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Introduction: Indigenous peoples and the politics of water

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Abstract
In recent history, we have seen water assume a distinct and prominent role in Indigenous political formations. Indigenous peoples around the world are increasingly forced to formulate innovative and powerful responses to the contamination, exploitation, and theft of water, even as our efforts are silenced or dismissed by genocidal schemes reproduced through legal, corporate, state, and academic means. The articles in this issue offer multiple perspectives on these pressing issues. They contend that struggles over water figure centrally in concerns about self-determination, sovereignty, nationhood, autonomy, resistance, survival, and futurity. Together, they offer us a language to challenge and resist the violence enacted through and against water, as well as a way to envision and build alternative futures where water is protected and liberated from enclosures imposed by settler colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

Keywords: *water, decolonization, Indigenous feminism, relationality*

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Introduction

The now popular discourse "Water Is Life" has become almost ubiquitous across multiple decolonization struggles in North America and the Pacific over the past five years. Its rise in popularity reflects how Indigenous people are (re)activating water as an agent of decolonization, as well as the very terrain of struggle over which the meaning and configuration of power is determined (Yazzie, 2017). Indigenous freedom fighters have reclaimed water, land, and Indigenous bodies within a network of life that simply refuses to disappear and relinquish its embedded relationships with the spaces and places from which Indigenous peoples emerge, and to which we belong (Goeman, 2017; Yazzie, 2017). From the Oceti Sakowin protecting the Missouri River from contamination by the Dakota Access Pipeline, to the Maori declaring that the Whanganui River has rights akin to those of humans (Roy, 2017), water is seen as an ancestor and as a relative with agency within this network of life, one who deserves respect, care, and protection. In short, in recent years Indigenous peoples have been rising up to develop vibrant struggles for decolonization that are, in the words of Zoe Todd (2017), "embedded in watery worlds" with our "water kin."

The waters that run through Indigenous lands are the arteries that feed us—humans and more-than-humans (Todd, 2017). Water runs through our human veins and connects us to everything. The water that we drink is the water the salmon breathes, is the water the trees need, is the water where Bear bathes, is the water where the rocks settle. Many of our stories foreground relationships to water. These stories show us that water is theory; theory that is built from relationality to the land, the earth, everything (Risling Baldy, 2017). As Shawn Wilson (2009) argues, "Knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections framed with the environment that surrounds us . . . There is no distinction between relationships that are made with other people and those that are made with our environment" (p. 87). Indigenous peoples have always analyzed, critiqued, questioned, and dreamed theories of how to balance and rebalance our worlds. And these theories, ever adaptable and ever changing, are built with a focus on the past, present and future. We argue that this multidirectional, multispatial, multitemporal, and multispecies theory of relationships and connections forms the terrain of decolonized knowledge production. Within this definition of knowledge, research is the very act of relationality across time and space. It is not the vocation of bounded individuals; indeed, the very notion of bounded individualism is completely undone by a view of knowledge that arises from expressions of verb-based Indigenous languages where life is "interdependent and in constant motion" (Sable, 2006, p. 167).

This special double issue of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society* (Decolonization) is an appeal to our five fingered relatives, the people of the earth, to engage in what Linda Tuhiwai Smith has called "the struggle for decolonization" (2012). The issue is meant to reflect upon and give language to the teachings of our water relatives so as to develop and capture an emerging framework of decolonization that we believe is different from existing paradigms. Healing and conscientization are conceptions of decolonization that have claimed somewhat of an exceptional and hegemonic space within Indigenous intellectual and political labor, often at the expense of other considerations. When certain elements of a political discourse dominate or overpopulate that discourse, historical and material complexities that refuse the teleological undercurrents of dominant strands suffer marginalization, short shrift, and even condemnation. Given the large-scale and undeniably complex struggles for decolonization like Idle No More, #ProtectMaunaKea, #SaveOakFlat, #NoKXL, Nihigaal Bee Iiná, and #NoDAPL that have been actively and continuously unfolding in recent years in the North American context, it is crucial for advocates of decolonization to open up space within our work to reflect upon and help shape the complex and contradictory cacophonies of these struggles, which abound with dynamic materialities and forces that exceed the internal locus of individual healing and the limited agenda of viewing academic research as a vocation for consciousness raising.

What we propose here is thus not a project of self-reflexivity that occurs at the site of individual consciousness raising or healing. Rather, it is a project of inter-reflexivity, a struggle for decolonization premised on the accountabilities we form in lively relation to each other. The act of (re)making our accountability in relationship to water and (re)claiming our relational theories of water culture remind us that we are water based, that we have water memory. As Cutcha notes, in Hoopa, we define ourselves in relationship to water; but more than that, Hoopa understand our place in the world based on how water views the world, or even how water views us. Our directions are views from the river that runs through our valley. "Worldview" is "water view," a view *from* the river not a view *of* the river. We move upriver,[1] or downriver,[2] to the river, or from the river.[3] So our theoretical standpoint is one that foregrounds *water view*, (re)claiming knowledges not just for the people, but also for the water; not just looking at our relationship to water, but our accountability to water view.

Decolonization, however, is not *only* a vocation of mind over matter, a therapeutic salve for history that will materialize into emancipation for all if we could just liberate our minds through a return to culture. Smith shows us that decolonization is a dynamic struggle that is worked out and contested between a cacophony of living beings, structures, forces, and dreams. In other words, decolonization is a thoroughly historical and material struggle.

