UNABLE TO HEAR:

SETTLER IGNORANCE AND THE

CANADIAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Philosophy
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

September 2018

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Unable to Hear: Settler Ignorance and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Degree awarded September 2018.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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My dissertation provides an epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism in terms of settlers' disavowal of past and ongoing settler colonial violence. I seek to explain how settlers can fail to hear Indigenous testimonies in ways that disrupt structural inequality and challenge settler colonial legitimacy. This theoretical consideration of settler ignorance reveals how the elimination of Indigenous peoples requires the delegitimatization of Indigenous peoples as *knowers*. This insight is crucial in evaluating contemporary governmental apologies and truth commissions aimed at reconciliation. In particular, I focus on the epistemic assumptions that do not challenge what I call 'settler ignorance' and so do not transform settler nation-myths that disavow past and present settler colonialism. My epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism demonstrates how the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason, what I call their 'epistemic elimination,' is not accidental, but integral to the settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous presence.

Using this characterization of settler ignorance, I evaluate the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in terms of its ability to accomplish its mandate of "establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians. I conclude that the TRC fails on its own terms because it does not

challenge epistemic assumptions that prevent testimonies of residential school survivors to be heard as expressions of Indigenous refusal of settler authority. Without challenging these epistemic assumptions, testimonies cannot disrupt structural settler ignorance and so, cannot lead to meaningful reconciliation.

Meaningful reconciliation requires of settlers a reparative transformation of epistemic assumptions that work to maintain a structural ignorance of past and ongoing settler colonial violence. The goal of what I call 'reparative knowing' is both a personal one and a critical intervention into how settlers can become epistemically responsible agents. In the context of ongoing settler colonial violence, reparative knowing involves a troubling of settler common sense, and so, a disruption of structural settler ignorance. Without such an understanding of settler ignorance and reparative knowing, an investigation into the aims and transformations of settler colonialism would remain incomplete.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes a village to write a dissertation and I am so thankful to have such a supportive and caring village at the University of Oregon. I am so grateful to my advisor, Scott Pratt, for seeing my diverse research interests as a strength and for being a model of responsible pluralism. His support and reminders that everything is going to be ok have meant so much to me. I thank the members of my committee Rocío Zambrana, Lani Teves and Kirby Brown for their generous support of my project. I feel incredibly honored and humbled to have the opportunity to learn from them.

I am grateful for the Indigenous Philosophies Research Interest Group for providing an interdisciplinary community on campus, thanks to Lauren Eichler, Jon LaRochelle, April Anson, Briana Meier, Burke Hendrix and John O'Connor. My dissertation emerged from this place, from the relationships formed here and from the perspective that is gained by looking at one's home from the outside. I am grateful for relationships with this land (the trees in the cemetery, the rhododendrons in Hendricks park, and the birds along Pre's Trail in particular). I am not from this land (I am second-generation Canadian with family from Scotland and England), and yet I feel so grateful to have been a visitor here and beneficiary of this Kalapuya land, I can only hope that my presence here has been beneficial as well.

I am grateful for the financial support and recognition provided by the University of Oregon Graduate School's Margaret J. Wiese Graduate Research Award, the Oregon Humanities Center Graduate Support Fellow, and the Center for the Study of Women in Society's Graduate Student Research Grant. I thank the members of the Department of Philosophy for the teaching opportunities and mentorship. I thank my students for teaching me so much about humility and courage, and for reminding me why philosophy is important.

I could not have made it through without the support of my close friends who reminded me to breathe and taught me that different people are different. I could not have done this without you: Bonnie Sheehey, Shannon Hayes, Amie Zimmer, Sarah McLay, Rebekah Sinclair, Billy Dean Goehring, Jon LaRochelle, and many others. Our many talks about our monsters and radical self-care have sustained me. I also thank David-Alexandre Faber, Sophine Johnsson, Souad Martin-Saoudi, Glynn Rankin and Josée

For all my relatives.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF SETTLER IGNORANCE IN THE

CANADIAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

> I hate you residential school. I hate you.
>
> You're a monster
>
> A huge hungry monster.
>
> Built with steel bones. Built with cement flesh.
>
> You're a monster.
>
> Built to devour innocent Native children.
>
> — Excerpt of "Monster" by Dennis Saddleman[1]

A Note on Terminology

Practices of naming and self-naming are important. As a white settler Canadian

working in the field of Indigenous philosophy, deliberate practices of naming are all the

more important.[2] For the purposes of this project, I use 'Indigenous peoples' to refer to

the *Onkwehonwe* (original people) of what is now called Canada and what is now called

United States (Alfred 2009b, 181).[3] I use 'Indian' to refer to the legal term in Canada, for

example when referring to the Indian Act or as Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat use

the term to name American Indians. The term 'Aboriginal' has become the most common

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[1] Poet Dennis Saddleman spoke at the Commission about his experience at Kamloops Residential School in Edmonton.

[2] I am second-generation Canadian (with parents from England and Scotland) growing up in Kahnawà:ke Mohawk land (Montréal) and currently living in Kalapuya land (Eugene, OR).

[3] While my analysis emerges from an investigation of Canadian policies, my account of settler colonial epistemology is not limited to policies to Canada (but United States, Australia, Hawaii).

official term used in Canada to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people once adopted in the 1982 Constitution Act. As such, I use the term as it is used in governmental documents and use 'Native' or 'Indigenous' as a modifier when naming communities and nations.[4]

I use 'non-Indigenous' or 'non-Native' to name persons or communities who are not Indigenous to the place called Canada. More specifically, I draw on Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw Nation), Chelsea Vowel (Métis) and Sherene Razack's respective writings to more narrowly define who counts as a settler to Canada. Vowel specifies 'settler' as a term to refer to "the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority" (Vowel 2016, 16).[5] Razack's definition of white settler society similarly emphasizes the role of racial hierarchy in the establishment, and continued shaping, of settler colonialism (Razack 2002). Byrd, moreover, provides a new category, the arrivant, to complicate the usual binary of colonial settler and native. 'Arrivants,' which she borrows from poet Kamau Brathwaite names "people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe" (Byrd 2011, xix).[6] For the purposes of this project, I narrow my focus to the relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples. Unless specified, I use the term 'settler,' as Vowel does, to refer to non-Indigenous peoples

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[4] Audra Simpson highlights the importance of self-definition of Indigenous identity given the history of settler colonial violence through the management of membership rules through blood quantum rules (Simpson 2014).

[5] As Vowel points out, 'settler' is a relational term, rather than a racial category (Vowel 2016, 16).

[6] Similar to Byrd's term 'arrivant', Vowel uses to term 'non-Black people of color' to distinguish non-European-descended peoples who come to live in Canada from European-descended peoples who are able to access the social advantages of whiteness (Vowel 2016, 17).

living in Canada or the United States who form the sociopolitical majority. For this reason, 'white settler' and 'settler' are meant to be synonymous.[7] When I use Razack's term 'white settler,' I do so to explicitly draw attention to the intersection of settler colonialism and white supremacy, especially when this intersection has been undertheorized.

History of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Indian Residential Schools system has been referred to as "Canada's greatest national shame" (Stanton 2011, 1). Beginning in the 1880s, the Canadian government sought to assimilate Indigenous children by requiring, under the Indian Act of 1876, their attendance at church-run schools. The result was that 132 federally supported schools were set up in almost every province and territory and functioned for well over a century.[8] Most schools were operated as joint ventures with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, or United Churches.[9] Over 150,000 children were separated from their families and communities to be sent far away to schools where they were forbidden to speak their languages, practice their spirituality or express their cultures. Physical and sexual abuse were rampant and at least 6,000 children died while in the residential school system.[10]

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[7] Since 'settler' is not a racial term, it should not be understood as following a dualistic logic. Identities are much more intricate than our terms can sometimes allow.

[8] The last federally run facility, the Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan closed in 1997.

[9] 67 percent of schools run by the Roman Catholic Church, 20 percent by the Anglicans, 10 percent run by the United Church, 3 percent by the Presbyterian Church.

[10] Vowel 2016, 117.

Starting in 1990, the violence of residential schools entered the public

consciousness when Phil Fontaine, then Grand Chief of the Manitoba Assembly of

Chiefs, spoke about his experience of abuse suffered in residential school on national

television.[11] The same year Fontaine publicly spoke out about his experience, the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (hereafter RCAP) was formed in response to the Oka

Crisis.[12] The RCAP held public hearings across Canada, speaking to over 2,000 people

and commissioning over 350 research commissions. Its mandate was to develop a

research plan on four theme areas—governance; land and economy; social and cultural

issues; and the North. RCAP's final five-volume report was released in November 1996.

Its findings, in short, were that past and current governmental policies towards Aboriginal

peoples were "unethical," and that there is a need for a complete restructuring of the

relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.[13] The RCAP's

final report *People to People, Nation to Nation* sought to establish the foundations of a

fair and honorable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of

Canada. The report called for a new Royal Proclamation to require the government to

commit to a "new set of ethical principles that would acknowledge and respect

Aboriginal cultures and values, the historical origins of Aboriginal nationhood and the

inherent right to Aboriginal self-determination."[14]

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[11] Nagy 2014, 204.

[12] The Oka Crisis was a land dispute between Kahnawà:ke Mohawk nation and the Canadian town of Oka, Québec, which lasted 78 days in 1990.

[13] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996.

[14] The *Royal Proclamation of 1763* was a defining document in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in North America. Issued in the name of the king, the proclamation summarized the rules that were to govern British dealings with Aboriginal people—especially in relation to the question of land. The central messages of the proclamation are clear in its preamble: "Aboriginal people were not to be

The RCAP final report changes would have required constitutional change. The federal government's response to the RCAP report, *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan,* emphasized *non-constitutional* approaches to strengthening Aboriginal governance and established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) to manage a healing fund of $350 million with particular attention to the legacy of abuse in the residential schools system.[15] This led to the creation of the federal Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada tasked with managing and resolving the large number of abuse claims filed by survivors of residential schools.

These class-action lawsuits resulted in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA).[16] The IRSSA is an agreement between the government of Canada and the approximately 86,000 Native Canadians who were enrolled in residential schools. The Settlement Agreement came into effect September 19, 2007 and provided approximately $5 billion in compensation, commemoration, and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter TRC).[17]

'molested or disturbed' on their lands. Transactions involving Aboriginal land were to be negotiated properly between the Crown and 'assemblies of Indians.' Aboriginal lands were to be acquired only by fair dealing: treaty, or purchase by the Crown" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

[15] The RCMP set up a Native Residential School Task Force to investigate allegations of criminal abuse (Regan 2010, 8). By 2000, it had received 3,400 complaints.

[16] At the time of the Settlement Agreement, 14,903 survivors had filed claims against the government, making it the largest out-of-court settlement agreement in Canadian history. The IRSSA came in the shadow of the dissolution of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in 2005 that unsuccessfully settled thousands of residential school survivor lawsuits (Nagy 2012, 354).

[17] The five main components of the IRSSA are the Common Experience Payment (CEP), Independent Assessment Process (IAP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Commemoration, and Health and Healing Services. The monetary repayment ($10,000 for the first school year the survivor attended, and an additional $3,000 for each subsequent school year) has been met with mixed reaction. The repayment process has been criticized by some students whose compensation claims were denied, while others report that the payment was important to them as tangible recognition of the systemic harms they suffered at the schools.

The TRC has had the stated purpose of promoting public awareness about the residential school system and educating Canadians about the 150-year history of residential schools, rather than bringing about legal reparations.[18] As part of the truth-telling and reconciliation process, there have been seven national events across Canada (Winnipeg in 2010, Inuvik in 2011, Halifax in 2011, Saskatoon in 2012, Montréal and Vancouver in 2013, and Edmonton in 2014) that aimed to engage and educate the Canadian public about the history of the residential school system through personal testimony from survivors, governmental officials, and church officials. Crucially, the TRC does not have powers of subpoena and "shall not name names unless the person has been already convicted" (Nagy 2014, 215).

The TRC's final report *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* was published in June 2015 at the National Closing Event held in Ottawa. The report affirms that for over a century "the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 1). The report names the establishment and operation of Indian Residential Schools system as "cultural genocide," under Article 2(e) of the UN's Convention on Genocide defined as "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a

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[18] John Milloy, the former Research Director of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has been openly critical of the process—"The design of the Commission, even before Commissioners were selected, was naively careless—its mandate too large, its time frame too short (and there is really no advantage in being an unset organization) and its budget, which I hazard was "picked out of the air," has proven wholly inadequate" (Milloy 2013, 13). After the initial TRC chair quit, the Commission was chaired by Justice Murray Sinclair, chief Wilson Littlechild and Marie Wilson (Regan 2010, 8).

group" (2015, 3). The report is accompanied by Calls to Action to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation" (*Calls to Action* 2012). These ninety-four calls for action include concrete steps that can be taken by the governments of Canada, Indigenous peoples, churches, educators, the business sector, civil society organizations and others. The calls include subsections pertaining to child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice.

The Canadian TRC was particular in many ways. Truth commissions have most often been established in countries making the transition to more democratic politics such as in South Africa, Chile, El Salvador, and Argentina. For this reason, the establishment of a truth commission in a stable Western democracy such as Canada was an unusual occurrence.[19] Furthermore, the Canadian TRC was the first truth commission to be established as part of a judicially supervised negotiated agreement, rather than by executive order.[20]

The creation of the TRC has been met with a fair amount of criticism from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Paulette Regan and John Milloy have focused on the implications of a model of reconciliation that is grounded in a public confession that performs a form of voyeurism for a mostly settler audience (Milloy 2013, Regan 2010); Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk) has argued that the absence of significant material changes and the restitution of tribal lands means that talk of reconciliation is empty rhetoric (Alfred 2009a); and Rosemary Nagy and Glen Sean Coulthard

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[19] Paulette Regan also notes that the Canadian TRC is the only commission that focuses on Indigenous peoples and on the historical experience of children (Regan 2010, 8).

[20] Rosemary Nagy traces the origin of the TRC as a hybrid model between a judicially-based public inquiry and a truth commission (Nagy 2014).

(Yellowknives Dene) have respectively pointed out how the TRC positions the ills of colonialism strictly in the past and thus denies the realities of an ongoing settler colonial present (Nagy 2013; Coulthard 2014).

While truth commissions provide a public platform to share survivors' experiences, the reconciliatory potential of truth commissions rests, however, on how these personal testimonies are *heard*. In other words, if truth commissions are about giving *voice* to survivors, they should be evaluated in terms of how these testimonies are heard. At issue here is that the way settlers hear the voices of residential school survivors can either maintain a historical amnesia about past and ongoing colonial violence, or effectively disturb what Alfred calls, "the benevolent peacemaker myth that forms the basis of settler identity" (Alfred in Regan 2010, ix). In this vein, Paulette Regan, the Research Director of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, notes that the Canadian TRC "provides a rare opportunity for non-Native Canadians to undertake a deeply critical reflective re-examination of history and themselves" (Regan 2010, 8). I contend, in turn, that the TRC provides a rare opportunity to consider what structures and discourses prevent testimonies from Indigenous peoples from being heard in a way that would transform settler history and settler identity.

In my dissertation, I argue that settler colonialism produces a form of structural ignorance. I draw from settler colonial studies, Native feminisms and social epistemology in order to articulate a novel theoretical framework of settler ignorance, which maintains a denial of past and ongoing settler colonialism by depicting Indigenous peoples as irrational and stuck in a fixed past. This project weaves together Native and Western

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traditions of knowledge in order to expose a settler colonial epistemology that undermines claims to Indigenous self-determination.

Using this characterization of settler ignorance, I evaluate the Canadian TRC to show its limitations in addressing settler ignorance and affirm that, without challenging its epistemic assumptions, the Commission merely performs the settler colonial myth of the "benevolent settler." The Canadian TRC offers a particularly fruitful occasion to consider how settlers hear the testimonies of Indigenous peoples and exemplifies how settler ignorance is maintained in the face of testimonies of past and ongoing settler colonial violence.

My dissertation provides an epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism in terms of settlers' disavowal of past and ongoing settler colonial violence. I seek to explain how settlers can fail to hear Indigenous testimonies in ways that disrupt structural inequality and challenge settler colonial legitimacy. This theoretical consideration of settler ignorance reveals how the elimination of Indigenous peoples requires the delegitimatization of Indigenous peoples as *knowers*. This insight is crucial in evaluating contemporary governmental apologies and truth commissions aimed at reconciliation. As such, my dissertation provides a critical examination of the TRC in terms of how it frames testimonies of residential school survivors. In particular, I focus on the epistemic assumptions that do not challenge what I call 'settler ignorance,' and so do not transform settler nation-myths that disavow past and present settler colonialism.

My epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism demonstrates how the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason, what I call their 'epistemic elimination,' is not accidental, but integral to the settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous

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presence. This epistemic evaluation informs my evaluation of TRC in terms of its ability to accomplish its mandate of "establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future" between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians (*Honouring our Truth* 2015, 339). I conclude that the TRC fails on its own terms because it does not challenge epistemic assumptions that prevent testimonies of residential school survivors to be heard as expressions of Indigenous refusal of settler authority. Without challenging these epistemic assumptions, testimonies cannot disrupt structural settler ignorance and so, cannot lead to meaningful reconciliation.

Meaningful reconciliation requires of settlers a reparative transformation of epistemic assumptions that work to maintain a structural ignorance of past and ongoing settler colonial violence. The goal of what I call 'reparative knowing' is both a personal one and a critical intervention into how settlers can become epistemically responsible agents. In the context of ongoing settler colonial violence, reparative knowing involves a troubling of settler common sense and a disruption of structural settler ignorance. While my theoretical framework emerges from an engagement with the Canadian TRC, I claim that settler ignorance is fundamental to the aims of settler colonialism whose scope exceeds a Canadian context. Settler colonialism produces structural ignorance as one of its effects. Without such an understanding of settler ignorance and reparative knowing, an investigation into the aims and transformations of settler colonialism would remain incomplete.[21]

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[21] This diagnostic explanation of settler ignorance speaks to settlers' lack of acknowledgement and respect in different settler colonial contexts. This thus applies to questions of land repatriation, sovereignty, pipelines, welfare abuses and disproportionate incarceration rates.

Chapter Overview

My second chapter, "Truth, Reconciliation, and Recognition" demonstrates how a politics of recognition fails to transform relationships between Indigenous and settler Canadians not only because it enacts an internalization of colonial recognition, but because it fails to account for structural ignorance. The TRC both shows how politics of recognition concretely manifests, and fails, in a settler colonial context. I first show the role of recognition in Canadian governmental policies whereby the state recognizes the cultural distinctness of Indigenous peoples as a group in Canada and consider its limitations. The model of recognition fails to appropriately characterize the harm of settler colonialism in terms of the seizure of land and a loss of self-determination. The TRC provides a concrete example of how a politics of recognition in settler colonial context functions, showing its limitations in addressing the structural violence of settler colonialism. This chapter presents the limitations of a recognition-model of reconciliation in three ways: (i) recognition's inability to speak to structural inequality; (ii) its narrow definition of recognition in terms of culture; (iii) and its internalization of colonial recognition.

While I agree that a politics of recognition is inadequate in transforming settler colonial relations, I extend Glen Sean Coulthard's critical intervention by framing these limitations in terms of settler ignorance. A politics of recognition fails to transform relationships between Indigenous and settler Canadians not only because it enacts an internalization of colonial recognition, but because it fails to account for the denial of settler colonialism. I argue, with Kevin Bruyneel, that this disavowal does not emerge from a *lack* of information, but rather emerges from a particular kind of knowing that

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undermines the testimony of Indigenous peoples. The TRC assumes that the testimonies will be heard in a politically meaningful way. I am critical of this assumption, and in response, this chapter argues that a liberal politics of recognition cannot challenge this disavowal since its characterization of social oppression is predicated upon a denial of settler colonialism.

My third chapter, "Settler Colonial Epistemology," contends that the devaluation of Indigenous peoples as knowers is *integral* to the settler colonial project. I draw on Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini's characterization of the underlying aims of settler colonialism as a logic of elimination (as opposed to colonialism's logic of exploitation) that both seeks to eliminate Indigenous peoples and desires its very own extinction. The aim of eliminating Indigenous presence takes the form of statistical elimination, elimination through settler nation-building myths, as well as what I call an "epistemic elimination." The latter eliminates Indigenous peoples as a group from the realm of reason.

An epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism explains the assumptions that justify the settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous peoples in order to seize land. This comes to form what I call a *settler colonial epistemology*. Crucially, settler colonial epistemology has a specific understanding of land as property. John Locke's political theory epitomizes the dominant model of Western rationality in which *rational* relationships to land are relationships of ownership and cultivation. According to a settler colonial epistemology, the rational understanding of land is as inert matter to be owned and cultivated. According to a settler colonial epistemology, Indigenous relations to the land are seen as irrational and primitive. As such, settler colonial epistemology justifies

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land dispossession by eliminating Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. The epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples explains the justification for both the characterization of a populated North American continent as belonging to no one (*terra nullius*) and the governmental policies of US boarding schools and Canada's residential school policy.

My fourth chapter, "Settler Ignorance," expands upon my third chapter to provide an original description of settler colonialism as an epistemology of ignorance. Settler colonial epistemology justifies ongoing ignorance and denial of a settler colonial past and present. Settler ignorance is not a lack of knowing, but a particular kind of knowing and remembering. This chapter engages with recent developments in social epistemology that aim to identify different forms of ignorance and examine how ignorance is produced and sustained. In particular, I draw on Charles Mills' work on white ignorance, which he tells us, cultivates collective amnesia about the past that undermines the testimony and credibility of nonwhite people.

I argue, however, that Mills' account of white ignorance should be expanded to a consideration of *white settler* ignorance. I broaden an account of racial ignorance to include the particular epistemic structures of settler colonialism. This characterization of settler ignorance shows that the denial of past and ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples, through the reconstruction of the past to assert the primacy of settlers, is not explainable in terms of a lack of access to resources for knowledge and information but is rather a *structural* ignorance. This structural ignorance functions to discredit Indigenous speakers by hearing emotional testimonies as (i) an expression of *past* wrongs and (ii) evidence of individual pathology. This structural ignorance is invisible to itself and

exempts itself from critique. It is for this reason that Indigenous voices are necessary in order to expose these epistemic structures.

My fifth chapter, "Settler Hearing and the TRC," provides an ethical evaluation of the Canadian TRC in light of structural settler ignorance. This evaluation shows how settler colonial epistemic assumptions limit the possibility for meaningful reconciliation. The confessional-model of the TRC comes to form what I call 'settler hearing,' a kind of paranoid hearing that *confirms* settler authority in which the hearer is not open to surprising or unsettling communication. Settler hearing is a concrete manifestation of structural settler ignorance. I characterize settler hearing in TRC in terms of three features: (i) its mandate's presumption that the sharing of testimony can and will reconcile relationships; (ii) the creation of a template for acceptable testimonies; and (iii) its isolation from structural settler colonial violence.

Insofar as the TRC performs a settler hearing, it fails in terms of both its own mandate of "establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between settler Canadians and Indigenous communities, as well as its ability to assuage the ethical loneliness of residential school survivors. In order to address the ethical loneliness of residential school survivors, settlers must develop a kind of 'reparative hearing' whereby the voices of residential school survivors are heard as an expression of ongoing Indigenous self-determination and agency such that these voices testify to the ongoing failure of the settler colonial project of elimination.

My final chapter, "Unsettling Settler Ignorance," proposes practices to challenge structural settler ignorance. These are practices of reparative knowing that show what meaningful reconciliation requires on the part of settlers. Against the TRC's framing of

reconciliation as something that has a single fixed meaning, I contend that reconciliation comes to require different practices for Indigenous communities than for settlers. With this in mind, I present two possible definitions of reconciliation that go beyond the TRC—reconciliation as refusal and resurgence, and reconciliation as reparation. The account of reconciliation as refusal and resurgence showcases practices of cultivating Indigenous self-determination *within* Indigenous communities and outside the confine of recognition from the settler Canadian government. The account of reconciliation as reparation proposes practices aimed at settlers to recognize their very own settler identity and its implications in order to bear ethical witness to past and ongoing settler colonial violence. This form of reconciliation requires that settlers take up practices of reparative knowing whereby they cultivate an epistemic responsibility characterized by humility, curiosity and open-mindedness.

In the context of ongoing settler colonial violence, reparative knowing involves a critical transformation of settler ignorance. This transformation must be predicated upon a rejection of the "placelessness" of Western epistemology, which justifies land dispossession through the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples as credible knowers. For this reason, I conclude with a proposal for unsettling settler ignorance that is rooted in Indigenous land-based education.

CHAPTER II

TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, AND RECOGNITION

I think all Canadians need to stop and take a look and not look away.

Yeah, it's embarrassing, yeah, it's an ugly part of our history.

We don't want to know about it. What I want to see from the Commission is to rewrite the

history books so that other generations will understand and not go through the same

thing that we're going through now, like it never happened.

Daniel Elliot, descendant of survivors[22]

Introduction

The language of recognition has become a dominant framework to discuss

political struggles. In particular, Glen Sean Coulthard notes that Indigenous self-

determination efforts in Canada have been couched in terms of recognition.[23] The TRC,

in particular, is immersed in this recognition-talk insofar as it seeks to provide an

opportunity for survivors to have their experiences recognized. Recognition of shared

experience fulfills the state's legal responsibility of the IRSSA. The TRC invites

survivors of residential schools to share their personal narratives under the assumption

that this will inform the Canadian public of the residential school legacy and will

motivate a transformation of settler identity. In this respect, the TRC proposes a model of

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[22] *Honouring the Truth* 2015, 13.

[23] Coulthard cites the 2005 policy position issued by Canada's largest Aboriginal organization, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), in which self-determination is defined "around a vision of the relationship between First Nations and Canada which would lead to strengthening recognition and implementation of First Nations' governments" (Coulthard 2007, 438).

reconciliation based on the sharing of personal testimony. According to this view, in order for there to be reconciliation, there must be recognition of the experiences of survivors of residential schools. The problem is a lack of information, a lack of recognition, and so the remedy is more information, more recognition.

As such, the TRC's underlying epistemic claim is that a collection of facts and testimonies can and will reconcile relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians. It assumes that settler Canadians simply need to hear testimonies of residential school survivors in order to challenge our historical amnesia about the role residential schools have played in the creation of the settler colonial nation-state now called Canada.

The TRC implies that truth-telling, through the recognition of survivors' experiences, can lead to reconciliation. The name of the commission, at the very least, suggests that truth-telling is first required in order to achieve reconciliation. What reconciliation means, however, remains murky and tenuous.[24] The final report notes the amorphous definition of reconciliation throughout the truth-telling events, yet officially defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 13). The TRC implicitly affirms that truth-telling is intimately related to reconciliation and that reconciliation must occur through state recognition.[25]

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[24] Dale Turner sees the definition of reconciliation in the TRC as follows: The action of restoring estranged people or parties to friendship; the result of this; the fact of being reconciled (Turner 2011). Reconciliation will emerge as a central concept in chapter 6.

[25] "There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued

This chapter considers the relationship between recognition and reconciliation and uses the TRC as a concrete example of a liberal politics of recognition that seeks reconciliation through the recognition of Indigenous peoples as a distinct cultural group in Canada. I conclude that the liberal model of recognition fails to address structural settler colonial violence and, as such, cannot provide the conditions for voices of residential school survivors to be heard in a meaningful way. I begin by contextualizing the politics of recognition as a guiding political theory in addressing political struggles in multicultural liberal democracies. I then examine the limitations of this model in terms of (i) the narrowing of recognition to *cultural* recognition and (ii) the overshadowing of structural and economic features of social oppression. I go on to show how these limitations of liberal model of recognition are all the more visible and damaging in a settler colonial context. In particular, I extend Coulthard's critique that recognition leads to internalized colonial identification by framing these limitations in terms of recognition's misdiagnosis of settler colonial violence. The model of recognition fails to appropriately characterize the harm of settler colonialism in terms of the seizure of land and a loss of self-determination, defined as "the right of a people to govern themselves by their own laws and exercise jurisdiction over their territories" (Tully 2000a, 57).[26]

The limitations of a liberal model of recognition play out in the TRC in the particular way that it assumes that the cause of settlers' historical amnesia is a lack of

healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 339).

[26] I will return to the question of Indigenous self-determination in chapter 6. James Tully writes, "the right of self-determination is, on any plausible account of its contested criteria, the right of a people to govern themselves by their own laws and exercise jurisdiction over their territories" (Tully 2000a, 57).

information that can be rectified by testimony. The mischaracterization of the harms of

settler colonialism leads to a fundamental misunderstanding of settler Canadians'

obliviousness about residential schools as a case of an innocent lack of knowledge.

Drawing on Kevin Bruyneel's account of settler memory, I show how settlers' historical

amnesia about residential schools is not a lack of memory but a particular kind of

remembering that upholds settler colonial power. Given recognition's misdiagnosis of

both the source of settler colonial violence and settlers' historical amnesia, I affirm that

the model of recognition cannot identify a continued disavowal of settler colonialism. For

this reason, I conclude that a liberal politics of recognition cannot challenge this

disavowal since its characterization of social oppression is predicated upon a denial of

settler colonialism.

Politics of Recognition

The motif of recognition as a normative goal of political struggle is situated

within a variety of philosophical traditions and debates. It is not clear *what* exactly

recognition means or looks like. As Nancy Fraser puts it, "is recognition really a matter

of justice, or is it a matter of self-realization?" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 27). In other

words, are political struggles in a liberal multicultural context primarily focused on

identity or on justice? While recognition emerges as a central theme in many

philosophical contexts and traditions, for the purposes of this project, I primarily frame

recognition as it pertains to critical interventions to liberal political theory.[27] Within

liberal political thought, the motif of recognition arises in the liberal-communitarian

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[27] The motif of recognition first emerges in the critical theory tradition in Hobbes and Rousseau.

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debate that emerges in response to John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971). It is a debate

about the nature of the self and the role of political institutions to promote the flourishing

of the self. The terms of this debate stem from Kant and Hegel's respective definitions of

freedom and self-determination. Kant's emphasis on the respect for the equal dignity of

autonomous beings gets articulated in the liberal position, whereas Hegel's recognition

model of identity comes to form the basis of the communitarian position.[28]

In the modern articulation of this debate, though, the concern for recognition

emerges from the defense of minority cultural groups in a multicultural context. Rawlsian

Kantian liberalism affirms that a just society is one that does not promote particular ends

but enables citizens to pursue their own values and ends. Liberalism expounds a theory of

justice in relation to the distribution of goods conforming to a concept of justice as

fairness (Rawls 1971). Justice is limited to the distribution of goods. Liberalism seeks to

provide the framework for individuals to pursue their own values and ends, and as such,

it posits a constitutive principle of equality, which requires official neutrality on

conceptions of the good life (Dworkin 1978).

Early critics of Rawls, such as Sandel (1981) and MacIntyre (1984), contest the

Rawlsian description of individuals as solitary, autonomous rational holders of desires

and beliefs, and propose, in response, a model of the self as socially and culturally

embedded, and fundamentally "encumbered" (Sandel 1984). Rawls' theory of justice as

fairness aims to decontextualize questions of identity through his thought experiment of

the original position with its veil of ignorance, whereby citizens are abstractly defined as

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[28] Hegel rejects the atomism of Kant's position whereby ethical acts arise from the exercise of reason. For
Hegel, freedom and the self do not arise from introspection, but from intersubjective recognition. As such,
rights are *concretely* actualized through the intersubjective recognition of freedom (Honneth 1995, 11-17).

equally rationally and mutually disinterested. Sandel characterizes Rawls' original position as a variation of Kant's transcendental argument in providing the foundation for the right that is prior to the good (Sandel 1984, 85). This argument, however, presupposes a picture of the self as an "unencumbered self" in which the self is an ideally free rational agent whose identity is prior to its aims and interests (1984, 86).[29] Sandel and MacIntyre contest the very viability of this unencumbered self, turning to Aristotle and Hegel to articulate the importance of cultural membership in the comprehension of virtues and the creation of identity.

