, and squash. Foods that nourish our bodies and connect our spirits to the earth they grew from. We are also mindful of the words we say and take in, as they can feed or poison us. It is important to speak with *PALABRA* (which means "word" or integrity, to be kind to others, and treat them as if they were you, because in many ways they are).

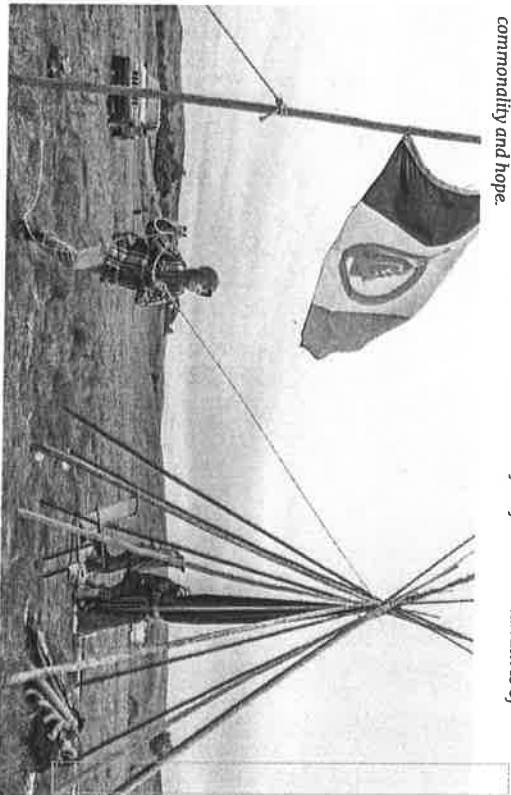
Decolonizing is about reclaiming what was taken and honoring what we still have.

This takes conscious work and effort. There is value in actively seeking what was lost, in remembering what was forgotten. Values matter to us as individuals and as a community. Many of our parents or grandparents would bless us as we were leaving their homes. We honor that, and our connections to new family members, through building community. We respect and take care of each other. Before capitalism, we literally needed each other and the earth to survive. We have not forgotten that. We honor the sacred in everyone and know that no matter what others might say, no one makes it alone. We still live with the trauma of what colonization did to us. We are trying to heal to make things better for future generations, so they can carry a little less of the burden. We do this work not only for ourselves but for the future, for the next seven generations to come. This means that we are always aware of how our words, intentions, actions, and prayers affect not only us but future generations to come. Our plan is to leave things better than when we got here.

I could write about ceremony, the sweat lodge, prayer, or dance — about finding ways to let go of things that hurt us. Decolonization of the mind is best left for another conversation, as there is much to be said on that subject as well. What I hope to have expressed to you is that decolonization is a way of life — a path forward that connects us to our past, present, and future. It is personal, political, spiritual, and intentional. If the most I have done is introduce you to questions about what decolonization means to you in your own life — wherever you might be reading this from — then I have done well. From here, the conversations, the actions, the seeking and building of community, these things are up to you. And they are possible! We are living proof of that. All my relations.

White Allies, Let's Be Honest About Decolonization

I want to experience the solidarity of allied actions that refuse fantastical narratives of commodity and hope.



How can settler allies move beyond being sympathetic beneficiaries of colonialism? What approach is legitimately decolonizing?
Photo by Jesse Rivers



Kyle Powys Whyte posted Apr 03, 2018

COMMENTARY

Indigenous environmental movements in North America are among the oldest and most provocative—from the Dish With One Spoon Treaty between Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples to the *Mini Wiconi* ("Water Is Life") movement of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. As a Potawatomi environmental justice advocate, I often get asked by other environmentalists in the U.S. to share my views on what they can do to be good allies to Indigenous peoples. Those who ask usually identify themselves as being non-Indigenous, white, and privileged. They are U.S. settlers: people who have privileges that arise from the historic and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Whether one participates in settler colonialism is not entirely a matter of when or how one's ancestors came to the U.S. Having settler privilege means that some combination of one's economic security, U.S. citizenship, sense of relationship to the land, mental and physical health, cultural integrity, family values, career aspirations, and spiritual lives are not possible—literally!—without the territorial dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

How then can settler allies move beyond being sympathetic beneficiaries of colonialism? What approach is legitimately decolonizing?

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integrity that Indigenous people experience. This is why scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang say decolonization is not a metaphor. Yet, the empathetic responsibility to support others' self-determination and well-being is a major lesson in many Indigenous environmental traditions. Subscribers to the romantic view are unprepared to respond to criticisms of supposed Indigenous hypocrisies. Like the alleged contradiction of tribally sanctioned coal industries. Responding to these critiques requires an understanding of colonialism, yet some romantics are unwilling to take the time to learn how the U.S. forcefully re-engineered tribal governments to facilitate extractive industries. This understanding is key if one's goal is to undermine the levers of power that undermine Indigenous self-determination and well-being today.

Nobody can claim to be an ally if their agenda is to prevent their own future dystopias through actions that also preserve today's Indigenous dystopias.