The reclaiming of our accountability to water view has been the hallmark of struggles for decolonization (including research and direct action) in recent years. Our resurgent commitment to water view has reinvigorated our human liveliness and our decolonial conviction. This accountability to water view envisions and enacts an ethos of "living well," which Harsha Walia (2013) points out defies "the capitalist and colonial system's logic of competition, commodification, and domination" (p. 255). Living well requires "interdependency and respect among all living things" (Ibid). We call this ethos of living well *radical relationality,* which is radical in the sense of roots or origins, as in a relationality from which all life and history derives meaning and shape (like water view), and also in the sense of a dramatic and revolutionary change from our current epoch of power, as in a radical shift towards decolonization (Yazzie, 2017). We conceive of *radical relationality* as a term that brings together the multiple strands of materiality, kinship, corporeality, affect, land/body connection, and multidimensional connectivity coming primarily from Indigenous feminists (Danforth, 2015; Dhillon, 2016; Goeman, 2016; TallBear, 2017). It provides a vision of relationality and collective political organization that is deeply intersectional and premised on values of interdependency, reciprocity, equality, and responsibility. In *'Talkin' Up To The White Woman,* Aileen Morton-Robinson (2001) states that "In Indigenous cultural domains relationality means that one experiences the self as part of others and that others are part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory" (p. 16). Within this framework of relationality, water is not seen as a resource to be weaponized for the interests of capital by corporations that harness, obstruct, pollute, and discipline water through infrastructure projects like dams and pipelines to boost the capitalist economies of settler nation-states. No, within an Indigenous feminist framework, water is a relative with whom we engage in social (and political) relations premised on interdependency and respect.

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[1] **yinuq** • upstream. Hupa Language Online Dictionary, entry #3303.

[2] **yide'** • downstream. Hupa Language Online Dictionary, entry #882.

[3] **yiduq** • up away from the stream, uphill. Hupa Language Online Dictionary, entry #3294.

Kim TallBear (2017) offers a similar framework she calls "caretaking." Drawing from Kate Shanley, who is also an Indigenous feminist, TallBear argues that caretaking is an expression of "obligations of human kin with our other kin." She goes on to argue that scholarly theories of relationality are simply inadequate for capturing the "vibrancy" and "spirit" of "Indigenous relationships with our non-human relations in these lands," largely because they sever materiality from spirit (Ibid). TallBear's critique of academic work on relationality suggests the importance of looking to other spaces of knowledge production like political movements (and relationalities like water view) to understand the stunning vibrancy and spirit of relational worlds. Indeed, this rich and diverse work by Indigenous feminists in the academy dovetails with equally impactful discourses that have emerged from Indigenous-led decolonization struggles occurring outside of the academy. Both fields of production point us to a framework of radical relationality that helps to theorize what might be called *ontologies of decolonization,* which are defined by the condition of being-in-relation-to that water view instills in us. In other words, decolonization's diverse political, ontological, and epistemological manifestations all center on and reproduce the interdependency, interconnection, and respect between all beings with spirit.

The future is uncertain. Whether or not we come together on a larger scale and in a spirit of radical relationality to forge an effective counterhegemonic force is entirely up to us, human beings. This issue is titled "Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water." When we talk of Indigenous peoples and the politics of water, we are talking about reorienting our politics and our collective practice of decolonization toward the framework of radical relationality, toward an accountability to water view. This radical relationality of water, however, is not invoked within the terrain of struggle simply as an act of cultural reclamation, Indigenous knowledge-making, or individual healing. Although these scales of decolonial investment are important aspects of struggle that scholars and activists certainly espouse as part of our practice of protecting our water relatives, we argue that radical relationality requires *interconnecting* these variously scaled decolonial practices to build the kind of mass movements that are necessary for staging a serious counterhegemonic challenge to the status quo of death that currently structures our existence. This requires commitment and trust in the work we have already done. The paradigm has already been created; we just need to enforce it.

Decolonization as struggle: From conscientization to cacophony

We imagine readers of the *Decolonization* journal over the years have seen many definitions of decolonization in its pages, with perhaps the most well-known offered by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang in their 2012 article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," a hallmark essay that marked the beginning of *Decolonization* and set the tone for the journal. In that article, Tuck and Yang intervened into the way decolonization is taken up within the field of education. They argued that educational projects that use the language of decolonization to describe their social justice endeavors participate in settler moves to innocence. Settler moves to innocence rescue settler futurity instead of fostering actual decolonization, which Tuck and Yang define as the repatriation of Indigenous land and life (p. 1).

"Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" has become a touchstone for scholars and practitioners of decolonization because it maps the many ways that decolonization is constantly evacuated of its true meaning and intention, which results in the preservation of settler colonialism and consequent deferral of the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. It seems that one of the main contributions of "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" has been its articulation of what decolonization *is not*: it is not a metaphor to be taken up within existing settler agendas for liberal, progressive, or radical politics that do not challenge ongoing settler colonialism. If settler-initiated projects do not advance the repatriation of Indigenous life and land, Tuck and Yang remind us, these projects cannot be called decolonial; they are nothing more than settler moves to innocence that keep colonial relations and settler privilege intact.

However, we argue that the article also provides a definition of what decolonization *is,* and this definition is different from the one that has populated many scholarly works produced by Indigenous academics in North America over the last decade. These works, many of them pertaining to the field of history, have focused on decolonizing knowledge and research through truth telling (Waziyatawin, 2005), analyzing and denouncing colonialism (Lonetree, 2012), recovering Indigenous knowledge and language (Miller & Riding In, 2011), and producing knowledge that prioritizes the needs of Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999). There is a salient feature to scholarly projects that situate decolonization in the realm of knowledge and research. Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird (2005), two main proponents of this approach to decolonization, argue that "First and foremost, decolonization must occur in our own minds" (p. 2). These two scholars cast decolonization as a practice that should foster critical awareness of the truths of oppression, which will facilitate the casting off of colonial ways of knowing and consequent adoption of Indigenous ways of knowing. Given that phrases like "our own minds" refer to the internal landscape of bounded (colonized) individuals, we might deduce that the locus of decolonial application and transformation in this paradigm is the individual. For example, Waziyatawin (2005), a Dakota historian, has drawn from Frantz Fanon to argue that "freedom from oppression" is only possible if "we first release our own minds from the bonds that have held them" (p. 14). She also argues that this process requires efforts to restore a "precolonized state of mind," which in the Dakota language translates to a "strong mind before they came" (p. 15). Seminole historian Susan Miller (2011) similarly emphasizes that decolonization is "a process designed to shed and recover from the ill effects of colonization," partly through the recovery of Indigenous knowledge and language (p. 14). And Ho-Chunk historian Amy Lonetree (2012) has argued that "speaking the hard truths of colonialism" is necessary for generating "the critical awareness that is necessary to heal from historical unresolved grief" (p. 6).