The critiques of traditional liberalism's individualism and neutrality of the conception of the good life are further developed within debates about multiculturalism. Liberal neutrality seems at odds with the aims of multiculturalism, which is explicitly aimed at a particular conception of the good life, namely membership in an ethno-cultural group.[30] The questions of *cultural* diversity arose within the political context of political struggles by Indigenous peoples, national minorities, and immigrants in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Laden and Owen 2007). In practice, this involves answering the question of what negotiations are necessary to ensure the flourishing of individuals in different cultural contexts. As a result of these political struggles, a *politics* of multiculturalism emerges with an emphasis on recognition. Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka and James Tully theorize the question of recognition as it pertains to the defense of minority rights within a specifically Canadian context. Their central goal is to

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[29] Seyla Benhabib argues that Hobbes' definition of men as "sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity" characterizes the ideal of the autonomous man (Benhabib 1986, 156).

[30] Laden and Owen suggest that a Rawlsian framework has led to "a number of idealizing assumptions such as the closed character of the polity […] and its cultural homogeneity," which in turn have led to a relative disengagement with issues of cultural diversity within liberal political thought (Laden and Owen 2007, 5).

articulate the importance of the recognition of cultural identities in a multicultural liberal democracy in a way that extends the communitarian argument for the centrality of community membership. At issue in their respective discussions is whether minority rights can be defended within a liberal framework of individual rights and state neutrality, or whether attention to recognition exceeds the confines of liberalism.

Most contemporary work on recognition as a normative framework for political movements developed in response to Charles Taylor's article "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition." In his article, Taylor traces the development of recognition as a normative category from the advent of individualized identity and the ideal of authenticity that emerged with the collapse of social hierarchy in the beginning of the 18th century.[31] This collapse led to the idea of individualized identity and authenticity as inwardly generated. As a result, recognition became fundamentally linked to self-identity and an "understanding of who we are, of our fundamental defining characteristics" (Taylor 1994, 25). For Taylor, recognition is fundamentally about identity.

The political implications of a recognition model of identity, however, are many. Taylor describes how the politics of recognition, which is based on the principle of equal respect, has come to mean two different things in the public sphere: the politics of equal dignity, "which emphasizes the dignity of all citizens and thus argues for the equalization of rights and entitlements" (1994, 37); and the politics of difference, "which emphasizes the unique identity of an individual or a group in terms of their distinctness from everyone else" (1994, 39). These two modes of politics, both based on the notion of equal

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[31] This collapse saw the rejection the notion of honor, which was intrinsically linked to inequality and preferences, in favor of the modern notion of dignity, which is defined "in a universalist and egalitarian sense" (Taylor 1994, 27).

respect, come into conflict—the principle of equal respect requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion by focusing on what is the same in individuals, while the principle of equal respect requires that we recognize, and even foster, particularity (1994, 43). On each other's terms, they violate the principle of equal respect: the politics of difference violates the principle of non-discrimination and the politics of equal dignity negates identity by forcing people into a homogenous mold that is untrue to their particular authentic identity.

Taylor's politics of recognition distinguishes itself from the liberal principle of equality and the principle of dignity. Drawing on Rousseau, Herder and Hegel, Taylor's politics of recognition rests on a holist ontology in which the self arises dialogically through reciprocal recognition of oneself as separate and equal. As a result, the social relation of recognition is prior to the individual and intersubjectivity is prior to subjectivity. In other words, you cannot be yourself unless you are recognized by another self. For this reason, Taylor characterizes recognition as a "vital human need," such that nonrecognition or misrecognition is "a form of oppression by inflicting crippling self-hatred" (1994, 26). Since recognition is vital to subjectivity, the absence of recognition, is profoundly damaging. For Taylor, recognition is required on both the intimate plane for acknowledgement of an original identity and on the social plane for a healthy democratic society.[32]

Taylor, ultimately, upholds a version of a politics of difference by arguing that a

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[32] This recalls Hegel's description of the master-slave dialectic specifies the need for mutual *intersubjective* recognition in *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the need for contractual recognition within civil society and solidarity within the state in *Philosophy of Right*. Axel Honneth's model of recognition similarly extorts the sociality of Spirit (Honneth 2014).

politics of recognition must accommodate value pluralism and support the survival of

minority cultural groups. Individual identity does not occur in isolation, but is formed

through "dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us"

(1991, 45-46). Cultural communication is the horizon for individuals to develop their

identities. One of his examples is the recognition of Québécois culture as distinct within

Canadian culture. The preservation of Québécois culture violates state neutrality insofar

as it posits its survival and flourishing as a social good. For example, Taylor's defense of

language policies (Bill 101, for example)[33] that promote the survival of French language

that is crucial to Québécois culture violates liberalism's principle of equal respect insofar

as it posits a vision of the good life.[34] His other example is the accommodation of claims

by First Nations to "preserve their cultural integrity" in order to realize their status as

"distinct and self-determining actors" (1994, 40). As such, Taylor characterizes the ills of

settler colonialism in terms of the preservation of cultural integrity. The lack of

recognition (or misrecognition) of Indigenous culture is the form of violence that a

politics of recognition seeks to redress. As I show in the final section, this

characterization of settler colonial violence is both too narrow and leaves out questions of

political self-determination and land dispossession in such a way that signals

recognition's failure to bring about meaningful reconciliation.

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[33] The Charter of the French Language, known as Bill 101, is a 1977 law in Québec (with subsequent amendments) that makes "French the language of Government and the Law, as well as the normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business" (Éditeur officiel du Québec 2018).

[34] For this reason, he has been characterized as a communitarian along with Michael Walzer (Tully 1995, 44). Walzer also critiques the abstraction of Rawlsian liberalism and argues that political theory must arise from the context of people's lived realities (Walzer 1983). Michael Sandel outlines the communitarian position in "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" (Sandel 1984).

The concern with cultural recognition within Canada's liberal policy of

multiculturalism gets articulated differently in Will Kymlicka's work. Kymlicka, on the

other hand, develops a defense of "group-differentiated rights" within a *liberal* model of

autonomy (Kymlicka 1995). Although Kymlicka characterizes group membership as a

requirement for the development of autonomy, he does not characterize cultural identity

as an intrinsic good, as Taylor does, but as an instrumental good in attaining individual

autonomy. In this respect, Kymlicka is neither a communitarian who views a person's

cultural community as determining the conception of the good, nor a cosmopolitan who

affirms that an individual can flourish without a membership in a single ethno-cultural

group (see Waldron 1995).[35] Alternatively, Kymlicka is committed to defending minority

rights within a liberal framework that prioritizes individual autonomy and state neutrality.

His position can be placed between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism—he

considers cultural membership to be "an unchosen value" like a communitarian and he

values free individual choice about conceptions of the good like a cosmopolitan.

Kymlicka insists that the exercise of free choice is possible only within a cultural context

that fosters autonomy (Kymlicka 1995, 85). He characterizes cultures as the "contexts of

choice" for individuals that provide meaningful and intelligible options from which

people can frame their goals (1995, 89).[36] In this way, Kymlicka articulates a liberal

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[35] The cosmopolitan argument is critical that a communitarian defense of culture maintains a crystalized version of a dynamic culture that limits its ability to adapt. Jeremy Waldron goes on to make the stronger claim that a cosmopolitan lifestyle is the only *authentic* response to a modern world. He describes the cosmopolitan as someone who "refuses to think of himself as *defined* by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language" (Waldron 1995, 95).

[36] Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism resonates with Joseph Raz's claim that the development of personal autonomy and freedom depends on cultural membership. He defines personal freedom as the freedom to choose from culturally defined options (Raz 1994, 161). Liberal multiculturalism emphasizes value pluralism as well as the belief that individual freedom relies on "full and unimpeded membership in a respected and flourishing cultural group" (1994, 159). Kymlicka expands on Raz's theory of liberal

multiculturalist position for the preservation of societal culture[37] that remains loyal to the liberal value of individual freedom.[38] For this reason, he affirms that national minorities and Indigenous peoples should have control over education as well as other aspects of their cultural and political life.[39]

Moving beyond the communitarian-liberal impasse, James Tully articulates an account of recognition that engages with Indigenous models of constitutionalism that reject the norm of uniformity. In this vein, he proposes a dynamic model of recognition whereby recognition is not overdetermined but is the result of negotiation and agreement among the group demanding recognition. In other words, recognition is a process of compromise and negotiation within the group, as well as between the group and other members of society. It is for this reason that Tully characterizes recognition not as a 'dialogue' but as a complex 'multilogue' that is inevitably unstable and always

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multiculturalism and furthers the connection between identity and cultural membership in *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Kymlicka 1989).

[37] A "societal culture" is synonymous with 'a nation' or 'a people' – "that is, an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. A state is multicultural if its members either belong to different nations (a multi-nation state) or have migrated from different nations (a polyethnic state), and if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life" (Kymlicka 1995, 18).

[38] Seyla Benhabib similarly contends that liberalism can provide a framework to work through the recognition of culture. She resists, however, both Taylor and Kymlicka's respective claims for recognition on the basis of the *preservation* of culture and puts forward a claim for recognition on the basis of the conception of cultures and identities as "essentially contested and internally riven narratives" rather than as static entities (Benhabib 2002, xi). For her, cultural identification is constituted by "a series of interlocking, fluid, and often competing strands of signification and argumentation" (2006, 385). For example, "to be a Catholic" is "to know and to identify with some strands of collective narrative through which the past is accounted for and the future anticipated" (2006, 385). Benhabib argues that cultural diversity is compatible with democratic equality only if three normative conditions are met: egalitarian reciprocity, voluntary self-ascription, and the freedom of exit and association (2002, 19). Under this model, claims for recognition must be articulated within the framework of deliberative democracy (by meeting the three conditions), and with an understanding that cultural identity is both porous and negotiable.

[39] See Moore 2003.

incomplete (Tully 2000b, 475). Crucially, he acknowledges that recognition demands cannot be made on the ground of a stable and fixed group identity. Group identity is the result of dialogue and negotiation, such that "any formal recognition at best will be a codification of the state of process of identity negotiation at a particular time, a reification of a moment of the more primary activities" (2000b, 477). For this reason, he suggests that the struggles for recognition are better understood as struggles for 'disclosure' or 'acknowledgment' (2000b, 479). Recognition is a form of democratic participation that demands political freedom to negotiate the rules according to which group members recognize one another. Recognition is more than simply a matter of a fixed and stable identity, but a matter of group identity in flux that arises through negotiation and struggle.

Talk of recognition has not been limited, however, to discussions internal to liberal political theory, but has also been an important framework in social critical theory. Axel Honneth, for one, echoes Taylor's characterization of recognition as a necessary condition for attaining full undistorted subjectivity. In this respect, both Taylor and Honneth articulate the harm of misrecognition in ethical terms—misrecognition stunts the subject's capacity for achieving a good life.[40] According to this identitarian account of recognition, there is a kernel of authentic identity that must be fully developed through the process of recognition in order to be an agent. Furthermore, Honneth contends that

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[40] Honneth provides a twofold understanding of recognition as both the basic intersubjective structure of individuation and the normative direction of social development. Drawing on Hegel's intersubjective model of identity and G. H. Mead's pragmatist social psychology, Honneth identifies the need for recognition within three principal spheres of social interaction: love, rights, and esteem (Honneth 1995). Following the object relations theory of Donald Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin, Honneth presents the first affective recognition of parent-child as the "structural core of all ethical life" which makes autonomous participation in public life possible (1995, 107). The legal form of recognition in the form of rights and the status recognition of social esteem as a unique person are further generalizations of this primary affective recognition.

the conceptual framework of recognition is the "appropriate tool for categorically unlocking social experiences of injustice as a whole" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 133). For Honneth, social oppression lies in the disrespect and psychic harm of misrecognition. As a result, the recognition model of struggle provides a "semantic bridge" between personal experience of injustice and impersonal institutionalization of legal and status recognition (Honneth 1995, 163). Moreover, Honneth's account of the struggle of recognition implies a *telos* to modern social development that parallels human development following a normatively guided recognition order.[41]

While Taylor, Kymlicka, Tully, and Honneth differ on the relationship between recognition and autonomy, they all propose variants of an identitarian model of recognition, which frames misrecognition as a harm for one's identity (and so individual autonomy and flourishing). While cultural representation is important, critics of politics of recognition worry that an emphasis on cultural recognition might overshadow other forms of social oppression, namely ones of material distribution and structural power inequality. For this reason, the following section considers critiques that an identitarian model of recognition often mischaracterizes the source of social oppression.

Limitations to Recognition

Politics of recognition raises questions about the relationship between identity and cultural membership. A consideration of how social power complicates this relationship, however, reveals some limitations of a politics of recognition. In the following section, I

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[41] Honneth names social, institutional spheres of care, respect and esteem in *Freedom's Right* (Honneth 2014).

raise two interrelated limitations of a liberal politics of recognition: the narrowing of

recognition to *cultural* recognition and the overshadowing of structural and economic

features of social oppression.

In her debate with Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser argues that in recent years,

identity politics have overshadowed the demand for economic redistribution.[42] She

contends that the move to recognition, and away from redistribution, has focused on the

cultural realm of social oppression at the expense of a providing a critique of economic

structures. Understood in the cultural and political domain, misrecognition occurs when

one belongs to a cultural group that is devalued by the dominant culture. As such,

misrecognition is repaired by "contesting the dominant culture's demeaning picture of the

group" and replaced by "new self-representations of their own making" (Fraser 2000,

109-110). She names two problems that arise from the move from redistribution to

recognition—the problem of displacement and the problem of reification. The former

displaces considerations of redistribution by narrowly characterizing misrecognition "as a

free-standing cultural harm" at the expense of considering institutionalized economic

inequality (2000, 110). The latter reifies identity insofar as collective identity claims

require "an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated" identity (2000, 112). This, in

turn, imposes "a single, drastically simplified group identity which denies the complexity

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[42] According to redistribution, classes or class-like collectivities suffer socio-economic injustice when they are unjustly differentiated, such that justice requires economic restructuring (Fraser 2003, 12-14). According to the identity model of recognition, Weberian status groups, who are differentiated either prior to, or as a result of, cultural hierarchical valuation, suffer cultural injustice rooted in social patterns of representation, such that justice requires cultural or symbolic change (2003, 12-14). Fraser argues that the antithesis of recognition and redistribution is a false one, and she proposes a two-dimensional social differentia. Gender injustice, properly understood as both a case of maldistribution and misrecognition, can only be remedied by an approach that encompasses both politics of redistribution and politics of recognition (2003, 15). This 2-dimensional conception of justice treats distribution and recognition as "distinct perspectives on and dimensions of justice" (2003, 35).

of people's lives" (2000, 112).[43]

For Fraser, the ills of misrecognition should not be framed in terms of the distortion of identity, but in terms of social subordination.[44] Recognition must be a matter of justice, rather than one of identity. The normative core of her status model of recognition is parity participation, which requires "all adult members of society to interact with one another as peers" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 36). This definition of justice has an objective condition—the "distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and 'voice'"—as well as an intersubjective condition—the institutionalization of patterns of cultural value that "express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem" (2003, 36). The aim of recognition is to overcome subordination by challenging institutionalized "patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it" (2003, 30). In other words, the struggle for recognition as the struggle for social status is a "remedy for social injustice, not the satisfaction of a generic human need" (2003, 45). The status model of recognition pertains to both socially entrenched patterns of cultural value and to the economic structure of society. That is to say, the status model of recognition requires a politics of redistribution insofar as "it understands that status subordination is often linked to distributive justice" (2003,119).[45]

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[43] This echoes Appiah and Heyes' respective concerns. Heyes argues that the politics of recognition ends up affirming a notion of authentic identity that demands recognition (Heyes 2003). In this respect, she echoes Appiah's worry that the identity model of recognition conflates the normative with the descriptive, and so risks balkanizing the cultural identity in question (Appiah 1994).

[44] In fact, Fraser claims that "maldistribution directly entails misrecognition" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 52).

[45] Fraser's status model of recognition is "deontological and nonsectarian," that is, it appeals to a morally binding principle of justice as participatory parity without espousing a single conception of self-realization or the good life (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 30-31). In turn, Fraser argues that attempts to redress

Iris Marion Young similarly raises concerns with the narrowing of recognition to cultural recognition.[46] She worries that current scholarship in politics of difference focuses too narrowly on the recognition of cultural difference within a liberal paradigm (see Kymlicka 1995) at the expense of concerns of structural inequality. She seeks to distinguish politics of *positional* difference from a politics of cultural difference (Young 2007). Young contends that her politics of difference is broader than a politics of cultural recognition insofar as it provides a structural analysis of social inequality and exposes the existence of ruling norms that dictate who the bearer of rights is supposed to be (1999, 416). Difference is more broadly understood in terms of the dominant institutions that support norms that privilege some groups and render others deviant. These might be cultural norms, but they can also be "norms of capability, social role, sexual desire, or location in the division of labor" (1999, 415).

A politics of difference rejects interpretations of formal equality as treating everyone equally insofar as it fails to redress such unjust norms and posits that many economic and social inequalities can only be remedied by attending to "the specific differences of capability, social positioning, spiritual obligation, etc. of persons, and

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misrecognition require "changing social institutions—or more specifically, changing the interaction-regulating values that impede parity of participation at all relevant institutional sites" (2003, 115). Young, however, is critical that Fraser's analytic framework, which opposes cultural and political economy, renders working-class and queer politics "more one-dimensional than they actually are" (Young 1997).

[46] Not all articulations of recognition deal with cultural recognition, however. Consider, for example, J. M. Bernstein's *Torture and Dignity*, which provides a more expansive account of intersubjective recognition in his characterization of torture as a form of moral devastation in ways that highlight the relationship between dignity, and physical embodiment and social trust. The self's need for external recognition entails a permanent vulnerability, and hence, a ubiquitous need for trust. This need for trust is not established rationally, but is given in "first love," and is further developed in and through the expectation of self-respect, or "lovability" (2015, 19-20). Under Bernstein's reading, recognition is not limited to the need for *cultural* membership but is described in terms of the fundamental intersubjectivity and vulnerability of the self.

accommodating to them in order substantively to realize fair equality of opportunity for everyone" (1999, 417). She thus affirms that most group-based political claims of justice are responses to these structures of privilege and disadvantage.

The narrowing of recognition to cultural recognition motivates the well-worn critique of liberalism's inability to attend to structural inequality. Both Tully and Young are ultimately critical that liberalism can attend to the dynamics of recognition insofar as it is theoretically blind to concerns of structural power.[47] Young challenges the liberal reduction of social justice to distributive justice and narrowing of difference to claims to culture.[48] She is critical that liberal models of distributive justice overattend to individuals and fail to articulate the import of social group membership for autonomy. In assuming a homogenous public and arguing for formal equality, liberal theory fails to consider the substantive heterogeneity of the public. Young defines the distributive paradigm of justice as one in which social justice is deemed as the "allocation of material goods such as things, resources, income, and wealth" at the expense of an analysis of "the social structure and institutional context that often help determine distributive patterns" (1990, 15). To this point, her account of the "five faces of oppression" reveal the subtle forms of injustice that cannot be addressed by a distributive model of justice (1990, 39). Her model resists the tendency to limit an analysis of oppression to one or two structures. Social oppression cannot be reduced to cultural misrecognition nor to economic injustice (1997). As such, both Young and Fraser (while using different language) attempt to

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[47] For Tully, recognition is intimately tied to the redistribution of power relations, and to "recognition capital (status, respect, and esteem)" (Tully 2000b, 470).

[48] Both of which Young sees still present in Benhabib's work (see Young 1999).

expand recognition beyond a consideration of identity to a consideration of structural power inequalities.[49]

Over and above the inability to challenge structural power inequalities, identitarian models of recognition rely on troubling ontological assumptions about the nature of identity and progressive social change. On this account, Lois McNay is critical of Honneth's normative account of recognition insofar as it depends upon an "ahistorical analysis that misrecognizes the role that power relations play in structuring and mediating the emotions of social suffering" (McNay 2008, 275). Under Honneth's account, recognition will inevitably result in progressive social change in a way that both underestimates "the negativity of social conflict and agency" and provides a limited account of the development of law (2008, 276). According to McNay, the ontological primacy of recognition, whereby the child-parent dyad forms the development of relations of recognition on all aspects of social life, is both psychologically reductive and it sentimentalizes social relations.[50] Honneth's account obscures how social relations are mediated through latent dynamics of money and power.[51]

Patchen Markell further criticizes the ontological assumptions of the politics of recognition. He is critical of the grounds on which Taylor articulates a notion of recognition as a necessary condition for self-realization insofar as it denies Taylor's very

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[49] Young and Fraser are, however, critical of each other's projects (See Fraser 1995 and Young 1997).

[50] Cynthia Willett is similarly critical of the infant-parent as the paradigmatic dyad of intersubjective recognition since this relation is not intersubjective but is one of "subjectless sociality" (Willett 1995, 18).

[51] Alternatively, McNay proposes that Bourdieu's account of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1979) can better describe a phenomenological account of oppression without naturalizing emotions and seeing them as the result of power relations that sediment as "physical and psychological dispositions" that define a subject's embodied being in the world (McNay 2008, 279).

own understanding of "the self as a creature of 'web of interlocutions'" (Taylor 1989, 36). Markell rejects recognition's underlying ontological claims of "sovereign agency" that is both claimed to be a product of intersubjective recognition yet also prior to it (Markell 2003, 23). Claims to sovereign agency mischaracterize the ontological principles of the human condition, defined as non-sovereign. Markell reframes recognition as acknowledgment in terms of the problem of sovereignty. A politics of acknowledgment emerges from an appreciation of one's own condition of finitude.[52] In this respect, he draws on Arendt's critique of the "identification of freedom with sovereignty" (Arendt 1977, 164) in his assertion that "if recognition makes the social world intelligible, it often does so by stratifying it, subordinating some people and elevating others to positions of privilege and dominance" (Markell 2003, 1-2). In other words, he is critical as to whether a politics of recognition can address the role of state institutions in establishing and perpetuating the power and status inequalities that it seeks to redress.

These critiques of recognition call for a recharacterization of the source of social oppression. More pointedly, these critics of recognition contend that a politics of recognition can perpetuate, rather than reduce, power inequality. This line of criticism gets further articulated when considering how a liberal politics of recognition characterizes social oppression in a settler colonial context. The narrowing of social oppression to cultural recognition frames the root settler colonial violence in terms of a loss of cultural integrity and identity. This characterization misses the particularity of

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[52] "Acknowledging her finitude enables the subject to dismantle her own privilege rather than patronizing others by 'granting' them recognition" (Markell 2003, 38).

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settler colonial violence, namely the seizure of land and the drive to eliminate Indigenous populations.

Recognition in a Settler Colonial Context

This section demonstrates how a liberal politics of recognition concretely manifests in the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. The two critiques of recognition laid out above (the narrowing of recognition to cultural recognition and its inattention to structural power relations) become all the more visibly nefarious in an explicitly settler colonial context. I define a settler colonial context as one in which colonizers invade a territory, exterminate Indigenous nations and seize Indigenous land with the aim of complete settlement.[53] I outline how Taylor's politics of recognition, within its own settler colonial context, shapes ongoing governmental policies towards Indigenous groups in order to show how recognition fails to frame social oppression of Indigenous peoples in terms of the loss of sovereignty, seizure of land, and denial of political self-determination.

An identitarian model of recognition characterizes social oppression in terms of cultural representation, while Fraser's status model of recognition broadens recognition to address problems of economic redistribution. Both versions of politics of recognition fails to capture what is at the root of the social oppression of Indigenous peoples. For this reason, Coulthard argues that even Fraser's model of recognition does not address "the most pertinent features of injustices related to mis- or nonrecognition in *colonial*

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[53] I explain the aims of settler colonialism in more detail in the following chapter. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson names the aim of settler colonialism as such— "It seemed simple. Colonizers wanted the land" (Simpson 2017, 15). Patrick Wolfe puts it succinctly—"Settler colonizers come to stay" (Wolfe 2006, 388).

contexts" (Coulthard 2014, 36—emphasis added). In particular, the discussion of recognition emerges from a consideration of multiculturalism and not multi-*nationalism*. A settler colonial context is a multi-national context in which the settler state and Indigenous nations are in some sort of relationship with each other.[54] That is to say, the question of recognition in a multicultural context emerges from the conflict between the liberal ideal of fairness and neutrality and the flourishing of distinct cultural groups and evades the question of Indigenous nationhood. This framework of recognition does not, however, address conflicts *between nations*.[55] The model of recognition is therefore ill-equipped to undermine settler colonialism since state recognition cannot attend to nation-to-nation relationships and, moreover, since *mutual* recognition is impossible since the Canadian state does not require recognition from First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in order to exist.

Taylor's identitarian liberal politics of recognition affirms that relations of recognition can have either a positive effect (when recognition is mutual or affirmative), or a negative effect (when recognition is unequal or disparaging) on "our status as free and self-determining agents" (2014, 17). Accordingly, proponents of a liberal politics of recognition seek greater "state recognition" and "accommodation" of Indigenous identity claims in order to enable more mutual Indigenous-state relationships.[56] It is through *state* recognition that Indigenous culture is affirmed and legitimated. In practice, Coulthard

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[54] Consider, for example, Canada's claim to be in a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous nations.

[55] Fraser's *Scales of Justice*, however, revises her theory of participation parity to include a third dimension of adequate representation in decision-making processes. This revision explicitly frames question of recognition and redistribution to target injustices across borders (Fraser 2010).

[56] This is most often accomplished through "land claim settlements, economic development initiatives, and self-government agreements" (Coulthard 2014, 3).

tells us that this results in "institutional accommodation by the settler state apparatus" (2014, 38). Indigenous claims to nationhood are reconciled through the "accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the Canadian state" (2014, 3). Consider, for example, the White Paper of 1969, the effort to abolish the Indian Act, which was framed as an attempt to turn First Nations people into *ethnic* groups, to "be gradually absorbed into the melting pot" (Manuel and Derrickson 2015, 29-30).[57] A more recent example is President Trump's effort to remove the classification that designates Native tribes as nations, which would classify Native tribes as ethnic groups.[58]

This model of the accommodation of Indigenous identity raises some pressing concerns. For one, the narrowing of recognition to culture *depoliticizes* Native relationships to land. As Maureen Konkle notes, "Native people's connection to land is not just cultural (as it is usually and sentimentally understood), but it is also a political connection about governments, boundaries, authority over people and territory" (Konkle 2004, 12). The effect of this narrowing of recognition means that culture becomes the sole site of Indigenous identity and agency, foreclosing a legitimate politics of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Land dispossession is not a problem of cultural recognition, but one of loss of sovereignty.[59] Cultural recognition here mischaracterizes the harm of misrecognition by failing to consider institutionalized

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[57] The 1969 White Paper, formally known as the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969, was a Canadian government policy that attempted to abolish previous legal documents pertaining to Indigenous peoples, including the Indian Act and treaties. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien proposed the policy in order to assimilate all Indian peoples under the Canadian State. The proposal's intense backlash led to its withdrawal in 1970.

[58] Letourneau 2018.

[59] The loss of land is also an ontological violence. The role of land in Indigenous ontology will be developed in the following chapter.

economic inequality, settler colonial and heteropatriarchical violence. Simply put, cultural recognition without political and economic redistribution will not lead to self-determination. By failing to frame social oppression of Indigenous peoples in terms of loss of sovereignty and political self-determination, recognition misidentifies the source of settler colonial violence.

A second limitation of recognition is its perpetuation of settler colonial identification. It is with this concern in mind that Coulthard argues that a liberal politics of recognition *reproduces*, rather than transcends, a colonial structure of dominance (Coulthard 2007, 438-9). In *Red Skins, White Masks,* Coulthard forcefully rejects Taylor's liberal politics of recognition on the grounds that it actually reaffirms the configurations of colonial power that demands for recognition aim to transcend. For this, he draws on Frantz Fanon's criticism of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic of recognition whereby self-consciousness arises through the process of externalization and mutual recognition, that is, through the recognition of another.[60]

Fanon contends that the dialectic of recognition breaks down in a colonial context, which he describes in terms of both objective (political economy) and subjective (affective) levels (Fanon 1967, 11-12 qtd in Coulthard 2007, 444). This account of the dual structures of colonialism moves past the Honneth-Fraser impasse and avoids a focus on recognition at the expense of redistribution and vice-versa. Given this description of colonialism, Fanon argues that reciprocal recognition is impossible since the terms of

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[60] While Taylor draws on Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in articulating the role of misrecognition in relations of domination, Coulthard relies on Fanon's earlier *Black Skins, White Masks* to challenge Taylor's argument that colonial misrecognition can be reconciled within a liberal multicultural framework (Coulthard 2007).

recognition are determined by and in the interests of the colonizer. Insofar as subjectivity is defined in terms of the recognition of the colonizer, the colonized's sense of self develops through the internalization of colonial recognition. In this way, settler colonial recognition involves the creation of "colonized subjects" through a process of internalization whereby the colonized come to accept and even identify with the limited misrecognition granted through state structures. Fanon affirms that this internalization often leads to psycho-affective attachments to these "master-sanctioned forms of recognition" (Fanon 2005, 148). In practice, this means that the state recognizes Indigenous culture through accommodation practices in the same spirit as Canadian bureaucrat Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott's 1920 goal of solving the "Indian problem" by ensuring that every Indigenous person be "absorbed into the body politic [so that] there is no Indian position, and no Indian Department" (Scott qtd in Manuel and Derrickson 2015, 29-30).

In this way, Coulthard contends that contemporary colonial power and hegemony work not through a process of exclusion, but rather through the inclusion and shaping of Indigenous peoples and perspectives by state discourses. Recognition practices do not rectify colonial injustice but reaffirm the settler state's legitimacy. He argues that self-determination cannot be bestowed upon by the state but must result from Indigenous resurgence that challenges the legitimacy of the Canadian settler state.[61] Given Fanon's description of the psychological internalization of colonized subjectification, Coulthard notes the importance of the self-affirmative power of righteous anger that leads to direct political action (as exemplified in the Oka crisis, the Idle No More movement, and the

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[61] I develop an account of reconciliation as refusal and resurgence in my final chapter.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement, among others).[62] He maintains the importance of *transformative praxis* in purging the "psycho-existential complexes battered into [Indigenous populations] over the course of the colonial experience—a process of strategic desubjectification" (Coulthard 2007, 450).

In this respect, Coulthard is suspicious of projects like Dale Turner's that aim to engage with state's legal and political discourses.[63] Turner proposes a model of Indigenous self-determination that engages with the confines of liberal recognition. He argues in *This is Not a Peace Pipe* that Indigenous people have to engage the state's legal and political discourses in more effective ways in order to have their relationship with the Canadian state informed by their distinct worldview (Turner 2006). Turner argues that violence against Indigenous peoples has resulted by excluding the perspectives of Indigenous peoples from discursive and institutional sites. He diagnoses the problem as one of exclusion from state discourse and so, he calls for Indigenous peoples to find more effective ways of participating in state practices that determine the meaning of Aboriginal rights. To this end, he affirms that certain members of the community should become what he calls "word warriors," that are fluent in language of rights.

Coulthard, however, is critical of Turner's approach insofar as it minimizes the discursive power of the state.[64] Turner's account rests on the ability of word warriors to

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[62] See Idle No More and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

[63] The worry of the assimilationist power of state discourses can also be reflected in Scott Lyons' project (Lyons 2010). Lyons' hope for Native American studies is to produce research programs and pedagogies that can integrate traditionalism with the modernity and diversity that exist in the indigenous world. Whereas Coulthard, Alfred and Simpson propose visions of self-determination that are grounded in a rejection of capitalism and the nation-state, through a rejection of state recognition, Lyons contends that a "project of decolonization begins with the apparatuses that we have at our disposal" (Lyons 2010).