The same-boat approach also misses the colonial context. The conservation movement has been as damaging to Indigenous peoples as extractive industries. National parks, ecological restoration projects, conservation zones, and even the uses of certain terms—especially "wilderness"—are associated with forced displacement of entire communities, erasure of Indigenous histories in education and public memory, economic marginalization, and violations of cultural and political rights. Though certain sectors of conservation have improved greatly, newer movements, such as the International UN-REDD+ Programme, still repeat harms of the past. Almost every environmental achievement in the U.S.—such as the Clean Air or Clean Water acts—has required Indigenous peoples to work hard to reform these laws to gain fair access to the protections. A decolonizing approach to allyship must challenge the resilience of settler privilege, which involves directly facing the very different ecological realities we all dwell in. Sometimes I see settler environmental movements as seeking to avoid some dystopian environmental future or planetary apocalypse. These visions are replete with species extinctions, irreversible loss of ecosystems, and severe rationing. They can include abusive corporations and governments that engage in violent brainwashing, quarantining, and territorial dispossession of people who stand in their way.

Yet for many Indigenous peoples in North America, we are already living in what our ancestors would have understood as dystopian or post-apocalyptic times. In a catastrophically short period, the capitalist-colonialist partnership has destroyed our relationships with thousands of species and ecosystems.

Zoe Todd and Heather Davis, authors of "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene," characterize the ecological footprint of colonialism as seismic. The ongoing U.S. colonial legacy includes forcing Indigenous peoples into grid-like reservations that empower corporations and private individuals to degrade our territories; fostering patriarchy and conditions for sexual violence in Indigenous communities; brainwashing Indigenous children through boarding schools; and brainwashing everyone else through erasing Indigenous histories and experiences across U.S. culture, education, and memory.

So Indigenous people awaken each day to science fiction scenarios not unlike the setup in films such as *The Matrix*. Yet in Indigenous science fiction films, such as *Wokring* and *The 6th World*, the protagonists are diverse humans and nonhumans who present unique solutions to daunting environmental problems. They are not portrayed as romantic stereotypes or symbols of a common humanity. They do not presuppose naive notions of Indigenous spirituality. They see environmental protection as possible only if we resist the capitalist-colonialist "matrix" of oppression and build allyship across different human and nonhuman groups. These films differ greatly from, say, *Avatar*, where the protagonist is a white male who passes as Indigenous and uses romantic Indigenous wisdom to save everyone. Indigenous people learn to ignore this difference, embracing a common foe together.

Indigenous environmental movements work to reject the ancestral dystopias and colonial fantasies of the present.

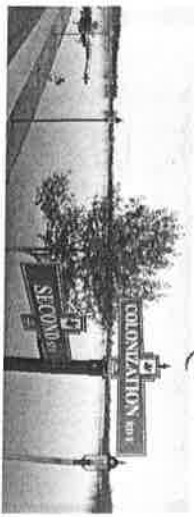
Decolonizing allyship requires allies to be critical about their environmental realities—and about the purpose of their environmentalism. To do this, allies must realize they are living in the environmental fantasies of their settler ancestors. Settler ancestors wanted today's world. They would have relished the possibility that some of their descendants could freely commit extractive violence on Indigenous lands and then feel, with no doubts, that they are ethical people. Remember how proponents of the Dakota Access pipeline sanctimoniously touted the project's safety and that it never crossed tribal lands? On the flip side, when more sympathetic (environmentalist) settler descendants lament the loss of Indigenous wisdom without acting for Indigenous territorial empowerment, buy into the dreams and hopes of settler heroism and redemption in movies like *Avatar*, or overburden Indigenous people with requests for knowledge and emotional labor yet offer no reciprocal empowerment or healing—then they are fulfilling the fantasies of their settler ancestors.

One can't claim to be an ally if one's agenda is to prevent his or her own future dystopias through actions that also preserve today's Indigenous dystopias. Yet how many environmentalists do just this? I do not see much differentiating those who fight to protect the colonial fantasy of wilderness from those who claim the Dakota Access pipeline does not cross Indigenous lands. Indigenous environmental movements work to reject the ancestral dystopias and colonial fantasies of the present. This is why so many of our environmental movements are about stopping sexual and state violence against Indigenous people, reclaiming ethical self-determination across diverse urban and rural ecosystems, empowering gender justice and gender fluidity, transforming lawmaking to be consensual, healing intergenerational traumas, and calling out all practices that erase Indigenous histories, cultures, and experiences.

Perhaps these goals and values are among the greatest gifts of Indigenous spirituality and wisdom. I want to experience the solidarity of allied actions that refuse fantastical narratives of commonality and hope. Determining what exactly needs to be done will involve the kind of creativity that Indigenous peoples have used to survive some of the most oppressive forms of capitalist, industrial, and colonial domination. But above all, it will require that allies take responsibility and confront the assumptions behind their actions and aspirations.

Decolonization ~ Meaning What Exactly?