These approaches represent an important trend that continues to shape academic writing and thinking on decolonization. However, a number of interdisciplinary developments over the last fifteen years within academic and organizing spaces have generated a diverse conversation about the meaning and practice of decolonization that extends beyond the realm of research and knowledge. These different approaches to decolonization also challenge the notion that individual transformation is the primary and predictive building block of decolonization. We look to the second edition (2012) of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* to understand these developments. As many know, the first edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) marked a key pivot in Indigenous studies that opened up new ways of thinking and practicing decolonization within the field. Smith inspired an entire generation of scholars to center decolonization in fields as varied as history, feminist studies, science and technology studies, and education. Her book, along with a remarkable growth of scholarly interest in decolonization developing both within and beyond Indigenous studies, also influenced the founding of this journal. The impact of the first edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* cannot be overstated. However, this blossoming of academic writing and thinking on decolonization has also sparked important internal critiques and debates about the various ways decolonization has been taken up. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" represents a key moment of internal critique that coincides with the revisions and additions that Smith advances in the second edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* published the same year this journal released its inaugural issue.

In a new chapter in the second edition entitled, "Choosing the Margins: The Role of Research in Indigenous Struggles for Social Justice," Smith (2012) expands her original definition of decolonization to include (and in some ways center) the concept of "struggle." Drawing from her experience with Maori decolonization efforts and Marxist and feminist definitions of material struggle, Smith argues that research is only one of five "dimensions" that make up the "struggle for decolonization" (p. 200). Whereas other academic definitions of decolonization emphasize the transformation of consciousness within the realm of research and knowledge, Smith argues that "participation in struggle can and often does come before a raised consciousness" (Ibid). Drawing from Graham Smith, she goes on to argue that hallmark concepts of research-based decolonization like consciousness raising, or "conscientization," a concept that comes from Paolo Freire's (1970) oft cited *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "may occur in any order and indeed may occur simultaneously" (Ibid). Smith concludes that decolonization is neither limited to the realm of research, nor is it an established trajectory whereby the transformation of consciousness leads to the casting off of colonial tropes and the embracing of Indigenous knowledge. This definition of decolonization, with its focus on research and knowledge, limits our understanding of how decolonization is as much a "story of struggle" interlaced with intersectional power relations and tensions as it may be a linear path towards healing and liberation that starts with conscientization (Ibid). Based on these observations, Smith offers a newly complex vision that outlines "five conditions or dimensions that have framed the struggle for decolonization:"

1. Critical consciousness, "an awakening from the slumber of hegemony"
2. Reimagining the world, "what enables an alternative vision and "dreams of alternative possibilities"
3. The coming together of disparate ideas, the events, the historical moment, which "creates opportunities" and "provides the moments when tactics can be deployed"
4. Movement or disturbance, "counter-hegemonic movements or tendencies, the competing movements which traverse sites of struggle, the unstable movements that occur when the status quo is disturbed"
5. Structure, "the underlying code of imperialism, of power relations that reproduce "material realities" (p. 201).

In this five-dimensional theory of decolonization, consciousness raising is only one element of decolonial struggle, and Smith does not place it within a linear model that posits it as a first step in a more or less direct path towards freedom from oppression. Nor does she necessarily position consciousness in relation to knowledge production or research. Instead, the transformation of consciousness and knowledge is part of a much more dynamic constellation of material and historical conditions that interact intersectionally to structure the decolonial manifestations she calls "struggle."

According to the five dimensions of decolonial struggle Smith outlines in the 2012 edition, neither resistance, critique, counterhegemonic mobilization, nor tactical action—all of which she recognizes as instrumental aspects of decolonization—are preconditioned by conscientization. As she reminds us, participation in struggle can and often does come before raised consciousness, and raised consciousness is only one aspect within this larger milieu of practices that comprise struggle. She draws from Chandra Mohanty (1991) to elaborate this point, arguing that "Spaces created by intersecting ideas, tendencies, or issues are sites of struggle that offer possibilities for people to resist" (p. 202). The lens of struggle thus points us to a diverse assemblage and constellation of conditions that make up decolonization, only one of which is a process of critical consciousness/conscientization that occurs within the realm of individuals' minds. Moreover, conscientization does not assume a predetermined path towards decolonization within this process. This path, which has captivated and dominated a great deal of what has been produced in Indigenous intellectual and political contexts over the last thirty years, presumes that awakening from the slumber of hegemony will inevitably lead to the development of a critical consciousness that itself will inevitably lead to healing from colonial wounds and embracing Indigenous knowledge as a replacement for colonial knowledges jettisoned in the process of developing a new consciousness. This view of decolonization reduces what in actuality is a dynamic, multi-directional, intersectional, and thoroughly material—indeed, cacophonous, to use Jodi Byrd's (2011) term—struggle to a singular phenomenon of consciousness raising that is undertaken primarily by individuals as an internal, therapeutic effort to heal and overcome colonial violence and intergenerational grief (Brave Heart, 2000).