[64] Coulthard writes, "the efficacy of Turner's intervention rests on a crucial theoretical assumption reflected in his text's quasi-Foucauldian use of the term discourse. I say quasi-Foucauldian because when he refers to

transform legal and political discourses of the state to be more amenable to Indigenous

perspectives. Coulthard worries that this approach underestimates the state's legal and

political power in maintaining colonial relationships. For Coulthard, colonial power has

been maintained not through the exclusion of Indigenous peoples but rather through the

inclusion and *shaping* of Indigenous identities. Given this, he tells us that self-

determination cannot be found in relationship with the colonial state, but in a rejection of

colonial authority.[65] Coulthard argues that Turner's proposal risks the assimilation of the

word warriors. Moreover, Coulthard's analysis does not limit the state's power to its

discursive power but acknowledges how the legal and discursive power of the state are

also "backed by and hopelessly entwined with the economic, political, and military power

of the state itself" (Coulthard 2008). In other words, discursive transformation is not

enough to allow for Indigenous self-determination.

Coulthard's criticism that state recognition cannot bring about meaningful change

because of the material power of the state accurately names a serious limitation of the

state's interest in seeing and naming settler colonial violence. In sum, recognition,

through the guise of recognizing the distinctness of Indigenous cultures undermines

Indigenous nations' self-determination. The process of recognition legitimates the

Canadian state's authority of defining Indigenous identity. As such, recognition makes

identity *intelligible* only by creating "colonized subjects." Relations between nations

must be predicated upon mutual recognition of each's sovereignty. Insofar as recognition

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the discursive practices of word warriors he assumes that these pack the 'power' necessary to transform the 'legal and political discourses of the state' into something more amenable to indigenous perspectives" (Coulthard 2008).

[65] Audra Simpson's politics of refusal articulates this very project. Her account is given in chapter 6.

does not emerge from the mutual recognition of sovereignty, recognition by the Canadian state *cannot* challenge settler colonial power imbalance but reasserts it.

The motif of recognition cannot identify land dispossession as a source of oppression. The narrowing of social oppression to cultural misrecognition has the consequence of erasing most forms of settler colonial violence, which, in turn, reinforces colonial recognition. For this reason, I argue that state recognition cannot hear voices as expressions of political self-determination, but rather will hear them in terms of colonial recognition. As Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes —"Right now to a great degree in Indigenous life, we are looking into the colonizer's mirror, and that mirror is reflecting back that we are shameful, that we are not good enough, that we are not smart, or successful, or rich enough, or white enough, or Canadian enough, or together enough to organize. But why is the colonizer our mirror? *Because the colonizer will always reflect back to us what the state wants to see*" (Simpson 2017, 188—emphasis added).

A liberal politics of recognition emerges from a consideration of the flourishing of individuals within a multicultural liberal democracy. Talk of multiculturalism, however, erases the settler colonial reality that distinct nations lie within the boundaries of the country now called Canada. Recognition diagnoses the problem of social oppression as a lack of appropriate cultural representation, but this characterization fails to identify settler colonial violence in terms of the loss of sovereignty through seizure of land. In this way, recognition fails to see its own assumption of settler colonialism. For this reason, I conclude that state recognition rests on a denial of settler colonial reality.

Recognition and the TRC

The TRC's framework of a liberal politics of recognition is evident in the TRC's final report characterizing the residential school system as a policy of *cultural* genocide. The TRC's final report names the establishment and operation of Indian Residential Schools system as a policy of cultural genocide (under Article 2(e) of the UN's Convention on Genocide) in that it sought to destroy structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. The focus on the residential schools' impact of cultural destruction harkens back to Taylor's account of the harm of cultural misrecognition. While the description of the residential school policy as cultural genocide is important and astounding, it belies an emphasis on cultural misrepresentation instead of land dispossession, loss of political self-determination, and the physical extinction of Indigenous communities. The description of social oppression in terms of cultural misrepresentation ignores questions of land dispossession and political self-determination.

The liberal politics of recognition's mischaracterization of the source of settler colonial violence, and thus its disavowal of a settler colonial reality, plays out in the TRC's epistemic assumptions. The TRC, insofar as it is framed by a politics of recognition, provides an opportunity to examine the limitations of recognition in terms of a denial of settler colonialism. In addition to Coulthard's critiques of recognition, I argue that a politics of recognition fails to transform settler colonial relationships not only because it enacts the internalization of colonial recognition, but because it rests on a denial of settler colonialism and so cannot identify, let alone challenge, this denial. These limitations play out in the TRC in the particular way that settlers fail to hear testimonies

of residential school survivors. The TRC illustrates how recognition attempts to include diverse voices in the political sphere while, at the same time, failing to challenge prevailing power relations that silence these voices.

Recognition and Historical Amnesia

> *How did you not know this?!*
>
> Chelsea Vowel (Métis)[66]

> *How is it that we know nothing about this history*?
>
> Paulette Regan, the Research Director of the Canadian TRC[67]

It would be hard to overemphasize the cultural, psychological, emotional, spiritual and political lasting devastation of residential schools. Yet, the schools and the former students remain "comfortably invisible" to settler Canadians (Regan 2010, 5). Regan argues that the truth-telling events have uncovered an uncomfortable historical amnesia about past and ongoing settler colonialism. She contends that this amnesia reveals the "continuing complicity in denying, erasing, and forgetting this part of our own history as colonizers while pathologizing the colonized" (2010, 6). A central question of my evaluation of the TRC is, thus, how will settler Canadians remember this "sad chapter in our history" that we settler Canadians have so selectively forgotten.

The relationship between historical amnesia and recognition becomes particularly

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[66] Vowel 2016, 173.

[67] Regan 2010, 5.

salient when considering the truth-telling events that were central to the TRC. The Commission's events, designed to make settlers remember the country's colonial past, have to contend with a sustained denial of a settler colonial past and present. The denial of a settler colonial past and present can be both explicit and implicit. It can be explicit—for example, in the denial of ongoing settler colonialism in the 2008 Statement of Apology—"The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history [that] has no place in our country"—which positions the ills of colonialism strictly in the past and thus denies the realities of an ongoing settler colonial present, or in the denial of past settler colonialism in Stephen Harper's 2009 G20 address in which he proudly claimed that "Canada has no history of colonialism," in Sen. Lynn Beyak's recent remarks on "the good deeds […] and remarkable works" of the residential school officials, in the Governor General's June 2017 comments that Indigenous people are immigrants,[68] or in a recent article from Montréal paper *Le Devoir* claiming that Montréal is not Mohawk territory.[69] The denial of settler colonialism is often more pernicious and subtle, however, in forming the settler everyday— for example, in Canadian history education curricula that frames the founding peoples of Canada as French and English settlers, or in recent discourse about non-European immigration as people who are "not from here."

The TRC proposes a model of reconciliation based on the sharing of personal testimony. According to this view, reconciliation requires recognition of the experiences of survivors of residential schools. As such, the TRC's underlying epistemic claim is that

[68] Tasker 2017a.

[69] Tellier 2018.

a collection of facts and testimonies can, and will, reconcile relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians. It affirms that the problem of historical amnesia arises from a lack of recognition and so the remedy is to have more information, more recognition. If this were the case, then the sharing of testimonies would transform this historical amnesia, but Regan tells us that this has not happened. Indeed, a recent informal poll in Winnipeg showed that only 1 in 3 respondents said they were aware of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indian residential schools (CBC News 2018a). While settler Canadians' knowledge about the existence of residential schools has increased—from 51% in 2008 to 66% in 2016—their sense of the impact of these schools remains low with only 41% of non-Aboriginal Canadians seeing the residential school system as "at least partly responsible for the current challenges Aboriginal people face" in 2016 (CBC News 2016).

Over and above a concern of internalized colonial recognition, the TRC faces a set of limitations with respect to how testimonies are, and can be, heard. Settler Canadians' so-called historical amnesia in the face of testimonies of past and ongoing settler colonial violence exemplifies this *further* limitation of the model of recognition in a settler colonial context.[70] I contend that the TRC's framing politics of recognition mischaracterizes the harm and mechanisms of historical amnesia as a problem of the lack of *recognition* that can be rectified by more testimony. This misdiagnosis of historical amnesia exemplifies recognition's ignorance of land dispossession and political self-

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[70] An example of ongoing colonial legislation is the passing of Bill C-45, which introduces significant changes to Canada's Navigable Water Act, the Indian Act, and the Environmental Assessment Act among other pieces of federal legislation, and which unilaterally undermines Aboriginal and treaty rights (Coulthard 2014, 127).

determination as a cause of settler colonial violence.

Drawing on Bruyneel's account of settler memory, I suggest that historical amnesia does not signal a *lack* of memory but rather a particular production of memory that upholds structural inequity. He challenges the popular notion that the failure to address settler colonial injustices is a result of "collective amnesia, of a forgetting of the past" (Bruyneel 2013, 237). He rejects this amnesia diagnosis and affirms that the appearance of collective historical amnesia is, in fact, a result of the particular manner in which the nation remembers its "past, as facts and myths" (2016, 351).[71] Bruyneel names the particular kind of memory that is produced and reproduced as "settler memory," as an "excess of memory" (2013, 240).

Yet, this is the very model the TRC adopts. The epistemic presumption of the TRC is that the problem of historical amnesia is simply a lack of information, that we simply need more knowledge about the evils of the residential school system, that the government and the general public are just conveniently *unaware* of the violence perpetrated against Native peoples in Canada. Bruyneel argues that this apparent *lack* of memory is a "consequence of collective disavowal and as such is a particular production and presence of memory" (2013, 237).

A consideration of settler memory reveals why a model of reconciliation through recognition is unable to challenge historical amnesia. The legacy of the residential schools does not merely require education in order for settlers to 'fill the gaps in our history education knowledge.' The TRC promotes reconciliation through the cure of remembering, but this model fails to see how discourses of forgetting a violent past and

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[71] Consider, for example, the settler nation myths of Canada's 150-year celebrations.

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present is crucial to the justification and perpetuation of settler violence. To understand how historical amnesia as a kind of memory, it is helpful to understand settler ignorance as a kind of knowledge.[72]

A focus on the cause of historical amnesia reframes the limitations of liberal politics of recognition. The motif of recognition cannot provide means for self-determination because it misidentifies the source of social oppression that Indigenous peoples experience by missing the centrality of land. This misidentification leads to a mischaracterization of settlers' lack of knowledge about a settler colonial past and present, and the residential school system more specifically. Bruyneel's account of settler memory gives language to show how recognition misdiagnoses historical amnesia. Moreover, recognition's misdiagnosis of historical amnesia shows how recognition is predicated upon a denial of settler colonialism.

Conclusion

> *Why, then, do we continually seek recognition from Canada*
>
> *when we know it never ends well?*
>
> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson[73]

A liberal politics of recognition misidentifies the source of social oppression as culture misrepresentation. This mischaracterization of oppression ignores its own settler

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[72] To flesh out this account, Charles Mills' description of white ignorance is helpful (1997; 2007). I give this account in chapter 4.

[73] Simpson 2017, 181.

colonial context, namely in terms of land seizure and the loss of political self-determination. This disavowal of settler colonialism in liberal politics of recognition becomes visible when examining the epistemic assumption that settler Canadians' obliviousness to the residential school system is an innocent lack of information that can be rectified by the sharing of testimony. Settlers' lack of knowledge of the residential schools is not, however, a case of misrecognition or a lack of information but a particular kind of knowing that tacitly supports ongoing settler colonial violence. The TRC misidentifies the harms of the residential school policy by focusing on individual experiences at the expense of a consideration of ongoing land dispossession and settler colonial violence. Over and above recognition's inability to attend to power structures, the recognition model, as it relates to the TRC, expects testimonies to be heard. Insofar as the politics of recognition fails to challenge structures of settler colonial violence and enacts an internalization of colonial recognition, it cannot provide the conditions for voices of residential school survivors to be heard in a meaningful way.

The goal of a truth commission is to provide a public platform for victims to tell their stories and to give *voice* to the survivors of human rights violations. For this reason, Teresa Godwin Phelps affirms that the truth commissions can provide the opportunity for victims to reconstruct their "shattered voices" and regain their dignity and self-respect (Phelps 2004, 39). Coulthard reveals the extent to which being heard requires colonial recognition and so, risks assimilation. For this reason, the reconstruction of the "shattered voices" of survivors of residential schools cannot occur within the guiding framework of recognition, since this process of 'reconstruction' is predicated upon a colonial recognition that makes voices intelligible only as 'colonized subjects.' Following

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Markell's critique, recognition makes the social world intelligible by stratifying it and so state recognition cannot change settler colonial relationships but merely reaffirm and relegitimize them.

The impulse to establish new relationships through the sharing of testimony seems admirable, however. Might the problem with the TRC be solely in its *execution*, rather than in the process of recognizing the experiences of another? Consider, for example, Jane Addams' account of sympathetic knowledge as a model of knowing through an openness to disruptive knowledge (Addams 2002). The TRC does not follow, however, this model insofar as it is not open to testimonies that transform settler identity. While the process of coming to know differently through a recognition of another's experience might often lead to a new understanding and appreciation of social oppression, the TRC's model fails to create conditions for such an exchange of experiences.[74]

The TRC mischaracterizes the cause of this historical amnesia as primarily a problem of a lack of recognition that can be rectified by more testimony. I contend, however, that the problem of this historical amnesia is not explainable in terms of a lack of access to information that can be remedied through a collection of testimonies. There are ways of remembering that complicate the assumption that settler Canadians simply need to hear testimonies of residential school survivors in order to challenge our historical amnesia. The TRC relies on the expectation that settlers will be emotionally

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[74] I give an account of settler hearing as a way of explaining how testimonies fail to unsettle settler ignorance in my fifth chapter.

affected and so will 'remember' differently, but Regan tells us that this isn't happening.[75] As such, the TRC mischaracterizes the harm and mechanisms of historical amnesia. Settlers' lack of knowledge of the residential schools is not a case of misrecognition or a lack of information but is a particular kind of knowing. In other words, historical amnesia is not a *lack* of memory, but names a particular kind of memory.

Bruyneel's work on settler memory gives us insight into how memory and settler colonial violence are intertwined in ways that complicate a model of reconciliation through truth-telling. If historical amnesia is not a result of a lack of knowledge but a particular *kind* of knowledge or memory, then we need to investigate what *kind* of knowledge it is and how such knowledge functions. This analysis, however, needs to be further developed in order to fully account for how testimonies can fail to be *heard* by a settler audience.

For this reason, I argue that we need to provide an epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism in order to more fully evaluate (i) the limitations of a model of reconciliation through recognition and (ii) how the TRC hears the testimonies of residential school survivors. This epistemic evaluation involves both an account of the conditions of speech that prevent testimonies of the violence inherent in past and present settler colonialism from being heard as meaningful, legitimate and self-affirming political expression and a conceptual framework to explain the experience of historical amnesia. These will be the questions explored in the following two chapters.

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[75] Danielle Lorenz's study on how well Alberta Teachers' Association members understand concepts of 'reverse racism' after being exposed to curricula that focuses on Indigenous content is helpful here. She concludes that settler colonialism and racism prohibit "reconciliatory thinking for settlers" (Lorenz 2017).

CHAPTER III

SETTLER COLONIAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Colonialism or settler colonialism or dispossession or displacement or capitalism didn't seem complicated anymore. The mess I was wrapped in at birth didn't seem so inevitable. It seemed simple. Colonizers wanted the land. Everything else, whether it is legal or policy or economic or social, whether it was the Indian Act or residential schools or gender violence, was part of the machinery that was designed to create a perfect crime— a crime where the victims are unable to see or name the crime <u>as a crime</u>

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg)[76]

Introduction

The TRC presents a model of reconciliation through the recognition of the experiences of residential school survivors. This model of reconciliation depends on the assumption that the testimonies of survivors will be received as credible such that settlers' disavowal of settler colonialism will be transformed by these testimonies. However, an ignorance of settler colonialism persists. As such, an explanation of this ignorance requires an *epistemic* evaluation of settler colonialism. An epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism first requires examining the underlying structures of settler colonialism as a "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 2006, 387).[77] The aim of eliminating

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[76] Simpson 2017, 15.

[77] While Wolfe and Veracini use the term 'logic of elimination' to name the underlying aims of settler colonialism, the use of 'logic' here does not bear connections to formal logic. The term here means a more general system of ordering that supports a particular aim.

Indigenous presence takes the form of statistical elimination, elimination through settler nation-building myths, as well as what I call an "epistemic elimination." The latter eliminates Indigenous peoples as a group from the realm of reason. As such, Indigenous peoples are eliminated as rational and credible epistemic knowers.

An epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism explains the assumptions that justify the settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous peoples in order to seize land. This comes to form what I call a *settler colonial epistemology*. Crucially, settler colonial epistemology has a specific conception of rationality to justify the seizure of Indigenous land. This epistemic framework stems from the dominant model of Western rationality, as exemplified in the writings of John Locke. Locke's political theory epitomizes the dominant model of Western rationality in which *rational* relationships to land are relationships of ownership and cultivation. For this reason, I characterize Locke as an exemplar settler colonialist. From the settler colonial point of view, Indigenous knowledges grounded in the land do not deductively follow and, consequently, Indigenous peoples can be dismissed as rational knowers. As such, settler colonial epistemology justifies land dispossession by eliminating Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. The epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples explains how a populated North American continent can be characterized as belonging to no one (*terra nullius*) since it is populated by peoples deemed irrational, and it provides the justification for the governmental policies of US boarding schools and Canada's residential school policy.

Settler Logic of Elimination

In order to articulate the assumptions of settler colonial epistemology, it is important to understand the underlying aims of settler colonialism. Settler colonial studies as a distinct field of study emerged with the work of Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini.[78] Their work aimed to theoretically disentangle settler colonialism from colonialism and to articulate the underlying aims of settler colonialism. In this respect, Veracini affirmed that settler colonial studies aims at articulating *heuristic* tools, rather than transformative ones.[79] He traces the genealogy of settler colonialism studies from writings on 'settlers' in North America as a history of pioneering endeavors, which until the 1960s was entirely unrelated to colonialism, to an analytic framework of 'settler colonialism' in the late 1970s as "an ongoing and uncompromising form of hyper-colonialism characterized by enhanced aggressiveness and exploitation" (Veracini 2013, 313). This, then, led to a third phase of scholarship (from the late 1970s to the first half of the 1980s) identifying settler colonialism as a practice to ensure economic development for colonists. In the mid-1990s, 'settler colonial studies' emerged as an autonomous scholarly field from this series of developments (2013, 313).

Veracini and Wolfe aim to articulate the underlying structures of settler colonialism. Veracini contends that colonialism and settler colonialism need to be "analytically disentangled" in order to consider settler colonialism in its specificity (2011,

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[78] Veracini gives an outline of the development of the field in the introductory article of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies* (Veracini 2011).

[79] This is why settler colonial studies is not a theory of Indigenous resurgence. Veracini contends that an analysis of settler colonial studies does not prefer one form of Indigenous agency over another and understands radical transformations of Indigenous political structures as both destructive and as constitutive processes that are always undermined and positively shaped by Indigenous agency (Veracini 2013, 312).

1).[80] The difference between settler colonialism and colonialism can be understood through the identification of their underlying logics—a logic of elimination and a logic of exploitation.[81] Settler colonialism is organized around elimination and colonialism is organized around exploitation. Colonialism is exogenous domination whereby colonizers seek to maintain a permanent colonial relation and to use the labor power of the colonized.[82] Settler colonialism, on the other hand, aims at the elimination of Native populations and the seizure of land.[83] For this reason, Veracini argues that colonialism and settler colonialism are in some ways "antithetical formations" (2011, 3).

Wolfe's description of settler colonialism's logic of elimination gives us an entry point to consider how settler colonialism *functions* to eliminate Indigenous peoples (both physically and discursively). For Wolfe, the logic of elimination manifests in both the dissolution of native societies and in the erection of a "new colonial society on the expropriated land base" (Wolfe 2006, 388). The elimination of Native populations is "an

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[80] This distinction arises, in part, in Fanon's writings on decolonial violence (2005). In Fanon's analysis, colonial and settler colonial phenomena overlap such that it was 'the settler' that had "brought the native into existence" (Veracini 2013, 318).

[81] Veracini draws on the diverse operations of viral and bacterial phenomena to heuristically distinguish the distinct functionings of colonial and settler colonial systems. In short, "viruses need living cells to operate, while bacteria attach to surfaces and may or may not rely on the organisms they encounter" (Veracini 2014, 617). While both viruses and bacteria (and so colonialism and settler colonialism) are exogenous domination, a colonial system of relationships, unlike a settler colonial one, depends upon the presence and subjugation of exploitable 'Others' (2014, 617). This heuristic analogy can be useful in drawing out the claim that settler colonialism does *not* require "indigenous 'Others' for their reproduction and operation" (2014, 623).

[82] Settler colonialism, however, aims to "supersede the conditions of its operations" (Veracini 2011, 8).

[83] Given the differences in the dependence of Indigenous labor, anticolonial or decolonial struggle will not be similar in a colonial and settler colonial context. In a colonial context, anticolonial work will aim to withhold the fundamental demand for labor through "direct anticolonial attack, sabotage, self-mutilation, insubordination, evasion, non-compliance, ostensible collaboration, mimicry, just to name a few" (Veracini 2011, 3). Since labor is not required for the maintenance of settler colonialism, anticolonial work in that context strives for Indigenous resistance and survival.

organizing principal of settler-colonial society" (2006, 388). The motivation for the *elimination* of Native populations is, first and foremost, territory: "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (2006, 388). Whereas colonialism depends upon the reproduction of labor power to augment the colonial power's wealth, settler colonialism depends upon access to land.[84]

Similarly, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang articulate the structure of North American settler colonialism in terms of "an entangled *triad* structure of settler-native-slave" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 1). This triad differentiates settler colonialism from "external colonialism" which involves the extraction and transportation of "Indigenous worlds, animals, plants and human beings," and from "internal colonialism" which aims at the management of "people, land, flora and fauna within the 'domestic' borders of the imperial nation" (2012, 4-5). The settler desire for land and resources has the effect of both making Indigenous land into the "new home and source of capital" for the settler, but also of disrupting and undermining Indigenous relationships to land (2012, 5).

Crucially, Wolfe explains that the invasion of Native lands in North America and Australia, for example, is not an event in the past, but is an ongoing *structure* that is reasserted each day of occupation (Wolfe 2006, 388). Settler colonization is a structure, insofar as it is both a "complex social formation and [a] continuity through time" (2006, 390). This land-centered project of the expansion of the settler-colonial state manifests the logic of elimination in the form of "spatial removal, mass killings and biocultural assimilation" (2006, 403). This elimination takes the form of both physical and discursive

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[84] This contrast is exemplified in the difference of defining Blackness in terms of the "one drop rule" that exponentially increased populations of labor power for the slave owner, and between the blood quantum regulations that radically decreased the Native population (Wolfe 2006, 388).

absence. For this reason, Wolfe suggests the term "structural genocide" in order to hold on to the specificity of the structure of settler colonialism, while also avoiding the hierarchy of qualified or hyphenated genocides (2006, 403).

Wolfe and Veracini's structural accounts of settler colonialism encompass both the settler will to eliminate Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities' capacity for survival (Veracini 2015). This project is, however, always incomplete given Indigenous peoples' struggle to survive against a structure aimed at their elimination. As such, settler colonial invasion is both ongoing and unresolved.[85]

The settler colonial logic of elimination takes many forms. The following section examines three practices structured by the logic of elimination—statistical elimination; elimination through settler nation-building myths; and what I call epistemic elimination.[86] These three forms of elimination come to justify and normalize the seizure of Indigenous land.

Statistical Elimination

Firstly, the settler colonial logic of elimination manifests in the management of Indigenous identity through membership rules that effectively minimize the population of Indigenous communities. Wolfe names both the United States' Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, which divided tribal land into individual allotments to sell to colonists, and the

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[85] While Wolfe's framework of the logic of elimination does not imply that elimination has been successfully, Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Corntassel worry that his analysis underplays the role of Indigenous resistance (Snelgrove et al. 2014). They worry that the institutionalization of settler colonial studies in the academy can "displace, overshadow, or even mask over Indigenous studies" (2014, 9). A limitation of Veracini and Wolfe's respective analyses is that they do not go beyond a theoretical or heuristic analysis of the logics of settler colonialism.

[86] This list is by no means exhaustive of the manifestations of the settler colonial logic of elimination.

1934 New Deal Indian Reform Act as examples of "biocultural assimilation" (Wolfe 2006, 400). While the authors of the Dawes Act explicitly framed the division of tribal land into individual allotments as an attempt to propel "Indians [sic] from the collective inertia of tribal membership into the progressive individualism of the American dream," the policy's concrete effect was to devastate Indigenous communities through assimilation in order to access land (2006, 399). Through these measures, the number of American Indians "rapidly hit the lowest level they would ever record [and the] procedure turned out to yield a faster method of land transference than the US Cavalry had previously provided" (2006, 399).[87]

For this reason, John Wunder terms the Dawes-era assimilation policy as "the New Colonialism" that "attacked every aspect of Native American life—religion, speech, political freedoms, economic liberty, and cultural diversity" (Wunder 1994, 39 qtd in Wolfe 2006, 400). The drive to eliminate can also be seen in the 1934 Indian Reform Act, which included blood quantum requirements to determine tribal membership.[88] This requirement, yet again, decreased the numbers of tribal members eligible for land allotments. For this reason, Juaneño/Jaqi scholar Annette Jaimes has termed the procedure of minimizing the statistical populations through blood quantum requirements "statistical elimination" (Jaimes 1992, 123-138).[89]

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[87] Wolfe writes, "In the half-century from 1881, the total acreage held by Indians in the United States fell by two thirds, from just over 155 million acres to just over 52 million" (Wolfe 2006, 399).

[88] The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act was John Collier's most significant initiative during his time as the Commission of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The measure abandoned allotment in favor of increasing self-government. The Act encouraged written constitutions in "structural harmony with its US civic environment" (Wolfe 2006, 400).

[89] Many Native American tribes continue to use blood quantum requirements to determine tribal membership. A person's blood quantum is defined as the percentage of their ancestors, out of their total ancestors, who are documented as full-blood Native Americans.

Another example of statistical elimination is the Canadian Indian Act of 1876.

Through the Indian Act, the Canadian government regulates Indigenous identity through

membership rules and, by using these rules, manages the numbers of "status Indians"

who can live on reserve land.[90] Under the Act, the term 'Indian' refers to "1) any male of

Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; 2) any child of such person; and 3)

any woman who is or who was married to such a person" (National Centre for First

Nations Governance). On occasion, Canada has forced First Nations to relocate their

reserves from agriculturally valuable or resource-rich land onto remote and economically

marginal reserves (Barron 1988). Without legal authority or foundation, in the 1880s,

Canada instituted a "pass system" that was intended to confine First Nations people to

their reserves (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 11). The method of defining status Indians was

guided by the goal of assimilating Indigenous people in order to free up lands and

resources and, consequently, allow the Crown to avoid its fiduciary responsibilities

(Native Women's Association of Canada 2007).

The regulation of Indigenous identity has been central to the colonization process

by reducing the number of tribal members who can legally access Indigenous land. On

this account, Métis scholar Bonita Lawrence traces the impact of the Canadian Indian Act

of 1876 in terms of a settler colonial conceptual framework and meaning-making of race

and gender in Canada (Lawrence 2003). Lawrence outlines the discriminatory legislation

under the Indian Act whereby First Nations women who married non-Native men, or

non-status Indian men, lost their status, and thus access to reservation lands. This sexist

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[90] The Indian Act pertains only to First Nations peoples, not to the Métis or the Inuit.

method of defining Indigenous identity rendered First Nations women invisible and so,

particularly vulnerable.[91] In 1985, Bill C-31, or the Bill to Amend the Indian Act, passed

into law in order to bring the Indian Act in line with gender equity as mandated by the

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This Amendment left individual reserves to

devise membership codes of their own making. Bill C-31 was aimed to redress the

patrilineal bias of the Indian Act of 1867. With this Amendment, women and children

who had previously lost status were put back on the federal registration list. The bill

leaves it up to reserves to admit or deny membership to these women and their children in

their own local registries (Simpson 2007, 72). While bands can determine their own

membership, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (formerly known as Indian

and Northern Affairs Canada) only provides funding for status Indians and not for non-

status band members.

Moreover, government regulatory discourses of who does and who doesn't come

to count as an "Indian" in settler colonial North America come to shape self-

identification. This, in turn, comes to form what Megan Bang and Ananda Marin call

"settler normativity" (Bang and Marin 2015). Settler colonialism imposes a settler

grammar in which certain identities (consider, for example, twin-spirit gender identity)

and kin structures are considered unintelligible.[92] In this vein, Mark Rifkin highlights the

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[91] See Quebec Native Women 2008; Amnesty International 2014. The 1996 Report of the Royal
Commission on Aboriginal Peoples relays the situation of Indigenous women in violent family situations:
"If the marital home is on a reserve, the provincial court is unable to handle the case because it falls within
federal jurisdiction over "Lands reserved for the Indians," yet [there is no] federal legislation to deal with
the matter. Consequently, women often have no alternative but to leave the marital home. Given the
shortage of housing on most reserves, women in these circumstances usually have to choose between
moving in with relatives already living in overcrowded homes or leaving the community" (Royal
Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

[92] See Driskill 2010 and Brayboy 2017.

heterosexualizing agenda invested in the ongoing management of Indigenous peoples

(Rifkin 2011). Settler governmental regulation is justified by marking Indigenous kinship

models as different from the heteronuclear family, and thus as an inappropriate basis for

governmental structure. According to Rifkin, the settler colonial sexual order of the

United States has attempted to make Indigenous peoples the mirrored image of the

Anglo-American heterosexual nuclear family.[93] Central to the project of settler

colonialism is both the erasure of Indigenous presence on land through physical and

statistical elimination, as well as the imposition of gender and kin structures. For these

reasons, the shaping of Indigenous identity must be viewed in terms of the project of

eliminating Indigenous populations in order to seize land.

Elimination through Settler Nation-Building Myths

      A second form of elimination of Indigenous presence is tied to the propagation of

settler nation-building myths. On this account, Adam Barker provides an analysis of how

the logic of elimination manifests in present-day Canada through settler myths. He

affirms that contemporary colonialism need not necessarily involve "the establishment of

physical colonies, forced military suppression of peoples, [or] slave labor" (Barker 2009,

326), but rather requires the creation of the narratives of the benevolent settler and the

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[93] Settler colonial violence occurs in the creation and violent imposition of a Christian heteropatriarchal family. This resonates with Scott Morgensen's work on the relationship between homonationalism and settler colonialism. He explains settler homonationalism "as the product of a biopolitical relationship between the sexual colonization of Native peoples and the normative settler formation of modern queer projects in the United States" (Morgensen 2010, 107). His project is to denaturalize settlement within U.S. queer projects in order to reveal "the past and present activity of settler colonialism as a contradictory and contested process" (2010, 107). Beth Piatote produces a similar comparison in her investigation of the dual meaning of 'domestic subjects' as both the legal status of American Indians during the Assimilation Period (1879-1934) and the legal destruction of kinship structures in *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship and Law in Native American Literature* (Piatote 2013).

chaotic Native, which "act as both a cover and a motivator for actions of control" (2009, 347).[94] In light of the failure of classical imperialism to control Indigenous populations, Canadian imperialism became what Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel refer to as "shapeshifting colonialism," which is more reactive and adaptive in its enforcement of "an ideology of control than creating specific structures" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 601). In other words, settler colonialism is adaptive and so does not function solely through physical elimination or exclusion but through the shaping and management of Indigenous and settler identity as well.