Posted on October 11, 2017 | Leave a comment



By Pegi Eyers, Stone Circle Press

With all the dialogue happening on decolonization today, a reminder on baseline definitions can be helpful, before widening out to other personal/collective interpretations and actions. There are movements happening right now across ethnic and cultural lines (including the dominant white society) that use "decolonization" to describe a wide array of practices. Do we need to re-examine how we use the term? What does "decolonization" mean to you? The following definitions can offer starting points for discussion, and for action going forward.

(2) Settler Removal

The next profound meaning for "decolonization" is for the colonizer to "de-colonize" – that is, withdraw and leave the lands of the oppressed they have taken by stealth or force. Here in the Americas, there is a justified belief among First Nations that the colonizer (folks of European descent) must return to our lands of origin. So far, there are a few progressive Settlers who are exploring their own removal, yet for the majority this is far beyond our capabilities, or even our desire. Everyday life in the homogenous American or Canadian nation-state does not support this kind of yearning, or any substantial link to a European homeland. And the trail to Europe can grow very cold, if your motherline has been on Turtle Island for over 12 generations. So, if it is impossible to leave the Americas (as much as we want to) it can be helpful for Settlers to think of this directive symbolically, and to ask ourselves what exactly an America or a Canada would look like, if we were able to reduce our Eurocentric imposition, dominance, supremacy and power? And what would a re-indigenized society look like, if First Nations and POC were in the ascendant position? In the face of these realities, we can be grateful for alternative approaches being offered by First Nations leaders such as Robert Lovelace (Tsiagi/Algonquin).

"Indigenous peoples and Settlers have our own histories, where those histories have led us, and where the possible futures might lie for us together. Because guess what? We are here and now, and we're not going to change that fact, but what we can do is change the possible futures that we face."

To maintain cultural continuity, and to show up for common causes with our diversity intact, the most we can hope for is to practice good intercultural competency skills, tolerance for "the other," mutual respect, and peaceful co-existence. Throughout human history, these are the elements that have been missing.

(3) Return the Land

For indigenous freedom fighters, scholars and community peoples, decolonization cannot happen until the ancestral lands are returned. As the source of epistemologies, cultural keystone(s), TEK (traditional ecological knowledge), food sources and medicine for good health, the land is deeply embedded in the communal heart and soul. At the root of indigenous community, the priority to care for and protect the land is for the *Web of all Life*, and the *Seven Generations* yet to come. In marked contrast, Empire has failed miserably in the protection of pristine ecosystems. Now, all people, including Settlers, who reject the paradigm of endless growth and recognize the value of IK (indigenous knowledge), can support the repatriation of lands to the original *Earthkeepers* and First Nations of Turtle Island.

In the truest sense of the word, for the recently colonized (indigenous and POC) "**decolonization**" is **not a metaphor**. Those in the dominant society are being asked to avoid using "decolonization" to refer to ideas or actions that do not hold indigenous resistance, sovereignty, land restoration, and other repatriations at the center.

(4) Resistance & Resurgence

As a baseline here in the Americas, for the recently colonized (indigenous and POC) "decolonization" is the active principle that attempts to undo the *Settler State* on a daily basis, both from within and without. Eurocentric dominance, white supremacy, racism, ethnic cleansing, genocide, slavery, land theft, imposed treaties, broken promises, relocation, forced assimilation, government manipulation, corporate control, psychic violence and all the associated forms of oppression that continue to impact indigenous people and POC in the Americas are identified, confronted, called out, and resisted. One step at a time, and marking the victories along the way,

decolonization attempts to undo the colonization of the individual, the community and *Earth Community* with protest, social justice activism, civil disobedience, education, cultural projects and legal battles.

At the same time that the *Settler State* is challenged, the necessary recovery and rejuvenation of pre-colonial heritage, language and tradition is taking place, with further preservation of culture ongoing. A focus on health and healing translates into relationships that realign individuals and entire communities with their *Original Instructions*. The majority of references to "decolonization" by POC and their allies refers to the active principles of **resistance and resurgence**, and ongoing education that supports and empowers these actions.

For our generation today, the question remains – what are we going to do about it? Here are a few questions to consider, as we look at how we use the term "decolonization."

- Where do you see yourself on the decolonization continuum? Do you belong to the historic colonizer Settler Society or the colonized group?
- How can reparations be made to First Nations?
- Are you recovering your connection to a landbase that has nurtured your people for generations?
- Do you center indigenous and POC resistance in your decolonization work?
- How are you educating your own cohort on issues of racism and oppression?
- Do you consider the recovery of your own heritage part of the decolonization process?
- What habits in your thinking, or daily life, can be decolonized?
- How can you dedicate more time to the rewilding of both soul and place, and the protection of wild nature?

At the local level, the popular "acknowledgement of territory" before public events provides a solid foundation for the decolonization of self, family, community and the wider world. After decades of denial and ignorance, the unadorned truth of this "first step" declaration centers indigenous reality, and is integral to the decolonization journey.

"I acknowledge that I am living in the traditional territory of the Mississauga Ojibwa, stand in solidarity with First Nations land claim processes, support First Nations sovereignty and cultural recovery efforts, and respect the traditional values of the Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Alderville First Nations."