There are also key differences in how research and knowledge production registers and functions within these differing frames of decolonization. As we outline above, Smith offers an intersectional theory of struggle that foregrounds conditions of possibility and dynamic materialities that come together in complex, often incomplete, ways to form the terrain of decolonial struggle. When we consider this rendering in relation to the definition of decolonization offered by Tuck and Yang in "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," the vision offered here is indeed neither metaphorical nor bounded by knowledge production, research, or consciousness raising. To the contrary, it is a deeply materialist, dynamic, and intersectional struggle that centers on the repatriation of Indigenous life and land. Research, for Smith (2012), is not inherently attached to consciousness raising or healing. Rather, research is "noisy optimism" that releases "forces that are creative and imaginative" within multiple intellectual, social, material, and political spaces (p. 202). The goal of research within this framework is to "offer a language of possibility" (Ibid). While research certainly involves awareness of the truths of colonialism—awakening from the slumber of hegemony that Smith talks about—its primary function is creative, not prescriptive. Moreover, a decolonial research program embedded in, an emerging from, struggle is dynamic, not linear.

Why is it important to hash out these differences in how Indigenous intellectuals approach decolonization? We are certainly not attempting to provide a comprehensive review of existing writings or approaches to decolonization. Such a project would require a dedicated volume because decolonization as an intellectual and political methodology has become a normalized structure of feeling (Williams, 1978) in Indigenous studies and Indigenous political formations. Our emphasis on the cacophony of struggle, and the role of research and knowledge production within this cacophony, is not meant to displace or otherwise minimize the important work that Indigenous peoples have undertaken under the related purviews of healing and consciousness raising. This work has generated countless programs, grassroots movements, fields of study, conversations, and organizations (Brave Heart, 2000). It has also made significant contributions to the project of Indigenous feminism, which we discuss in more detail below. Nor are we necessarily trying to stake a claim by critiquing existing tensions or competing definitions of decolonization that might exist today. Rather, we begin this special issue in this manner because we want to encourage our relatives who are reading this to think about Indigenous peoples and the politics of water through this lens of struggle; the struggle for decolonization. We believe the framework of struggle is an important step in placing healing and consciousness raising alongside and within the heterogeneity of possibilities that make up decolonial struggle.

Decolonization as relationality: The human-land-water connection in Indigenous feminism

The intellectual and political project of Indigenous feminism, which spans multiple institutional, grassroots, organizational, and governmental spaces, has perhaps produced the most comprehensive understanding of radical relationality and its many dimensions. Indigenous feminism gives shape to work happening under the aegis of post-humanisms, new materialisms, queer affect, studies of the anthropocene, and critiques of biopolitics, all of which reflect an important meditation on the dynamic politics of life and death that energize liberal societies and their social, material, and political formations. What sets Indigenous feminists apart from these other approaches are their commitments to Indigenous life and self-determination in all respects, as well as their popularization and impact within the realm of non-institutional (i.e. grassroots) political organizing.[4] Indigenous feminists also uniquely encourage us to question the ways in which therapeutic logics—particularly when articulated to ideas about Indigenous culture, tradition, and sacredness—might actually reproduce liberalism, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy rather than dismantle and transcend the violence of these structures of power (Barker, 2011; Deer, 2015; Denetdale, 2009; Denetdale, 2006; Million 2013; TallBear 2017).

Moreover, academic work on Indigenous feminism has intermixed with the material and social practices of decolonial struggle to generate lively embodiments, socializations, and theorizations that exceed and influence academic meditations. An important example of this multi-sited project of Indigenous feminism is the movement to seek justice for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW). By tracking the machinations of settler colonialism and capitalist accumulation/devaluation as they manifest in the violation of Indigenous women's bodies, MMIW has played an instrumental role in the increased visibility and influence of Indigenous feminism within mainstream media and organizing spaces. However, a key point should be highlighted: although MMIW is a movement in its own right, it has evolved in relation to dozens of Indigenous-led resistance struggles that have erupted across Turtle Island. These struggles are a response to the crushing hegemony of capitalist-driven extractive practices. Copper mining, tar sands mining, hydraulic fracking, industrial logging, diamond mining, military and science tests, dams, water pipelines, bombs, oil drilling and uranium mining have destroyed many of our relatives and made it increasingly impossible for others to live. And this violence has been largely pursued by settler states and corporations that use benevolent liberal platitudes about economic development, recognition, and progress to justify their actions (NYSHN-WEA, 2016).

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[4] Indeed, the influence of these other largely academic movements in the dynamic historical struggles for liberation occurring in this moment pales in comparison to Indigenous feminism. For example, we might read the emergence of terms and roles like "water protector," which became the name of those on the various frontlines of the NoDAPL uprising, and "land defender," which the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) and Women's Earth Alliance (WEA) use in concert with "water protector," as shorthands of political struggle that are informed by an Indigenous feminist politics that has arisen to challenge environmental violence (2016). The salience of terms like "water protector" and "land defender" are partly a result of the widespread influence and circulation of Indigenous feminisms that connect the violation/health of human bodies to the violation/health of land/water. Most of this discourse has been developed and circulated in spheres outside of bounded academic knowledge production.

While resource extraction of this magnitude is not new to Indigenous people, the frequency and magnitude of resistance to it is historically unique (Yazzie, 2016), as is the role of water as an ideological and ontological centerpiece within this resistance. Indigenous feminism has been instrumental to these historical developments within the field of Indigenous resistance. The interconnectedness between Indigenous women's bodies and the lands that women caretake constitutes one of the primary axes of relationality in Indigenous feminism. This has been theorized largely in relation to violence (Dhillon, 2017; Simpson, 2016; Smith, 2005) and biological reproductive rights attached to cis-hetero bodies (NYSHN-WEA, 2016). But it has also been theorized in relation to our broader conceptions of space, being, and political possibility, particularly by Tonawanda Seneca feminist Mishuana Goeman. Settler colonialism relies on a "scale based on difference," writes Goeman (2017, p. 101). Indigenous feminist praxis "upsets" this by offering a "scale based on connection" that collapses "the settler scale that separates humans, lands, animals, and so on" (Ibid). What Goeman points to here is a theory of connection in which relationality and movement defines ontology rather than autonomy and objectification. This key theme in Indigenous feminism has emerged and gained traction within decolonization struggles—many of which have been led by First Nations women resisting settler colonialism in Canada—as a formation that spans multiple scales and sites. Although the majority of Indigenous feminist energy has gone into articulating the relationality between humans and land, Goeman (2017) conceptualizes a more expansive view of relationality that pivots on relationships between humans and water, which has recently emerged as a powerful axis of relationality within the vast web of relations that constitute the multiple "scales of spatial justice" that comprise ontologies of decolonization (p. 106).