A consideration of settler myths recalls Homi Bhabha's claim that the nation-state creates a homogenous identity by appropriating narratives of the past that mystify "discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference" (Bhabha 1990, 212). Alfred names "the benevolent peacemaker myth" as formative of Canadian settler identity (Alfred in Regan 2010, ix). As he writes: "Canadians grew up believing that the history of their country is a story of the cooperative venture between people who came from elsewhere to make a better life and those who were already here, who welcomed and embraced them, aside from a few bad white men" (Alfred in Regan 2010, ix). This settler myth of Canadian benevolence names an example of what Tuck and Yang call "settler moves to innocence," which aim to ensure a settler futurity (Tuck and Yang 2012, 1).[95] Settler

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[94] Barker's interpretation of Canada's contemporary colonialism does not fit Hardt and Negri's definition of decentered and deterritorializing Empire (Hardt and Negri 2001) insofar as Canada is a site of "hybrid imperialism," in which the state both participates in the emergence of a decentralized global imperialism, and in ongoing colonization in the face of Indigenous resistance (Barker 2009, 344).

[95] Against these moves to innocence, Tuck and Yang put forward an ethic of incommensurability, which "recognizes what is distinct, what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization in relation to human and civil rights based social justice projects" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 28).

myths feign an innocence about the destruction of Indigenous communities by maintaining myths of settler benevolence.[96] Through this mechanism, settler myths exemplify the logic of elimination.

Epistemic Elimination

A third manifestation of the settler colonial logic of elimination involves the elimination of Indigenous peoples as rational knowers. This characterization comes to form an elimination of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. Over and above an elimination of Indigenous knowledges, an epistemic elimination eliminates Indigenous peoples as knowers. This epistemic elimination arises from a settler conception of rationality grounded in a belief that land is inert matter to be owned and cultivated, such that the rational relationship to land is one of property. The attempt by Western philosophers to give an objective account of reality by negating the epistemic role of place leads to a particular conception of land. Settler colonial epistemology, which describes reality from a 'view from nowhere,' is used to justify both the seizure of Indigenous lands and the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples.[97] The settler colonial account of the placelessness of epistemology leads to the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples.

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[96] Scott Pratt shows how the United States' definition of American Indian nations within its borders as "domestic dependent nations" (as a result of the 1831 Supreme Court decision in Cherokee Nation v. Georgia) as well as organizations such as *Friends of the Indian* exemplified what he calls "genocide by caring" (Pratt 2013, 17).

[97] I take Locke as representative insofar as his political writings were explicitly used to justify North American settler colonial expansionism.

Settler Colonial Epistemology

Settler colonial epistemology names a way of knowing that legitimates the seizure of Indigenous land. This justification arises from a particular conception of land and place. According to *settler colonial* epistemology, the epistemically sound relationship to land is as inert matter to be owned. On this account, Locke's political theory epitomizes the dominant model of Western rationality in which *rational* relationships to land are relationships of ownership and cultivation (Locke 1952; Pateman and Mills 2007). The following section first presents an account of Indigenous metaphysics that depicts land as an agent to then illustrate how such a characterization is deemed irrational according to a settler colonial account of rationality. I then describe an example of settler colonial epistemology that aims for a placeless account of rationality.

Vine Deloria Jr (Standing Rock Sioux) and Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi) put forward a distinctly Indigenous metaphysics and epistemology that centers on a consideration of land, place and power. In *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, Deloria and Wildcat define Indigenous philosophy as philosophy "of a place" (Deloria and Wildcat 2001, 31). Deloria claims that in most Native American traditions, land is an active participant in the life of the community. The emphasis of being 'of a place' puts forward an ontology in which place, defined as "the relationship of things to each other," is an agent (2001, 22-23). For this reason, Scott Pratt characterizes Deloria and Wildcat's metaphysics as an agent ontology in which "entities are persons whose particular character will be a matter of their interactions and where knowledge will be a matter of knowing their personalities" (Pratt 2006, 5). An agent ontology states that all things are,

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or are parts of, agents, meaning that they are things that act with a purpose. Deloria and Wildcat assert that "power and place produce personality" (Deloria and Wildcat 2001, 23). Agents or persons are the intersection of power and place, where power names a kind of motivating force and place names the complex network of relations that make agents what they are. A human, for example, is *generated* by a particular place. In this respect, Wildcat affirms that identity—"who one is"— is emergent from place (2001, 114).

This ontological starting point leads to an alternative *epistemology* as well. Deloria and Wildcat describe reality as an interweaving of relations. Accordingly, the universe is alive and personal, such that "it must be approached in a personal manner" (2001, 23).[98] If things to be known are themselves agents, then knowing involves not only noting their behavior but also learning their purposes and interests. For example, I come to know my dear friend Amie by coming to know her interests to the point that I can predict (though never with complete certainty) her behavior. Knowing others is not simply a process of acquiring objective facts but is a moral activity.[99] To know is to be familiar and to be familially related.[100] Learning is a moral activity insofar as my 'subject' of study is an agent in her own right with her own interests and purposes. Moreover, since every action toward a purpose affects the actions of others toward their

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[98] Deloria affirms that Indigenous epistemology is limited to experiential knowledge of correlation and rejects claims of placeless causation as universally true.

[99] The natural world is personal and as such, "its perceived relationships are always ethical" (Deloria and Wildcat 2001, 27).

[100] As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, "intelligence in [a Nishnaabeg] context is not an individual's property to own" (Simpson 2014, 11).

purposes, every act is necessarily moral in that it affords or constrains the pursuit of goals.

In dominant Western epistemology, however, place is not epistemically salient. Western epistemology seeks to articulate a "view from nowhere."[101] For example, René Descartes presents a method to attain a clear and distinct vision of the truth that is (ostensibly) not situated in a particular way. He affirms that reason, as a universally shared faculty of the mind, leads a knower, through introspection, to universal truths about the self and the world. Experience is a mere occasion for the mind to realize universal objective rational truths. The specific situations of time and place is irrelevant since his method will discern clear and distinct ideas that are not temporally and spatially specific. Knowledge is beyond doubt when it is deduced from placeless universals. For example, the clear and distinct idea that "I think, I exist" is as true now as it was for Descartes in 1637. Located claims of the kind 'p is true here and now,' on the other hand, are also always and everywhere true since 'here' and 'now' are indexical to a particular place and time. Even though located claims are always and everywhere true, they do not imply, however, a universal. For example, "it is raining in Eugene" does not imply a universal claim "it is raining everywhere."[102] As such, located claims are less useful in the deduction of universal truths.

Place, unlike in Deloria and Wildcat's account, is not an agent that creates a sense of identity but rather names an epistemically neutral, and so irrelevant, feature. Place is a

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[101] Most prominently in Thomas Nagel's *The View From Nowhere* (1986).

[102] In predicate logic, the rule of universal generalization states that ∀xfx can be inferred from any proposition fx where 'x' stands for an arbitrary, placeless individual that does not appear in the premises. From any universal generalization, we may validly infer any instance of it.

qualification that is relevant to claims of *ownership* but not essential to knowledge

(claims can be made *about* places, but places are not necessary for all claims). Place, or

land, does not have an agential role in knowledge-production. For this reason, I assert

that dominant Western epistemology presents a placeless account of rationality.

According to a placeless account of rationality, place is not essential to knowing. While

knowing which is placed is *possible* according to Western epistemology, it is of limited

value. For this reason, Deloria and Wildcat's accounts illustrate an agential relationship

to land that contradicts and rebuffs settler colonial conceptions of epistemology and

metaphysics.[103] The following section explains how the placelessness of Western

epistemology is taken to justify land dispossession by eliminating Indigenous peoples

from the realm of reason.

In Western dominant epistemology, the placelessness of rationality leads to a

conception of land as property. An example of this can be found in Locke's social

contract theory, which articulates a model of rationality in terms of property ownership.

In *The Second Treatise of Government*, Locke begins his argument for monarchy by

stating that men are naturally free and equal. The law of nature, which is God's law to

man that is found out by reason, obliges everyone to not "harm another in his life, health,

liberty, or possessions" (Locke 1952, 5). The natural liberty of man in the state of nature

is to be free from the legislative authority of man and to be ruled solely by the law of

nature.[104] In this state of nature, there is no common judge with authority to settle

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[103] Deloria and Wildcat identify metaphysical assumptions of Western civilization of materialism and machine metaphysics as undermining Indigenous knowledge (Deloria and Wildcat 2001, 10-12).

[104] Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau all ground their argument for the creation of the state as a necessary corrective to their conceptions of the state of nature. Seyla Benhabib argues that the metaphor of the state of nature plays an important role in modern moral and political philosophy, in that it serves as a "looking glass of these early bourgeois thinkers in which they and their societies are magnified, purified and

disputes, and as such, everyone has the right to punish, and even kill, offenders of the law of nature (1952, 8). Individuals enter into a state of war whenever someone threatens their life or takes their property, which is a threat to their liberty. Locke argues that they leave the state of nature by entering into one community and forming a body politic under one legislative authority. The creation of the commonwealth removes them from states of war since it establishes a common authority that can adjudicate on competing claims to property. With the creation of the commonwealth, individuals transfer to the governing authority their natural right to be the executioner of the law of nature.

Locke argues that civil society is primarily concerned with the preservation of *property*. Property that is given to individuals by God and that is held in common in the state of nature becomes *mine* when I mix my labor with the property. Ownership arises when the labor of my body is attached to property previously commonly held (the land, the fruit, etc.). The accumulation of private possessions is limited however to the consumption of perishables. No one can justly own things that she cannot use. The use of money to exchange goods thus becomes central to Locke's account of the limitations to property ownership. He affirms that God gave humans dominion over the earth so that the industrious can enhance its value through their labor. The commonwealth, through the establishment of legislative power, is thus necessary in order to enjoy one's property in "peace and safety" (1952, 75). Locke defines society as nothing but "the consent of a number of freeman, capable of majority to unite and incorporate" (1952, 97). Consent to

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reflected in their original, naked verity" (Benhabib 1986, 408). Hobbes' state of constant warfare, Locke's God-given state of natural equality and Rousseau's utopia free from social intervention reflect, she argues, these men's "flaws, fears and anxieties, as well as dreams" (Ibid.). Hobbes' state of nature reflects a paranoid obsession with the fear of death, Locke's reveals a fantasy of an efficient self-made property owner, and Rousseau's shows his aspiration for a fictional noble savage.

laws becomes the ground of political legitimacy. Consent to the governing laws can be either explicitly given or can be given tacitly through the possession or "enjoyment of any part of the dominions of any government" (1952, 68).

I contend that Locke presents a model of settler colonial epistemology that puts forward a definition of rationality in terms of a specific relationship to land. Locke writes that land is to be owned by the one who works on it. It is not an agent, but an object of an agent's labor. According to Locke, land is "almost worthless," because "it is *labor* […] which puts the greatest part of the value upon land" (1952, 26—emphasis added). Locke offers an account of a specific relationship to land in terms of rationality (i.e., a rational relationship to land is one that is predicated upon a logic of capitalism and private ownership). Moreover, he explicitly uses his definition of land and labor to justify settler colonial expansion and Indigenous land dispossession.[105] Since he considers Indigenous peoples to not be properly mixing their labor with the land, they do not own it and, as such, it is up for grabs.

Locke's account of land is epistemological insofar as one can see it as a natural consequent of the epistemic assumptions that he develops in his 1689 text, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* I emphasize the epistemological dimension of Locke's land-relation to clarify the links between settler colonial epistemology and epistemic elimination, which justifies Indigenous land dispossession by relegating their ways of knowing and relating to land to the realm of unreason. For this reason, I argue that Locke's political writings that justify Indigenous land dispossession are a consequence of his epistemic assumptions.

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[105] See Tully 1994.

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Unlike Descartes, Locke contends that knowledge is rooted in sense experience. His empiricism is greatly informed by the scientific method and the idea that scientific progress emerges from observation and experimentation. There are no innate ideas since our minds are, for Locke, a *tabula rasa* prior to sensations (Book II). In Book IV, he defines knowledge as a relation (of agreement or disagreement) of ideas.[106] For example, I know that '7 is greater than 3' insofar as I perceive that there is a size relation of bigger and smaller between the two ideas.

Knowledge does not emerge from place but is a consideration of the relationship of *ideas*. By defining knowledge as the relation of ideas, Locke effectively leaves knowledge placeless. While he contends that ideas come from sense-impressions, the relations connecting ideas do not emanate from sense-experience but are known through the agreement or disagreement that obtains between them. Hence, the relation of ideas does not depend on their being grounded in place, but can be known by anyone, anywhere, at any time. It is this notion of things been known by *anyone, anywhere,* and *at any time* that contributes to the placelessness of Locke's epistemology.[107] Indeed, one can see this account reaffirmed by other empiricists, like David Hume, who insist that relations of ideas (such as mathematical operations) are *a priori* and universally true, and thus do not depend on their being verified in experience (in some place, some time, by someone).

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[106] "*Knowledge* then seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*. Where this Perception is, there is Knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of Knowledge." (Locke 1975, 4.2.2).

[107] The process of knowing for Locke is to find what is *common* among diverse experiences, rather than what is distinct about one experience.

How do claims *about* place fit such a model? It seems as though 'X owns Y' (where Y here refers to a plot of land) names not only an *abstract* relation, but a relation of ownership about a particular plot of land. It is, however, an *idea* of the one place that is related to X. The plot of land itself (whatever that is) is secondary to the idea of the plot of land. Just as land is only considered valuable if it is worked, plots of land are only owned if they are properly ideated by an agent. If people do not properly have an idea of a land (with its specific location and dimensions), then there is no claim. Those who refuse to have such ideas of ownership cannot properly *know* it.

Locke as an Exemplar Settler Colonialist

Locke's placeless account of knowledge throws into sharp relief his colonial desire for place in the form of expansion. Rather than regard his epistemic and political writings as contradictory positions, they can be seen as mutually entailing the other.[108] For if knowledge is unbounded by place, then it can go anywhere. Likewise, if there is unowned land, the colonist can go anywhere. Locke famously justifies settler colonial expansion in North America by characterizing lands as being unused by Native populations. In the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Locke affirms that "in the beginning all the world was America," viz., "uncivilized." As such, settler colonial expansion is not, in fact, an infringement of individual rights since the very land that is contested is not being cultivated in the appropriate—i.e., rational—way.[109] Since land is

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[108] Max Milam shows the consistency between Locke's epistemology and political writings through his definition of knowledge in terms of property (Milam 1967). Locke's conception of knowledge as a kind of possession or property marks the continuity between how he thinks about knowledge and how he thinks about land relations.

[109] Tully 2000c, 27.

not plotted or assigned, Native Americans are taken to be unable to plot or assign it properly. As such, it is up to properly rational knowers to properly assign it (by using measures to objectively determine its location to assign its latitude and longitude) to do so.[110]

Locke's language of rationality as ownership can be found in the very way North American colonists wrote about the Indigenous populations they encountered. The way in which settler colonial expansion (and dispossession of Indigenous lands) was framed and justified reveals underlying norms of rationality and who counts as a credible knower and political agent. With Locke as an exemplar of the "driving moral ethic of the West," the settler rational subject is driven to "appropriate nature, accumulate property, and cultivate" (Seawright 2014, 566).[111]

Such an account is found in William Robertson's 1777 *History of the Discovery and Settlement of North America* in which he writes that "Indians [sic] cannot rise out of their state of nature because of their inherent moral failings, which are demonstrated in their inherent traits that exclude them from the universal human" (qtd in Konkle 2004, 10).[112] Indigenous peoples are destined to remain in their 'state of nature'—what he calls a "state of wild unassisted nature"—because they do not have a relationship to land as property (Robertson 1852, 782). Robertson touts the familiar line that a different

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[110] On the effort to determine longitude in response to Newton's idea of particles that can have determined space and location, see Sobel 2007.

[111] For this reason, Tully argues that Locke provides "a set of concepts we standardly use to represent and reflect on contemporary politics" (Tully 1994, 137).

[112] Robertson was a Scottish historian who was part of the Scottish Enlightenment and a founding member, along with David Hume, Adam Smith and Allan Ramsay, of the Edinburgh's Select Society.

relationship to land marks an inherent inferiority. As such, private property is the mark of rationality and civilization.

The conception of Indigenous nations' state of nature is not presented as an original position from which to describe legitimate political authority in the form of a social contract but rather as a permanent state of mental immaturity. Insofar as Indigenous peoples did not characterize land as something to be owned, they were seen as less rational (or even pre-rational) and incapable of escaping their state of nature to achieve civilization.[113] As such, Robertson characterizes North America as "occupied by such people were almost in the same state as if they had been without inhabitants" (1852, 782). The equation of property and civilization justifies the colonists' seizure of land, since, as the story goes, "Indians [sic] [did] not appreciate the importance of property, they [were] morally and intellectually incapable of perceiving the tenets of natural law, and therefore incapable of forming governments administered by the rule of law and of being civilized, political subjects" (Konkle 2004, 10).[114] Insofar as Native Americans were purportedly unable to grasp the regularities of natures as placeless laws of nature (such as causation as something applicable everywhere), they were taken to be unable to follow rules of law. Indigenous peoples remain fixed to a state of nature until they

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[113] This judgment recalls Charles Eastman's, a Dakota Ohiyesa, story: "A missionary once undertook to instruct a group of Indians in the truths of his holy religion. He told them of the creation of the earth in six days, and of the fall of our first parents by eating an apple. The courteous savages listened attentively, and after thanking him, one related in his turn a very ancient tradition concerning the origin of maize. But the missionary plainly showed his disgust and disbelief, indignantly saying: 'What I delivered to you were sacred truths, but this that you tell me is mere fable and falsehood!' 'My brother,' gravely replied the offended Indian, 'it seems that you have not been well grounded in the rules of civility. You saw that we, who practice these rules, believed your stories; why, then, do you refuse to credit ours?' (Eastman 1980, 30).

[114] "Where the right of separate and exclusive possession is not introduced, the great object of law and jurisdiction does not exist" (Robertson 1852, 162-163).

changed to a 'more rational' conception of land. Unlike Locke's model of political

community through social contract whereby each resigns his executive power of law of

nature to the public, Indigenous communities emerge from their state of nature, on this

account, through a reconceptualization of land as property (Locke 1952, 50).[115]

The settler colonial desire to own property and to improve upon their property

sets a moral standard in addition to a standard of rationality. According to a settler

colonial epistemology, an agential relationship to land is not only an epistemic failing,

but also a moral failing. This moral failing of Indigenous peoples is "a product of their

incapacity to perceive the tenets of natural law" (Konkle 2004, 11). This so-called

inferiority was taken to illustrate an inability to grasp abstract ideas, internalize moral

laws, articulate an understanding of time and space and form real governments. Insofar as

Indigenous peoples were labelled as unable to grasp abstract ideas and their relations of

agreement or disagreement (the epistemic standard according to Locke), they were

deemed to be epistemically inferior. On this account, the (inaccurate) perception that

Indigenous nations did not seek to improve the land through means of European

cultivation signaled a mark of rational and moral inferiority.

Along this line of argumentation, Secretary of War Henry Knox's report to

Congress in 1789 articulated the rationale for the United States' governmental policy

towards Indigenous nations. He hypothesized that "if Indians could be persuaded to

change their practices to EuroAmerican ones, fundamentally with regard to the issue of

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[115] Locke defines society as nothing but "the consent of a number of freeman, capable of majority to unite
and incorporate" (Locke 1952, 97). Consent to laws becomes the ground of political legitimacy. Consent to
the governing laws can be either explicitly given or can be given tacitly through the possession or
"enjoyment of any part of the dominions of any government" (1952, 68).

property, they would willingly submit—consent – to EuroAmerican authority" (qtd in Konkle 2004, 10). The idea was that a rational conception of land would lead to an appreciation of the legitimacy of settler authority. As such, settlers interpreted the rejection of settler authority as an expression of moral and rational inferiority. Knox's hypothesis would be repeatedly disproven.[116]

The exclusion of Indigenous peoples as knowers is not accidental, but integral, to the settler colonial project of eliminating the Indigenous presence. For this reason, Gardner Seawright argues that "white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism coexist with anthropocentrism in the Western body of knowledge to create settler traditions of *place*" (Seawright 2014, 559—emphasis added). According to settler colonial epistemology, Indigenous relationships to land premised upon an agent ontology fundamentally misunderstands what land is, which is something to be measured and used, such that that land is open to proper acquisition.

Following the settler colonial logic of elimination, land is remade and reconceptualized as property and, as such, epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land other than as property are "made pre-modern and backward" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 5). In addition to this characterization of land as property, Bang and Marin contend that settler colonialism requires the "establishment of settler lifeways as the normative benchmark from which to measure development" (Bang and Marin 2015, 532). More than a mere dismissal, settler conceptions of rationality both justify seizure of land and also actively *remake* land, such that "the way nature was perceived, understood,

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[116] One counter-example to this line of thinking is the Cherokee Nation, who took up a European conception of property and yet continued to be considered irrational Natives.

and interacted with was transformed at the most fundamental levels" (Seawright 2014, 563). An account of knowing through abstract relations sets the standard in the colonial world. This is a settler colonial epistemology that leads to an *epistemic* elimination of Indigenous peoples as rational knowers. Indigenous peoples who do not know properly, since they do not assign land in determinate space or plot land to be owned, are eliminated as knowers. The following section explains two effects of this epistemic elimination: the legal category of *terra nullius* and residential (and boarding) schools policy.

Epistemic Elimination: Terra Nullius

An understanding of the *epistemic* elimination of Indigenous peoples explains how a populated North American continent could be characterized as belonging to no one (*terra nullius*) since it was populated by peoples deemed irrational. Carole Pateman tracks the application of the doctrine of terra nullius to legitimize the interests of white settlers in Australia (Pateman and Mills 2007). The doctrine of *terra nullius*, meaning 'land belonging to nobody' is a legal concept that came to be used in the 17th century to allow European colonial powers the right to occupy what belonged to no one. The definition of 'belonging to no one' is not narrowly defined as *uninhabited* but includes habituated areas that were judged to be uncultivated or without sovereign government. Pateman asserts that white settlers characterized populated territories "as mere waste or wilderness, and so legitimately open to seizure," based on the criteria of not having a form of government "appropriate to a civil society" (2007, 36). According to a settler colonial epistemology, the form of government appropriate to a civil society requires a

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conception of land as property. Consequently, European colonizers perceived the

populated continent as belonging to *no one*, because it was populated by so-called

uncivilized peoples. For this reason, the doctrine of *terra nullius* exemplifies how the

justification of the seizure of Indigenous lands occurs through an elimination of

Indigenous peoples as knowers.

Epistemic Elimination: Residential School Policy

Another example of the effect of the epistemic elimination inherent in settler

colonial epistemology is the mandate of both the United States' boarding schools and

Canada's residential school policy. Capt. Richard Pratt famously stated that the goal of

the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, as well as other US boarding schools, was to "kill

the Indian, and Save the Man."[117] In Canada, the first boarding school opened in New

France in the early seventeenth century with the goal to both "civilize and Christianize

young Aboriginal boys" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 28).[118] The first residential schools

failed to take root until the 1880s with the settler expansion of the Northwest. Roman

Catholic and Protestant missionaries established missions and small boarding schools

across the Prairies, in the North, and in British Columbia. Most of these schools received

small, per-student grants from the federal government. While the ostensible goal of the

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[117] Luther Standing Bear, member of the Sioux Nation, provides account of his experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School that outlines these violences (Standing Bear 2006).

[118] Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, told the House of Commons in 1883: "When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men." (*Honouring the Truth* 2015*,* 12).

schools was to educate (and 'civilize') Indigenous peoples, their primary goal was the devastation of Indigenous nations so that the Canadian government could gain control over their land and resources. As the TRC final report observes—"If every Aboriginal person had been 'absorbed into the body politic,' there would be no reserves, no Treaties, and no Aboriginal rights. Residential schooling quickly became a central element in the federal government's Aboriginal policy" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 3). If Indigenous peoples became *rational*, then they could become part of the Canadian polity. In addition to the cultural, spiritual, and physical elimination of Indigenous communities, these schools explicitly aimed to undermine and eliminate Indigenous epistemologies. As such, the residential school policy offers another stunning example of the elimination of Indigenous peoples (and knowledges) as a manifestation of the settler colonial project of land dispossession.

Conclusion

The settler colonial aim of elimination leads to different forms of elimination— statistical elimination, elimination through settler myths, and epistemic elimination. In order to describe this third form of elimination, I present Locke as a model of Western rationality that justifies settler colonial expansionism by defining a rational relationship to land as something to be plotted, used, and owned. According to this settler colonial definition of land, agential relationships to land and place, as demonstrated by Indigenous peoples, are evaluated as incoherent and as evidence of a moral and rational inferiority. This evaluation comes to form an epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. This epistemic elimination justifies land dispossession. Moreover, this

epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism explains both the doctrine of *terra nullius* and the assimilationist goals of the United States' boarding schools and Canada's residential schools. These different forms of elimination are ultimately grounded in the settler desire for territory. Thus, an epistemic elimination comes to serve as justification for the seizure of land and the elimination of Indigenous presence. The elimination of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason affects how their testimony (especially emotional testimony) is heard by a settler audience. The following chapter shows how the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples discredits their testimony in ways that uphold settlers' ignorance of settler colonialism.

CHAPTER IV

SETTLER IGNORANCE[119]

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad

chapter in our history [...] we recognize that this policy of assimilation

was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Statement of Apology 2008

Canada has no history of colonialism.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, G20 Address 2009

Introduction

In 2008, former Prime Minister Harper called the residential school policy an evil

that has "no place in our country" in his official Statement of Apology for the Indian

Residential Schools Policy, which precipitated the creation of the Canadian TRC. And

yet, a year later he proudly proclaimed that "Canada has no history of colonialism"

during his G20 Address. How can we make sense of this seeming contradiction by a man

supposedly educated and informed by residential school survivors? What was the evil of

residential schools if not the evil of (settler) colonialism? This seems, at first glance, to be

a set of contradictory statements in which one of the two statements must be false. Does

Prime Minister Harper believe that (i) residential schools were part of a violent settler

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[119] A version of this chapter will be published in *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly Special Issue: Epistemic Injustice and Recognition Theory* (forthcoming).

colonial project, or (ii) Canada has no history of colonialism? It seems like he can hold one, but not both.

Epistemology, as the study of knowledge, and propositional knowledge more specifically, uses the schema 'S knows that p', where 'S' stands for some subject who has knowledge and '*p*' for the proposition that is known from direct observation.[120] For example, 'Harper knows that Canada has no history of colonialism' and 'Harper knows that residential schools were a violent settler colonial endeavor' are contradictory propositions, in which at least one of these statements must be false. Traditional epistemology tells us that this conflict must be resolved by determining which individual proposition is false by looking for correspondence with the external world. This determination will answer which statement is a *justified true belief.*

Drawing from feminist social epistemology, I argue, however, that this way of proceeding is an impoverished one, especially as it pertains to an explanation of Prime Minister Harper's denial of settler colonialism. Firstly, in the standard model of epistemology, it is reason alone, uncontaminated from the unreliability of the body, that leads to objective knowledge. In 'S knows that p' epistemology, the complexity, messiness, and situatedness of life is negated in favor of analytic simplicity and an aspiration for infinite replicability. These claims to objectivity and universality have been intensely disputed in feminist standpoint theory.[121] Sandra Harding, in particular, eschews assumptions about "solitary generic knowers on an indifferent landscape

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[120] The traditional view is epitomized in Thomas Nagel's *A View From Nowhere* (1986).

[121] The Marxist concept of "standpoint theory" has been further developed in Sandra Harding's work. See Harding's edited volume *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* (Harding 2004) and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowermen*t (Collins 1990).

accumulating verifiable 'bits' of information" (Code 2014, 153). This feminist intervention reveals that the supposed generality is in fact a situated position, namely one of a white able-bodied man—"the 'generic' S does refer to a 'standard' white male knower or doer" (2014, 150). Neutrality is not so neutral after all but is rather an expression of power and privilege (with its specific interests and values). With this intervention, the stark distinction between epistemology and ethics begins to fade as knowledge practices can no longer be taken to be ethically and politically neutral.

Another limitation of this model of knowledge is the *individualism* of the 'S knows that p' schema of knowledge that abstracts knowledge-production away from its social environment.[122] The turn to *social* epistemology emerges from the recognition of the fundamentally relational aspect of knowledge production. This intervention investigates the epistemic effects of social interaction and takes *testimony* to be central to knowledge production.[123] Testimony does not fall into the 'S knows that p' model insofar as it is interactive—there are speakers and hearers. Over and above considerations of truth and justification, a focus on testimony brings matters of "trust, credibility, responsiveness and responsibility, epistemic character and situation" to the fore in knowledge-making and knowledge-circulating practices (2014, 152).[124] Framed in terms

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[122] Social epistemology, such as Helen Longino's *The Fate of Knowledge* (2002), undoes the dichotomy between sociality and knowledge, as she argues that sociality contributes *positively* to knowledge production.

[123] Testimony here refers to a "range of practices from simply telling one another the time of day to the complex verbal and written reports that are the substance of knowledge-conveying exchanges between and among people in the real world" (Code 2014, 152).

[124] Linda Martín Alcoff notes that testimony is broadly categorized as either inferential or non-inferential (Alcoff 2010, 129). In the former, testimony justifies a belief by inference, whereas in the latter testimony justifies a belief directly.

of testimony, knowledge production is no longer described impersonally and without social location. Kristie Dotson puts it succinctly— "In short, to communicate we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us" (Dotson 2011, 238).

One outcome of the turn to testimony has been to seriously consider ignorance, that is, the failure of knowledge-production and knowledge-circulation, as an epistemic practice.[125] As a result, Robert Proctor and Londa Schiebinger named and defined the field of 'agnotology' as "the study of ignorance making, the lost and forgotten" (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008, vii 2008).[126] Agnotology aims to observe the causes and distribution of ignorance in order to question the characterization of ignorance as a natural absence and a void to be corrected or filled in. For this reason, the study of ignorance (what we do not know) is meant to compliment the study of knowledge (what we know).[127]

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[125] The development of an epistemology of ignorance as a firmly ethical and political inquiry can be traced to the 2003 NEH summer seminar in feminist epistemology and the 2004 Penn State Rock Ethics Institute Conference, "Ethics and Epistemologies of Ignorance." The proceedings of the conference led to a volume in *Hypatia* and to Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana's edited volume *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (2007).

[126] The term agnotology is a neologism that differentiates the study of ignorance (how it is created and maintained) from agniology, the "doctrine of things of which we are necessarily ignorant" (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008, 27). The former term emphasizes the historicity and artifactuality of not-knowing.

[127] As an initial outline of the field of agnotology, Richard Proctor provides a topology of three different types of ignorance: "ignorance as native state (or resource), ignorance as lost realm (or selective choice), and ignorance as a deliberately engineered and strategic ploy (or active construct)" (Proctor 2008, 3). This differentiation of types of ignorance highlights the need for an investigation of the conditions that produce or sustain ignorance, the political factors that lead to specific forms of ignorance, and the relationship between these forms of ignorance and their corresponding forms of knowledge. The first type portrays ignorance as the prompt for inquiry. It is the native state of not knowing that must be overcome, and it is what drives scientific inquiry. The second considers inquiry (and thus ignorance) as selectively chosen. It characterizes ignorance as having a "political geography" such that we can ask: "Who knows not? And why not? Where is there ignorance and why?" (2008, 6). The third considers ignorance as something that is "made, maintained, and manipulated by means of certain arts and sciences" (2008, 8). An example of this latter kind of ignorance would be research subsidized by the tobacco industry that aims to maintain a "studied ignorance" of the fatal effects of tobacco (2008, 17-20).

The impulse to seriously consider ignorance as a kind of knowledge has emerged as a powerful critical intervention to traditional epistemology. The study of ignorance, and social ignorance specifically, aims to identify different forms of ignorance and examine how they are produced and sustained. It asks which epistemic practices make it such that 'S does *not* know p.' In this way, ignorance is not taken to be a "*neglectful* epistemic practice" or simply a *lack* of knowledge but is rather considered as a "*substantive* epistemic practice" (Sullivan and Tuana 2007, 39). Ignorance is not simply a result of failed inquiry or "faulty justification practices," it is structural and is the result of "*practices* of ignorance" (2007, 40). Analyses of ignorance pose questions at the intersection of "cognitive norms, structural privilege, and situated identities" (Alcoff 2007, 39).