6

"Settler Colonialism Primer" By Laura Hurwitz & Shawn Bourque, *Unsettling Klamath River Coyuntura*

Waziyatawin gives some clues, from a Dakota perspective, to these perplexities:

Does this mean that others should never engage Indigenous ways of being? Not necessarily. If we are struggling for Indigenous liberation on Indigenous lands, all people are going to have to practice Indigenous ways of being in some form. We will all need to engage in sustainable living practices and Indigenous cultures, including Dakota culture, offer excellent models for all people. That does not mean former-colonizers can appropriate our spirituality and ceremonial life, but it will mean they need to embrace Indigenous values such as balance and reciprocity. In the meantime, it is far more appropriate for colonizers to work to ensure that Dakota people are able to practice Dakota ways of being. If you believe sugar-bushing and wild-ricing are important, than help Dakota people recover lands so that we can engage that practice. Perhaps, we can eventually engage such activities together.

Decolonization

There is not a blue print for decolonization, and decolonization means different things for different people. Like all libratory re-makings of political and social life, it is a step into the unknown. To give a deeper perspective on decolonization, from a multiplicity of viewpoints, we quote several definitions at length. Zig-Zag defines decolonization as:

Decolonization is the ending of colonialism and the liberation of the colonized. This requires the dismantling of the colonial government and its entire social system upon which control & exploitation are based. Decolonization, then, is a revolutionary struggle aimed at transforming the entire social system and reestablishing the sovereignty of tribal peoples. In political terms, this means a radical de-centralization of national power (i.e., the dismantling of the nation-state) and the establishment of local autonomy (community & region, traditionally the village and tribal nation).

The Unsettling Minnesota Source Book identifies decolonization as involving:

The ending of colonialism and the liberation of the colonized. In order to be liberated from the oppressive state, the process of colonization must be reversed — beginning with the mental aspects and moving towards the physical. While decolonization can be an act of cultural revitalization, it also requires the dismantling of the colonial government and the entire social system upon which control and exploitation are based.

Michael Yellowbird offers a two-fold definition of decolonization, both as an event and as a process:

As an event decolonization concerns reaching a critical level of consciousness, an active understanding that you are (or have been) colonized and are thus responding to life's circumstances in ways that are limited, destructive and externally controlled. As a process, decolonization means engaging in the activities of creating, restoring and birthing. It means creating and consciously using various strategies to liberate oneself, adapt to or survive oppressive conditions; it means restoring cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant and necessary to survival; and it means the birthing of new ideas, thinking, technologies and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples.

Derrick Jensen suggests decolonization requires:

The process of breaking your identity with and loyalty to this culture—industrial capitalism, and more broadly civilization—and remembering your identification with and loyalty to the real physical world, including the land where you live. It means reexamining premises and stories the dominant culture handed down to you. It means seeing the harm the dominant culture does to other cultures, and to the planet. If you are a member of settler society, it means recognizing that you are living on stolen land and it means working to return that land to the humans whose blood has forever mixed with the soil.

In the context of settler colonialism, decolonization necessarily involves the literal unsettling of settlers and ultimately the complete repatriation of land. For the settler, decolonization means facing that there is not necessarily a place for them and that settler destiny no longer takes center stage. Tuck and Yang state this clearly:

Decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity.

⑦

Allyship

In regards to decolonization, an ally can be seen as a settler engaged in working to support Indigenous People's struggles. As Ancestral Pride points out, the word ally is a verb, which necessitates action not just theoretical support. "Allies actively seek" according the Unsettling Minnesota, "to interrupt and dismantle oppression in all its forms, even when doing so could jeopardize one's own position of relative comfort and security." In his article, "On Refusal," Corey Snelgrove urges settler allies to move beyond the paralysis that can come from being a self-refusing settler: "Destroying settler society, and allowing the rise of ethical relations, requires a two-fold active response: destroy the material and discursive foundations of settler colonialism and actively engage with Indigenous resurgence." Another important point is that, "allies cannot self-define as such, but must be claimed by the group one strives to be an ally to."

Points to Remember for Indigenous Solidarity Activists from Waziyatawin:

- The movement for Indigenous liberation is a radical political struggle.
- Being an ally does not mean signing up for Indigenous spirituality.
- We need strong, solid individuals who are not floundering with their own spiritual struggles.
- This is not a struggle for those people who believe it's trendy to support Indigenous causes—we are in it for the long haul.
- You can find Indigenous individuals who will support any position you want them to support—that is a direct result of the colonial experience.
- Those indigenous individuals who encourage non-Indigenous participation in ceremonies are often (not always) those who are attempting to curry favor with white women, or white people for their own purposes.
- Because this is a political struggle, it is essential to work in solidarity with critically minded and politically engaged Indigenous individuals.
- Remember that decolonization is a process for both the colonizer and the colonized.

LAND REPARATIONS & INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY TOOLKIT

This is a brief guide for Resource Generation members and other folks with access to land to support in education and resource sharing around land reparations. We hope these resources can support us in taking collective action towards land repatriation to Indigenous people in the ongoing struggle against colonization. This is not a comprehensive guide, but rather a starting point. This guide was compiled by the RG Land Reparations Group in 2018.