It is no coincidence that Goeman was writing about scales based on connection at a time when the NoDAPL struggle was taking off in Oceti Sakowin territory. Human "water protectors" activated a profound and powerful human/water relationality when they decided to protect and defend their water relatives from destruction by the Dakota Access Pipeline. We see this synergy between Indigenous feminism and historical-materialist struggles for decolonization as evidence of an emergent common sense of relationality that has significantly influenced the political and ontological horizons of Indigenous possibility. However, like all knowledge keepers within our networks of kin, Indigenous feminists remind us that the relationality that exists between humans, lands, and waters is not a recent invention of politics or research. Certainly, the growing public consciousness about climate change has played an important role in the turn to relationality, and scholars have been furiously producing theories to capture it (the inadequacy that TallBear points out). However, Indigenous feminists remind us that relationality has always been here; it is our collective origin story premised on water view, and one that will continue to unfold so long as we caretake life. Cutcha (2017) has written about this in her own work on women's coming-of-age ceremonies and the centrality of connections to water, land, and life that have always been a part of our epistemological Indigenous world/water view. She writes, "Many of our ceremonies give us an intimate connection to the river, they remind us that we are responsible for our river, our environment. These ceremonies teach us that our well-being is tied to our environment and our community. They teach us that we are intertwined with our world, not separate, not dominant."

It is in our interdependencies and reciprocities that we derive our greatest power and secure a future for all. Although Indigenous peoples in North America do not have a monopoly on relationality (indeed, by definition, relationality is not a possessive ontology), it cannot be denied that the widespread renewal of our bonds with these lands and waters is necessary for the larger struggle for decolonization. This renewal of relationality has stunningly energized what we believe is a potential paradigm shift. The multi-spatial and multi-scalar constellation of struggles that is forming now could potentially cohere into a broader epistemic shift where the deadly hegemony of capitalist-colonial relationality is met with a fully formed counterhegemony based on a politics and ontology of relational life (Yazzie, 2016). This has been an ongoing struggle and we acknowledge how resistance and movements can be seen from the very first moments of settler invasion. Resistance can also be seen in the ongoing practices of Indigenous peoples in their communities, their refusal to bow to state or imperial regulations on their ceremonial, cultural and environmental practices with or without media or popular interest or support for their actions (Risling Baldy, 2013). In this contemporary moment, the convergence of movements like MMIW with land-based struggles against resource extraction (which coalesced into Idle No More in 2012-2013) has been quickly followed by new uprisings like NoDAPL (2016) to protect water and new movements like The Red Nation (2014) to abolish carcerality in urban and bordertown locations (Dhillon, 2017; The Red Nation, 2014). The 2015 struggle to prevent copper mining in customary Apache territory in Oak Flats and the uprising that same year by Kanaka Maoli relatives to prevent construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope atop Mauna Kea on the island of Hawai'i are also a part of this growing movement. Each of these struggles has received massive international support and significant mainstream media attention.

As we note above, a simple review of the discourses coming out of these struggles demonstrates a conscious actualization of radical relationality. For example, The Red Nation (TRN), which is an Indigenous-led liberation organization that Melanie co-founded in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2014, espouses an Indigenous feminist framework based on the elaborate and expansive systems of kinship that Indigenous peoples continue to practice. Like TallBear, who highlights the relations of caretaking that are at the heart of Indigenous kinship practices, The Red Nation operates according to an ethics of caretaking, and believes that revolutionary struggle requires the caretaking of human, land, water, and ancestor kin wherever and whenever they need protection.[5] All of the organization's campaigns, which range from establishing Indigenous Peoples Day in Albuquerque, to resisting hydraulic fracking in Chaco Canyon, to protesting police violence against human relatives in reservation border towns, extend from this philosophy and practice (TRN, 2014). Melanie notes that TRN does not see itself as unique or novel. To the contrary, those who organize with TRN represent the current generation of kin who are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring a future for our world, just as our ancestors of the before and the already forthcoming have and will always do (Estes, 2017). For TRN, this intergenerational relationality is the basis of decolonization and the horizon of a collective revolutionary struggle to free all living beings from the violence of colonialism and capitalism. It is a far-reaching and unremitting labor of love; a quest to galvanize a federation of life that can overthrow the empire of death that structures our current reality.

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[5] In following with TallBear's non-natalist definition of kinship, TRN does not presume a natural link between caretaking and the biological imperative of reproduction (i.e. natalism) that often defines cis-hetero Indigenous womanhood. As TallBear points out, caretaking is an ethics that does not need to be attached to specific bodies and, moreover, should not be attached to specific bodies lest we undermine the actually existing and expansive kinship Indigenous peoples still practice. For example, within the larger tiospaye system, she points out, biological mothers are not the only caretakers. Likewise, those who choose not to (or cannot) have biological children can be mothers and caretakers (2017). Extending from this definition of kinship is a theory and practice of relationality-as-caretaking that regenerates and reproduces life wherever it is practiced, including within the extended family that comprises our kin. The distinction between natalist and non-natalist definitions of kinship is important; while the former excludes all LGBTQAI2, disabled, and non-gender conforming womyn from the web of caretaking (as both caretakers and those who deserve to be caretaken) because of their perceived biological failure and deviancy, the latter envisions an expansive practice of kinship in which all relatives—regardless of their gender or ability—are included in the circle of caretaking so long as they abide by the ethics of responsibility, respect, and reciprocity that binds kin together.