A study of ignorance reveals cognitive frameworks of ignorance and the "role of power in the construction of what is known and [provides] a lens for the political values at work in our knowledge practices" (Sullivan and Tuana 2007, 2). The central claim of an epistemology of ignorance is that an account of knowledge is incomplete without an account of ignorance and an account of ignorance is incomplete without an account of who benefits and who is disadvantaged by such ignorance. In particular, investigations of racial ignorance examine how a lack of knowledge is "actively produced for purposes of domination and exploitation" (2007, 1).

With these two critical interventions in mind, an investigation of former Prime Minister Harper's statement becomes more complicated. In particular, the positionality of *S*—in this case former Prime Minister Harper—*matters* to an evaluation of his proposition and his attribution of the credibility of residential school survivors emerges as

an important factor. In other words, if he does not consider residential school survivors to be credible knowers, then their testimonies have little weight.

I contend that the development of epistemologies of ignorance in social epistemology is well suited to better understand the conjunction of Prime Minister Harper's 2008 and 2009 statements. In other words, Harper can hold both these statements as true and that something important about these statements is lost if we fail to evaluate them in conjunction. What would it mean to take Harper's statement that Canada has no history of colonialism, in the face of testimonies that this is patently false, as a belief that is reasonably held? In fact, this seeming lack of knowledge is indicative of a *kind* of knowing that settler colonialism propagates. I propose, then, to evaluate the statement "Canada has no history of colonialism" not as presenting a *lack* of knowledge, but as asserting a particular kind of knowledge.

In the previous chapter, I argued that settler colonial epistemology is one in which Indigenous peoples are discounted as rational knowers because of an agential relationship to land. The settler colonial logic of elimination implies an epistemic elimination, which is the elimination of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. In this chapter, I show how the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples discounts their testimony in a way that upholds settlers' ignorance of settler colonialism. The assumptions of a settler colonial epistemology both justify and motivate an ignorance of past and ongoing settler colonialism, what I call 'settler ignorance.'

In order to explain how settler ignorance functions as a kind of knowledge, I draw on Charles Mills' description of white ignorance and expand it to an account of white

settler ignorance.[128] My explanation of settler ignorance emerges from an engagement with social epistemology, settler colonial studies, and Native feminisms. I begin with an overview of developments in social epistemology with an emphasis on white ignorance. Secondly, I show how settler ignorance functions by (i) distancing present testimonies to the past and (ii) discrediting emotional expressions as signs of individual pathology. Thirdly, I explain how, structural settler ignorance comes to form the everyday settler common sense such that Indigenous voices are needed in order to identify and make this ignorance visible. Finally, I use Kristie Dotson's characterization of epistemic oppression to show how negative prejudicial stereotypes undermine the credibility of Indigenous speakers. Epistemic oppression cannot be transformed solely through individual cognitive changes or to changes in shared hermeneutical resources. Material changes, and land restoration more specifically, must be central to a concerted effort to transform settler ignorance.

White Ignorance

Analyses of ignorance with an emphasis on race were first articulated in Marilyn Frye's 1983 *The Politics of Reality* and in Charles Mills' 1997 *The Racial Contract*. Frye defines ignorance not as a simple absence, but as an active force. In particular, she names the non-accidental ignorance of white feminists who think of themselves as anti-racist while remaining largely oblivious to the worlds of women of color. Additionally, she cites "the determined ignorance most white Americans have of American Indian tribes and clans, the ostrich-like ignorance most white Americans have of the histories of Asian

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[128] I use 'settler ignorance' and 'white settler ignorance' synonymously.

peoples in this country, the impoverishing ignorance most white Americans have of Black language—ignorance of these sorts is a complex result of many acts and many negligences" (Frye 1983, 118).

Mills gives a structural account of white ignorance such that ignorance is not explained in terms of the situatedness of group identities that leads to particular blind spots and specific insights (as exemplified in the works of Code and Harding), but in terms of structural forms of oppression.[129] Ignorance is more than just the individual prejudicial blind spots according to one's group identity. It is a structural feature of white supremacy. As such, dominant groups not only "have less interest" in criticizing the status quo, but they "have a positive interest in 'seeing the world wrongly'" (Mills 2007, 47). In other words, there are concrete benefits to this sustained ignorance. Mills illustrates this by looking at the notion of "color blindness" (2007, 25). Color blindness fosters a worldview in which racial violence can be easily overlooked. Rather than promoting racial equality, color blindness, in the wake of historical inequality and white normativity, actively separates present perception from past wrongs thus ignoring the ways in which a history of racial domination shapes the present.

Mills' articulation of the Racial Contract famously formulates an epistemology of ignorance within white supremacy, which prescribes for "its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the

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[129] Lorraine Code analyses the role of subjectivity in knowing. Given her call to "take subjectivity into account," she claims that ignorance follows from our situatedness as knowers (Code 2008). What and how we know is dependent on our social location as a knower such that there is no interchangeable subject S of the schema 'S knows that p'. Sandra Harding's work considers the situatedness of *group identities* leads to particular blind spots (Harding 1993).

ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they

themselves have made" (1997, 18). The Racial Contract is an epistemological contract (in

additional to a political and moral contract). An epistemology of ignorance (or an

inverted epistemology) is a requirement for the racial division of the human race into full

persons and racial subpersons (1997, 118-119). Ignorance is here defined as a substantive

epistemic practice that differentiates the dominant group. It is more than an effect of the

knower's general situatedness but is defined in terms of structures of power. As Linda

Martín Alcoff writes, "oppressive systems produce ignorance as one of their effects"

(Alcoff 2007, 40).

In his 2007 article "White Ignorance," Mills further elaborates on the "inverted

epistemology" of the racial contract by describing white ignorance as it is connected to

white supremacy. Firstly, he affirms that an analysis of ignorance must be historicized

since whiteness is a political construct that emerges from a particular history of white

supremacy. Secondly, he acknowledges that an account of white ignorance implies the

possibility of knowledge that can contrast with such ignorance. Mills' account of

knowledge draws on Alvin Goldman's veritistic epistemology, which is concerned with

both knowledge, defined in the "weak" sense as true belief, and its contraries error (false

belief) and ignorance (the absence of true belief) (Goldman 1999, 4).[130] It is not an

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[130] Mills and Alcoff both affirm that a meaningful account of ignorance requires a robust (if reconstructed) account of truth and reason. Alcoff expands upon Mills' analysis of ignorance by drawing on Horkheimer's critique of the ontologies of Western science in order to illustrate that "ignorance is a problem relating not just to justificatory practices but also to ontologies of truth" (Alcoff 2007, 40). She argues that an analysis of ignorance requires more than an analysis of epistemic situatedness or structural contexts of oppression, but that epistemology must be "reflexively aware and critical of its location within an *economic* system" (2007, 57—emphasis added). Drawing on Max Horkheimer's criticism of instrumental rationality, Alcoff defines ignorance as a loss of critical rationality that can only be challenged by a reconstructed and critical notion of objective reason (2007, 53). In order to reveal how instrumentalized reason is a dysfunctional cognitive norm that obscures the truth, Horkheimer contends that we need to denaturalize the social production of the "knowing individual as such" (Horkheimer 1975, 199). A critical description of the world

epistemology that is concerned with justification, but rather is one that seeks to discover

the practices that "have a comparatively favorable impact on knowledge as contrasted

with error and ignorance" (1999, 5). For his purposes of defining white ignorance, Mills

uses the term 'ignorance' to designate both false belief and the absence of true belief, and

white ignorance specifically as the false belief and the absence of true belief about

"people of color, supporting a delusion of white racial superiority that can afflict white

and nonwhite people alike" (Mills 2007, 17). White ignorance is both individual and

collective and, as such, impacts both individual and social memory. White ignorance

supports the social cognition that distorts reality shaped by white supremacy. For

example, the lens shaped by white supremacy causes people suffering from white

ignorance to "mis-see whites as civilized superiors and nonwhites as inferior savages"

(Sullivan and Tuana 2007, 3).[131]

    White ignorance has the result of cultivating a collective amnesia about the past

that undermines the testimony and credibility of nonwhite people. Under this analysis,

white ignorance is naturalized as objective knowledge that rebuffs political analysis.[132] In

this case, the study of ignorance is primarily tasked with unraveling the cognitive

mechanisms associated with structural racial discrimination.

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recognizes knowledge as a reflection or product of "collective human praxis, meaning reflective practical activity" (Alcoff 2007, 51). As such, Horkheimer's critical theory can help us identify the cognitive norms that both naturalize and dehistoricize the process and product of knowing.

[131] James Baldwin and W.E.B. Du Bois both offer accounts of developing a double vision (or "double consciousness") in order to survive (Mills 2007, 18).

[132] Consider, for example, Edward Said's account of the naturalization of Orientalism (Said 1978), whereby the Orient becomes "wholly discrete, stable, and fixed, providing sharp contrast to the Occident" (Alcoff 2007, 56). Said's account of the naturalization of the Orient is helpful in beginning to articulate an account of how white supremacy and settler colonialism come to *naturalize* settler knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

White Settler Ignorance

An epistemology of ignorance offers both a description and explanation of how structures of domination come to inform what can and cannot be known. The task of considering the disavowal of settler colonialism as a particular kind of knowledge involves looking at how oppressive structures inform the epistemic practices of willfully denying past and ongoing settler colonial violence. Work in epistemologies of ignorance and epistemic oppression can help give language to explain sustained denial and provide tools to further understand how it is maintained and how it can be made visible, and so challenged. For this task, Mills' articulation of white ignorance should be expanded to a consideration of *white settler* ignorance.

An account of white settler ignorance develops out of an appreciation of the intersection of white supremacy and settler colonial violence. Aileen Moreton-Robinson's work on the logic of white possession highlights how racism is "inextricably tied to the theft and appropriation of Indigenous lands in the first world" (Moreton-Robinson 2015, xiii). She defines white possession as a set of rationalizing processes that are "operationalized within discourses to circulate sets of meaning about ownership of the nation, as part of commonsense knowledge, decision making, and socially produced conventions" (2015, xii).

Although Mills speaks to the role of the "state of nature" in the white settler state, he does not explicitly thematize white *settler* ignorance as part of the Racial Contract's epistemological contract (Mills 1997, 12-19). For this reason, my account fills out what is only sketched out in Mills' formulation of white ignorance. Building on Mills' analysis of

white ignorance as a kind of *knowing*, his description can be expanded to an account of white settler ignorance (thus highlighting the intersection of settler colonialism and white supremacy). The task of this chapter is to explain what *kind* of knowledge white settler ignorance is and how it functions. Such an account emerges from an examination of settler colonialism's underlying logics. An investigation of the settler colonial "logic of elimination" reveals that the elimination of Indigenous presence normalizes and sediments an ignorance of settler colonialism. The elimination of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason—the account of epistemic elimination I gave in the previous chapter—explains how settlers can remain ignorant of Indigenous peoples' experiences. My description of settler ignorance involves both an account of the conditions of speech that prevent emotional testimonies of the violence inherent in past and present settler colonialism from being heard as meaningful, legitimate and self-affirming political expression, as well as a conceptual framework to explain the experience of historical amnesia. In other words, settler ignorance is maintained by hearing testimonies of present settler colonial violence as an expression of *past* wrongs and individual pathology rather than as an expression of ongoing settler colonial violence.

Patrick Wolfe's description of settler colonialism's logic of elimination gives us an entry point to consider how settler colonialism *functions* to eliminate Indigenous peoples (both physically and discursively). For Wolfe, the logic of elimination manifests in both the dissolution of native societies, and in the erection of a "new colonial society on the expropriated land base" (Wolfe 2006, 388). In order to assert settler normativity, the settler colonial logic of elimination of Indigenous presence also mandates an invisibility (and ignorance) of settler colonialism. Importantly, the logic of elimination

that underlies settler colonialism aims not only at the elimination of Indigenous peoples but also to its very own extinction. Whereas colonialism seeks to reproduce itself, settler colonialism seeks to become invisible. Lorenzo Veracini writes: "Settler colonialism justifies its operation on the basis of the expectation of its future demise" (Veracini 2011, 3). In other words, settler colonialism aims to no longer be settler colonial and to become either 'settled' or 'postcolonial.'[133] For this reason, settler colonialism, when successful, "effectively covers its tracks" (2011, 3).

This 'covering its tracks' entails certain ignorance of its own operation. Insofar as settler colonialism aims for complete *settlement*, it demands both the elimination of Indigenous peoples and the ignorance of its own operations. Settler colonialism aims to make itself invisible, and structural settler ignorance is a way of furthering this invisibility. An account of structural settler ignorance exemplifies how a process of ongoing structural domination leads to settlers' obliviousness about settler colonial violence.

Settler colonialism as a structure mandates the ignorance of its own operations. This ignorance is structural insofar as it is a necessary outcome of the settler project of eliminating Indigenous presence. For this reason, settler Canadians' obliviousness about past and present settler colonial violence is not accidental but is a structural feature of settler colonialism. Settler ignorance is maintained by discrediting testimonies of ongoing

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[133] Veracini cites Ronald Horvath's classification of six types of colonization, with type 1 being the closest to settler colonialism: "Type 1 is colonization in which the dominant relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is extermination of the latter. In the extreme sense of the word, to exterminate is to root out totally or eradicate. History provides us with relatively few examples where total extermination of the inhabitants of geographic entities occurred—among them the European occupation of Tasmania and of some of the Caribbean islands—but extermination of the inhabitants of vast areas of America, Australia, Canada, and Tsarist and Communist Russia can also be cited here" (Horvath 1972, 47).

settler colonial violence by Indigenous speakers. In other words, settlers can remain oblivious when testimonies of settler colonial violence are not heard as factually relevant or politically meaningful.

An account of settler ignorance as a necessary outcome of a settler colonial logic of elimination can help us better understand former Prime Minister Harper's two statements: "Canada has no history of colonialism" and "Residential school policy […] has no place in our history." What do these two statements made by the same person just one year apart signal about how settler colonial power is maintained and re-legitimated? Examining these two statements in conjunction allows us to better appreciate how the disavowal of colonialism reveals a particular kind of knowledge production and nation memory-making.

Settler Ignorance: Present to Past

In the following section, I give an account of structural ignorance by explaining how it functions by discrediting Indigenous speakers through a distancing of present testimonies to a fixed past. In this respect, this account builds on the previous chapter and demonstrates another way in which testimonies by Indigenous speakers get dismissed. Structural settler ignorance functions by discrediting the epistemic agency of Indigenous speakers through the negative prejudicial stereotype of being stuck in a settler *past*. Kevin Bruyneel's account of settler memory is a helpful starting point to explain how settler ignorance functions to form settler common sense by relegating testimonies of ongoing settler colonial violence to a far-away and fixed past.

Bruyneel argues that the explanation for the forgetfulness of settler colonialism as a form of "historical amnesia" is not a lack of memory, but a particular production and presence of memory that he calls "settler memory" (Bruyneel 2013, 237-240).[134] His analysis resonates with historian Ernst Renan's understanding of the nation as constituted in moments of violence which must then be perpetually repressed and forgotten in order to effect national unity (Renan 1882). The act of forgetting is all the more visible in *settler* nations' forgetfulness of their own settler colonial projects (as stated in Prime Minister Harper's G20 Address). Settler colonial nation-building *requires* a certain kind of forgetfulness in order to function.[135] In this vein, Bruyneel tells us that settler memory functions by both seamlessly distancing past injustices from those of the present and disavowing the political relevance of this memory by refusing and absenting the presence of Indigenous people as contemporary agents (Bruyneel 2013, 236). His work on political time is especially useful in better articulating how settler memory shapes "collective and individual identities, subjectivities and imaginaries" (2013, 236).

A feature of structural settler ignorance, then, is its distancing of present testimonies of settler colonialism to the past. Settler ignorance is maintained by hearing testimonies of present settler colonial violence as an expression of *past* wrongs, rather than as an expression of ongoing settler colonial violence. Consider, for example, the 2008 Statement of Apology that prompted the creation of the TRC. Former Prime Minister Harper considered the legacy of the residential school system to be "a sad

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[134] This fleshes out the account of settler memory given in chapter 2.

[135] This can be seen forcefully with the defunding of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), which supports Indigenous healing programs in 145 community-based projects (Nagy 2012, 358).

chapter in our *history* [which] has *no place* in our country," and thus framed the

residential school system as *both* a problem in the *past* (thus erasing ongoing settler

colonial violence to Indigenous peoples[136]), while also diminishing the central role of the

residential schools in settler-colonial nation-building ("it has no place in our country").

Harper's statements in the Statement of Apology denied a settler colonial present by

situating the damage of settler colonial violence in the past. His G20 statement continues

this process of disavowal by denying the settler colonial past.

This is settler ignorance at work, habitually invoking settler colonialism in a

manner that blurs the line between past and present and further re-inscribes the practices

of present day settler violence and dispossession. Specifically, a consideration of these

two statements in conjunction reveals how settler ignorance is maintained by discrediting

Indigenous voices through relegating testimonies of ongoing settler colonialism to an

unchanging past. Nothing can be done now, we should focus on the present rather than on

the evils of our "history." As stated in the TRC's mandate, we should "put the events of

the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future"

(*Honouring our Truth* 2015, 339).

The displacement of Indigenous peoples to a fixed past is yet another example of

the settler colonial logic of elimination. In this case, Indigenous peoples are eliminated by

being eliminated from the present. This mechanism of elimination relegates Indigenous

peoples and their expressions to a distant (and irrelevant) past. To be 'out of time' erases

and denies ongoing Indigenous activity and presence. As Bruyneel writes, "these settler

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[136] Consider, for example, the rates of Indigenous child welfare rates (roughly accounting for 48% of all foster children) creating a "humanitarian crisis" in Canada (Yükselir and Annett 2016 and Barrera 2017).

memories are both there and not there at the same time, before our eyes but also

dispossessed of *active* political meaning in and by the settler imaginary" (2016, 251—

emphasis added).[137] This feature of settler ignorance resonates with Mark Rifkin's

description of settler time whereby Indigenous peoples are in a double bind: "either they

are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined on non-native terms"

(Rifkin 2017, vii).[138]

Settlers experience the world made by settler colonialism, and so experience its

temporalities and understandings of space as natural and, therefore, beyond questioning.

The distancing of present to the past recalls Mills' "inverted epistemology" of the racial

contract in which the temporal distancing works to create a denial of present-day settler

colonial reality (Mills 1997, 19). Settler colonialism demands a temporal displacement of

Indigenous peoples. This displacement (and subsequent erasure) has the effect of both

dismissing the political relevance of residential school survivors' testimony and

disavowing ethical responsibility for a settler colonial present.

According to this temporal displacement, the harm has been done and the 'bad

guys' have died.[139] The narrative of the benevolent settler informs an ignorance of

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[137] Bruyneel's example of the use of "Geronimo" for Osama bin-Laden's codename that both brings the Chiricahua Apache leader to the foreground while reinscribing the settler colonial cultural meaning of his rebellion as a threat to US sovereignty that must be destroyed at all costs (Bruyneel 2016).

[138] Rifkin rejects the notion of universal time that is "dictated by settler expectations of the future, and instead emphasizes Indigenous temporal heterogeneity" (Rifkin 2017, 16). He argues that there is a multiplicity of temporalities that coexist and that this multiplicity makes expressions of temporal sovereignty possible (2017, 30).

[139] "In a global era of apology and reconciliation, Canadians, like their counterparts in other settler nations, face a moral and ethical dilemma that stems from an unsavoury colonial past. Canadians grew up believing that the history of their country is a story of the cooperative venture between people who came from elsewhere to make a better life and those who were already here, who welcomed and embraced them, aside from a few bad white men" (Alfred in Regan 2010).

ongoing settler colonialism (we're so benevolent!) and the narrative of the chaotic Native

justifies a denial of past settler colonialism (they needed to be tamed!) (Barker 2009, 326,

347). According to this story, as a settler, I am not implicated in or responsible for

continued land dispossession and the settler colonial myth of Canadian peace-making can

remain intact.[140]

Settler Ignorance: Emotional Expression

A second feature of settler ignorance relates to a negative stereotype that

Indigenous communities are irrational (or pre-rational). The previous chapter named the

dismissal of Indigenous peoples from the realm of reason. A settler colonial conception

of rationality eliminates Indigenous peoples by creating negative prejudices that

undermine their testimony. In particular, settlers can remain ignorant of settler colonial

violence when Indigenous testimonies are taken to be expressions of individual

pathology. As such, settler ignorance functions by discrediting Indigenous voices as

irrational and a sign of individual pathology. This feature of settler ignorance is most

forcefully articulated by a feminist Native intervention and Dian Million's felt theory in

particular (Million 2009; 2013). Million's felt theory exposes the way testimonies of

abuse and the emotional expressions of internalized colonialism are heard as evidence of

pathological victimhood. For this reason, I argue that settler ignorance is maintained

through the narrative of Indigenous pathological victimhood, which mishears and

dismisses emotional expression.

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[140] Recall that one form of the settler logic of elimination is the elimination through settler nation-building myths (see chapter 3).

A Native feminist intervention can more fully identify and destabilize settler ways of hearing Native expressions of hurt, pain, and anger insofar as it raises the questions of whose voices are heard as politically meaningful in a context of ongoing settler-colonial, capitalist and heteropatriarchical violence. Native feminist theory reveals the key aspect of settler colonialism to be "the consistency and thus naturalization of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism" (Arvin et al. 2013, 14). As Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill put it: "settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process" (2013, 9).[141] In particular, Native feminists have worked on making visible the epistemic assumptions of what counts as academic scholarship.

Million's felt theory, with its attention to the *affective* intersections of heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism, makes visible how settler ignorance functions by delegitimizing and pathologizing emotional expression. She invites us to recognize the way Native women have born "witness to felt colonial experience" (Million 2013, 75). These voices—that of Maria Campbell, Lee Maracle, Ruby Slipperjack, in particular—of a felt history present a powerful challenge to the social control of internalized colonialism and invigorate political discourse of Native self-determination with emotional

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[141] The silence within mainstream feminist thought about settler colonialism has led to a suspicion within Indigenous communities about the use of feminism for decolonial projects (see Shanley 1984; Maracle 2002; Andersen 2010). Arvin et al. raise five central challenges that Native feminist theories pose to gender and women's studies: The first is the intersection of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy; the second is to challenge the conception of Native feminism's 'inclusion' within mainstream feminism as an articulation of hierarchical power; the third is to prioritize questions of land and tribal belonging in building solidarity; the fourth is to foreground Indigenous epistemologies of land and sovereignty; and the fifth is to challenge "how the discursive and material practices of gender and women's studies and the academy writ large may participate in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples' lands, livelihoods, and futures, and to then divest from these practices" (Arvin et al. 2013, 25).

knowledge.[142] Their narratives disrupt settler-colonial silencing and defy the logic of state recognition that pathologizes Native expression.

Million tells us, however, that the embodied knowledge of how colonialism is *felt*—what she calls felt scholarship—has been denied as a legitimate form of knowledge within academia. Their accounts that describe how colonialism is *felt* are political acts in themselves, insofar as they challenge what counts as 'proper' history (2013, 54). First-person narratives that describe, for example, the felt experience of being raped by a priest at ten years old, have been rejected as legitimate historical knowledge (2013, 72). Rather, they have been segregated as a "feminine" experience, as a polemic and as evidence of pathological distress.

Moreover, Million affirms that felt descriptions of colonialism have been interpreted as evidence of individual *pathology* (2013, 59). For this reason, she worries that the emphasis on historical trauma can situate Native communities as static victims in ways that obscure ongoing activities of self-determination—she writes, "the space of medicalized diagnosis as victims of trauma is not a site wherein self-determination is practiced or defined" (2013, 150). While it is important to recognize and name experiences of systemic violence, Million highlights the drawbacks of focusing too narrowly on traumatic experiences.[143] The characterization of Native communities as victims of historical trauma can too easily ignore decolonizing, self-affirming, and community-building practices.

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[142] See Campbell 1973; Maracle 1993; Slipperjack 1987.

[143] Another example of settler distortion of emotional expression is in the consumption of damage or deficit models of Indigenous life, the appropriation of Indigenous pain and suffering as one's own while denying one's complicity in it (see Rosaldo 1989).

A Native feminist evaluation of the TRC thus highlights its performative contradiction of both encouraging emotional expression *and* dismissing it as apolitical non-knowledge. Glen Sean Coulthard echoes this concern with a description of reconciliation as a necessary overcoming of reactive negative emotions, which assumes the "'good' of forgiveness over 'bad' reactive emotions, unhealthy, irrational political violence" (Coulthard 2014, 108). He affirms that this model of reconciliation draws on the Nietzschean characterization of pathological ressentiment as a form of unhealthy dwelling in the past, rather than as an expression of "righteous anger" in reaction to a settler colonial present. Under this definition of reconciliation, Native testimonies of settler colonial violence are heard as "reactive, backward and a passive orientation" (2014, 111). Importantly, he is concerned with the way in which the Canadian TRC locates the traumas of settler colonialism in the past, such that Native testimonies of the impact of the residential schools are heard as a dwelling in the *past*, rather than as an expression of the impact of the ongoing violence of settler colonialism.

The characterization of testimonies as ressentiment illustrates settler ignorance's temporal displacement (as ressentiment is past-orientated) and pathologization of emotional expression. Hearing testimonies of injustices as ressentiment dismisses testimony as not factual, meaningful, or about the present, but rather as irrational and biased ramblings motivated by past wrongs.[144]

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[144] This resonates with Audre Lorde's work on the uses of anger in black feminism (Lorde 2007).

Settler Ignorance as Settler Common Sense

In the previous chapter, I gave an account of settler colonial epistemology in terms of a characterization of land as inert matter to be owned. The settler colonial logic of elimination leads to an epistemic elimination in which Indigenous peoples are eliminated from the realm of reason. This epistemic elimination affects how a settler audience hears testimony by Indigenous speakers. Settler ignorance can appear intractable when Indigenous voices are easily dismissed as irrational and out of time. Epistemic elimination names the system of domination and exploitation that undermines the epistemic agency of Indigenous peoples, whereas settler ignorance names the daily lived experience of settler normativity.[145] The next section explains how settler ignorance comes to form the everyday settler common sense that legitimates and normalizes the elimination of Indigenous peoples as credible knowers.

Settler ignorance comes to form what Rifkin calls "settler common sense," defined as a set of dynamics for granted political and legal structures that both legitimates and normalizes the elimination of Indigenous peoples (Rifkin 2013). The everyday non-Native experiences of space in terms of jurisdiction, occupancy, and ownership and of subjectivity as self-identical comprise settler sovereignty on an *affective* level. This, in turn, shapes "an embodied recognition" of settler sovereignty that does not explicitly take Native dispossession as its direct object (2013, 323). In this respect, Rifkin describes settler colonialism in terms of an affective orientation that forms the background of the settler everyday. Settler selfhood does not, Rikfin argues, follow "axiomatically from

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[145] This resonates with Zeus Leonardo's account of white privilege as a system of domination (Leonardo 2004)

policy formulations and official legal geography," but becomes part of the everyday of settler experience through affective networks (2013, 322).[146]

Rifkin's account of settler common sense gives language to the affective and aesthetic dimensions of settler colonial violence. Settler colonial violence is not limited to disproportionately high incarceration and child welfare rates, violations of treaties, and acquitted murders of unarmed Indigenous teenagers, but is also present in everyday experiences of invisibility.[147] Rifkin's account of settler common sense emphasizes the non-cognitive and affective effects of the everyday invisibility of Indigenous peoples in the public sphere. The forgetfulness of settler colonialism forms the affective background that legitimates both ongoing settler colonial violence and the continued denial or forgetting of settler colonialism by settler Canadians. The settler common sense manifests in a settler every-day in which Canadian sovereignty and Indigenous land dispossession are taken to be both obvious and natural.[148]

An account of settler ignorance as a kind of common sense highlights the affective investments in knowledge-production. The investment in settler normativity impacts how settlers experience a taken-for-granted everyday invisibility of settler colonial violence. Settler common sense names the affective orientation that normalizes Indigenous absence, which in turn leads to an ignorance of a settler colonial reality. This

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[146] Andrea Smith notes that since this settler common sense is constantly made and remade, it can, as such, potentially be unmade (Smith 2014).

[147] Consider, for example, the acquittals of Gerald Stanley for the 2016 murder of Colton Boushie and of Raymond Cormier for the 2014 murder of Tina Fontaine. See MacLean 2018 and Draaisma 2018.

[148] Rifkin looks to canonical American literature (such as Thoreau's *Walden,* Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*, and Melville's *Pierre*) as providing examples of how settlement gives rise to feelings through which the terms of law and policy become "imbued with a sensation of everyday certainty" (Rifkin 2013, 322).

affective orientation normalizes and naturalizes a disavowal of settler colonial violence. This ignorance is neither individual or innocent but is made possible by a settler colonial logic of elimination of Indigenous presence.

Settler Ignorance as Epistemic Oppression

An account of structural ignorance in terms of (i) distancing present testimonies to the past and (ii) discrediting emotional expressions as signs of individual pathology shows how Indigenous speakers are discredited in such a way that infringes their epistemic agency and reduces their ability to participate in a given epistemic community. This dismissal forms the settler everyday experience of settler ignorance. Indigenous peoples' credit-deficit is not accidental but part of the settler logic of elimination. As discussed in the previous chapter, the settler colonial logic of elimination mandates an epistemic elimination, which has the effect of undermining the epistemic agency of Indigenous speakers.[149] This elimination produces epistemic oppression, which Dotson defines as persistent epistemic exclusions in which a knower's ability to participate in a particular epistemic community is hindered (Dotson 2014). By undermining the epistemic agency of Indigenous peoples, settler colonialism produces epistemic oppression as one of its effects.

Epistemic oppression can be tracked in the negative identity prejudices (being stuck in the past and being irrationally emotional) that undermine Indigenous speakers as knowers. The negative prejudicial stereotypes of being stuck in the past and of being

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[149] Epistemic agency is the ability to use "shared epistemic resources within a given epistemic community in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources" (Dotson 2012, 24).

irrationally emotional harms Indigenous speakers as epistemic agents. Indigenous speakers have a credibility-deficit and, as such, experience both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007).

Dotson draws on Patricia Williams' example of being barred entry into an open shop as a woman of color in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* to illustrate how negative prejudicial stereotypes undermines epistemic agency (Williams 1991). Dotson names Williams' experience of repeatedly not being *believed* that this was an incident of racism and being "unwarrantedly stripped of credibility" as an example of testimonial injustice (2012, 27). Testimonial injustice, names the injustice that occurs when a knower is discredited as a knower by virtue of their social identity as a member of a socially powerless group (Fricker 2007, 156). In other words, there is an epistemic injustice when a hearer deflates the credibility of a speaker by virtue of their identity. A hearer deflates the credibility of a speaker by virtue of negative prejudicial stereotypes about their identity and affective investments in negatively stereotyping that group. In Williams' case, testimonial injustice names her experience of being discredited as a credible knower and her hearers' investment in the denial of self-knowledge in the guise of 'neutrality' that preserves a "willful ignorance of racial discrimination and other social ills" (Dotson 2012, 27). Similarly, Indigenous women suffer testimonial injustice due to a credibility deficit such that their accounts have been dismissed as too "bitter" or "biased." Moreover, their testimonies are met with a negative affective involvement to believe them.

Changes to testimonial injustice call for first-order changes, that is, to changes in the attribution of negative prejudicial stereotypes. In order to change testimonial

injustice, hearers need to alter their epistemic prejudices. Dotson names this as a *first-order* change because it suggests alterations that do not challenge "the underlying schemata" (2014, 11). Inefficient credibility distribution is correctable when epistemic agents "pursue minimal reforms in their interactions with other epistemic agents" (Bailey 2014, 64). An implicit bias test to help jury members and police officers would be an example of such a reform.