There is no blueprint for how to work towards land reparations and land returns to the Indigenous people of this land. Every region, location, and tribe is different in the history of colonization, and in the political landscapes of Indigenous struggle and organizing. This brief guide is a compilation of some educational resources on colonialism, decolonization and solidarity, and links to some inspiring case studies and examples of settler descendants who have returned land to Indigenous people, as well as some initial questions/best practices to consider when beginning to think about working towards land repatriation to Indigenous people.

(Land Reparation Toolkit cont.)

In Resource Generation's mission — to be working toward the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power — we name the "equitable distribution of land." This is a tactic and a specific outcome that young people with wealth are well positioned to influence. As an economic justice organization, focusing on this reparation of resources is one fundamental way we can contribute to and strengthen the holistic project of decolonization — but it must be in concert with other aspects of anti-colonial practices and principles, which are determined and led by Indigenous people. Decolonization and "the equitable distribution of land" is simultaneously about Native sovereignty, self-determination, and rights; and about the Earth and its resources being sustained, cared for, and lived with symbiotically. Colonization disrupted the communal responsibility to land inherent in Indigenous nationhood, and turned land into a private commodity for wealth extraction and accumulation.

Therefore, a decolonial lens of returning land to Indigenous nations, not just individuals, is necessary to avoid reproducing those dynamics. To talk about true "redistribution of land" with a decolonial lens is seeking to address the question, "what would it look like to truly tend to the harm of wealth extraction done by colonizers [US-focus in RG but this is worldwide]?" Another way of putting this is — we are trying to get to the *root causes of injustice*.

Colonialism is both a root and result of racism and capitalism. A primary cause of the racial wealth divide is colonialism: white Europeans' theft of land, resources, human bodies and their labor. In order to end racial capitalism, we must disrupt and end colonialization.

Colonialism is a root cause of many other "isms" and injustices.

- Colonization by white Europeans brought indentured servitude, targeting poor people from Europe, Asia, the Caribbean and elsewhere that laid the groundwork for ongoing exploitation of the working class.
- Colonization is at the root of racism. White Europeans justified land theft and genocide by asserting that they were a scientifically superior class of human beings.
- Colonization by white Europeans introduced a strict Christianity-backed patriarchy that created and enforces gender roles and binary with the use of sexual violence, transphobia, and homophobia.
- Colonization by white Europeans imported and amplified a culture of greed and an economy of capitalism that led to the enslavement of Africans and seeded our current penal system.

U.S. colonialism and imperialism has shaped the history and present lives of Black, Latinx, Asian, and Arab people in the U.S. and abroad. Non-Native people of color have a different relationship to settler colonialism than descendants of White Europeans. Be it from forced migration through slavery,

economic migration due to U.S. extraction of resources in South America, U.S backed imperialist land grabs, refugee resettlement due to U.S. wars abroad, non-Native people of color in the U.S have suffered from colonialism and imperialism, and have also been brought into the settler-colonial project that is the United States. As a community that is vastly majority settlers, we have a responsibility to center and work in solidarity with Native folks.

Some questions and best practices to consider:

1. **What is the history of any land you indirectly/directly have access to?** What Indigenous people historically or currently inhabit that land, and what is the history of how it was stolen? (Get started by checking out this decolonization homework from the Catalyst Project and this map of Native land)

2. **Who are the Native people/communities where you live or where the land you have access to?** What is the political landscape of both recognized and unrecognized tribes where you live? Are there any local efforts that are led by Indigenous people?

3. **Start the slow process of building relationships with Native people where you live.** Be patient. This work is relational and because of colonization Indigenous people and struggles are often less visible/invisible. Are there local events or cultural centers you can show up to? Are there individuals you are connected to that you can build relationship with?

4. **What are the visions and struggles of Indigenous people/tribes in the area you live or have access to land in?** Show up and support the visions and struggles that are ongoing. This might be fundraising for land or other resources, or inviting local tribes to utilize land that you have access to. Decolonizing land in the long term and returning lands to disenfranchised and Native people is ideal, and we must be working within the visions and struggles of Indigenous people/tribes.

5. **What does informed consent look like in the offer for donation or transfer of land?** Acknowledging that land transfers/land repatriation can be complex, can you consider and discuss how there can be a choice on behalf of the donation recipient of whether to accept the offer, and how to support the entire process and success ongoingly if so.

6. **Learn about the specifics of what is possible as far as land transfers.** Land can be transferred to individuals or cooperatives of individuals, collective ownership and control is important for maintaining long-term control of land, as private ownership is more vulnerable to dispossession. There are different ways donors can transfer land to land trusts— donation vs title transfer vs charitable sale. Learn about different options and discuss with partners. (See the guide below from the Sustainable Economies Law Center about different options for how to transfer land.)

(cont.)

Case studies/examples:

Below are several examples of current or recent land return efforts. This includes organized fundraisers for land return, as well as individuals who have returned land to Native communities.

