

INDIGENOUS NEW YORK, CRITICALLY SPEAKING

... of a band, the Minister may authorize
... moneys for any purpose that in the opinion
... al progress and welfare of the band or any

... out of the revenue moneys of the band to
... titute Indians of the band, to provide for the
... rs of the band and to provide for the payment
... ment Insurance Act on behalf of employed
... of their employment out of moneys of the band.

... take expenditures out of the revenue moneys of a band in
... made pursuant to paragraph 81(1)(p.3) for the purpose of
... any person whose name was deleted from the Band List of the
... not exceeding one per capita share of the revenue moneys.

... revenue moneys with authority of Minister

... may authorize the expenditure of revenue moneys of the band for
... following purposes, namely,

... ruction of noxious weeds and the prevention of the spreading or
... insects, pests or diseases that may destroy or injure vegetation
... ves;

... mitigate and control the spread of diseases on reserves, whether
... ases are infectious or communicable;

MARCH 11, 2017

The New School
Wollman Hall
65 West 11th Street, 5th floor
New York City

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Introduction

The following texts were commissioned and are the foundation for *Indigenous New York, Critically Speaking*, the second of three colloquia that ground the *Indigenous New York* series this year. Karyn Recollet's contribution is reprinted by permission from *Curriculum Inquiry*. The series is a public program and research initiative of the Vera List Center developed in collaboration with artist Alan Michelson and in consultation with artist Jackson Polys. It facilitates collaborations and exchanges among contemporary curators, artists, critics and scholars through public events and colloquia that focus on indigeneity and the legacy of colonialism and position the local as evidence of concerns shared globally.

The first of this series, *Indigenous New York, Curatorially Speaking*, examined four key inquiries: indigenous and non-indigenous epistemologies and methodologies; the non-colonial museum; challenges of collaborative curation; and the growing indigenization of international art. It was presented in October 2016.

Building on the success of the first colloquium, the second colloquia *Indigenous New York, Critically Speaking*, takes up a second set of thematics: Land Writes—Citing Territory, Seeing Red: Invisibility and Opacity, Resistance, Resurgence, Collective Practice, and Unsettling Narratives. These thematically framed exchanges provide opportunities to examine how a fuller consideration of indigenous creative production might reconfigure regimes of critical writing.

Indigenous New York is a public program and research initiative of the Vera List Center developed in collaboration with artist Alan Michelson and in consultation with artist Jackson Polys. It facilitates collaborations and exchanges among contemporary curators, artists, critics and scholars through public events and colloquia that focus on indigeneity and the legacy of colonialism and position the local as evidence of concerns shared globally. It is supported, in part, by the Native Arts and Culture Foundation, the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and the Advisory Committee of the Vera List Center. It is part of the Vera List Center's 2015-2017 curatorial focus theme Post Democracy.

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the cuts.¹

cheyanne turions and Sadia Shirazi

This text was crafted in dialogue. Our conversation began over Skype (bridging the distance between Toronto, New York and the various other places we found ourselves writing from), was continued through email and culminated in our meeting, for the first time, at the Vera List Center's colloquium Indigenous New York, Critically Speaking. Instead of cheyanne writing an essay on the topic "Land Writes—Citing Territory" and Sadia composing a response, we were both interested in a more process-based written exchange, in which we might allow our writing to evolve out of, as much as it could for two people who did not know one another, an incipient dialogue.

A relationship to history is more than a recitation of it. A relationship to history, if it is to be called a relationship at all, must bear upon the forms made of the future, in the now.

I write these words in Toronto, a place whose name derives from a Haudenosaunee word. When I cite this place, invoking history, I note that it is the land of the Mississaugas of New Credit, though by doing so, I am privileging a moment of colonial encounter through treaty making. The history of this place cannot be summarized through this relatively recent encounter because this is a place that many different Indigenous peoples, for thousands of years, have called home. In marking this history, starting the story earlier than colonial encounter orients the acknowledgement to Indigenous perspectives on the history of this place that is now known as Canada.

I have learned this practice of citing land from colleagues and mentors, and my understanding of these kinds of territorial acknowledgements is that they are a relatively new practice, begun as a way of centering Indigenous relations and presence in settler-colonial spaces. Following the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the practice of performing territorial acknowledgements at cultural events—panel discussions, performances, screenings et cetera—has noticeably increased. Here, the tie between history, orality and the present-becoming-future is tasked with resisting the placation of performance as justice. To

¹ This title is drawn from Layli Long Soldier's *WHEREAS* (2017).

acknowledge the settler colonial condition of these lands is not redress to the many forms of colonial dispossession that continue to shape the lives of Indigenous people here. Territorial acknowledgements should be discomfiting, a cursory form of truth-speaking that provokes considerations of how cultural work is not distinct from the political realities that shape civic society. They should provoke labour in service of redistributing power, privilege and resources, drawing from the specific capacities of art—to lend gravity to strange propositions that cannot be articulated elsewhere (such as in politics or science)—to propose new ways of being in relation.

At this particular political moment I wonder how this practice of acknowledging territory, as taken up in the spaces of art, might be able to bear upon other structures of dispossession, like those I see at work in, for instance, the seven/six nations travel ban.² I know the actual effects of the executive order(s) are in flux, but the anxiety and fear they produces in those potentially affected is nonetheless sustained. It feels more important than ever to talk about land, mobility and the ways that white supremacy conditions the social and political forces that dictate who has access to certain places/privileges and who does not.

I'm not sure that all the assumptions here hold, but: if territorial acknowledgements can work to dismantle the supports of a settler-colonial white supremacy, then is it possible that the effects of this can also trouble the racism and Islamophobia that have allowed for the travel ban? If we acknowledge the ways that an ongoing colonial project and a ubiquitous white supremacy condition us, can we use the specific extra-rational capacities of art³ as a way to organize relation otherwise?

Here's one example of this coming together of cultural forms and political agency, of this working toward a something else:

² Originally written in February 2017, we were first referring the seven nations travel ban, which applied to people from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. In the time since our initial draft was composed, the executive order has been rearticulated in order to avoid legal concerns that have otherwise effectively stalled the implementation of the previous executive order. The current ban covers six nations—excluding Iraq from the list above—and goes into effect on 16 March 2017, after the publication of our writing.

³ The specific phrase “extra-rational” is a reference to an idea of David Garneau’s that describes artworks (objects, performances or time-based media) that “through visceral and intuitive means [endeavour] to provoke change in other bodies—to alter moods, attitudes, dispositions and sensibilities first, in the hope that arguments, reason, judgment and minds will follow.” Garneau, David. “Extra-Rational Aesthetic Action and Cultural Decolonization,” *FUSE Magazine*, vol. 36 no. 4 (2013). Accessed 13 February 2017. http://fusemagazine.org/2013/10/36-4_garneau.



Dylan A.T. Miner, *No Bans on Stolen Lands*. 2017

I first encountered this sign hanging in the street-facing window of a cafe in Toronto, where it connected a pre-colonial history of the lands now know as the United States to current legislation that attempts to govern who has access to them. “Bans” foregrounds how the executive order has been constructed to bar access and “stolen” highlights the foundational violence of American statehood. As an imaginative exercise, to whose authority should one appeal when seeking permission to settle on these shores? What would it look like to re-articulate immigration policy in a way that acknowledges law as a colonial framework and pivots, instead, to Indigenous legal orders to administer cross-cultural relationships, including who has access to theses territories? Such an orientation would trouble an assumptions of the sign: that these lands are stolen. “Stolen” locates dispossession in the idea that ownership has been wrongfully reneged, but on my understanding, ownership of land is a western/colonial idea, not an Indigenous one. If land cannot be owned, how can land be stolen? Instead: No Bans on Indigenous Lands. Or: Indigenous Legal Orders on Indigenous Lands. Or even: Treaty Frameworks as Immigration Policy. I admit, these are not quite as catchy as slogans, but there’s something useful in the complications they offer, in the paradigm shifts they propose. And something useful in the making public of them through aesthetic channels.

—cheyanne

I began writing in response to you, cheyanne, on the 75th anniversary of Japanese internment in the United States. The Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt in 1942 resulted in the “evacuation” and internment of residents and American citizens of Japanese ancestry. Smaller groups of German and Italian immigrants were also caught in its net. You wrote to me about the seven nations travel ban and about land, legislation and dispossession, something I have been thinking through, too. I had mentioned to you on Skype that I am wary of the juridical lenses the state uses to capture people, to define whose bodies pose a threat to the security of the state within and outside its territorial borders.

I happened upon the image “No Bans On Stolen Lands” that you described seeing in a cafe window in Toronto. I saw it circulating online, with its text sprawling across the territorial outline of the United States first in an all blue image and then in the colors of the Medicine Wheel. Dylan A.T. Miner designed the image and had posted it on social media and written “Feel free to use this image” and “please share.”⁴ Prints of the image were also used to raise donations to support people affected by the terrorist attack at the Islamic Cultural Center of Quebec City. The image was recently updated by the artist to read “No Raids on Stolen Lands.” Your thoughts on the sign and the question of ownership brought to my mind the legal case *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823) that laid the foundation for the dispossession of Indigenous land in the United States. In this case between two non-Native men over land sold to one by the Piankeshaw, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Indigenous tribes and nations could not sell land to private citizens. He cited the “discovery doctrine” that was used to legitimize European colonization and that justified colonial theft through the premise of “discovery” as legalized dispossession of non-Christian lands. This case established the foundational violence of dispossession of Indigenous land and Indigenous erasure, echoing what you described as the foundational violence of the state.

You wrote of the practice of acknowledging territory as working to dismantle the supports of settler-colonial white supremacy. You wondered how territorial acknowledgement could bear upon structures of dispossession behind the recent seven nations travel ban, Executive Order 13769, “Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States.” As a second generation American, and the first generation to grow up in this country, I am struck by

⁴ Dylan A.T. Miner is a a Métis artist who has posted these images on instagram under his handle “wiisaakodewinini,” accessed February 28, 2017. <https://www.instagram.com/wiisaakodewinini/?hl=en>

how this nation-state and its laws are a palimpsest of successive dispossessions and inclusions. Wartime incarcerations of long term residents and American citizens for the “threat” they pose to its security has many precedents as do immigration bans. Executive Order 9066 was preceded in both the United States and Canada by the Chinese Exclusion Acts, from 1882 in the United States and 1923 in Canada. The recent travel ban was preceded by Executive Order 13768, “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” that subjects undocumented immigrants to deportation. Indigenous peoples and nations posited as threats to the state precede all of these.

The interior of the United States feels like fear. This fear justifies a state of constant violence mobilized against a field of moving targets. German Jews were caught in the net of Executive Order 9066, as there was not yet a move to distinguish between Jewish as an “ethnicity” and German as a national identity. I am alarmed by the way in which discourse around the seven nations travel ban marks the state’s racialization of a religious group that was not previously self-articulated as an “ethnicity” or “race.” When did Muslim become a racialized category? What is borne out of Islamophobia as a distinct category of exclusion? To ward off a suffusive feeling of fear as the miasma through which our marked bodies move in this country, I turn towards a deeper desire to hold the people I know and love, to trace a history in order to understand how we might sit, stand and lie down shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot, together. I want to remember, too, people whom I have not yet met or who are within and amongst us, who were and are also still treated like strangers in this land. In the shifting entanglements of settler-native-slave relations that undergird settler colonialism how can we theorize and attend to the particularities of immigrant arrivants?⁵ Drawing from the post-9/11 neoimperial language of threats to the state within and outside its borders, Jodi Byrd writes “In the United States, the Indian is the original enemy combatant who cannot be grieved.”⁶

This land belongs to strangers.

—Sadia

⁵ Arrivant is a term I adapt from the work of Jodi A. Byrd, who borrows the term from African Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xix.

⁶ *Ibid.* xvii.

Recent actions by the governments that call themselves Canada and the United States demonstrate how even an acknowledgement of harm caused by the kinds of legislation you describe can be morally neutered. Apology, it turns out, has been manipulated so as to preserve state power and its attendant logics, rather than administering a kind of justice that challenges these systems. An adequate redress to wrongs should correlate to changes in behaviour, no?

In the place that I live, what has come to be known simply as “the apology” was performed on 11 June 2008 and it involved then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper conceding to the insidious, inter-generational and ongoing violence of the now-defunct residential school system. The apology was administered as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement agreement that, according to the government, sought a “fair and lasting resolution to the legacy of Indian Residential Schools.”⁷ The much-lauded Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was also a part and this settlement agreement, tasked with collecting the stories of residential school survivors and their kin, and disseminating this history to a broader Canadian public. The TRC process culminated in 2015 with the of release its final report, which included 94 calls to action. Directed mostly toward the government and its agencies, none of the calls suggest dismantling the structures that made the residential school system possible. None of the calls recommend the repatriation of land and resources to Indigenous people. Perhaps this is unsurprising. Power is conservative, predisposed to preserving existing conditions rather than challenging them. To the extent that the calls to action challenge the status quo, they do so in ways that the state can recognize and abide by, on its own terms. These calls, addressing one specific manifestation of settler-colonial rule, do not make a decolonial discourse for there is not Indigenous self-determination at their core.

In the place that you live, the Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans was signed by then-President Barack Obama on 19 December 2009. The apology was not performed, in that Obama did not offer his breath to these words, he did not speak them aloud to any of the people to whom they were ostensibly addressed. In some deeply existential irony, this apology was enacted into law as part of a defence spending bill (H.R.3326—Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010, Sec. 8113) and concluded with the following disclaimer: “Nothing in this section authorizes or supports any claim, or serves as a settlement of a claim,

⁷ “Indian Residential Schools,” *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*, accessed 24 February 2017, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015576/1100100015577>.

against the United States.”⁸ In essence, as the government acknowledged the harm wrought by settler colonialism on Indigenous people in its name, it simultaneously absolved itself of culpability (or, at least, accountability) for any of those wrongs. This stands in contradistinction to President Ronald Reagan’s Japanese Internment Apology, signed into law in 1988, that carried with it token financial restitution to those survivors of the camps that were still living. The settlement agreement of which Harper’s apology was a part also included token payments to residential school survivors.

To be honest, the only reason I know about the American apology is because of poetry. Or rather, because of poetry’s capacity to confront power through *détournement* and refusal, and because of one poet’s insistence on doing so. (There was very little promotion of the apology through official government channels, and as far as I can tell, most press coverage was through Indigenous media outlets.) Layli Long Soldier’s *WHEREAS* (2017) shapes itself after the original Joint Resolution, which was put forward by Republican Senator Sam Brownback and (weakly) informed the final language of the Act.⁹ For every *whereas* statement in the resolution that grapples with the immense history of Indigenous presence on these lands and the violence of genocidal attempts at erasure, Long Soldier writes back. She takes the language and turns it. In her hands, the capacity of poetry to make meaning thick, to enact life, to become flesh is wielded with precision. In her *whereas* statements, she carries the undue weight of emptiness, she carves a curative collectivity, she shows inheritance seeping in through cracks. In her *whereas* statements, she tears the state’s language apart and performs, instead, a divergent kind of beingness.

In this poetry, a way forward, and I see it in your proposal too. You advocate tending to the energies we make when together: the poetry of bodies, speaking truth to power.