In the case of Indigenous women, the correction of testimonial injustice would call for an inflation of credibility, for example, by making visible the material conditions of ongoing settler colonial violence (such as disproportionately high rates of gendered violence, incarceration, and suicide, for example[150]) and by recognizing that Indigenous women are well placed to name experiences of heteropatriarchal and settler colonial violence.[151] Unlike the TRC's assumption that settler Canadians will attribute credibility to Indigenous speakers' testimonies, these measures of correcting credibility attribution aim to challenge stereotypes that distort how these testimonies are heard.

Insofar as personal accounts of settler colonial violence are *unhearable* to a settler audience, Million's analysis also points to another kind of epistemic injustice, what Miranda Fricker calls hermeneutical injustice. Hermeneutical injustice names the

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[150] See Bellrichard 2018.

[151] According to 2009 report "Violent Victimization of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Provinces," Aboriginal women reported close to 138,000 incidents of violence. Missing and Murdered Indigenous women has been described as a Canadian national crisis. The 2014 report by the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) found that there were 1,181 incidents of homicides and unresolved missing Aboriginal women. This report led to the creation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The executive director Michèle Moreau announced her resignation as a commissioner in July 2017. The Office of the Correctional Investigator reports the incarceration rate of Indigenous people is at 26.4 per cent of the federal prison population, while comprising only four per cent of the Canadian population. See Brennan 2011 and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

injustice of having a significant area of one's social experience "obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker 2007, 155). This injustice pertains to the unintelligibility of a knower's experience due to a "hermeneutical gap," and results from a lack of social resources to make sense of a social group's experience. For example, the experience of sexual harassment was an experience that previously lacked hermeneutical resources, such that victims of sexual harassment could not make their experience intelligible and interpretable to others and to themselves (2007, 149-151). Alison Bailey uses an apt colonization metaphor to explain hermeneutical injustice—"Think of it this way, hermeneutical injustice happens when powerful groups *colonize* the knowing field's schemata. That is, they assign meaning to phenomenon in ways that reflect *their* understandings and *their* experiences of the world, leaving the rest of us to work awkwardly with the conceptual vocabulary they have crafted" (Bailey 2014, 64— emphasis added). Indigenous peoples suffer hermeneutical injustice insofar as the experiences of settler colonial violence are heard as unintelligible in the face of settler myths of benevolence and the displacement of settler colonialism to a fixed past.

Dotson categorizes hermeneutical injustice as a *second-order* epistemic injustice because it demands shifts in structures that generate our shared understandings in order to re-organize hermeneutical resources.[152] New language, new conceptual resources are needed to fill this lacuna in epistemic resources about the felt experience of

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[152] Dotson is critical, however, of Fricker's assumption that there is only *one* set of hermeneutical resources.

colonization.[153] For example, once the term 'sexual harassment' entered the lexicon, the experience became interpretable and communicable to others (Fricker 2007, 149-151). Million's felt theory amounts to an analogous project of addressing hermeneutical injustice by re-storying history curricula to redress the dearth of first-personal accounts of settler colonial violence. Accounts of the felt experience of settler colonialism provide new hermeneutical resources to communicate ongoing instances of heteropatriarchal and settler colonial violence. Importantly, these narratives challenge the historical truths of "settler truth," and as such push the boundaries of what "the Canadian public [is] willing to hear" (Million 2013, 58).

However, epistemic oppression, as an epistemic by-product of social oppression often resists transformation. For this reason, Dotson emphasizes the *irreducible* features of epistemic oppression in her description of contributory injustice as a third-order epistemic injustice that is particularly resilient to changes in the epistemic field.[154] She locates contributory injustice "within the gray area between individual and structural perpetuation of epistemic injustice" (Dotson 2014, 31). Her account reveals that the underlying schemata that give rise to epistemic exclusions often resists the identification

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[153] Hence, second-order change located at the level of frameworks and structures themselves, is required in order to address hermeneutical injustice in the long term (Dotson 2012, 30).

[154] Dotson highlights the irreducible features of third-order epistemic oppression that reveals the limits of Fricker's earlier account of epistemic injustice. Alcoff is similarly critical of Fricker's work on epistemic justice insofar as it fails to consider the structural elements of epistemic injustice. She raises concerns about the ability of volitional epistemic practices to correct non-volitional prejudices (Alcoff 2010). Alcoff worries that Fricker employs a too narrow definition of identity as merely "the source of unearned merit or undeserved demerit" that aims at a kind of identity neutrality, and proposes that a structural account, such as standpoint theory, better articulates identity as an epistemic resource that can provide epistemic resources for specific projects *due to the specificity of identity position* (2010, 134). Fricker, in response, affirms that her individualist approach to the cultivation of epistemic virtues does not preclude the fact that "structural mechanisms also have an essential role in combating epistemic injustice" (Fricker 2010, 164).

of its exclusions. Bailey puts it succinctly—"our shared epistemic resources are themselves *inadequate* for understanding their inadequacy" (Bailey 2014, 66).

A structural analysis of settler ignorance exemplifies this third-order epistemic injustice. Settler ignorance functions by making settler colonialism invisible and *felt* as normal and obvious. The epistemic oppression of Indigenous peoples is a necessary outcome of the structure of settler colonialism. Since settler ignorance is a structural outcome of the settler colonial logic of elimination, it is invisible to itself and so, exempts itself from critique. As such, Indigenous voices are necessary in order to expose these epistemic structures.[155] Indigenous peoples are better situated to *see* the functionings of settler ignorance and *feel* settler common sense as non-sensical and as justification for ongoing settler colonial violence.

Settler ignorance comes to form settler common sense, which is experienced as an *affective* background that normalizes the elimination of Indigenous peoples. Common sense normalizes the elimination of Indigenous presence by displacing testimonies to a fixed settler past and by dismissing emotional expression as evidence of individual pathology. As such, settler common sense needs to be challenged on an affective and aesthetic level. In particular, transformations to third-order epistemic oppression cannot be limited to cognitive resources since these resources are inadequate in identifying their very own inadequacy. Non-cognitive resources, such as aesthetic or affective resources, seem more transformative to dismantle third-order epistemic oppression. For this reason,

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[155] The claim that Indigenous voices are necessary to expose settler colonial violence echoes both work in standpoint theory and in José Medina's definition of the epistemic virtue *meta-lucidity* among epistemically virtuous subjects of oppressed groups, defined as the "capacity to see the limitations of dominant ways of seeing" (Medina 2013, 47).

the transformation of settler ignorance cannot occur solely on a cognitive level. Artistic creations, such as Kent Monkman's recent exhibit *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* which includes a painting of Indigenous chiefs Big Bear and Poundmaker in chains signing a treaty with founding Canadian Prime Minister John A. Macdonald,[156] Adrian Stimson's photography parodying photos from his family's residential school,[157] or Christi Belcourt's *Walking with Our Sisters* exhibit with a traveling display of 1,800 moccasin vamps as a way of honoring and commemorating missing and murdered Indigenous women and children in Canada and the United States are better equipped to disrupt the invisibility of settler colonialism.[158]

On this account, Million's felt theory names another way to challenge epistemic oppression. She argues that Canadian First Nation women's embodied narratives have fueled a discursive shift in the histories of residential schooling (Million 2013, 67). Their first person and experiential narratives of past and future pain, grief, and hope create a new language for communities to reveal and analyze "the moral affective heart of capitalism and colonialism" (2013, 55). In exploring the embodied, gendered and sexual nature of their colonization, these Native women's personal narratives "transformed the debilitating force of an old social control, shame, into a social agent in their generation" (2013, 55). These voices of a felt history present a powerful challenge to the social control of internalized colonialism as well as invigorated political discourse of Native self-determination with emotional knowledge. These emerging conversations between

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[156] Cram 2017.

[157] Klein 2018.

[158] Qtd in Simpson 2017, 25. See Belcourt.

Indigenous women that articulate their felt histories in ways that allow them to speak for themselves represent a project of dismantling epistemic oppression. These narratives disrupt settler-colonial silencing and defy state recognition that pathologizes Native expression.

Coulthard offers another example of a way to challenge epistemic oppression. Against the characterization of Native expression of anger and pain as pathological *ressentiment*, Coulthard argues for the self-affirmative power of righteous anger that leads to direct political action—as exemplified in the Oka crisis, the Idle No More movement, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement, amongst others.

Conclusion

"Yet, collectively we still keep looking and begging, and educating and appealing to the morality of benevolent Canada. *If only they knew better*."

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson[159]

Settler colonialism aims to make itself invisible and, as such, settler ignorance is a way of furthering this invisibility. Settler Canadians' obliviousness about past and present settler colonial violence is not accidental but is a *structural* feature of settler colonialism. The legacy of the residential schools does not merely require education in order for settlers to 'fill the gaps in our history education knowledge.' If it did, then former Prime Minister Harper's statement that Canada has no history of colonialism would be

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[159] Simpson 2017, 188.

nonsensical. His denial of colonialism, however, inadvertently makes the disavowal of settler colonialism explicit. An account of settler ignorance shows us that an apparent *lack* of memory results from "a particular production and presence of memory," which is a central and non-accidental feature to the settler colonial logic of elimination (Bruyneel 2013, 237). Settler ignorance functions by limiting Indigenous peoples' epistemic agency by (i) distancing present testimonies to the past and (ii) discrediting emotional expressions as signs of individual pathology. Settler ignorance (as it is bound up with negative stereotype prejudices) is both naturalized and normalized to form settler common sense, where to be a settler Canadian is to be a Canadian, full stop. The 'settler' modifier is both unnecessary and overly political.

The two features of settler ignorance—the relegation of present testimonies to a fixed past and the pathologization of emotional expression—are non-accidental features of settler colonialism that come to form settler common sense and come to limit Indigenous peoples' ability to contribute to a settler Canadian epistemic community. Former Prime Minister Harper's statement denying Canada's settler colonial past *makes sense* according to settler common sense, which normalizes a denial of settler colonial violence. This description of settler ignorance builds on my account of settler colonial epistemology in the previous chapter in order to explain how the dismissal of Indigenous peoples as credible knowers upholds an ignorance of settler colonial violence. As such, former Prime Minister Harper's disavowal of Canada's settler colonial past should be seen as a *continuation* of the settler colonial justification for Indigenous elimination and land dispossession. Harper's disavowal exemplifies a contemporary articulation of a

settler colonial epistemology that discredits testimonies by Indigenous peoples in order to justify settler colonial expansionism.

The language of epistemic oppression, in particular, can help identify the particular harms of settler colonialism on the epistemic field. In the case of Indigenous peoples, there are (at least) two negative prejudicial stereotypes similarly undermining their epistemic agency.[160] For example, the stereotypes of being irrational (or pre-rational) and stuck in the past (or out of time) come to inform how Indigenous speakers are heard and the epistemic agency that they are afforded by a settler audience. The upshot of such an account is that it explains how settlers can remain oblivious to ongoing settler colonial violence by hearing testimonies as biased or stuck in a settler past that is irrelevant to current policies.

Moreover, an epistemic evaluation of settler ignorance in terms of settler common sense and epistemic oppression highlights the aesthetic and materiality of knowledge production and circulation. Crucially, a social investigation into knowledge production and circulation reveal how epistemic resources are connected to structural power and material conditions. Transformations of settler ignorance cannot be limited to individual cognitive changes or to changes in shared hermeneutical resources. Material changes, and land restoration more specifically, are required in order to transform settler ignorance.[161]

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[160] Following Dotson's cautionary warning, though, this list is not an exhaustive one (Dotson 2012).

[161] I return to the question of reparations in chapter 6.

CHAPTER V

SETTLER HEARING IN THE CANADIAN TRC

There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that

we can work towards a stronger and healthier future… This is a profound commitment to

establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will

forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free

and pave the way to reconciliation[162]

This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian

Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship

between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge

of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together

with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant

cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada[163]

Introduction

With an account of structural settler ignorance and an understanding of how

testimonies are dismissed in order to maintain an ignorance of settler colonialism, I return

to an examination of the Canadian TRC. In chapter 2, I concluded that the TRC's framing

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[162] *Honouring the Truth* 2015, 339.

[163] *Statement of Apology* 2008.

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politics of recognition does not identify or challenge a disavowal of settler colonialism. In this chapter, I evaluate the TRC in order to show how settler colonial epistemic assumptions limit the possibility for meaningful reconciliation.

While the previous chapter outlined how structural settler ignorance functions as a kind of knowing (providing an epistemic evaluation of settler colonialism), this chapter investigates the TRC's ability to properly hear the testimonies of residential school system, and so provides an ethical evaluation.[164] The willingness and capability of hearing is not simply an epistemic concern but is an ethical one as well. The production and circulation of knowledge is a profoundly ethical matter. In particular, Jill Stauffer's work on ethical loneliness makes explicit the ethical dimensions of (not) being heard. Stauffer defines ethical loneliness as "having been abandoned by humanity compounded by the experience of not being heard" (Stauffer 2015, 1).[165] This seems to be the very condition that the TRC attempts to redress. For this reason, this chapter emphasizes the ethical dimensions of knowing and highlights how structural settler ignorance distorts a settler audience's ability to hear the testimonies of residential school survivors in ways that can unsettle their settler identity.

Such an ethical evaluation of the Canadian TRC is firmly grounded in a relational conception of the self. The experience of being abandoned and not being heard is ethically provocative because of the kinds of being we are and "our intersubjective

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[164] The need for an *ethical* evaluation reflects the conclusions of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)'s final report *People to People, Nation to Nation,* which sought to establish the foundations of a fair and honorable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Its findings, in short, were that past and current governmental policies towards Aboriginal peoples were "unethical," and that there is a need for a complete restructuring of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

[165] She draws on Jean Améry's account of his experience in Nazi concentration camps (Améry 1980)

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reliance on one another" (Stauffer 2015, 3). Insofar as we are relational and dependent upon others, we are vulnerable to being "refused the human relation necessary for self-formation" (2015, 26). While Stauffer explicitly draws on Emmanuel Levinas' emphasis on relational intersubjectivity in order to name the *injustice* of being "abandoned by those who have the power to help," my project is situated in both Western feminist and Native American traditions (2015, 5).

A number of feminist theorists expound the ethical and political implications of an understanding of embodied vulnerability as constitutive of subjectivity.[166] They argue that the figure of the vulnerable body provides "the ground for, and vital link between, ethics and ontology" (Bergoffen and Weiss 2011, 457). This link is most clearly seen in Judith Butler's claim that the recognition of the precariousness of embodied experience can ground an ethic of nonviolence (Butler 2003; 2004). The *primary* ethical provocation to ethical response arises, however, from the confrontation with one's universally shared corporeal fragility. It is the recognition of a primary susceptibility that provides the ground for an ethical response. The ethical provocation of vulnerability is in no way prescriptive, however. An *ethics* of vulnerability is thus an ethics in a very limited sense. It does not provide guidelines for action, but rather reveals that a shared vulnerability makes an ethical response both possible and necessary. A feminist ethics of vulnerability, more broadly, seeks to revalue vulnerability in both its positive and negative valences in order to ultimately challenge the damaging fictions of self-sufficiency and self-mastery.

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[166] See Debra Bergoffen's "Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body" (2003); Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* (2004); Gail Weiss' *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (1999); Gail Weiss and Bergoffen's "Embodying the Ethical"; Erinn Gilson's *The Ethics of Vulnerability* (2014); Catriona Mackenzie's *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy* (2014); Rosalyn Diprose's *Corporeal generosity* (2002); and Martha Fineman's "The Vulnerable Subject" (2010).

While providing different frameworks, an emphasis on dependency and relationality is also shared in Indigenous epistemology and ethics. Viola Cordova (Apache) argues that human beings are fundamentally relational and, as a result, our ethical system should be based on the notion of community or a collective "We" rather than on an autonomous "I" (Cordova 2003). Similarly, Vine Deloria outlines his epistemic methodology that is grounded in the assertion that "we are all relatives" (Deloria 1999, 34). The phrase "we are all relations" is both an affirmation of a relational ontology and an announcement of the implications for an ethically responsible epistemology. Drawing on both Western feminist ethics of vulnerability and Indigenous epistemology, I evaluate how successfully settlers can enter into ethical relationships with Indigenous communities. The TRC can be taken to be successful insofar as it creates the conditions for such an ethical relationship.

In this chapter, I provide an ethical evaluation of the Canadian TRC in light of structural settler ignorance. I begin by describing the TRC's confessional-model of testimony and show how this model reaffirms the state's authority to legitimate Indigenous identity. The confessional-model of the TRC comes to form what I call 'settler hearing,' which is a kind of paranoid hearing that *confirms* settler authority, in which the hearer is not open to surprising or unsettling communication. Settler hearing is a concrete manifestation of structural settler ignorance. I characterize settler hearing in the TRC in terms of three features: (i) its mandate's presumption that the sharing of testimony can and will reconcile relationships; (ii) the creation of a template for acceptable testimonies; and (iii) its isolation from structural settler colonial violence.

Insofar as the TRC performs a settler hearing, it fails both in terms of its own

mandate of "establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between settler

Canadians and Indigenous communities, as well as its ability to assuage the ethical

loneliness of residential school survivors. In order to address the ethical loneliness of

residential school survivors, settlers must develop a kind of 'reparative hearing' whereby

the voices of residential school survivors are heard as an expression of ongoing

Indigenous self-determination that testify to the ongoing failure of the settler colonial

project of elimination. Without an affirmation of Indigenous self-determination, the TRC

does not disrupt settler ignorance because it maintains the fiction of settler benevolence.

TRC's Confessional-Model

The TRC aims to signal the seriousness with which the Canadian government

considers the violations of the residential school system. It seeks to make amends for the

past wrongs of governmental policies in the hope of establishing a new relationship

between the state and Indigenous communities and "forg[ing] a brighter future"

(*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 339). It offers the promise of communicating previously

unknown information to many settler Canadians. While truth commissions differ, they

share the basic commitment to investigate and publicly disseminate information about

past human rights abuses and to provide a public platform for victims to tell their stories.

As such, one of the goals of truth commissions is to give *voice* to the survivors of human

rights violations.[167] For this reason, Teresa Godwin Phelps emphasizes the potential of

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[167] Moreover, Phelps acknowledges that not all ways of sharing personal testimony will be effective. In particular, she notes the limitations of both the Argentinian and Salvadoran truth commissions in their general framework that perpetuated an us/them distinction between innocent civilians and guilty soldiers (Phelps 2004, 97-104). She contends that the South African truth commission's "carnival-like" approach, whereby victims shared their stories in their own ways was more effective (2004, 105-110).

storytelling as a non-violent means of achieving retribution that avoids cycles of revenge. She argues that victims of human rights abuses lose *language*, such that truth commissions can provide the opportunity for victims to reconstruct their "shattered voices" and regain their dignity and self-respect (Phelps 2004, 39).

Phelps affirms that the kind of compensation that victims want and need is the acknowledgment of their suffering. Consequently, truth-telling seems particularly well suited as both a reparative activity and a condition of other kinds of reparations. For Phelps, the "sacramental storytelling" of truth commissions can offer restorative justice that might "actualize a radically new kind of constitutive history for an emerging democracy" (2004, 55-56).[168] Similarly, Margaret Urban Walker characterizes truth-telling as a reparations measure. She argues that politically implemented modes of truth telling can satisfy the four features of suitable reparations vehicles—(i) interaction between responsible parties and victims which (ii) is useful for victims in light of their experience of suffering and loss, (iii) fitting for the wrong and loss, and (iv) effective for the victim's concrete experience of repair (Walker 2010, 533-534).[169]

While a truth commission purports to foreground the experience of the survivors of human rights abuses, its relationship to *reconciliation*, however, is unclear. The TRC's final report notes that the very definition of reconciliation was up for debate throughout

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[168] Phelps is critical, though, to characterize truth commissions as a *panacea* that marks a closure or a burying of the past (Phelps 2004, 120).

[169] Walker cautions that truth telling will not in and of itself be reparations for serious wrongs, without a sensitivity to the larger reparative activity. Truth telling does not guarantee "to produce and maintain the moral conditions of confidence, trust, and hope and their political embodiment in voice, recognition, civic respect, and guarantees of equal standing and protection" (Walker 2010, 540). While she acknowledges the limitations of truth telling, as well as any reparations vehicle in "righting" past wrongs, she holds hope for truth telling to "effect quite real and profound changes in our intertwined epistemic and moral worlds" (2010, 540).

the truth-telling events. While the final report remarks on this ambiguity, it officially

defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful

relationships." The TRC suggests that the experience of "truth-telling" is a necessary step

in (re)establishing respectful relationships.[170] The truth will lead, as it were, to

reconciliation—"The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and

pave the way to reconciliation" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 339). As such, the TRC

proposes a confessional model of reconciliation whereby residential school survivors

confess their experiences (and the state confesses its shame) in order to establish new

relationships. Given this definition of reconciliation, an evaluation of the TRC will,

therefore, have to discern its ability to establish and maintain respectful relationships. The

Canadian TRC can be taken to be successful in its mandate so long as the sharing and

dissemination of the truth about Indian Residential Schools leads to the establishment of

respectful relationships between settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples.

In order to evaluate the TRC on the terms of its own primary goals of establishing

and maintaining respectful relationships, first we need to understand what reconciliation

can mean in the context of ongoing settler colonial violence. What, exactly, can

"establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" mean in the context of the TRC's

final report? What would it take to re-establish respectful relationships if these so-called

respectful relationships have never existed? The TRC, then, could be said to seek to

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[170] Both Teresa Godwin Phelps and Ronald Niezen are wary of the equation of truth with reconciliation: "It seemed to me that truth was one thing, reconciliation another, and that truth alone did not necessarily result in reconciliation: the rote connection—truth-and-reconciliation—was wrongheaded" (Phelps 2014, 665).

establish respectful relationships between settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples *for the first time*.[171]

To be even more specific, what would a respectful relationship look like in the context of ongoing land dispossession and systemic settler colonial violence (including disproportionately high rates of female homicides, practices of 'scooping up' Indigenous children from their families for placement in foster homes,[172] and poor living conditions in many Aboriginal communities)?[173] Given the context of an ongoing settler colonial present, an evaluation of the TRC (and an interrogation of the relationship between truth and reconciliation more broadly) must ask: Which interests are best served by the TRC? In what ways is the settler colonial nation-state challenged (or re-legitimated) by the publication of the TRC's final report? If the Canadian government sponsors such a commission, what are the Commission's limitations in scrutinizing and calling into question the very legitimacy of the Canadian settler nation-state?

The terms of the TRC must be understood with respect to the restrictions of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). The TRC invites survivors of the residential school system to a settler audience in order to fulfill the government's

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[171] Recall that the RCAP's report called for a new Royal Proclamation to require the government to commit to a new set of ethical principles that would acknowledge and respect the inherent right to Aboriginal self-determination (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

[172] Patrick Johnston coined the term "Sixties Scoop" in his 1983 report "Native Children and the Child Welfare System" to name the practice from the late 1950s to the 1980s of removing Indigenous children from their families (Johnston 1983). The Canadian government announced a $800 million settlement with survivors of Sixties Scoop, with $750 million for individual compensation and $50 million for a foundation dedicated to reconciliation initiatives. (Tasker 2017b).

[173] James Anaya, a United Nations human rights investigator called the living conditions of the Attawapiskat First Nation a national crisis. He stated, "The social and economic situation of the Attawapiskat seems to represent the condition of many First Nation communities living on reserves throughout Canada, which is allegedly akin to Third World conditions" (Anaya 2011).

legal obligation.[174] While the Indian Residential Schools system is emblematic of structural settler colonial violence and its desire to take Indigenous land and exterminate Indigenous presence, the TRC does not frame reconciliation in terms of legal or structural changes to Canadian nationhood and to governmental policies toward Indigenous nations.

As noted in chapter 1, the TRC does not have any legal power to name names but is limited to collecting testimonies in order to *educate* a settler audience. The TRC's role is to create a 'counter-narrative' of Canadian history. While the TRC's framing of the residential school system is limited in challenging underlying structures of settler colonial power, we can evaluate the TRC's *symbolic* power of "reconciling" relationships between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples. On this account, Joseph Weiss argues that, by its existence, the TRC symbolically constitutes 'truth and reconciliation' "without necessitating any further action on the part of the state or church" (Weiss 2015, 33).

The success of the mandate depends on the circulation of knowledge, which, in turn, requires "an audience willing and capable of hearing us" (Dotson 2011, 238). In order for the circulation of knowledge to be successful, hearers and speakers must be both vulnerable and open hearing the other. The establishment of new respectful relationships requires, at the very least, an ability to hear one another on each's own terms. The imbalance of vulnerability is most visible when considering how the TRC proposes a confessional model of truth-telling. The following section argues that the way the TRC frames the residential school policy leads to settler hearing. Settler hearing does not challenge settler identity and fails to establish an ethical relationship between speaker

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[174] As explained in chapter 1, the IRSSA is an agreement between the government of Canada and the approximately 86,000 Native Canadians who were enrolled in residential schools.

and hearer. Insofar as the TRC does not create the conditions for successful circulation of knowledge, it does not establish such a relationship and, consequently, fails on its own terms.

Settler Hearing

> *"And they opened up all our wounds, for what? To turn us all down? And some people are dying.... My sister's doing drugs, like, 'cause she's tired of waiting. She's living on the streets. So, so, why did they do this to us, again? They hurt us again. They shouldn't go back on their word to us. They already hurt us. Stop hurting us."*
>
> Amelia Galligos-Thomas, a former student at Sechelt residential school[175]

Over and above the epistemic elimination of Indigenous speakers that dismisses their testimony by hearing it as an expression of a *past* wrong and an evidence of individual pathology (as discussed in the previous chapter), the TRC performs a particular kind of hearing that prevents the testimonies of being heard by a settler audience in such a way to change the terms of the relationship between Indigenous communities and settler Canadians. This kind of hearing enacts, drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on paranoid reading, a paranoid hearing in which the hearer is not open to surprising or unsettling communication (Sedgwick 2003).

A paranoid reading, or paranoid *hearing* in this case, is closed off to possibility in a way that overdetermines the result of inquiry. This kind of hearing negates the very

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[175] *Honouring the Truth* 2015, 169.

fragility and inherent risk of communication. A paranoid hearing closes itself from the vulnerability of communication. Stauffer writes, "paranoid reading is a kind of insurance policy against the disappointment that comes with wanting the world to be one way and finding that it is not that way" (Stauffer 2015, 69).

Settler hearing is a kind of paranoid hearing that overdetermines the content of testimonies of settler colonial violence such that they conform to negative prejudicial stereotypes and reaffirm settler colonial power.[176] The TRC's confessional model of reconciliation based on the sharing of testimony performs this settler hearing insofar as it decides ahead of time that the sharing of testimony can (and will) lead to reconciled relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians. It offers a false promise that the process will work. In this way, the very mandate of the TRC presupposes the results of the truth-telling events.

Paradoxically, then, the truth-telling events, which were meant to foreground the experience of survivors and to share their testimony with the general public, can lead to a kind of hearing that prevents the voices of survivors from being heard as expressions of Indigenous refusal of settler authority.[177] An Indigenous refusal of settler authority would constitute a surprise to settler hearers, which their model of truth-telling extinguishes *as a possibility* (i.e., as a possible mode of truth-telling). Settler hearing thus prevents an acknowledgment that settlers are responsible for the historical and ongoing violence inflicted upon Indigenous peoples insofar as it hears the testimonies as always already

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[176] I describe these negative stereotypes in chapter 4.

[177] Stauffer asserts that a kind of irony is always present in Levinas' account of human communication, when institutions aimed "to adjudicate loss may impose loss of a different kind" (Stauffer 2015, 70).

reconciled. The TRC performs a settler hearing insofar as (i) its mandate presumes that the sharing of testimony can and will reconcile relationships; (ii) it creates a certain template of the kinds of acceptable testimonies; and (iii) it isolates testimonies from structural settler colonial violence.

Settler Hearing: TRC's Mandate

A first feature of settler hearing can be found in the very framing of the TRC's mandate as victim-centered. The goal of the truth-telling events is for survivors to share their experiences and for these experiences to be collected in the TRC's final report in order to inform changes in curriculum and policy.[178] The confessional model of the TRC leads, however, to a settler hearing since it inadvertently positions the settler audience as arbiter of both truth and reconciliation.

Both the mandate for the TRC and the Statement of Apology make references to a "compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us" and to the treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools as "a sad chapter in our history" (Statement of Apology 2008). This framing in the Apology and TRC Mandate marks a sharp division between settler Canadians as "us" and Indigenous peoples as "them." The TRC's confessional model proposes a way for "'them' to let go of this admittedly 'sad chapter' in 'Canadian history' so that settlers can 'have all of 'us' move on with our lives" (Koggel 2014, 503). The government's expression of a desire to put the events in the past illustrates how it defines reconciliation as serving settlers.

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[178] While everyone was invited to share their experiences (including former staff), the vast majority of participants were survivors or family members of survivors of the residential schools.

The settler hearing appears with the very definitions of truth and reconciliation within the TRC's final report. For example, the TRC proposes a definition of reconciliation amidst a lack of consensus as to whether or not it is even possible.[179] As for its definition of truth, Christine Koggel argues that the TRC's mandate places settlers as the 'us' that are "judges or evaluators of the 'truth' of 'their' stories" (Koggel 2014, 503). While the TRC invites *survivors* to share their experiences, Sue Campbell worries that the settler public will hear these testimonies as if they were in "the adversarial setting of the courtroom" (Campbell 2008, 4).[180] As such, the confessional model of the TRC makes settlers the arbiter of the truth of the residential school system.[181] For this reason, Campbell affirms that we need to distinguish forensic from narrative forms of truth-telling within the legal and political testimony of the truth-telling events in the TRC.

The Apology and TRC's mandate focus on what has *happened*, rather than on the *active* role of the government in devastating Indigenous nations. The emphasis on the harms of residential schools eclipses a conversation about the government's continuing actions. For this reason, Matt James argues that the TRC's victim-centered focus performs "a 'quasi-apology' in which wrongdoer agency is obscured by an emphasis on victim experiences, with 'sorry for what happened to you' standing in for 'sorry for what

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[179] "During the course of the Commission's work, it has become clear that the concept of reconciliation means different things to different people, communities, institutions, and organizations" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 17).

[180] The TRC explicitly affirms that the truth-telling process will not lead to legal action against churches and the government. The TRC "shall not hold formal hearings, nor act as a public inquiry, nor conduct a formal legal process" (Stanton 2011, 5).

[181] This account thus rejects Matt James' claim that the victim-centered TRC, in foregrounding the truths of the victims of the residential school survivors, "embodies the prefigurative, role-reversing spirit of the carnivalesque," and this overturning of settler knowledge performs a form of "symbolic reparation" (James 2012, 21).

I did'" (James 2012, 22). Settler hearing thus allows settlers to evade their responsibility as agents who commit and *continue* to commit wrongdoings against others. This follows from Sedgwick's account of paranoid reading insofar as paranoia allows subjects to shirk from holding themselves accountable for their actions, but rather places this responsibility on others or on surprising events.

Settler Hearing: (Un)acceptable Testimonies

A second feature of the TRC's settler hearing is the way in which it creates a certain template of the kinds of acceptable testimonies, and so closes itself to testimonies that complicate the narrative of the residential school system. Complexities and diversity of experience get simplified and streamlined to create a unified testimony of the residential school policy. On this account, social and legal anthropologist Ronald Niezen provides an ethnology of the TRC and shows how the truth-telling events shape testimonies shared to highlight the particular "kind of justice a truth commission delivers" (Niezen 2013). Niezen argues that the TRC's educational goal took precedence over its goal to disseminate truth or to provide the means for reconciliation. He affirms that the truth-telling events framed the testimonies in such a way as to limit certain kinds of testimony in order to create an oversimplified narrative of the experience at the residential schools.