Land returns

- Mashpee Wampanoag (Cape Cod) — Native Land Conservancy was founded in 2012 in Mashpee, Massachusetts, and is the first Native-run land conservation group east of the Mississippi, and this story about the first parcel of land donated to the Native Land Conservancy by an individual

• Maidu (Sacramento) — Land Stewardship Council returns ancestral California land

• Ponca (Nebraska) — Nebraska farmer signed a deed returning ancestral tribal land back to the Ponca Tribe

• Wabanaki (Maine) — First Light Learning Journey A collaboration of 25 non-Native conservationists controlling 2 million acres in Maine, and Wabanaki tribal members to build towards collective awareness of Native land left and move towards land resourcing sharing with Wabanaki people. Notes on process here.

Land taxes, cash & other returns

- Individual transfers \$250K to Ute Tribe in Utah for stolen land Professor paying reparations for great-grandfathers' profiteering
- Sogorea Te Land Tax: land tax in Bay Area, traditional Ohlone land, for non Indigenous people to pay into the Shuumi Land tax to acknowledge the history of colonization, land theft and the Ohlone community.
- Non-Profit Making a Land Return towards Sogorea Te Land Trust
- Duwamish Real Rent: Land tax in Seattle area
- FEDCO seeds – indigenous royalty
- There are currently many Indigenous-led, land-based anti-pipeline camps seeking on the ground support, supplies and legal support, such as The Lean Est La Vie Camp.

TAKE ACTION

- Donate to any of the ongoing land tax/ land returns struggles.
- Host a fundraiser and direct money towards supporting Indigenous organizing.
- If you have access to land and are interested in land repatriation to Indigenous people, begin building relationships with people and see if there is interest in local land returns.
- This is not available for everyone who has access to land, so another way to move towards land repatriation is sell acres of land and give the proceeds to support ongoing Indigenous-led organizing or land return struggles.

HOW TO SUPPORT STANDING ROCK AND CONFRONT WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE ON STOLEN LAND

Longtime activists engaged in solidarity organizing with indigenous groups offer action steps and best practices for non-Native supporters. Berkeley Carmine and Liza Minno Bloom October 13, 2016

As support for those at Standing Rock grows, it is important that allies also confront the fundamental questions of what it means to live on stolen land and how to transform colonial relations in a way that creates a viable and just future for all communities and the planet. After almost a decade of engaging in request-based, volunteer solidarity organizing with indigenous groups fighting relocation in Black Mesa, Arizona due to coal mining, we have learned and honed a list of action steps for non-Native individuals just getting involved, as well as a set of best practices for activists already working on other organizing efforts.

As people of European descent who benefit from both white privilege and settler privilege, we understand that our work and writing is most effective when it is developing and acting upon a mutual stake in decolonization. This means focusing on the responsibilities specific to our position, which is inherently different from that of indigenous and non-Native people of color. Nevertheless, their organizing, along with much activist scholarship — some of which is linked to below — has helped inform this list of action steps and set of best practices.

1. **Know whose land you are on.** There are plenty of resources out there to help you educate yourself about the land that you, your school or place of worship are occupying and its original inhabitants. Here is one. Find out if the tribes or nations are still in that area. If they are not, find out why. Have they been forcefully relocated or pushed out in another way? Acknowledge that you are on occupied land when you say where you are or where you are from. This is an important way to disrupt the myth of the "disappearing native."
2. **Know your family's history.** How did your family end up in the United States? Was it through a colonial process in another country? If your ancestors are from a colonizing country, what was your family's connection to land, spiritual traditions, economics, etc., before that country began colonizing other places? Does your family own land in the United States? If so, how did they come to acquire it?

3. **Learn together.** Encourage learning that is personal, emotional, spiritual, embodied and communal. Host reading groups and discussions that build an understanding of settler colonialism and your community's relationship to it that is tied to indigenous solidarity. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz's "An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States" is an enormously helpful place to start, and there are numerous resources, such as the book "Unsettling America," the website for Black Mesa Indigenous Support, the Colors of Resistance archive, the



Excerpt from
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Grows: The Indigenous
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(An example of a decolonization
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OTHER PATHWAYS TO INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Achieving true environmental justice in Indian country must ultimately engage a wide variety of strategies, from creative organizing and functional partnerships at the community level to formal organizing initiatives and evolving environmental justice policies at the local, state, federal, and international levels that respond to American Indians' specific histories, legal statuses, and assertions of sovereignty. As the framework of settler colonialism gains traction and becomes more widely understood and accepted in activist movements and governmental institutions there will be more opportunities for honest community dialogue and decolonizing action.