And yet, I can’t shake this feeling of a something else, shuddering to think of the other poems, yet to be written, the ones that will speak back to the motivations behind—and consequences

⁸ “H.R.3326 - Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010,” *Congress.gov*, accessed 24 February 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/house-bill/3326>.

⁹ The Joint Resolution was significantly altered and watered down in its adoption into law. Consider that the Joint Resolution was over 1000 words in length, whereas the entirety of its section in the Act is 122 words. Full text of the resolution can be seen here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/14/text>.

of—the seven nations travel ban, of the racialization it provokes and that you have diagnosed, of the apology I imagine will one day be offered in consequence.

—cheyanne

The apology

Fair and lasting resolution

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

94 calls to action

The Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans

Disclaimer

The Japanese Internment Apology

Settlements for survivors

The American apology

Layli Long Soldier writes back

There is a violence that inheres to the juridical language of these resolutions and apologies. The language of law is a counterpoint to the theft that precedes it, a contrapuntal violence in which the resolution or apology is a response to the prior call of state violence. The fact that the Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans was unperformed, as you noted, exhibits a parallel violence to the originary dispossession enacted by *Johnson v. M'Intosh*. In that case, the Indigenous were disappeared from the land and any claims to it. In this Resolution of Apology, the Native American is rendered into a spectral figure that haunts the exteriority of the law with neither land nor body, so spectral that it cannot even be spoken to aloud. What is actually enacted in an state's apology to an addressee with whom there is no reciprocal communication but only unidirectional address? In which there is no performance of a poietic social practice that institutes a relation beyond subjugation by the laws of the state?¹⁰ This is why Layli Long Soldier writing back is such a powerful gesture, her poetry enacts life and becomes flesh, as you beautifully describe. It feels important that Long Soldier is not just speaking back but performing what you describe as "a divergent kind of beingness" through which "she carves a curative collectivity." To the call of the state to violence and the response of the law to apology, Long Soldier returns in refigured flesh.

The Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans includes the Indigenous without consent into the state, it calls the Indigenous Americans. This functions to capture the Indian

¹⁰ For more on poietic social practice and heterolingual address, see: Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

within the territorial boundaries and legal jurisdiction of the United States through a doubled gesture, through legalized dispossession of their land and then again through this call that is a kind of violence, this homogenous naming of heterogenous groups. When did Indigenous tribes and nations named otherwise become Indians? And when did the Indian then become Native American? What is called The Japanese Internment Apology, it struck me, differs from the Apology to Native Americans. The Internment Apology is not even addressed *to* anyone. Its formal structure is a predictive outline for the futurity of other internments and subsequent apologies that you foresee. It is not an apology for evacuation or land theft, which historians have argued accounts for the discrepancy in treatment of long term residents of Japanese descent in the West coast in comparison to Hawaii. It was property in the West coast that the government wanted to seize from them, too. In the 94 calls to action issued by the TRC in Canada you noted that not one suggested dismantling colonial structures nor repatriation of land or resources to Indigenous people, as well as in the United States' unperformed Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans. The state striates its spaces of governance through law, while the land and flesh are entangled.

The Japanese Internment Apology also captures the Japanese in repressed relation to the Native American. These victims are not also named as American, although many were, perhaps because to cast them as Americans would too closely cohere to the predictive logic by which American citizens will continue to be killed and interned, murdered and imprisoned, as a matter of daily practice despite their citizenship. Or as an evocative gesture through which other Americans will have their citizenship unnamed in an effort to demonstrate their nonconformity to the the state's demand that populations homogenize. It also separates the treatment of this minority group named through their national origin and not their residential status nor even their American citizenship, from the murder, internment and colonization of Indigenous people as well people affected by American imperialism across the world. To name Indigenous Nations and Tribes by the names they answer to, in the Congressional Resolution of Apology enacted by this government, instead of as Native Americans, is too threatening to the law that has already rendered them bereft of sovereignty. I wonder how a Japanese Internment Apology that disappears another record of American terror, the dropping of atomic bombs, operates historically. Is there a fictive relation established that determines that war is always elsewhere and not also here within the territorial boundaries of this nation-state? The fact is that war

waged outside the state is simultaneous with war waged internally. The seven nations ban demonstrates this logic perfectly.

That feeling that you cannot shake of something else, is prescient. Violence is a kind of initiation into —American life, for its citizens and non-citizens, it is the wounding of the flesh in some cases and the erasure of the body in others.¹¹ I often think of the state's self-articulations through its architecture, its formal logic. The state's resolutions score its stiff, cold materiality and allow its skin to develop into a more complex and faceted armature. Resolutions and apologies do not rip or tear its skin, they only extend and repopulate it parametrically, so it not only permits the preservation of the state but enhances it. The state is sorry when it says "have one on us." It gives out medals, holds ceremonies, maybe even writes a check for a little money for your people's hard times. Its nonsense is interrupted when Long Soldier writes back. She stages an irruption into the logic of the law; she shreds the skin of the state. Long Soldier enacts the social poesies denied by the unspoken apology and its previous foreclosure of the status of the human to Indigenous people. The racialization of the marked body of the "Muslim" in discourse around the seven and now six nations travel ban is another such naming. It follows the call of violence the state has already inflicted on the bodies of those who resisted neo-imperialism, colonialism and racism, both within and outside this nation-state. I am working on a book of scores for Muslim sociality with my friend Mezna Qato and there is one particular score we wrote that I would like to share with you.¹² In it we try to decipher the utterances that emerge from the moving lips of a severed head. It is a way forward, together, that is also already an everyday practice of invocation and breath.

Score for 13769

786

—Sadia

¹¹ This distinction between the body and the flesh is drawn from the work of Hortense J. Spillers. See: Hortense J. Spillers, *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*, *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection (Summer, 1987), 65-81.

¹² Sadia Shirazi and Mezna Qato, *7 Scores & The PMK*, 2016-ongoing, *publication forthcoming*. More information can be found here: <http://www.sadiashirazi.com/7-scores-and-the-peoples-mic-khutba>. Accessed March 4, 2017.

cheyanne turions and Sadia Shirazi thank Layli Long Soldier for her provocations and generosity in highlighting the force of language as a tool to make and remake the world. Long Soldier's recent book of poetry, WHEREAS, can be found [here](#).

Art, Ceremony, and Activism: evading capture in visual representation

Crystal Migwans and Anne Spice

One



On a bright day in September, we gather in Washington Square Park. Supporters start to mill about, and we set up in front of the fountain, across from the archway. This is one of the most recognizable parks in NYC. Banners are laid out on the ground in front of the fountain, painted in black and red and blue and yellow. “#NoDAPL. Water is Life! Mni Wiconi. Indigenous Sovereignty Protects the Land and Water. Decolonize this Place. This is Genocide.” The banners form a brightly colored stage. The central banner is actually a red carpet marked with text acknowledging the Lenape people on whose territory we are gathered. When speakers approach the mic, they walk along the carpet, marking their presence on Lenape land.

Soon, there is a crowd gathered around the stage, holding posters and banners of their own, pressed in tightly to hear the words of the speakers-- Indigenous scholars and activists and community members and water protectors. We hear later that the crowd numbered two thousand people. People burn their sage bundles. There are people chanting. Speakers are interspersed with drumming and singing. The big drum comes out, and jingle dancers lead the group in a round dance. This feels like a closing moment, but an elder has yet to speak. We ask the crowd to stay, to sit and listen, and they do. The elder leads the crowd in a blessing of all directions, and we turn and offer thanks in unison: east, west, north, south, sky, earth. It begins to grow dark and people gather closer, sitting and listening-- until the first drops of rain start to fall and we take this gift of water as a sign that it is time to go home.

Two



At Oceti Sakowin camp, the days move in and out of ceremony. At nighttime, people gather around the sacred fire or in the large geodesic dome (word is that “the burners”-- Burning Man festival-goers-- set it up, but it has been repurposed and claimed for Native events) to sing and drum and dance late into the night. The camps are lit by a line of large floodlights from the nearby hill where construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline is currently taking place. Private security forces fly planes overhead, even at night. The site is lit like an ominous movie set, we feel exposed, on display, surveilled.

The next day, word travels around the camp that there will be a ceremony to light the seven council fire and re-establish the horn of the nation-- a formation of lodges. We wait in a large circle and watch as riders on horseback enter the circle and swirl around the fire. The scene is breathtaking and powerful. Suddenly, we hear the buzz of a drone overhead, it is hovering over the fire. People motion wildly for it to leave the space, as photographing or filming the ceremony is not permitted. Eventually it takes off, and there are murmurs about whether it was a police drone or a camp drone. Another drone appears, and it is waved off as well. People are visibly upset by the interruption of the ceremony, by the attempt to capture it on film.

Three



The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City plays unwilling host to its first Anti-Columbus Day rally one October Monday. Their 20-foot statue of Teddy Roosevelt is the focal point, selected from among the city's many monuments to colonialism for its depiction of racial hierarchy: a heroic Roosevelt astride a stallion, his reins held by the subordinate figures of a generic Native American man on one side and a generic African man on the other.

The action begins with a 'decolonial tour' of the main level exhibits before spilling out onto the street. On the front steps of the museum, between a sprawl of protesters and a line of police, a small action group struggles to pull a grey shroud over the statue. To each side red banners unfurl, demanding: REMOVE the statue, RENAME the day, RESPECT the ancestors. The shroud catches on pigeon spikes and is whipped by the wind but stays up, a blank space torn out of the museum's façade. A series of speakers leap into the open space to shout their decolonial messages, amplified by the crowd of hundreds and captured from a dozen angles by reporters, cameras, and Facebook live feeds. Hyperallergic magazine later ranks it among the best art shows of 2016.

At the same moment, a group of protesters are carrying out a different kind of action in an inner corner of the museum. The three Anishinaabe women sit in the Eastern Woodlands Indian exhibit, drumming nonstop. Their backs are turned to the curious public, red and black cloth draped over sacred objects in their display cases, a line of accomplices guarding the corner. Security guards and museum-goers pause to watch but stay well back, unsure of where or how to direct their gazes. Some take photos furtively, others bow their heads and listen.

Art or ceremony?

Indigenous actions in these examples have entered two distinct but overlapping modes: art and ceremony. Although art and ceremony seem to describe separate spheres with contradictory demands, they must be understood as two strategies in tension within the same frame.

Art is imagined secular, democratizing, critical in its ability to penetrate social hierarchy and make visible the invisible. Art invites a gaze and demands a response, and so Indigenous movements have made use of its ability to call an audience to action. Banners are waved, words recited, symbolic gestures performed within a frame carefully selected for greatest visibility: the fountain at Washington Square Park, the row of flags at Oceti Sakowin, the Roosevelt façade at the natural history museum.

Ceremony instead demands restrictions on visual access and participation. For Indigenous people, ceremony enacts specific, familial relationships to land, water, and the non-human that predate and exceed the settler state. It is decidedly undemocratic in its proscription of social roles; unsecular in its essentialism. But ceremony too can be a critical tool. An abbreviated ceremonial mode emerges in the land acknowledgements and prayers that begin most Indigenous actions, when smudging, speaking one's Native language, or drumming leads

viewers to bow their heads or step back out of respect. The land acknowledgement ceremony is generally accepted in non-Native spaces as a decolonizing *gesture*, appended to the start of an action to authenticate it, but the moments of sustained, specific ceremony in the above examples ask something harder and more revealing. Try asking a reporter to turn off their camera at a council fire, or a museum to remove their model of a medicine society ritual, and an appeal to the virtues of public access will soon follow. Deployed as a strategy in settler spaces, ceremony is a call for settlers to cede presumptions of visual access and become un-sovereign.

Art / ceremony is analogous to recognition / refusal, if art is about soliciting a settler gaze and ceremony is about turning from that gaze. 'Recognition' as formulated by Glen Coulthard (2014) describes the politics of becoming visible and acceptable to colonial governments as Indian-enough in order to 'earn' sovereignty. Mohawk political theorist Audra Simpson (2014) uses 'refusal' as an alternative. She posits this turning-away (from the settler gaze) as a strategic choice; a positive assertion of life and meaning elsewhere.

It's more complicated than looking for / looking away, however. Indigenous ceremony is also part of public rituals of recognition, and Indigenous art is used to interrupt settler spaces.

The tension between these modes can be transformative, as when the dancing and drumming at the Washington Square Park rally made the massed protesters strikingly receptive to the directive to sit down, be silent, and give an ear to an Elder for an extended period of time. It can be transgressive to the point of violence, as when camera-drones and visitors with iPhones intrude in ceremony at Standing Rock, unwittingly asserting the claim of the settler gaze on a space that is struggling against surveillance. And it can be contradictory. The drumming group inside the AMNH were performing a private ceremony to "feed" the ancestors (museum objects) at the same time as they were using performance art strategies to highlight their ceremonial rejection of the settler gaze.

Out of these strategic tensions between art and ceremony comes an Indigenous practice that Tuscarora art historian Jolene Rickard terms "visual sovereignty." With this, Rickard complicates Western notions of sovereignty as confined to the legal or political realm, pointing out that the legal-political exists within a wider "expressive imaginary of visual sovereignty" (Rickard 2011, p.471, [here](#)). Thus Indigenous art can challenge the colonial myth of an Indigeneity confined to certain marginal spaces -- the reservation, the display case, the past -- and allow it to erupt into the here and now. Visual sovereignty allows us to see Indigenous art in conversation with ceremony, working against the colonial containment strategies of inclusivity and tokenization which neutralize assertions of self-determination into expressions of identity.

Art as apprehension

Indigenous peoples have been objects of anthropological concern since the founding of the discipline; early ethnological texts on Indigenous peoples of North America often included

sketches of wild Indians, accompanied by descriptions of their odd customs and elaborate ceremonies (for example see John Maclean-- *Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada*). Popular representations of Indigenous people have shifted between a number of trends-- from the "vanishing race" pictured by Edward Curtis and described by salvage ethnography, to the "noble savage" trope that characterized early anthropology and still echoes through environmentalist depictions of Indigenous resistance (not to mention racist sports mascots). This representational history is inseparable from the history of violent settler colonization. For Indigenous peoples, attempts to "capture" ways of life in ink and paint and film have been accompanied by actual capture-- bounty hunting, massacre, relocation, incarceration. In a discussion of anthropological representations of the Haudenosaunee people, Audra Simpson describes the politics of representation in terms of "apprehension"—apprehension describes the kinds of representational capture that are woven into Iroquoianist anthropology, as well as the kinds of anxiety and fear produced in this encounter (2014). This fear of "being apprehended" is not misplaced given the ease with which apprehension slips from the abstract to the carceral. In spaces like Standing Rock, the fear of being apprehended shifts into the realm of representation, and technologies of police surveillance and art production are one and the same. In North Dakota, weaponized drones have been legalized for use by police, but drones have also been used by the camps to keep tabs on the drill site and military forces. In this space of seige, water protectors look to the sky and ask: "is that a camera or a weapon?"