We do not wish to gloss over the fact that several of these struggles were forced to an early conclusion by unrelenting state repression. Nor do we want to downplay the actual complexity and conflict that has characterized these struggles. Indeed, there were several important battles regarding the culmination, reinvigoration, and conclusion of past paradigms of struggle that played out in this cluster of uprisings between 2012 and 2017. The multiple trajectories both within and in the aftermath of Idle No More, #SaveOakFlat, #NoDAPL, Nihigaal Bee Iiná, and others, point to this. Whereas some came out of these struggles settled on healing and cultural resurgence as the path forward, others rejected these terms and instead shifted their efforts towards confrontations with state violence. Some have become more interested in collaborating with other Leftist, radical, and progressive traditions, while others have chosen to see Indigenous resistance as a singular struggle with unique challenges. And whereas some have embraced non-violent direct action as the tactic of choice, others have chosen militancy.

Whatever the trajectories, the complexity of these struggles opened space for long brewing tensions and contradictions to be worked out. But they also forged possibilities for equally dynamic struggles to form in the future. It is out of this complexity and vibrancy that radical relationality has emerged as a common feature of these struggles. Amidst this complex history unfolding, we see a critical process emerging, one where we are learning how to work together as good relatives even whilst carrying all the contradictions and injuries that colonialism has imposed upon us into these relationships. And most of us are doing this on a scale and magnitude (and with unprecedented support) that we never imagined possible. But we want to emphasize that what is politically and analytically significant here is the saliency of our collective commitment to radical relationality. Indeed, this cluster of struggles was not entirely localized to the geopolitical context from which each emerged; they were, as Goeman might say, part of a larger phenomenon of radical relationality that collapses the perceived distance between scales of space that colonial knowledges fabricates. In its place, these struggles have cultivated the seeds for a vast interconnected movement that operates at multiple scales of spatial justice, including the individual, social, political, community, and transnational (2016, p. 101). Regardless of our different approaches to decolonization or resistance, we thus ask our relatives who are reading this to recognize that the expansive interconnectedness forged through these struggles remains very much intact. Our mountain, human, animal, and water relatives with whom we have reignited a promise of mutual care and protection await our next move. We are not starting from scratch; the seeds have already been planted, the cracks in empire already made. The tide of history is with us. So long as we remain committed to building a successful liberation movement and embracing a far-reaching relational politics of life, the web of radical relationality will only grow until it blankets the world in stunning beauty and restores the balance that our stories and prophecies have always foretold.

Decolonization as solidarity: How we struggle is how we live

While the new relatives and cacophonies of struggle we have made in the past six years certainly move us toward a more fully formed practice of radical relationality, we still have work to do—together—to build the interconnectedness that is needed to build a successful liberation movement premised on values of cooperation, respect, interdependency, and care. This can and will only be strengthened by making new relatives and practicing traditions of belonging and incorporation that are not based on capitalist and colonial notions of difference, exclusion, scarcity, and competition. Radical relationality is, after all, simply the ontology of being-in-relation-to that describes all life and futurity; keeping ourselves open to the possibility of making new relatives is one of the essential functions of life and, indeed, decolonization. It is thus important not to treat Turtle Island as exceptional or somehow isolated within the broader constellation of actually-existing (and already won) struggles for decolonization in other parts of the world. How can we conceive of, and build, connections between the ontology of decolonization (i.e. radical relationality) that emerges from this specific place, and ontologies of decolonization elsewhere? How can we look to radical relationality and water view as a guide for our relationship-making with other nations?

We believe the reach and impact of radical relationality extends beyond the web of relations that comprise life in our specific nations. We can see this with our waters, which run and interconnect across nations, across continents, across any arbitrarily drawn border. We learn from water that these interconnections are complex and dynamic and that they weave together in a web that sustains and builds the infrastructure for life as we know it. Like our waters, we are meant to work, sustain, and support each other.

Decolonization is an aspiration and a militant struggle that has been and will continue to be waged in all places that have been ravaged by empire. If radical relationality is about living well, and if living well depends on acting in a manner of interdependency and respect among all things with spirit, then it makes sense to extend this logic to the realm of solidarity where working and collaborating across difference is a key part of what it means to organize under the banner of liberation and decolonization globally. In this sense, radical relationality encourages a view of decolonization consistent with the intersectionality that Angela Davis (2015) points out has been so central to the relations of solidarity that have defined the growing interdependencies between the Palestinian liberation struggle and the Black liberation struggle in the United States. Davis also implies that these interdependencies are a prerequisite for actual, mature movements to grow out of uprisings like Black Lives Matter, NoDAPL, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions struggle that has captivated US-based Palestine solidarity work over the last handful of years (Ibid).

In addition to the interconnections that have been transpiring and growing in the organizing world, there have been promising parallel developments in Native American and Indigenous studies. Renewed interest in solidarity between the Palestinian liberation struggle and North American (and Pacific) Indigenous struggles has taken form over the past several years under the aegis of critiquing settler colonialism in Israel and the United States (Kauanui, 2012; Warrior 1989; Waziyatawin, 2012; Yazzie, 2015). In *Inter/nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Steven Salaita (2016) highlights how at the center of this growing Palestinian-Indigenous solidarity has been the articulation of a shared struggle for decolonization and national liberation, both of which are organized under the larger structure and imaginary of Indigenous nationalism. However, this nationalism, like decolonization, is not an "isolated organism. It is a radical entity that survives in relation to the destinies of other nations" (p. xvii). While US settler colonialism is certainly sited in specific territorial configurations, Salaita points out that "American colonization is an international phenomenon" (p. 61). A prime example of this phenomenon is contemporary Israeli nationalism, which he argues is a "modern incarnation and proud conserver of American manifest destiny" (p. 15-6). This is why he concludes that decolonization and national liberation are necessarily cooperative—indeed, inter/national—processes (Yazzie, forthcoming).[6]