The Canadian TRC is oriented around the experience of *survivors*. As such, the TRC creates an audience that has specific expectations for the truth-telling events. This orientation comes from the specifics of the TRC's origins and context. The TRC emerges from the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)'s out of court settlements. Crucially,

though, the TRC responds to a legal situation that was invisible and unknown to most

Canadian citizens. Unlike the South African TRC or the Argentinian TRC, there was no

public consensus that motivated the creation of the Canadian TRC on the Indian

Residential Schools.[182] Before the TRC, only one in two Canadians were even aware of

the existence of the Indian Residential Schools system.[183] A general lack of awareness of

the schools, and of the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada more broadly, shaped

the Canadian TRC in specific ways. For this reason, the Canadian TRC has both an

educational and publicity-oriented goal of raising awareness about the residential school

system and the experience of victims of the schools more specifically. The TRC does not

have legal powers and it is primarily aimed at educating settler Canadians by creating a

unified counter-history of the residential school legacy.[184]

The TRC presents a model of reconciliation through the creation of a counter-

history that provides venues for the formerly silenced survivors to tell their stories.[185]

Niezen affirms, however, that the goal for reconciliation and the collection of *truth* are at

odds. Crucially, he focuses on which testimonies got told and which were omitted in the

truth-telling events. Not all stories get told as witnesses shape their stories to fit the

"acceptable" template. The process of creating a unified counter-history necessarily

involves shaping testimonies to fit a certain narrative with clear victims and perpetrators.

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[182] Nagy provides a comparison with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Nagy 2012).

[183] Niezen 2016, 923.

[184] The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation opened at the University of Manitoba in 2015.

[185] The TRC Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair announced—"Once these truths are known, they will form a part of our country's historical record" and "provide opportunities for healing and greater awareness" (CBC News 2010).

As such, Niezen concludes that the history of the residential school policy is far more complex than the "history" that is being promulgated by the TRC.

The TRC truth-telling events produced an unspoken template for acceptable narratives in a few ways. The events began with a 'highlight reel' of previous events as a way to connect disparate experiences in residential schools across the country. Niezen argues that this reel had the effect of creating a template of sorts for the kinds of testimonies that could and could not be shared at the truth-telling events. In addition to the highlight reel, the events began with testimony of a survivor of the residential schools who travelled with the Commission to the different truth-telling events. This 'template testimony' set the tone of each truth-telling event. In particular, the testimonies privileged the sharing of extreme abuse in a way that inadvertently silenced, Niezen argues, less visible (or graphic) experiences of abuse at the schools.

Moreover, Niezen contends that the TRC's events both created and performed the category of 'residential school survivor' in a way that overdetermines the kinds of testimony that could be shared at the truth-telling events.[186] The category of the 'residential school survivor' was enacted through the narration of traumatic experience, for example, through a sunrise ceremony and lighting of a sacred fire in which tears were collected to be burned at the end of the truth-telling events. The ceremony also marked a finality to the process.

The sacred fire ceremony is symbolically illuminating, especially as it reveals what the TRC means by "reconciliation" and their attempt to create a "counter-history."

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[186] Niezen relays how the affirmation of survivor experience pervaded the events and activities of the Commission "with phrases like 'for survivors only' (with reference to gift bags or refreshments), 'Survivors registration,' or 'Survivors rest area,' and so on" (Niezen 2016, 927).

By marking this finality, it assumes that trauma can disappear (be burned away) simply by sharing the experience of it. It also entails an over-determination of trauma as that of extreme violence, rather than countenancing the other, subtle forms that trauma can take. The counter-history is one that attempts to vanish the colonial history that made the trauma possible in the first place. These two erasures—the erasure of trauma and the erasure of history—are mutually imbricated in one another. The picture of reconciliation is one that aims to overcome a traumatic history and in aiming to overcome it, this history is denied.

Another way the testimonies were framed to create a unified narrative can be seen in the handling of testimonies from former teachers and church officials. While the truth-telling events were open to former teachers and church officials, their testimonies were implicitly unwelcome.[187] Niezen reports how churches attempted to provide a counter-narrative to the testimonies. In addition to churches' statements of apology, there were attempts to show a broader account of the residential school experience.[188] Niezen relays meeting a woman who showed a multi-lingual dictionary (with Indigenous languages) as evidence that not all church officials sought to eliminate Indigenous languages and culture. These testimonies were not, however, welcome since they challenged a unified counter-history. Niezen worries that these measures had the effect of patrolling the boundaries of the kinds of experiences shared in the truth-telling events.

For these reasons, Niezen argues that the TRC failed to gather a complete

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[187] Niezen notes that the governmental officials were mostly absent from the events. While the governmental role at the truth-telling events was limited, its presence was felt in the restrictions to accessing archives.

[188] Pope Francis has, however, refused to issue an apology for the Catholic Church's role in the abuses in residential schools (CBC News 2018b).

historical record, since it shaped the testimonies to form a more unified experience. The requirement of a *universalized* experience is a symptom of a paranoid settler hearing.[189] The result is predetermined, such that any surprise or unexpected testimony must be omitted or stifled. Accounts like those from Tomson Highway about his positive experience at residential schools are seen as dangerous threats to the TRC's goal of creating a unified narrative.[190] The importance of the unification (and oversimplification) of the residential school experience points to the TRC's goal of showcasing a unified traumatic experience instead of presenting a full and messy picture of the schools. In a sense, the desire for a unified experience reflects the need to legitimate the TRC's very existence and the thousands of survivors' lawsuits.[191] According to this line of thinking, the experience was either (universally) traumatic or it was not that bad.

Settler Hearing: No Land and No Politics

Finally, a third feature of settler hearing is how it hears testimonies as apolitical and isolated from talk of land and political self-determination. As such, the TRC fails to meaningfully hear the testimonies of survivors insofar as it focuses on cultural recognition at the expense of talk of Indigenous land restitution and politics of self-determination.

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[189] Sedgwick 2003, 134.

[190] Tomson Highway has said—"You may have heard stories from 7,000 witnesses in the process that were negative [but] what you haven't heard are the 7,000 reports that were positive stories" (Ostroff 2015).

[191] Defending the legitimacy of the TRC is all the more pressing given that 67% of non-Aboriginal Canadians "believe Indigenous people have a sense of entitlement to government support and services" (CBC News 2016).

The shift away from political self-determination was prominent in the TRC's truth-telling events, which included exhibits showcasing Indigenous survival in the face of cultural genocide. These exhibits did not frame survival as acts of resurgence and self-determination but framed them as expressions of individual survivors.[192] While the events celebrated cultural resilience, the TRC did not explicitly celebrate *political* self-determination, defined as the restoration and regeneration of Indigenous nationhood, and the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 1). While the emphasis on the *cultural* harm of the residential schools is important, it should not overshadow the harms of the schools in terms of seizure of land and the undermining of political self-determination.

The emphasis on *cultural* harm can be seen in the TRC's declaration in their final report that the establishment and operation of the Indian Residential Schools system was a policy of *cultural* genocide (under Article 2(e) of the UN's Convention on Genocide).[193] It is cultural genocide, rather than physical genocide, because it sought to

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[192] Niezen writes, "The most prominent display that toured with the major TRC events was that of the Legacy of Hope, self-described as 'a national Aboriginal charitable organization dedicated to raising awareness and understanding about the legacy of residential schools'. This display took great care to present a range of material, supported with photographic and documentary evidence, assembled into timelines, and presented with brief, plain-language summaries presented under clear captions. Prominent in the Legacy of Hope display were photographs and transcribed testimony from survivors illustrating the connections between residential schools and territorial removal as well as the traumas associated with the school experience. In one section of the display, headings taken from survivor statements like 'I learned to feel shame', 'I wanted to go home', 'I died in this place', and 'They cut my hair and burned my clothes' stood out prominently above explanations of the dislocations brought about by the schools. The messages conveyed by the Legacy of Hope in this touring exhibit paralleled those that it presented on-line, including the general finding that '[g]enerations of Aboriginal people today have memories of trauma, neglect, shame, and poverty. Those traumatized by their experiences in the residential school have suffered pervasive loss: loss of identity, loss of family, loss of language, loss of culture'" (Legacy of Hope Foundation 2015 in Niezen 2016, 929).

[193] This recalls the limitations of politics of recognition's narrow focus on cultural representation that was given in chapter 2.

destroy structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group.[194] For this

reason, the truth-telling events also sought to affirm cultural survival in the face of this

attempted cultural genocide.[195] The characterization of cultural genocide was even used

by former Prime Minister Paul Martin.[196] The truth-telling events invoked the language

of genocide by inviting survivors of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide.[197] The

characterization of cultural genocide plays into a cultural recognition model of

reconciliation that limits questions of recognition of political self-determination to the

recognition of cultural identity.

The TRC presents a model of cultural resilience in the face of individual trauma.

Dian Million warns that the emphasis on trauma is profoundly troubling. In particular,

she notes that this shift away from talk of political self-determination to talk of emotional

self-care limits political discourse (Million 2013). The trauma discourse individualizes

systemic power imbalances—completely leaving out talk of land dispossession—and has

the potential to frame Indigenous agents as static victims. Under this model, the only

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[194] Joseph P. Gone raises concerns, however, about the political efficacy of characterizing North American settler colonialism as 'genocide' (Gone 2014).

[195] "Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity. Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 1).

[196] "Let us understand that what happened at the residential schools was the use of education for cultural genocide, and that the fact of the matter is, yes it was. Call a spade a spade" (Right Honourable Paul Martin qtd in *Honouring the Truth* 2015, 276).

[197] The report is accompanied by Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation with respect to child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice (*Calls to Action* 2012).

legitimate expression of Indigeneity is traumatization in the face of cultural genocide. This description reaffirms an emphasis on cultural recognition at the expense of political self-determination and land restitution. Moreover, this characterization is *paranoid* insofar as it presumes at the outset the nature of the oppression that Indigenous peoples face.

The TRC's emphasis on cultural resilience in the face of cultural genocide does not, in and of itself, lead to more respectful relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. Such a transformation would require changes to the material conditions of Indigenous communities, such as ensuring access to clean water (David Suzuki Foundation 2018).[198] It would, to put it simply, require changes to how the Canadian state positions itself with respect to its authority over Indigenous land. Such structural changes are not, however, within the TRC's mandate. At the very least, a vision of reconciling relationships between the state and Indigenous communities must support Indigenous self-determination and describe settler colonial violence in terms of ongoing land dispossession. In order to evaluate the TRC's ability to fulfill its own mandate, we must consider the extent to which it satisfies these two conditions.

TRC: Establishing Respectful Relationships?

Without foregrounding political self-determination and land restitution, the TRC fails on its own terms of "establishing new respectful relationships" between Indigenous

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[198] The David Suzuki Foundation's 2018 report "Reconciling Promises and Reality: Clean Drinking Water for First Nations" notes that the federal government's actions to address the First Nations drinking water crisis in Canada falls short of its promises to ensure the right to clean water. The report said that the federal government should adopt First Nation-led models for fixing water problems and ensure appropriate financial resources to the problem (David Suzuki Foundation 2018).

communities and the Canadian settlers. Two notable absences in the final report exemplify the TRC's limitations to changing existing relationships: political self-determination and land restitution. Instead of leading towards meaningful reconciliation, the TRC reaffirms the settler fiction of benevolence and recreates the power of the colonizer's shame in defining Indigenous identity.

Firstly, a more 'respectful' relationship requires recognizing Indigenous self-determination in forming nation-to-nation relationships.[199] This is, however, clearly not part of the TRC's mandate. As noted in chapter 1, the Canadian TRC is unusual in that it does not have a post-conflict structure that announces "a new democratic order" (Weiss 2015, 32).[200] The TRC does not emerge at a transitional period of political systems —"In Canada, by contrast, the basic political system that was established when Canada first became a nation remains in place. In other words, the nation-state that was responsible for the residential school system is now sponsoring a commission aimed at making amends for its harms and injustices" (Weiss 2015, 32).

Secondly, a change towards more respectful relationships requires talk of land dispossession. Concerns of land dispossession are not central, however, in the TRC final report. While Elders' and survivors' testimonies often spoke about the importance of land in sustaining culture and the people, the final report does not focus on the question of land restitution. As Anishinaabe elder Fred Kelly recounted, to take the lands away was

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[199] The treaties between Indigenous nations and the Crown form the legal and constitutional foundation of Canada as a nation (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 195). Dale Turner and James Tully both provide accounts of what nation-to-nation relationship and respect of treaties would consist in (Tully 2000c).

[200] The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) came in the shadow of the dissolution of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in 2005 that unsuccessfully settled thousands of residential school survivor lawsuits. The Settlement Agreement provided approximately $5 billion in compensation, commemoration, and the establishment of the TRC.

to dispossess the people of their being and to destroy Indigenous nations. He spoke about the role of land at the truth-telling events—"To take the territorial lands away from a people whose very spirit is so intrinsically connected to Mother Earth was to actually…destroy whole Indigenous nations. Weakened by disease and separated from their traditional foods and medicines, First Nations peoples had no defence against further government encroachments on their lives" (*Honouring the Truth* 2015, 224-225). In its 94 Calls to Action, talk of land is noticeably absent, only making an appearance in relation to corporate responsibility and sustainability (Call to Action #92). Talk of land is limited to a call to 'meaningful consultation' for land development by corporations. As Eric Ritskes notes, though, the language of 'meaningful consultation' has already been "the hallmark of the Canadian government's approach to development on and extraction from Indigenous land, and what is considered 'meaningful' to Indigenous peoples varies wildly from what is considered 'meaningful' by the Canadian government" (Ritskes 2015).

While the residential school system follows from the settler colonial logic of elimination, the significance of these schools must be grounded in the taking of *land*. As Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) board member Viola Robinson puts it: "truth has to go deeper than residential schools or it will be superficial" (qtd in Weiss 2015, 44). The broader systemic problems that plague relationships between settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples is rooted in the seizure of land. Recall Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's quote above—"It seemed simple. Colonizers wanted the land" (Simpson 2017, 15). It is this history that must be foregrounded by the TRC in order to begin a process of true reconciliation, otherwise reconciliation is simply superficial rhetoric. In other words,

testimony from survivors cannot on its own address the devastating legacy of the residential school system. The residential school system must be viewed as a product of an ongoing history of settler colonialism encompassing government policies, settler myths of benevolence and broken treaties. Insofar as the TRC isolates testimonies from ongoing land dispossession, it fails to address this broader history and, therefore, does not challenge settler common sense whereby land dispossession is experienced as normal for settlers.

Without explicit framing of the residential school system as an inevitable feature of the settler project of land seizure and extermination, the TRC's model of reconciliation fails because it characterizes the residential school system as merely "a historical injustice to be 'resolved'" (Weiss 2015, 46). This model of reconciliation would be what Dale Turner calls restoring two contradictory realities—settler colonial violence and the myth of Canadian benevolence (Turner 2011). The TRC aims to *resolve* these two contradictory realities, rather than dismantle the myth of Canadian benevolence that undergirds ongoing settler colonial violence.[201]

While the truth-telling events seem to express a commitment to foregrounding the experiences of residential school survivors in order to face the legacy of Canada's colonial past, this vision of reconciliation is not one that supports Indigenous self-determination. The TRC's symbolic power has the function of relegitimating the Canadian state's authority of creating its nation-narrative. In other words, the school

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[201] Chief Lee Crowchild of the Tsuut'ina Nation proposes "making wolf" as an alternative to term 'reconciliation.' The term refers to practices of his ancestors whereby leaders of tribes with whom they had fought meet in order to validate experiences of both sides (Dippel 2018).

policy is framed in such a way that testimonies of school survivors are not heard as challenges to structures of ongoing settler colonial power and violence.

While the TRC provides a national platform for residential school survivors to share their lived experiences, it does so within a context that does not validate these experiences as expressions of *ongoing* colonial violence and land dispossession. The TRC provides the opportunity for *individuals* to express their *individual* grievances without attending to ongoing settler colonial structures (both economic and psychological). These testimonies are shared in a way that is politically palatable to the settler colonial state, yet politically ineffective. It is politically palatable in that it reaffirms narratives of Indigenous pathology in such a way as to frame the Indian Residential Schools policy as an ongoing *Indigenous* problem, rather than as an ongoing settler colonial problem. It is politically ineffectual in that it individualizes these experiences without the possibility of legal action against the government and churches responsible for systemic assault. Consequently, the TRC acts as a panacea that has the goal of moving past what former Prime Minister Harper called "a sad chapter in our history… that has no place in our country" (*Statement of Apology* 2008). The reconciliatory potential of the TRC in provoking a social accountability of past and present colonial violence is thus heavily mitigated.[202]

Moreover, in this respect, the TRC's confessional model amounts to the request of residential school survivors to perform a form of 'colonial-exorcism' for a settler audience, in order to maintain the fiction of Canada as a peacekeeping and non-colonial

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[202] This is not to suggest, however, that the sharing of experiences of violence cannot be empowering for residential school survivors. But rather that the focus on individual experiences fails to address the *structural* violence of the residential school system.

country. As such, the TRC does not shatter this nation-fiction but rather *performs* the narrative of Canadian respect of human rights. This functions as a form of colonial-exorcism insofar as it acknowledges the need for reconciliation but in ways that limit the possibility of inciting meaningful conversations about ongoing settler-colonial violence. It thus assuages settler guilt, while perpetuating the legitimacy of settler authority.

The TRC seeks a colonial-exorcism through a form of therapy for the settler colonial state. The state foregrounds the "experiences of its 'victims' and so publicly admits its 'shame'" (Weiss 2015, 38). The TRC's commitment to move forward indicates a desire to move beyond an "ashamed" past in order to create new relationships. Following Elizabeth Povinelli's analysis of a politics of recognition based on suspicion, we can understand this in terms of a desire to create a new 'purified' state.[203] The admission of past wrongs 'purifies' the state so that it can continue on with a new legitimacy (Povinelli 2011, 162). The TRC's confessional model relegitimates and justifies the Canadian state's power, while simultaneously reaffirming shame as a mechanism of settler colonial control.

The TRC inadvertently reproduces the colonizer's shame by emphasizing pain without explicitly situating it within settler colonial land dispossession. As discussed in previous chapter, the political relevance of Indigenous testimonies can be denied when

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[203] Povinelli aims to articulate the paradoxes of liberal multiculturalism which aims to, on the one hand, recognize otherness and, on the other, to subject that otherness to critical scrutiny. She affirms that the aboriginal subaltern must be "inspected, examined, and investigated," but in ways that force Indigenous persons to account for themselves in a manner that suits the national imaginary of liberal multiculturalism (Povinelli 2002, 39). As such, the inspection of Indigenous Australians always already constitutes them as "failures of indigeneity as such" (2002, 39). She argues that this paradox leads to a "politics of recognition based on suspicion" in which Aboriginal Australians must serve the function of providing evidence that Australia is a tolerant multicultural nation, and at the same time they must "protect the liberal subject from suspecting the (ir)rationality of their intolerance" (2002, 109).

they are heard as evidence of individual pathology. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, "We are made to feel ashamed—dysfunctional, wrong, 'damaged goods'—because of how we cope with the pain of shame and violence, which in turn amplifies and perpetuates shame. Not knowing languages, not protecting our lands well enough, not organizing effectively enough, for always being on the losing end of colonial violence. Shame cages resurgence in a very basic way because it prevents us from acting. Radical resurgent organizing, then, must generate the escape routes out of shame and into grounded normativity" (Simpson 2017, 188).[204]

Settler hearing means that the hearer only hears what she expects. Settler hearing names a kind of hearing that reaffirms the legitimacy of settler authority. As such, it marks a failure of communication.[205] The TRC's mandate does not extend to a critique or reconsideration of the legitimacy of the settler colonial nation and the settler colonial government. As such, the truth-telling events are situated within a framework that presumes a shared (settler colonial) world. The truth-telling events do not put this shared world into question. If settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples do not agree on the (supposedly shared) world, then how can we expect testimony to lead to a reconciliation? If there is no consensus on the way in which the world is broken, how can solutions possibly be heard? In settler hearing, colonial recognition is heard such that it reaffirms settler colonial power.[206] As such, the settler public can rest assured that the TRC does not the challenge settler colonial foundations of this supposedly shared world.

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[204] I return to the question of resurgence and grounded normativity in the final chapter.

[205] Stauffer, drawing on Levinas, affirms that communication is not about transferring knowledge, but it about co-creating the world (Stauffer 2015, 91).

[206] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reminds us that "the colonizer's mirror [will always] reflect back to us what the state wants to see" (Simpson 2017, 188).

These three features of settler hearing— its presumption that the sharing of testimony can and will reconcile relationships; its creation of a template for acceptable testimonies; and its isolation from structural settler colonial violence—prevent, in effect, testimonies from establishing new respectful relationships between Indigenous people and Canadian settlers. Insofar as the TRC performs a settler hearing, it fails to create an ethical relationship between speaker and hearer, and so does not provide the means to establish respectful relationship since it does not shatter the settler myth of benevolence or reject colonizer's shame.

Ethical Loneliness and Reparative Hearing

A second criterion by which we can evaluate the TRC in light of structural ignorance is in terms of its ability to hear testimonies of residential school survivors in a way that attends to their ethical loneliness. The TRC's limited capacity of hearing testimonies means that it is not likely to assuage the loneliness caused by social abandonment. In order for the TRC to address the survivors' ethical loneliness, a settler audience must be able to hear their testimonies in a particularly *unsettling* way.

The TRC's politics of suspicion exemplifies its settler hearing.[207] As such, the TRC's model of reconciliation is based on paranoia and suspicion. I say this also because for Sedgwick (who gets the idea from Melanie Klein), it is only with the reparative position that agents experience themselves as *ethically responsible* agents—as agents who recognize the fact that their actions inflict harms, damages and unintended

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[207] Sedgwick explicitly links paranoid reading to suspicion (Sedgwick 2003, 125).

consequences on others.[208] Hence, it is only with the reparative position that agents experience things like *regret*, *mourning*, *guilt*, *remorse* and the like (Klein 1975, 316 and Sedgwick 2007, 637).[209] As such, a settler hearing does not create the conditions to assuage the ethical loneliness of the residential school survivors and, as such, fails to establish new respectful relationships between settler Canadians and Indigenous communities.

Meaningful communication, for Stauffer, is one that begins from an appreciation of our dependence on others "to confirm the reality of the shared world [...] without that there is no world" (Stauffer 2015, 92). Communication begins from an understanding of our dependence on each other to make sense of (and to create) the world.[210] This means that the act of speaking and hearing is a co-authoring in which the end-result is a surprise to all parties. With this understanding of communication, she argues that reconciliation "rests on a fragile consensus—a new definition of past, present, and future—that can be won only slowly, painfully, and cooperatively and will never succeed in erasing or redefining every resistant narrative" (2015, 93). Reconciliation puts into question a supposed shared world. It seeks to show that what was previously experienced as consensus was never stable. Reconciliation based on testimony requires that testimony shape the very framework of reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be a fixed and stable end-result of truth-telling events but must be a process that must be shaped and reshaped

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[208] I borrow the term 'reparative' from Sedgwick's account of reparative reading as an alternative interpretative practice to that of paranoid reading (Sedgwick 2003).

[209] Bonnie Sheehey expands Sedgwick's account of reparative reading to reparative agency in "Meliorism and Reparative Agency in Jamesian Pragmatism" (forthcoming).

[210] Following Levinas, Stauffer calls a world "a cooperatively authored thing" (2015, 80).

by (often contradictory) testimonies in the continued co-creating of a world with a new past, present and future.

The confessional model of the TRC prevents meaningful communication in that it overdetermines what can be heard.[211] The overdetermination of the kinds of testimonies that can be shared within the truth-telling events inadvertently closes itself to the surprise and risk inherent in communication. Insofar as the TRC can present a final report of having done its job in providing the truth of the residential schools and having uncovering injustice—cultural genocide—it performs a settler hearing that forecloses the possibility for meaningful communication. An example of this is in how the Apology has been read as the recognition of an historical wrong that marks the *resolution* of reconciliation, rather than as the beginning of a meaningful process. On my account, then, the TRC does not succeed in assuaging ethical loneliness of residential school survivors insofar as it does not engage a practice of reparative hearing.

Stauffer interestingly notes that meaningful communication requires hearers to be "open to being *unsettled*" (2015, 70—emphasis added). Unlike settler hearing, a more meaningful kind of hearing is one that begins from an "openness where what is said might be heard even if it threatens to break the order of the known world for those who listen" (2015, 80). This is a type of reparative hearing that must unsettle entrenched relationships of inequality and upset norms and structures of power that have shaped and continue to shape how injustices are spoken, but not heard (Koggel 2016, 3).

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[211] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, for one, worries that 'reconciliation' has been taken as a stable state, rather than as an ongoing *process*.

Unlike settler hearing, reparative hearing begins from an avowal of the inherent vulnerability and risk of communicating without knowing in advance what may be said or heard. That is, reparative hearing requires an openness on the part of hearers to being caught off-guard, and hence, to the possibility of being unsettled by what is said. This hearing requires an openness to what is *not* said, as much as it does to what is said. This openness is required in order to assume ethical responsibility. By being open to testimonies that challenge or disrupt what appears to settlers as natural and normal— namely, settler ignorance—reparative hearing is a kind of hearing that begins the work of challenging the assumptions of settler colonial epistemology that eliminate Indigenous speakers as credible knowers.[212] This is a type of hearing that the TRC effectively gives up by relying on a model of reconciliation that overdetermines what is heard through tropes of victimization, survival and a confessional form of truth-telling. Whereas truth commissions aim to sanitize a devastating past, Stauffer considers the use of "revisionary practices," which make "the past more livable in the present moment" (2015, 7).[213] Revisionary practices do not attempt to simply do away with the past or to "get over" feelings of resentment, but rather aim to grapple with a reconciliation with *time*, which is "the desire to live with what the past has been" (2015, 7).[214]

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[212] An account of reconciliation as reparation will be given in the final chapter.

[213] Stauffer draws on Nietzsche's term "willing backwards" in her account of revisionary practices as ways of learning to live with the past. These practices, such as those of transitional justice, are ones which does not keep a strict boundary between victim and perpetrator. These practices highlight how we "are implicated in the destruction of worlds and in a responsibility to rebuild those worlds" (Stauffer 2015, 138).

[214] With this concern in mind, Campbell argues that the TRC will have to challenge myths that have rationalized Canadian settler colonialism in order to foster relational memory-sharing. Her model of relational remembering emphasizes the role of relationships of power and oppression in shaping what is remembered and considered to be true. In this respect, it refuses the act of abstracting the "us" and "them" in the remembering relation by "focusing on memory as the shared activity of remembering together—as always in relationships through time and shaped by the how of remembering and who remembers" (Koggel 2014, 503). Campbell's model of relational remembering raises concerns about the inability of a non-

Conclusion

The TRC's settler hearing provides a concrete illustration of the ethical impact of structural settler ignorance. The TRC proposes a definition of reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships." The promise that the experience of "truth-telling" is a necessary step in (re)establishing respectful relationships fails when we consider how the testimonies have been framed in such a way as to limit being heard as expressions that challenge settler authority. These testimonies must be heard as examples of Indigenous resurgence, rather than as expressions of shameful victimhood. The emphasis must be on acknowledging the government's actions to destroy Indigenous nations, rather than on the sharing of testimonies which signal individual survival in the face of cultural genocide.

Without an account of Indigenous self-determination, the TRC cannot meaningfully hear testimonies but enacts a settler hearing. Given the settler hearing of the TRC's truth-telling events and the reception of its final report, I argue that the TRC fails on two accounts. It does not provide the means to establish respectful relationships between settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples, and so fails on the terms of its own mandate. It is also unsuccessful in its ability to address the ethical loneliness of residential school survivors. Since the TRC mischaracterizes the harm of the residential schools solely in terms of cultural identity, it does not hear testimonies as expressions of Indigenous refusal of settler authority. The ability to assuage ethical loneliness calls for a

Indigenous public to hear, and remember with, Indigenous residential school survivors (Campbell 2003; 2014).

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reparative hearing which is open to being unsettled by testimonies that challenge settler

common sense, which normalizes settler authority and Indigenous absence. An account

of reparative hearing suggests what is required of setters to enter into ethical relationships

with Indigenous communities. An account requires work to disrupt structural settler

ignorance by rejecting the epistemic assumptions that lead to the elimination of

Indigenous peoples as credible knowers. This is the account I give in my final chapter.

CHAPTER VI

UNSETTLING SETTLER IGNORANCE

Linked by sweetgrass, there is reciprocity between you,

linked by sweetgrass, the holder as vital as the braider.

The braid becomes finer and thinner as you near the end,

until you're braiding individual blades of grass, and then you tie it off.

Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi)[215]

Introduction

The problem of settler ignorance complicates an evaluation of reconciliation

within the confines of the TRC and other governmental attempts to 'move forward' from

past wrongs. An account of settler ignorance demonstrates that reconciliation cannot

occur by simply sharing testimonies of residential school survivors since epistemic

assumptions undermine the very credibility of these testimonies. The TRC's underlying

epistemological framework is one in which subjective felt experiences of residential

school survivors can be easily dismissed as being stuck in the past, or as overly

'emotional' and a sign of individual pathology. These dismissals are not accidental but a

necessary part of the settler colonial epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples. For this

reason, the TRC cannot properly hear the testimonies of residential school survivors as

challenges to settler authority. Consequently, the truth-telling events of the TRC do not,

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[215] Kimmerer 2013, ix

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on their own, challenge settlers' structural ignorance of past and ongoing settler colonial violence.

Without challenging these structural epistemic assumptions that limit Indigenous epistemic agency, governmental apologies and truth commissions simply replicate epistemic exclusions that leave settler ignorance unaltered. Furthermore, an analysis of settler ignorance shows us that an apparent *lack* of knowledge about residential schools is not a case of misrecognition or a lack of information but a particular kind of knowing that undermines Indigenous peoples' epistemic agency.

The previous chapter concluded that the TRC performs a kind of settler hearing in the ways in which it structures its mandate, defines acceptable testimonies at the truth-telling events, and fails to frame the residential school policy in terms of land seizure and destruction of Indigenous nations. These features come to form a settler hearing by foreclosing the possibility of settlers being surprised—of being 'unsettled'—by the truth-telling events. The failure of being vulnerable leads to a settler hearing that evades ethical responsibility and, therefore, fails to provide the conditions for "establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between settlers and Indigenous communities, as well as for assuaging the ethical loneliness of residential school survivors. As such, the inability to be vulnerable further cements settler common sense and settler ignorance. This settler hearing does not challenge what appears, to settlers, as normal, natural and common-sensical. In this chapter, I propose practices to challenge structural settler ignorance. These are practices of reparative knowing that show what meaningful reconciliation requires on the part of settlers.[216]

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[216] Reparative knowing is a broader account than reparative hearing. Whereas 'reparative hearing' names how testimonies can be *heard*, 'reparative knowing' names a way of knowing.

Against the TRC's framing of reconciliation as something that has a single fixed meaning, I contend that reconciliation comes to require different practices for Indigenous communities than for settlers. The very meaning of reconciliation cannot be presented as a foregone conclusion with a predetermined assurance of its success. With this in mind, I present two possible definitions of reconciliation that go beyond the TRC—reconciliation as refusal and resurgence, and reconciliation as reparation. The account of reconciliation as refusal and resurgence showcases practices of cultivating Indigenous self-determination *within* Indigenous communities and outside the confine of recognition from the settler Canadian government. These practices call for *reciprocal* recognition and come to refuse the state's role in bringing about meaningful reconciliation. The account of reconciliation as reparation proposes practices aimed at settlers to recognize their very own settler identity and its implications in order to bear ethical witness to past and ongoing settler colonial violence. This form of reconciliation requires that settlers take up a practice of reparative knowing whereby they cultivate an epistemic responsibility characterized by humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness.[217]

In the context of ongoing settler colonial violence, reparative knowing involves a troubling of settler common sense and a disruption of structural settler ignorance. On this account, a critical transformation of settler ignorance must be predicated upon a rejection of the "placelessness" of Western epistemology, which justifies land dispossession through the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples as credible knowers. For this reason, I contend that work in Indigenous land-based education, which highlights land's

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[217] Lorraine Code develops an account of epistemic responsibility that highlights the role of social forces on our identities as epistemic authorities (Code 1987; 1991; 2006).

role in knowing, makes visible the epistemic assumptions of the settler colonial logic of elimination. Meaningful reconciliation requires of settlers a reparative transformation of the epistemic assumptions that work to maintain a structural ignorance of past and ongoing settler colonial violence.