As artists, scholars, art critics, activists, do we know the answer to this question? What are we doing to avoid the weaponization of representation, the shift from art to surveillance, the apprehension of Indigenous peoples? When Indigenous people turn to ceremony as a refusal of settler consumption, as a form of visual sovereignty, what is the response? Simpson's (2014) challenge to anthropology is to critically interrogate the desire for Native representations, for authenticity, for collaboration, and to respond in ways that do not simply replicate the power structures connecting Indigenous communities with academic capital. She maps out "a history of ideas about the Iroquois in order to revisit in a different register and in a focused manner the very specific ways in which desire operates in the production of anthropological knowledge and weds elegantly, effortlessly, and very cleanly with the imperatives of settler colonial projects predicated upon a desire for territory" (ibid., p.71). This desire for Indigenous representation is woven into the visual fields of Indigenous resistance, and it is a desire that needs to be interrogated, and even interrupted. In activist spaces that shapeshift between art and ceremony, artists and art critics can and must (a) support and allow the disruption of representation to allow Indigenous peoples to resist capture and (b) critically interrogate their own desire for "authentic" representations of Indigenous peoples and recognize when these desires work against movements for Indigenous self-determination. Working in the cradle of this tension is a way to nurture a radical and collaborative collective practice that destabilizes settler claims to Indigenous representations while actively resisting the continued occupation of Native lands.

Calls to action

In the actions described above-- the rally in Washington Square Park, the ceremony at Oceti Sakowin camp, the decolonial tour at AMNH-- Indigenous activists, scholars, artists and water protectors invite the settler gaze only to evade its apprehension. A representational politics that takes Indigenous resurgence seriously would dwell in the discomfort of Indigenous peoples "gazing back," would acknowledge the violent histories that have shaped the scene, would accept the momentary loss of settler sovereignty as an invitation into a different reality, a different relationality. These art/ ceremonies are interventions and also demands. Indigenous art activism is a call to action that demands a contradictory, unsettling set of responses from settlers. It seizes upon the framing and capturing powers of the museum, the media, the art world, and then rejects the authority of that frame. By insisting on visual sovereignty, it destabilizes a representational field that has often captured Indigenous peoples as objects of settler desire and consumption-- as Rickard suggests, "there is a need to expand art criticism and visual theory to include a discourse read across Indigeneity, colonization, and sovereignty" (2011, p.471). Indigenous art activism is more than a "reveal" of underlying structures, more than a replacement of common tropes with more positive images. It is an invitation to collective practice, a practice that resists settler colonial domination while honoring the power of both ceremony and art to enact and embody Indigenous resurgence.

Art's Audience: Questions About the Power of Restriction as Disruption.

By Randy Kennedy

Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance, and it becomes a part of the ceremony.

Kafka, "Leopards in the Temple."

In his introduction to Erich Auerbach's great literary history "Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought," Edward W. Said remarks on the fundamental subjectivity of Auerbach's critical method, a method Said wholly supported. The human mind studying the world, Said wrote, "can only do so as all authors do – from the limited perspective of their own time and their own work; no more scientific a method or less subjective a gaze is possible."

And in that spirit I believe my response to the urgent questions posed by Crystal Migwans and Anne Spice in their text, "Art, Ceremony, and Activism: Evading Capture in Visual Representation," will be most effective, helpful and honest if framed solidly from the perspective of my history and role as a journalist, one who has written about art for the last dozen years and who thinks constantly about the power dynamics in the art world underlying visibility and withholding, publicity and privacy, the expressive and the ineffable.

I'm not a critic but a reporter, although writing about art and its histories necessarily involves a more analytical, contextualizing and critical approach than writing about banking or municipal politics might. I've written almost not all about Indigenous art and issues surrounding it, a lack I can explain, not excuse, only by observing that most of the public institutions and commercial art worlds I'm charged with covering still – so many years into the postcolonial broadening of art history's purview – so rarely touch on Indigenous art or activism.

I came to writing about art not through the academy but through personal fascination, that of an English literature student drawn to art history and theory and, once living in New York, to galleries and museums. I was raised in rural West Texas, highly aware from early childhood of living in the midst of an immense cultural absence in one of the most symbolic settler areas Manifest Destiny created – the southern end of the Comancheria, the empire and hunting territory of the Comanche bands for more than a century. Their history was still so recent – it was less than a century before my birth that the Plains Wars and government buffalo slaughter led to the forceful confinement of the tribes to territory in Oklahoma – that I could walk into a pasture near my house and see, barely covered by dusty topsoil, pieces of carved chert that had once been lashed to wooden shafts for buffalo hunts. The extent of the disappearance of the culture was almost total; any trace in local history museums was perfunctory at best in those years; and not only did I never meet anyone who identified as Comanche during my youth, I never met anyone who had had *any contact* with a Comanche until, in college, I interviewed a

very elderly woman who recounted, as a child in her father's general store, meeting Chief Quanah Parker, whose celebrity in Texas in those years was akin to that of a movie star.

My job for a general-interest publication involves, by definition, showing readers what is or will be visible, what they can hope to see, bringing them artists and institutions who are interested in speaking about what they do and why they do it. But because of the dynamics of that transaction, which is often generated by publicity machinery underwritten by powerful institutions and which sometimes benefits others besides readers (collectors, dealers, auction houses), I've always been deeply interested in the power and value of what resists that visibility, or at least what resists the largely fixed rules of that kind of compartmentalization, consumption and historicizing.

I've become only more interested in these kinds of resistance as the world becomes increasingly dominated by digital-social-commercial systems inside which, as the artist Ryan Trecartin has memorably described it, we become "a species that can no longer assume a sense of privacy" and what Migwans and Spice describe as "the weaponization of representation, the shift from art to surveillance" becomes more difficult to evade because even identifying it becomes tricky.

In the last half of the 20th century, in proximity to the commercial art world, some performance artists began to set up that kind of resistance, insisting on the intimacy and essential ephemerality of work in order to keep it from becoming commodified. And more directly under the heading of what Migwans and Spice describe as a turning-away from the dominant gaze, feminist performance artists, as Kathryn Thoms Flannery discusses in "Feminist Literacies, 1968-1975," staged " 'private' performances as part of women's consciousness-raising groups; planned street actions and guerilla theater events; performance of written scripts in nontraditional spaces such as schools, women's centers, church basements, unwed mothers' homes, and women's prisons."

In this context I also often think of African-American artists like David Hammons, who has used refusal and absence magisterially to gain power within an art world whose mechanisms and values he distrusts. And I think of gay artists like Ray Johnson, who subverted the gatekeeping methods of the art world by using the mail system, for example, and conducting performances in which questions of audience or documentation were almost superfluous beyond a kind of oral tradition. (Johnson and his friend Dorothy Podber were known to approach strangers on the streets of Manhattan and talk their way into those strangers' apartments to stage impromptu, often inscrutable actions.) In more recent years, social-practice artists have brought these strategies back to the fore, asking what constitutes critical acceptance in the art world, what defines an audience and what making art means in the pursuit of social change and social justice.

The question for Indigenous artists and activists seems to me to be how a collective practice that uses ceremony both for its own inherent sanctity and its power to provoke "a contradictory, unsettling set of responses from settlers," a "momentary loss of settler sovereignty," will function within the art world and outside it, in protest. Will it be able to succeed in both ways? One analogy I can think of to try to answer that question comes from another realm, that of erotic politics. But I think its mechanics might apply here as well. In Dave Hickey's "Invisible Dragon," he draws a comparison between Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio* work and Shakespeare's Sonnets, which were both "conceived in the intimacy of private discourse" and only later entered the arena of art. But once they entered that arena, they destabilized it by leaving no allowance for "an objective cultural auditor."

As Hickey writes, “all of the rhetorical positions implied” by the works are “exhausted in the suspended transaction between beholder and beheld; the comfortable role of ‘art beholder’ is written out of the scenario, as we are cast in roles before the image that we are unaccustomed to acknowledge, at least in public.” In the case of Indigenous ceremony, the uncomfortableness created is not simply by confronting settlers with work that makes us acknowledge violent histories or dubious authority. It is by placing the beholder in this unaccustomed – and vulnerable – position, as a witness to something essentially private, exclusionary and, as Migwans and Spice say, “decidedly undemocratic in its proscription of social roles; unsecular in its essentialism.”

It has been 25 years now since Thomas McEvelley, in helping to open up the art world to a postcolonial, post-Modern era, wrote of a hoped-for “affirmation of cultural pastiche,” the desire in a less culturally blinkered Western world to “stand fully yet stand nowhere, to act as two rather than as one, to incorporate difference into the felt sameness of existence.” But as recent events and political outcomes have taught us, many of the oppressive forces that McEvelley and others were working to end are far from vanquished, and the power of asserting unincorporated difference, of standing somewhere, remains vitally necessary.

Glyphing decolonial love through urban flash mobbing and *Walking with our Sisters*

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This article contributes to understanding multi-plexed Indigenous resistance through examining spatial tags. As symbolic, moving critiques, spatial tagging intervenes normative structures of settler colonialism and provides the space through which radical decolonial love can emerge. This discussion of the production of spatial glyphs has implications for new ways of thinking about the processes of solidarity building, social activism and the generation of new pedagogical practices of resistance. An analysis of Christi Belcourt's walking with our sisters commemorative art installation (2013–2019) and the urban flash mob round dance at the intersection of Yonge and Dundas streets in downtown Toronto, reveals how spatial tagging formulates Indigenous acts of creative solidarity. This article contributes to an analysis of Indigenous resistance strategies through focusing on the interstitial passageways as generative sites of knowledge production and possibilities for new ways of being in the world.

Keywords: activism; dance; feminism; indigenous knowledge; social justice; Urban American Indians

This article contributes a spatial analysis of two distinct forms of spatial tagging, the Idle No More¹ urban flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* (Belcourt, 2013–2019) commemorative art installation. The approach in this analysis is multi-faceted and explores new geographies of resistance through forms of *petroglyphing* urban landscapes. This discussion of the production of spatial glyphs has implications for new ways of thinking about the processes of solidarity building, social activism, and the generation of new pedagogical practices of resistance. I examine spatial tags created through embodied pathways of Indigenous motion as Indigenous artists (singers and dancers), dancing with non-Indigenous settler allies, produce urban flash mob round dances. I also demonstrate how strategically positioned vamps (the tongues of moccasins) and emergent pathways within the commemorative ceremony *Walking with our Sisters*, illuminate complex Indigenities where tagging produces glyphs as new geographies of resistance. Spatial tags carry on a legacy of glyph production as a key practice shaping Indigenous resistance, and thereby formulate the central focus of this article, which aims to recontextualize our understandings of Indigenous resistance in Canada.

To that end, in this article I situate the practices of spatial tagging within a larger framework of Indigenous resistance preceding the #Idle No More² and #MMIWG2P (missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2 spirited) solidarity movements. Since the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples have been engaged in embodied acts of defiance, producing intervening sovereign acts to challenge encroachments of non-Indigenous development and resource extractions on contested Indigenous territories within the Canadian nation-state. I propose that these embodied Indigenous acts assume

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the form of the spatial tag, thus contributing to a long-standing glyph-making strategy of resistance. I suggest that the current manifestation of spatial tagging and glyph making are extensions of past glyphs mobilizing Indigenous resistance towards settler-colonialist accumulation of capital through resource extraction on Indigenous land. The larger network of contemporary public acts of Indigenous resistance in Canada precipitating these manifestations of spatially glyphing Indigenous resistance include: the Temagami First Nation blockades of 1988 and 1989 in Ontario to challenge clear cut logging in their traditional territories; the Lubicon Cree struggle against oil and gas development in their traditional territories; and the 1990 defense of the Mohawk territories of Kanehsatake/Oka from settler colonial interests.³ This 1990 Kanien'kehaka resistance was a major event informing Idle No More public acts in response to the colonial state.

In examining the mechanics of the spatial glyph, I describe the interstitial passageway as an important focal point for understanding the effects of spatial glyphing in shaping patterns of Indigenous resistance and Indigenous futurity. This article also illustrates how a radical pedagogy of decolonial love lies within the details of both the urban flash mob round dance, and in the commemorative act of *Walking with our Sisters*. I share that it is in the interstice, that space of in-betweenness, where practices of solidarity and significant pedagogies of resistance, such as the notion of radical decolonial love can emerge. Radical decolonial love is spatial and generative, made manifest in the glyph-making strategies of “creative solidarity” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). As a relationship building strategy, this form of Indigenous love critiques the conditions of coloniality in the very act of love making (inclusive and beyond acts of sex) - as through living Audre Lorde's (1984) articulation of an erotic life. It produces a self-reflexive space, challenging the conception of love as a space of permanence, or as a strategy of containment. I offer this analysis of spatial tags to convey their nature as complex manifestations of radical decolonial love in working with and through this rupture and impermanence.

Exploring Multi-plexed Geographies of Indigenous Resistance through the Spatial Tag

Amongst the key concepts mobilized within this article are the relationships between spatial tagging and urban glyphing as they produce new geographies of resistance. The notion spatial tagging describes the function of visual and aural symbols actuated within Indigenous hip-hop culture and round dance revolutions. As a practice, spatial tagging is in relationship to the old school practice of petroglyphing, a long-standing act of inscribing Indigenous collective memory on rock surfaces by knowledge holders and artists. In Cree/Métis visual artist, singer/songwriter Cheryl L'Hirondelle's view, tagging is a manifestation of petroglyphing, connecting us to ancient Indigenous travel across the land. As she describes, “the notion of tagging is so old school that it's ancient when one recalls the repeating petroglyphs and pictographs that make their own trail across the land” (L'Hirondelle, cited in Ritter & Willard, 2012, p. 86).

Traditionally achieved through the strategic application of *waabigan* (clay) on rock surfaces, petroglyphing functioned in the following ways: to record a critical occurrence, relationship or alliance; as signifiers describing a futurism; images demarcating a battle; and a modality through which to demarcate a sighting, or home space for sacred beings (I. Murdoch, personal communication, 2013).

Glyphing practices share a history of producing geographies of resistance, achieved through making visible an active Indigenous presence and futurity in otherwise contested

Indigenous territories. I utilize the concept of urban glyphing to accentuate the doing, and the intrinsic Indigenous motion entailed in producing symbols and narratives as forms of cultural production that are inherently political. I perceive how the collective and communal motion expressed within the dance form of the flash mob round dance produces significant spatial glyphs on urban concrete.⁴ I acknowledge the relationship between petroglyphing and tagging, as both ascribe to surface an active presence of complex Indigenities (Vizenor, 1999). At the same time, when actuated in urban spaces, both practices formulate modalities of consciousness dissemination through the creation of Indigenous hub spaces. Indigenous hub spaces, such as the urban flash mob round dances, evoke spatial tags in a consciousness building exercise resulting in the creation of new spatial geographies of resistance.

Hip-hop visual and aural (sonic) culture provides an important framework through which to analyze the significance of flash mob round dances. For example, tagging could be interpreted as a manifestation of an Indigenous futurity through offering what graffiti scholar Anderson (2012) conceptualizes as counter-spaces. In discussing graffiti, Anderson remarks, “resisting this oppressive socio-spatial arrangement, graffiti in turn operates through space. This resistance, this creation of counter-spaces, gives graffiti its true artistic and emotional force” (p. 6). As such, when expressed as flash mobs or commemorative art installations, spatial tagging produces counter-spaces to resist oppressive socio-spatial arrangements of space. One of the outcomes of graffiti’s spatial presence is to lift the conceptual ghetto and the identities of its inhabitants from their invisibility, reaffirming the existence of the silenced ghetto residents by making their voices physical and concrete on the urban landscape. The act of visibility carries the potential to transform the street into a visionary space where new futurisms for Indigenous peoples might be possible.