The inter/national interconnectedness that has been growing between Black, Palestinian, and Native liberation efforts gives an additional dimension and scale to the relationality between humans, land, and water that has been growing here on this continent over the past five years. There are multiple other connections and axes of cooperation materializing, as well. We are in a historical moment in which political struggle is manifesting anew as large-scale, collective mobilization for liberation on numerous fronts. Indigenous peoples of this continent are part of a worldwide uprising of the dispossessed who are confronting a growing conflagration at the nexus of climate change, resource extraction, militant resistance, forced human migration, feminist mobilizations to end sexual violence, imperial wars and militarization, and wide-scale demands to end carcerality (Dhillon, 2017). Although many see these struggles as isolated or issue-driven campaigns, we encourage our relatives reading this to see the *radical relationality* in and across these struggles. More importantly, we implore our relatives to *build* and *foster* this radical relationality.

In *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence,* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011) asks something similar from us:

> While theoretically, we have debated whether Audre Lourde's 'the master's tools can dismantle the master's house,' I am interested in a different question. I am not so concerned with how we can dismantle the master's house, that is, which sets of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house. I have spent enough time taking down the master's house, and now I want most of my energy to go into visioning and building our new house" (p. 32).

Like Salaita and Smith, Simpson is invested in building struggles for decolonization that abound with the kind of noisy optimism and relationality—a praxis centered on building vibrant alternative futures rather than just challenging colonial violence—that drives our commitment to decolonizing knowledge, building successful decolonization movements and, ultimately, decolonized futures. The phrase "ontologies of decolonization" certainly points to this dual character of struggles for decolonization: dismantling the master's house and building our own. However, we hope to have demonstrated a third dimension of struggles for decolonization. This dimension, simply put, is struggle; the dynamic, materiality of decolonization that is forged in the terrain of the here-and-now of collective and cooperative struggle. How we struggle is how we remember, how we live, how we dream. It is how we *relate*. This is what water teaches us.

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[6] Parts of this paragraph appear in a book review Melanie has written about Salaita's book. See Yazzie, Melanie K. Review of *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* by Steven Salaita. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. Forthcoming 2018.

In This Issue

The articles in this issue offer powerful pathways and urgent critiques that assist us with thinking, acting, and building in the spirit of radical relationality. The first cluster of articles by Rosemary Georgeson and Jessica Hallenbeck, Charles Sepulveda, Zoe Todd, and Eleanor Hayman offer us innovative and critical methodologies that combine Indigenous methods with those of science, technology, feminism, history, and the law. Georgeson (Coast Salish and Sahtu Dene) and Hallenbeck, whose article weaves the intertwined histories of Indigenous persistence and colonial dispossession through human-fish relationalities, start the issue. Their article offers a poignant starting point for readers because it enacts a key methodology of water view by foregrounding the lived experiences and histories of Indigenous women living close to the Pacific Ocean in current day British Columbia. Georgeson and Hallenbeck juxtapose the oral traditions embedded in these experiences and histories with academic methodologies like interviews, academic research, and the settler colonial archive. The result is a powerful example of how to narrate water view in a way that challenges, balances, and displaces academic conventions.

The second article of the issue directs our attention to a different region within the Indigenous geographies of relationality in North America. Writing about the Santa Ana River in what is now southern California, Tongva and Acjachemen scholar Charles Sepulveda opens his essay by asking, What does it mean when human-beings have relationships to places and waters that are currently no longer viable for a sustainable way of life? He follows this up by asking, What does it mean to be rooted to a place you have been dispossessed of? Using these questions to shape his contribution, Sepulveda urges us to think creatively about decolonization within a landscape of profound dispossession. He also draws critical links between the domestication and submission of the Santa Ana River and gendered structures of domestication and submission that began with Spanish imperial domination. By drawing links between sexual and gender violence and environmental degradation, Sepulveda directly builds on the central questions about land-water-body relationality that guide the project of Indigenous feminism.

Sepulveda's article is followed by another meditation on human-fish relationality, this time by Métis scholar Zoe Todd. Todd explores how human-fish relations in Paulatuuq and amiskwaciwâskahikan (current day Northwest Territories and Alberta) operate as an important field of contestation in which Indigenous peoples interact with and challenge the Canadian settler state. Todd offers a theory of fish refraction and dispersion, which is a process through which Indigenous peoples in Paulatuuq and amiskwaciwâskahikan bend and disperse state laws and norms through local relations to fish and waters. By emphasizing an ethics of care, Todd encourages us to center the radical relationality of human-fish kinship in our visions of decolonization.

Eleanor Hayman in collaboration with Colleen James and Mark Wedge, two elders from Carcross/Tagish First Nation, uses Tlingit and Tagish oral traditions to examine the radical relationality between glaciers and a number of species. Hayman urges us to see glaciers as sentient relatives who have a great deal to teach about relationality, life, and, ultimately, decolonization. She asks, How might thinking with glaciers, powerful agents in the forging of human and more-than-human identities, work to address new types of climate change realities? She challenges the assumptions and elisions of the Anthropocene, an academic and scientific framework that leaves much to be desired when considering alternative futures that respect Indigenous epistemologies. She looks to Tlingit and Tagish narratives about glaciers to disrupt increasingly entrenched notions and narrow definitions of the Anthropocene(s) and to chart decolonial futures.