Reconciliation and Recognition (again)

The ethical evaluation of the TRC in the previous chapter highlighted the fact that the voices of residential school survivors cannot be properly heard outside of an account of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination. Anishinaabe Elder Fred Kelly puts it succinctly—"Real and meaningful [reconciliation] in Canada…must embrace the inherent right of self-determination through self-government envisioned in the treaties" (Kelly 2008, 22 qtd in Weiss 2015, 45). Meaningful reconciliation requires "a revision of contemporary Canadian-Aboriginal policy entirely" and it needs to be more than merely symbolic but require change in material conditions (2015, 46). Taiaiake Alfred is clear on this point—"Without massive restitution, including land, financial transfers and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices committed against our peoples, reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice" (Alfred 2005, 152).

For these reasons, Jeff Corntassel and Cindy Holder argue that the Canadian government's reconciliation mechanisms ultimately fail to transform inter-group colonial relationships and go beyond "hollow, symbolic gestures" (Corntassel and Holder 2008,

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467).[218] State apologies fail to address larger policy implications for Indigenous nations and contemporary power imbalances between settler and Indigenous communities. In this respect, state apologies and truth commissions fail Matt James' criteria for an authentic political apology, which includes the acceptance of responsibility, a statement of regret, and does not demand forgiveness (James 2007).[219]

Corntassel and Holder affirm that the Canadian government's 1998 apology in response to the *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) co-opts the language of reconciliation without first "establishing meaningful forms of restitution and group compensation" (Corntassel and Holder 2008, 486).[220] The short 'Statement of Reconciliation' to Indigenous leaders sought to close the book on the historical legacy of residential schools and "to find ways to deal with the negative impacts that certain historical decisions continue to have in our society today" (*Statement of Reconciliation 1998* qtd in 2008, 473). The Statement clearly situates the violences of the residential school policy in the past, such that the task of reconciliation is to "deal with [past] negative impacts." The 2008 Statement of Apology for the Indian Residential Schools similarly places the ills of settler colonialism in a fixed past.

Without land restitution and support of self-determination, apologies and truth

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[218] Jeff Corntassel and Cindy Holder critically evaluate the use of official apologies and truth commissions in addressing human rights abuse. They consider the use of state-sponsored commissions in Canada, Australia, Peru, and Guatemala (Corntassel and Holder 2008).

[219] These conditions include: (i) recorded officially in writing; (ii) names the wrongs in question; (iii) accepts responsibility; (iv) states regret; (v) promise non-repetition; (vi) does not demand forgiveness; (vii) is not hypocritical or arbitrary; (viii) undertakes—through measures of publicity, ceremony, and concrete reparation—to engage morally those in whose name the apology is made and to assure the wronged group that the apology is sincere (James 2007, 5).

[220] The RCAP was formed in response to the 1990 "Oka Crisis." It was mandated to cover the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The 1996 report's sections on the residential school system aroused such outrage and shame that it called for a separate public inquiry (Nagy 2014, 204).

commissions engage in a "politics of distraction" that diverts energy and attention away from community resurgence and frames community relationships in "state-centric terms" (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005, 600). The politics of distraction names the tools of shape-shifting colonial entities to separate Indigenous peoples from their homelands, cultures and communities. Corntassel contends that the focus on rights, reconciliation, and resources are central to the distraction from "deep decolonizing movements and push us towards a state agenda of co-optation and assimilation" (Corntassel 2012, 91). Corntassel and Holder characterize state apologies and truth commissions as engaging in this distraction insofar as they shift the discourse away "from restitution of Indigenous homelands and resources and ground it instead in a political/legal rights-based process that plays into the affirmative repair policies of states and ultimately rewards colonial injustices" (Corntassel and Holder 2008, 471).

Reconciliation, in other words, would require *recognition* of the damage of past and ongoing structural settler colonial violence. Is this not, however, the model the TRC adopts? Although the TRC presents a model of reconciliation based on the recognition of testimonies, I explained in my second chapter that the TRC's framing politics of recognition cannot challenge structures of settler colonialism. A *meaningful* account of reconciliation requires *reciprocal* recognition, which includes a recognition of structural settler colonial violence and material support of Indigenous self-determination. Insofar as the TRC's confessional model does not challenge these underlying structures, it ends up being a distraction from the work of political self-determination.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson defines reciprocal recognition as "the act of making it a practice to see another's light and to reflect that light back to them, forms the

basis of positive identity, self-worth, and dignity in the other being" (Simpson 2017, 184). Simpson's model of reciprocal recognition within Nishnaabeg intelligence is one that is grounded to land and is an expression of love in the continuance of Indigenous life.[221] Simpson writes—"Recognition within Nishnaabeg intelligence is a process of seeing another being's core essence; it is a series of relationships. *It is reciprocal, continual, and a way of generating society.* It amplifies Nishnaabewin—all of the practices and intelligence that make us Nishnaabeg" (2017, 185).

Simpson's Nishnaabeg model of reciprocal recognition rejects "the colonizer's mirror" which will always "reflect back to us what the state wants to see" (2017, 188). For this reason, Kahnawà:ke Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson's politics of refusal, which situates the refusal to share testimony is a model of self-determination that firmly rejects state recognition that can address the ethical loneliness of residential school survivors (A. Simpson 2014). The model of refusal provides a more viable alternative that prioritizes self-determination and Indigenous resurgence over the empty rhetoric of reconciliation. Whereas the TRC asks Indigenous peoples to engage with a state-sanctioned truth commission in order for the Canadian government to recognize the damage of the residential school system, Nishnaabeg reciprocal recognition rejects the colonizer's mirror, and asks "when you look in the mirror, what do you see?"[222]

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[221] In Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's model recognition, it is about "profound listening, and about recognizing and affirming the light in each other as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening in each other as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening internal relationships to our Nishnaabeg worlds" (2017, 182).

[222] Audra Simpson asks a Mohawk national, "What is the ideal form of membership for us? What do you think makes someone a member of the community?" He looks her squarely in the eye and doesn't answer. Instead he says, "When you look in the mirror, what do you see?" (qtd in Simpson 2017, 179).

Reconciliation as Refusal and Resurgence

A powerful example of a model of self-determination that turns away from the colonizer's mirror is Audra Simpson's politics of refusal. Simpson's work in anthropology explores the avenue of refusal as a politics of resurgence (Simpson 2007; 2014). Refusal here serves the purpose of 'turning away' from the legitimizing gaze of settler authority and from the "presumed 'good' of multicultural politics" towards revitalized, self-generated, transformative models of self-determination (2014, 11). Refusal is both a political and methodological stance to refuse the legitimacy of the settler state's jurisdiction and power of recognizing. Refusal is a failure to consent to the politics of cultural recognition, that is to the "desire to have one's distinctiveness as a culture, as a people, recognized" (2014, 11).[223]

In *Mohawk Interruptus*, Simpson outlines how refusal can be a political and ethical stance of disengagement that enacts sovereignty.[224] Refusal is at once a refusal of settler authority and a declaration of political sovereignty—she writes, "[turning away] negates the authority of the other's gaze" (2014, 24). Kahnawà:ke Mohawks' refusal to claim Canadian and American passports or to become objects of anthropological study, are methods of claiming political sovereignty amidst settler colonialism. Simpson writes, "Refusal comes with the requirement of having one's political sovereignty acknowledged and upheld and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position

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[223] Audra Simpson writes: "If a refusal to recognize also involves using one's territory in a manner that is historically and philosophically consistent with what one knows, then it is an incident of failed consent: Mohawks, in this case, refused to consent to colonial mappings and occupations of their territory" (Simpson 2007, 195).

[224] Audra Simpson defines sovereignty as "a construct which is always a bestowal and as such is deeply imperfect but critical for these moments in Indigenous/Settler-State relations" (Simpson 2007, 72).

of recognizing" (2014, 11). The importance of ethnographical refusal emerges, in part, from Simpson's own experience of "complete disjuncture between what was written about [her] own people and the things that mattered the most to [them]" (2007, 72). The refusal of state recognition is thus not simply an individual act but names collective action whereby membership is collectively defined. For this reason, she frames the question of Mohawk nationhood in terms of "living, feeling citizenships" that are narratively and communally constructed and form the basis of everyday life of the community (2014, 175).[225] Refusal rejects recognition and prioritizes questions of land, Indigenous resurgence, and language revitalization.[226]

In the context of the TRC, refusal would be exactly that—refusing to participate in the process and refusing the state's authority to recognize and hear these testimonies. Refusal means refusing state-sanctioned truth-telling events as a way to reconstruct "shattered voices,"[227] since this process of 'reconstruction' is predicated upon a colonial recognition that makes voices intelligible only by creating 'colonized subjects.'[228] Rather, refusal negates the authority of the state's gaze (or the settler's hearing in this case). The TRC's framework of recognition does not challenge colonial structures that prevent testimonies from being heard. For this reason, the exposing of voices to settlers who

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[225] Audra Simpson's work centers Kahnawà:ke Membership Law of who can and cannot live and access resources on the Kahnawà:ke reserve. She considers the "problem of membership" within the context of the amendment to the Indian Act.

[226] An example of this can be found in Michelle M. Jacob's *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing* (2013).

[227] Phelps 2004, 39.

[228] Coulthard argues that settler colonial recognition involves the creation of "colonized subjects" through a process of internalization whereby the colonized come to accept and even identify with the limited misrecognition granted through state structures (Coulthard 2014).

cannot hear is further damaging and harmful. Consequently, refusal has the potential to assuage ethical loneliness and avoid the dangers of further abandoning residential school survivors in the process by sharing their personal testimonies in an environment in which they cannot be heard.

Indigenous resurgence is another example that cultivates self-determination outside of a relationship with the state. Within Indigenous communities, Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Sean Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson all point to the role of resurgence as a means of cultivating self-determination outside of the confines of recognition from the settler Canadian government. Cultural and spiritual restoration or revitalization does not prescribe a return to pre-contact Indigenous lifeways, but rather fosters "'self-conscious traditionalism' anchored in customary relations of family, place, and politics modeled in traditional knowledge and cultural practices" (Alfred 2009a, 16). Kirby Brown (Cherokee Nation) identifies Indigenous resurgence theory as committed to "*collective* critique of and resistance to settler-state structures of politics, power, and representation, coupled with—if not motivated by—the revitalization of *community-specific* indigenous traditions" (Brown 2015, 293). Resurgence emphasizes ways to restore and regenerate Indigenous nationhood and the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck and Yang 2012).

The return to Indigenous traditions is forcefully articulated by Alfred (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk). He proposes an Indigenism that is not an assimilative pan-Indianism, but rather a view that "brings together words, ideas, and symbols from different Indigenous cultures to serve as tools for those involved in asserting nationhood" (Alfred 2009a, 112). His work weaves together oral traditions and interviews with

community leaders, activists, Elders and youth. In *Wasáse*, Alfred speaks of the Wasáse, the Rotnishonni Thunder Dance or war ceremony, as a "ceremony of unity, strength, and commitment to action" in order to map out meaningful, revolutionary change that reclaims dignity and strength for *Onkwehowe* (Original People) (2005). The call for radical change stems from, and necessarily involves, the resurgence of tribal traditions. Alfred's call to return to warrior tradition is at once grounded in a call for peace and in the resurgence of traditional spirituality. The warrior dance "must be formulated as a spiritual revolution, a culturally rooted *social* movement that transforms the whole of society and a *political* action that seeks to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect truly a liberated post-imperial vision" (2005, 27). His call to revitalize traditional and spiritual roots echoes his reasoning in *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, in which he argues for the return to traditional Indigenous governing models in order to challenge the capitalist model of power, "My guiding vision is of a retraditionalized politics, and the re-establishment of our nations and relationships on the basis of the sacred teachings given to us by our ancestors" (2009, 27). As Alfred notes, traditionally rooted self-determination requires "a set of values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism" (2009a, 60).

Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee Nation) similarly considers everyday examples of resurgence within Indigenous communities, such as from Cherokees in Kituwah, the Lekwungen protection of camas, the Nishnaabekwewag "Water Walkers" movement, and Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) revitalization of kalo (Corntassel 2012).[229] He argues

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[229] Corntassel describes the Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians' opposition to the Duke Energy project and creation of the "Citizens to Protect Kituwah Valley" (Corntassel 2012, 91);

that Indigeneity means struggling to "reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization" (2012, 88). Practices of Indigenous resurgence reflect "the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle" (2012, 88). Unlike the state's measures that form a politics of distraction, Corntassel suggests that decolonizing resurgence emphasizes responsibilities over rights, localized and community-centered actions "premised on reconnecting with land, culture and community" over processes of reconciliation that reinscribe the status quo, and an understanding of Indigenous homelands as "a complex web of relationships" over the commodification of resource (2012, 91).

Corntassel, Cha-Win-Is, and T'lakwadzi call for an Indigenous "restorying" as an alternative to the Canadian TRC and as a "first step toward remembering and revitalizing our collective and individual consciousness" (Corntassel et al. 2009, 155). Without an explicit attention to storytelling, they affirm that the 2008 Statement of Apology and the TRC reinforce colonial relationships, and so maintain a colonial status quo. They name the Nuu-chah-nulth Stop the Violence March (May 2006)[230] as an example of community

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Cheryl Bryce and her family's efforts of managing their traditional Lekwungen territories for centuries and harvesting kwetlal (camas) on park lands and private properties (2012, 93); the "Water Walkers" movement in Wikiwemikong Unceded First Nation in Ontario, Canada in response to increasing threats of environmental pollution to their community lakes and traditional waters; and finally, the Hàlau Kû Mäna (HKM) public charter school to rebuild Indigenous Hawaiian agricultural and educational systems (2012, 96).

[230] The 10-day March raised awareness and act as a catalyst for community-based change. Gloria Larocque (Cree) writes, "The Indigenous women of this land will continue to march to attain what has been suppressed, what has been denied, what has been taken with their lives and liberty. The Indigenous women of this land will again stand where once they have fallen; to feel inside our souls the heartbeat of our ancestors. It is they who fell yesterday, that we base our collective value today. That together, the ancestors will walk alongside future generations, guiding the fight for all Indigenous people of this land. Empowering the Indigenous women empowers the Indigenous family. This walk will be a tangible means that those participating can offer towards the collective end. That all Indigenous women may have the power to provide a sustainable future for the Indigenous family" (Stop the Violence 2012).

mobilization that results from inter-community relationship building between the Nuu-chah-nulth communities rather than from state intervention—"In fact, Nuu-chah-nulth people view state-centered processes as further dividing communities—or trapping us in a cycle of ongoing oppression. In the march, Nuu-chah-nulth people engaged a haa-huu-pah that breathed hope and possibility for the future grounded in our own world-view" (2009, 156).

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson advocates land-based education and the embodied resurgence within language and spiritual traditions (Simpson 2008; 2014). Simpson turns to traditions of governance and resurgence within the Nishnaabeg language, Creation Stories, and personal encounters with both Elders and children. She uses Nishnaabeg stories to reclaim land as pedagogy, in which "stories direct, inspire and affirm ancient code of ethics" (Simpson 2014, 8). She proposes that a return to land, as opposed to efforts to "Indigenize the academy," can nurture a generation of people that can think "within the land and have tremendous knowledge and connection to aki [the land]" (2014, 23). Resurgence involves a turn to Indigenous experiential knowing.[231] Moreover, she puts forward a four-part strategy designed to transcend the politics of distraction and keep the focus on the revitalization of Indigenous communities (2009, 75). Resurgence requires confronting and rejecting a "funding" mentality; confronting linguistic genocide; visioning resurgence of Indigenous traditions; and renewing "precolonial treaty relationships with contemporary neighbouring Indigenous Nations" (2009, 77-84).

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[231] Leanne Simpson writes, "Shortly after the creation of the world and the birth of Nanabush, Nanabush took a trip around the world as a way of learning about the world. That's the first lesson. If you want to learn about something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it. Get a practice. If you want to learn about movement building, get yourself outside involved with people that are building movements. That doesn't mean don't read books, or don't talk to people with all kinds of intelligences. It doesn't mean don't find mentors. It does mean, get out, get involved and get invested" (Simpson 2014, 17-18).

Alfred, Coulthard, Corntassel and Simpson all offer visions of everyday practices that reject the settler colonial logic of recognition and the assumptions of a settler colonial epistemology in order to enact self-determination on their own terms. In this respect, they present practices of reconciliation as refusal and resurgence that reject both the authority of the settler colonial state and turn to an Indigenous epistemology and ontology.

Reconciliation as Reparation

The project of reconciliation should not, however, be framed solely as a task for Indigenous scholars. It is not the 'job' of Indigenous communities to 'inform' settler communities about the realities of settler colonialism. Rather, it is the ethical responsibility of settlers to bear witness to the testimonies of past and ongoing settler colonial violence in meaningful and unsettling ways. I argue, though, that the very *ability* to bear ethical witness depends, however, upon a reparative hearing. The very possibility of ethical responsibility depends upon the vulnerability of reparative hearing. It requires an openness on the part of settlers to *hear* refusals of settler authority as legitimate expressions of political self-determination. A settler hearing, on the other hand, dismisses the possibility of refusal insofar as it remains closed off from the unexpected or unanticipated. Against this settler hearing, reconciliation as reparation demands a rejection of assumptions of a settler colonial epistemology. For this, I expand on Paulette Regan's recommendations for critical interventions to begin the work of deconstructing the Canadian peacemaker myth that informs both collective settler ignorance and empty colonial empathy.

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Regan affirms that a focus on *settler identity* and on the benefits and privileges

that settlers have reaped from Indigenous lands and resources is crucial in order to move

the prevailing framing of the residential school system as a "Native problem" to a more

accurate conception of the residential schools as a "settler problem" (Regan 2010, 36).[232]

She seeks to replace colonial forms of denial, guilt and empathy with acts of "insurgent

remembrance" to borrow Roger Simon's term (Simon 2005). These acts, including her

own autoethnographical account of feelings of "unsettlement" at the Apology Feast in

Hazelton held on Gitxsan territory, center around the violation of treaties and the

dispossession of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands in order to resist the state's

tendency to reduce settler colonialism to residential schools in order to foreclose the past.

Regan asks, "How can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name

and then transform the settler—the colonizer who lurks within, not just in words but by

our actions, as we confront the history of colonization, violence, racism, and injustice that

remains part of the [residential school] legacy today?" (Regan 2010, 11). I offer

reparative knowing as a way of responding to this question. This response builds on

Regan's project of dismantling the settler myth of benevolence and transforming

misguided attempts to assuage settler guilt. Reparative knowing is a coming to know that

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[232] To this end, she seeks to answer the question posed by historian Roger Epp regarding reconciliation in Canada: "How do we solve the settler problem?" (Epp 2003, 228).

displays an openness to being surprised and unsettled.[233] This reconstructed epistemology draws on an Indigenous relational ontology.[234]

The settler national myth of Canada as peacemaker works to uphold settler ignorance, such that "colonial forms of denial, guilt, and empathy act as barriers to transformative socio-political change" (2010, 11). On this account, Regan articulates an account of settler responsibility that requires settlers to "enter willingly into a more vulnerable, unsettling space of not knowing" (2010, 41). The productive space of not knowing—what I am calling reparative knowing—is necessary to transform the ability of settlers to hear the experiential accounts of residential school survivors.[235] A transformation of settler guilt, and other moves to settler innocence, requires not only an active listening, but also an implementation of Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies in Canadian education. In this vein, Regan calls for the need to "restory" the dominant version of history by making decolonizing space for Indigenous history— "counter-narratives of diplomacy, law, and peacemaking practices—as told by Indigenous peoples themselves" (2010, 6).[236]

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[233] Bonnie Sheehey notes that reparative knowing "requires a kind of transformative work on the part of the subject" (forthcoming). Klein understands the work of reparation to be tied to creativity. In "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," Klein argues that feelings arising with the achievement of the depressive position, feelings like guilt, mourning, and love, are a "fundamental incentive towards creativeness" (Klein 1975, 335).

[234] For example, in Deloria 1999.

[235] Matt James contends that Canada's victim-centered TRC performs a carnivalesque "symbolic reparation" that reverses the dominance-submission logic by foregrounding the voices of survivors in ways that trouble settler truths (James 2012, 189). This, however, can only happen within a context in which these voices are meaningfully heard.

[236] An example of this is Oregon Senate Bill 13, which directs the Department of Education to develop curriculum relating to Native American experience in Oregon (Oregon 2017).

I contend, though, that Regan's recommendations for critical pedagogical interventions can only function by dismantling the *epistemic* assumptions of settler colonialism. As I have shown in previous chapters, epistemic assumptions of Indigenous peoples being stuck in a fixed past and being irrational undergird the settler colonial drive for elimination. For this reason, Regan's recommendations should be expanded to practices that challenge underlying *epistemic* norms of who counts as a knower. Consequently, the transformation of settler ignorance requires work in making dominant epistemic assumptions visible. This is the work of taking settler epistemic responsibility.

Settler Epistemic Responsibility

An account of settler epistemic responsibility draws from José Medina's epistemology of resistance, which emphasizes the importance of locating one's epistemic positionality (Medina 2013). Settler responsibility first requires settlers to experience settler ignorance as an example of profound epistemic arrogance. For this reason, the transformation of the settler common sense requires what Medina calls "epistemic friction" to disrupt our taken-for-granted assumptions (2013, 29). Settler ignorance becomes fixed when an invisibility of settler colonialism is felt as both natural and normal. Settler common sense becomes visible to settlers only when it comes to be experienced as *strange*. As such, cognitive and emotional turmoil is necessary for critical epistemic introspection.

The epistemic virtue that Medina attributes to epistemically virtuous subjects among oppressed groups is their *meta-lucidity*—"their capacity to see the limitations of

dominant ways of seeing" (2013, 47).[237] This meta-lucidity involves the epistemic virtues

of humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness, and it has the critical potential to provide

perspectives that make it possible to "redraw our cognitive maps, to redescribe our

experiences, and to reconceptualize our ways of relating to others" (2013, 47).[238]

Reparative knowing includes this virtue of meta-lucidity insofar as it is open to being

surprised by something that initially appears non-sensical. This openness to the non-

sensical can challenge the fixity of settler common sense. The transformation of active

ignorance requires both an individual retraining of epistemic attitudes and habits as well

as social and material changes.

     Drawing on the epistemic virtue of meta-lucidity, Medina proposes two guiding

principles for an epistemology of resistance: the principle of acknowledgment and

engagement, and the principle of epistemic equilibrium. The former demands that all the

cognitive forces be acknowledged and engaged (2013, 50). The latter principle dictates

that agents search for equilibrium in the "interplay of cognitive forces" (2013, 50). Such

an equilibrium requires epistemic meta-lucidity as well as an epistemic responsibility to

others. On this latter point, Medina draws on Miranda Fricker's account of testimonial

responsibility to highlight the need for agents to understand "how identity power

functions in their society, and how epistemic appraisals (such as credibility assessments)

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[237] Medina describes epistemic vices (arrogance, laziness, and closed-mindedness) that cultivate an active ignorance (Medina 2013, 39). These epistemic vices are structural and systematic, and manifest as a cognitive superiority complex and a lack of curiosity in the perspectives of others. Medina defines active ignorance as "an ignorance that occurs with the active participation of the subject and with a battery of defense mechanisms" (2013, 39).

[238] Medina's approach to epistemic resistance stresses the importance of cultivating an openness to a multiplicitous set of perspectives developed by both individuals and collectives in solidarity networks, which are formed "by weaving together problems, values, and goals, that though often irreducibly different […] can be addressed simultaneously and enjoy mutual support" (Medina 2013, 308).

and testimonial exchanges are mediated and colored by social perceptions and stereotypes" (2013, 54).

Crucially, the disruption of epistemic assumptions cannot occur solely through cognitive means but requires material and social change. As Kristie Dotson tells us, there are *irreducible* features of epistemic oppression. Epistemic oppression, of which settler ignorance is one example, is an epistemic by-product of larger social and political systems that often resists transformation (Dotson 2014). Her account of contributory injustice reveals that the underlying schemata that give rise to epistemic exclusions resists the very *identification* of its exclusions. This is why Medina's description of the *emotional* turmoil of epistemic friction is so helpful here. While epistemic exclusions are hard to see and name, they can be *felt*. For this reason, Alison Bailey offers that "performance art, spoken word, mystical insights, mindfulness about affective resources, or by applying non-Western cosmologies and epistemologies critically to the unlevel knowing field" can better identify and change third-order epistemic oppression (Bailey 2014, 67).

An account of reconciliation as *reparation* is helpful in naming both material reparations (e.g. monetary reparations and land restitutions) and relational reparations in the form of reparative knowing. In this respect, the language of reparation highlights the connection between epistemology and social change. A change in epistemology does not solely occur on the cognitive level and, as such, a change to settler ignorance requires affective and material changes. In particular, I contend that a rejection of settler colonial epistemology can occur through a turn to land-based education.

Reparative Knowing and Land-based Education

> *Reconciliation must be placed within a spiritual context,*
>
> *as an intervention in settled understandings of identity and place*

Chief Robert Joseph, head of the Indian Residential Schools Survivors' Society[239]

In chapter 3, I argued that the settler colonial logic of elimination leads to an epistemic elimination, which in turn comes to be used as justification for the seizure of Indigenous land. This epistemic elimination arises from a settler colonial epistemology which defines rationality in terms of a property-relation to land. The settler colonial project of seizing Indigenous land and eliminating Indigenous communities destroys relationships in place, and then dismisses the epistemic and ethical import of this destruction. Accordingly, agential relations to land are taken to be a sign of rational and moral inferiority. This presumed inferiority comes to justify settler colonial expansionism and assimilationist policies, such as the Indian Residential Schools system. Epistemic elimination, which discredits Indigenous peoples as rational knowers, works to uphold an invisibility and ignorance of past and present settler colonialism. For these reasons, I contend that a transformation of settler ignorance must begin by challenging the epistemic assumptions that prevent Indigenous speakers from contributing to public knowledge-production and knowledge-circulation.

I identify Western epistemology's aim for placelessness as a lynchpin to the epistemic elimination of Indigenous peoples. For this reason, the project of working towards unsettling settler ignorance through reparative knowing must begin from a

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[239] Qtd in Nagy 2013, 69.

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critical re-valuation of the placelessness of epistemology. Land-based education has the potential to create the "epistemic friction" needed to spark a change out of the inertia of settler ignorance insofar as it rejects the assumption of placelessness (Medina 2013, 29). This is not to suggest, however, that a change in epistemology in itself will bring about political change. Rather, my account of settler ignorance shows the extent to which epistemic assumptions come to justify settler colonial violence. As such, transformation would require, as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition, the reworking of these assumptions. A consideration of alternative epistemologies serves to identify both the epistemological limitations of state-sanctioned truth commissions and highlights the violences of such epistemic assumptions.

Land-based education explicitly rejects the placelessness of Western epistemology by considering land as a source of knowledge and understanding (Wildcat et al, 2014). An exploration of land as a "system of reciprocal social relations and ethical practices" provides an epistemic and ontological framework for reparation (2014, ii). Land-based education prioritizes Indigenous resurgence and the sustenance of Indigenous life in ways that contest the settler colonial drive for elimination.[240] Land-based education does not aim for reconciliation through the tokenized inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies within settler education but seeks to revitalize Indigenous communities in order to work towards decolonization.[241]

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[240] See McCoy et al. 2016.

[241] Indigenous resurgence has become one of the most robust scholarly paradigms to study Indigenous politics for theorizing how a shift in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples, away from reconciliation and towards decolonization, would provide the foundation of an Indigenous social movement capable of transforming Canadian society (Wildcat et al. 2014, iii).

Land-based education gives an account of ethical relationships in terms of *grounded normativity*. Grounded normativity is the ethical framework that emerges from "place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge" (Coulthard 2014, 60). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson affirms that it is an ethical framework that does not have a pre-determined structure or conclusion but is generated and "maintained from deep engagement with Indigenous processes that are inherently physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual" (Simpson 2017, 23). Since land is a connection of relationships, a land-based ethics is one that emerges from the particular obligations to the particular relationships in place.[242]

Grounded normativity is an ethical model that both rejects the placelessness of settler colonial epistemology and resists the moral authority of the settler nation.[243] It presents an alternative model of reconciliation in the refusal to see the legitimacy of the settler nation. According to grounded normativity, *reconciliation* must itself be place-specific.

Conclusion

So, what does this mean in the context of settler ignorance and the Canadian TRC? What does a model of grounded normativity suggest as a way forward? According to grounded normativity, the ways forward emerge from relationships in place, and so cannot be unilateral. The emphasis on land as a source of knowledge, however, is

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[242] Deloria and Wildcat 2001.

[243] "Having undergone cultural regeneration, an Indigenous resurgence would engage in an outward, disciplined confrontation with settler society" (Wildcat et al. 2014, iv).

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suggestive for both an account of reconciliation as refusal and resurgence, and reconciliation of reparation. The model of grounded normativity points to the need for land-based responses that emerge from relationships with the land. These responses are unlike attempts to 'reconcile' a difficult past through state mandate, which are not responsive to relationships to land. Reconciliation as refusal and resurgence, however, points to actions that are responsive to communities.[244] Settlers have an ethical responsibility to listen and to be open to hearing refusal of settler authority and to disrupt settler ignorance. On this account, reconciliation as reparation highlights the need for material reparations as well as a model of reparative knowing that is open to hearing such refusals.

Land-based education has the promise of creating the epistemic friction needed to begin the work of disrupting the felt normalcy of settler common sense and making visible the epistemic assumptions of settler ignorance. A focus on the ethical import of sustaining relationships in place disrupts Western philosophy's ambitions to a placeless account of the world and reveals that this ambition only serves to justify, and thus evade ethical responsibility for, the destruction and genocide of Indigenous communities. For this reason, reconciliation requires a rejection of epistemologies and ontologies that have justified (and continue to justify) settler colonial violence.

Throughout my dissertation, I have shown that a transformation of settler identity requires a critical investigation into the epistemic assumptions that normalizes and

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[244] Leanne Simpson names examples of Indigenous land-based responses that are response to relations in place—the community of Hollow Water First Nation's Community Holistic Circle of Healing as a Nishnaabeg restorative justice model to address sexual violence in their community; Grassy Narrows First Nation's fight against mercury poisoning in their river system; and the Akwesasne Freedom School that provides Mohawk education for Mohawk children (Simpson 2016, 24-25).

naturalizes settler colonialism. Without such a critical investigation into settler ignorance, we settlers can believe the myth of our own benevolence, which masks and justifies ongoing violence. Whereas the TRC inadvertently perpetuates settler colonial authority in its epistemic assumptions, the model of land-based education presents a radically different picture of reconciliation. For one, reconciliation is not one that can occur within the confines of state recognition but is rather an on-going process that emerges from relationships to, and with, the land. For this reason, reconciliation *requires* a central focus on land restitution and a nation-to-nation relationship with the Canadian government. A change in settler colonial epistemology entails, for settlers, a new relationship with land. Reconciliation requires settlers to critically transform our epistemology and ontology in order to attend to our relationships to, and in, place for the first time. Reconciliation for settlers, in this respect, must be thoroughly *grassroots* and profoundly unsettling.

APPENDIX

THE 2008 STATEMENT OF APOLOGY

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons
We are sorry
Nimitataynan
Niminchinowesamin
Mamiattugut

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

On behalf of the Government of Canada
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,

Prime Minister of Canada[245]

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[245] June 11, 2008

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