Within hip-hop culture, tags are the displays of a chosen moniker for an artists’ graffiti identity and the space from which they come. A form of recognition throughout the city, tags reflect “a possibility for the sons and daughters of adults whose names were rarely mentioned outside the block where they lived” to have visibility (Austin, cited in Anderson, 2012, p.8). According to Anderson, “graffiti conceptually remaps urban spaces through a physical inscription of identity on the very landscape designed to pen in inner-city residents” (p. 8). As such, spatial tagging provides a freedom of motion within hyper-regulated urban spaces where marginalization and segregation are used as containment strategies.

Hip-hop scholar Tricia Rose (1994) explains that graffiti offers “aggressive public displays of counter-presence and voice” (p. 59). Hence tagging accommodates the creation of a counter space where a collective consciousness stemming from unexpected, hidden, furtive Indigenous youth presence, can be visually and sonically experienced. Tagging “inscribes one’s identity on an environment that seemed Teflon resistant to its young people of color; an environment that made legitimate avenues for material and social participation inaccessible” (Rose, cited in Anderson, 2012, p. 8). Urban flash mob round dances as tags (with symbolic and narrative functions) not only visibilize, but also intervene in public spaces by creating their own opportunities for material and social participation in contemplating radical difference and as such, can assist in decolonization projects.

An Indigenous act of solidarity, the spatial tag involves collective practices of inscribing embodied motion and creativity in visual, and in some instances, aural form. In the form of a flash mob round dance, tags actuate Indigeneity as a critical site of intervention to address systematic colonizing practices of the nation-state, such as community-rooted

practices protesting the over 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.⁵ Spatial tag formation involves the creation process as a vehicle to inform an anti-colonial, moving critique of social injustices. For instance, as spatial glyphs of resistance, flash mob round dances have been mobilized as a form of participatory politics to challenge the disappearances of Indigenous women within Canada. These flash mob round dances have been an integral piece of the #MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous women) social media campaign, which has actuated the use of spatial tags as a means of resisting systems and practices constitutive of gender violence.

The concept of spatial tag describes specifically-rooted Indigenous forms of creative solidarity in the sense that it generates fluxual/transformational symbols and narratives of resistance that can be intensely collaborative and communal (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). Creative solidarity can be described as an attempt to challenge the inherited coloniality of solidarity discourse as social practice through the production of spatial/symbolic arrangements that mobilize a radical turn towards relationality, difference, and interdependence. As modalities of creative solidarity, the spatial glyph's impermanence and fluidity produce symbolic socio-spatial rearrangements of material and social conditions of oppression. Within the context of the round dance, for instance, as new drummers are drawn to the inner circle and the bodies that pass by enter the round dance, the circuitous, rhizomatic nature of the round dance produces fluid Indigenous acts that transform and challenge boundaries, expressing "solidarity without guarantees" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p. 90). The spatial tag facilitates the exploration of tensions, contradictions, and the critical examination of how difference is both recognized and negotiated as mobilizing factors in the creation of solidarities. Multiple solidarities are expressed through this process, emergent within the interstices — those spaces between the beats and dancers.⁶

Gaztambide- Fernández (2010) describes creative solidarity as solidarity in constant flux of invention and reinvention. The mobilization of Indigenous spatial tags through the form of the flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation embed dis-assemblages and reformations across vast spatial geographies. *Walking with our Sisters* is a touring installation that manifests unique symbologies and forms dependent upon the knowledge holder's vision in each traditional territory it enters. In Thunder Bay (September- October 2014), for instance, the vamps and pathways were assembled to manifest a turtle lodge.

This notion of creative solidarity lends itself to the conversation involving Indigenous futurities, in that it is a persistently dissatisfied form of solidarity, "one that is always imagining things differently, maybe even a bit better" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p. 90). This notion of creative solidarity allows for us to view glyphing as a modality through which to accentuate difference, including the complexities and tensions, as well as the new spaces of possibilities that this form of resistance provides. Spatial tags of Indigenous resistance are in relationship with a conceptualization of solidarity that "hinges on radical differences and that insist on relationships of incommensurable interdependency" (Gaztambide- Fernández, 2012, p. 46). Contextualized as urban glyphs, tags of Indigenous solidarities on urban spaces are visually archiving traces of actions engaged in the very process of transformation. This is time sensitive, in that they are archiving moments, and happenings of decolonial strategic solidarities. In such instances, the glyph *is* the Indigenous pedagogy.

Considering the shape and form of the flash mob round dance, in relationship to its interstitial/intersectional environment, the concept of multi-plexual describes Indigenous spatial tags in acts of creative solidarity building. Applied to the visual form of the round

dance, the notion of multi-plexed informs a key element of the spatial geography of Indigenous resistance. Multi-plexed geographies are actuated through the very form of the flash mob round dance as they create interstitial passageways within urban landscapes and temporarily reshape the main corridors of diasporic movement. Spatial tags visually symbolize the complexities of what it means to be rooted/uprooted in an urban space within a greater Indigenous diasporic community. Spatial tags are quite important as forms of resistance to the erasure of Indigenous presence and territorial sovereignty within urban contact zones such as downtown Toronto, which houses a collective history of Indigenous occupation that has been effaced from the public memory.⁷ Multi-plexed Indigenous tagging challenges the multiple layers of occupation and representational practices that produce Toronto as a site of capital accumulation, rather than as an Indigenous territorial homeland and sovereign space.

The concept of multi-plexed describes complex articulations of Indigeneities and represents the contours of Indigenous resistance embodied in spatial tags. Hip-hop artist Daybi-No-Doubt mobilizes the concept of multi-plexed to describe the layered, synco-pated nature of the universe. Daybi's song "The Deep End" (First Contact, 2010) references this moment of recognition, "my multi-plexed universe gets very real," he tells us. According to No-Doubt, its categorical use references multiple staging areas for different works, as in a multi-plexed theatre (D. No-Doubt, personal communication, 2014).

Multi-plexed describes the diverse interactions and experiences of the social world (s) in which we live. This positioning informs and produces complex symbologies and spatial formations that help us understand the significance of the urban flash mob round dance. These multiple frequencies are metaphorical threads of diverse experiences of doing Indian identity in the now. When applied to the identity politics of present articulations of Indigeneity, the concept multi-plexed can be mobilized as an intervention, and an "opportunity to finally put the question of essentialism behind us" (Lyons, 2010, p. 59).

The creation of the interstitial passageway is another characteristic of Indigenous resistance through spatial tagging that is articulated through the forms taken on by the round dance and *Walking with our Sisters*. I first encountered this notion in the writings of Homi Bhabha (1994), and through Cheryl L'Hirondelle's (2012) mobilization of the concept to describe the fabric of complex Indigeneities. L'Hirondelle (2012) states, "I inhabit this thin, dotted interstice where colonial and Indigenous overlap as authentically as I can using the language that helps shape and guide my understandings of who I am and where I come from" (cited in Ritter & Willard, 2012, p. 86). As an active space in-between, Bhabha's (1994) conceptual use of interstitial passage between fixed categories can be understood in relationship to a more multi-plexed viewing of Indigeneities. Through accentuating a process of "wedging in" (Deiter-McArthur, 1987), and engaging the interstitial passageways (Bhabha, 1994), multi-plexed geographies of resistance inform fluid, creative solidarities, which focus on the possibilities of different kinds of futurities.

As a central component of the spatial tag, the interstitial passageway illustrates the rupturous nature of in-between spaces, where notions of belonging and home are renegotiated and challenged, and where articulations of various forms of difference come to the forefront. In describing the interstitial spaces of Indigeneity, Martineau and Ritskes (2014) identify the "fugitive spaces of Indigeneity" that are located in the "critical ruptures where normative, colonial categories and binaries break down and are broken open" (p. iii). As I will attempt to illustrate later in this article, practices like the urban flash mob round dance can be viewed as an interstitial articulation of solidarity emerging

from converging sites of difference that are generative in their capacity for social transformation.

Having contextualized the spatial tag within a broader framework of Indigenous resistance and highlighted its essential characteristics, in the next two sections I discuss how spatial tags are being mobilized through Indigenous resistance strategies by artists and community activists, beginning with a discussion of Christi Belcourt's *Walking with our Sisters* and then discussing the particular instance of an urban flash mob round dance at the intersection of Toronto's Yonge and Dundas.

***Walking with our Sisters* Commemorative Art Installation and the Production of Spatial Glyphs**

Walking with our Sisters (2014) is a commemorative act of resistance, resurgence, and love comprised of over 1,700 pairs of moccasin vamps, each representing one missing or murdered Indigenous woman. Award winning Métis visual artist and author Christi Belcourt is the lead coordinator for this commemorative exhibit, which has toured thirty-two locations across North America continuing through to the year 2019. The vamps are arranged in a winding path formation on red fabric, and viewers remove their shoes to walk the path alongside the vamps.

Walking with our Sisters can be viewed as a form of spatial tagging, imprinting Indigenous women and girls and the impacts of gendered, racialized violence into dominant consciousness. Amongst the important interventions of violence is the creation of a vocabulary to engage, visibilize, and build connections through our grief and collective resistance (Hunt, 2014). The *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation embodies these elements by spatially mapping the unfinished lives of Indigenous women and girls. It creates a vocabulary of movement and form through which to engage in collective solidarity building by calling on our participation to actuate this walking glyph of resistance. Each vamp enacts a radical pedagogy of love through the very creative process of working with and through rupture, "as the artists created these works, many prayed and put their love into their stitching. Some shared stories of what their work means or who they made their work for" (Walkingwithoursisters.ca).

Spatial tags within the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative exhibit enact complex representations of home, territoriality, and identity where functional and aesthetic choices in color, symbology, design, and textile actuate geographies of resistance. In some instances, they challenge normative white settler colonial depictions of Indigenous lives through visibilizing racialized, gendered violence within their material forms.⁸

The exhibit's pathway and the forms that the vamps collectively create manifest a spatial tag embodying a lodge. The focus on the pathway calls us to engage the active presence of a collective honoring through the embodiment of ceremony. This active presence gives the spatial tag its relevancy and meaning as a device for Indigenous self-determination, through a decolonial aesthetic whereby elders as ceremonialists and curators determine the form and protocol of the commemorative piece. The September, 2014 *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation in Thunderbay, Ontario, has been described as a sacred bundle that was accompanied by community events such as a community bead and read, teach-ins unpacking settler colonialism, and art and decolonization, self-defense classes and other acts of resistance. Through such attention to physicality, *Walking with our Sisters* actuates a moving glyph focusing on the embodied sovereignty of Indigenous women. This particular glyphing practice actuates embodiment

as an intervention, a means of disrupting the marking of Indigenous women's bodies through various forms of violent actions.

Amongst an array of meaningful interventions, artistic contributions create spatial tags to visually map and delineate specific sites as cartographies of violence. *Walking with our Sisters* includes graffiti tagged vamps and vamps that map out the stroll and other sites of colonial, racialized, and gendered violence. For example, one pair of vamps created by artist Miranda Huron utilizes ribbon and beadwork to materially reproduce a road and the sign that hangs over the Balmoral Hotel in East Vancouver, a racialized/ spatial geography marked by dispossession, neglect, and violence against Indigenous women (Razack, 2002). The artist describes her intentions that "more and more women find their way home from such beacons" (Huron, 2014 cited in walkingwithoursisters.ca). Functioning as a signifier, the Balmoral hotel signage physically maps out a stroll as a racialized geography of gender violence. Actuating an urban pathway, the stroll physicalizes the interstitial spaces where settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, racism, sexism and Indigeneity come into contestation to produce cartographies of violence. Consequently, the intersection has been mobilized within Indigenous solidarity glyphing forms such as the urban round dance, as argued in the next section.

Creating a spatial tag, artist Erin Konsmo's birch bark vamps map out the Eastside of Vancouver in juxtaposition with a mountainous British Columbian landscape. Again, the images of streets and pathways are used to represent the city, one such street formulated out of a white line leading down the curve of a street light, with a possible reference to red light districts as strategies of urban containment, ghettoization, and trafficking, shaping the complex lives and realities of many Indigenous women and girls.⁹ Further these images elevate the conversation to focus on the structures, systems, and their role in producing marginalization and poverty that make Indigenous women victims of colonial, gendered, and racialized violence.

The commemorative vamps in *Walking with our Sisters* are manifestations of complex Indigeneities and the spaces they inhabit. Many of the works represent floral designs reflecting fluidity and a generative capacity for resiliency and motion as ways to map Indigenous futurity. The urban glyph created through *Walking with our Sisters* uses embodiment in the process of envisioning a world(s) transformed and looks forward as a way to recall our past. Resembling lodges, the formation of the vamps (as spatial tags) symbolically and literally, transform the landscape of gendered, racialized violence against women through making visible unfinished lives. Evoking processes of reclamation, *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance illustrate various forms of spatial tagging to mark contested spaces. Embodying new ways of theorizing political protest and struggle, the glyph as a new geography of resistance, creates a vocabulary to speak new worlds into being — lending itself to the creation of Indigenous futurisms.

Urban Flash Mob Round Dances as Geographies of Resistance

As a Cree adoptee, I returned to my community in 1993, during which time my birth mother brought me to a series of round dances as a way to get to know each other through dance and enjoy the company of a collective Cree community. Since I had experienced cultural and symbolic displacement as a Cree adoptee, it was important that I engage in a practice embodying a round dance to find connection to place and to access collective memory. I perceive the embodiment of a round dance as a spatial tag of resistance and am intrigued by the affect it produces in spaces I now choose to call home, such as Toronto, and other parts of southern Ontario. The round dance has been conceptualized as

Piciciwin, the moving slowly, or crooked legged dance¹⁰; *pīhci-ciḥcīyī*, which translates to “reach your hands in,” to describe the process of “people reaching into the circle to grab onto life and blessings”¹¹; and *wasakamesimowin* to describe the round dance ceremony (Deiter- McArthur, 1987).

Plains Cree scholar Patricia Deiter-McArthur (1987), describes the round dance as originating with Stoney people. Hosted by different societies, round dances were held in times of sickness, but today are hosted by families and communities in celebration for graduations, anniversaries, and marriages. As well, they take shape as memorials for deceased loved ones and for fundraising initiatives for families and communities. There was certainly a ceremonial element to the round dances that I attended with my mother as we participated in protocols that I sensed spanned generations. Hand drummers formulate the center of the concentric circles, singing songs whose rhythmic structure follows a double beat and four push-ups led by a lead singer. The dancers shape concentric circles, holding hands, and dance in a shuffle-step movement accentuated by the down beat.