These conversations are gradually taking place. In one especially interesting example, members of a non-Native community in the original homelands of the Karuk, Yurok, Shasta, and Konomihu peoples in Northern California began a movement to consciously decolonize the region. They started a public conversation about how to change their relationship with the Native community by changing their relationship with the land. Created in 2014, the Unsettling Klamath River (UKR) project began with a small group of white activists led by Laura Hurwitz, who was working

on a master's thesis that interrogated the area's history of settler colonialism and issues of white settler responsibility. The study focused on "back-to-the-landers"—the counterculture settlers who migrated to the area and built a cannabis industry that has led to skyrocketing land values and profound ecological impacts that further alienated Indigenous peoples from their homelands in the last half century. Hurwitz, herself a white settler, posed the question "Back to whose land?" The study was inspired by Unsettling Minnesota, a project begun in 2009 by Dakota and non-Dakota activists with a ten-week class titled "Dakota Decolonization: Solidarity Education for Allies," and Unsettling America, a decentralized network of autonomous groups and individuals committed to "mental and territorial decolonization throughout Turtle Island and the Americas."²²

UKR identified several different portals, or openings, through which white settlers continued flooding into the area, among them nonprofit internships, AmeriCorps programs, the cannabis economy, and Black Bear Ranch, which is a commune established as a land trust in 1968 under the moniker "Free land for free people."

UKR's organizers raised tough questions about closing the portals and tearing down fences that blocked access to Indigenous sacred sites and other cultural resources, and it conducted public meetings to educate the community about decolonization. One of their most essential tasks was to brainstorm ways to repatriate land, including bringing Native people into the land trust, creating housing for some Indigenous families, and creating a support network. Reactions to talk of decolonizing ranged from curiosity and openness to hostility and rage. Some claimed to have "saved" the area due to their land stewardship and environmental activism, asserting that their presence prevented logging, pesticide spraying, and other environmental ills, playing into what Hurwitz identified as a white savior narrative. Relationships were strained and broken, especially at Black Bear Ranch. Hurwitz analyzed these responses as settler fragility and described debates about whether the unsettling movement should try to avoid making people "uncomfortable." Hurwitz's own opinion was that while it wasn't the goal to hurt loved ones, discomfort with the topic of decolonization is unavoidable and should be directly confronted.²³

While the Unsettling Klamath River project is a work in progress and has yet to accomplish any measurable decolonizing action, it did start a

powerful conversation—one that could potentially be replicated in other contexts. In this regard, it succeeded in metaphorically unsettling the settler population by blowing the lid off myriad unspoken assumptions about what it means to "go back" to a land that was stolen to begin with, and it exposed the ways in which even the most progressive and anti-establishment of countercultures are rooted in white supremacy and settler privilege. By attempting to dismantle the structures of settler society, the conversation started by UKR revealed that it is not a matter of liberal versus conservative ideology but about challenging the foundation of a country built on genocide, slavery, and private property.

journal Decolonization, the No One Is Illegal network, queer indigenous studies, critical indigenous studies and more.

4. Ask permission. Asking permission fundamentally shifts the entitlement inherent to the settler experience. Cultural appropriation is an extension of genocide, forced removals, and land theft, as settlers take what does not belong to them as if it is rightfully theirs. This can be countered by asking permission to be on indigenous peoples' traditional lands. This practice can be extended in a variety of ways and open up new modes of relating and relationships. As one of the first steps of planning, ask permission for any gatherings, marches, etc., from an indigenous representative of the land you are on. Invite them to collaborate in planning around gatherings, conferences, actions, and campaigns for justice work on their traditional homeland. Be open to the work shifting because of such collaboration.

5. Know where your water, heat, electricity and other resources come from. Lands that were relegated to indigenous use under the reservation system often because of their perceived barrenness are now resource colonies for the settler state. Indigenous communities in the United States are among the hardest hit by the negative impacts of climate change because of the extractive projects and processing that take place on their lands. Coal mining and burning, uranium mining and copper mining are just a few of the extractive projects that leave toxic legacies for generations to come. The profit from extraction on Native lands is rarely returned to the community that has paid the cost in destruction of lands and sacred sites, damage to health, and devastation of local economies and lifeways.

6. Take responsibility for Christian privilege/Dctrine of Discovery. If you've grown up in Christian culture, you may be unaware of all the ways that Christianity is culturally dominant in the United States. Work with your faith community to raise awareness about the violent legacy of Christian hegemony and move resources to shift power. If you are part of a Christian denomination that has not yet repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery — the theological justification for the theft of indigenous land — start or join a movement to do so. Challenge the notion that the settler church was divinely ordained within your church community. Start conversations about saints or landed leaders of faith who were directly responsible for conquest. Learn how your church acquired its land and whose land it was originally. Learn the history of your denomination's relationship to conquest. Consider that within Christian traditions there are built-in practices for atonement and reparations. Get creative with your spiritual community about what atonement and reparations might look like. If it is possible, try and connect with the indigenous tribe or nation in your area to work on this.

The Christian and Catholic Churches are incredibly well resourced not only in cash but also in land. Many, if not all, indigenous-led movements across Turtle Island — the indigenous term for North America — call for return of land to indigenous stewardship. How can the church leverage its many resources in solidarity with indigenous-led efforts for land return? There is a new project in California that is working for the return of urban land to indigenous stewardship. Could your church start a conversation about putting land in trust and working with a local indigenous group to steward it?