The second cluster of articles by Shaun Stevenson, Elizabeth LaPensée, and Jane Griffith demonstrate the importance of art, song, and literature in enacting water view and radical relationality. Shaun Stevenson pens the fourth installment of the issue, which looks at Mohawk artist Alan Michelson's 2005 video art installation *Two Row II* as a site of analysis. Stevenson draws on the concept of the hydrosocial to articulate what he calls the ethical potential of water as terrain for sharing, contesting, and forging relationality. He asks, Does focusing on water, its ability to both act, and be acted upon, how it both produces and is produced through social relations, allow for a rethought ethical and political paradigm based in theories of action and responsibility that cross human and non-human divides? Certainly, the ethical potential of water was a key concern for the NoDAPL water protectors who descended upon Standing Rock in 2016 to protect Mni Sose from an oil pipeline. In this article, Stevenson shifts our focus to the Grand River, which flows between the Haudenosaunee community of Six Nations and a number of predominately non-Indigenous communities in Southern Ontario, to consider the ethical and political capacity of water.

Stevenson is followed by Anishinaabe and Métis game designer, artist, and writer Elizabeth LaPensée, who in collaboration with Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe) and Lyz Jaakola (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe) writes about an online singing game they designed called *Honour Water* (http://www.honourwater.com/), which incorporates songs through gameplay to encourage players to develop comfort with singing and learning Anishinaabemowin. The songs available through *Honour Water* were gifted by Anishinaabe grandmothers who sought to reconnect users with water, revitalize and carry forward Anishinaabeg teachings, and heal the water through song. LaPensée, Day, and Jaakola offer a thoughtful and successful example of how we might use unlikely media like the internet to put water view and radical relationality into practice.

Jane Griffith uses monthly publications issued by the Bureau of Reclamation, a federal agency within the Department of the Interior responsible for diverting, delivering, and storing water in the Western U.S., to show how the control and enclosure of water is a key form of settler colonialism that enables non-Indigenous settlement. She finds evidence of colonial intent in the Bureau's rhetoric about Indigenous water, particularly its narratives about engineering feats, Reclamation construction, legal decisions on water, practical instruction for farmers, and black-and-white photographs of water. Griffith's piece is unique in the sense that it examines narratives, language, rhetoric, and image to uncover the ways that Indigenous waterways are recast through discourse to facilitate the material dispossession of Indigenous lands and waters, and in how it uses Indigenous literature to offer a counter-discourse that undermines colonialism.

The final cluster of articles by Michelle Daigle, Beth Rose Middleton, Morning Star Gali, and Darcie Houck, and Angel Hinzo examine state and corporate driven water laws, as well as the various forms of Indigenous resistance and resurgence that have arisen to contest and refuse colonial dispossession enacted through such laws. Mushkegowuk scholar Michelle Daigle centers Indigenous water governance at the intersection of Indigenous self-determination, extractive capitalist development, and water contamination and dispossession. Through a spatial analysis, Daigle traces contemporary forms of water dispossession enacted through mining extraction to the larger colonial-capitalist objectives of the original signing of the James Bay, or Treaty 9, agreement. She balances her discussion of dispossession with a discussion of how Mushkegowuk peoples are resurging against settler colonial and capitalist regimes by regenerating their water relations, and how water itself cultivates a form of resurgence that regenerates Indigenous kinship relations and governance practices.

Daigle is followed by Beth Rose Middleton, Morning Star Gali (Ajumawi Band of Pit River), and Darci Houck, who shift our focus back to present-day California. They center California Indian voices and histories of resistance to massive state-sponsored water projects that have displaced important headwaters throughout the state. Beginning with an overview of the history that led to the development of quasi-public projects on Native lands, Middleton, Gali, and Houck offer three case studies of Indigenous resistance: the Winnemem Wintu struggle to stop the proposed raise of Shasta Dam; the Maidu Summit's work to regain ownership of former Pacific Gas & Electric company lands established within their homeland; and the Pit River Tribe's decades-long struggle to protect the sacred Medicine Lake Highlands from government-approved corporate exploitation of geothermal resources. Their piece challenges the injustices in natural resource policymaking and offers alternative visions for a future that centers California Indian relationships to place.

The final article of the issue is by Ho-Chunk historian Angel Hinzo, who narrates a history of dispossession, sovereignty, treaty rights, and resistance along the Missouri River. Hinzo explores Native American tribes' efforts to maintain their sovereignty and stewardship over waterways, the connections between these waterways and their communities, and the tensions between tribes, states, and transnational corporations in controlling the future of the river. She focuses on three specific cases that reflect on tribal activism for the preservation of treaty rights along the Missouri River: United States v Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, the Omaha Tribe's legal battle over the area of land known as Blackbird bend, and activism against TransCanada's Keystone XL Pipeline. Hinzo's contribution offers a deeply historical account of how power is forged, contested, and shaped through relationality with water. Collectively, these pieces offer rich and diverse insights into how water—in its full material, discursive, and legal dimensions— is at the center of our shared histories of colonization, resistance, governance, and, indeed, our very identities as Indigenous peoples and as human beings.

Conclusion

It is a time of pulsating and unstable struggle. It is also a time of (re)emergence and (re)ascendance for the good people of the earth to rise up and claim our rightful place as good relatives once and for all. In reading this and considering our points, you have become our relative; you have entered into a relationship of interdependency, respect, and care. You have become our kin, and we yours; we have, together, reinvigorated our accountability to water view by entering into a multi-scalar relationship of movement and fluidity that will carry us into the future (Recollet, 2017). Beings that live in good relation do not have a common goal other than to live and to have a future, and to let others have the self-determination to do the same. As Indigenous feminist Karen Recollet (2017) reminds us, "Indigenous feminism has always and will always maintain . . . integrity towards the love of Indigenous lives . . . and lands . . . " (Ibid.). So, too, do we both maintain Indigenous feminist integrity towards the love of all good relatives of the earth and the cosmos who caretake the future.

In closing, we leave you, our new relative, with this:

Indigenous people are good at making relatives. It's what we do; it's who we are. Our relatives are our source of strength. We are not afraid when we are surrounded by relatives. We will have no future without relatives. We will have no future if we are bad relatives.

To be a water protector is to be a good relative
To be a land defender is to be a good relative.
To struggle together is to be a good relative.

And to be a good relative is to be an Indigenous feminist.

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