According to Deiter-McArthur (1987), the round dance included a practice of relationship or alliance building expressed as *kiskipocikek* (which translates into the English verb, to “wedge in”), an idiom, which means to dance with a woman who is not a relative or a cross-cousin. This would have taken the shape of one who enters the space between two dancers holding hands with the purpose of relationship building. In this way, engaging the interstice through “wedging in” has a history in the structure of the round dance, representing the interstitial passageway, which, I would argue, increases the range of possibilities for an Indigenous futurity. *Kiskipocikek* can be viewed as an important process within alliance and relationship building as it encompasses one of the foundational elements of spatial tagging expressing a form of Indigenous resistance.

Within the context of decolonization, *kiskipocikek* — to “wedge in” and to fill a between space — can be perceived as a form of syncopation produced as an act of love. This is manifest in the reverb that is produced between the drum-beats (the hand drummers act of using their finger to produce a vibration on the hides of the hand drum). Shaping the aural kinesthetic of the space (Kai Johnson, 2009), circuitous motion enacts a radical pedagogy of love through the singing of love songs, which effectively embed between spaces for the wedging in of dancers, thoughts, reconceptualizations, and renegotiations of space. Being an Indigenous adoptee, my own pathway has been informed through this wedging in movement, as I was raised within a family not inherently my own. Indigenous round dances that produce spatial tags are symbologies of Indigenous motion. As such, they become tremendously meaningful as filling rupturous spaces with love.

The power of the round dance can be mobilized in the context of public protest. For instance, the Idle No More round dance situated at the intersection of Yonge and Dundas streets in downtown Toronto expresses a symbolic dissidence towards colonial capital and accumulation. The urban flash mob round dance at Yonge and Dundas challenged settler colonialisms claim over Mississauga and Huron-Wendat territorial jurisdiction. Along with marches taking place on main highways and streets in downtown cores to protest violence against Indigenous women and girls, the Idle No More urban round dance flash mob on the intersection of Yonge St. and Dundas St. in downtown Toronto was one of many locales for strategic actions of solidarity.

Within the context of the Idle No More Movement, the round dance has been mobilized as one way of symbolically *tagging* the contours of Indigenous acts of resistance



Figure 1. Idle No More round dance at Yonge and Dundas in Toronto.
(Photo courtesy of Anishinaabe scholar/activist Hayden King).

and displaying solidarity between Indigenous nations and the colonial nation-state. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2012) differentiates Idle No More from other forms of political protest, such as the Kanien'kehaka resistance of 1990 and Temagami blockades, citing the absence of widespread economic disruption by Indigenous direct action during the movement.¹² Yet, according to Coulthard, Idle No More has provoked clashes between Indigenous activism and non-Indigenous settler colonialism that have fostered Indigenous acts of resistance strategically enacted in the “thoroughfares of colonial capital” (2012). These include blockades on several major Canadian transportation corridors, including highways and railways, where spatial tags function as Indigenous acts that formulate a resistance specifically engaged in efforts to challenge and “un-settle settler-colonialisms sovereign claim over Indigenous peoples and our lands” (Coulthard, 2012). The urban flash mob round dance intervenes colonial capital by symbolically tagging communal collective action on main thoroughfares that are symbolic of globalization.

Urban flash mob round dances are central to the activities that are part of Idle No More, which include teach-ins, marches, rallies, blockades, and other forms of strategic protest. The flash mob round dance, mobilized in urban malls, intersections, and other public spaces, is shaped by the aural kinesthetic of the dance form (Kai Johnson, 2009). This means that the sonic production and physicality exercised through the dance creates the affect of the spatial tag of resistance. The urban flash mob round dance encompasses a public gathering in which dancers and singers perform and embody an *in the moment* Indigenous act. This act evades permanency and will be followed by dispersal.

Interventionist-pictographing or urban glyph-making is achieved through the creation of spatial tags, which imprint urban thoughts through circuitous song and motion. As acts of multi-plexed Indigenous resistance, their spatial formations are layered modalities capable of reconfiguring power. Spatial tagging becomes an expression of defiant Indigeneity through which artists “perform a configuration of Indigeneity that constantly

deconstructs, resists, and recodifies itself against and through state logics” (Teves, 2011, p.77). The urban flash mob round dance can also be viewed as a socially/culturally constructed space with potential alliance building capacity for settler peoples, and provides opportunities for settlers to reflect upon their own difference and the privileges afforded to them within society. Yet, this raises the question: can we deconstruct whiteness at the same time as we enact, perform, and embody the dance form?

I return to hip-hop culture to illuminate the form of resistance that this particular form of spatial tagging takes on. In expressing hip-hop’s principles for social change, Tricia Rose (1994) articulates that social change is actuated within hip-hop culture through the building of sustaining narratives, layering these narratives through repetition and the embellishment of these stories. We can apply these same layers to the spatial mechanics of the urban flash mob round dance: with hand drum singers formulating the inner most cypher/circle; layered with double beat drum soundscape; syncopated with the reverb interstice (created through a technique hand drummers use to aurally accentuate the interstice, or space between the beats); layered with hand embraces, love songs, and a stride-and-shuffle to the left. This formula within the Indigenous dance is an important element for creating a geography of resistance. The form of the round dance highlights layers through generatively expressing the interstices in acts of reclamation of urban Indigenous space. The layering and syncopation achieved via the concentric circularity of the round dance carries the potential to unmark bodies of difference and instead, to inscribe multiplexed Indigenities as a product of the reverb interstice created through the drum. As ethical spaces these interstitial spaces formulate a reconfiguration and dislocation of power (Ermine, 2007).

The urban flash mob round dance offers a geography of resistance that maps out the intersectional nature of the social discourses and practices within a heteropatriarchal system that reproduces and normalizes racialized and gendered violence. The urban flash mob round dance does this through its concentric circularity, layering, and creation of interstitial spaces. Critique and analysis are embedded within the very form of the urban flash mob round dance. Basically, the structure provides the *spaces between* within which self-reflective anti-colonial critique can manifest.¹³ The round dance actuates a consciousness that is always in flux, representing an important pedagogical moment of self-reflexivity and temporal repositioning wherein the past is in the future. Pausing to reflect, challenges us to consider how the past is being negotiated and constructed, while also asking: whose past?; and how are we implicated in the past? These questions are essential to thinking through the spatial mechanics of the round dance as a tag.

The intersections and interstices house the conditions for the most profound solidarity acts that carry transformative potential. It is important to be attentive to the multi-layered strata of such conditions. A spatial positioning in various interstices of difference requires a constant self-reflexivity that carries the potential of problematizing one’s own location as part of the cypher. In a process of conscientization (Freire, 1970/2005) through one’s embodied action within the dance, one is also engaged in a “paradoxical continuity of self mapping, and transforming” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 122). Consequently, resistance is generated within an interstitial space located at the convergence point of various articulations of difference. A *beyond-the-border* consciousness begins to formulate through the embodiment of the urban flash mob round dance (embedded in the concentric circularity of the dance form), whereby we may be flung into the now as a result of a temporal and spatial shift. Through this act of solidarity exists the possibility that we may exceed the boundaries of our encased Indian identities and be propelled into the beyond as a new generation of “post-Indian” protestors (Vizenor, 1994).

Reading the spatial tag as an act of creative solidarity allows for a freedom of motion whereby resistance itself evades being located completely in one space, and at one time, thus challenging overly simplistic categories and conditions of resistance. Interpreting the urban flash mob round dance as a spatial tag reflecting the in-flux nature of a creative solidarity reminds us of the possibilities for new ways of being in the world and provides opportunities for us to reflect upon our differences within an impermanent spatial geography. The round dance eventually distills as participants continue to walk the urban space, or move to another intersection to manifest another spatial glyph. *I reflect upon the conditions that we are apt to change . . . this moment is apt to change, and we can reconfigure the spaces between these differences as we honor them through the dance.*

The urban flash mob round dance is characterized as shifting and temporal in enacting its own refusal to be white-washed, and painted over by municipal authorities and state law enforcement anti-graffiti campaigns. The tag articulates a difference that is constantly changing, forcing us to reconsider who is our community. What does community look like in the urban Indigenous diaspora, in downtown Toronto? We can witness the in-flux nature of creative solidarity in spatial tagging itself as this particular form of tagging is literally taking circuitous, ever-changing form in the intersecting lines of the Yonge and Dundas urban space. The spatial tag as an act of creative solidarity is dissatisfied, in the sense that it is constantly changing and challenging form, causing us to reflect upon the compulsion for sameness in shaping solidarity (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, 2012).

It might be important to consider how the symbology of the spatial tag can be appropriated to drive certain interests that undermine Idle No More's scope and direction, thereby limiting the possibility of solidarity. Flash mobbing a round dance also generates potential for settler peoples to reflect upon their own constructions and assumptions of Indigeneity. Consequently, some of the tensions might lay in the possibility that these same constructions become reproduced through this act of solidarity. Creative solidarity honours the generative capacity of difference (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010).¹⁴ As Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) describes, "most relevant to projects of decolonization, yet more rare and complicated to theorize, is a conception of solidarity that hinges on radical differences, and that insists on relationships of incommensurable interdependency" (p. 46). As a practice of creative solidarity, the urban flash mob round dance, can be mobilized to generate critique and evoke critical participation in a movement that looks for transformation within the interstices of those differences. What processes do we employ in our resistance struggles to bravely build upon differences? Tensions may arise through uncritically claiming perceived common experiences as the main driving force determining the nature of the solidarity. However, it is important to also acknowledge the political power derivative from such solidarities built upon common experiences.

Urban flash mob round dances, as manifestations of creative solidarity are attempts to shift socio-spatial symbolic arrangements of inequality. However, symbolically positioned in a nexus of colonial power and capitalistic accumulation, the Yonge and Dundas round dance reveals that spatial tags are actuated as "extensions and manifestations of larger social, economic, political, as well as cultural arrangements" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, p. 57). In these instances, the mobilization of *Kiskipocikek* produces a generative transitional space. For instance, Pile (1997) describes the interstice as an important site invoked through the round dance in creating geographies of resistance. He notes, "material effects of power are everywhere . . . but wherever we look power is open to gaps, tears, inconsistencies, ambivalences, possibilities for inversion, mimicry parody, and so on; open that is to more than one geography of resistance" (p. 27). As a practice

related to cultural production, mimicry can also create tensions that need to be explored in order to negotiate, and locate, Indigenous resistance.

Potential pitfalls of this form of spatial tagging include the appropriation of Indigenous ceremony, as well as undesirable claims to authenticity in an over-determining practice of cultural fundamentalism. Creating new socio-spatial possibilities, creative solidarity insists upon a more complex and accurate conception of culture that challenges multiculturalism's desire to contain cultural difference, and reinscribe colonial essentialisms. For instance, as Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) explains, creative solidarity embraces multi-plexed approaches to culture and identity "countering the versions of 'culture' and 'identity' that are imposed by the colonial project of modernity" (p. 57). In mobilizing this form of spatial tagging, we run the risk of impeding our solidarity through reproducing narrowly essentialist Indigenous identities. Can we create alternative articulations of Indigenous protest that challenge such expectations?

Round dance revolutions may be perceived as a process of enacting a collectively inspired radical pedagogy of love onto urban spaces through embodied motion. This embodied motion offers a critique of the conditions of coloniality, while simultaneously challenging the colonial practice of using love as a strategy of containment and permanence. However, we should be mindful of potential tensions evoked through a form of cultural revitalization that "encourages Aboriginal people to seek out and *perform* [my emphasis] cultural authenticity as a compensation for exploitation and oppression" (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1080). Within the context of the Idle No More round dance revolution it becomes important to acknowledge the counter-narratives that perceive its practice as an appropriative act that challenges traditional protocol. For example, Cree hand drum singer Marc Longjohn, of Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan shares the view that round dances have their own set of teachings and protocols that activists may not be honoring. As Longjohn suggests, "some are opposed to Indians using hand drums and round dance music for this purpose." He further states, "the round dance is a ceremony with specific purposes. They never had Idle No More flash mob round dances twenty years ago" (M. Longjohn, personal communication, 2014).

Although flash mob round dances function to include non-Indigenous peoples into the concept of relationality, Sherman cautions that it could have unintended consequences if people do not consider the cultural and spiritual implications of displacing its purpose and context (P. Sherman, personal communication, 2014). These shared perspectives illustrate tensions involved in the practice of evoking ceremony as a form of political protest.¹⁵ How, for instance, does performativity function in relationship to urban flash mob round dances; and what are some of the implications of evoking ceremony in spatially tagging resistance?

Perhaps what is being made visible is an alliance in solidarity with multi-plexed Indigenities including broader, more complex recognitions of Indigenous peoplehood. This visibility can also be problematized in a spatial reading of urban flash mob round dances, when we consider what is and who are made visible through this process; how, for instance, are drums, skirts, and dancing being interpreted within a broader context?; is this form of protest an appropriation of an Indigenous cultural aesthetic?; and how does this particular form of visual/aurally compelling Indigenous protest aesthetic function as a tag, inscribing identity, and as a form of recognition throughout the city? Perhaps it is important to consider the implication of the shifting temporal and spatial nature of the tag as a practice of Indigenous/settler solidarity. The very texture of the tag as a creation of Indigenous motion propels our reading of the flash mob as a forging in multiple directions evading permanency and therefore intervening authenticity discourses.

Spatially Tagging Radical Decolonial Love

You are the breath over the ice on the lake. You are the one the grandmothers sing to through the rapids. You are the saved seeds of allies. You are the space between embraces . . . you are rebellion, resistance, re-imagination (Simpson, 2013, p. 21).

As multi-plexual sites of Indigenous creative resistance, spatial tags like the urban flash mob and the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative installation contribute a critical praxis, which can be implemented in urban Indigenous life to achieve social justice. In this concluding section, I would like to illuminate some observances or practices that might shape urban protocols for spatial tagging. Reflecting the notion of creative solidarity, these observances inform practices that would need to be interpreted as fluid, impermanent, and apt to change (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; 2012). These practices emerge from within the creases of the spatial tags themselves and reflect strategies useful to relationship building.

The first strategy is to *create the space for multi-plexed Indigeneities within the vocabularies that we use to frame and build solidarity*. The visual and sonic interpellative pathways produced in *Walking with our Sisters*, and the Yonge and Dundas round dance provide symbolic textual metaphors for a multi-plexed/intersectional reading of resistance and create the interstitial passageways to mobilize difference as a decolonial strategy. Shaping cartographies of resistance, spatial tags mobilize difference as a way to be creative about the immense possibilities for the future. The enactment of spatial tags allows us to critique whiteness as a construction that continues to affect our spatial relationships within a settler colonial condition.

Another practice stemming from an analysis of spatially tagging Indigenous resistance, is to *enact a radical pedagogy of decolonial love within the context of the everyday in order to assure a freedom of motion; to imbue the streets with love, and enact this as a radical form of everyday protest*. Tahltan artist Peter Morin posited the question, “where do you carry your sacredness when you have been exiled?” (Indigenous Acts: Arts and Activism Gathering, Vancouver, B.C., 2014). In this sense, radical decolonial love requires a shift from conceiving of love as a holding space of permanence, or a vehicle of containment; towards an embrace of its molten lava-like properties, as it flows within and through our bodies to connect with others. The glyph can be useful as a way to kiss the urban space, imprinting a form of radical decolonial love that presents itself in all of its flaws, inconsistencies, imperfections, ruptures, and pauses.¹⁶ This is a form of love that is unfinished and indeterminate, attributes that resonate with creative solidarity. In its surfaces and surges it finds strength and solitude within its own impermanence. The spatial tag’s impermanent nature strengthens an Indigenous futurity through radically asserting that our past is in our future.