7. Engage in local struggles and build relationships. There are ongoing indigenous-led struggles for land and self-determination taking place all over Turtle Island. Not all indigenous spaces and organizations are looking for outside support, but many are. Educate yourself on this history of the area and current struggles. Reach out and take principled and accountable action by centering relationships in your work. The work will often be request-based and/or take on various forms of asking for permission, seeking guidance and input. This is a nuanced dance of taking initiative while ensuring there is guidance and the work upholds, not undermines, community self-determination. Your participation in decision making and giving input should be determined by the indigenous people you work with and will depend on the specific goals. For example, an indigenous community addressing its own tribal government has different objectives and requests from non-Native people than if cross-community power is being built to challenge federal and/or state policies, energy policy, corporate power, etc.

8. Work for reparations of land, upholding treaties, and funding Indigenous-led struggles and efforts for land return. This entails supporting Standing Rock, and other indigenous-led struggles in your region, building power to force the state to respect treaties, and doing creative fundraising campaigns like door knocking for reparations, as members of Resource Generation did in the Bay Area in solidarity with Poor Magazine's "Stolen Land and Hoarded Resources Tour." Read more here.

While these are helpful tips for individuals entering the sphere of solidarity work, there are also things activists already engaged in other organizing efforts can do to amplify indigenous-led struggles or incorporate a decolonial analysis into their work. It begins with incorporating an analysis of settler colonialism into all of your organizing work.

If your primary area of organizing is around the environment, recognize that indigenous cultures and lifeways are deeply tied to land, and most contemporary indigenous-led struggles center around access to land or land return. If you engage in environmental work: Consider how the environmental framework of land (or wilderness) as separate from people is an inherently colonial mindset that pits environmentalists not only against labor but also indigenous people, whose lifeways are inseparable from land.

If you engage in climate justice work, recognize the ways that indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted by extreme extraction and climate chaos, as well as how they are resisting. Globally, indigenous communities are living as frontline blockades against extreme extraction.

If you engage in anti-racist work, consider doing the work of understanding settler colonialism as a structure and logic distinct from racial capitalism (although interlocking) that is defined in terms of self-determination rather than being solely rights-based. A stance of self-determination signifies that indigenous nations pre-date the existence of the United States and aren't always looking for recognition from the colonizing force. Rights and "equality" frameworks are most often based on the idea of the individual as the social actor and view equality under the law for all individuals as the end goal. Many indigenous frameworks don't fully fit this and are centered more on the ideas of the collective (nation, tribe, people), as opposed to the individual. They also prioritize responsibility (to land, and future generations) as opposed to rights.

If you engage in labor justice work, familiarize yourself with the history of exploitation of indigenous labor in this country and consider ways in which your work for just workplaces may invisibilize the original inhabitants of the land your workplace occupies. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's "An Indigenous People's History of the United States" and Andrés Bessières' "The Other Slavery" are good places to start.

If you are involved in queer and trans organizing that isn't yet connected to two spirit/Native queer and trans perspectives and movements, learn from and build with queer and/or Two Spirit Native organizers, cultural workers and scholars. Learn the history of non-Native (particularly white) LGBTQ+ appropriation of indigenous alternative sexualities, genders and kinship structures. The article "Settler Homonationalism" by Scott Morgenson is a great place to start. Envision and enact queer and trans liberation that is anti/decolonial.

If you engage in food justice, or permaculture, herbalism, building alternative economies, and more broadly alternatives to capitalist institutions and modes of organizing reproduction and social life, familiarize yourself with the existing alternatives indigenous people have maintained through surviving, resisting, adapting and decolonizing. Consider the potential for connecting your work to questions of land and unsettling settler desire. As Scott Morgenson explores in the essay "Unsettling Settler Desire," the desire to replace Native peoples and inherit their land, lifeways, alternative economies, spiritualities, modes of kinship and sexuality runs deep in settler society and permeates various alternative and radical subcultures. These desires for connection to land and land-based practices are often seen as a much needed antidote to the disconnection inherent in settler society. If, however, these connections and practices aren't cultivated in relationship to indigenous peoples' struggles to maintain their connections, responsibilities and traditions, then the forms of connection settlers are fostering can replicate "settler desire" and further entrench colonialism.

For non-Native people, walking a path of decolonization is the work of envisioning and enacting reciprocal relationships. Through this we can be humbled. We hold discomfort, knowing it is part of our work and our process of rekindling our dignity and interconnectedness. We can work to stop violence and environmental degradation. We can organize to build our communities' capacity for self-determination, while struggling alongside indigenous communities as they maintain their responsibility to their homelands and future generations. We can shift entitlement and the normalizing of theft, as well as the narrative of "disappearing Indians" — the dominant colonial story that says indigenous peoples, lands and lifeways are inevitably disappearing as part of the natural passing of time. It is the narrative that relegates all things indigenous to the realm of history. We can move away from Western, colonial modes of existing as we restore traditional economies and modes of relating, community to community and nation to nation. Moving towards decolonization allows us to reckon with the violence of our collective inheritance and commit to healing, restoring and transforming our present, so as to ensure that we have a viable and liberatory future.



Excerpt from
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