To extend the conversation, I would also suggest that we *circle as we would cypher—it’s all about flow; and to acknowledge rupture in our solidarity building. We can work with, and through rupture to create Indigenous futurisms*. Glyphing Indigenous solidarity relies on the formation of intimate relationships with rupture and impermanence. These two conditions inform Indigenous motion necessary for radical decolonial love and are mobilized through acts of *kiskipocikek* (wedging in), or rupturous movement. Like hip-hop, the creation of spatial glyphs accommodates rupture in its very aural/sonic form. In short, this kind of creative solidarity relies on rupture as a generative practice. The urban spatial tag propels decolonial love where it is possible to “love one’s broken-by-the-coloniality of power self through holding the hand and walking with another broken-by-the-

coloniality-of-power person” (Diaz, cited in Simpson, 2013, p. 7). Working within and through the ruptures, the new spatial geographies produced through the urban flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* offer alternative world(s) through the act of infusing pathways, intersections and other spaces with this very specific form of love. Spatial tagging uses wedging in a generative capacity to shift, unsettle and generate new futurisms for Indigenous peoples. Both *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance invite our own body narrative as part of the solidarity creation. As Leanne Simpson writes in the above spoken word poem, *you are the space between embraces*, you become that space between the honoring of the missing and murdered women as you are invited to walk with our sisters; you are the one that mobilizes the interstices of solidarity through wedging in at a round dance.

Finally, the practice of spatial tagging reminds us to *pay attention to Indigenous futurisms embedded in the vocabularies and the praxis of our next generation of visionaries*. Youth engagement in Indigenous participatory politics has been a crucial thread of the Idle No More movement, where youth develop a critical consciousness through the creation of new media and the use of technology to mobilize. Flash mobbing is typically organized via social media. Idle No More has impacted settler-colonial consciousness and “now encompasses a broad range of conversations calling for recognition of treaty rights, revitalization of Indigenous cultures, and an end to legislation imposed without meaningful consultation” (Kinew, 2014, p. 96). The mobilization required for interventionist forms of urban pictoglyphing are contingent upon social media and youth organizing. As a consequence of the movement, youth are producing Indigenous new media hub spaces to actuate reclamation and generate complex reassertions of urban territoriality. We need to pay attention to these youth visionaries as they spatially map their own forms of resistance with vibrancy, brilliance, and much love. They are the next generation of glyph makers.

As this article makes explicit, the concepts of spatial tagging and urban glyphing describe the generative production of Indigenous solidarity through forms and practices such as *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance. Evoked through the spatial tag, creative solidarity challenges the influence of multiculturalism’s narrowly defined Indigeneity, and offer up geographies of resistance which manifest in relationship with traditional caretakers of the land -within distinctive Indigenous urban spaces. This form of spatial tagging posits an extension of Belcourt’s ethical practice of changing the form of the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative pathway to reflect local Indigenous pedagogy in the now; it situates this process as an urban protocol. This mobilization would be inclusive of Indigenous urban identified youth and grassroots organizations such as the Native Youth Sexual Health Network,¹⁷ and Indigenous hip-hop collectivities with whom to ascertain the appropriate abstraction through which to codify Indigenous protest rooted within a particular spatial geography.

This form of creative solidarity offers new possibilities for Indigenous resistance, and the creation of spatial tags through shifting the focus away from the performance of cultural appropriation. In stating this, effective solidarity building disrupts comfortable notions of Indigeneity and Indigenous protest while maintaining a radical pedagogy of decolonial love through acknowledging multi-plexed Indigeneities stemming from rich and complex interstitial urban Indigenous pathways.

Notes

1. Founded in December 2012, Idle No More has been a sustained, coordinated, strategic national-now global movement originally led by Sheelah McLean, Jessica Gordon, and Sylvia

- McAdam in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Idle No More began as a voice to oppose Bill C-45, omnibus legislation, which would significantly impact water and land rights under the Canadian Indian Act.
2. The hash tag formulates an Indigenized digital spatial glyph, and informs a significant mobilizing force within contemporary Indigenous solidarity movements. Within the Idle No More movement, the hashtag has been an integral component of what has been described as a #RoundDanceRevolution. According to spoken word artist, performer, and radio producer Jamaia DaCosta, “Social media networks, prove that Indigenous resistance and resurgence is alive and well, and continues to flourish and express itself in dynamic ways, most of which can be followed via a hashtag revolution” (#HASHTAG #REVOLUTION, Muskrat Magazine, March 14, 2014).
 3. The Kanien’kehaka resistance involving a 78-day armed standoff between the Mohawk nation of Kanesatake Quebec, the Quebec provincial police (SQ) and the Canadian armed forces near the town of Oka, Quebec. This standoff, informing the shape and form of Indigenous resistance, was an effort to defend Indigenous sacred lands from resource development on land that the Mohawk nation had been struggling to have recognized for almost 300 years. The land, known as the pines, was slated for the expansion of a golf course. This act was part of a decade of Indigenous resistance leading to the federally sanctioned Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), which produced 440 recommendations calling for a renewed relationship based on the core principles of “mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility.” RCAP was the most expensive public inquiry in the nation’s history intended to pacify the decade of Indigenous protest. For brief descriptions of these Indigenous acts of resistance, and a how they fit within a contextual history of IdleNoMore please see Glen Coulthard’s (2012) #IdleNoMore in Historical Context (<http://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/24/idlenomore-in-historical-context/>).
 4. I would like to extend this conversation through future research to include the context of visual tagging through graffiti and mural creation on urban street spaces as part of this larger decolonization project of spatially tagging Indigenous resistance.
 5. A 2014 R.C.M.P (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) report on missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada reported that 1,181 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing over the past 30 years.
 6. Participants of urban flash mob round dances represent a variety of perspectives and interests that may include those embracing an Indigenous feminist, and/or environmental justice, reproductive justice ethic, non-governmental organizations and those who oppose legislation threatening resources and livelihoods, as well as community allies and people of color advocating for social justice for Indigenous peoples.
 7. Previous to the 1793 British occupation at York (which was to become the city of Toronto in 1847), for instance, the Mississauga (Anishinaabek/ Ojibway) of the New Credit River, and the Wendat Haudenosaunee nations had territorial jurisdiction within the area. The Toronto Purchase expropriated approximately 250,880 acres of land from the Mississauga’s in 1805.
 8. Herein, I utilize the term white settler in its function as it “evokes a nexus of racial and colonial power” (Morgenson, 2014; see also Razack, 2002).
 9. We need a careful consideration of the historical context of colonization and the tensions in settler –Indigenous relations that contribute to practices of state-sanctioned racialized and gendered violences. Additionally, please see Hunt and Kaye’s (2014, Sept. 24) discussion of the misunderstood stigmatism towards sex work that are cast in the broad category of trafficking.
 10. Description provided by Cree storyteller, musician, language speaker Joseph Naytowhow (Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan).
 11. Translation provided by Cree musician, language speaker Jason Chamakese (Chitek Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan) in conversation with a knowledge holder from Ocean Man First Nation, Saskatchewan.
 12. Coulthard (2012) strategically claims, “if history has shown us anything, it is this: if you want those in power to respond swiftly to Indigenous peoples’ political efforts, start by placing Native bodies (with a few logs and tires thrown in for good measure) between settlers and their money, which in colonial contexts is generated by the ongoing theft and exploitation of our land and resource base. If this is true, then the long term efficacy of the #IdleNoMore movement would appear to hinge on its protest actions being distributed more evenly between the

- malls and front lawns of legislatures on the one hand, and the logging roads, thoroughfares, and railways that control to the accumulation of colonial capitol on the other.”
13. Anzaldúa (1987/2012) conceptualization of the borderlands is quite meaningful to this exploration of the temporality of the space between the break beats.
 14. A focus on similarities rather than difference could stifle an otherwise emergent critique of the conditions of oppression. Is it possible that some of these problematic positionings of Indigeneity get reaffirmed as settler peoples bask in the glow- and peer through the hand drums to connect with other settlers-holding hands in circuitous motions, as if, in solidarity.
 15. In preparation for the Yonge & Dundas urban flash mob round dance Anishinaabe artist, activist, and curator Wanda Nanabush, and Cree/Métis coordinator for Idle No More Toronto Charm Logan sought permission to host round dances within Idle No More demonstrations. In consultation, Cree elders supported the dance as a public performance, given that it was not intended to be ceremonial. Outside of its ceremonial context, this urban flash mob round dance was understood as a public performance of political unity, maintaining its meanings of unity and mourning towards missing and murdered Indigenous women (W. Nanabush & C. Logan, personal communication, 2014).
 16. New spatial geographies created out of radical decolonial love are also expressed through the aural/visual/narrative glyph manifest in Leanne Simpson’s Islands of decolonial love (2013).
 17. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is an organization by and for Indigenous youth that works across issues of sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice throughout Canada and the United States.

Notes on contributor

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Real Bodies in Real Time: Mirror Shields vs. Black Mirrors

By David Levi Strauss

One of the things I'm most interested in getting to in these discussions is the question of the creation and sustenance of social space in a hyper-mediated world. How is contested social space changing, in real terms? Where is the space for resistance? How has it changed? And how is the social now constituted? I suspect that discussions of indigeneity and indigenous futurity have a great deal to add to this, and vice versa.

My anarchist friends believe that the Social came to an end in about 1989/90, and that Social Media appeared soon after that, as a response by Global Capital to that disappearance. The transfer of newly unmoored social motivations to circular, self-absorbed mediation for the most part worked to short-circuit real world progressive political engagement. And some people think this short-circuit contributed to the rise of right-wing populist, xenophobic, nationalistic political movements.

That is an extreme statement of the process, but certainly, changes in our communications environment have contributed greatly to the current political conditions. The question is, how? And what do we do about it?

In her paper “Glyphing Decolonial Love Through Urban Flash Mobbing and Walking with Our Sisters,” Karyn Recollet navigates the line between social media and “embodied acts of defiance” in a way that I want to know more about. She describes the relation as an “interstice, that space of in-betweenness, where practices of solidarity and significant pedagogies of resistance, such as the notion of radical decolonial love can emerge.” And I want to know more about “a radical pedagogy of decolonial love,” and “multi-plexed geographies of Indigenous Resistance.”¹

Recollet’s recounting of the importance of the round dance “as a spatial tag of resistance,” and the physicality of *kiskipocikek*, or “wedging in,” which “increases the range of possibilities for an Indigenous futurity,” is compelling, as is her characterization of the physical commemoration of 1700 murdered or missing Indigenous women and girls marked in Christi Belcourt’s *Walking with Our Sisters* installation, that “calls us to engage the active presence of a collective honoring through the embodiment of ceremony.” “Through such attention to physicality,” writes Recollet, ‘Walking with Our Sisters’ actuates a moving glyph focusing on the embodied sovereignty of Indigenous women.”

The recent wave of xenophobia that swept a neo-fascist regime into power in the U.S. has focused most ostentatiously on the immigrant as the enemy. The brand new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development got into trouble a few days ago when

¹ Karyn Recollet, “Glyphing Decolonial Love Through Urban Flash Mobbing and Walking with Our Sisters,” *Curriculum Inquiry*, 45:1, pp. 129-145, 2015.

he conflated slavery and immigration. “That’s what America is about, a land of dreams and opportunity,” he said. “There were other immigrants who came here in the bottom of slave ships, worked even longer, even harder for less. But they too had a dream that one day their sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, great-grandsons, great-granddaughters, might pursue prosperity and happiness in this land.”² His later invocation of “involuntary immigrants” did nothing to lessen the offense. His next step might have been to posit “indigenous immigrants” as another group of ungrateful beneficiaries of the American Dream.

The original American colonists were, of course, immigrants. And the “conquest” of the Americas had everything to do with slavery. At the time of the Quincentennial, in 1992, I wrote, “Underneath all of the millenarian religious fundamentalism, Columbus was primarily an *entrepreneur*, backed by venture capitalists in a business venture. His contract with them was supposed to give him ten percent of what he found and eight percent of all resultant profits of commerce. The preponderance of evidence shows that he had the slave trade in mind from the beginning Over and over he prays, ‘Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold,’ and ‘Let us thank Our Lord who made us worthy of discovering so much wealth.’”³

² Liam Stack, “Ben Carson Refers to Slaves as ‘Immigrants’ in First Remarks to HUD Staff.” *The New York Times*, March 6, 2017.

³ David Levi Strauss, “Columbus Plus Ultra,” in *Between Dog & Wolf: Essays on Art and Politics* (New York: Autonomedia, 1999), p. 30.

What has happened and is happening at Standing Rock is also all about money, from the settler side. Money backed up with violence. And money is always backed up with violence.

At Standing Rock, dogs, tear gas, mace, rubber bullets, batons, sound and water cannons were deployed against a peaceful and prayerful defense of the water.

Those young people of the ILYC (International Indigenous Youth Council) who ran from Cannonball, North Dakota to Washington, D.C. last summer are now back in Washington, as the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and indigenous grassroots leaders called upon allies to peacefully gather in Washington, D.C. this week, culminating in a march in prayer and action yesterday.

Since 2010, more than \$100 billion worth of oil has been pumped out of North Dakota. Over 35 banks are backing the four companies in the Energy Transfer conglomerate that are behind the Bakken Pipeline. The median income on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation is a little under \$13,000 a year. Who do you think is going to prevail?

But, like Occupy Wall Street, Standing Rock should be thought of as a victory in an ongoing struggle. I refuse to see what happened at Standing Rock as a failure. And what happened there will not be forgotten.

Last October, a group of young activists who'd been at Standing Rock till September, and were about to return, contacted me to see if they could come and give a report on what they'd found to my students and others. I was struck by the extent to which these non-indigenous young people had been changed by their experience in Standing Rock. They talked about the history of the struggle for sovereignty and the structures of prayerful and peaceful protection in the camps. No one talked about the dangers of "appropriation," or about feeling excluded.

At the end of their report, students asked them, "What can we do to help? Can we raise money and send supplies, and start online petitions?" These four answered as one: "Go there," they said. "Well," said the students, "we don't know anyone there, and we wouldn't know what to do, and we don't want to be a burden," and the four answered, "Don't worry about any of that. Just go there. You'll be accepted and embraced. You'll see. If you're young and able and can take time away and no one else is depending on you for their livelihood, go." Again, "But it's cold up there, and we don't know the terrain, and how will we eat, and . . .," and again came the answer, "Just go there. Everything will be okay. Just *go*."

The clarity of that astonished me: Just go. Go from where you are right now to Standing Rock. Go now.

As with Occupy Wall Street, what made it matter was the being there: real bodies in real time. Karyn Recollet quotes Glen Coulthard, writing about the history of

#IdleNoMore: “If history has shown us anything, it is this: if you want those in power to respond swiftly to Indigenous peoples’ political efforts, start by placing Native bodies (with a few logs and tires thrown in for good measure) between settlers and their money, which in colonial contexts is generated by the ongoing theft and exploitation of our land and resource base.”⁴

I was struck by the effectiveness of the mirror shields at Standing Rock, made first, out of Masonite and vinyl, by artist Cannupa Hanska Luger, who was born on the Standing Rock reservation and is a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. He said he was inspired by the old women and children in the Ukraine, who took their bathroom mirrors out onto the streets so that the riot police who were attacking them would see themselves—and see the position they were in—and maybe think again.

Cannupa Hanska Luger said this about coming to Standing Rock: “When you first come through the gate—there is one entrance and one exit—they look through your car. They ask if you have weapons or drugs. Then you are welcomed in, and they say, ‘Welcome home.’ Your first interaction is being included, which is not something that people are used to in this country. This is an exclusive country. It’s all about fences and borders.

⁴ Karyn Recollet, footnote 12. Glen Coulthard, “#IdleNoMore in historical context.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* (Dec. 24, 2012). Retrieved from <http://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/24/idlenomore-in-historical-context/>.

“You set up camp and someone gives you firewood. The whole thing of guarding your stuff goes away. It’s so much easier to share things. Culturally, we have a practice called ‘seven generations.’ As you walk through the world, you are not yourself. You are not a singularity. You are not an American individualist bootstrapping bull . . . You are only borrowing this place from children you will never meet. And the only reason you have an opportunity to do that is because elders took care of it for you.

“Everybody came in hoping to experience something new, something profound. But when they got there, they realized they’re not a part of something new, they’ve just been absorbed into something that is much older than the entire country. That’s incredibly humbling.”⁵

I see the mirror shields of Standing Rock as a counter to the Black Mirrors we all carry around with us now, that are actually controlled by others. They are controlled by the largest corporations in the world. And they are all surveillance machines.

In our present condition, we tend to reduce being to identity, and change to technological innovation and consumption. How can we more pointedly question these beliefs?

⁵ Carolina A. Miranda, “The artist who made protestors’ mirrored shields says the ‘struggle porn’ media miss point of Standing Rock,” *The Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 2017.

Where We Are At with Contemporary Indigenous Art
By Richard William Hill

Six months ago I would have been confident of my ability to say “where we are at” with the discursive and institutional constructions that have come to be called (in Canada at least) “Contemporary Indigenous art.” True, with just that sentence I have already implied that where we are at with contemporary Indigenous art depends on, well, where we are and who that “we” happens to represent. It conceals diverse multitudes. How things have played out in Canada is different from the U.S. and I suspect, since Indigenous art has not become a national concern in the U.S. as it has in Canada, that there are many regional differences within the U.S. as well. And then there is the recent international turn opened up by the wide applicability of the term Indigenous to many colonized peoples around the world.

Six months ago my task would have been to discuss the situation in Canada, with my mind on several audiences, but particularly a general audience my New York friends have helped me to imagine, who may potentially be sympathetic allies, but who are only beginning to consider the issues and approaches artist of Indigenous heritage bring to the table (and to the gallery). That would have been challenge enough.

But then Donald Trump was elected President of the United States and suddenly my mental map of who is where doing what—and what might be the most effective approach in a given circumstance—has been violently jarred and it may be that all the markers have moved from where I thought they were. Like many of you I’m still trying to figure that out. It suddenly seems that we may be re-fighting some of the battles we had thought we had won, but perhaps this is also an opportunity to ask again about the battles we have systematically been losing as well and what we might do about that.

One of the ways in which I have tried to acknowledge our extraordinary, and completely unacceptable moment—dramatically more unacceptable than the usual unacceptableness—is by cancelling my two U.S. talks, one of which was for this event. To be honest this was a visceral rather than a carefully considered choice. When I heard about the first immigration ban from seven Muslim majority countries I began to feel extremely uneasy about my own relative freedom of movement across the border. Then I watched British Prime Minister Theresa May’s early visit to Trump, a clearly craven and cynical attempt to win his favour by being the first head of state to provide him with “business as usual” legitimacy. Watching that disgusting spectacle I decided, for the moment at least, that I couldn’t be part of business as usual with the U.S. As many of my American friends have told me this is probably not a long-term solution; cosmopolitanism is one of the very things we are again suddenly obliged to defend and of course it is also the case that many Indigenous peoples are unreconciled to the colonial state from the outset and need our ongoing solidarity. But just for now I will be staying home.

I should also say that I don’t think Canadians or anyone else is in a position to feel smug about what is going on. I lived in Toronto during the right wing populist Rob Ford’s shambolic run as mayor, which was all the foreshadowing required to see the threat of Trump victory. The more

outlandish his behaviour, the greater his authenticity in the eyes of his supporters and chronic, shameless lying helped facts to dissolve into insignificance. All too familiar. So while the U.S. has been the first state to fall prey to rightwing populism, none of us need look far to find the same social forces waiting to summon a similar creature to take power in our own political systems.

Despite all that I think that the best approach to understanding where we are at now is still to look at where we have recently been, especially since we have not all been in one place together, but nevertheless have ambitions to build connections. My apologies if time and space constraints produce something of a caricature and, more importantly, that they don't leave room to make the case through discussion of specific works of art, which is always my preference.

In the early 1980s a new generation of Indigenous artists, many trained in mainstream art schools and using the approaches of international contemporary art, emerged into various art worlds. Although there had been outliers before—contemporary artist of Indigenous heritage who worked outside the “Indian arts and crafts” markets of the American Southwest, the Northwest Coast and the so-called “Woodland School” of Ontario and Manitoba—these were the first to arrive *en masse*. Exhibitions in the early 1980s, such as *New Work By A New Generation*, at the Norman MacKenzie Gallery and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina in 1982 and *Contemporary Native American Art*, at Oklahoma State University's Gardiner Art Gallery, were among the first to ask what it meant to address an Indigenous heritage through what was then described as the lens of modernism (in retrospect many of the approaches now look characteristically postmodern). Both shows included artists from Canada and the U.S. and both catalogues had important curatorial writing by Indigenous artist/curators: Robert Houle in the former, and George C. Longfish (writing with Joan Randall) in the latter. In each case the authors were obliged to defend the modernity of both their life experiences and their artistic practices and insist that such experiences and approaches did not render their relationship to their Indigenous heritages inauthentic.

The next important step in the development of this discourse took place in New York. There, artist and writer (and former American Indian Movement activist) Jimmie Durham had begun showing with other “minority artists” in places like the Kenkeleba House Gallery. In the mid 80s he was approached by the British art writer, Jean Fisher, who was currently living in the city, about the possibility of curating an exhibition together. They ended up doing two: *Ni'Go Tlung A Doh Ka* [We Are Always Turning Around On Purpose] at SUNY Old Westbury's Amelie A. Wallace Gallery in 1986 and *We the People* at Artists Space in New York in 1987. Not only did these shows introduce a number of important artists to a wider audience, but they also brought new postmodern and postcolonial intellectual tools to bear on the politics of Indigenous representation, questions Durham and Fisher would continue to take up in their writing.

Perhaps Durham and Fisher's most important contribution was to bring an aggressive ideological critique to the history of Indigenous representation. The Cowboy and Indian of pulp fiction and Hollywood legend, as well as the authentically traditional Indian of salvage

anthropology were all challenged and shown to conceal operations of power that systematically excluded actual Indigenous participation in the public sphere, including the mainstream art world. Durham in particular cautioned against a particular colonial trap that awaited Indigenous activists: that is, that the logic of salvage anthropology might be all too easily married to less reflective strains of Indigenous nationalism, making “purifying” gestures of cultural recovery into colonially pre-scripted performances of authenticity according to the dichotomies of colonial racism. He argued instead, along with many other artists of the time, against a romantic mimesis of the past that would limit or conceal cultural innovation and freeze Indigenous art and culture out of the wider world. Durham insisted, “We want to be participants in all of art’s discourses. We expect that those discourses must allow more voices.” What often prevents this, he wrote, “is an unspoken demand that we not exist as ourselves in this world, this terrible week, but exist only as nostalgic echoes of our ancestors—the ‘real’ Indians.”

This eruption of new art and ideas moved quickly across the border into Canada, enlivening a series of group exhibitions. These included *Revisions* at the Banff Centre’s Walter Phillips Gallery, curated in 1988 by Helga Pakasaar and, most influentially, two big surveys by Canada’s national museums in 1992: the National Gallery of Canada and what was then the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now the Canadian Museum of History). The National Gallery exhibition was curated by Diana Nemiroff, Charlotte Townsend-Gault and Robert Houle, while the Museum of Civilization’s show was curated by two Indigenous curators, Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin. Both were large shows with ambitious catalogues; the latter with a bolder activist stance, the former more restrained, but nevertheless intellectually challenging.

This moment of official recognition, as problematic and only partially fulfilled as it was, marks a real split between the U.S. and Canadian situations. In the U.S. a discourse has persisted and grown in areas of the country (and institutions) with larger Indigenous populations, but has not risen above the surface in many places, including many artistic centres, such as New York and Los Angeles. In Canada there has been a much wider and deeper effort at inclusion, including federal and provincial arts funding targeted to Indigenous artists and curators, pressure on state funded galleries (we have many) to include more diverse programming and emphasis on Indigenous hiring and recruitment in universities. In parallel there has been, since the 1980s, a huge growth in Indigenous run social service agencies, which have placed cultural revival at the rhetorical centre of the services they provide.

In the arts in Canada traditional revivalism and the articulation of Indigenous methodologies for research and practice have come to dominate the discourse, as have discourses of sovereignty over cultural institutions and, at times, over culture itself. This has also played out institutionally. For example, the Indigenous arts section at the Canada Council for the Arts is essentially autonomous in running its programs. Likewise the National Gallery of Canada now has an Indigenous curatorial department headed by Greg Hill, a curator of Mohawk heritage.

This may look like an enviable position, but of course successes of various sorts also bring new problems to work through. The creation of institutions can lead to conservative institutional

cultures. I am, for example, concerned that we have swung so far in the direction of cultural revivalism that we have lost track of the other lesson of the artists of the 1980s and 1990s, which was to insist on our place in the wider world and a recognition of the complex, messily entangled relationship with popular culture and the wider art world. The scandal, it often seems to me, is not our radical alterity, but how much we actually already share in a wider culture.

The question of sovereignty potentially brings similar problems. On one hand it is very important to understand that political sovereignty is the key issue that distinguishes Indigenous politics from the concerns of many other marginalized groups. While we struggle with issues of racism, misrepresentation and vilification our main political concern has been our dispossession of territory and loss of sovereignty in our own lands. Our politics therefore tend to be not only focused on liberal goals such as freedom from discrimination and inclusion, but also and most crucially, about sovereignty and treaty or other land rights. Where this sometimes gets tricky for me is when arguments about political sovereignty migrate into the realm of cultural politics. As I have said many times, culture is a messy and promiscuous phenomenon and we should not treat it as something to either bracket off into its own discrete space or to exclusively control. For example there is no reason we can't have sovereign cultural institutions that choose to be open to and inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives.

I think distinguishing between liberal politics of inclusion and questions of deeper political and economic structures can be an important way to swing this discussion around to the challenge posed by rightwing populism that we now face. This can be a challenge because in common use the distinction between liberal and left politics has been tellingly all but done away with in North America. Even in Britain, where it is better remembered, I now see the tendency to treat the terms as synonyms. This is largely because the critique of political economy of the traditional left has been subordinated to social liberalization, a progressive agenda that has been effectively advanced under capitalism. All of my life (until just now) I have watched the victory of battles for liberal inclusion around issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and orientation (important victories, don't mistake me) and at the same time the constant loss of battles to address the fundamental problems posed by our economic system. The two most important of these are obviously growing economic inequality and the environmental consequences of an economic system madly premised on constant growth within a finite system. Likewise, in indigenous politics I have watched our struggles for sovereignty continuously bought off with platitudes about equality and reconciliation as well as funding from the state for things like education or cultural programs (I am not against these either, of course). And I have likewise watched us "revive" our traditional cultures (or some imagined version of them) so long as they remain (or appear to remain) relatively static; bracketed off from daily life and do not address the fundamental ways in which the capitalist economy has been changing our cultures on a very deep level. I suspect that in Canada the state has gambled on educating us, trusting that however empowered and potentially dangerous our educations make us, the inevitable absorption of this educated minority of our community into middle class comforts and values will blunt that edge. Maybe our frenetic displays of traditionalism are an effort to overcome this, or they might be, even at the same time, our way of hiding from

ourselves the very fact that many of our victories remain largely cosmetic and our cultures are being deeply changed.

Rightwing populists like Trump have tapped into a sense that many people have that the capitalist system as it currently exists is rigged against them and that conventional politics offers only superficial change. They are correct about both things. Sadly, many of them have been duped by the oldest move in the conservative repertoire, convinced, perversely, that this problem is the fault of the most vulnerable and disempowered members of society, not the people who are actually in charge. It is the most ridiculous slight of hand, but apparently it keeps on being effective. The last time we went down this path in earnest millions of scapegoat “enemies of the nation” were murdered, so we need, as a matter of absolute seriousness, to stop this slide toward barbarity as soon as possible. At the same time we need to make sure the left actually behaves according to left principles and not like timid liberals asking only for a bit more tolerance here or there. We can afford to miss no opportunity to provide a more accurate explanation of the growing economic disparity and what might be done about it. The cosmetic improvements of theoretical liberal equality cannot paper over deep class divisions indefinitely. The populist right has decided that it is not the captains of industry who are now societies elites, but rather middle class artists, academics and other intellectuals (especially, oddly enough, those of colour). This is absurd, but it will be a clever trap if status quo politicians of whichever party convince us to fight the destabilizing effects of rightwing populism in the name of cosmopolitan diversity only and not also address the larger issues of economic justice that created the crisis in the first place.

This means to me that, more than ever, Indigenous political art needs to look not only inward, but outward, to not only distinguish our differences, but to continue to innovate and make new connections. There is no reserve or reservation, however remote or apparently autonomous, that is not subject to the rule of the market, which is now the naturalized global order; nor will it be spared from global warming or the political instability caused by growing inequality. These are all now Indigenous issues and the change that we need can no longer be cosmetic, but must be deeply structural. I’m not advocating a revolution; look how terribly they have tended to turn out, and a slide toward disorder would be just the opportunity fascists are waiting for. We need to band together to push for real change through democratic processes or this may be just the beginning of a descent into catastrophe.

From this perspective, the disparity between the U.S. and Canadian Indigenous art worlds provides both caution and possible hope. After reading a first draft of this essay, Alan Michelson, who knows both art worlds well, helped to provide a clear picture of the disparity that I consider very useful. In an email he wrote that although during the 1980s and early 90s:

It seemed like indigenous exhibitions could defy borders and national frameworks and would continue to do so, that indigenous, cross-border synergies and solidarities would prevail over the ongoing colonial agendas of Canada and the U.S. But right-wing politics in the U.S.—the so-called culture wars of the 90's sparked by the NEA Four—quashed that dream for indigenous artists on this side

of the line. From the perspective of many of us, the result was a kind of cultural trade deficit, in which Canadian First Nations artists, bolstered by increased funding and attention in the form of Canada Council grants, regional gallery exhibitions and catalogs, and a receptive press and audience—routinely populated our exhibitions—at NMAI, university galleries, and alternative spaces—but the reverse situation was rare and still is.

The lesson here, to my mind, is that we have a clear example of how the state can use its redistributive powers to dramatically alter events with only a modest intervention. That the U.S. has been failing to do so is a tragedy, but Canada also needs to do much more if that change is to be deep and real. That won't happen if we let an unsustainable (and gamed) economic system simply run its course toward environmental destruction and stark economic disparity. Our only option is to work together to rebuild a sense of political agency, a power the left has been told for decades no longer exists, but as Trump has proven, in a dreadful way, is just waiting to be used.

Unsettling Narratives: Art at Standing Rock

Hrag Vartanian

What if we thought of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) standoff at Standing Rock and the artistic production it hosted and generated as a window into the state of contemporary art? What if we imagined contemporary Indigenous art during the DAPL standoff as a way to see how art can look, adapt, and react to the violence of the neoliberal state. What if that influential event that galvanized communities across the country, continent, and around the world gave us insight into the new coalitions being formed to fight against marginalized communities?

This inquiry was initiated by Richard William Hill’s provocative essay on the state of contemporary Indigenous art in the United States and Canada, “Where We Are At with Contemporary Indigenous Art.” He presents the issues with a sense of urgency based on the current political situation in the United States, and recognizes that “all the markers have moved from where I thought they were.”

This essay is not designed to sideline questions of political sovereignty for Indigenous people but reinforce them, pressing for an examination that incorporates what Yates McKee has written about in his book *Strike Art as the “camp” as a site of the modern*. McKee quotes from Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri’s “Camp Campaign” (2006) project, which begs the question, “How can a camp like Guantanamo exist in our own time?” I add my own question, “How can Oceti Sakowin Camp exist in our time and what role does it *serve*?”

The “Camp Campaign” project, McKee writes, “Comprises a constantly reconfigured archival assemblage of photographs, videos, sound recording, maps, and field-notes with the figure of the ‘camp’ as a kind of poetic machine guiding their journey.”¹ It should be mentioned that for their project, Anastas and Gabri visited various types of camps, including military camps, labor camps, prisons, immigrant detention centers, and, notably for this discussion, Native American reservations.

This short incomplete examination takes on, to quote Elvira Pulitano in *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*, “the struggle against an ideology whose primary tenet is the systematic representation of the Indian as romantic artifact, the inhabitant of an unchanging past.”² While Pulitano focuses on writers and critics in her text, the idea is clearly relevant to the realm of contemporary art.

These are observations and summaries compiled from 10 interviews³ with predominantly indigenous artists and the records of experiences during a November 25-26 trip to the Oceti Sakowin Camp at the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota.

¹ Yates McKee, *Strike Art* (Verso, 2016), p.82.

² Elvira Pulitano, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 140.

³ Raven Chacon, Tenanche Rose Golden, Jesse Hazelip, Graci Horne, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Dylan McLaughlin, Rebecca Nagle, Yatika Rivers, Asa Wright, and Mary Zeiser. I also interviewed artist Ahmed Mater via email as he was not at the site at the time but left an art work at the camp that was present during my visit.

Observations At Standing Rock

When I arrived to Standing Rock during the highly symbolic US Thanksgiving Day weekend, I could immediately recognize that art had a large role as part of the acts of solidarity, resistance, and transmission at the Oceti Sakowin Camp.

The images and sounds that circulated through patches, banners, signs, video, as well as social media channels and news reports, created a media-intensive environment even though data and phone services were reputedly being monitored and restricted. I was told by many that it was unusual that data and phone services worked at all — though still not reliably — during Thanksgiving weekend and many people seemed perplexed by the new development.

The Oceti Sakowin Camp had a very visible **art tent** area that consisted of three tents. Known by almost everyone at the site, it was roughly a 20x30 foot space that housed printmaking and drying facilities. At any one time, according to Mary Zeiser, who is a non-Indigenous artist from LA working directly with the International Indigenous Youth Council, up to 25 people could be working in the space. The Art Tent was responsible for the majority of graphics at the site and it provided space and supplies for those creating banners and signs.

One of the most prominent tools of identification at the Oceti Sakowin Camp were **flags**, whether national, ethnic, or other political identities or affiliations, which formed a visible **marker of diversity. Hundreds of nations were represented, most prominently at “flag row,”** which consisted of a double row of flag polls that lined the main road from the entrance down to the sacred fire.

One flag that was walked through the camp on more than one occasion while I was there read **“Since 1492, One Blood,”**⁴ indicating the desire to unify the diversity of indigenous nations present. While most of these flag were not strictly contemporary art, this created a prompt for at least one Saudi artist, Ahmed Mater, to create specially designed flags that were part of his *Evolution of Man* series, to leave at the site.⁵

When I asked Mater why he created the flags he replied, “*Evolution of Man* is an artwork and a statement. I wanted it to be visible in the ‘real’ world. It is addressing the front line of the issue, not just in galleries, museums, or specialist media. It was a very organic process to turn these works into flags, and install them among the hundreds of other flags which represent over 300 nations at the Standing Rock Camp.”

Mater’s desire to go beyond the traditional confines of contemporary art was not unique. It’s interesting to note that Mater, like Hill, believes there is an urgency today and, in his case, he chose to travel to Standing Rock to express that. “It’s inspiring and urgent in the new Trump Era we are about to enter,” Mater said about the events at Standing Rock. He also pointed out his

⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/BNUdq-3gBam/>

⁵ <http://hyperallergic.com/342042/saudi-artist-ahmed-mater-standing-rock/>

personal history made the struggle more crucial: “As an artist, brought up in the south of Saudi Arabia, I empathized with the struggle of the Lakota Nation against the impact of oil development, and I wanted to go and see for myself and, if possible, contribute to spreading this story and building momentum through my platform as an artist.”

Asa Wright, a Klamath/Modoc artist from southern Oregon, explained part of the appeal of being at Standing Rock. **“I made a banner the other day with a broken piece of wood and a pencil and 40 feet of canvas and now that banner was seen all around the world,”** he said. He also shared his thought **on his role as an artist. “Art becomes the visual of every action that’s there, and when you’re coming out to Standing Rock and you see all these actions, people are walking around with all this art on their back. These simple messages are powerful messages and they’re really getting the point across ... connecting it to the bigger issue which is sovereignty and treaty rights,”** he said.

Wright added that being present at the camp **“definitely has changed how I’m working and where I am working.”** He outlined how the lack of phone service removed the **“phone face”** of cities, referring to how people are constantly looking at their smartphones, and it resulted in **“tribal dialogue”** as individuals chose to identify themselves by tribal affiliation and create relationships that will exist beyond the camp.

Writer and artist Tenache Rose Golden, who noted her partner is a Dakota artist, explained her **understanding of art in the context of the Oceti Sakowin Camp. “Art is a focal point, it helps people focus on the cause, and why they’re here,”** she said. **“And it keeps people grounded and focused on that, art is also the communication to the world, so when you see posters and t-shirts on Facebook and Twitter, those images repeatedly seen by many people begin to sink in and join in to understand the importance of the cause and that water is for all generations to come.”**

Oklahoma-based Yatika Starr Fields, a young Native American painter of Cherokee, Creek, and Osage decent, explained that he examined his role as an artist **before arriving: “You have a role to initiate dialogue ... to produce something that should stay here.”** When I asked him about the most powerful symbols and images emerging from Standing Rock, he explained: **“I think it’s about force, it’s about breaking, that’s what I think it is, it’s about making the United States look at themselves and see what’s going on ... it’s about standing up, breaking, separating, and unifying.”**

Mary Zeiser, who is a non-Indigenous white artist from LA working directly with the International Indigenous Youth Council, shared her observations as an active volunteer in the art tent: **“What I’m seeing is artists coming together from different walks of life creating similar imagery because of the message to stop the Dakota Access pipeline is a thread that connects everybody. What I’m seeing is imagery of sacred corn and the flowers and trees coming out of the land ... and the imagery of the black snake comes up again and again.”** Zeiser explained she planned to stay until the very end of the DAPL fight as a volunteer.

The one project that captured international media attention from Standing Rock was Cannupa Hanska Luger’s **Mirror Shields project**. A sculptor of Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Lokata

heritage, he explained the source of the idea. “I originally saw it in the Ukraine ... I saw people holding up mirrors to the riot police and I saw how effective it was as a symbol,” he said. The project was partly influenced by the location, which as a non-urban site, did not have many witnesses that were **not engaged on either side of the action**. “We’re isolated, we’re in a quiet place. If you yell or make any sort of noise out here, there are not bystanders who are not **partisan one way or another ... so we had to come up with a different way to protest in this situation because the police are ruthless in their practices. You saw Sunday night they were spraying people with water and it was 20 degrees outside [and] that’s threat to life, you know. Because there is nobody to witness it ... one side says this and another side says that, and there’s no neutral party, this is why we were struggling so much to get media out there because we need neutral parties to see how absurd it is.**”

The shields Luger made were constructed of vinyl and Masonite and they helped, he said, highlight the mirroring effect that occurred with the protesters and the authorities, an effect that many of the artists noticed.

Artist Jesse Hazelip explained his thoughts on the mirroring effect that would happen at the **front lines as water protectors were confronted with security forces**. “When we were approaching them yesterday they kept on calling out every one of our actions as aggressive, and it was funny because **they were saying ‘oh, you’re wearing ballistic vests, that’s an aggressive action,’ or ‘you’re wearing this or that and that’s an aggressive action,’ but we are mirroring [them],**” he said referring to the defensive gear worn by the authorities. “You came at us so hard that we have to protect ourselves so we can be peaceful and not die in the process,” he said as if addressing the police themselves. “Everything that we would do they would say that’s an aggressive action.”

He said he thought “**art was being used almost in a protective manner, because they would be holding banners across the line and holding it up almost as a shield too from the water cannons ... Then they had the banners almost as a front for the police to stare at. Normally you’re making banners to carry in a protest so that the city can see it, but there’s no city here to see it, so it’s a direct message to the oppressor. Art is being used in many strong ways, there are flags being made, it’s really beautiful seeing how it’s going on.**”

Artist Raven Chacon of the Postcommodity collective explained that his experience there was **helping him understand the idea of silence and its role in action**. “They don’t know how to respond to silence,” he said. “It becomes a feedback loop when you start yelling. Even signs, they can be used, but when it is people standing there, all people, just standing there, then police don’t know what to do. When everyone went into a circle, you could almost feel the police wanting to do the same ... ”

As to art’s role at Standing Rock, Chacon explained: “I think it’s really complicated, I think that the impulse for any artist, even all of us, is to have our art reinforce this binary battle that’s happening. Us against them, the good guys and the bad guys. But I don’t think that’s our role all the time, it’s to make work that speaks to the broader situation that’s happening and if that requires us to be critical within our work, even of ourselves, that might be something that the art

can speak to, while at the same time acting as a unifier ... **this isn't going to stop with Standing Rock, this is going to happen again all over this country,**" he said "Maybe we're doing this wrong and maybe we don't need to be shouting, maybe we need to be silent with reflective shields. There's more power that hasn't been examined, and I think the artist can let people see these other types of powers that are existing in the landscape."

All the artists I spoke to said they came expecting to use their art skills. In an interview with Caroline Miranda of the *LA Times*,⁶ Luger explained that he saw being an artist as "a way to weaponize privilege."

Luger also discussed the Mandan-Hidatsa tradition of creating songs using the horizon line of a site, which said he was thinking about when creating the 2016 video project "**We Are In Crisis**"⁷ along with artists Dylan McLaughlin, Ginger Dunnill, Merritt Johnson, and Nicholas Galanin. "**You see this very distinct horizon line as you spin in a 360 degree turn, and we would use that to create songs bound to location and bound to place ... you start from where you stand, every human being has an innate desire to belong and this is a way to create music, which is part of culture, which is part of landscape, and connect it all together,**" he explained about the project that used **drones**, a tool used by water protectors and their allies, as well as the authorities at Standing Rock.

Yet the art making wasn't restricted to outward messages and understanding actions. Artist Rebecca Nagle, who is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, and Graci Horne, who is affiliated with the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota people and Hunkpapa Lakota/Dakota people, brought their **Monument Quilt project, a large public art project, to the camp, to "raise awareness about sexual assault and sexual violence in Indian country and show support for survivors,"** according to Nagle. Horne explained that in the evening they also brought in elders to help Native American women to heal from generations of trauma starting with the Indian Wars (1540–1924) and continuing until today. They had already collected 1,700 squares created by survivors of **rape and abuse from across the US. Horne called Standing Rock a "magical moment" because it was so rare to have survivor groups of all Native American women.**

Each of the artists interviewed at Standing Rock expressed their connection to the site, presenting a place-consciousness about the work being created and reflecting on how it amplified the impact of the gathering, which many repeatedly told me, often before our interviews began, was a life changing and powerful experience. The heterogeneity of experiences were also unified by a common struggle focused on DAPL. Most Indigenous artists also had the hope that the hundreds of nations that came together at Standing Rock will also join them when their own tribes or reservations are under siege. Asa Wright said his community in Oregon was already starting to fight against a pipeline planned on his ancestral lands.

A few of the artists spoke about previous experiences at anti-capitalist events. Mary Zeiser talked about being involved with the LA Occupy camp, while an artist in the art tent recognized

⁶ <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-cannupa-hanska-luger-20170112-story.html>

⁷ <https://vimeo.com/187762675>

me, and we figured out we had met when I was reporting at the 2014 Flood Wall Street march in Manhattan.

The role of art at the Oceti Sakowin Camp was best encapsulated by Navajo filmmaker Dylan McLaughlin, who saw the actions of Standing Rock as part of a continuity for Indigenous artists: **“ ... Art making has been ingrained ... into identity, of land, of place, and of language ... what we are doing is a continuation and evolution of that same thing, with our conversations, with our paints, and with our sculptures, we’re all carrying ourselves in an artful way. The songs that were sung in prayer yesterday were just gorgeous, just incredible, and all of it. The signs, the people, the formations, the prayer circles, the conversations, it’s all being done in a very artful manner, and we’re showing up and having conversations people always had in this landscape but maybe in a slightly different material manner now because of what we have access to because of the industrial world we live in.”**

The itinerant art community that formed at Standing Rock was multilayered, decentralized, and organized through an informal structure that still had elements of hierarchy. At least three artists refused to give interviews during my trip after suggesting I talk to those who had been at the camp longer.

It appeared that the artists at the Oceti Sakowin Camp were “rebuild[ing] a sense of political agency,” to quote Hill’s concluding plea, and they looked outward to larger struggles. The camp was on the frontline of anti-capitalist conflict. It acted as a hub for indigenous and non-indigenous artists who created works in solidarity, including work that acted as focal points, visual shields, reflections of the world, and a way to facilitate healing. Artists worked to imagine new ways to help understand, reinforce, and support the struggle against DAPL.

Colophon

Cover image: Nadia Myre, *Indian Act*, 2000-2002 (detail of p. 35)

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